THE LIBERAL PARTY OF STOKE-ON-TRENT AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 1862 - 1880.

A case study in Liberal - Labour relations.

Thesis submitted for the

degree of Master of Arts

1974

by

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This study examines the constituency Liberal Party of Stoke-on-Trent in a period of political history noted for the formation of a Liberal-Labour alliance. This alliance was symbolised by the entry of Henry Broadhurst into Parliament in 1880 as M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent. The final assessment of the growth of the Liberal Party outside Parliament and the character of the Liberal-Labour alliance depends upon investigations into constituency parties and the manner in which local party leaders tackled such problems as the demand for labour representation. It is shown in this study that the nature of the relationship between those who led organisations for working men and those who managed the Stoke-on-Trent Liberal Party in the last stages of the constituency's existence did affect the outcome of Parliamentary elections in the Borough. The study, therefore, is a contribution towards a fuller understanding of the development of the Liberal Party in the second half of the nineteenth century and the impact of the Liberal-Labour alliance upon constituencies.

The central theme is the struggle between the leaders of organised labour in the Potteries and local Party managers over the control of official Party nominations for Parliamentary candidates. It was essential for the continuation of the Stoke-on-Trent Liberal Party, and for the realisation of its ambition to hold both seats in perpetuity, that a satisfactory resolution of this class conflict be found. This happened before the general election of 1880 and enabled the Party to record on that occasion its most complete victory in the history of the constituency. The ease with which this victory was obtained has tended to obscure the fierceness of the internal conflict in the Liberal Party in the early 1870s, and also the reality of the aspirations of working men in the Potteries to have their own representative in Parliament. In effect, therefore, the success of Henry Broadhurst in 1880, when he joined Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt in epitomising Lib-Labism, has obliterated the very real possibility

of the collapse of the Stoke-on-Trent Liberal Party in the mid-1870s.

The study opens with a description of the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent in the 1860s and an account of the organisational changes necessitated by the growth of the Temperance Movement and a threat from a Temperance candidate, Samuel Pope, to capture a Liberal seat. The impact of the 1867 Reform Act on the constituency in relation to these changes created a special situation in advance of the general election of 1868.

The 1868 election, therefore, is considered separately in the second section of the study, along with the immediate consequences for the local Party which followed from the way events were handled by its leaders. During this election the first labour candidate appeared, Robert Hartwell, and the third section of the study describes the political activities of organised labour, especially in the years immediately following Hartwell's campaign, for a distinct shift then took place in the attitude of labour leaders. The next stage of the study is an examination of the reaction of Liberal leaders to working class movements and the general election of 1874, in which there was open political conflict between middle class and working class sections of the Party. As this conflict led to the loss by the Party of one of its two Members of Parliament there were moves to close the ranks, but as these were in progress a by-election became necessary early in 1875 when the second seat was lost. The fifth part of the study is concerned with these moves, the effect of the by-election on them, and the ultimate resolution of Party problems by the adoption of Henry Broadhurst in partnership with William Woodall as the official Liberal candidates for the 1880 general election.

The final section of the study contains a consideration of the historiography of the Liberal-Labour alliance and of the Liberal Party in its constituency aspects in the second half of the nineteenth century.

This is coupled with an assessment of the extent to which conclusions drawn from events in Stoke-on-Trent should be used to modify some previous judgements about the growth of constituency Liberal Parties and the Liberal-Labour alliance.

Attention is drawn in the final stage to the importance for the local Liberal Party of organisational changes in the mid - 1860s, namely the creation of an elected Council to approve official Parliamentary candidates because this contrasts with views that such organisational changes were of little importance in the development of the Liberal Party. Similarly, attention is drawn to the issue of labour representation, and the manner in which attempts were made to secure it in Stoke-on-Trent, because this, too, has been dismissed as of small consequence for the Liberal Party. In Stoke-on-Trent, at least, the creation of the Council encouraged those working men enfranchised in 1867 to believe that they could become fully integrated members of the constituency Liberal Party with a share in the exercise of power according to rules made in 1865. The existence of the Council also encouraged working men's leaders to believe that they could realise their ambition to influence the selection of Liberal candidates to the advantage of working class interests. The result of the discovery that the council was a sham nearly brought about the collapse of the local Liberal Party, and certainly caused the loss by 1875 of both its seats in the House of Commons. Whatever view is taken about the Labour Representation League in general, therefore, this study shows that in Stoke-on-Trent it had very considerable consequences.

The almost total devotion of working class voters to Liberalism, which transcended organisations and party structures in the period 1860-1880, is confirmed. The story of events in Stoke-on-Trent in the early 1870s, however, casts doubts on the faith that the articulate working class had in the Liberal Party, as organised at constituency level, as the proper

mode of mobilising Liberal opinion and the most effective means of securing working class interests. Finally, it is noted that though a resolution of the local Liberal Party's problems appeared to have been found by the adoption of Henry Broadhurst as the working man's candidate, the reality of the extent to which Party managers had achieved a harmonisation of Liberalism and the special interests of the working classes, as rooted in Chartism and articulated by trade union leaders, was not tested in Stoke-on-Trent. This was because the constituency was divided into two single member constituencies in 1885 and the context of local politics was thereby completely changed.

ILLUSTRATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

Advertiser refers to The Staffordshire Advertiser

Examiner refers to The Potteries Examiner

Sentinel refers to The Staffordshire Sentinel (weekly)

and The Staffordshire Daily Sentinel

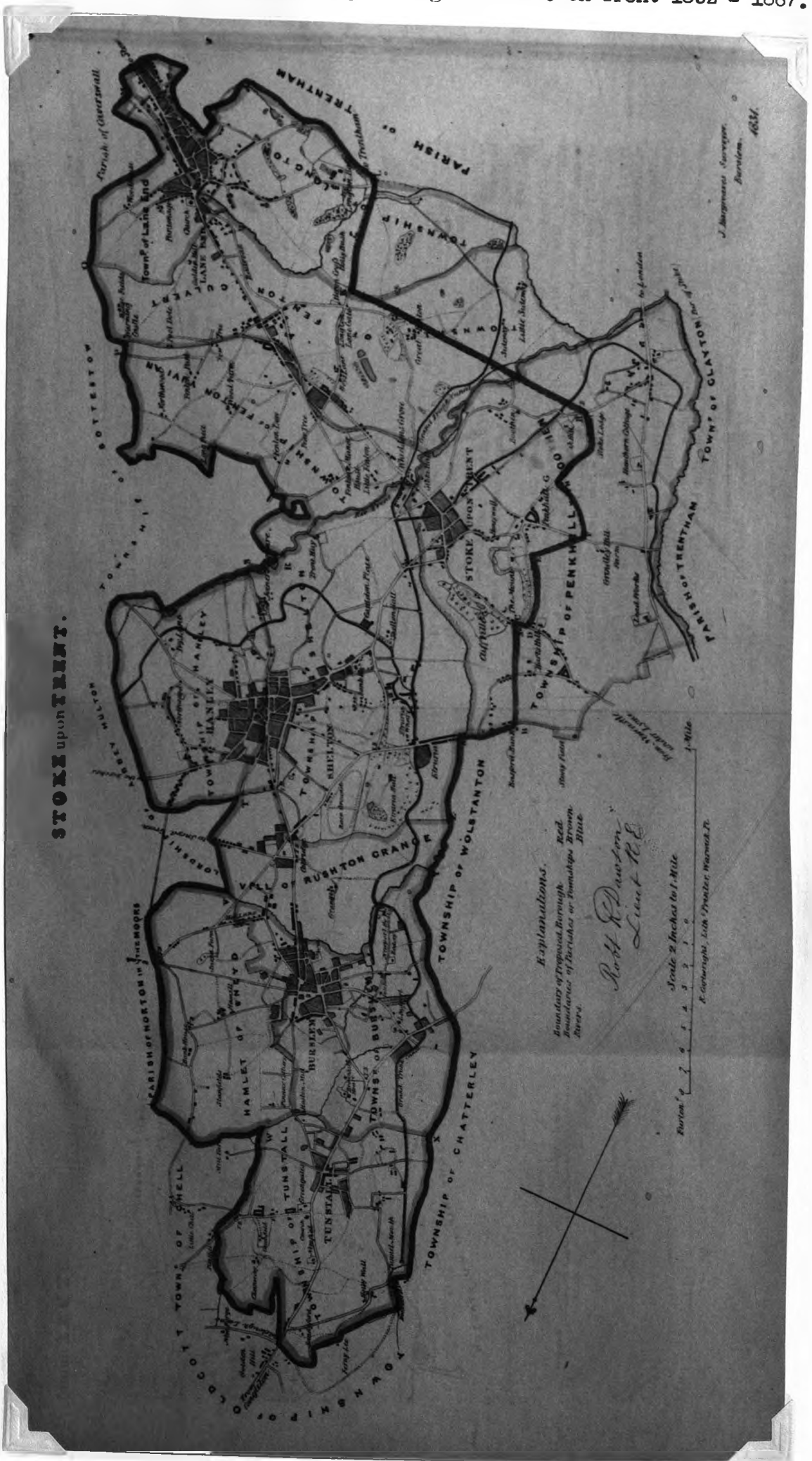
Melly Papers refers to the collection of papers relating to George Melly held in Liverpool Public Library.

G.Howell Collection refers to the collection of material in the Bishopsgate Institute, London covering all aspects of the work of George Howell.

H.R.L. refers to Hanley Reference Library, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.

Note. The Parliamentary Borough comprising the North Staffordshire Potteries is referred to as Stoke-on-Trent. The municipal borough, formerly part of the township of Penkhull and Boothen and centre of the medieval parish, is referred to as Stoke-upon-Trent.

The Parliamentary Borough of Stoke-on-Trent 1832 - 1867.



CHAPTER I

THE LIBERAL PARTY IN STOKE-ON-TRENT IN THE 1860s.

Stoke-on-Trent Parliamentary Borough.

Date	Population	
1831	51,589	
1841	68,637	
1851	84,027	
1861	101,207	
1871	129,137	inside 1832 boundaries
	134,001	inside 1868 boundaries
1881	152,394	

Date	No. of voters	
1832	1,349	
1841	1,582	
1862	2,494	
1865	3,189	858 of whom were of the 'working classes'. *
1868	16,204	
1873	19,129	

* Return of Parliamentary Boroughs --- working classes on Parliamentary Register. Parl.Papers vol.LVII p219.

Votes in significant elections prior to the operation of the 1867 Reform Act.

1859 general election for two seats

'official'Liberal	1,258
'official'Conservative	1,074
independent radical	569

1862 by-election for one seat

'official'Liberal	1,089
'official'Conservative	918
independent	32

1865 general election for two seats

'official'Liberal	(a(1,373
	(b(1,277
'official'Conservative	1,462

1868 by-election for one seat

'official'Liberal	1,489
'official'Conservative	1,420

CHAPTER 1.

THE LIBERAL PARTY IN STOKE-ON-TRENT IN THE 1860s.

Part 1. Groups in the Liberal 'interest'.

The 1832 Reform Act created the Parliamentary Borough of Stoke-on-Trent out of a patchwork of urban communities whose sole unifying feature was their engagement in pottery making. A local campaign was necessary to obtain the inclusion of the district in the schedule of new constituencies, and another to win two members rather than the one initially proposed. Immediately following this success there was an election contest when four prominent local figures bid for the honour of being the first representatives of the Potteries in Parliament. The Liberal 'interest' in the Borough was created during the eventful two years when these campaigns were fought.

The case for a Borough constituency was argued by pottery manufacturers on the grounds that the concentration of population in the locality was considerable and a growing proportion had houses of the £10 value which reformers accepted as evidence of political fitness. Above all, they claimed, the area had a unique characteristic and was an industrial region whose special needs would not otherwise be represented in the House of Commons. The manufacturers wanted the name of their constituency to be the "Potteries",[1] not Stoke-on-Trent, for the latter did not reflect the interests which they wanted forwarded in Parliament.

The Reform Bill as a whole did not become law without public clamour and neither was the potters' case accepted without popular demonstrations. In the last resort manufacturers turned to a radical tactic of organising a Political Union[2] to advertise their opposition to the Duke of Wellington's moves to prevent the passage of the Bill. They were reluctant to voice support for, or to give silent approval to, wider measures of Parliamentary reform which radicals required. Nevertheless by associating with more

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1. Advertiser. 1831. June 4, p1.

2. ibid., 1832. May 26, p3.

extreme reformers in a Political Union at the critical stage of Parliamentary negotiations in 1832, pottery manufacturers confirmed their broad agreement with liberal views. The Union was short-lived and collapsed because of dissentions within the ranks of "persons of liberal politics".[1] Only a minority of those enfranchised accepted the need for reform of the House of Lords and the other unspecified changes advocated by the radical candidate in the 1832 election, and these were the people who had wanted a Political Union. The hope that an alliance could be formed between the manufacturers and the populace such as had obtained the enfranchisement of Stoke-on-Trent and had momentarily been expressed in the Political Union, remained at the centre of Liberal 'interest' long after 1832.

The Liberal 'interest' was divided not only into radicals and moderates, but more significantly into those with a vote and those without. Only 1,349 persons were registered as electors in 1832[2] and this number did not double until after 1862. A considerable section of the electorate inclined to a Conservative rather than a Liberal view of politics so that the effective strength of the Liberals in Stoke-on-Trent was numerically small. Before the 1867 Reform Act changed the franchise the maximum number of voters for a Liberal candidate was 1,489. This was reached at the last election on the old register when, in a by-election in 1868, there was a straight fight between the parties for one seat. In 1862 on an almost exactly similar occasion only 1,089 votes were cast for the candidate in the Liberal 'interest'.

It is possible to define the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent in other terms than the number of registered voters pledged to its support. There is no other way of quantifying it, however. Those enthusiastic for the Liberal cause in Parliament naturally found the electors to be the most

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1. ibid., 1832, June 16, p4.
2. Report of the Commissioners on Proposed Boundaries of Counties and Boroughs 1832, vol. III. Part I, p7 noted that "The number of qualifying Tenements in the Potteries does not amount to more than 1,400 or 1,500, a number which bears a remarkably small proportion to the population 53,000". The reasons given for this were cheap building materials and abundance of building land which kept the value of houses low.

important section of the local population and concentrated their energies on keeping the support of those already registered and adding any willing to promise a vote in the future. Those not eligible to vote at all were not without influence at election time, but the sheer size of this section of the population made it impossible to manage. On the grounds of voting power and ease of management, therefore, there was a tendency to regard the Liberal Party as composed of committed voters, while the Liberal 'interest' included the more diffused and volatile mass of non-voters able, for the most part, only to express their sympathies.

In addition to being few in number, the Liberal Party in the first decades of its existence in the Potteries was entirely in the hands of a controlling group of manufacturers. Their combined influence and wealth, and the rising commercial importance of the industry they controlled, had given Stoke-on-Trent its claim to two seats in the reformed Parliament. Not all pottery owners were of a Liberal outlook, but those who were expected to lead the Party. Ironically, the activities of one of their number, G.M. Mason,[1] who had recently been in business in Fenton, pointed up this state of affairs most dramatically. He had been the fourth candidate in 1832, when the first seat, by common consent, was due to Josiah Wedgwood,[2] son of the great Wedgwood who was revered as the founder of the pottery industry's fortunes. This deference to the Wedgwood dynasty left only one seat available to satisfy the claims of Tories and Whigs. Two candidates had come forward representing these views, John Davenport

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1. George Miles Mason 1789-1859 : Son of Miles Mason of the Minerva Works, Lane Delph (of Fenton). After obtaining an MA at Oxford he was partner with his brother in the family business 1813-29. He moved out of the Potteries to live at Wetley Rocks, and 1848 went to Small Heath, Birmingham.

2. Josiah Wedgwood 1769-1843 : M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent 1832-5. He inherited the celebrated Etruria Works from his father in 1795 and saw it survive the depression period of the Napoleonic Wars. He was a Unitarian and lived at Maer Hall after 1819.

and R.E. Heathcote.[1] Both were prominent figures locally, and in 1835 when Wedgwood announced his retirement, Heathcote was adopted by the manufacturers because he had lost to Davenport in 1832. Mason stood in 1832 as a radical, drawing out support from non-voters but very little from the electorate. In 1836 Heathcote resigned and caused a by-election. Mason made public his bitter disappointment at the cabal of Liberals who secretly brought in an outsider, Colonel G. Anson, to represent the Liberal 'interest'. Mason claimed to have been given a pledge by his fellow manufacturers in 1832 that he would obtain Heathcote's place as the Liberal candidate whenever that fell vacant.[2] He sadly decided not to stand in opposition to Anson, but he advised the electors that only the formation of proper political parties would prevent the constituency becoming a nominated borough as rotten as any abolished in 1832.

The dominating group of employers who led the Liberal part of the constituency was headed by John Ridgway.[3] He was a king-maker rather

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1. John Davenport 1765-1848 : M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent 1832-41. He was born in Leek, and worked in a bank and with Thomas Wolfe in a pottery in Stoke-on-Trent before buying his own business in 1794 at Longport. He built up a flourishing series of manufactories and became wealthy before allowing his sons to take over from him in the 1820s. He lived for some time on an estate, Westwood Hall, in Leek, which he bought in 1813 and on the Maer estate bought from the Wedgwoods in 1843. He retired from public life in 1838.

   Richard Edensor Heathcote 1781-1850 : M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent 1835-6. He was the son of Sir John E. Heathcote of Longton Hall whom he succeeded in 1822. Educated at Oxford he took a great interest in the iron works at Apedale where he lived at a new hall after 1840.

2. Advertiser. 1836, January 30, p4.

3. John Ridgway 1786-1860 : son of Job Ridgway, pottery owner, and New Connexion Methodist. From 1830 John was the sole proprietor of the Cauldon Place Pottery, Hanley. His brother William was also active in local politics. The family had the closest of links with Bethesda Chapel, Hanley, and the New Connexion Methodist movement. He was Chairman of Potteries Waterworks Co, a J.P., and a Deputy Lieutenant of the County.

rather than a contender for the crown, never standing himself for Parliament, but being

> "for nearly forty years --- the chief political force of the Borough of Stoke-on-Trent"[1]

He was the one particularly criticised by G.M. Mason in 1836 and his guiding hand was well recognised in Liberal affairs. Until 1860 John Ridgway dictated Party tactics and had a large voice in the choice of candidates.[2] He was very actively engaged in local government politics and especially in the struggles centred on the reform of Hanley's administration. His pre-eminent position was recognised by his election in 1857 as the first Mayor of Hanley. His outlook was that of a Whig rather than a radical, being deeply sympathetic towards the downtrodden and indignant at the oppressive Corn Laws. Ridgway was not particularly keen, however, to involve the lower classes in political decision making beyond that of voting for representatives. Even at local government level he favoured a high rating qualification as the basis for the municipal franchise of Hanley.[3]

Francis Wedgwood, whose father had been the M.P. in 1832, and William Brownfield[4] were others in the coterie of leaders, but their individual

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1. Sentinel. 1897. - see Local News Cuttings vol. 4, p102-4 (HRL), article by Rev. C. Shaw.

2. Sentinel. 1859, May 21, p5 : ibid., 1862 Sept. 13, p7.

3. W.E. Townley. : Urban Administration and Health - a case study of Hanley M.A. Thesis, University of Keele 1969, p251.

4. Francis Wedgwood 1800-88 : a younger son of Josiah Wedgwood, MP for Stoke-on-Trent. In 1843 Francis inherited the Etruria estate from his father, but though he remained involved in the family business in 1848 he moved out to Barlaston Hall and sold Etruria Hall.

   William Brownfield 1812-73 : China and earthenware manufacturer at the Cobridge works. He had been born in Hanley and started his pottery in partnership with Robinson and Wood, but from 1850 was the sole owner. He was one of the first Aldermen of Hanley and second Mayor of the town where he was also a J.P. He held directorships in the Potteries Water Works Company and the North Staffordshire Railway Company, and was a Deputy-Lieutenant of the County. Some time after 1865 he moved his home from Hanley to Barlaston Hall.

influence is hard to measure. Each of the towns of the Borough had its own select group composed, in some cases, of men whose reputations were entirely local. Altogether in 1841 approximately 130 pottery manufacturers were listed in the Poll Book, of whom 62 were devoted at that time to the Liberal cause.[1] In Longton the potters were overwhelmingly Liberal - 32 of the 44 plumped for the Liberal candidate, and only 6 voted Conservative. No individual Longton leader had the same status in the Borough as a whole as did Wedgwood or Brownfield, however, and there seems to have been some deference to these Hanley men.

The meeting place which pottery manufacturers used for the discussion of common problems was their Chamber of Commerce. This institution did not play a direct part in Parliamentary politics, but it gave individuals a useful means of establishing themselves as prominent local figures. M.D. Hollins[2] was no doubt considered for both the Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-Under-Lyme seats in 1868 because of his leading role in the chamber.

For political purposes there was no real need for pottery owners to establish special organisations or formal structures. Their wealth, industrial power and social prestige in an urban community with no tradition of deference to a landowning elite were sufficient to give them authority. Their numbers were not so large as to prevent close, almost daily, contact, especially before the 1860s prior to which only the exceptionally prestigious employer lived outside the immediate streets of the pottery towns. The size

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1. Poll Book 1841, published by T.Allbut and Son.
   127 voters qualified by virtue of their manufactories, but at least three others can be added, including Francis Wedgwood, who qualified by the value of their houses. 62 plumped for the Liberal candidate and five others split their votes with the Conservative, and are, therefore, left out here.

2. Michael Daintry Hollins 1815-98 : son of Thomas Hollins of Manchester and grandson of Samuel Hollins, partner in the New Hall Pottery Manufactory. He qualified as a surgeon but after 1838 was in partnership with Herbert Minton in a pottery in Stoke-on-Trent where he took a special interest in the encaustic tiles. In 1868 he started his own business making tiles. M.D. Hollins was the only person involved in the pottery industry to give evidence to the Royal Commission on Trade Unions 1867-9.

of the electorate which they had to control was also such that much could be done on a person-to-person basis. In 1841, only 62 manufacturers plumped for the Liberal candidate; each needed to influence only eleven others to do the same to explain why 753 voters acted in this way. This figure alone was sufficient to put the Liberal at the head of the poll, though split votes actually swelled his total to 831.

Too much emphasis should not be placed upon divisions among pottery manufacturers as reflections of Parliamentary party politics. There was a remarkable undercurrent of stability flowing through their ranks before the 1860s which sprang from a desire to keep the levers of power under their own control, and which led to the minimisation of electoral conflict. During John Ridgway's 'reign' only one election battle of any significance was fought after 1837 - in 1852 - and the general rule that contests should be cut-and-dried affairs with each side supporting only one candidate was thereby upheld.

The evidence for this stability was the hold over Stoke-on-Trent's two seats enjoyed by W.T. Copeland and J.L. Ricardo.[1] The first, owner of the renowned Spode Works since 1833, and Lord Mayor of London in 1835, represented the desire of manufacturers to have one of their own kind in the House of Commons. Copeland satisfied this qualification without unduly exciting jealousy among manufacturers. He had been introduced

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1. William Taylor Copeland 1797-1868 : son of William Copeland. He was much involved in local government in London, being Alderman for Bishopgate Ward for nearly 40 years. In 1832 he was M.P. for Coleraine. President of Bridewell and Bethlehem Hospitals in London.

   John Lewis Ricardo 1812-1862 : son of Jacob Ricardo and nephew of David Ricardo the eminent economist. His public career began with his election for Stoke-on-Trent in 1841 and his marriage at about the same time to the daughter of General the Hon. Sir. A. Duff. He founded the Electric Telegraph Co. and was Chairman of the North Staffordshire Railway Co., Director of the London and Westminster Bank and associated with railway construction in Norway and Denmark. He was noted chiefly for his campaign for the repeal of the Navigation Acts.

RICARDO
and
VOTE by BALLOT

The last remains of an election poster uncovered by demolition workers on a wall in Rebecca Street, Stoke-upon-Trent, during the first week in January 1974. The house which had been removed faced into Liverpool Road and its builders had not troubled to remove the posters on the wall to which they attached the house. Immediately underneath the election poster was one for services in Bethesda Chapel dated 26 August 1838, so that it appears that the election was the first that Ricardo fought in the constituency, in 1841.

into the pottery business through his father's, and his own, partnership with the second Josiah Spode. The Copelands were London agents for the sale of pottery, and, though of Staffordshire origins, were more at home in the capital than the provinces. William Taylor Copeland acquire the whole firm in 1833, which gave him a claim to be a potter when he stood for election for the first time in 1837. Until he retired in 1865, Copeland fought his contests as the representative of the pottery industry, though he was well recognised as inclining to the Conservative view-point. Liberals in Stoke-on-Trent found a champion of their interest, who served for almost as long, in John Lewis Ricardo. He was elected first in 1841 and gave twenty one years' unbroken service before his death in 1862. His qualification was that of respectable radicalism and, perhaps, his relationship to the great economist, David Ricardo.

Parliamentary politics in Stoke-on-Trent in the 1841 to 1862 period was overshadowed by the successful careers of Copeland and Ricardo. As individuals they commanded respect and loyalty, and as a pair they represented a spectrum of views on the issues of their day which was satisfactory to many. With one exception - Copeland in 1852 - they both overcame challenges to their position, but the circumstances of politics were ever-changing and their supporters should have expected problems in finding replacements for them. Important factors in the political scene of the early 1860s were the death of John Ridgway, Ricardo's chief prop; the death of Ricardo himself in 1862; and the imminent retirement of Copeland, though he hung on until 1865. Each of these men had enjoyed an entrenched and commanding situation in local politics envied by others. Their removal alone was sufficient to initiate a new era in Party politics, though not one necessarily damaging to the control exercised over Parliamentary affairs by pottery manufacturers.

One aspect of the slowly changing nature of provincial politics in the mid-nineteenth century, which had an impact in the Stoke-on-Trent Parliamentary Borough, was the reform of local government. The introduction of elected municipal councils to administer the affairs of rapidly swelling urban communities was a major change in local politics, hitherto organised by an elite, self-selected by birth, wealth and social status. Each of the Pottery towns required reform urgently in the 1840s, but not until the 1848 Public Health Act was in operation did the elective principle begin to disturb the traditional pattern of government in the area. Debates and public campaigns on the necessity for reform, and the type of improved government, were occasions when sides were taken and alliances developed, generally, though not always marking Liberals off from Conservatives. When the new Local Boards of Health - in Burslem in 1850 and Tunstall in 1855 - and municipal corporations were in being, these political divisions continued to be reflected in the elections to, and the discussions at, these various bodies. Above all, their elective nature, with relatively widespread franchises, gave scope for a new group of politically-minded men to emerge alongside the industrial employers. Retail tradesmen, owners of businesses in the advancing trades ancillary to the pottery and iron industries, and professional men, rose in political significance even in Parliamentary affairs as they established themselves as a major group involved in running the new local administrations.

There were suggestions from time to time that the solution to local government problems in the Potteries was a single authority within the bounds of the Parliamentary Borough. Local tradition was a powerful factor working against this, and the manner in which local government changes were effected tended to mark still more deeply the divisions between townships. Hanley was convulsed twice by arguments over reform before it was incorporated in 1857[1], and Longton and Stoke-upon-Trent obtained charters in 1865 and 1874 respectively.

1. For details of the changes in government in Hanley see W.E. Townley, Urban administration and health : a case study of Hanley. M.A. Thesis, Univ. of Keele, 1969.

Thus did a new, politically significant group become important in party politics in the middle years of the century, and, in Stoke-on-Trent, this group was largely Liberal in outlook, being in favour of reform in general, yet divided from time to time on particular plans and always fissured by parochial rivalries. All these features of local government politics had consequences for the Liberal Party in the Potteries. The ruling oligarchy of pottery manufacturers was broadened as professional men such as Benjamin Boothroyd,[1] the Hanley surgeon, made an impact on local politics. Edward Challinor,[2] the solicitor whose leading role in the fight to incorporate Hanley was recognised by his appointment as clerk to the first council, was another example. He was agent for the Liberal Party in the 1860s and an influential voice in its counsels. The unity of control possible when relatively few shared the decisions was also affected, for separate town groups emerged, each closely resembling the dominating set of municipal politicians. In Burslem James Macintyre,[3] the central figure on the Local Board of Health, came to be regarded as its leading Liberal largely for that reason. Gathered around him was a distinct coterie of lesser figures, all of them adding potency to Macintyre's influence in the town. Another similar group

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1. Benjamin Boothroyd 1808-1886 : son of a Lincolnshire carpenter. In 1831 he became an M.R.C.S. and settled in Hanley in 1832. He was much involved in the campaign to incorporate Hanley and was one of the first six aldermen in 1857 alongside John Ridgway, Francis Wedgwood and William Brownfield. In 1861 he was Mayor of the town and remained active in local affairs right up until his death. For five years he was President of Hanley Liberal Club.

2. Edward Challinor 1817-69 : son of William Challinor of Derby, and Elizabeth, daughter of J. Glass, an earthenware manufacturer of Hanley. He was articled to a Manchester solicitor and moved to Hanley in 1839 to set up his own practice. His son also became Town Clerk of Hanley. Edward Challinor may have helped to found the Staffordshire Weekly Sentinel.

3. James Macintyre 1803-1868 : born in Glasgow of Scottish parents. He came to the Potteries in 1832 and joined the Anderton Carrying Co. He married the sister of W.S. Kennedy, owner of the Washington Pottery in Burslem, and took over the Works in 1854. He was elected to the Boards of Health and Guardians and served three times as Chief Bailiff of Burslem.. William Woodall (see page 39) married his daughter Evelyn and succeeded to his business and local political influence.

existed in Longton for a time, gathered around James Glover[1] and his son Alfred, owners of a brewery and colliery. James Glover was the first Mayor of Longton in 1865, a sure sign of his eminence and involvement in the campaign for reformed government. Finally the changes in local government, being based upon the elective principle, undermined a Party structure founded on self-selection. When mayors and corporations were subject to annual elections and were the product of highly organised formal procedures it ill-befitted those same men to conduct political party business on less democratic lines. At much the same time that the heavy hand of John Ridgway was removed and the career of John Lewis Ricardo ended, the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent was feeling the effects of changes in local government.

The distinguishing feature of the two leading groups of the Liberal 'interest' so far described was that of status. Other groupings of Liberals were based upon shared sentiments or objectives, the common ground on which they stood being the relatively narrow aim of securing some particular piece of legislation. Manufacturers, tradesmen and leading professional figures usually organised or headed such groups, but the collective devotion of such a group to a particular cause, and its intention of making that cause an integral part of the Liberal Party's election platform, gave the group a distinction worth examination. One stood out above all others in the Potteries.

The third group in the Liberal 'interest' consisted of supporters of the Temperance Movement. Their initial activities in the Borough were

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1. James Glover 1796-1869 : lived at Sideway House, Longton. He was a County J.P. for some years and very active in Longton. His obituary in the Staffordshire Sentinel was remarkably uninformative. He withdrew from Liberal Party affairs after a financial quarrel with candidates following the 1865 election.

contemporaneous with its inauguration,[1] and from 1836 onwards Temperance societies developed in all the Pottery towns, with particular success in Tunstall. After 1853 the United Kingdom Alliance made good progress in the area, with the result that, during the 1850s, Temperance supporters were able to create a whole new way of life for themselves. A strong regional organisation linked various town societies together; savings clubs helped members make the most of their money; and lectures, outings and teas fulfilled educational and entertainment needs quite divorced from the ubiquitous public house. Not surprisingly the zeal some had for this liberalising cause ran to advocating specific legislation for controlling the sale of alcohol. Since the working man especially was not dragging himself free from the evils of drink with the rapidity reformers desired, Parliament was asked to help with a new law. Sir William Lawson's Permissive Bill,[2] designed to bring in the prohibition of the sale of alcohol by local choice, thus became a political touchstone with serious implications for the Liberal Party. It faced loyal voters with a choice between their general Liberal sympathies and their particular temperance objectives.

The first open move in Parliamentary affairs in Stoke-on-Trent made by members of the Temperance Movement came in the last stages of John Ridgway's rule over the Liberal Party. At the general election in 1857 J.E. Keates, a draper and general dealer in Burslem, persuaded the

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1. Advertiser. 1832, Sept. 15, p4. - Hanley and Shelton Society formed with John Ridgway in the chair. For a general account of the growth and influence of the Temperance Movement in the Potteries, which dates it from 1836, see M.J. Wilson, The Temperance Movement in the Potteries 1848-60. M.A. dissertation Univ. of Keele 1972.

2. B. Harrison. Drink and the Victorians., (Faber & Faber 1971), p240.

Secretary of the United Kingdom Alliance, Samuel Pope, Q.C., to put up as a Temperance candidate, because the first two Liberals in the field refused to pledge themselves to the Permissive Bill. This action was in line with the policy of the Alliance at elections, which was to fight for its particular objectives rather than on behalf of the general interests of a Party. G. Kitson Clark pointed out when reviewing the place of the Temperance cause among nineteenth century movements that this course was "more likely to hurt their friends than their foes"[2]. Liberals in Stoke-on-Trent saw the matter in exactly that way in 1857. To many of them, Samuel Pope's appearance as a candidate was a challenge to their Party, no matter what the protestations to the contrary temperance men made.

The reason for the alarm at Pope's candidacy was simple. It was that Pope was an eminently respectable radical, sound on the questions of franchise extension, religious freedom, local control of education and the ballot box. He was as strong a candidate as had ever put up in Stoke-on-Trent in the Liberal 'interest', with two exceptions. The exceptions were the two in the field before him - J.L. Ricardo and the Hon. F. Levenson-Gower.[3] The former had claims on the loyalty of Party members going back to 1841 and was closely identified with the commercial interests of the Potteries region. The second came from the ranks of the landed gentry, the family of the Dukes of Sutherland in fact, seated at Trentham Hall and with property in the Borough. Leveson-Gower's claim on the constituency, however, arose from his success in the election of

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1. Samuel Pope 1826-1901: Q.C., D.L., J.P., born in Manchester, the eldest son of Samuel Pope, a merchant. After attending the University of London he became a barrister in 1858 and worked in Manchester until 1865 when he moved to London. He was the first secretary of the United Kingdom Alliance. In 1859 he was a Parliamentary candidate at Stoke-on-Trent, and in 1865 and 1868 at Bolton, but never entered Parliament. In 1869 he became Recorder of Bolton.

2. G.Kitson Clark. The Making of Victorian England., (Methuen, 1962), p199.

3. Hon. Frederick Leveson-Gower 1819-1907: M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent 1852-7. He was a younger son of the first Earl Granville and nephew of the first Duke of Sutherland of Trentham Hall. Educated at Eton and Christ Church he was called to the Bar in 1846. In 1847 he was elected M.P. for Derby but unseated after a petition. 1858-85 M.P. for Bodmin, a borough much influenced by his family connections.

1852 when he had been ousted by W.T. Copeland from his seat. That victory had temporarily ended the arrangement of sharing the seats between two groups of manufacturers, and some Liberals were determined not to allow a return to that situation. Pope was a threat to a repeat performance of 1852, for he was competing for precious Liberal votes in the contest for the second seat. Pope himself acknowledged this when he retired before the poll to give the 'official' candidates a clear run. He won popular acclaim and the show of hands at the hustings, which was sufficient to extract some sort of promise on temperance from Ricardo and Leveson-Gower. Unfortunately for the Liberals there were other factors at work and W.T. Copeland regained his seat alongside Ricardo.

Two features characterising the political aspects of the Temperance Movement in the Potteries showed up strongly in 1859, when Pope returned as a candidate at the General Election because the Liberal leaders refused to adopt two candidates. They preferred tacitly to accept Copeland's claim to the second seat once again. One feature was the level of organisational strength the Movement had achieved, and the other was its hold over certain classes of working men. An analysis of the voting published in the Movement's own national newspaper the Alliance Weekly News gave some clue to both features.

		Publicans & beersellers who voted.
Plumpers for Ricardo(Liberal)	303	51
for Copeland (Conservative)	534	97
for Pope	25	1
Split votes for Ricardo/Copeland	481	115
Ricardo/Pope	474	29
Copeland/Pope	58	3
Total voters	1,875	296

[1]

Total votes per candidate -

Ricardo	1,259
Copeland	1,075
Pope	569

[2]

Of the electors who cast their votes 29.7% had Pope as a choice. As the casting of votes was manipulated by party agents to a considerable degree, the key feature of the analysis was the relationship of plumpers - when the elector used only one of his two votes - to split votes. Most of Pope's supporters also voted for Ricardo, whereas Ricardo had a substantial block of single votes. A surprisingly large number of people voted for neither Party, by splitting between Ricardo and Copeland. Pope's supporters argued that if Ricardo-Liberals had been true to their Party, rather than out to spite Pope, they could have made both seats safe for Liberals. The argument depended on shaky assumptions that some Ricardo/Copeland voters might have been persuaded to drop Copeland, but carried enough conviction to point to a plan to ditch Pope by the manipulation of plumpers. The local Temperance Movement, in fact, had sufficient organisational initiative to bring Pope to Stoke-on-Trent, arrange meetings and rouse general

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1. Alliance Weekly News. 1859, May 21, p789 - quoted in M.J. Wilson. The Temperance Movement in the Potteries 1848-60 - Dissertation for M.A., University of Keele, 1972.

2. These figures show a miscalculation, the totals being in fact:-
   Ricardo 1258 Copeland 1073 Pope 557
   Election results, as reported in different sources, varied slightly. James Acland analysed the 1859 Election figures for a Stoke audience in 1862, giving figures different from those in the Alliance News quoted above - see Sentinel. 1862, September 6th, p.6. The differences are not significant.

support for him, but totally lacked expertise at the poll. It was geared to winning popular sympathy, but not to securing votes. While voting remained open party agents could acquire pledges for their candidates in the knowledge that they could keep an accurate check on every one. Many voters, whatever their sympathies, found it hard to escape the clutches of agents whose ultimate masters were employers of voters' labour.[1]

There is no doubt that Pope's campaign in 1859 had its basis in working class support.[2] He again won the show of hands at the hustings and forced the other candidates to go to a poll. Though his nominator and seconder were on this occasion of a higher social status (one of them, Christopher Dickinson,[3] becoming in the early 1870s a pillar of the Liberal Party) the general membership of temperance societies came from the "respectable" working classes, led more actively by non-conformist ministers than by manufacturers. Pope himself played down his temperance views in his speeches and concentrated much more on the general issues of Parliamentary reform so as to catch a wider measure of "respectable" support. It is difficult to see the majority of the 474 voters who chose Pope and Ricardo as anything but working class electors. They kept faith with the Party by splitting their votes to retain for Ricardo his much prized place at the head of the poll. Yet by voting for Pope at all they were approving political radicalism rejected by some of the Party's leaders, and at the same time indicating an opposition to those same leaders in the

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1. M.J. Wilson - op.cit. - shows that the Temperance group tried to organise some revenge action against local tradesmen who voted the wrong way by issuing a classified poll book with the intention of indicating those businesses to boycott.

2. ibid., p89.

3. Christopher Dickinson : He owned a cornmill in Stoke-upon-Trent from at least 1851 until about 1880. His brother-in-law was Joseph Sturge, a Birmingham Chartist. In 1868 Dickinson became Chairman of the Liberal Council, and after the incorporation of Stoke-upon-Trent in 1874 he was a leading figure on the Council, becoming an Alderman.

matter of their tactics. There was a strong suspicion that the influence of "Cauldon Place" - that is of John Ridgway - lay behind the decision not to have a second Liberal candidate as partner to Ricardo.[1]

The Temperance Movement in Stoke-on-Trent by the end of the 1850s had demonstrated its importance within the local Liberal Party. It commanded nearly one third of the voters in 1859, far too high a proportion for Party leaders to ignore. This political influence was of recent origin and was becoming associated with a particular candidate, Samuel Pope. In contrast with changes in local government, which seemed likely to lead to a very slow dilution of the leadership provided for the Liberal Party by manufacturers, the Temperance Movement contained an immediate threat to the position enjoyed by a handful of industrial bosses. The movement supplied an organisation structure potentially stronger than any devised by the Liberal Party leaders; it commanded respect among those very workingmen the Liberals wished to enfranchise; and its candidate, Samuel Pope, personified radical policies of a wide-ranging kind also popular among the lower classes. If the Temperance Movement was alienated by the Liberal leadership there was a real risk of a drastic alteration in politics in general and in the personal position of Party leaders. Clearly a new era in local politics had begun.

A fourth section of the Liberal Party was recognisable by its radical sentiments. Unlike the Temperance Movement, no binding organisation held radicals together, though there was a lengthy tradition in the Potteries of support for advanced causes. Prominent episodes in radical history had been the early elections in the 1830s and the events associated with the Chartists in 1839 and 1842. During the elections respectability had been conferred on advanced views by spokesmen such as George Miles Mason, but

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1. Sentinel. 1859, May 21, p5.

working class leaders, especially Joseph Capper,[1] also captured attention. The Chartist cause was publicly espoused only by working class leaders, Capper again playing an active part. In 1842 over 200 men of the working classes were made martyrs to the radical cause by their arrest and trial for complicity in the riots throughout the Potteries in August that year. This deliberately severe revenge, judicially administered to the leaders of working class political groups, crushed Chartism as an open movement in the Potteries, though there was some infiltration by Chartists of local government bodies, such as the Highways Board of Shelton township.[2]

Involvement in local government led Chartists to oppose Liberal moves to secure the reform of urban administration because the interests of working men appeared to be low on the list of priorities of ardent middle class reformers. In the 1852 election the energies of the working class, voters and non-voters alike, were harnessed to the Liberal campaign, and one of the candidates, Leveson-Gower, attributed his victory over W.T. Copeland to the pressure exerted on voters by working men aroused by the possibility of losing the advantages gained by the repeal of the Corn Laws.[3] By 1857 this temporary alliance of radicalism, working class non-voters and the Liberal leadership had evaporated. One of the causes was the heated controversy over the scheme to set up a Local Board of Health in Hanley which had not advanced far enough in 1852 to affect

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1. Joseph Capper 1789c-1860 : Advertiser. 1860, January 14, p5 gives news of his death, describing him as a "blacksmith, aged 71 years ... formerly a member of the Local Board of Health, well known during former days for his ultra-political opinions". He was a Tunstall man, a Primitive Methodist preacher and a popular political speaker. He served two years in Stafford goal for alleged conspiracy in the 1842 riots in the Potteries.

2. See W.E. Townley, Urban Administration and Health : a case study of Hanley. M.A. Thesis, Univ. of Keele, 1969.

3. F.Leveson-Gower, Bygone Years (1905 London)

Parliamentary politics, but which may have explained the renewed popularity of Copeland by 1857 when he unseated Leveson-Gower. Copeland appeared as the champion of working class interests in the Potteries in 1854 when he assisted J.A. Wise, M.P. for Stafford,[1] in moves to remove Hanley from a list of towns included in a Bill to set up a number of Local Boards. Class interests prevailed over Liberal sentiments so far as workingmen were concerned at this time and on this issue, and the Liberal Party suffered accordingly. Leveson-Gower was closely associated with John Ridgway's group, and Ridgway's ambition to retain the control of local government in the hands of the few was notorious.

The radical wing of the Liberal Party included people of all classes. Manufacturers, tradesmen and artizans spoke publicly in support of the chief radical objective, that of Parliamentary reform. The division over the issue of local government reform between working class radicals and their social superiors, which occurred in the 1850s, was complicated at the same time by another split on the question of temperance reform. The significance of Samuel Pope's candidature in 1857 and 1859 was that he was promoted by a section of radicals who did not feel adequately represented by Ricardo. The latter had hitherto been the spokesman for advanced Liberal views and was so regarded by Party leaders in Stoke-on-Trent. No radical challenge had been made against him before 1857, and even in 1859 Pope did not directly attack Ricardo's position. Nevertheless, Pope headed a move to secure representation of views sincerely held by leading artizan radicals. Despite his own social status he appeared to articulat

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1. J. Ayshford Wise 1810 - 1870 : of Clayton Hall, Newcastle-under-Lyme. Wise was regarded in North Staffordshire as a radical. He had been educated abroad; was the son of an M.P. for Totnes; and had been twice married. 1852-60 M.P. for Stafford. 1865 he claimed he had been tricked into standing as a candidate in Newcastle-under-Lyme so as to allow the voters the chance of financial profit from a contest. (The Staffordshire Times and Newcastle Pioneer. 1865, July 15, p3.)

the aspirations of respectable working men more clearly than Ricardo. That being the case, the demand arose that the Liberal Party should support two candidates for Parliament, one of them a spokesman for working men.

The emergence of a distinctly working class radical element seeking separate Parliamentary representation was associated with the candidacy of Samuel Pope. Its origins lay in the Chartist associations of the 1838-42 period; it was fed by working class activity in local government affairs and the temperance movement. There was no specifically working class organisation, however, channelling the energy of the respectable artizans of the Liberal Party, or bringing together the more widespread members of the Liberal 'interest'. Moreover, the political edge of Chartism had been blunted and the appeal of the Temperance Movement was limited. The situation after the 1859 election, therefore, was far from clear, there being no certainty that the Temperance candidate was able to harness the latent power of the working classes to his cause. The nature of Pope's attraction for the working classes was not clear either. There was some doubt as to whether it was his advocacy of temperance legislation or his views on Parliamentary reform which won him votes. In that situation it could not be said that a distinctive working class radical group had been formed in Stoke-on-Trent different from that within the Temperance Movement, though there were signs that it could crystallise at any time. One of the factors which made the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent in the late 1860s a different body from that of the earlier years of the constituency's existence was precisely this emergence of a group of working class radical leaders not dependent upon the Temperance movement for support.

Men with an outlook determined by a Liberal frame of mind were to be found in all classes and can be categorised in more than one way.

The degree to which each group of Liberals was conscious of its unity of interest, and the extent to which its members saw that interest as a political one, varied. There were also differences of strength between groups, and differences in levels of activity. In Stoke-on-Trent the groups which appeared to be of most significance because of their relatively high degree of activity on behalf of Liberal candidates at elections were pottery manufacturers, councillors and members of Local Boards of Health, Temperance supporters, and those favouring reform of Parliament in various ways. Liberals gathered in other groups and, for example, can be classified as trade unionists or chapel goers, but in neither of these cases did the people concerned appear to seek open involvement in Parliamentary politics through the medium of that group.

It might be the case that <u>being</u> a Liberal was more important to men in the Potteries than casting a vote for a Liberal candidate for Parliament.[1] Nevertheless, those who wanted their interests, whether commercial, religious or social, to be represented in the House of Commons by a Liberal, needed to make some arrangements to obtain votes. The increasing tendency for separate interest groups to be recognised within the general Liberal cause, and for conflict to appear as to the suitability of a particular candidate to represent those interests, created a new situation demanding the attention of those who saw themselves as the organisers of Parliamentary elections. By 1859 the existence of the new situation was becoming apparent : in 1862 it was necessary to deal with it. Party managers were compelled to recognise the need for methods of organising the selection of candidates so as to ensure the maximum unity of support from voters.

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1. see J. Vincent. <u>The Formation of the British Liberal Party</u> (London 1966; Penguin edition 1972) p14 for the importance of <u>being</u> a Liberal, "rather than just promiscuously recording a Liberal vote".

PART II

The first Liberal Councils 1862-5

The evolution of a Council providing a seal of approval for official Liberal Party candidates for the Borough of Stoke-on-Trent began during a by-election in 1862 and continued through to the conclusion of the General election of 1865. The occasion for the initiation of the process was the death of J.L. Ricardo in August 1862 and the immediate reason for using a committee procedure was that there was no longer any John Ridgway to direct operations. The problem which faced Liberal leaders was to unite the diverse sections of the Party behind one candidate, satisfying the demands of industrialists, political reformers and temperance advocates, and avoiding the mistakes of the 1859 election. In particular, the leaders had to find a means of blocking the path of Samuel Pope, for they did not regard him as suited to their interests.

The speed with which the self-appointed organisers of the Party acted indicated the seriousness of the threat posed by Samuel Pope, and the tactics they adopted, including the invention of a Council, confirmed their determination to avoid approving his candidacy. On the day following Ricardo's death a "numerously attended meeting of the leading Liberals of the Potteries"[1] was held in the Town Hall, Hanley, and a decision taken to send a deputation to the Hon. F. Leveson-Gower to invite him to stand again. There can be no doubt that the presence in the Potteries of the Parliamentary Agent for the United Kingdom Alliance, J.H. Raper,[2] was a considerable spur to action. He was reported as having been in the district for some time and keen to promote his candidate.[3] There were others looking to step into Ricardo's shoes also, including E.V. Kenealy, who reappeared again in 1875, and another

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1. Advertiser. 1862, August 23, p5.

2. J.H. Raper (1820-97). He was appointed as official Parliamentary Agent in 1860 (see Harrison, B., Drink and the Victorians. p 251). In 1878 he was a Parliamentary candidate at Peterborough for the Liberals, but lost.

3. Sentinel. 1862, August 23, p5.

lawyer, Sergeant Shee,[1] who stayed to go to the poll in 1862. Compared with Pope, however, they were strangers and had no chance of election.

The first meeting of Party leaders which dispatched the delegation to Leveson-Gower was chaired by William Brownfield, but was not described in the press reports as a Council. It was reported, however, that should the delegation fail to secure Leveson-Gower, who was already sitting in the Commons for the safe seat of Bodmin, it should go on to London for some unstated purpose.[2] While the delegation was in London a circular was issued in the Potteries calling a meeting for Monday, August 25th, five days after Ricardo's demise. At no time was this assembly of Liberal gentlemen described by the local press as a Council meeting, yet when it was held a decision was taken to adopt H.R.Grenfell[3] as the candidate in the election.

Considerable controversy surrounded the August 25th meeting, concerning the manner in which it was called together, the purpose announced beforehand and the treatment it accorded to the candidates interested in acquiring the Liberal nomination. It is clear that under William Brownfield's chairmanship the assembly heard speeches from H.R. Grenfell, Kenealy and Shee.[4] It is also clear that a two to one

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1. Edward Vaughan Kenealy, 1819-80 : born in Cork the son of a merchant, educated at Trinity College and called to the Bar in 1840. In 1850 he was prosecuted successfully for cruelty to his natural son, whereupon his fellow barristers refused to speak to him. He was junior counsel in the trial of Palmer the poisoner, and defended Orton in the Tichborne Case. In 1868 he lost an election at Wednesbury. M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent 1875-80.

   Sir William Shee, 1804-1868: serjeant-at-law; son of an Irish merchant and born at Finchley; educated at a Roman Catholic College and Edinburgh University. In 1828 he was called to the Bar and in 1856 defended Palmer, the poisoner of Rugeley, in Staffordshire. In 1863 he became the first Catholic judge since the Revolution. He was knighted in 1864.

2. Sentinel. 1862, August 23, p5.

3. Henry R. Grenfell 1824-1902 : of Morgan, Grenfell & Co., bankers. He was a Governor of the Bank of England and unsuccessful in general elections at Chester 1857, Lymington 1860, South West Lancashire 1868, Truro 1874, and Barnstaple 1880. M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent 1862-8.

4. Sentinel. 1862, August 30, p8.

majority voted for Grenfell, and that J.H. Raper reported Samuel Pope's interest in the contest and his desire not to do anything which would divide the Party. Despite Pope's claim for consideration Brownfield and Macintyre, who had both interviewed Grenfell in London on the 22nd, pushed hard for Grenfell, forcing the vote which revealed seventeen supporters for Pope against thirty two for Grenfell. Only one, Elijah Jones,[1] was named of the Pope group, he probably being the Chairman of Pope's Committee in 1859, an auctioneer by profession and one-time editor of the local temperance journal, the Beacon.[2]

Those who wanted Samuel Pope as the official Liberal candidate, and Pope himself, charged the Party leadership with undue haste, misrepresentation, unfair tactics and intimidation of voters. In the first place they considered that Pope was first in the field and had established his claim for official nomination by virtue of his success in 1859. In the second place they thought that Pope had been tricked into withholding his announcement of candidature by the delegation sent to recall Leveson-Gower, the only man whose claim might be thought superior to Pope's. In view of that move Pope stayed in Liverpool to await the outcome of the delegation's work, thus losing his opportunity to attend the meeting on August 25th. The delegation, however, returned to the Potteries on the 25th bringing Grenfell with them, unannounced, and apparently committed to his nomination. Thirdly the supporters of Grnefell pressed matters to a vote on the 25th despite the fact that, according to Pope's interpretation of the circular, the meeting was called only to hear a report on negotiations undertaken by the itinerant delegation. Pope's agent, Raper, was allowed to state to the meeting that his instructions

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1. Advertiser. 1862, August 3o, p8. In 1886 Jones had been President of the Hanley Temperance Society for four years. (Sentinel. 1886, December 4, p3).

2. Sentinel. 1858, May 14, p6.

3. Sentinel. 1862, August 30, p8.

from the prospective candidate were not to divide the "interest",[1] but the leaders refused to listen to Elijah Jones, who

> "claimed on behalf of Mr. Pope that he should have an opportunity of attending a public meeting of the electors and protested - the three candidates first named [Grenfell, Shee and Kenealy] having had an opportunity of addressing the meeting - against any decision being arrived at which might be considered as binding by the electors without Mr. Pope having had a similar opportunity.[2]

Pope finally withdrew altogether from the contest after Grenfell had refused to agree to a preliminary ballot of Liberal supporters as to which one of the three, Pope, Grenfell and Shee, should fight the lone Conservative, A. Beresford Hope.[3] Pope's reason was stated to be that

> "in view of the fact that the professed supporters of the Ballot have declined to accept the decision of the Ballot, I cannot avoid the conclusion that Mr. Grenfell and some of his friends prefer to reply upon the influence they may be able to bring to bear, rather than on the free expression of the will of the Party. Having witnessed the manner in which many of the Electors have been canvassed and pressed, I fear that a vote given to me might result in some instances in persecution and possible loss of trade or employment --- I will not needlessly be the means of introducing a day's suffering into an industrious home."[4]

Grenfell went into the poll against Beresford Hope and Shee, gaining 1,089 votes against 918 for the Conservative and 32 for Shee. Without Pope the Temperance men were confused and the working men radicals frustrated, turning first to Hope and then Shee, but deciding in the end on Party lines, for Shee made no impact on any effective group in the

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1. Sentinel. 1862, September 13, p8 : p7 for E.Jones on the same point.

2. ibid., August 30, p8.

3. Alexander James Beresford-Hope 1820-1887 : son of Thomas Hope, author, and heir to the estates of his stepfather, Field Marshall Viscount Beresford. Art, architecture, the Church of England and journalism were of special interest to him. He was proprietor of the Saturday Review. M.P. for Maidstone 1841-52 : 1857-9. M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent 1862-8 and for the University of Cambridge 1868-85.

4. Sentinel. 1862, September 13, p1.

district. Pope's friends, in the hope of salvaging something, tried to secure a pledge from Liberal leaders that they would run Pope alongside Grenfell at the next general election, but they failed.[1] As the Electoral Register was said to be in a poor state, neglected, inadequate and the consequence of careless rather than malicious effort, the results of the poll were not necessarily a good guide to the relative strength of sections of the Liberal Party.[2] However, the need to take stronger measures in the future was obvious, if only because of the condition of the Register and the threats of working class radicals.

The growing dissatisfaction of part of the constituency with the leadership of the Liberal Party can be identified in relation to Samuel Pope. It can also be personified by Samuel Robinson,[3] a china painter of Hanley, who, like Pope, demonstrated the way that political radicalism was assimilated at this time into a powerful campaign to secure temperance legislation. Robinson was one of the martyrs of 1842 and a noted Chartist preacher. In 1859 he spoke with "rugged eloquence"[4] in favour of Pope, and in 1862 interrupted one of Grenfell's meetings when he had been answering questions about how low a qualification for a reformed Parliamentary franchise he would support.

> "Mr. Robinson contended that Mr. Pope was "the man of the people" and protested against his being withdrawn to make way for Mr. Grenfell. He assured the meeting that if Mr. Pope were withdrawn, another candidate would be immediately brought forward to take his place"[5]

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1. Sentinel. 1862, September 6, p4.

2. Advertiser. 1862, September 6, p5. James Acland, agent of the National Registration Association, lectured at the Mechanics Institute and stated that 1,024 voters on the register were of known politics having voted in 1859, but 1,470 were of unknown views.

3. Samuel Robinson, 1807-69 : china painter of Hanley. As a Chartist he had been accused of high treason in 1842, but imprisoned for conspiracy. He was active in local politics, and was said to be in both the Reform Union in Hanley and the Reform League.

4. Sentinel. 1859, April 30, p7.

5. Sentinel. 1862, August 30, p7.

In the last resort Robinson reverted to an earlier tradition of working class support for Conservative representatives when he spoke at a non-electors' gathering in Hanley.

> Samuel Robinson "next addressed the meeting, in a long, voluble and unconnected speech, in which reminiscences of his own career, and his services and sufferings on behalf of the Borough, and mankind generally, were intermixed with other topics more or less relevant to the occasion. Twice he vociferously declared (by -) "he would be hanged", twice that he would be "drownded", and once, that he would "throw himself i' the fire" rather than the chief supporter of Mr. Grenfell should override the Borough. Like Acland he advocated the return of Mr. Hope in preference to Mr. Grenfell".[1]

Robinson was clearly a 'character' and attracted attention, though perhaps not serious consideration, for that reason; but he was the tip of an iceberg. The North Staffordshire Temperance Association had powerful supporters and Liberal Party leaders were too wise to seek their alienation.

The tactic used by the Liberal leaders to obviate criticism of their action in rushing Grenfell to Stoke-on-Trent, having been advised by the Party Whip of his worthiness no doubt,[2] was to use the majority vote in his favour secured at the meeting on 25th August. The Chief Bailiff of Longton, William Bateman, afterwards referred to this meeting as a "Council",[3] and spoke of the obligation he felt to abide by the majority decision reached, despite having been Chairman of the Longton Committee for Pope in 1859 and still inclined in his favour. William Brownfield Chairman of the meetings of leaders, took to calling these gatherings 'councils', and clearly regarded their function as that of legitimising

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1. ibid., September 20, p8.

2. Sentinel. 1862, September 2, p6 - Acland referred to Grenfell as a Government nominee.

3. ibid., September 20, p8.

the claim of candidates to official status as Party nominees.[1] The uncertain position was, however, reflected in the county newspaper when it reported:-

> "Mr. Grenfell comes before the electors as the accepted [candidate] of the recognised Liberal "council" of the borough ....."[2]

The title given to the body authorising Grenfell's candidature was clearly a new one, and of uncertain meaning.

The theoretical defence of Brownfield's assertion was that the Council represented the Party. No such defence was advanced in the press during this campaign, though Brownfield described the membership of the Council as being the several committees at work in the six towns on behalf of Grenfell.[3] This account of the composition of the Council did not explain the membership of the meeting on 25th August, about which all that can be said with certainty is that forty nine persons took part in voting. The supposition, therefore, must be that the meeting on 25 August was of all those who were strong enough to assert their right to participate in a Party conclave, with no rules governing membership, only the conventions of a generation of political activity. The key to the situation might well have been that ruefully explained by Pope as the reason he was not chosen, when he was reported as saying that

> "if he had been brought forward by the half dozen gentlemen at Hanley - the half dozen gentlemen who were seeking to hold the reins held by the late Mr. Ridgway - he should probably have been elected...."[4]

The death of J.L. Ricardo probably caught the Liberal Party unprepared for an election, disadvantaged by the lack of a clear outcome to the local problem of who was to rule the organisation in Ridgway's place. In that situation power had to go into commission and the striking fact of the first

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1. Sentinel. 1862, September 13, p8.
2. Advertiser. 1862, September 6, p5.
3. Sentinel. 1862, September 13, p8
4. ibid., 1862, September 13, p7.

attempt to arrange this - no doubt by the half dozen gentlemen in Hanley with Brownfield prominent among them - was that seventeen determined Pope supporters gained entry to the assembly. This proportion of the whole bore a striking resemblance to the proportion of voters who made a mark for Pope in the 1859 election. It must have been a very uncomfortable fact for the industrial leaders of the Party to swallow, that up to one third of the group associated with them in leadership preferred a radical lawyer and determined temperance advocate to a commercial candidate, sound, but not adventurous, on the main questions of the day. In the end the industrialists had their way, and Grenfell was elected, but they must have found Samuel Pope's parting shot a disturbing one. Against the background of the emergence of a Council to legitimise official candidates, not declared to be representative of the Party, but theoretically defensible only if it became so, Pope wrote to his friends

> "I do very respectfully urge you not to allow your present experience to be lost. An active and complete organisation worked out between this time and the General Election next year would enable you so to assert your rights in the Liberal Party as to be irresistible ..."[1]

Advice of this kind was not easy to practise. It required a special kind of single minded determination on the part of a few to create political machinery within the constituency capable of challenging the entrenched position of the chief employers in the district. Pope was quite clear that, in his view, intimidation of voters was threatened in 1862, and much courage was needed to overcome it in the future. Giving this advice to an essentially non-political movement - the Temperance Movement - was also something of a waste. The moral reclamation of working men was the common ground on which temperance supporters met; tactical manoeuvering

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1. Sentinel. 1862, September 13, p1.

inside a political party was more likely to promote divisions among them, for the immediate result of this included the advancement of radical courses not necessarily desired by all. This was the case if Samuel Pope remained the candidate, for whose benefit the party manoeuvres were undertaken. Those supporters of Pope who saw him first and foremost as an advocate of the ballot box and franchise extensions, and who accepted the "Permissive Bill" as the unfortunate price of having such a candidate, were not likely to be happy until they had forced the Liberal Party to accept their man. They would go on fighting for Pope through thick and thin. Others, upset by machinations within the Liberal Party for a more popular method of selecting candidates, and open to the conviction that some other candidate could advocate reform in the temperance field without alienating the manufacturing group, were likely to drop Pope and take up the other man.

In 1864 the steel of Pope's friends was tested. A General Election seemed imminent, and, taking advantage of a visit by Pope to Hanley in connection with the opening of a Working Men's Club there, his friends secured from him a pledge that this time he would go to a poll whatever happened.[1] About the same time, according to Pope, the Liberal leaders made a move to reconvene the Liberal Council.[2] For a short time this conjunction of events promoted a certain discord in the party, to judge from letters to the local Press.[3] Nothing came to a head until April, 1864 when W.T. Copeland announced that he would not contest the next election for the Conservatives, being now too old, and A.J.B. Beresford Hope claimed to have Copeland's support to take his place.[4] There immediately

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1. Sentinel. 1864,March 5th,p4 : March 19,p8.
2. ibid.,
3. ibid., March 26,p8 : April 2,p7.
4. ibid.,April 23,p1.

followed a meeting of a "General Liberal Council" on the 29 April at the Railway Hotel, Stoke-upon-Trent.[1] William Brownfield, from the chair, explained that the purpose of the meeting was to select a second Liberal to stand with their successful candidate in 1862, H.R. Grenfell. Two men had been invited to speak, between whomthe meeting was to choose. Since one immediately spoke of his poor health and unwillingness to stand, the other was chosen. This was H.W. Schneider.[2]

The smoothness with which Schneider was adopted for the second seat, leaving no room on the "official" platform for Pope, brought protests from the latter, but no action from his friends.[3] On the whole they took the line that Schneider could hardly have been unaware of Pope's prior claim to be already in the field, and that his conduct was ungentlemanly to say the least. All the indications were, in fact, that Pope's friends had made no impression on the control exercised by the oligarchy of manufacturers through the Council. A repetition of these events in 1865 proved the same conclusion, but did prompt some fresh activity on the part of Pope's allies, which they had declined to take in 1864.

In February 1865 Schneider announced that he proposed to exchange Stoke-on-Trent for Lancaster, where no candidates of the temperance brigade were likely to counter-balance his business investments in the town. On the day on which he dated his published letter of resignation - Saturday 11 February - the Stoke-on-Trent Council met.[4]

> "to take into consideration the altered circumstances in which Mr. Schneider has been placed".[5]

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1. ibid., April 3o, p4.
2. Henry William Schneider 1817-1887 : founder of steel works at Barrow and Director of shipbuilding Company there. M.P. for Norwich 1857-60 and Lancaster 1865-6, but unseated at both after petition alleging misconduct.
3. Sentinel. 1864, May 7, p1:p8.
4. ibid., 1865, February 18, p1.
5. Melly Papers.X.2555. - J. Macintyre to G. Melly, 1865, February 11.

Once again, as on the occasion of Ricardo's death in 1862, the Liberal leaders were in a situation in which very speedy action was called for if the claims of Samuel Pope and his friends were not to intrude upon the intentions of the ruling group. One member of the group was deputed to write to George Melly,[1] a merchant and ship owner of Liverpool, and James Macintyre, taking his duties seriously, reported the meeting to Melly with some interesting detail.

> "Mr. Bodley - one of the Council - who had been written to by a friend of yours - spoke highly in favour of "a L'pool merchant" who was desirous of contesting the Borough, when I at once alluded to the interview I had with you some months ago and asked (of course without alluding to your note [of yesterday]) if it was Mr. Geo. Melly. The answer - after some hesitation - being in the affirmative a discussion at once took place."[2]

Macintyre wrote to Melly's address in London, and to Liverpool, inviting him to Stoke-on-Trent straightaway and added

> "In any case - <u>as not an hour is to be lost</u> - I shall run down to L'pool by the train ... in the hope of finding you at home"

This frenzy of activity brought George Melly to the Potteries for the second Council meeting two days after the first, and secured his services for Stoke-on-Trent as a Liberal candidate. On the 14 February he wrote his Address to the Electors, met a general gathering of Liberals within the following two days and on Saturday, 18 February, saw the first public report of all these activities in the local newspaper.

The rapidity with which Schneider was replaced by George Melly, and the methods used to effect the change, reawakened the dormant controversy.

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1. George Melly 1830-1894 : Son of Andre Melly a Liverpool Merchant. He was educated at Rugby and joined the family firm of Melly, Forget & Co. He was involved in Liverpool politics and administration, serving as a J.P. and on the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. In 1862 he stood for Parliament at Preston but failed. From 1868 to 1875 he was M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent, but retired to care for his business when family problems developed in 1875.

2. Melly Papers. X. 2555. - J. Macintyre to G. Melly, 1865, February 11.

No clearer evidence could have been given by the Party managers of their desire to avoid being forced to adopt Samuel Pope. For the second time the Council had been used to find a candidate and to give him the seal of "official" approval without any opportunity being given for anyone else to invite consideration. No one other than Melly appeared before the Council on this occasion, and, as in 1864, no publicity was given to any discussion which might have been held in the Council as to the possibility of accepting Pope - not even for the second seat, which was, after all, the one under consideration. Pope was just not acceptable.

A defence of the Council's action was published in the Staffordshire Sentinel , which, with some reason, considered itself the official organ of the Party. It stated facts not made public in earlier issues and used them to prove the enlightened state of the Party's management group. The Liberal Council, it said,

> "Consists of representative electors from each of the eight districts, and was not long since elected to insure if possible, cohesiveness and unity of action in the great Liberal Party, and to guard the borough against the intrusions of political adventurers ..."[1]

This defence, however, contained a contradiction. For the first time the leading Liberals were claiming that their decisions were reached after consulting the wishes of the party members through the election of "representative electors". No such claim had been made during the Schneider affair in 1864. However, the purpose of holding the elections in eight districts and creating a Council was "to guard the borough against the intrusions of political adventurers". The purpose was inconsistent with the means, for "representative electors", if truly so, might have favoured supporting a "political adventurer". Moreover, in the

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1. Sentinel. 1865, February 25, p4.

circumstances, that phrase could only refer to Samuel Pope, for no other person had any declared interest in standing for the Borough seat.

It is scarcely surprising that Pope's supporters sprang into immediate action, with meetings in the week following Melly's adoption, and that they were highly sceptical of the representative nature of the Council. At one of Melly's meetings, in Hanley, a certain George Mills moved a vote of confidence in Pope as an amendment to that for Melly, observing that

> "It appeared to him that there were more Councils than one in that Borough".[1]

At the same meeting another interrupter put the affair in a different light

> "A person at the back of the room said that Mr. Brownfield was the head of the Liberal Council, and he wished to ask him if it was not an understanding at the last election when Mr. Pope withdrew, that the second Liberal candidate should be chosen by a meeting of the largest number of electors that could be got together."[2]

A witty letter to the Staffordshire Sentinel later in the year expressed the view that the Council contained

> "Self chosen nominators, whose nominees we, forsooth, must cheerfully support".[3]

The serious consequence of these actions was that the friends of Samuel Pope resolved to fight strenuously on his behalf at the next election. At meetings on the 20th and 21st of February, 1865, they declared that

> "steps should be taken to reorganise the Council and committees, and to resume active operations in view of the coming campaign".[4]

It was not clear whether the Council they proposed to reorganise was the Liberal Council or one in the Temperance movement, but the dangers of deep division in Liberal ranks were only too clear, and worried George Melly from the first.

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1. Sentinel. 1865, February 25th, p8.
2. ibid.,- Brownfield rejected this view, though he admitted that individuals might have favoured the proposal at the time.
3. Sentinel. 1865, June 10, p7.
4. Sentinel. 1865, February 25, p4.

There was no mistaking the fact that the Liberal Council was an important institution involved in electoral affairs in Stoke Borough by February, 1865. That it was meant as a device for creating unity in the Party is equally clear. Its responsibility lay in performing one task, and one task only - that of selecting the 'official' candidates for the Borough seats. It was not meant to replace the informal meetings of "leading Liberals" as the executive body in general party affairs, nor was it a substitute for the organising committees conducting the election campaign for each candidate. Having announced its decisions it ceased to have a function until one of the candidates withdrew, or threatened to do so. The consequence was that its importance looked severely limited. Its usefulness, however, as a means of creating that unity of purpose in the Party necessary to effect the election of two Liberal members in a Borough traditionally accepting only one, was such that various groups within the Party saw the advantage of being substantially represented on it. The most effective group in 1865 was undoubtedly that of the supporters of Temperance, and its activities had considerable influence on the developments which followed George Melly's adoption by the Liberal Council.

At first, the Temperance men were much more enthusiastic about working for the election of Samuel Pope in defiance of the Liberal Council, than they were for transforming the Council itself into an institution more amenable to their wishes. This was an attractive course, for success would have quite undermined the Council and the Liberal Party managers. Pope was encouraged to believe that he had considerable support in the Potteries, and a campaign denigrating the Liberal council, as subject to the dictatorial wishes of a few, was waged to devalue the 'official' nature

of the approval given to George Melly.[1] Melly counter-attacked this campaign by engaging in a private correspondence with Pope's Manchester backers (chiefly the Reverend A. Steinthal)[2] to show that no worthwhile support existed for Pope in Stoke-on-Trent. Though he was sufficiently successful in this to convince Steinthal and to worry Pope himself, the real size of the threat posed by the Temperance group remained unmeasured, and therefore potent. Early in April, Steinthal replied to Melly, after a visit from him:-

> "I saw Pope, and we went through the paper you left in my hands, comparing it with the statement he had received from the various towns. He agrees with me that the return makes his prospects less hopeful than he had conceived. He writes to his agent to have all the papers that still are out, called in, and he will go over as soon as he can, certainly not later than Monday and will keep the pledge I gave you of comparing the lists with the poll book.
>
> Of course this makes the probability of his retiring greater than it was ...."[3]

Some days later, Steinthal wrote again.

> "The plain state of things is this, that he and with him our Alliance folks cannot go into fight and lose. We shall contest Stoke if when the books which are now out show when they come in a certainty of success. As far as they are gone through they look healthy in so far as that a good number of liberal votes are promised to us. I will, however, be quite candid, if the canvass for the requisition were finished and showed more strength than it does today we should withdraw, but our friends have not finished, ask another fortnight's delay, have worked hard for Pope, and go through fire and water for him, that it is impossible not to grant them their request. Mr. Pope however begs me to assure you that if

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1. Melly Papers.X.2565.- letter from William Woodall to George Melly, 1865, April 5th. "It is clear that the impression on Mr. Steinthal's mind is that Mr. Brownfield, Mr. Macintyre and some third person, are the Dictators of the Liberal party at Stoke, their personal prejudice alone standing in the way of Mr. Pope's adoption. Mr. Pope either believes or affects to believe, this and the weak but well meant letter in Saturday's Sentinel will seem to strengthen that view. The idea however is, as you must have seen, utterly fallacious".

2. Rev. A. Steinthal 1826-1910 : son of a German settled in Manchester by 1809. After being apprenticed as an engineer he entered the ministry becoming a Unitarian, and in 1846 a teetotaler. He settled in Manchester after 1864.

3. Melly Papers.X.2451.- A. Steinthal to G.Melly 1865,April 5th.

> they do not show him the certainty of success he does not stand .....
>
> I still believe most confidently that Pope will not receive even in the coming fortnight that promise of support which will justify his standing ....."[1]

Another correspondent relayed to Melly some second-hand information he had collected on the number of pledges given to Pope

> "Mr. Pope met his supporters at Stoke. Four attended! He called for the written pledges and saw what purported to be the signatures of between 500 and 600 voters.
> ..... Mr. Pope then appears to have expressed a wish to retire. His friends urged him to reconsider the matter and he agreed to give them an answer in 48 hours ....." [2]

Pope tried one last manoeuvre. He wrote directly to Melly inviting him to join in a preliminary contest, in which all Liberal voters would be asked to chose between Melly and Pope by returning a postal address sent out to all by the two candidates. This well-known device Melly promptly rejected.[3]

The anxiety of Melly and leading Liberals, inside and outside Stoke-on-Trent, concerning the threat posed by the 'Popeite' group to the chances of the Liberals winning both seats, had been manifest in other ways from the very start, and Pope was too wise a tactician to withdraw immediately. The possibility of being appointed Recorder of Bolton had been dangled before him on the clear understanding that this would make it impossible for him to stand for Parliament in the Potteries. Melly had been told of this potential bargain in March, but was naturally most concerned in

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1. Melly Papers. X. 2454. - A. Steinthal to G. Melly 1865, April 12th.
2. Melly Papers. X. 2566. - letter of William Woodall to G. Melly 1865, April 15th.
3. Melly Papers. X. 2467. - letter of S. Pope to G. Melly 1865, April 14th and Melly's reply contained in a copy - X. 2463, 1865, April 21st. In this Melly said, "when you say that I was invited to stand for Stoke-on-Trent "by several of the leaders of the Liberal party" you understate the fact, the Liberal Council, appointed by, and fairly representing the great body of electors, formally invited me to contest the borough....."

the weeks that followed to see it kept secret. Nothing came of this, but it probably served to undermine still further Pope's position. Any suspicion among his friends at Stoke-on-Trent that he was about to sell out would hardly do his cause good, and could not win him more support. Edward Challinor, Secretary to the Liberal Council, and regular correspondent with Melly in this period, clearly did not know all, but reported significant items.

> "In my opinion, Pope does not mean to stand. Something or other is preventing him from saying that he will go to the Poll and from issuing an Address. ---- Is it the Recordership of Bolton that affects him? I am told it has been, in a manner, promised to him, conditional on his leaving Stoke."[1]

Within two weeks Challinor reported directly to Melly that Pope's organization in Stoke-on-Trent was weakening. Pope's secretary there, he said was

> "an active young man, who has become disgusted with the shabby way in which he has been treated, has resigned, and <u>come over to us.</u> I shall give him a small retaining fee, as he will be useful."[2]

Since the mere offer of the Recordership did not induce Pope to withdraw, and the appointment was in fact given elsewhere, another trick was employed. The origin of this was more obscure, but the essence was discussed in a letter Steinthal wrote to Melly on the 7th May, 1865

> "I do wish he [ie. Pope] could have been asked for some other borough by the party it would have solved the difficulty at once. I may

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1. Melly Papers. X. 2461, 2462. E. Challinor to H.R. Grenfell 1865, April 27.

2. <u>ibid.</u>, 2510. E. Challinor to G. Melly 1865, May 5.
and 2514. E. Challinor to G. Melly 1865, June 5, the man was named as James Bebbington.

James Bebbington : a printer, bookseller and newsagent of Hanley. In 1859 and 1862 he had published Poll Books for recent elections, the first apparently designed to allow temperance supporters to take revenge on shopkeepers whose political opinions they opposed. In 1871 he became a Councillor in Hanley and in 1873 began a four year stint on Hanley School Board. He was most anxious to make a fortune and to climb the social and political scale in the Potteries and was by no means popular.

> tell you that I am working at this idea and not quite without hopes of success. Of course you know that I shall not fail as far as I can do to help your cause; if I can do so with justice to the Alliance." [1]

The other seat which Pope was induced to consider turned out to be Bolton! On the 20th June Steinthal wrote to Melly that Pope was being considered by a selection committee at Bolton.

> "and even now the balance is not decided by leaning one way or the other. Stoke still promises well and Pope cannot withdraw without reasons that will satisfy others beside you, who I dare say would not be very critical about the grounds of his retiring ...." [2]

This was the end of Pope's relationship with Stoke-on-Trent in 1865, however, for he was accepted at Bolton. This left the way open for Melly to try to heal the breach in the Stoke-on-Trent Liberal Party by coming to terms with Pope's saddened supporters. William Woodall[3] a consistent commentator on local political affairs in letters to Melly, wrote on the 28th June,

> "I have consulted a few friends about the Breakfast meeting. They approve it, but all agree that Mr. Pope's authoritative announcement of his retirement - about which his friends are very incredulous - must be published before we can do anything. Please let me know the instant this arrives and I will fix the earliest possible morning after I know it" [4]

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1. Melly Papers. X. 2456. A. Steinthal to G. Melly 1865, May 7.
2. ibid., 2457. 1865, June 20.
3. William Woodall 1832-1901 : born in Shrewsbury. Educated in Liverpool, he moved to Burselm about 1857 as Manager of Gas Works. He married the daughter of James Macintyre and thus gained control eventually of the Washington Pottery. Woodall made his reputation in Burslem be securing the establishment of the Wedgwood Institute there and then inherited his father-in-law's political influence becoming Chief Bailiff of Burslem and the first Chairman of the School Board. From 1880 to 1885 he was M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent and 1885-1900 M.P. for Hanley. He was on two Royal Commissions on Education and held minor Government posts in Gladstone's later administrations. He warmly supported the disestablishment of the Church, Home Rule, the exclusion of the franchise to Women and the local veto, writing frequently in numerous journals on these and other topics.
4. Pope did not publish a letter or notice of retirement in the Press, but it is significant that, on him being selected at Bolton, Melly and Grenfell immediately issued their official addresses to the Stoke-on-Trent electors, (Sentinel. 1865, July 1st, p1).

He went on to advise Melly on his future conduct:- talk, he said,

> "a little innocent Sabbatarianism. A great lot of people made a vow to support no candidate who would not aid the closing of public houses on Sunday and possibly it may be worth your while"[1]

Pope's withdrawal once more from Stoke-on-Trent left his followers and friends without a policy. Their whole effort had been directed at securing his election against the Liberal Council. Now they found their candidate had given way to the man proposed by that Council. Inevitably they met to consider their position. Inevitably Melly's friends and the local Liberal newspaper urged them to support Grenfell and Melly as a pair, without splitting votes between Grenfell and Hope, the Conservative.[2] A delegation from the Conservative Party attended a Temperance group meeting to advise precisely upon this latter course of action. The decision of the group, however, was to change their whole approach so as to achieve some change in the Liberal Council, whereby they presumably hoped to salvage something from the wreck of their efforts by securing a voice on that Council in the future. They passed a resolution for the Liberal Council to consider:-

> "That in the event of an election in -- Stoke-- notice by circular shall be given to each known Liberal elector and a meeting be called from which the Liberal Council shall be selected, and the candidates chosen by a majority of that Council. That the functions of the Liberal Council shall terminate at the close of each election.[3]

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1. Melly Papers. X.2571. - W. Woodall to George Melly 1865, June 28th.

2. Sentinel. 1865, July 1st, p5. - article advocating that Temperance men support Grenfell and Melly.

3. ibid., 1865, July 1st, p5. - article on negotiations between Pope's friends and the Liberal Council.

The newspaper report containing this resolution goes on:-

> "The resolution was taken into consideration by the Liberal Council on the following morning, and Mr. Challinor replied on their behalf, stating that the resolution was completely in accordance with the views of the supporters of Messrs Grenfell and Melly, and that the Hanley Committee unanimously adhered to the proposal."

The conclusion to be drawn from the events of the 1865 General Election, with regard to the Liberal Council, seems to be that, though it was well established as a body with a limited, if vital, function, it had been under very considerable pressure because of its susceptibility to directions from old-established party managers. It could only hope to command support for the candidates it selected in the future if it was seen to be constituted more closely in line with the theory of popular election, with which it had defended itself in 1865, than with the practice which had prevailed in its creation in 1864/5. This change in electoral procedure was entirely the consequence of the powerful threat exerted by the Temperance movement in the Borough upon the chances of returning two Liberal members.

The reality of this threat had never been in doubt, and was conclusively proved at the poll in July, 1865.[1] Even though ostensibly reunited with the main body of the Party, many temperance men clearly felt cheated and voted for Hope and Grenfell, not the two Liberals together. Motives for this were mixed, but the element of resentment at the conduct of the Liberal Council was admitted. Steinthal wrote to Melly afterwards:-

> "That spite against the Liberal Council had much to do with the result I have no doubt - but that was not all ...."[2]

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1. Melly Papers. X. 2504. - Edward Challinor to G. Melly 1865, March 22:- speaking of Pope's success, Challinor said that it must not be supposed that "he has the shadow of a chance, even if he coalesced with Hope, of which I believe him to be quite capable ---- He may possibly succeed, if he goes to the Poll (but I don't believe he will) in throwing out a second Liberal, but that is the extent of the benefit he can confer on the cause of which he calls himself an apostle ---".

2. Melly Papers. X. 2459. - A. Steinthal to G. Melly 1865, September 30th.

He went on to blame Melly for his own defeat by first uniting with Grenfell to the extent that he promised to reject offers of votes cast on the split 'Melly and Hope', and secondly by an insufficiently strong advocacy of the Temperance Movement's current support for the Permissive Bill. Steinthal admitted in another letter, however, that onee Pope had withdrawn, the headquarters of the United Kingdom Alliance ceased to have any control over the actions of its local supporters and they went their own way to seek vengeance.[1]

When the Liberal Council negotiated with the Temperance group at the end of June 1865, and accepted the resolution regarding the manner in which future Councils should be created, the extent of the group's power was not precisely known. It was not lost on George Melly, however, that if he ever wanted to seek election again at Stoke-on-Trent the Temperance voters there had to be conciliated and won over. The urgency of this was driven home by the election result, and Melly thus became a supporter of the move to reorganise the Liberal Council. In terms of Party development this promised reorganisation was the most important consequence of the 1865 contest for the Borough of Stoke-on-Trent.[2].

1. Melly Papers. X. 2460. - A. Steinthal to G. Melly 1865 (no date)

2. ibid., 2490. - E. Challinor to G. Melly 1865, October 11th., reported the last meeting of the old Council, writing "The Council meeting last night was a very nice one - every town was well represented ---. The new Council is to be organised on the broadest basis, quite to your satisfaction."

PART III

The reorganised Liberal Council 1865-8

The focus of unity for the Liberal Party in the Borough of Stoke-on-Trent was the Parliamentary candidate. The occasion when that unity was most in peril was at the time of his selection. The agreement of June 1865, however, created a new, and almost equally fragile, moment in the affairs of the Party - the election of a Council to select the candidate. In the Autumn of 1865 it seemed reasonable not to rush into such an event, for a Parliamentary contest was not expected for some time. Meanwhile, three factors arose each affecting the operation of the reorganised Council. The first two entirely local, but the third, the rising tide of nation-wide demands for Parliamentary reform, threatened to bring a General Election at any time, and counter-balanced the weight of local influences which inclined to a deferment of a Council election.

The first factor sprang from the conduct of Party managers during and immediately following the 1865 campaign, and was the continued association of George Melly with the Borough necessitated by a wrangle over election costs. These were not only unexpectedly heavy, but especially repugnant to Melly, for a large element of them was concerned with payment for the excessive drinking alleged to have taken place. Treating electors was not an uncommon aspect of polling days, but the Stoke-on-Trent contest of 1865 was worse than many, to judge by the local standard.

Melly could scarcely have been blamed if he had wanted to leave Stoke-on-Trent altogether following his defeat. Even if he had entertained such ideas, however, circumstances prevented him. Although he had once nursed and fought the Preston constituency, and should have had experience of financial problems at election time, his arrangements with Grenfell over the sharing of costs seem to have been of the flimsiest. A long and complex wrangle over their separate and joint responsibilities continued to exercise Edward Challinor until November of 1866. The central issue of this was a huge bill for expenses in Longton claimed by Alfred Glover,

who had disbursed much money there on behalf of the Liberal candidates, as their local agent. He was, however, by business a brewer, and though a leading Liberal and son of the first Mayor of Longton, newly incorporated in 1865, suspicion of the legitimacy of his financial claim worried George Melly and others. The whole problem was compounded by the fact that Edward Challinor had a legal obligation to record the full election expenses of his candidates and account for these to the Returning Officer. This he had done on 30th September, 1865, stating that £3,125.15.2½d was their sum.[1] He must have known of the outstanding claims even at that point, but the £2,150 of Glover's claim was not discussed until afterwards. The simple fact was that Grenfell refused to pay more than £2,000, and was very slow to pay even that, with the remainder charged to George Melly on the basis that their original agreement had so stipulated.[2] Melly wrote to Challinor in November, 1865,

> "I understood at the first meeting of the Council which I attended that £4,000 would probably cover our joint expenses. At a later date I prepared myself for £6,000, of which £4,000 fall upon me ---- it is a very bitter mortification to me to find that the 280 Longton voters who voted for me should have cost £2,150 (if Mr. Glover's claim is correct) and still more that though I am certain to pay some £5,000 I shall still be open to unpleasant correspondence"[3]

The upshot of Melly's refusal to pay Glover, while dribbling out further sums to others who continued to make smaller claims - so Challinor continually reported - was that Glover started a Court action. At this point Melly carried out an earlier threat to lay the whole matter before the leaders of the party to obtain their advice, though not to bind himself to acting on it. The meeting took place in Edward Challinor's office, in

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1. Melly Papers. X.2486. - Edw. Challinor to G. Melly 1865, September 30th stating that accounts were sent off that day.

2. Melly Papers. X.2410. - copy of letter from G. Melly to H.R. Grenfell, 1866, November 9th.

3. Melly Papers. X.2502 - copy of letter from G. Melly to Edw. Challinor 1865, November 6th.

November 1866, under the threat of Glover's court action, which named Melly and Grenfell as being jointly responsible for the debt. At this, Melly agreed to pay £900 to close the matter so as to prevent, as the resolution passed at the meeting stated,

> "an exposure which might bring discredit upon the Boro".[1]

The affair of the election expenses tied Melly to Stoke-on-Trent in a complex fashion. The drawn-out nature of the problem kept him in touch with local leaders longer than he may have wanted; the money he continually distributed through Edward Challinor, against claims entered long after the official returns were made, increased his financial investment in the Borough; and the feeling grew that the constituency owed Melly a 'safe run' at the seat next time. This last point arose alongside a growing disillusion with Grenfell, whose financial obduracy and political weakness made him appear less and less like a suitable candidate for an industrial area. Whatever might happen to Grenfell, however, the fact was that any new Council was likely to be faced with the impossibility of rejecting Melly and could hardly be seen as making a free choice of candidates.

The second local factor impinging on the election and work of a new Council was the unhappy state of the Party in Longton, disaffection there arising partly out of the protracted conflict over election expenses. Edward Challinor reported to Melly, for example,

> "Your testimonial stands over simply because we have not yet elected the members for the Liberal Council. That has stood over chiefly on account of Longton not being in a proper frame of mind. When the members are elected (which shall be done as soon as I am quite well) then your Testimonial will be actively pushed forward."[2]

There was more to this reluctance to hold Council elections than simply the wounded pockets of Longton voters. Samuel Pope's brief flirtation with

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1. Melly Papers.XI. 2658. 1866, November 5th : also X.2541 - 3, 2550, 2410, being letters from E. Challinor to G. Melly, and from G. Melly to H.R. Grenfell.

2. Melly Papers.X.2513. E.Challinor to G. Melly 1866,January 30.

Bolton had come to nothing, and it was easy to see in the changing political atmosphere of 1866 that a Reform Act might well enhance his chances in the Borough, for his popularity lay precisely among that section of the working classes most likely to be enfranchised. Liberal leaders did not want to commit themselves to candidates before they knew the electoral conditions under which they would have to fight. Nevertheless when Council elections were held it was noticeable that Longton's delegation was chosen six months after Hanley moved in the matter, so that the full Council was not known until February 1867.

The third factor affecting the reorganised Liberal Council was the greatly reinvigorated demand for a new Reform Bill, which affected the Potteries district just as it influenced other industrial areas. As an issue in politics the franchise had never died; as a national obsession it had last been paraded by the Chartists. In the mid-1860's the Liberal Party stood fair to gain a structured organisation from the twin associations of Reform Union and Reform League launched to fight for Parliamentary reform. Hitherto the constituency Party had survived from election to election with the minimum of organisation, having but a tenuous existence recognised only when individuals gave a lead on some ephemeral issue. The foundation of branches of the Reform Union in the Potteries in 1865 gave promise of more continuous and lively political activity and of meeting places for the regular association of Liberals from a wide cross-section of society.

The National Reform Union, with headquarters in Manchester, and the National Reform League, based in London, advocated different policies on the question of the best form of electoral qualifications a Liberal Government should sanction. The Union appealed mainly to existing voters by seeking to extend the franchise on the household suffrage principle, but the League was more radical in wanting a limited version of manhood suffrage, and was more closely associated with the working classes. The Union

enjoyed a number of advantages when doing missionary work in the provinces, and found it easier to establish active branches in the Potteries than did the League. A Union branch existed in Burslem by June 1865, or by November at the latest, and by September of the following year others were in operation in Hanley, Longton and Stoke-upon-Trent.[1] The Rev. W. Bonner, a well-known itinerant speaker for the Reform League, visited the Pottery towns in August 1866 to form branches of his association, but any success he had was not given wide publicity.[2] Three Reform League branches in the Potteries were listed in 1868 by George Howell, the Reform League Secretary,[3] but their activities were smothered and discounted by the leaders of the Union. It was even claimed that the League's supporters were in no way responsible for the great demonstration held in September 1866 at which Party leaders pledged themselves to be in favour of Parliamentary reform.[4]

The existing oligarchy, already dominant in the Liberal Party, controlled the Reform Unions set up in all the Pottery towns except Tunstall.[5] These Unions were not exclusive bodies and workingmen belonged to both League and

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1. Sentinel. 1865, June 17, p5 : 1866, November 17, p8.

2. ibid., 1866, August 11, p4 : 25th, p4-5.
and Staffordshire Times and Newcastle Pioneer. 1866, August 18, p2.

3. G.Howell Collection. Election Reports 1868.
George Howell 1833-1910 : son of a building tradesman. He followed his father as an itinerant Craftsman working much in London 1854-9. He was involved in the London builders' strike as an official of the Operative Bricklayers' Society; on the London Trades Council, and from these organisations he moved into others for political reform. 1865 he was elected Secretary of the Reform League and was much involved in election work in 1868. He was secretary to numerous other workingmen's organisations, earned a living later in life as a journalist and 1885-95 was M.P. for North East Bethnal Green. He wrote Labour Legislation, Labour Movements and Labour Leaders (1902).

4. Sentinel. 1866, September 22, p7 - letter from James Bebbington.

5. ibid., November 17, p8 - for an account of the first annual general meeting of the Burslem branch of the Reform Union. James Macintyre was chairman, William Woodall, Secretary, and numerous other leading manufacturers of the Local Board of Health were present.

Union in some cases. Nevertheless those workingmen who expected enfranchisement under a Reform Bill were not to be found among speakers and platform parties at public meetings held by the Union, though the whole purpose of Union work was to extend voting rights to a new section of the population. It was clearly not intended, however, that Unions should be the means whereby the traditional Party power structure could be changed. Rather the Party managers seized this opportunity to arrange to meet the obligations laid on them by their agreement in June 1865 with the Temperance group, by using the Unions as though they coincided with the Liberal Party. To the extent that this gave the Liberal Party in the constituency a regular organisation such as had not existed before it could be considered a small advance in Party development. But as it was simply a way of ensuring that the industrial masters of the Party carried out their promise to hold elections for Liberal Council members without putting their own position at risk, it was little more than confirmation that nothing had changed.

One aspect of the revival of the campaign for Parliamentary reform was that it put pressure on constituency Liberal Parties to prepare for a new General Election. In Stoke-on-Trent local factors tended to slow down the preparations, yet part of the Borough was aware of the need to be ready. Hanley elected its representatives to the Liberal Council in July 1866, in the week following the resignation of Lord John Russell's ministry signifying the end of a Liberal opportunity to pass a Reform Bill.[1] Longton witnessed huge public meetings of protest against those who had destroyed Russell's government, but Liberals there did nothing towards electing the Council until the following February.[2] Burslem, too, was rather slow, electing its quota for the Council in December 1866.

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1. Melly Papers. X. 2535. E. Challinor to G. Melly 1866, July 6.
   also Sentinel. 1866, July 7, p4.

2. Melly Papers. XII. 2945. E. Challinor to G. Melly 1867, February 11.
   also Sentinel. 1867, February 9, p5.

The most interesting aspects of these elections reflected further advances in party organisation than had hitherto been revealed. The press report of the Hanley meeting to elect members of the Council said:-

> "Captain Roden was elected to preside. In opening the meeting the chairman stated that it was understood that one per cent of the electors would be chosen in each town; so that for the 1000 voters in Hanley ten representatives had to be elected -----"[1]

No indication of the size of the meeting was reported, but "every known Liberal was invited by circular to attend". At the Burslem election in December William Woodall presided and non-electors were there. "The ballot was agreed upon as the mode of election", said the press report, this being the first indication of such a procedure in election matters in the Potteries.[2]

Altogether twenty three gentlemen[3] were sent to the Liberal Council from these three towns (Hanley ten, Burslem seven, Longton six) and if Roden stated the case correctly thirty two or three should have been elected altogether.[4] The "eight districts", said to have been used to produce the Council of 1865, would seem to have been replaced by "towns" - almost certainly *five in number, not six.*

The reorganization of the Liberal Council, however, did not produce a significant change in the type of person on it, despite the increase in size. Though in form it might have looked more democratic, with its numbers fixed at a percentage of the electorate and ballotting adopted at meetings of the Liberal electors, in practice the composition of the new

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1. Sentinel. 1866, July 7, p4.
   William Sergeant Roden 1829-1882 : son of William Roden and born in Wolverhampton. He was Manager and partner with Earl Granville in the Shelton Bar Iron Works from about 1855 after having a managerial post in a South Welsh iron works. In 1869 he became an honorary colonel in the Shropshire Artillery Volunteers. M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent 1868-74.

2. Sentinel. 1866, December 22, p5.

3. Christopher Dickinson is the only one from other towns who can be identified and he was one of the Stoke-upon-Trent group.

4. Total number of electors on Register 1865 - 3,038. 1868 (by-election) 3,446.

Council, so far as it is known, was not more representative of the Liberal "interests". Of the 24 members identified, 12 were pottery manufacturers,[1] and a thirteenth was partner in the largest iron making concern in the area. The employers were, in fact, very heavily represented. The other 11 members were all in business in one way or another, none obviously of the artizan or managerial classes, but all in the lower ranks of the business community. The greatest single common element found in the Council was participation in local government; of the 24, 18 served as elected representatives on the major local government body in the town from which they came.[2] This group of 18 included 11 employers and 7 of the lesser business men. Of the 6 without local government experience one could not have had it since his town, Stoke-upon-Trent, had no elected body, and another, William Woodall, was clearly kept out by the fact that his father-in-law had not yet deemed it necessary to introduce him to that work. Only Taylor Ashworth, Enoch Palmer, Thomas Bostock and Samuel Carryer[3] were genuinely recruited to the Council from outside the agencies of local government in the Potteries. The last two were important within the Burslem branch of the Reform Union, and if their presence on the Liberal Council was determined by this, there might here be a small indication of the need to recognise the value of the Union within Liberal circles, in Burslem at least. No other supporter of Union or League was admitted to the Council on these grounds alone.[4]

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1. 12 manufacturers includes William Woodall, for he was so closely identified with his father-in-law, James Macintyre, and became his partner in 1868 so that it is impossible not to count him.

2. Hanley and Longton had municipal Corporations in 1866 and Burslem a Local Board of Health.

3. Samuel Carryer was a Councillor in Newcastle-under-Lyme and had local government experience though not inside the Stoke-on-Trent constituency.

4. Bostock chaired the first meeting called to form a Union branch in 1865 (Senti. 1865 June 17, p5) and Carryer represented the branch at a national convention in 1866 (Sentinel. 1866, November 17, p8). Carryer was also a "political and personal friend" of William Woodall's (Melly Papers. XII. 2979. W. Woodall to G. Melly 1867, October 16th).

The predominance of local government politicians on the Liberal Council testifies to the vital part corporations and Boards of Health played as the basis for party organizations. They provided regular meetings at which councillors argued points on plans for change and improvement. There were annual election contests in which rudimentary Ratepayers' Associations and Municipal Associations campaigned for particular candidates. Divisions, based on principles and personalities, were thus reinforced and formalised, and could hardly fail to reapppear when Parliamentary elections and candidates were at issue. Acceptance as the administrators of borough and Local Board areas also brought Councillors to expect equal acceptance as the leaders in Parliamentary campaigns. Many would have agreed with an anonymous correspondent's opinions on the membership of the Liberal Council given to the local press in 1865:-

> "there must be leading men in all towns, and who more fitted than those at the head or holding office in the local government of the various towns".[1]

The Liberal Council formed in 1866-7 followed the agreement made between the Temperance groups and the 1865 Liberal Council. No obvious representation of those Temperance groups was to be found on the new Council, however, just as there was no obvious representation of working men or of ultra-radical opinion. Certain individuals can be identified as likely holders of dissentient opinions - Christopher Dickinson was a former Pope supporter and temperance advocate[2] - but it is not possible to say that they were elected to the Council to advocate these opinions as representatives of sections of the Liberal 'interest'. Since the accepted leaders of

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1. Sentinel, 1865, April 1st, p8. - signed "R", and referring to Brownfield, an Alderman of Hanley, and Macintyre, a long service member of the Burslem Local Board of Health, as eminently suited to their position on the Liberal Council, as were all men in their local government situation.

2. The only other Temperance man who can be identified with certainty was E. Boon, who had nominated Samuel Pope for the election of 1857.

temperance societies, trade unions and radical groups found no place on the Council it seems more than likely that those members of the Council with a tendency towards radicalism were accepted because they were relatively 'safe' men, of good social standing and not too far from the centre of opinion. Whatever hopes Temperance supporters had entertained in 1865 that their agreement with the Liberal Council of that date would lead to greater participation in the choice of candidates at succeeding elections had been dashed. Samuel Pope was no more likely to find favour among the new Council than he had been among the old.

If the piecemeal elections for the Council reflected divisions and uncertainties within the local Party, the fact that it was called together at all early in 1867 reflected political necessity. Nationally events had taken a dramatic turn in February, 1867, when Disraeli and the Conservative Government entered into a scheme for Parliamentary reform. In the long term this would bring a General Election for which preparations would be required. In the short term Liberals in Stoke-on-Trent were much exercised by rumours of a possible by-election consequent upon the sitting Conservative member, Hope, taking a peerage. Some took this to be the reason why the Council held its first meeting on February 28, 1867. Of this meeting a report said:

> " --- a conversation was held on the course which it was desirable the Liberal Party should pursue at the next election. No definite line of action was decided upon, but it was urged by some gentlemen that Mr. George Melly, of Liverpool, had established a sort of claim upon the electors to be the second Liberal candidate, in consequence of the heavy expenditure which he incurred during the last contest ---"[1]

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1. Advertiser, 1867, March 2, p5.

With reference to this report Woodall wrote to Melly, "P.S. I will send you the local paper (Advertiser) in which an awkward report of the Council meeting occurs". - Melly Papers. XII. 2983, W. Woodall to G. Melly 1867, March 2.

The report failed to mention a much deeper reason for anxiety among leading Liberals which was the situation of the sitting member and presumed claimant to the first place on the Liberal platform, H.R.Grenfell. His relations with the constituency had not been of the best and doubt about his future was in itself a sufficient reason for calling the Council together.

Grenfell had not kept the loyalty of some of the most vital members of the ruling oligarchy, and he had upset a section of the constituency and non-electors by his actions on the Parliamentary reform question. The financial dispute following the previous election may well have alienated Brownfield. William Roden was equally not happy with Grenfell's conduct. When Grenfell moved to recoup his fortune in March 1867 by arranging to speak in the Potteries, the Agent, Challinor, commented to Melly that the meeting was called,

> "--- not by anyone in particular, I believe. No one is invited to it - therefore it is only that G [renfell] wishes an opportunity of putting himself right here. Brownfield says he shall not go. Roden is away ---"[2]

After the meeting William Woodall wrote his view of Grenfell's position.

> "Gilman was in the chair. Not one of the leading Liberals - excepting Mr. Macintyre was on the platform and although Mr. Grenfell was Brownfield's guest he was allowed to go to the hall and return from it alone!! --- I feel assured that Mr. Grenfell's position is now the reverse of what it was last week --- and he implied a determination to stick to the Boro reformed or unreformed --- I am not disposed to over-rate the importance of last night's meeting, but I believe it will convince the party that it would be ungrateful and unjust to abandon an honest and consistent Liberal to the mere clamour of prejudice and malice."[2]

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1. Melly Papers. XII. 2948. E.Challinor to G.Melly, 1867, March 1.

2. ibid., XII. 2984. W.Woodall to G.Melly, 1867, March 6.

For the moment Woodall was of the opinion that Grenfell's best ever meeting in Hanley had recovered his status as the senior Liberal candidate in the future. Later that year he was not so sure. Stoke-on-Trent he thought, was "an open Borough with small prejudice in favour of anybody".[1]

George Melly attempted to make the Liberal Council a more active participant in the manoeuvres involved in securing candidates in 1867. He had heard rumours which puzzled him, and he wanted to establish his own position at least. With Edward Challinor's help he tried to get a Council meeting in July, but the Chairman, William Roden, refused to call one, using as an excuse the imminent passing of the Reform Bill.[2] Not wishing to miss any opportunities,and fearing that local intrigue in the Potteries was mounting to a climax, Melly issued an Address "To the Householders of the Parliamentary Borough of Stoke-on-Trent"[3] early in August 1867, staking his claim to one seat irrespective of what happened to the other. Before doing this he was careful to obtain Roden's personal blessing for the move.[4]

Melly was correct in believing that negotiations and conspiracies were afoot in the Potteries to replace Grenfell, and since one root cause of this unrest was the ambition of the Chairman of the Liberal Council, that institution had some small part to play in these affairs. As an institution within the local Party the Council was sufficiently well established, and performed such a vital task, that its Chairman acquired power and status otherwise unobtainable In 1867, the Council had elected William Roden to the chair, even though he was not present at the time.[5] In the 1860 s he had risen through the ranks

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1. ibid., XII. 2987. W.Woodall to G.Melly, 1867, July 8.
2. ibid, XII. 2959. E.Challinor to G.Melly, 1867, July 6.
   also ibid., XII. 2961. E.Challinor to G.Melly, 1867, July 19.
3. Sentinel. 1867, August 10, p1
4. Melly Papers. XIII. 3301. W.Woodall to G.Melly, 1868, January 17.
5. ibid., XII. 2948. E.Challinor to G.Melly, 1867, March 1.

Colonel and Mrs. W.S.Roden.

An undated photograph taken in Scarborough. (Warrillow Collection.)

of local government and on the basis of his position as an employer had gained a position of influence within the Liberal Party. Roden had come from South Wales to be the Managing Partner to Earl Granville in the Shelton Bar Iron Works. Having control over the daily operation of this rapidly expanding blast furnace and foundry business put him at the pinnacle of success among manufacturers in the area, for few could rival the number of his employees or the size of the wage bill he paid each week.[1] He was proud of having served a political apprenticeship as Poor Law Guardian and Hanley Town Councillor, with two years in the mayoral office in the same town. Nevertheless, he and his industry were thought of as secondary to potters and pottery making in the constituency of Stoke-on-Trent. To overcome the bias within the Party favouring pottery interests an ambitious man from outside that group needed to have his hands on the levers of power available within the Party structure. William Roden grasped the opportunity given to him by his election to the chairmanship of the Council.

During 1867 Roden carefully blocked Melly's and Challinor's efforts to call meetings of the Council to discuss the candidate situation, and disguised his real intentions for a while. However, before the end of the year Edward Challinor came to realise what was afoot.

> "The only thing at all like the shadow of a cloud on the horizon, is it is possible that Roden may come. He has not pronounced himself at present, but he seems anxious to make friends. He gave a splendid dinner on his re-election as Mayor --- still he has no influence, except in Hanley. Moreover for a local M.P. a potter would be preferable and more popular than an ironmaster ---"[2]

With this, and other comments on Roden's activities, Challinor kept Melly informed, pointing quite clearly to efforts by Roden to prepare the way for a local man to take one seat. In September 1867 Roden was even talking

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1. Royal Commission on Trade Unions 1868. 5th Report, Q. 10524. Roden gave it in evidence that he employed 3000 men and paid out each week £3000 in wages.

2. Melly Papers. XII. 2965. E. Challinor to G. Melly - undated.

of two members coming from the constituency which did not upset Challinor, though, as he pointed out,

"it may frighten Mr. G[renfell]."[1]

Roden's tactic was to prevent the Liberal Council from meeting to seek a solution to the uncertainty over Grenfell's future and to Melly's determination to be a candidate. Only when he had secured sufficient support to advance his own name publicly did it seem that Roden would invite a Council to assemble. Unhappily for him, circumstances beyond his control played him false. The consequence of the 1867 Reform Act reached Stoke-on-Trent before a General Election was announced and proved to be a set back to his ambitions. He was indeed to become M.P. for the Borough in 1868, but not until he had survived the first impact of the Reform Act on the constituency, and solved the problem of finding a sufficient number of supporters.

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1. ibid.,X.2594.E. Challinor to G. Melly - 1867 September 11

PART IV

The first impact of the 1867 Reform Act on the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent and in the by-election won in 1868.

The 1867 Reform Act made only minor alterations to the boundaries of the Stoke-on-Trent constituency, but transformed it in terms of the number and character of its electors. The voting Register approved in 1867 contained 3,446 names; that of 1868, 16,204.[1] In its thirty five years of existence the Borough had been noted for its radicalism, but by skillful manoeuvres the Conservative Party had held one seat for most of that time. Any Conservative contemplating standing in the Potteries after 1867 was bound to reflect upon the history of previous elections and to see the difficulties facing him as immense. The Conservative member in 1867, who might previously have entertained some hopes of continuing in the seat, knew full well that for him at any rate there was no possibility of overcoming the problems thrown up by the new franchise. A.J.B. Beresford-Hope had been implacable in his opposition to Disraeli's move to reform Parliament, and had no chance of reaching the new voters in the Potteries with appeals for support. He needed to find a new, more congenial, seat.

It was not expected that he would find one and get elected before a General Election, however, but by achieving this Beresford-Hope brought the consequences of the reform of Parliament to Stoke-on-Trent earlier than was anticipated. A by-election had to be held in February 1868 and the results of this enforced contest were not entirely to the benefit of the Liberal Party in the Borough. This was not the contest for which its members had been preparing, and it disturbed the arrangements which were being made for the first fight in the new constituency.

The by-election was profitable for the Party in one respect, as it provided the opportunity for the Party to capture the second seat relatively easily. George Melly was alert to all possibilities of this kind and was aware in December 1867 that Beresford-Hope was

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1. Advertiser. 1868, October 3, p5.

exploring one avenue of escape from the Potteries. A seat for Cambridge University was likely to come vacant if rumoured Government appointments were made. Even before it was certain that the Cambridge seat was vacant and that Beresford-Hope was a candidate, George Melly was in correspondence with various persons likely to be of assistance in his attempt to take the Stoke-on-Trent seat. On January 2nd 1868 Melly sent Gladstone a copy of Hope's address to the Cambridge electors and promised to leave no stone unturned in an effort to get the Stoke-on-Trent voters unified behind him.[1] He also urged Gladstone to write to Earl Granville[2] to obtain from him, in turn, letters to W.S. Roden, his Managing Partner in the Shelton Bar Ironworks at Hanley, and Frederick Wragge,[3] his property agent in the Potteries,

> "evincing a warm interest in my success (as) the influence of Earl Granville among the £10 electors through his great works and large landed property is very important --- and if Earl Granville will push the more Whig element aright, I have small fear of success ---".

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1. Melly Papers. XIII. 3296. copy of letter G.Melly to W.E.Gladstone, 1868, January 2. Melly also asked that Gladstone write similarly to Godfrey Wedgwood and G.G. Glyn.

2. Granville George (Leveson-Gower), 2nd Earl Granville 1815-91 : educated at Eton and Christ Church, M.P. for Morpeth 1837-40 and Lichfield 1841-6. In 1846 he succeeded his father. He held numerous Government posts including that of Foreign Secretary 1851-2; 1870-74 and 1880-5. Twice he expected to be Prime Minister. Although he owned the complex of iron works and collieries which gradually overwhelmed Wedgwood's Etruria, Granville was an infrequent visitor to the Potteries.

3. Frederick Wragge 1822-86 : born in Derbyshire. While employed at the War Office he worked on the 1851 Great Exhibition, and became Agent to Earl Granville for his property in Stoke-on-Trent shortly afterwards. President of North Staffordshire Coal and Iron Masters Association from its inception in 1854 to his death. First Chairman of Hanley School Board in 1870 and associated with the Hanley Economic Building Society.

Melly also worked at removing Samuel Pope, as well as Roden, from the list of possible rivals, assuring Gladstone that Pope would retire in his favour on this occasion. The successful culmination of these efforts came at the Liberal Council meeting on January 16th, which Roden was forced to call in view of the strong rumours current concerning Beresford-Hope's intentions. Despite some ardent discussion about the desirability of having a local candidate, evidently with Roden as the leading contender, George Melly was adopted. Pope wrote to explain that he preferred to wait for the general election and the new voting Register. William Woodall put the chief points of the meeting to Melly in a letter.

> "Mr. Pope's name then came up --- he did not wish his friends to bring forward his name in opposition to Mr. Melly --- who had done good service to temperance movements in the magestracy --- some surprising talk about a local candidate and a great deal as to your present claims but with almost universal acclaim a determination to be wholly unfettered for the next General Election --- There will be no serious complications before the year is out and I believe Mr. Roden will be a candidate himself. Much of course will depend upon your own conduct at the election and the cause in Parliament but the horizon is clouded."[1]

About the same time H.R. Grenfell added another dimension to this account of events, writing to Melly in a letter which he wanted destroyed.

> "As to Roden standing I think I may assure you that such is very unlikely --- [Granville might have got F.Leveson-Gower to have his Bodmin seat, with the result that] you might have found yourself squeezed out without knowing why or wherefore --- [but] --- they consider F.Leveson quite safe at Bodmin. And I am sure that it would not suit L [ord] G [ranville] for Roden to stand ---"[2]

In Edward Challinor's view the by-election was most unwelcome to Roden, who, he wrote to Melly, was "evidently not delighted with this turn"[3]

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1. Melly Papers. XIII. 3301. W.Woodall to G.Melly, 1868, January 17.

2. ibid., XIII. 3322. H.R. Grenfell to G.Melly, no date. (probably late in January.)

3. ibid., XIII. 3306. E.Challinor to G.Melly, 1868, January 19.

Circumstances were especially favourable for George Melly's adoption and for a Liberal gain at this by-election - and these circumstances were partly consequences of the 1867 Reform Act. In the first place the Liberal Party exhibited a high degree of unity behind Melly. In the absence of any rival claimant he had almost unanimous support. The Temperance group was not entirely in his favour, even though advised by Samuel Pope to do all it could to help. A special meeting of temperance men considered both Melly and his Conservative opponent, Colin Campbell,[1] and agreed to not make a choice, leaving it rather to every Temperance voter to decide for himself.[2] Even so, this was not a situation where vindictiveness had a justification, for Pope had not been turned down by the Liberal Council - he specifically told the members he did not wish to be considered. Temperance voters had no reason to desert their Liberal allegiance, therefore. Another circumstance explaining why Melly had no rivals, was that the Reform Act rendered victory at that moment somewhat hollow. The successful candidate could scarcely hope for more than a few months before having to go through the same expensive operation again. It was also an unsatisfactory victory to gain for it was known to all that it was based on the out-dated register of pre-reform days. This was not an augury for a repeat performance when the General Election came. No one shieldedMelly from these factors, rather they were made absolutely clear at the Liberal Council by the terms of the resolution adopting him. This stated

> "that while this Council cannot nominate or suggest any candidate to a future constituency and holds itself individually at Liberty to take any step that they may think proper at any future election they agree to support Mr. Melly as a candidate in case Mr. Hope retires during the present Parliament".[3]

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1. Colin Minton Campbell 1827-1885 : born in Liverpool. He was a nephew of Herbert Minton and partner in Minton and Co. of Stoke-on-Trent, pottery manufacturers from 1849. He was Chairman of the North Staffordshire Railway Co., a Deputy Lieutenant of Staffordshire and J.P. 1874-80 M.P. for North Staffordshire, but did not stand in 1880 for re-election.

2. Sentinel.1868,February 22,p7.

3. Melly Papers.XIII.3300.E. Challinor to G.Melly, 1868, January 16.

Finally, the Conservative Party was just as much affected by circumstances as the Liberals. The Party had contracted with the Earl of Harrowby's son, Viscount Sandon, to stand,[1] but he had gone on holiday abroad before the election became certain, and a last minute change brought Colin Campbell out as a substitute. He was one of the most respected of pottery manufacturers, but he did not shine as a public speaker. He did not give Melly much of a fight and was not as dangerous an opponent as might have been found in the Conservative Party. Campbell secured 1,420 votes and Melly 1,489 which gave the Liberals a narrow majority of 69, 83% of the electorate having voted.

1. Advertiser, 1868, February 15, p5.

Conclusion

The Liberal victory at the by-election early in 1868 was hailed by the Party in Stoke-on-Trent as a great triumph for its organisation and Council. Unhappily for the members, however, it was the last unalloyed triumph of an age that was closed, not the first in a post-reform era which had been opened by the Reform Act of 1867. The extension of the franchise to a large group of male urban workers had been a Liberal objective and was expected to attract votes to Liberal candidates at elections, even though, in the event, a Conservative government produced the necessary Act. Melly may have benefitted at the by-election from votes cast in gratitude for Liberal pressure on behalf of Parliamentary reform, but no one could be certain of this. No one could be certain either that Melly's success represented a vote of confidence in the leadership of the local Party.

Just as important as major changes initiated by Parliamentary legislation were alterations made at constituency level by organisations of a local nature. In Stoke-on-Trent such a change was the agreement on the constitution of a Liberal Council made between the manufacturing oligarchy and the Temperance group in July 1865. The Council of one per cent of the electorate set up under this agreement laid the precedent for future selection procedures for candidates. It raised the hopes of those in the Liberal 'interest', who were enfranchised by the 1867 Act, that they would equally be granted a voice in Party affairs within the constituency. This meant that new voters expected to participate in Council elections, perhaps even to be members of the Council itself. It also meant that the established leaders were threatened with the removal of their power to select available candidates.

This possibility of the further democratisation of Party organisation at constituency level was not tested by the by-election, but it was inevitable that it should be tested in its aftermath. The Council created by the 1865 agreement died, by the terms of that agreement, on the completion of the by-election. The election of a new council was bound to be a trial of the

sincerity of Liberal leaders in the Potteries, who had long advocated allowing some working men to share in the process of forming a national government, and who were thought to have accepted the need for Liberal Party voters to help select their Parliamentary candidates by means of a Council.

The members of the ruling oligarchy were certain that the by-election proved their claim that Stoke-on-Trent was predominantly a Liberal borough which required only firm management to ensure a succession of victories. They were disturbed by the implications for their continued leadership of a Council elected from the new constituency, and they were apprehensive about the new scale of election work made necessary by the extension of the franchise. Some had doubts about having a new Council, and there was uncertainty about the most effective ways of managing elections in the new circumstances. The Council had been created, however, to head off the challenge made since 1857 by a particular interest group in the borough which had working class associations, and there was some confidence that it might serve the same purpose again.

In the short term the most serious problem facing the Liberal leaders in the Potteries was not that of a Council, but that of candidates. Two impeccable representatives were required with qualifications so strong that potential rivals would stay away. Provided these could be found, the leaders could sanction the creation of a Council in line with the 1865 agreement, knowing that it would have no choice but to accept the nominees of the oligarchy. The established leaders had maintained their power by these means before and they hoped to do so again, while giving the appearance of bending to popular will.

The by-election did not solve the problem of candidates, even though it gave the Party both seats. This was because Melly and Grenfell were not

equally acceptable to all Party leaders, or even to the voters.[1] There were serious doubts about Grenfell's views and about his tact. In addition, there was the ambition of William Roden to enter Parliament, supported by the tradition that one of the two seats should be occupied by a local man. Finally, there still hung over the leadership the unmeasurable threat of Samuel Pope. His popularity was thought to be immense, but he personified the moves to restrict the powers of the leadership over the previous decade. William Roden undoubtedly aimed at Grenfell's place after the by-election gave Melly the other seat, but it was precisely this kind of action which was likely to bring Pope back to the borough. Thus the problem of every other election in the 1860's was repeated, but in a new context. Under the new franchise the mass of the electorate were of the working classes.

The general election of 1868 was a most significant occasion for the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent as it had evolved since 1832. It was just as significant for those who hoped for an improved status for working men through the medium of that Party. It was the time of trial; the occasion when the intentions of the Liberal leaders were tested. Their response to the situation, the manner in which they solved the difficulties over candidates and the actions they took to eliminate the danger of independent action by a handful of dissident workingmen, all had effects upon the constituency until it was broken in two in 1885.

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1. Melly Papers.XIII. 3084.J. Bebbington to A.Billson,1868,June 17. "What does Mr. Grenfell mean to do --- with the exception of a few --- all I speak to wish he would take himself off to some other constituency ---".

CHAPTER 2.

THE 1868 GENERAL ELECTION AND ITS EFFECT ON LIBERAL PARTY ORGANISATION.

CHAPTER 2

THE 1868 GENERAL ELECTION AND ITS EFFECT ON LIBERAL PARTY ORGANISATION

Part I. Party leaders and their candidates

The gap between the by-election in February 1868 and the general election necessary after the Reform Act was not sufficiently large to break the thread of political activity in Stoke-on-Trent. By the end of May events were stirring again. Samuel Pope, true to his word given before the by-election, had his supporters working hard among the new voters preparing the way for his candidature. George Melly, too, appreciated the need to make his intentions known clearly and early. For him the first task was to gain the approval of a Council, and to ensure that no other candidates were in prospect threatening his own position. Grenfell, the senior Member, took the view that neither he nor Melly ought to make a move until invited to do so by the Party. Such advice was fraught with danger unless the previous Council could be retained for use in the forthcoming election. Melly was convinced that it had been automatically dissolved at the end of the by-election, and had this confirmed before the end of May.[1]

Action of some kind was required in this situation, as Alfred Billson,[2] Melly's aide and confidant during the by-election pointed out. Pope had to be prevented from making too much of an impact on the electorate. Billson's advice was to start election agents at work in each town, even though the Council could not authorise Melly's candidature. Billson wrote,

> "You really do not encroach on the prerogative of the Council (if there is a Council) by doing so, and you can still wait for an invitation from them before taking any prominent step, but it is simply suicidal for you to rest contented for the next few weeks, whilst a Popeite demonstration is going on, whilst from one end of the place to the other, the <u>people</u> are getting familiarized to the notion that Pope is the man, and whilst individual members

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1. Melly Papers, XIII, 3044, A.Billson to G.Melly 1868, May 31.

2. Sir Alfred Billson, 1839-1907 : Solicitor. He was in a law partnership in Liverpool in 1868, and was Secretary of the South Lancashire Liberal Association. He managed both contests for Melly in 1868 as well as that by W.E. Gladstone. In 1892 he was M.P. for North West Devon; in 1897-1900 for Halifax, and 1906-7 for North West Staffordshire. He was knighted in 1907.

> of the very Council whose actions Grenfell waits upon are giving all their assistance to the scheme- I don't suppose it matters much to you personally, for all Pope's friends will work first for him next for you - but this will cause a very awkward fight and make room for a Tory. On the other hand your object is to carry Grenfell as well as yourself, and it will not suit you to have Pope in the field if he can be kept out ----"[1]

At the same time Billson was most anxious that Melly should not cross William Roden.

> "Do be careful, and whatever happens don't let Roden and the Council, or the Hanley branch of the Council, think that G [renfell] has treated them better than you - I am very much afraid of your acting without Roden. He is the difficult man ----"[2]

It was easily seen that the old problem of too many candidates - more particularly the unwanted presence of Samuel Pope - had reappeared. The additional complication of William Roden's ambition to become a Member for Stoke-on-Trent was appreciated by the inner group of the Party leaders, but was not public knowledge at that point. Nothing was certain about Henry Grenfell but his withdrawal would not help matters, for Pope and his allies could exploit this to their own advantage. Nothing could suit their cause better than a vacancy, for their claims to official support had always been insistent, and Pope's chances of winning on the new Register were acknowledged by some of the leaders who sought to keep him out.[3] The factor which might keep Pope out was his own political good sense. He had withdrawn before rather than split the Liberal interest. If Grenfell stood firm alongside Melly, it was argued, Pope would not challenge either, no matter how much his friends blustered at local meetings. For the Party leaders in the Potteries, who were content with this state of affairs, the most important move was to secure Grenfell's and Melly's speedy adoption by a

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1. Melly Papers. XIII. 3044. A.Billson to G.Melly 1868, May 31.
2. ibid., 3043. same date
3. ibid., XIII. 3446. A.Billson to G.Melly 1868, March 12.

popularly chosen Council.[1] This was the tactic which had defeated Pope on previous occasions, and if employed skillfully could allow the creation of a Council with substantial representation from the new voters. With only two men offering their services, and Pope protesting his unwillingness to destroy an established partnership, the Council could do little else but nominate them, no matter how many radicals, temperance or working men it had on it.

William Roden could not be expected to fall in with this view so easily. Any move to push Grenfell and Melly before a Council as the only available candidates spoilt his chances. He had no wish for any Council to be created for the purpose of looking for candidates - this too might spoil his hopes - but he clearly sought an opportunity to step into Grenfell's shoes without exposing the Party to the threat of Samuel Pope. Roden's interests required that a Council be delayed until that opportunity had presented itself.

The first part of Roden's problem appeared to be solved later in June when the news of Samuel Pope's adoption at Bolton was given out. Though Pope's friends in the Potteries had already begun work on registration, forming a Liberal Association with weekly committee meetings in Burslem,[2] Roden did not need to fear that Pope would change his mind once he had made public his firm attachment to Bolton. When Pope had done this, Roden had a chance to turn his hand to removing Grenfell, while still preventing the election of a Council. Billson suspected Roden's intentions, for he wrote to Melly,

> "If Pope goes to Bolton they are not likely to find anyone else to disturb the peace of the locality ---. P.S. I think it is time I wrote to Woodall asking from myself whether it is not time they moved! Shall I? I cannot help being just a little anxious and suspicious about their silence. Roden can work without our knowing".[3]

Roden's position as the Chairman of the former Council, and the necessity

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1. ibid., XIII. 3081. W.Woodall to A.Billson 1868, June 3.
2. ibid., XIII. 3084. J.Bebbington to A.Billson 1868, June 17.
3. ibid., XIII. 3040. A.Billson to G.Melly 1868, June 21.

for that Council to arrange for its successor, put considerable power in Roden's hands. He called the meetings and by virtue of this prerogative could effectively prevent Grenfell and Melly receiving an official invitation from the Party, forcing them into the embarrassing position of acting without one, or of not acting at all, thus leaving the way open for outsiders. Roden's actions left no doubt that he was using his authority to serve his own ends, buoyed up by the knowledge that Pope was out of the way.

The first overt move Roden made was to call a meeting "of the leading Liberals for the 3rd July"[1] - so Woodall described it. Alfred Billson mistook this for a Council and was relieved that at last the impasse was broken and the question of approving candidates on the verge of settlement.

> "---- I shall be pleased if the Council shirks the question of Regn. and leaves it to me --- This is what I want - and let the Council confine itself to the election of candidates - it can do no harm there.
> ---- if the Council tomorrow does nothing decided - or feels a want of authority - or leaves any opening for it - I should like you and Grenfell to issue an address at once --- it would extinguish Roden".[2]

It was not, however, a meeting of the former Council. Eleven men attended, three of whom did not represent their respective towns in the delegations elected in 1866-7.[3] William Brownfield, a former chairman of Liberal Councils, referred to it as a selected groups of individuals. He wrote to Melly,

> "A few of your friends and supporters met last evening at Stoke - Col. Roden in the chair to consult respecting the best mode of proceeding with regard to the general election."[4]

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1. ibid., XIII.3085. W.Woodall to G.Melly 1868, June 20.
2. ibid., XIII.3038. A.Billson to G.Melly 1868, July 2.
3. ibid., XIII.3088. W.Woodall to G.Melly 1868, July 4.
4. ibid., XIII.3087. W.Brownfield to G.Melly 1868, July 4.

Another view of the meeting was that no existing Council was competent to act, and that this, and Roden's intentions, were made clear during its discussions.[1]

At the very least Roden did not intend calling a meeting of the former Council until he had the advice of his fellow "leading Liberals". It is impossible to say whether he wished to avoid such a meeting altogether. According to Woodall it was F.Wragge and Dickinson who prevented this meeting on July 3rd from adopting a proposal to create a new Council. He thought that if one were created at all it would take a "month or two". The meeting went on to discuss a local candidate, "Goddard and Barlow as before evidently looking to Roden but not naming him".[2] This suggestion again met with opposition and the leaders were left agreeing that nothing was to be done immediately except to press the sitting members to go ahead on their own without invitation from the local party.

Such an action by the members in no way solved the problems of the Council or those of personnel. The leadership of the Party was divided and had no agreed plan of action. The conflict was over the promotion of particular candidates, Roden evidently having some support, but not enough to oust Grenfell. Until agreement on candidates had been reached it was too dangerous to hold a Council meeting, for the Council would then become the real arena for decision making and might well take the opportunity of introducing other names into the list. Pope was not so settled at Bolton that he would ignore a popular call from Stoke-on-Trent, backed by a Council, and Roden was not the only local man with Parliamentary ambitions. In this situation the leaders were not prepared to move on to the election of a Council, even though the

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1. ibid., XIII.3086. W.Woodall to A.Billson 1868, July 4.

2. ibid., XIII.3088. - W.Woodall to G.Melly 1868, July 4.

Burslem group of Macintyre, Woodall and Wigley led a powerful movement for such elections.

The compromise of advising the Members to go ahead on their own, without reference to a Council, did not harm Melly - the favourite candidate of the Burslem leaders - and appeared to leave Grenfell undisturbed. In practice, as many were well aware, Grenfell's general unpopularity would have been compounded by any Address from him which did not arise from a local invitation. In this situation, with Melly backed by Popeites and Roden's men, a key factor may well have been Melly's own wish as to whom his partner should be.

A solution for this difficulty was worked out between 3 July and 16 July. Matters were set in hand for the election of a Liberal Council,[1] supported by the Staffordshire Sentinel in an article it printed on 11 July which argued the case for a representative Council.[2] The Reform Union branches took on the task of organising things, except in Tunstall, where a Liberal Registration Association was the key body. The final decision to select candidates by means of a Liberal Council does not seem to have been taken until 16 July, at a meeting in Hanley.[3] Much discussion and lobbying on this issue had obviously taken place during the previous thirteen days, almost certainly indicating that a Council would be desired by the majority, and quickly too.

Against this background, Melly and Roden each took action to bring the uncertainty as to candidates to an end. Both knew that Grenfell was central to the difficulties, and Roden may have suspected that the pressure for a new Council came from Grenfell's supporters who saw his only chance of adoption as lying in a speedy invitation from a Council persuaded to remain loyal to the sitting Members.

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1. Sentinel. 1868, July 18, p4 : Advertiser. 1868, July 11, p5.
2. Sentinel. 1868, July 11, p7. Article signed by "T.M."
3. Sentinel. 1868, July 18, p4.

The day before the Reform Union representatives met in Hanley to resolve on a Liberal Council, Roden met Grenfell in London. They agreed to put out separate Addresses to the electors, Grenfell withdrawing in favour of a local man, Roden advancing on those very grounds. Though Melly, and Billson his agent, knew all of this on the day after (the 16th) at the latest,[1] the Reform Union meeting on the evening of the 16th was held in ignorance of this exchange of candidates. The ground was thereby cut from beneath the feet of thosewho had pushed Grenfell before the constituency, and Roden gained an almost perfect victory. He could safely support the formation of a Council in the knowledge that it would not be asked to choose between candidates, but rather to approve the only two in the field. It was now to Roden's advantage, as well as Melly's, that a Council meet quickly, be apparently representative of the new voters, and be rushed into a decision without being given a chance to consider other candidates.

W.S. Roden achieved his ambition because of the use he made of the Liberal Council. He prevented it meeting in 1867 to discuss Melly's position, and forced Melly to issue an Address without Council sanction. This helped to split up the Melly-Grenfell partnership, and equally forestalled an examination of Grenfell's intentions. The continued uncertainty as to whether Grenfell would stand again was in part the product of the failure of the Council to assert an intention to adopt him again. This circle of doubt was enlarged by Roden arguing in public for a local representative and, after the by-election had terminated the Council, by Grenfell's negotiations for a seat at St. Ives where he had family connections. Only the necessity of blocking Samuel Pope's path to a seat at Stoke-on-Trent gave Grenfell an influence in the constituency which he could use to keep the Party leaders

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1. Melly Papers. XIII.3032. A.Billson to G.Melly 1868, July 16. This letter, in effect, congratulated Melly on forming a "strong pair" with Roden.

loyal. This influence was strengthened by Melly's victory in the by-election for he enjoyed much support among the Temperance group, which gave grounds for believing that a Melly-Grenfell partnership could just win in the new constituency. Roden was no doubt dismayed by the by-election and its result, but the relatively easy disposal of Pope's threat gave him a second chance, even though he would have to face a popularly elected Council rather than deal with the oligarchic body over which he himself had presided. Publicly much was made of Grenfell's self-sacrificing withdrawal in the interest of Party unity. He put it in his retirement Address that

> "a strong feeling existed in the minds of some of the Staunchest Liberals, as well as in those of many Conservatives, that the interests of the Borough would be best secured by the introduction of at least one local man into the representation".[1]

For this reason, he graciously retired. F.W. Wragge, Roden's partner in managing the affairs of Earl Granville in the Potteries, added further to this publicity story by emphasising Roden's innocent involvement and his noble self sacrifice. St. Ives invited Grenfell to become its candidate, Wragge reported to his branch of the Reform Union at Stoke-upon-Trent, and

> "Mr. Grenfell then invited Mr. Roden to go and see him --- when he told him that he would not leave Stoke in the lurch, by accepting this flattering offer from St. Ives, unless he could see his way clear to two Liberals being returned for Stoke --- Mr. Roden never for one moment contemplated coming forward as a candidate until he had this interview with Mr. Grenfell ---".[2]

The resolution of the dilemma facing the Liberal leaders, on and off the Council, came very largely through the energetic manoeuvres of William Roden. Though men such as Wragge opposed Roden's plan to stand as a candidate,[3] Liberal leaders in general preferred to settle their arguments over candidates in private, and only when some compromise had been reached around which they could

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1. Sentinel. 1868, July 18, p1.
2. ibid., July 25, p7.
3. Melly Papers. XIII.3446. A.Billson to G.Melly 1868, March 12. ibid., XIII.3083. W.Woodall to G.Melly 1868, July 4.

rally did they wish to hold public Councils to approve the choice. William Roden arranged the compromise in July 1868, and though not all the ruling clique of manufacturers could personally approve him, or agree that he had a stronger chance of winning than Grenfell, they gathered round him as readily as they had linked with Schneider, Grenfell and Melly on earlier occasions when they had emerged as candidates for the first time. Roden was of their number, he had forced the issue and no one stronger had upset his challenge. In those circumstances he had the right to demand allegiance from his former peers in the Liberal leadership.

On Saturday, 18 July local newspapers carried the news of the exchange of candidates, and on the following Tuesday delegates were elected to a Liberal Council from Stoke-upon-Trent at a meeting addressed by F.W. Wragge. Longton and Hanley elected their delegations in the same week. Speculation in the Press was of a Liberal "walk-over".

Part II. The election and work of the Liberal Council.

The preliminary Liberal moves to the 1868 general election followed a pattern evolved during the two preceding elections. By a process of private debate and intrigue the self-created leaders found two candidates suitable to themselves. A Council was then required to give these candidates the seal of official approval. The Council had to be apparently representative of all shades of Liberal opinion so that, in declaring in favour of the chosen candidate, Party unity was manifest to all.

The election of members to the Council in 1868 followed hard on the decision to accept Roden in Grenfell's place. Grenfell agreed to withdraw on the 15 July and on the 21st Stoke-upon-Trent Reform Union members met to select their fifteen representatives on the Council. Hanley and Longton held similar meetings during that same week, and Tunstall and Burslem had representatives elected by 31 July.[1] Very little time was available for

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1. Advertiser. 1868, July 25, p4 : August 1, pp4 and 5.

public discussion of the suitability of men for election to the Council, or of the Parliamentary candidates themselves. As on previous occasions, once the leaders had made up their minds, others were rushed into approval as quickly as possible.

Much was made at the Council election meetings of the representative nature of the Council, reflecting the new electorate created by the 1867 Reform Act. New rules, announced at the Hanley open air assembly of electors - not merely Reform Union members - included one representative for every two hundred names on the register.[1] A generous estimate of these numbers allowed one hundred and nine persons to sit on the Council altogether, though the eventual official list of voters drawn up in October justified only eight one.[2] Much was made, too, of the open and above-board manner of holding elections. Press reports said that one thousand five hundred people crowded into St. John's Square for the Burslem meeting, and large numbers attended at Hanley and Tunstall also.[3]

The degree to which management of the voters was possible in these circumstances was, nevertheless, considerable. The organizing committee of the Reform Union branch in each town was well placed to prepare "cut and dried" lists of delegates it approved, and the good humoured tumult of crowds, some of whom could well have been Tories or trouble-makers, gave opportunities for miscounting hands. William Woodall reported to Melly how effectively the leaders had their way in Burslem.

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1. ibid., 1868, July 25, p4.

2. ibid., 1868, October 3, p5. On the final list approved by the Revising Barrister there were 16,204 voters. The quota of members of the Council allowed to each town was Hanley 35, Longton 25, Burslem 22, Stoke-upon-Trent 15, and Tunstall 12.

3. Sentinel. 1868, August 1, p5.

> "I got home in good time to take part in a meeting which on Friday evening last elected the Burslem contingent to the new Council. The "cut and dried" list was submitted from a waggon in the open market square and adopted without question. We talked about our avoidance of "hole and corner" proceedings, but the whole thing was anything but the deliberative business it ought to have been. However, the men chosen are sufficiently representative, half of them workmen, and I suppose no one will dispute their authority".[1]

In Hanley the secretary of the local branch of the Reform Union proposed a list of delegates, "of which the working class element predominated".[2] The exact nature of this domination was explained to George Melly much later, and for other reasons, by one of the participants.

> "--- the course pursued at Hanley in the election of the Council was exceptional - in a number of cases persons were placed on the Council, not because they were the men who took an active part in elections - but because in other respects they were, to some extent, representative men that is to say - they were leading men in trade union matters or Friendly Societies - and Secretaries of trade societies in some instance. We thought it of even greater importance under the circumstances to have the Council composed of representative men, than of the men who usually took the most active part in Elections - feeling as we did, secure of their services, irrespective of their [being] elected on the Council.[3]

Clearly few of the one hundred and nine Council members were elected in opposition to the established leadership of the Party. Nevertheless, among the eighty or so who can be identified quite a spectrum of opinions was represented. In addition to the trade union secretaries, the editor of the Potteries Examiner, William Owen,[4] was present. His newspaper was

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1. Melly Papers. XIII. 3101. W.Woodall to G.Melly, 1868, August 3.
2. Staffordshire Weekly Times. 1868, July 25, p2.
3. Melly Papers. XIV. 3782. J.Bebbington to G.Melly, 1869, April 28.
4. William Owen, 1844-1912. See Appendix A.

owned by unions in the pottery industry and, though a very young man, Owen was making a powerful reputation for himself through its columns. There were at least two ex-Chartists in the list. George Salt,[1] President of the North Staffordshire Temperance Association in 1870, was in the Longton contingent, and William Wood,[2] a correspondent of John Stuart Mill's in support of female suffrage, was among the Hanley members. Manufacturers included William Brownfield and M.D.Hollins, but numerically they were very much in a minority.

The confidence of the leaders, as well as their careful preparation for the first Council meeting, was shown by the actions of William Woodall and the Burslem Party managers - who included Macintyre and Wigley. Woodall informed Melly's agent that,

> "On Tuesday night we had at Burslem a meeting of the 22 electors as our quota and we went over the business which was expected to come before the full council.
>
> I anticipate no serious difficulty. Mr. Melly's position with the new Electors appears to be everything we could desire. His popularity is unbounded, and his election, under any complication which may arise, is sure!
>
> Mr. Roden has to meet a Trade Union combination and to go through some serious catechising, but I fancy he will accomplish everything smoothly. ------ I assume the two candidates will be certainly adopted".[3]

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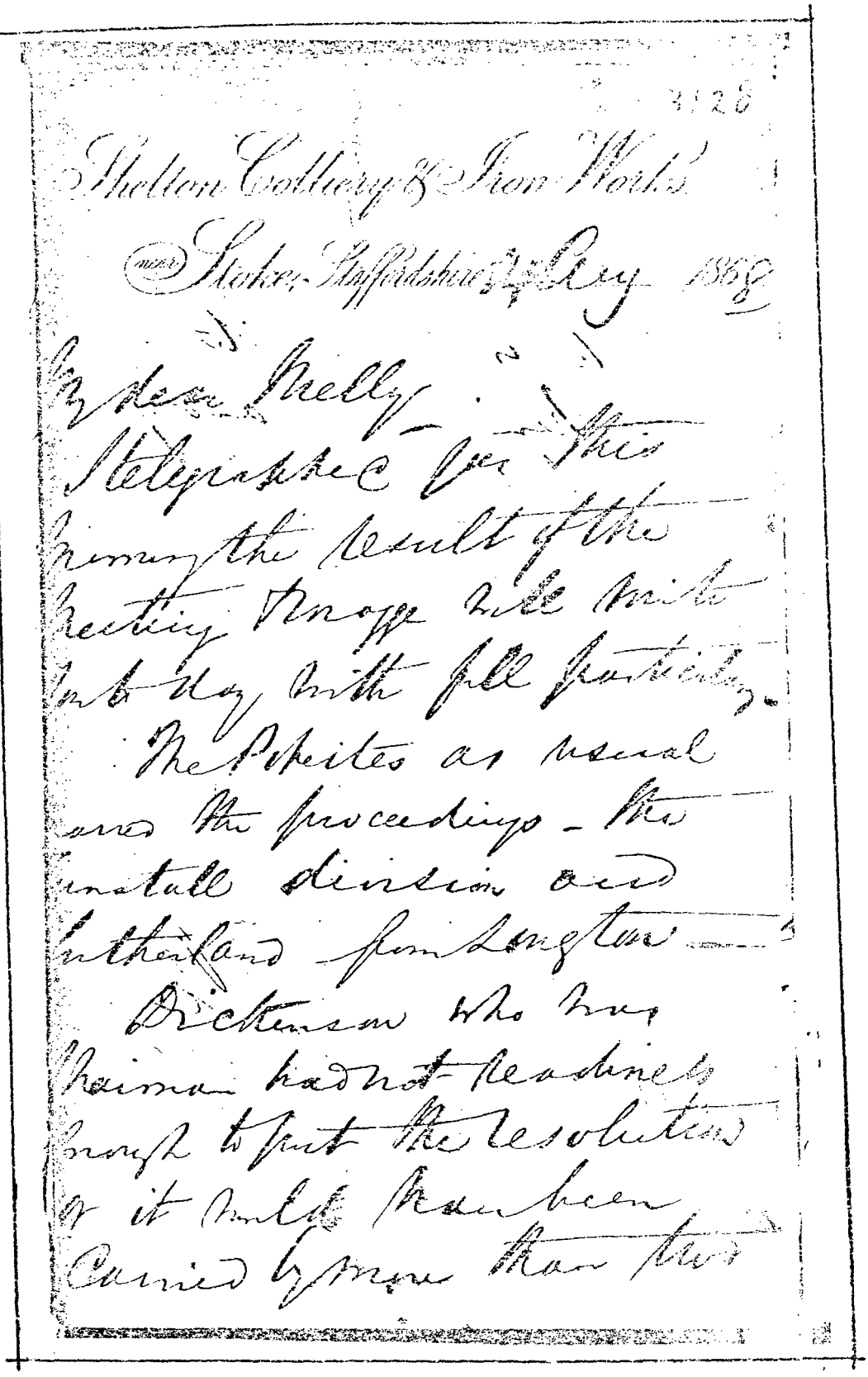
1. George Salt. He was an agent and rent collector and active in the movement to incorporate Longton. He might have been that George Salt who was reported as speaking to a Chartist meeting in 1838. In 1871 he was President of the Labour Representation League in the Potteries.

2. William Wood, 1838-1896 : a mould maker, union official and later a newsagent. He made his most substantial mark on the Hanley School Board, 1870-73: 1877-1896, being vice-chairman 1888-94. Wood was a considerable letter writer, both privately and as secretary to a number of ephemeral working men's groups.

3. Melly Papers. XIII. 3100. W.Woodall to A.Billson, 1868, August 13. The "Trade Union combination" was a Political Council, set up by unions in the pottery industry, to interview the candidates with a view to presenting a petition to Parliament on the abolition of 'good-from-oven' methods of calculating wages. (See also, Record Book of the Transactions of Executive Committee for the Hollow Ware Pressers Union 1864-71, 1868, August 3.)



3128

Shelton Colliery & Iron Works

near Stoke-Staffordshire 14th Aug 1868

My dear Melly

I telegraphed you this morning the result of the meeting Wragge will write you today with full particulars.

The Popeites as usual marred the proceedings - the Tunstall division and Sutherland from Longton.

Dickinson who was Chairman had not readiness though to put the resolution or it would have been carried by more than two ---- .

Melly Papers. XIII. 3128. W.S.Roden to G.Melly, 14 August 1868.

"My dear Melly

I telegraphed you this morning the result of the meeting Wragge will write you today with full particulars.

The Popeites as usual marred the proceedings - the Tunstall division and Sutherland from Longton.

Dickinson who was Chairman had not readiness though to put the resolution or it would have been carried by more than two ---- ."

Woodall was correct in his estimation of the outcome, but very wrong in his view that things would be smoothly accomplished. The elections to the Liberal Council had produced a body of radicals intent upon using the Council for what they saw as its real purpose - selecting candidates. Merely approving ones already chosen was not enough for them.

The first meeting of the Liberal Council, in Hanley Town Hall, on 13 August was "animated".[1] F.W. Wragge described the affair for Melly.

> "The Council meeting last night was attended by about 70 members: the Tunstall Popeites being in a compact body. All went well at first --- but when it was proposed that Melly and Roden be invited to address meetings of the Electors as the Liberal candidates the Popeites began to talk, talk, talk in an endless circle:- "other candidates to select from", "too little choice", etc, etc. At length many left from among our friends; the Longton men suggesting adjournment and departing almost in a body; and when our side was weakened by the loss of I should think 30, we were afraid to go to a vote, and agreed to an adjournment for a week. At the adjourned meeting, if we get a vote early, I think we shall be all right.
>
> I forgot to say that, after our numbers were reduced, the Popeites threw off all disguise and suggested that Pope should be written to, "he not being, they had reason to know, so far committed to Bolton, but that he could still come to Stoke if invited".[2]

The situation revealed by Wragge was, in fact, more complicated than he implied. He reported the situation as if opposition to Melly and Roden centred round a proposal simply to substitute Pope for one of them. There were indications, however, that unionists had a different objective for it was reported in the press that

> "there has been some agitation among the operative electors, some of whom desire a special representative of their class, but, so far as we can hear, there has been no application to any gentleman by them".[3]

It was not necessarily Samuel Pope per se who attracted union leaders, therefore, but any candidate chosen by themselves to advocate policies of

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1. Advertiser. 1868, August 15, p4.
2. Melly Papers. XIII. 3127. F.W.Wragge to G.Melly, 1868, August 14.
3. Sentinel. 1868, August 15, p4.

which they approved. Pope was merely the man they were accustomed to thinking of as a result of his long connection with the area.

It was to counter the possibility of working class influence on the choice of Parliamentary candidates that the Council had been created and its operation defined. It was very firmly pointed out during the Council meeting of 13 August that the Council could not consider alternative candidates, for example Pope or M.D. Hollins:

> "it was answered that the Council had no power, and that it was out of its province to write to these gentlemen, though it was open to any party of electors to communicate with any gentlemen likely to be acceptable to the electors and the reply --- could be submitted to the Council at an adjourned meeting". [1]

In view of this ruling, the Popeite victory in obtaining a week's adjournment was a hollow one. Samuel Pope had already informed the leadership of his intention to stand at Bolton[2] expressing his belief that Grenfell and Melly were assured of victory, and were very close to his own views anyway. Even though the old trick of switching candidates, without giving him an opportunity of being considered by the Council, had once again been pulled, it was very unlikely that Pope would do more than bluster and protest from afar. As Wragge had said, "At the adjourned meeting, if we get a vote early, I think we shall be all right". Any move to find a substitute for Pope would require much longer than a week, and a quick vote forced on the meeting while the Popeite - trade union men were still bemused by their loss of Pope would result in a Melly-Roden victory.

These tactics did, in fact, operate though the press report showed that, after speeches by both men, the meeting of the Council on the 20 August

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1. Sentinel. 1868, August 15, p4.

2. ibid., 1868, July 18, p4.

gave both a long and serious interrogation as to their views on a number of issues. Roden was particularly questioned on trade union matters, and had to deny that he had once said, "3/- a day was as much as a miner ought to get",[1] and that he would not employ union members in his iron works. In the end, as the leaders expected, overwhelming approval was given to both men, and Melly and Roden were formally declared the Liberal candidates for the Borough.

The smug anticipation by the Liberal leaders of general approval for their choice of candidates proved well-founded only in one sense. In the manner in which this was obtained there lay an awful warning for the future. Never before had the Liberal Council been the scene of divisive debate; never before had candidates been challenged in so sharp a fashion. No nucleus of workingclass opposition to the leadership had collected in the past inside the very body of the Council itself. Press reports on the debate over the merits of various candidates had never been so full. A new scene had been created for the play of local politics, and, contrary to the belief of many, the action had scarcely begun.

There had been no possibility of victory for the radicals within the Liberal Council as it had been set up in July, 1868. The cards were too strongly stacked against them. But matters did not necessarily end with the formal declaration of the candidates. Once before, in 1865, opposition had existed, and in defeat had obtained some modification of the Council as balm for its wounds. Expectations among the opposition in 1868 were so much the greater after the Reform Act of 1867, that the consequence of defeat was likely to be more far reaching and dangerous to the self-selected oligarchy whose apparent victory was celebrated in Hanley Town Hall on 20 August. Yet the consequences were not seen; the real state of affairs was not understood.

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1. Advertiser. 1868, August 22, p5.

The Staffordshire Sentinel leader writer enthused:-

> "The two candidates as politicians have coincident and equal claims, and beyond that while one has a claim to confidence founded on Parliamentary services, the other has claims based on loyal services and position. With the two there is nothing to desiderate. They are altogether all that the great majority could wish. The Liberals are well satisfied with their men. There is not a single drawback. Nothing is wanting that could be desired. In Messrs. Melly and Roden they have all the elements of union, and happily for their success that union is an accomplished fact. There is every prospect that the over whelming majority in the borough will act in perfect unity, and in that case they will carry all before them."[1]

In so far as the leaders of the Party had resolved the dilemma facing them in May and June 1868, the Staffordshire Sentinel was right. Despite Grenfell's claims he had been eased out without recrimination - a move winning some popularity by itself. Another, and local, candidate had been fitted into his place, satisfying the uncomfortable ambitions of a recent and dynamic force within the leadership ranks. This had the added advantage of pre-empting the usual Conservative platform, and neutralised any opposition from that quarter based on the time-honoured plea that the constituency should have one native in the House of Commons, whatever his party colours. Seen from the mansions of the Woodalls, Macintyres and Brownfields, and articulated in the leader columns of the Liberal press, the achievements of the Party in 1868 were unalloyed.

Yet the fact was that the evolution of the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent had come to a turning point. No matter how successful the Council's work appeared to the leadership, the institution itself had been undermined by the manner in which that work had been done. It did not, in fact, bind together the whole 'interest' behind the candidates proposed by the inner group within the Council. Succeeding events, shocking and unprovoked though they appeared to some, demonstrated that a new direction had been taken and

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1. Sentinel. 1868, August 29, p4.

that lines of development in the Party hitherto leading straight into the future were fractured beyond repair. The Council was broken, and the claim had been set up that working men, as the majority in the electorate, had a right to determine the choice of one Liberal candidate.

Part III Robert Hartwell and opposition to the 'official' candidates

The impact of the events surrounding the formal adoption of Melly and Roden as Liberal candidates for Stoke-on-Trent was greater than any of the Party leaders in the area anticipated. On two matters they made serious miscalculations. One was the assumption that all the recently enfranchised working men, who had been encouraged to look forward to the day when their votes would count within the Party, would meekly accept the operation of a revamped Liberal Council so patently a tool of established, middle-class management. The other mistake lay in thinking that Colonel Roden could be presented as a substitute for the "working man's candidate" for which there was obvious pressure within the Borough. He was too clearly no such thing.

The failure of the leaders to recognise the strength of feeling aroused by insincerity on their part led to serious consequences. No matter how few regarded the leaders as culpably dishonest, if those people were prepared to act accordingly they presented a dangerous challenge at the point of greatest weakness. It was not certain for some weeks after the second Liberal Council session on 20 August that any were prepared to organise a counter-move to Melly's and Roden's candidatures. It is impossible to list the factors which persuaded some to attempt this course of action, but investigations were made as to the practicability of bringing in a more appropriate "working man's candidate", as events in September showed.

On Saturday 26 September the local press published stories concerning Robert Hartwell[1] and the possibility of his standing for Parliament in Stoke-on-Trent as the particular rival to Roden as the "working man's" choice. Shortly after, he began a campaign, waged nearly until polling day, which demonstrated the depth of resentment and frustration in the constituency against the "little knot of gentlemen"[2] who pulled the wires of the Council machinery. Hartwell was no Conservative nominee covering up the miserable failure of that party to run a respectable politician. He was no fly-by-night excuse to hold the candidates to the ransom of an expensive campaign from which tradesmen and drinkers profited. Hartwell was a serious challenger to the Liberal oligarchy's management of the constituency. He was able to enter the contest only because of the miscalculations of that oligarchy, and its insistence on maintaining a complete hold over power while going through the motions of seeking representative decisions and the promotion of a substitute working man's candidate. When he had finished in the Potteries the sham was exposed.

The ground had been prepared for Hartwell by Pope's earlier activities. These had been concerned with Temperance societies to a large extent, but had also increasingly involved him with radicals and trade unionists because he had been keen to press his claims to represent a wider range of opinion than the sectional one of temperance.[3] It had been Pope's contacts with trade union leaders in Tunstall particularly, shortly after the closing

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1. Robert Hartwell, 1813? - 1875: compositor, trade unionist, journalist and political activist. He had been secretary to the Dorchester Labourers' Committee, 1834; active in the agitation for the unstamped press; founder-member of the London Working Men's Association, 1836, and delegate to the Chartist Convention in 1839. After working as the foreman and managing printer for the Daily News in 1861 he became sub-editor of The Beehive and editor 1863-8. He was a foundation member of the Internation in 1864 and on its General Council. He was on the Council of the Reform League and 1866-8 secretary to the new London Working Men's Association. He left The Beehive in December 1868 after the serious financial situation brought about by the events of his campaign in Stoke-on-Trent.

2. Sentinel. 1868, October 24, p6.

3. B.Harrison, Drink and the Victorians pp243-5.

of the by-election contest in 1868, that had alarmed Billson in May. He told Melly that the unions were a ready-made political organisation already in Pope's hands.[1] This was particularly worrying because Melly had clearly been successful in presenting himself as an advocate of temperance more suited than Pope to represent the Potteries in Parliament. By turning to the working classes as led by trade union organisers Pope threatened to out-flank Melly. Trade unions were designed to mobilise working men for unified action, their members were likely to be the newly enfranchised voters, and they were better fitted for political work among the working classes than Temperance societies. These latter groups had a large infusion of middle class persons among their leadership, not all of whom relished the thought of using their societies to secure the election of a radical M.P. The strength of Pope's working class friends was demonstrated by the "Tunstall Popeite" fillibuster at the first meeting of the new Liberal Council.

No further success for this radical - trade union group was possible within the institutions of the Liberal Party. Samuel Pope was not interested in standing for it unless the Party was officially behind his candidature, and he was not willing to be used to challenge the oligarchy which had shown its continued grip on Party affairs. Trade unionists had, therefore, only the choices of submitting to the superior forces of Party management, or of seeking another candidate. Whoever he was, he would have to run against the Party, and his promoters would attract the dreaded charge of 'splitting the Liberal interes' Since that 'interest' now included some 13,000 new voters, almost entirely working men, and actual or potential trade union members, there was also a risk that campaigning for a third candidate would produce a split in the working classes and in their unions. The appearance of a third candidate, and the incidents he provoked, showed that this split took place, though it was prevented from widening too far by the much disputed manner in which he was removed from the constituency.

The responsibility of some "Tunstall Popeites" for introducing Robert Hartwell, the ex-Chartist journalist, as a "workingman's candidate" challenging William Roden for the second seat at Stoke-on-Trent, was made clear by events.

It was to Tunstall that Hartwell came first to speak - on Tuesday, 13 October. He was introduced by the chairman, to an audience said to consist of 2000 operatives, as

"a gentleman .... introduced by some of themselves".[1]

He had been invited to give the electors a chance to decide for themselves whether Roden or some other was the better representative of the "working classes". It was Tunstall that housed the most vigorous supporters of Hartwell, as a motion of no confidence in Roden,[2] and appreciation of Hartwell, passed at a Melly-Roden meeting there in November, so positively showed. Above all, it was the Tunstall iron workers' union which had the personal contact with Hartwell which would suggest him as the ideal candidate for them. Hartwell's own statement that he had gone to Stoke-on-Trent

"at the invitation of a large and influential body of workingmen"[3]

need not be taken too literally. With the other circumstantial evidence it does suggest most strongly that an initiative of some kind came from "friends" in the Tunstall area.[4]

Hartwell's earlier association with Tunstall, which gave him knowledge of the militancy of union men in the district, had been during the strike of iron workers in 1865. The activities of the local branch of the Associated Ironworkers of Great Britain on that occasion were decidedly out of step with the national union's policy, and out of sympathy with the prevailing mood of much of the union movement as a whole. Negotiation and arbitration, rather than militancy, were key aspects of union objectives as formulated by their recently developed leadership. Newspaper accounts of

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1. Sentinel. 1868, October 17, p7
2. ibid., November 7, p5; Advertiser. 1868, November 7, p5.
3. Advertiser. 1868, October 17, p6.
4. Staffordshire Weekly Times. 1868, September 26, p2.

of the strike, and the evidence later given to the Royal Commission on Trade Unions by William Roden and the ironworkers' national leaders, John Kane and William Hobson,[1] all showed that the Tunstall branch of the union rejected a moderate and reasoned approach to wage settlements. The members preferred belligerent action despite the grinding hardships involved. The evidence further showed that the branch had acted to a large extent as a result of advice from some London-based unionists. The chief member of this group was Hartwell's journalist associate, George Potter,[2] but Hartwell had been active as well. He was probably one of the delegation of Potter's friends who visited North Staffordshire during the strike to persuade the Tunstall men away from the arbitration being arranged by the Earl of Lichfield. The Royal Commission had been told of a Tunstall man, Peter Baker,[3] who had all the information about the financial inducements given by the London group, but it did not interview Baker. During one of Hartwell's election meetings, however, Baker spoke on the candidate's behalf, seeking to impress on the audience the value of Hartwell by reporting that,

> "he, as Secretary to the local union, received £1,864 from Mr. Hartwell during the strike in support of the men".[4]

The link thus forged in 1865 was renewed in 1868 when, once again, men in Tunstall wanted advice and assistance.

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1. John Kane, 1819-1876 : ex-Chartist and founder of the Amalgamated Malleable Iron Workers' Association in 1862. He was General Secretary to the reconstructed union after 1868c.

   William Hobson. In 1868 he was secretary to the Associated Ironworkers of Great Britain which, for a time, was a rival union to that founded by Kane. Hobson's headquarters were at Brierley Hill in the Staffordshire Black Country.

2. George Potter, 1832-1893 : carpenter and one of the leaders of the Amalgamated Union of Building Workers. He founded and edited The Beehive, and sat on the London Trades Council where he was often opposed to the majority group. He attended the first Trades Union Congress in Manchester and soon after was reconciled with the group of major union leaders, the Junta.

3. Royal Commission on Trade Unions, 5th Report, 1868. Questions 9008-10 answered by W.Hobson.

4. Advertiser. 1868, October 31, p7.

Hartwell's campaign was based on a theme to which the chairman of the Liberal Council had himself drawn attention. He was reported as saying that

> "as this was now a working man's borough, the working men ought to select the candidates. There was a great deal of truth in that view of the case ....."[1]

Hartwell cleverly took this up, insisting in his speeches that Roden's claim to "having been a working man ever since I began life"[2] was calculated to mislead. True, in a narrow sense, it may have been, but Hartwell sought to show that Roden no more spoke with the feelings and interests of ordinary working men at heart than did any other self-made capitalist of considerable fortune. The proof he had to offer of Roden being an opponent rather than a friend to the working man was supplied by unionists in Tunstall, and was personal to Roden moreover. It concerned Roden's attitude and actions towards trade unions, and particularly fastened on events during and after the great ironworkers' strike of 1865. These personal allegations led to angry denials and personal counter-charges, with the consequence that the campaign became a bitter feud with no apparent political significance. However true this became as polling day drew near, it was not true of the origins of the clash. The opposition to Roden's candidature on grounds of principle, not personality, existed long before Hartwell turned up, and it was a bonus to the Tunstall militants that they could so fortuitously find Hartwell free to engage himself in Stoke-on-Trent, seeing that his opposition to Roden was so splendidly apt for them. The struggle of 1865 was reopened in 1868 with much the same cast, and perhaps in a spirit of vengeance.

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1. ibid., 1868, August 22, p5.
2. ibid., 1868, July 18, p1.

For a time the impression given by the election contest was that of a deeply divided Liberal 'interest'. There was a considerable fear that this would encourage a Conservative to come forward to exploit the advantages of a split vote. It was not beyond the bounds of possibility that Hartwell would win on his own. The 1867 Reform Act had changed the context within which electoral battles took place and party leaders were uncertain as to the consequences this would have. On thing was beyond doubt - working men had the opportunity for the first time of electing any candidate of their own choice, especially in constituencies where the class structure of the electorate had changed as much as it had done in the Potteries. The chance to do this was unquestioned; the problem was to ascertain whether working men had the unity and skill to succeed. Some thought this unlikely, as one newspaper report indicated.

> "Considerable discussion has taken place during the last three months with a view to prepare a way for returning some working men to the next Parliament; but we have little faith in that object being carried out. There will be, no doubt, quite enough of working men on the register of the borough of Stoke-on-Trent; but not unity enough among themselves to carry out their objective".[1]

Others were not so sure, and, rather than trust in the feebleness of the effort behind men such as Hartwell, preferred to use time-honoured manoeuvres to stop them ever going to the poll. Events in Stoke-on-Trent took this course in the fortnight or so before the day fixed for polling, 16 November.

Hartwell was "bought out" of the contest in circumstances of some mystery and much confusion. The mystery concerned the persons who put up the money and proposed the deal; the confusion surrounded the reasons why Hartwell accepted the idea and what happened to the money. The former aspect of this - the mystery of the people responsible for offering Hartwell money - could have had one of two solutions. Some group within the Stoke-on-Trent constituency Liberal Party could have done it, hoping to preserve some shreds of unity from the wreck of their campaign. If they

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1. Staffordshire Weekly Times. 1868, September 26, p2.

did not fear Hartwell, they feared a last minute Conservative move to put up a candidate to exploit the division in Liberal ranks. A second possibility was a group from outside, perhaps under the influence of the Party Whips in Parliament.[1] In either case the result was the same for the local Party. It shrivelled up under the blow.

The manner in which Hartwell was induced to leave the Stoke-on-Trent constituency was more damaging to the Borough Liberal Party than his intervention in the election had been. His arrival had been a sympton of unrest and of the existence of factions. His campaign had brought bitterness and animosity to the surface, not because he had sought this, but because the seriousness of the situation overheated some of the participants. Nevertheless, he was more of an embarrassment to the working class section of the electorate than was realised by the local newspapers and Party leaders, and less of a threat to the ambitions of Melly and Roden than they knew. Had he been allowed to go to the poll the reality of the situation might have been demonstrated. As it was, Hartwell agreed to go on the payment of £280 to cover his expenses, and the impression was created that he had been the victim of the kind of electoral trickery condemned by all radicals. Workingmen who had differed quite sharply on the question of whether to vote for Hartwell or the Party, all agreed in condemning the underhand methods employed to remove Hartwell, and by an extension of this condemned the Party as an institution for being responsible.

An early sign that working class support for Robert Hartwell was far from unanimous and hung very much in the balance was the decision of his Tunstall Committee not to collect money to finance his campaign. Promises to pay £200 were made in Tunstall alone, but no cash was taken at the time.[2]

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1. This is the more likely explanation.

2. Sentinel. 1869, January 30, p8.

Accusations were made afterwards that leaders on the committee acted on instructions from organisers of the Melly-Roden campaign.[1] However near the truth that may have been the fact was that no open use was made of trade union lodges to raise levies on behalf of Hartwell, and no spontaneously created fighting fund was subscribed by ardent supporters. London promoters of working men's candidates, who had promised to finance Hartwell in the Lambeth constituency, were expected to foot the bill even though he withdrew from that contest and moved to the Potteries.

A second sign that working men in the Potteries were reluctant to commit themselves fully to Hartwell's cause can be detected in the absence of certain people from the lists of those reported as speaking for him at the numerous meetings he held. In very few cases is it possible to suggest that those who did appear with him on public platforms were men with responsible positions in working class organisations,[2] but some very obvious omissions can be noted of men whose radical activities before and after 1868 gained them press notices. Charles Heath,[3] the ex-Chartist and temperance advocate, had been well to the fore in discussions affecting ratepayers and had been outspoken on behalf of Samuel Pope in 1859.[4] He was on the Liberal Council in 1868, but made no move to support Hartwell. Had William Owen been vigorous in campaigning for Hartwell he would certainly have been mentioned in newspapers which were rivals to his own. William Wood and Josiah Stevenson,[5] two pottery union officials and members of the 1868 Liberal Council, were conspicuously absent from Hartwell's list of friends.

1. Beehive. 1868, December 12, p5.

2. John McGill, the treasurer of Hartwell's committee, may have once been on the committee of the Flat Pressers' Society. (Melly Papers. XIII.3458. James McGill to G.Melly. 1868, March 16)

3. Charles Heath. He had been Clerk to Shelton Highways Board in the early 1850s, a Sunday school teacher and opponent of free libraries. In 1868 he was elected to Hanley Town Council. He described himself as a potters' manager.

4. Sentinel. 1859, April 30, p7.

5. Josiah Stevenson was a mould maker and first vice-President of the Potteries Arbitration Board.

Some working men went so far as to make spirited attacks upon Hartwell. One, Edward Mayer, was reported as saying that

> ".... it was a small clique of disappointed men at Tunstall who had introduced Mr. Hartwell as an element of discord into the borough, and he cited two or three instances in which he alleged that because the Reformers of that town could not have their own way with respect to a Permissive Bill candidate they had given Reform altogether the cold shoulder."[1]

Samuel Robinson, the Hanley ex-Chartist, made his opposition plain at a meeting Hartwell held in that town by moving a vote of confidence in Melly and Roden as an amendment to a motion on behalf of Hartwell.[2] In view of Robinson's radical past this was a significant rejection of Hartwell.

Final proof of the division in the ranks of working men on the question of whether to support Robert Hartwll or not, was that he was not brought to Stoke-on-Trent at the unanimous invitation of those working men known to have been on the Liberal Council in 1868 and whose support for Samuel Pope can be presumed from their earlier activities. Some twenty members, or rather more, of that Council have earlier been noted as "Tunstall-Popeite s", but the term was loosely used by Frederick Wragge because the official Tunstall delegation contained only twelve men. He included under that description men from Longton and Hanley because of their known connections with the Temperance Movement and Samuel Pope's previous election activities in the Borough. Thirteen pronounced advocates of Hartwell's candidacy can be listed, none of them on the delegations to the Liberal Council from Stoke-upon-Trent, Longton or Hanley. They could only have come from Burslem or Tunstall, if they had been on the Council at all, and the likelihood of their being from Burslem is small. William Woodall did not see his Burslem contingent giving trouble. Even the Tunsall group could not have contained them all, so the conclusion must be that few, if any, sat in on the deliberations of the Liberal Council.

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1. Advertiser. 1868, October 24, p6.
   Edward Mayer, ? - 1873 : of Burslem. William Woodall thought very highly of him.

2. Advertiser. 1868, October 31, p7; Sentinel. 1869, June 26, p4.

The men who held themselves aloof from Hartwell were those in responsible posts in trade unions and temperance societies. With the possible exception of the ironworkers of Tunstall, whose lodge books were used by Hartwell as evidence against Roden, no union supported Hartwell's candidacy. The reason for this was almost certainly because union officials had not been consulted about Hartwell's suitability. The kind of candidate union leaders had in mind to replace Pope was suggested to the Liberal Council by William Owen.[1] He had approached J.A. Wise, who had a high reputation locally as a radical and friend of the working man, and had Parliamentary experience. Wise had refused, but he was not against working men having their own representatives in the House of Commons. Hartwell tried to obtain backing from Wise for his own candidature,[2] and the ambiguous reply Wise sent may well have reflected a more general attitude held by others. In effect, Wise approved the principle of working class candidates, but disapproved of Hartwell. This last point was difficult to express for Hartwell did not set out to be a rabble-rouser. One newspaper reporter commented on his first appearance in the Potteries,

> "Mr. Hartwell was listened to attentively and was frequently applauded, but his style is too quiet and deliberate to provoke enthusiasm."[3]

If it was difficult to oppose Hartwell's cause it was, nevertheless, easy to condemn the high-handed invitation to him from the "Tunstall Popeites". This, in its way, was as arrogant as the moves to install Roden in Grenfell's place. It undermined all reasoned attacks on the operation of the Liberal Council for these were based upon some notion of democratic procedure. It was also possible to attack Hartwell indirectly by pointing out his close links with militant London trade unionists, whose support for the Tunstall puddlers in 1865 did not recommend them to all union members. An anonymous

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1. Advertiser. 1868, August 22, p5.
2. Beehive. 1868, October 31, p1.
3. Advertiser. 1868, October 17, p6.

letter by 'Quilp', in a local paper, pointed out the incongruity of pottery unions working hard to set up a Board of Conciliation and Arbitration for their industry, at the instigation of William Owen, while at the same moment considering electing to Parliament a man who epitomised conflict.

The newly enfranchised voters of Stoke-on-Trent, and particularly the trade union men among them, were saved the embarrassment of having to resolve their dilemma as to whether to vote for Hartwell or not by the action of some members of the Liberal Party whose identity was not established. Not only that, but the underhand tactic of removing Hartwell by paying his debts allowed the divided ranks of labour to unite in righteous indignation. It is significant that the most vociferous and consistent condemnation of the means found to procure Hartwell's resignation came from the very men who had opposed, or at least been silent about, his arrival. Resentment of the financial deal which had removed Hartwell flowed wide for the remainder of 1868 and throughout 1869. A flood of recriminations dissolved the bonds of the Liberal 'interest', and working class suspicion of the instruments of middle class management was increased. In view of the huge extension of the franchise made in 1867 the local Liberal Party could not afford to be associated in the minds of working men with corruption and intimidation. In the long term much damage was done to the Stoke-on-Trent Liberal Party by the conduct of its leaders in 1868.

The conclusion to be drawn from Hartwell's appearance as a candidate in the Potteries in 1868 is that he came at the instigation of some working class political activists who resented the deception practiced on them by the oligarchy of Liberal leaders, and the submissive policy of Union organisers who meekly accepted the fraud. It is not possible to measure the depth of the division in the ranks of labour, but subsequent events in the next decade indicate that the lesson was not lost on those union leaders whose real power was so nearly exposed in 1868.

Part IV. The long term consequences of the 1868 General Election for the Liberal Party.

The consequence of the way in which the Stoke-on-Trent Liberal Party achieved its victory in 1868 was the dissolution of its organisation. The 'walk over the course' performed by Melly and Roden, however satisfactory to them personally, brought an end to the local Party as it had existed in the 1860s. The worst aspect of this was that it shattered the progress made towards some kind of organisational link between the oligarchy of manufacturers and their local government satellites on the one side, and the developing web of predominantly working class associations on the other. The Liberal Council, even in its latest form, was far from effecting that link in itself, but as a stage in an evolutionary process it marked a decided advance. In 1869 it disintegrated, acrimoniously and in confusion.

The Liberal Council collapsed in the wake of the Hartwell scandal and as a consequence of renewed argument between middle class leaders and working men's representatives. Especially noteworthy in his attacks upon his social superiors was that same Edward Mayer of Burslem who had earlier led the onslaught on Hartwell. These attacks reached such a pitch that Christopher Dickinson, chairman of the Council, felt constrained to call an extraordinary meeting in January 1869, inconvenient though it was to him, living for the moment in Cheltenham. He explained to George Melly that,

> "The Secretary of the Council Mr. Mostin came to me and represented that he had been pressed from various parts of the District to call the Council together. He stated his belief, that if it was longer delayed it would be thought that there was something to conceal, ... and the letter you send me from Mr. Bebbington confirms my view of the case, that the feeling is too strong to be altogether ignored. I did not think it well for you or Mr. Roden to be there .... It has been usual to call the Council together once or twice after an election so it is according to precedent."[1]

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1. Melly Papers. XIV. 3780. C.Dickinson to G.Melly, no date, 1869.

The ferocity of the meeting hurt Frederick Wragge who afterwards wrote,

> "The meeting was 42 strong; 20 moderate and satisfied with the letters, 22 hyenas incapable of being tamed. Wigley was at the bottom of it and Mayer of Longton was most vicious against the members (n.b. he had had no money). 2 hours of wild talk and inflated nonesense interspersed with violent epithets."[1]

Dickinson's account was similar in tone, but more detailed.

> "The meeting last night was a very unpleasant one, the feeling about the matter much stronger than I had supposed. The Hartwell transaction was denounced in strong terms and resolutions passed to the effect 1st that the Council repudiates all knowledge or participation in the transaction which it condems 2nd "that you and Mr. Roden be required to attend a Council meeting and give explanations" as they did not consider the letters satisfactory - this was only passed by 22 against 20 - so the first no opposition was attempted. --- Altogether the meeting was against you - and they seemed ready to believe any and all stories about you both, the two Mayers came out particularly strong --- I mentioned the subject of dissolving the Council but they would not entertain it at all, considering that they had been elected for a year, so I think it will be best for me to give up the chairmanship."[2]

Two points were at issue - the morality of financing Hartwell's retirement to ease the path of the other candidates, and the complicity of the Members themselves, and the Council, in the act. To Edward Mayer, who was still raising the issue at a public meeting in October 1869, Hartwell had been bought off. This constituted a politically immoral act. William Wood, perhaps less harsh in his views, nevertheless represented to Melly that the consequence of the affair.

> "had a most prejudicial effect by lowering the tone of political morality in the constituency, which you know was low enough already"[3]

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1. Melly Papers. XIV. 3779. F.Wragge to G.Melly, no date, 1869.

2. ibid., XIV. 3781. C.Dickinson to G.Melly, 1869, January 27. The first motion was proposed by E.Mayer and Charles Heath (Advertiser 1869, January 30, p4).

3. ibid., XIV. 3788. W.Wood to G.Melly, 1869, March 22.

In 1871 William Owen was reported as commenting,

> "that the question of the working men's candidature at the last election had mud at both ends of the stick. If it had been a sin for Robert Hartwell to receive money it had been equally a sin for others to have any hand in the giving of it."[1]

The possibility that Hartwell had been bought off, not only by having his expenses paid, but also with an additional sum as encouragement, made the working class representatives on the Liberal Council especially keen to obtain a resolution denying any part in the affair. They could not affor d to be tarred with the brush of bribery and corruption. It also made them keen to pursue Melly and Roden for the truth, and to this end they determined to keep the Council in existence as their best weapon. Bebbington wrote:-

> "With regard to the Hartwell business it is impossible to predict what course the matter will take --- Colonel Roden's letter seems to have given great umbrage. The reference he made therein to the Council being defunct after the election had terminated has given great offence."[2]

Ironically the Council was now the last thing the managers of the Party wished to preserve, for it was being used as a platform for attacks on them, not as a means of controlling the various 'interests'. The attempts to sweep aside the whole Hartwell affair as a storm in a tea cup had failed miserably, and the managers were forced to recognise that the Council as an instrument of government, was broken. In November 1868, Frederick Wragge informed Melly of his view of matters:-

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1. Sentinel. 1871, December 23, p7 - Melly and Roden had given their annual account of Parliamentary business, and Owen rose from the audience to address the meeting. In his own paper, The Potteries Examiner, 1871, December 23, though his speech was given some prominence in the report of the meeting, this particular passage was in no way mentioned.

2. Melly Papers. XIV. 3782. J.Bebbington to G.Melly, 1869, April 28.

> "There is a great amount of silly exitement here about the Hartwell affair, which I dare say will run its course of nine days. I have not seen Col. Roden since last Monday until this morning. Mr. Bodley was then pouring into his ears his "regrets" and "pities" about the proceedings of Hartwell ---
> I afterwards said to Mr. Bodley that everyone with any knowledge of political affairs was well aware that when three candidates appeared for two seats it was a usual and a wide proceeding for the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party as the case might be, either locally or through the London organisation, to request the weakest of the three to withdraw upon having actual expenses paid. --- I would not mete him such hard measure as to refuse him [Hartwell] the usual option of retiring upon the usual conditions; it appeared unreasonable to insist upon crushing and stamping him out; as he might have been misled and deceived as to his chances at Stoke-upon-Trent."[1]

Wragge's failure to recognise that the election scene had changed with the enlargement of the constituency was probably common to his fellow party leaders. The "usual" way of handling third candidates was outmoded, and when applied to a man in Hartwell's situation was liable to rebound. Caught by this rebound the chairman of the Liberal Council was thrown off balance in 1869, and he used his distance from the constituency as an excuse to give up his position, and to undermine the existence of the Council. With attendance down to forty two for vital business in January it was in any case declining. By September 1869 it was thought to be deceased.[2]

It was not only the Liberal Council which suffered the backwash of the Hartwell scandal, and the earlier events of 1868. William Wood told Melly that the Party was in bad shape for other reasons.

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1. Melly Papers. XIII. 3116. F.W. Wragge to G. Melly 1868, November 23.
2. Melly Papers. XIV. 3809. C. Dickinson to G. Melly, 1869, September 25.

> "To convey any adequate idea of the present political feeling in the Borough and its causes I must refer back to a time long antecedent to the last election, this I cannot now attempt to do, but this much I will say that the Liberal Party in the Borough is greatly in need of a sound, healthy and efficient organization, and if such an organization is not shortly effected it will most probably result in the defeat of the Liberal cause so far as the Borough of Stoke is concerned at the next election".[1]

Wood probably had in mind the absence of a Liberal agent and an adequate team of assistants, for this was the second area of failure for the Party following the 1868 election. This was particularly serious, for paid agents had performed a vital task by securing pledges from electors in return for assistance in the process of registration. Such work was routine, but it was one of the few ways in which some continuity was maintained in Party life and through which voters were informed of their rights. George Wigley of Burslem had once been in charge of registration throughout the Borough,[2] but Edward Challinor had been given over-all supervisory responsibilities in the early 1860s, possibly to Wigley's annoyance. Challinor was, in turn, supplanted by Alfred Billson, the Liverpool solicitor, because Melly had learned his lesson about Challinor and his tendency to lose control of finances after the 1865 election. This change certainly helped Melly to keep a tighter grip on affairs in the Potteries, but it did not help the local Party in the long run.

Billson organised both of the 1868 campaigns for Melly, though Challinor was officially the agent for the by-election. At the general election Billson used James Bebbington as his stalking horse. Bebbington

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1. ibid., XIV. 3788. W.Wood to G.Melly, 1869, March 22.

2. ibid., XIII. 3333. J.Macintyre to G.Melly, 1868, January 21. Wigley was not a lawyer. In 1869 he kept the Queens Head Inn.

had been recruited from Pope's committee in 1865 by Challinor and clearly had political ambitions. His rise was not welcomed by all, however, Wigley for one feeling aggrieved by it. Bebbington was not a man of stature in the Liberal Party, and neither was Wigley, so that Billson's bequest to the local organisation, when he withdrew at the end of the general election campaign, was not a happy one. Each town had its own registration organiser and committee of gentlemen to oversee affairs, but there was no central direction by one official. Billson had performed this task, but had no long term intention of remaining in charge for he had his own interests to serve in South Lancashire. The consequence was, therefore, that Stoke-on-Trent was left with a group of sub-agents each unwilling to yield pride of place to one, and all collectively failing to supply the necessary drive and energy to keep the Party united.

It is interesting to note one other change in the organisation of the Stoke-on-Trent Liberal Party which occurred because George Melly was a candidate there in 1868. This followed a decision by the Liberal Council in January 1868[1] not to use public houses as committee rooms and ward headquarters. Clearly this was the result of Melly's personal choice and the influence of the Temperance Movement in the Party. This divorce of the Party from the evils of drink at election time played a part in quietening the by-election, but it left a gap in the organisation which was not filled. No alternative local headquarters were secured to replace the pubs and the consequence was that the Party's contacts with the working classes were reduced just at the time when these were most valuable.

The collapse of the Liberal Party's organisation after 1868 was highlighted by activities undertaken by Conservatives. They had long relied on the personal appeal of their wealthy patron, William Taylor Copeland.

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1. Sentinel. 1868, January 25, p4. Melly Papers XIII. 3338 A.Billson to G.Melly, 1868, February 3.

This had been sufficient not only to secure his own election but also to provide for his successor, A.J.Beresford-Hope. The slenderness of the base of Conservative fortunes were exposed in the by-election of 1868, despite a narrow failure at the poll, and party leaders moved quickly thereafter to prepare a new organisation to meet the new conditions. Inspired, perhaps, by the manner in which they had recovered from their only previous defeat, that of 1852, when a Hanley Conservative Association had been formed and a newsroom instituted to counter the propaganda of agitators,[1] in September 1868 they set up a Constitutional Association.[2] The purpose behind this Association was stated to be the education of the voters prior to the occurrence of another election. The Liberal press reported these and subsequent moves to marshall working class voters in the Conservative cause, but ignored their implications.

Along with the change in strategy there came a new leader. William Davenport[3] had inherited his father's status at the head of the Conservative Party in the Borough, but in 1868 he was replaced by Robert Heath,[4] also a second generation industrialist, but in the iron trade, not pottery. Heath tried to push Colin Minton Campbell into standing a second time at the General Election in 1868, but failed, and in the absence of any other candidate turned to a long-term programme of party re-organisation. He became the first President of a Staffordshire Potteries Workingman's Constitutio-nal

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1. Advertiser. 1874, September 12, p5.

2. Sentinel. 1868, September 12, p4.

3. William Davenport 1805-1869 : younger son of John Davenport. After the death of his older brother, Henry, in 1835, William headed the family business. In 1859 he beamce High Sheriff of Staffordshire, but his real interests outside business were country sports, not local government.

4. Robert Heath 1816-1893 : M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent 1874-80. He was the son of a local iron master and was born in Burslem. After partnering F.Stanier in iron works at Silverdale he built up his own empire of furnaces and forges to become by 1880 one of the most successful independent iron masters in England. He became a Deputy Lieutenant and High Sheriff of Staffordshire.

Association whose object was to foster branches in the Pottery towns where Conservative supporters among the working class could gather. Each branch was to recruit members by holding dinners and to educate them by opening newsrooms.[1] The first dinner was held in Stoke-upon-Trent in September 1868, and the second in Hanley the following month. C.M.Campbell and Heath were joined by the Northern Division Conservative Member, C.B.Adderley, as the leading speakers and advocates of the Association.

Progress, while not rapid, was steady and the Constitutional Association improved its position in 1869. Robert Heath was heavily committed in the general election to fighting the campaign in Newcastle-under-Lyme, and without a candidate in Stoke-on-Trent there was little point in pressing too heavily too quickly. In April 1869, Tunstall and Burslem shared a newsroom, opened with a successful dinner for some three hundred.[2] Viscount Sandon and Sir Smith Child spoke. A projected demonstration of strength, with Disraeli as guest of honour, did not come off,[3] but by August all five towns had newsrooms, and an Agent, James Montford, was using them to help in his work of registering voters.[4]

On these foundations and under Robert Heath's guidance an attractive organisation was built up, each branch arranging social activities for the purpose of winning Conservative votes. Lectures and concerts were held, teas provided before political meetings, billiard rooms built for amusement, newspapers bought for their propaganda, and annual excursions made to the gardens of the great. Alton Towers was a special favourite for these attractively cheap day trips. In view of this patronage by the Earl of Shrewsbury and lesser landed gentry in North Staffordshire, and since working

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1. Advertiser. 1868, September 26, p5; October 17, p1; 24, p7.
2. Sentinel. 1869, April 3, p7.
3. ibid., 1869, March 6, p4.
4. ibid., 1869, August 14, p1

men could find an outlet for their organisational talents in the social events, political leadership was left in the hands of those who had always exercised control in the Potteries. Robert Heath was the equal of the Davenports, Copelands and Campbells in social and industrial terms, and he led the Party into a new and more lively situation in the early 1870s. A real effort was made to channel working class support for Conservative ideals through new institutions specially created to woo voters, not to select candidates. By contrast, the Liberals scarcely attempted to win voters to their party, and destroyed the machinery they had set up to find candidates.

CHAPTER 3.

TRADE UNIONS, THE LABOUR REPRESENTATION LEAGUE AND THE DIVISION OF THE LIBERAL 'INTEREST'

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TRADE UNIONS, THE LABOUR REPRESENTATION LEAGUE AND THE DIVISION OF THE LIBERAL 'INTEREST'.

Part 1. Early trade union involvement in politics in Stoke-on-Trent.

The analysis of the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent prior to the 1867 Reform Act not only stressed the leading position of a small group of employers, but also showed how some working class actions impinged on party politics. Among the broad masses of the working population there existed a deep and wide commitment to Liberalism, even though the great bulk were outside the Party as it was narrowly defined in terms of those on the electoral register. This commitment was evident at the hustings and in 1852 had proved a useful asset for the Party managers. But expressions of it were infrequent and its extent could not be measured. There was an assumption by Liberal leaders in the Potteries that any expansion of the franchise would strengthen their Party in the constituency because of this attitude among the lower classes; the possibility that there might be some separate working man's Liberal organisation was not entertained.

The main political movement involving the working classes prior to the 1860s - Chartism -had not prospered, and had not, in any case, challenged the two-party framework built up since 1832. Chartists sought the vote, not the destruction of existing political parties. In the absence of any substantial evidence suggesting that working men were looking for a third force, distinct from the Conservative and Liberal cohorts, and in the knowledge that much wealth and a high degree of organisational skill would be required to oust these parties from constituencies, the assumptions of party bosses were natural enough.

It was possible for Liberal leaders in Stoke-on-Trent in the 1860s to be encouraged in their beliefs also by the success they had enjoyed in heading off the Popeite group. The weight of working class support behind the Temperance movement had not been enough to compel the Liberal Party bosses to admit Samuel Pope as an official candidate, and neither he, nor any other, had stood as an independent Liberal with working class backing until after the franchise had been changed. Even then there had been a

marked absence of support for Robert Hartwell from the trade unions, and none at all from the Temperance Societies. There were no other associations of working men active in local politics, and independent working class action in Parliamentary affairs required the backing of some formal organisation.

Liberal leaders made a mistake in assuming, however, that the working man's allegiance to Liberalism made him oblivious of its implications for action. Some working men grasped very quickly that the power of their newly won vote, obtained as they saw it by reason of justifications to be found in Liberalism, was not fully realisable unless the Liberal Party was altered to allow for the proper inclusion of their interests. They expected Party leaders to take action to this end because it was consonant with Liberal ideology. A few working class leaders saw this action as going as far as encouraging working men themselves to enter the House of Commons to represent the special interests of their class. In Stoke-on-Trent in 1868 some signs indicated that local Party leaders understood this aspiration, but the outcome of the Liberal Council deliberations proved otherwise. Nevertheless, those working men with the most useful knowledge of politics, and the most acute reasons for seeking representation in the Commons, had been involved in Party affairs for the first time. These were the leaders of trade unions and Friendly Societies. They acquiesced in arrangements made for their representation in Parliament by the established Party leaders, but they came out of the experience sadder and wiser men, for they recognised the extent to which Party leaders had failed to live up to the high ideals of Liberalism.

As a group, trade union leaders were some of the most articulate and forceful personalities of those in the working classes to be touched by Parliamentary politics. They were not necessarily typical of the vast mass of the labouring population, and did not, as individuals, always claim to be representative of all working men. The association of working men in unions, however, had proved to be the one effective way of arranging for the collective voice of sections of the working classes to be expressed. Such associations were strong enough to challenge employers on industrial

matters, and to fight bitter battles with them. Once urban workers had the vote it was but a short stride for union leaders, accustomed to conflict with their industrial masters on one set of issues, to move on to a struggle with those same masters on political matters.

Conflict between union leaders and Liberal Party managers was not inevitable, but it took place in Stoke-on-Trent after 1868, and the division in the Liberal 'interest' which thus appeared led to the promotion of another labour candidate, A.A. Walton.[1] That this happened was partly the result of the way union leaders were introduced into Liberal Party affairs in 1868 and the dismay which they experienced over their treatment at the hands of Party bosses.

Union leaders in the Potteries district felt this dismay all the more because their support for Liberalism was well-known and deeply rooted. This was particularly true of those men who organised unions in the pottery industry, though the reasons why operative potters should have been so decided in their politics are more matters of speculation than fact. The nature of the pottery industry and the important contribution Non-conformist chapels made to life in North Staffordshire were doubtless factors conducive to the propogation of Liberal ideas, but the strongest evidence for the political views of unionists in pottery trades came from one of their union activities.

From early in 1864 unions in the pottery industry, chiefly the Hollow-ware Pressers' Union and the Flat Pressers' Union, financed and supervised

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1. Alfred Armstrong Walton 1816- : builder, architect, journalist and social reformer. He was born at Hexham, the son of a local builder and descendant of 'border chiefs'. About 1837 he moved to London and worked for Peto and Grissell and other building contractors, finally qualifying as an architect and joining Sir George G. Scott about 1845. In 1863 he set up independently, first in Brecon, later in London. From his earliest working days in Newcastle-on-Tyne he associated with labour politicians and union leaders. Harney and O'Brian encouraged him; he was linked with Cobden in the Free Trade movement and he wrote books and articles designed to inform his fellow workers about education, sanitation, housing and land tenure questions. He was on Brecon Council, stood briefly for Parliament there in 1868, worked actively in the Labour Representation League, and for the Artizans, Labourers and General Dwelling Co.

STOKE-ON-TRENT SCHOOL BOARD.

THE above Board will proceed, at their next Meeting to APPOINT AN INSPECTOR to carry out the Bye-laws and other instructions of the School Board.

He will be required to devote the whole of his time to the duties of the office.

Candidates to send their applications, endorsed "School Board Officer," with references and stating salary required, to me, on or before MONDAY, December 4th, 1871.

(Signed) JOHN W. THOMAS,
Clerk to the Board.

Liverpool-road,
Stoke-on-Trent.

MONEY TO BE LENT, in town or country, to Gentlemen Farmers, Tradesmen, or others, from £50 and upwards, upon personal security: interest, 5 per cent. per annum, from one to seven years; no commission or charges made. Also, Sums from £1,000, on mortgage, at 3½ per cent., on freehold or leasehold property, for any term not exceeding 21 years.—Apply to MR. HENRY HOWARD, Civil Engineer and Surveyor (late Girdlestone and Barclay), 11, Euston Square, London.

WANTED

WANTED Two Women GILDERS and LINERS, One Man GILDER, and an Apprentice GILDER.—Apply NEALE AND HARRISON, Swan Works, 10, Brunswick street, Hanley. Good wages given to really good hands.

TRADE NOTICES, &c.

NOTICE.—Hollow-ware Pressers and Encaustic Tile Makers are requested not to apply at MESSRS. HOLLINS', at Stoke, as there is a dispute.
By Order.

NOTICE. — THE LONGTON LODGE OF HOLLOW-WARE PRESSERS will meet every Saturday night at the HARE AND HOUNDS INN, between the hours of 6 and 8. Hollow-ware Pressers attend.

HANLEY OLD LODGE OF HOLLOW-WARE PRESSERS.

The members of the above Lodge are respectfully informed that SPECIAL MEETINGS will be held on SATURDAY NIGHTS, Nov. 18th and 25th, at the usual hours (from 6 to 8 o'clock.)

' In addition to some other highly important business on the night of November 18th, the Auditors of the Quarterly Accounts will have to be appointed; and on the night of November 25th, it being the ordinary Quarterly Meeting, the audited accounts will be submitted to the Lodge, and the appointment of officers take place.

All members who profess to feel an interest in the existence and welfare of the Lodge are expected to attend, if possible, and take part in the deliberations which may arise, and the decisions which may be come to.

BY ORDER.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR FLAT-PRESSERS DISPUTE.

All moneys collected for the Flat-pressers' Dispute to be forwarded to the Queen's Hotel, Cobridge, on this day (Saturday), and Monday next, to the central committee.

BY ORDER.

THE FLAT-PRESSERS' LODGE OF STOKE holds its Meetings at the Ring-of-Bells, Church-street, on Saturday evenings, at 6 o'clock.
By Order.

NOTICE.—FLATPRESSERS are requested not to apply for Situations at Messrs. Copeland's Stoke, as disputes are pending respecting prices.

NOTICE.—The Earthenware and China Turners of Longton will hold a GENERAL MEETING on WEDNESDAY EVENING NEXT, Nov. 29th, at the [illegible] INN, Commerce street, to consider the question of paying 1s. per week to Trade, Sick, and Burial Fund. Chair to be taken at half-past Seven o'clock. Every turner is requested to attend.
BY ORDER.

NOTICE.—Dish-makers are requested not to apply for situations, at Messrs. MEAKIN'S, Cobridge.
By Order.

TO SOLICITORS, TRUSTEES IN BANKRUPTCY, and parties about to DISPOSE of HOUSE-HOLD FURNITURE, STOCK-IN TRADE, &c.

WILLIAM O'KEEFFE,
AUCTIONEER AND VALUER,
13, MARKET-STREET, HANLEY.

Sales by Auction of every description of property conducted on the most approved principles, and valuations made with care and efficiency.

JOHN LLOYD, Auctioneer, Valuer House, and General Agent, is prepared to receive consignments of goods of any description, and can insure immediate disposal at good prices for cash. Having had 30 years' experience in the Drapery and General Agency Business, he feels assured he can give satisfaction to his employers. Valuations made for Probate, Transfer of Hotels promptly attended to, and effectually executed, at moderate charges.

Office—7, Gower street, Longton.

NOTICE TO THE READERS OF THE *EXAMINER.*

In our remarks upon the customs which prevail at some manufactories of stopping workmen's wages for various purposes, just and unjust, which we made last week, reference was made to a payment being made for a doctor at one firm. From information that we have since received it is but just to state that the practice of paying for a doctor had prevailed for 12 months at this firm, and had been commenced with the free consent of the men; but not caring to continue the payments the workmen at a meeting the week before Martinmas decided not to continue the payments for a doctor. From this it will be seen that no compulsion in the matter has been exercised over the men.

The Potteries Examiner.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25TH, 1871.

THE LICENSING QUESTION AND WORKINGMEN.

It seems to be generally understood that the next session of Parliament, after the Ballot Bill has been passed, will be devoted to a very large extent to social, and not so much to political questions. Foremost amongst these questions are the anticipated measures for the better regulation of the industry of mining, and the traffic in strong drink, in both of which there is a strong similarity, in one point at least. The Mines Regulation Bill is intended to prevent the wholesale destruction of life in our mines, and the Licensing Bill to lessen the amount of evil resulting from the use of intoxicating drinks. But though there is this similarity, in the public benefit conferred in a general sense, by the two trades, there is no kinship whatever, the good in one case being limited to those who get rich out of others poverty, while there is no industry, class, or community that does not in some degree derive its prosperity from the exercise of the miners' calling. Another great difference in these two trades is the reason why legislation is required. In the case of the sale of alcoholic drinks, it is the public whom it is desirous to protect from the effects of that sale, the publicans' profit and the public advantage being to a large degree antagonistic; but the point is reversed with the miner, as it is he who, while enriching his employer, and building up the industrial success of the country, requires protection from those who do not adequately protect him when working in the mine. The miner is often sacrificed to the greed of others, through the cheap system of working the mines, that grudges taking proper precautionary measures against accidents; and the difference between him and the publican may thus be expressed: the miners need protection, while others need pro-

a government be worth anything, it will multiply as far as possible the incentives to virtue and diminish the temptations to vice; but our governments have sought rather to fructify the latter, and after raising the devil they have held before him the gaol and the gallows to repress his evil propensities, with what success our criminal records will declare. There is a national system for manufacturing drunkards and paupers, which yields a yearly profit to the country of twenty-five million pounds. Those who believe in this revenue from such a debasing source, may try moral suasion and argument to stop drinking; but the truth is, as fast as those influences rescue some, the nation with its myriad of revenue-paying public-houses, leads others in the slough. As a nation we have enacted again the fable of Æsop by nursing the drink system, which, like the serpent, stings the nation in its children. We may see how this law-licensed temptation operates in our district, where there are thirteen or fourteen hundred public-houses, or one to every 30 of our adult male population. Is it not a perfect farce, with this fact facing us, to talk about the liquor trade being a needful public convenience, when it is so overgrown as this. What tax is heavier than the maintenance of this number in our midst? They are at every corner of our streets to lure to drink. Well may Mr. Bruce say the workingmen of our country are crying, 'deliver us from temptation.' In his speech at the North Stafford Licensed Victuallers' dinner, on Monday last, Sir C. B. Adderley, M.P., said that "In the case of intoxicating liquors, the demand rose to the supply, and when the temptations were excessive, the demand would be also excessive. This would not only be injurious to the health and morals of individuals, but positively hurtful to the peace of society." This is true, but it is nevertheless strange language to hold at a banquet of publicans, whose motto is to defend the interests of their trade. We quite agree with Sir Charles, also that it would be better for the workingmen to pray Parliament 'not to lead them into temptation,' and the legislature would best do that by giving the people themselves the power of vetoing the excessive sale of drink, as the responsibility of the continuance of the traffic would then be thrown upon the people themselves. The great principle of legislation on the licensing question will be to give the community right of absolute control over a trade that so much affects its moral, social, and physical well being. The principle of the government of the people demands that those who suffer from the effects of the traffic should have the power of restraining it, and if need be of prohibiting it. Self protection demands this. No class of men have a right to impose a burden upon society for their selfish interest alone, and any public system like the liquor traffic should stand or fall by the principle, is it mainly influential in producing public harm or public good, and the public should be made the judges of this, and endowed with the legal power of carrying out its judgment. Sir Charles Adderley's reasoning at the Licensed Victuallers' dinner shows that the government has the right to, and must for the public good exercise that right, of restricting this traffic in a different manner to any other business. That principle admitted, it is but a logical step to the right of the people having either a vetoing or a limiting power over the traffic as may seem best to them. If the people wanted the liquor traffic they could retain it, if they do not want it why should the sole controlling power be vested in the magistrates? In the

An extract from William Owen's Potteries Examiner after improvements made in lay-out in June 1871. Page 4 carried the leading article and notices of union business.

the publication of a newspaper, the Potteries Examiner.[1] Its prospectus advertised it as an advocate of Liberal principles and its editor was William Evans.[2] This weekly paper was the successor to The Potter, which Evans passed on to the unions in 1864, and it was run by Evans because of the reputation he had made in the 1840s as editor of the much more influential Potters' Examiner and Workman's Advocate. Under Evans's managership the Potteries Examiner had a struggle to find a sound financial base, but in the context of politics it was more significant that Evans fell out with his union-appointed controlling committee over editorial policy, and his own behaviour. He was censured in 1865 by the Executive of the Hollow-ware Pressers' Union which recorded that,

> "it is the opinion of this Executive that the interest of our Paper has suffered through the conduct of Mr. Evans in presiding over a Tory Committee whilst the Paper by its Prospectus was to advocate Liberal Principles and we hope that he will be more discreet in future".[3]

Leaders in pottery trade unions in the 1860s, therefore, were clearly committed to the Liberal cause. Evans was not over much in sympathy with this, but he was sacked in 1867[4] for being lax in forwarding the interests of the unions. By 1871 the paper called itself the official organ of the "Potters, Miners and Ironworkers" which indicated that some time before that date officials of unions in all three industries had endorsed its political standpoint. As it has already been noted that Pope looked to Tunstall union men for support for his radical views, and that William Woodall thought unions

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1. In 1864 the full title was Potteries Examiner and Workman's Advocate. (see Record Book of Transactions of Executive Committee for the Hollow-ware Pressers' Union, 1864 February 29; June 20).

2. William Evans, 1816-1887 : artist, gilder and trade union journalist. He came to the Potteries aged seven, and in 1836-7 he was involved in the great strike of potters. He helped to refound the potters' union in 1843 by establishing a newspaper for it. His greatest contribution to union affairs was his Emigration Society which had a settlement in Wisconsin in the 1840s. Little is known of his career after 1851, apart from his brief return to the Potteries 1864-7.

3. Trans. Hollow-ware Pressers' Union, 1865, July 31.

4. ibid., 1867 April 1; May 13.

were generally led by radicals, there is little doubt Liberal leaders were right in assuming that the extension of the franchise increased Liberal support quite significantly.

It was because Liberal leaders were so confident of the political opinions of union officials that in July 1868 several union secretaries and other officers were taken on to the Hanley section of the Liberal Council. The secretaries of small branches of the Engineers' Union and the Joiners' Union were included in this group, but there were also two miners and seven men from pottery unions.[1] At least two other unionists can be identified in delegations from other towns, both from the pottery group of unions, and, since there is no evidence that union members were unwilling to become involved in Liberal Party organisation, it appears safe to conclude that before the general election of 1868 trade union officers accepted a political role with an easy conscience.

The actions of several individuals, however, did not imply that their societies authorised them as representatives. As organisations, unions did not associate themselves with particular political campaigns, and had not been linked directly to any party before 1868. If the example of the Hollow-ware Pressers' Union is typical, they were extremely wary of such situations. During the years 1864 to 1871 the Executive of that union only once recorded a decision which involved a political commitment, other than those made concerning the union newspaper. In January 1867 members of the Executive decided, as a union, to make a contribution of articles for a bazaar to be held by the Reform League.[2] This was questioned among the various town lodges, and in February the Executive retracted, recommending only that lodges

> "do as they think compatible with the interests of the society and recommend that the Lodges should adopt their own course in assisting the movement".[3]

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1. Sentinel. 1868, July 25, p7.

2. Trans Hollow-ware Pressers' Union, 1867, January 7,

3. ibid., February 11.

It would appear from this that though union leaders were prepared to make a minor advance toward political involvement the rank and file preferred neutrality.

In August 1868 an ad-hoc Political Council was formed by the pottery unions to hold a private meeting with the Liberal candidates so as to seek their support for a petition to Parliament on the need to abolish the good-from-oven system of wage payments. It has already been shown that William Woodall did not regard this as a serious threat to the candidates, and for all its grandiose name, it was not apparently intended as one by the unions concerned. They were genuinely seeking negotiations on an industrial question, not entering the election campaign in a partizan spirit. It is true that the Political Council was formed before the new Liberal Council had its first meeting, and before the nominations of Melly and Roden were steam rollered through. Presumably, therefore, it was available for use in a union-inspired political campaign against the candidates proposed by the Liberal Party bosses. That it was not so used was testimony to the prudence of Liberal leaders and the cleverness of their invitation to union leaders to join the Liberal Council. This neat association of union leaders with a majority decision to adopt candidates proposed by the Party managers foiled any union move to put up a working man's representative.

Trade unions in the Stoke-on-Trent constituency did not make a big impact on local politics in the early 1860s even though their leading members were Liberal in outlook. Few unionists were voters and as organisations unions were wary of political commitments. With the passing of the second Reform Act, however, union leaders were of some value to the Liberal Party organisers and these unionists were brought into Party affairs as a token recognition of the strength of the new voters. Even so, in 1868 the unions had no influence on the course of events.

The reason why union leaders made so little difference to the political scene in 1868, even when invited to take on a particular role, and the reason why miners and ironworkers were even less prominent than pottery men, was partly a consequence of the size and state of unions at that time. Whatever their size there could never be a guarantee that leaders could deliver their members' votes for a Liberal candidate, but if unions were large and full of life, there was a chance that a proportion of members would follow the advice of their officials. In the case of the mining and iron industries in 1868 unions were in disarray and had few members. They had been in better shape earlier in the decade, but were at a low ebb immediately prior to the general election. There had been a decline in membership and interest in the pottery unions too, since the peak of 1866, but fairly active societies existed for a few of the main kinds of craftsmen. The Ovenmen, Hollow-ware Pressers, Mould Makers and Turners had representatives on the Liberal Council.

In the case of the pottery unions there was another, more particular, reason which may help explain their easy acquiescence in the Liberal Council decisions and their lack of aggression in 1868. In 1867 the unions and employers had begun negotiations which resulted in the formation in 1868 of a Board of Arbitration for the industry. This consisted of ten manufacturers and ten union officials. The operation of such a Board was a delicate business and dear to the hearts of the ten union members. It began meeting in July 1868, the same month as the elections to the Liberal Council. Important figures in the pottery industry, both masters and men, served on both bodies and it is easy to understand a desire on the part of the unionists not to foment arguments with their employers in the one institution for fear of repercussions in the other.

Thirdly, unionists only had a small effect on party politics in Stoke-on-Trent during the 1868 general election because their leaders became involved more at the invitation of Liberal Party bosses than by reason of their own decision. Moreover, their involvement was as individuals, not as representatives of institutions. It probably did not suit Party managers to encourage union officers to act as delegates from their societies any more than the unionists themselves wanted so to act. Union leaders went on to the Liberal Council because of their status among workingmen in general; as individuals they were men of account among those classes of people newly enfranchised and eligible for Party membership. They had positions, in their own circles, very similar to those held by public-spirited manufacturers in the middle ranks of society. For this reason union leaders were men deserving some respect, and invitations to the Liberal Council were seen as the currency in which that respect was paid.

Nevertheless, the deliberate association of union leaders with the Liberal Party, and the ready acceptance by those leaders of the link, necessarily brought unions as institutions into politics. In Stoke-on-Trent unions had not sought to become adjuncts of a political party, but the Liberal bosses wanted them as satellite agencies to recruit voters, and they captured the union officials in the hope that they would volunteer for this role. At the time little importance was attached to this action, probably because of the relatively weak position of unions, but events gave the union-Liberal Party link an entirely new significance.

Robert Hartwell personified a change of attitude towards politics which became apparent in union circles at the end of the 1860s. In October 1867 he had raised the possibility of working men becoming M.P.s in a discussion at the London Working Men's Association.[1] At that time he was not arguing for the use of trade unions as means for securing such representation, but

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1. A.W. Humphrey. A History of Labour Representation. (London 1912). p14

in August 1868 his newspaper, the Beehive, was pointing to this as a possibility.[1] When Hartwell decided to move to Stoke-on-Trent to fight the election he aimed to secure trade union support as the basis for his campaign. He obtained a manifesto signed by two hundred officers of London and provincial trade societies welcoming his candidature, and he associated himself with the Tunstall lodge of ironworkers. His campaign did not develop as a union-based one because the pottery union leaders stood by their commitment to the 'official' candidates, and because common sense dictated that a broader appeal was necessary in view of the feeble state of unions in other industries. Nevertheless, Hartwell set an example which could be followed if unions expanded and found it possible to co-operate on political matters.

In 1869 the Liberal Council in Stoke-on-Trent dissolved, and with it went the association between union leaders and the Party. Union officials were thereby freed from an inhibiting factor, and, encouraged by a widening of the movement among trade union organisers at national level to seek Parliamentary seats for working men, they set about reversing their policy of 1868. They felt snubbed by local Party managers, and recognised that the tide of union fortunes had turned when membership increased. Thus the movement began for the promotion of another labour candidate in the constituency, with the expansion of unions in all three of the major local industries as the prime factor behind the challenge mounted by Alfred Walton in 1874.

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1. ibid., p22

Part II. The revival of trade unions in the major industries of Stoke-on-Trent in the early 1870s.

Three significant features have been identified in the reinvigoration of trade unions in the pottery industry in the early 1870s.[1] New societies were formed; older unions reconstituted themselves to gain new advantages; and the overall size of the membership increased. Since the last vestige of the United Branches of Operative Potters had disappeared on the collapse of the Emigration Society about 1851, societies had existed only for workers in one craft or section of the industry. Acting independently and husbanding slender resources a few unions had achieved modest success, in the 1860s, reaching a peak in 1866 when the Ovenmen's Society helped to bring to an end the yearly contract of hire made by operatives each November. Membership figures as reported for 1867 and 1868 have been regarded as above average for the 1850s and 1860s, meaning that usually only half the hollow-ware pressers of the district were members of their union, and fewer than half the ovenmen in their society. In 1867 each of these unions had some 700-800 members[2] and were the largest in the industry. The Flat Pressers' Society mustered only 98, which was certainly a small percentage of the men working in that trade.

Militancy was not a characteristic of pottery unions in general even though they were not heavily involved in social benefit schemes which often made leaders cautious about strike action. Arbitration was a built-in feature of annual hiring agreements after 1851 and helped reduce the tension otherwise common to an industry with a complex piece-rate wage structure. The change

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1. W.H.Warburton, The History of Trade Union Organisation in the North Staffordshire Potteries. (London 1931), pp 168-178.

2. ibid., p.169. Trans. Hollow-ware Pressers' Union noted that 550 members were in the union in 1867, and only 400 in 1869.

in circumstances in the early 1870s did not bring more militant policies to the fore partly because a number of societies reformed themselves to promote social benefit schemes which demanded higher weekly subscriptions and stricter financial control. Of all the unions the Hollow-ware Pressers appeared to change most, increasing its membership to 1,400 in 1873, and adopting a remodelled constitution in 1871 with considerable success. Only one branch of the old union stood out against the new benefit schemes and against the new rule book six months after their introduction.[1] The Flat Pressers' Society reconstructed itself in similar fashion, and even considered amalgamating with the Hollow-Ware Pressers' Union.[2] Altogether, eight unions flourished in March 1871,[3] and in the succeeding two or three years continued to enjoy increasing prosperity and success in negotiations with employers.

Only one marked weakness worried some of the most ardent unionists. This was the failure of the unions to amalgamate to produce strong, nationally-organised societies after the fashion of so many other industries and crafts. Three agencies gave some unity to the pottery unions - the Potteries Trades Council, the Board of Arbitration and the union newspaper - but these were not acceptable substitutes for full amalgamation. In the absence of this the individual societies were very vulnerable to pressures exerted by employers.

One man occupied a unique position among the members of pottery unions at the end of the 1860s - William Owen, the editor of the Potteries Examiner. He was not named as a union agent but he acted as one, working full-time on behalf of unions in general, and the separate societies of pottery workers in particular. In 1867 he had left his potter's lathe to edit the union newspaper[4] and to earn his living as a journalist and publisher. His

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1. Examiner. 1871, May 19, p2.
2. ibid., June 17, p4.
3. ibid., March 17, p1.
4. ibid., 1873, March 29, p4; Sentinel. 1907, November 25, p6.

reputation among his fellow workmen was such that they allowed him to lead them into the setting up of the Board of Arbitration in 1868, on which Owen served as secretary to the union representatives. He attended Trades Union Congresses on behalf of the potters, starting with the second such assembly in August 1869 in Birmingham. Above all, he was in constant daily contact with union work at every level, from lodge tea parties and fund-raising concerts, where he was in demand as chairman or speaker, to formal inquiries into piece-work rates at the Board of Arbitration. Though still a young man, William Owen was acquiring a formidable influence in the local trade union movement, and it did not pass unnoticed that this was not used on behalf of Robert Hartwell. It was alleged in the Beehive that Hartwell was

> "assailed with the vilest abuse by the Whig tools, and grossly misrepresented in two Liberal journals supposed to be somewhat under the influence of one of the opposing candidates ---"[1]

The only two Liberal journals to which the Beehive could have referred were the Staffordshire Sentinel and the Potteries Examiner.

Few, if any, working men in the Potteries were better placed than Owen to assess the consequences of Hartwell's campaign. None was more able to lead the newly enfranchised workers of the district towards having their own representative in Parliament. He was known to be a relative of the great Robert Owen and the son of a union organiser active at the time of the famous strike of potters in 1836. Before accepting the challenge a task of this magnitude offered, however, Owen may well have wanted outside support and some evidence of the respectability of the objective. He may have needed some such stimulation as forced his thoughts in the direction of arbitration on wage disputes in 1867, when an article by T.Hughes provoked him to action.[2] If so, his stay in Birmingham in August 1869 for the Trades Union Congress

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1. Beehive. 1868, November 21, p4.

2. Examiner. 1873, June 21, p6.

provided exactly this external influence. As the sole delegate to the Congress from the Potteries Trades Council he mixed for several days with union secretaries and working class politicians of national reputation. He heard Alfred Walton address the Congress on the subject of labour representation in the House of Commons, and listened to the ideas of two other advocates of the same course, Robert M.Latham, President of the Labour Representation League, and Mr. Harry of the Chelsea Electoral Association. The latter circulated a paper which

> "urged the formation of a great industrial party to secure the return of representatives of labour, with a view of securing the "nationalization of the land by purchasing it off its possessors", and a national paper currency ..."[1]

Walton was more moderate, being a business man in his own right as well as a friend to trade unions. Even so, he thought

> "that the working classes were not represented as they ought to be in the House of Commons. The Session of the Reformed Parliament was allowed to pass without a single member having suggested an enquiry into the cause of more than a million and a half working men in England being in a state of compulsory idleness ---. The conditions of the working man had been neglected and not a single working man had been permitted to enter Parliament in the labour interests. What therefore should they do? They should unite, form a working man's party, and at all future elections where two Liberal candidates had to be elected they should insist upon nominating one, allowing the middle class to choose the other. Should the middle class party refuse to concur in this arrangement the working men would support their man by plumping for him. They should in future disregard the delusive cry, 'Don't divide the Liberal interest', but having one object in view, nothing should divert them from its accomplishment."[2]

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1. Times. 1869, August 3o, p4.

2. ibid., this is partly quoted in B.C.Roberts, The Trades Union Congress, 1868-1921. (London, 1958). pp58-9.

Congress passed a motion associating itself with the sentiments expressed in all three appeals for labour representation and recommended unionists to support the Labour Representation League.

Alfred Walton would have attracted Owen's attention earlier in the Congress proceedings for he had proposed a motion, seconded by George Howell, in support of the ideas Owen put before the Congress in a paper entitled, How far will courts of Arbitration and Conciliation promote peace between Capital and Labour? In view of Owen's commitment to this cause nothing could have more firmly drawn Owen to Alfred Walton. In similar fashion Walton was devoted to the proposition that working men should put up for election to Parliament with the expectation that their fellow workers would campaign for them. He was not at this stage, so it has been suggested,[1] anticipating that trade unions would use their funds for election purposes, but he was hoping to link them to the efforts of the Labour Representation League. Given that Walton was not without political ambitions - he had tentatively offered himself as a candidate for Brecon in 1868 - and that Owen would be receptive to the general idea of promoting a working class candidate at Stoke-on-Trent, the fact that Walton had taken a moderate line on labour representation, and was wholly behind arbitration in industrial disputes, would make this a most significant first meeting. From this point Walton's career became ever more linked with the Stoke-on-Trent constituency in which William Owen's influence also continued to grow.

William Owen made an important contribution to the revival of union activity in industries other than pottery, and so helped to underpin still more securely those moves which were made to obtain a labour Member of Parliament. In particular, Owen's energy and journalistic encouragement were given to a new miners' union established in 1869, which, in turn, brought

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1. Humphrey, A History of Labour Representation, p66.

in an agent, William Brown,[1] who gave himself to the cause of unionism just as freely and vigorously as did Owen.

Miners in North Staffordshire had not achieved much success in forming a union until 1843. Then branches of the Miners' Association of Great Britain were established,[2] and a delegate conference of this union was held in Burslem in July 1844. However, this failed to prevent the collapse of the union locally after the defeat of a strike held in March and April. Sporadic attempts to bring the benefits of union to miners continued to be made, and for short periods, as in 1862-3,[3] North Staffordshire lodges were linked to unions on other coalfields. Representatives were sent from the Potteries to the third annual general meeting of the National Union of Miners, an organisation created by Alexander Macdonald.[4] Local militancy cut across policies supported by Macdonald and did not bring success to the unionists of North Staffordshire, for their strikes in the mid-1860s were easily defeated. In March 1868 it was reported to the Royal Commission on Trade Unions that combinations rather than unions existed on the North Staffordshire coalfield and that they hardly interfered with the mine owners.[5]

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1. William Brown, 1829? - ? : came from a mining family working near Leeds, and he began his working life in a mine aged nine. After suffering persecution for union activities he set up a greengrocery business, and in 1863 became President of the West Yorkshire Miners' Association, and in 1865 a paid agent. During the 1866 to 1868 period he was organiser of Derbyshire and Nottingham unions, losing a strike and his health to end that stage in his life. In 1870 the North Staffordshire miners invited him to be their agent and he remained involved in the area even in the early 1880s. No adequate biography exists as yet.

2. R.Challinor and B.Ripley, The Miners' Association and trade unions in an age of Chartists. (London 1968), p159.

3. Examiner. 1871, March 17, p2 - letter from James Hand, one of the men involved.

4. Alexander Macdonald, 1821-1881. He was President of the National Union of Miners from its formation in 1863 to his death. From 1874 to 1881 he was M.P. for Stafford.

5. Royal Commission on Trade Unions, 1867-9. 6th Report, Witness No. 1. George Elliott.

Late in 1869 miners' leaders from Lancashire and South Staffordshire visited Hanley[1] and initiated moves to establish branches of the Amalgamated Association of Miners. In December the district paid subscriptions to headquarters for 530½ members,[2] and by April 1871 it was claimed that twenty six lodges of the union had 2,600 members. Thus this union was larger and of a longer continuous existence than any other of the 1860s.[3]

The establishment of a district union of the Amalgamated Association of Miners by 1870 was an important new factor in union activity in the Potteries. Though it was a union covering the whole coalfield, much of it in the Northern Division constituency of the county, and therefore of unfranchised men, as an organisation it had a vitality that was refreshing, and chose headquarters in the various Pottery towns which linked it to other developments in the urban scene. Local leaders,some with long memories of miners' struggles and union battles, came from both the county and Borough areas, all stimulated by the publicity given to their work by the Potteries Examiner. Their most important single step to stabilise the union was to appoint an agent, who began his work in August 1870. The weekly salary of £2.10.0 paid to William Brown[4] from that date was an indication that he had no mean estimate of his own worth, and that his union officials likewise had great expectations of him.

After August 1870 William Brown quickly established a position among unionists in the Potteries remarkably similar to that occupied by William Owen. Primarily Brown worked among miners, meeting colliery owners and managers on their behalf, attending lodge and district business meetings, singing at concerts, and exhorting men and their families to lead sober and

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1. Sentinel. 1869, September 4, p4; October 23, p4.
2. H.Barrett Greene, Trade Union Congress 1905 - Souvenir of the visit to the Potteries (Hanley) p81.
3. Examiner. 1871, April 7, pp2-3.
4. The Labour Press and Miners' and Workmen's Examiner. 1874, April 4, p3.

thrifty lives whenever an opportunity occurred. He was a New Connexion Methodist and

> "His ordinary meetings were generally opened by singing a moral song, and prayer, and for that purpose he had a collection of those songs he had gathered and put into a small book, similar to those used by revival preachers, or like a collection of Sankey's hymns."[1]

His reputation as a union agent was considerable, one he was proud of, and he gave evidence in 1868 to the Royal Commission on Trade Unions.[2] He was in Scotland helping Alexander Macdonald in 1870 when officials of the North Staffordshire district union wrote to him, and he did not lightly accept their invitation to become an agent. Though he travelled widely for the Amalgamated Association of Miners, and rivalled Thomas Halliday for its leadership, William Brown identified himself with North Staffordshire in the 1870s and the union movement throughout the district.

Brown and William Owen were the only two full time, paid servants working on behalf of union organisations in the Potteries in the early 1870s. During the first part of that decade both had the full confidence of the men in the industries which they served. Their styles contrasted and their situations with regard to their respective unions differed, but their aims were remarkably alike. Both were ardent temperance supporters, popular platform orators and concert entertainers, but Owen liked to be involved over the widest range of working class movements and was clearly a more politically-minded man than Brown. Owen was an active campaigner or official in a variety of societies in the early 1870s - the National Education League and British Workmen Public Houses being but two.

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1. J. Wilson. Autobiography of John Wilson, J.P., M.P. (London 1910) p265

2. Royal Commission on Trades Unions 1867-9, 8th Report, p29.

Brown reserved his political skill for union affairs, for he had to compete at times with agents from other areas.[1] Nevertheless, he was not averse to the idea of a Parliamentary career for himself, and toyed with invitations to stand, as did Owen.

The Amalgamated Association of Miners expanded remarkably in North Staffordshire under William Brown's guiding hand. Nine weeks after he joined membership stood at 2,037, and in May 1873 it was 8,286. Of the 12,000 men said to be at work in the mining industry in the district, 10,000 were claimed as union members in the 1873-4 period.[2] This mounting wave of union activity could scarcely fail to have widespread consequences, and for the politically conscious members of unions in the Potteries one of the most significant features of the period prior to the 1874 general election was the apparently irresistible increase in union strength, especially noticeable in the lodges of miners.

The workers who found it less easy to establish a union organisation of the same strength as the miners, but whose societies nevertheless shared to some extent the same experience of expanding membership and improved structure, were in the iron industry. Prior to 1863 two sets of unions had existed in the Staffordshire industry, but had been of little consequence. In the early 1860s iron smelting boomed in North Staffordshire and, as various businesses expanded, so there developed a firmer foundation for union growth. The National Association of Malleable Ironworkers was established in 1862, inspired by John Kane. This Association recruited members most successfully in Hanley. From Brierley Hill, in South Staffordshire, the Associated Ironworkers of Great Britain spread branches at about the same time and attracted the ironworkers in Tunstall. In 1865, officially disowned by

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1. G.Howell Collection. Rough Notes, dated 1872 with reference to October 1 - 8

2. Advertiser. 1870, October 8, p6 : Sentinel. 1873, May 13, p3.

both their national executive committees, both groups of North Staffordshire men banded together during a long and hard strike, but they gained nothing for their pains. A feeling of district loyalty survived and a rudimentary organisation in some lodges, but nothing else. After 1868, however, John Kane's activities gave rise to hopes that a single national union could be formed by amalgamating all societies into his National Association.

Ironworkers' lodges in North Staffordshire in 1871 had some relationship with John Kane's union, but their health gave cause for concern - to William Owen for one, for he wrote in the Potteries Examiner

> "The ironworkers of this district have for nearly two years been striving to consolidate a trades union among themselves --- unluckily they began their activities at the wrong end, they tried to obtain an advance before they were half organised --- The ironworkers lodges in some parts of the district, we are given to understand, are at a very low ebb; do the members intend to allow the society to become entirely defunct? The first great necessity of the district, as we have long ago pointed out, is for the ironworkers to follow the example of the miners union, and of the potters combinations, in having all the lodges in this locality affiliated together by a district council or executive ---"[1]

John Kane was roused to reply to this description of affairs, and a local leader, Philip Harries, wrote to the Potteries Examiner welcoming Kane's promise to visit the area to whip up enthusiasm. He also reported that Alfred Walton had been invited "to give his services for the benefit of the ironworkers".[2] To some extent Kane's tour of the area, Walton's interest and Owen's encouragement led to a revitalised ironworkers' union in 1872 and 1873. Some 3000 from various lodges attended an annual gala in 1873,[3] and a district committee was instituted though given very little to do.[4]

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1. Examiner. 1871, May 12, p2
2. ibid., May 26, p2.
3. Sentinel. 1873, July 22, p3.
4. ibid., 1874, January 10, p2.

The most interesting difference between the ironworkers' union and those of the miners and the potters was the absence of an agent or leader of independent means. The district committee attempted to appoint one in the Autumn of 1873 but fell foul of the centralising policy of John Kane. It had to make do with calling on the South Staffordshire agent when he had time to spare.[1]

The progress achieved by unions in the three major industries of the Potteries district in the period 1869 to 1874 can be regarded as considerable. In the context of politics it was not the exact size of membership, or the total funds and resources accrued by 1874 which was significant, however. It was rather the rate of advance, the extent to which leaders represented the views of the rank and file, and the degree of organisational skill possessed by officials which had political importance.

The speed of expansion, especially noticeable in the three years 1871-3, indicated an altogether fresh willingness on the part of working men to consider the virtues of union-associations as means for improving their personal situations. For such rapid growth to take place general interest in the aims of unionism had to be widespread and the subject of much debate at shop floor level. Unions were but a means to an end and debate about their aims, and usefulness was political in character therefore. At the same time, leaders at the level of national secretaries and presidents were showing an increasing appetite for Parliamentary politics - the debate at the second Trades Union Congress on Walton's paper was witness to this - and, in the light of that example, provincial leaders reconsidered their attitudes on the extent to which their societies ought to be involved in constituency politics. When the arguments favouring such involvement were accepted it was clearly to the advantage of union leaders to build up the

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1. ibid., 1873, September 16, p3; October 20, p2.

membership of all lodges as rapidly as possible. If men could be convinced that the benefits were real and worth the weekly subscriptions and hazards of being known as unionists, then those members who were electors looked to be certain supporters of union-promoted Parliamentary candidates. It was the rapidity with which the unions of the Potteries district grew, therefore, which made them politically important. On such a rising tide a prospective labour candidate could expect to find election to the House of Commons plain sailing. The fallacy of equating union membership with a willingness to vote for a unionist Parliamentary candidate was ignored.

The second politically significant feature of trade union expansion in the Potteries, therefore, was the relationship between the objectives stated by officials as imperatives for the rank and file and those actually accepted by members. Union leaders, by definition, set the goals for their societies, but only discovered in the course of time the extent to which these were approved by the rank and file. In the Pottery district in the early 1870s union officials were reported as speaking most frequently about three types of objectives, above and beyond the basic aim of increased wages. They argued that concilation and arbitration machinery was the most desirable, long-term method of settling disputes and advancing wages; that union insurance and benefit schemes were the soundest way of changing the wider economic conditions of workingmen and their families; and that thrifty and sober conduct by members was both morally desirable and a means to an enhanced social status. These aims were constantly advocated by Owen and Brown, often as a duet performance at a lodge tea party or annual general meeting. From a political point of view these were eminently respectable aims, being long-term, far from revolutionary and within the reach of the working classes inside the exisiting social and economic framework. They were also misleading. Many unionists preferred militant action, short term gains and drink. Strikes were held, burial funds and sickness insurance schemes were not fully supported and public houses were full of union men.

When, therefore, some union officials in the Potteries added to their list of objectives the promotion of a Parliamentary labour candidate there was no guarantee that their appeals on his behalf would find any greater response from their members than arguments for temperance. As long as unions expanded, however, and enjoyed success in wage negotiations, and while men expressed confidence in their leaders, the latter could go on hoping that their continued popularity also meant that their followers would vote for their labour candidate. In 1872 minor wage increases were negotiated for North Staffordshire colliers and pottery workers and gave hope of better things when the unions were stronger. The stock of union officials was boosted. Alfred Walton, as the prospective labour candidate introduced into the constituency by those same union officials, addressed public meetings with sufficient success to give rise to a belief in his electoral appeal. The reality of his situation could only be revealed at an election, but in the meantime harmony within the union movement generally in the Potteries district lent colour to the supposition that leaders were reflecting the views of their members. The foremost unionists in the area gave full support to the campaign for an independent labour candidate and there was little indication that this was out of step with the desires of the rank and file. The political significance of unity in the union movement within the Potteries was difficult to assess at the time of the expansion in the 1870s. However, it did not deserve to be ignored.

The third feature of union expansion with political implications was one which could obviate many weaknesses of unions as political agencies. This was the organisational skill possessed by officials and agents, which, though developed in union work, was available for political purposes. In the early

1870s Brown, Owen and William Mayer of Longton[1] had reputations as leaders, speakers and organisers sufficient for them to be considered as possible candidates for Parliament. Brown, indeed, went to Tamworth in 1874 to stand as a representative for the miners.[2] The mere fact that these three union officials were classed as potential M.Ps was testimony to the regard their colleagues had for them. Only the printed words of news reporters preserves their reputation as orators and persuasive communicators, and may well do them an injustice. If demand for their services is any guide the number of concert platforms, tea tables and lodge rooms to which they were called in order to make speeches was quite enough to show their popularity. Business sense and management flair was required of a greater range of unionists, however, if their movement was to progress, and evidence for this must be deduced from the successful conduct of lodge and district committee affairs.

The miners developed the more effective relationship between lodges, neither pottery workers nor iron workers succeeding on anything like the same scale. Delegates from each lodge attended monthly meetings of a district committee where policy was made on a wide range of issues. The full membership of the union was thus bound together and an impressive degree of harmony displayed. At its peak the union organised demonstrations of its strength, or galas, which encourages the feeling of district unity and the distinctiveness of the miner's life. In 1873 and again in 1874 the size of these demonstrations demanded a considerable degree of business expertise from officials who managed them and brought them to a satisfactory

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1. William Mayer. He was in the Turners' Society and the Labour Representation League branch. In 1866 he welcomed a touring speaker for the Reform League to the Potteries, and in 1868 was reported to be Secretary of the Longton branch of the Reform Union. He served on the Longton School Board 1871-7 claiming to represent workingmen. William Woodall thought he might be a Parliamentary candidate in 1871. He worked at the Daisy Bank Pottery, Longton, for some time. He was a New Connexion Methodist.

2. Examiner. 1873, October 25, p5 : November 22, p6 : 1874, April 4, p8.

conclusion. Thirty eight lodges contributed to the 1873 demonstration, all marching in well defined order with bands and banners in profusion and coming together on Hanley race course. The publicity value of the processions did not escape the organisers, as a newspaper reporter recognised.

> "Before one lodge walked two little girls, dressed in white, and in a gig a poor fellow rode who had lately met with an accident in the mine, his wife sitting by his side and seeming to tenderly care for her husband. The deep sympathy of the miners for one another, as shown in so many mottoes and emblems, on their flags, but more particularly in the poor widows and fatherless children who had been adopted by those thousands of men, was very affecting, and could not help but be morally elevating in its influence upon the whole body. Many of the onlookers were touched at these traits in the procession, and they would feel that the miners' union was both noble in its objects and influences".[1]

Union officers sharp enough to see the propoganda value of widows and orphans strategically placed in a gala procession were likely to make useful campaigners for Parliamentary candidates.

In politics experience in financial matters was of considerable importance, in terms of handling accounts and raising capital. For the most part union officials in the pottery societies handled small sums, but did do regularly and with a sense of responsibility. The financing and management of their newspaper, however, gave potters a quite different experience. From 1864 to 1878 at least (possibly until 1881) a management body composed of delegates from trade societies supervised the Potteries Examiner. In 1871 they floated the Co-operative and General Printing Co. and became a Board of Directors in business in a much larger way.[2] William Owen was undoubtedly the inspiration behind this scheme and the reason for its success. He

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1. ibid., 1873, May 17, p6.

2. ibid., 1871, June 2, p2.

claimed a circulation of 7000 copies in 1873.[1] The significant matters in political terms, however, were the success of union officials in selling the paper to the rank and file, gaining valuable business knowledge in the process, and secondly developing a means of communication of high political potential.

An examination of union operations in the Potteries in the early 1870s leads to the conclusion that there was no lack of business skill or management experience among officials and agents. The miners' secretary, James Hand, claimed thirty years association with societies in his industry;[2] Charles Bloor, Secretary to the Hollow-ware Pressers Union, was an important negotiator for the operatives on the Potteries Arbitration Board and sat for eight years on the Burslem School Board. Enoch Edwards,[3] the future President of the Miners Federation of Great Britain, and M.P. for Hanley, was making a reputation as lodge official and taking an interest in politics. There is no reason to suppose that union organisers, given the will, were incapable of conducting a successful political campaign. Their failure to secure the election of Alfred Walton in 1874 as the first working man in Parliament was not a consequence of feeble organisational talent.

Part III. The emergence of A.A. Walton as a candidate for Stoke-on-Trent.

It has been suggested earlier that important factors behind the division in the Liberal 'interest' in the early 1870s were the snubs received by working class leaders in 1868, the dissolution of links between the trade unions and the Party in 1869, and the expansion of unions in the 1870-4 period. Another factor was the move among national leaders of trade unions to encourage political action and to seek Parliamentary representation. This

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1. ibid., 1873, March 29, p4.

2. ibid., 1873, May 17, p3.

3. Enoch Edwards 1852-1912: miner. He was born just outside the Stoke-on-Trent constituency, but worked at pits inside it before settling in Burslem where he was elected to the School Board in 1886. In 1875 he was treasurer to the North Staffordshire Miners' Association and in 1889 he helped found the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. He was Liberal M.P. for Hanley 1906 -12 and reluctant associate of the Labour Party.

took the form of founding the Labour Representation League. Personal links between a small group of union leaders in the Potteries and men in the League introduced this body into Stoke-on-Trent as a factor affecting party development there.

The Labour Representation League was the product of leading union officials operating in London. All but six of the first group of thirty two in the Executive Committee were so engaged. They came together under the presidency of a radical barrister, Robert Latham, because of their acceptance of the necessity for promoting working men as candidates for Parliament. By creating a special institution for this purpose these leaders showed that they did not see individual unions, or the infant Trades Union Congress, as the spring-board for working class M.P.s. In November 1869, when the inaugural meeting was held, unionists were still looking forward to protective legislation[1] expected from the Liberal Government. Unions had been under severe pressure in 1867 and 1868, and in the tense atmosphere of the prelude to Government action there was small incentive to advance unions as political agencies. Individually, however, union leaders felt the need for securing some representatives in the Commons from the working classes - hence the Labour Representation League.

Once the League existed, its members cast around for means to secure their objectives. Even before the inaugural meeting Latham wrote a paper which George Howell read to the second Trades Union Congress;[2] and the representative of the Brecon Trades Council, Alfred Walton, also spoke to that assembly on the same subject of Labour representation.[3] These were not appeals for union officials to use their offices to mobilise society members

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1. Humphrey, A History of Labour Representation, pp34-5.

2. ibid., p66.

3. Beehive. 1869, September 4, p6.

behind candidates selected by union committees. They were, however, appeals for unionists to support the Labour Representation League, and by winning the endorsement of a resolution of the Congress, Latham and Walton sowed the seed of union political activity. They clearly indicated that unions had a part to play in bringing working men into the House of Commons, though for the moment they were content to see the unions as publicity agents. Essentially working men needed to be stimulated to actions such as fighting for control over the nomination of second candidates in constituencies where two Liberals could be expected to win. No specific strategy was proposed, but union officials could not be expected to act in political affairs as though they did not hold union office. The means at the disposal of union officials for political activity included the powers of their office, and such powers were too useful to be ignored.

Walton's suggestion that working men should have the nomination of second Liberal seats exactly matched the situation in Stoke-on-Trent. This was precisely the demand made of the Liberal Council in August 1868 and its rejection was the reason why Robert Hartwell had been able to make an impact on the constituency. William Owen recognised that Walton had won the approval of the Trades Union Congress for the kind of action pottery unions had refused to support in 1868, and he may well have returned to the Potteries with a strengthened resolution to find a working class candidate for the constituency.

Of all the tasks facing those in Stoke-on-Trent who thought as Owen did, the most critical was that of finding a suitable person to stand as a representative of labour. There were, no doubt, difficulties in the way of an effective working man's political organisation, and certainly the creation of an appropriate procedure for the selection of a candidate was far from easy. The personality and status of the candidate, however, were vital factors determining the success of his campaign, and it might have been expected that

much care would have gone into his selection. Yet only one man ever appeared to be in the running, and of all possible candidates Alfred Walton was the most unlikely.

The chief reason why Walton was eventually adopted in Stoke-on-Trent as a labour candidate was probably that he was introduced into the area by William Owen and was Owen's choice. There was a rumour that Owen himself might have been chosen, but for the jealousy of others in the leading ranks of working class organisations,[1] but no public discussion of this possibility was reported. In the absence of this, the frequent visits which Walton paid to the Potteries after March 1870, and the number of times he turned up for important events, suggest that he was nursing the constituency with Owen's assistance. At first sight, Thomas Halliday,[2] President of the Amalgamated Association of Miners, or Alexander Macdonald, might have looked more certain of success. Both had political ambitions, and like other labour politicians such as George Howell and George Odger,[3] were men of national reputations and did stand in the election of 1874. However, they were not publicly mentioned in relation to Stoke-on-Trent even by local miners. Walton was the choice of pottery trade union organisers, and was accepted eventually by miners' and ironworkers' leaders in the interests of unity.

The first occasion on which Alfred Walton spoke in Stoke-on-Trent was at a meeting of unionists in March 1870, called to hear him outline his ideas on the value of Courts of Arbitration to unions.[4] Owen also spoke, and since

1. Melly Papers. XIX. 4928. C.W.Bond to G.Melly, 1874, February 6.

2. Thomas Halliday 1835 - ? : miner. He was born near Bolton in Lancashire and worked in mines and cotton mills as a boy. In 1863 he became agent for the miners of his district and was the first President of the Amalgamated Association of Miners. In 1874 he stood as a candidate for Parliament in Merthyr Tydvil. He devoted his life to miners' unions and died in poverty in Cardiff.

3. George Odger 1820-77 : shoemaker. He was born near Tavistock, but moved to London to follow his trade and there became involved in union and political movements. In 1862 he was Secretary to the London Trades Council, and later was very active in the National Reform League. He stood in four constituencies for Parliament, twice in Southwark in 1870 and 1874.

4. Advertiser. 1870, March 12, p5.

this repeated their joint efforts at the Trades Union Congress of the previous August it is highly likely that Owen was responsible for Walton's invitation. Owen certainly had arranged a visit from George Howell, who had also collaborated with Owen at the Congress, during the month previous to Walton's speech.[1] Ostensibly Howell's purpose was to campaign for the National Education League, and he did address the Hanley Trades Council on that subject. However, it has been argued that Howell was "adept at combining trips for the [National Education] League with other political activities",[2] and it may be no coincidence, therefore, that shortly afterwards branches of the Labour Representation League were formed and William Owen listed among its provincial representatives.[3] Walton never claimed any credit for assisting in the birth of the local Labour Representation League, but he had reasons for not wishing to emphasise overmuch his earliest connections with working class leaders in the area. Opposition to his adoption in 1873 centred around the suspicion that he had been groomed for the job by some small group careless of the conventions of democratic processes. The interest he showed on his first visit in the Potteries Arbitration and Conciliation Board, and the manner in which he had urged its cause before a Trades Union Congress, made him a contender for the union nomination in Stoke-on-Trent because friends of local working class interests from outside the area were so few.

Walton was well qualified to stand as a labour candidate for he was one of the small but vocal band of men who tried to impress on the trade union movement in general the need to use all possible influence to obtain the return of working men to Parliament. At the Nottingham Trades Union Congress

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1. G.Howell Collection. Letter Books. Vol. 5. No. 288 : two letters to W.Owen and W.Wood, dated 1870, February 12.

2. F.M. Leventhal. Respectable Radical : George Howell and Victorian Working Class Politics, (London, 1971), p137.

3. Sentinel. 1870, May 7, p5 : G.Howell Collection. Packet containing printed circulars of Labour Representation League.

in January 1872 Latham's paper on "The best means of securing Labour Representation in Parliament"[1] was opposed, and only the combined pleading of Applegarth, Odger, Howell, Broadhurst and Walton secured a resolution in its favour. No practical action followed and Walton suspected many Congress delegates of being

> "traitors, who, while they had said nothing in Congress, had gone away opposing the idea"[2]

In the following year Walton's own address on the subject was taken as read by a Congress anxious to go on to other business. Had it listened Congress would have heard of Walton's optimistic plan based on a 1/- levy on all union members so that £200 would be available for each of 50 labour candidates.[3] He did successfully move that the Parliamentary committee of the Congress be given powers to assist in organising trade societies in

> "any borough where a fair prospect of returning representative working-men to Parliament is apparent".[4]

Applications for such help had to come from the constituency, and Walton never got nearer than this to his aim of a union promoted political campaign. In the event, no one applied for aid and none was offered by the Parliamentary committee.

The course of Walton's association with Stoke-on-Trent did not run smoothly. The Labour Representation League branch did not prosper in 1870. Trade union leaders were anxious about Government proposals for legislation on trade union rules and postponed the Trades Union Congress until these proposals were published. Thus Walton had no further opportunity in 1870 to show his interest in the Potteries. The impetus towards securing a working

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1. Humphrey. A History of Labour Representation, p67.
2. Beehive. 1872, September 7, quoted in Humphrey, op.cit., p68.
3. Examiner. 1873, February 22, p3. The Congress was held in Leeds.
4. Humphrey, op. cit., p68.

man's candidate found expression in other ways, chiefly in the first School Board elections at Hanley in December, and in Longton in January 1871.[1] Three working men obtained seats on these two Boards. At the same time, a noted activist in the Flat Pressers' Society, Thomas Lyth, moved a vote of no confidence in Melly and Roden when they appeared before their constituents for an annual report in December 1870.[2] Lyth figured prominently among Walton's supporters in 1873, and clearly represented the continuation of the movement Hartwell had once headed which still sought in 1871 to show its displeasure at Roden's election. Edward Mayer of Burslem challenged the Members about the Hartwell affair at a similar meeting the day before Lyth spoke in Tunstall.[3]

In 1871, immediately after the Government announced its plans for legislation on trade union reform, political activity in Stoke-on-Trent quickened, coinciding with a local event equally demanding action - the third School Board election, this time for Stoke-upon-Trent. George Howell replied to correspondence from William Owen by writing:

> "I had seen that arrangements were made for a meeting on the Trade Union Bill. The meeting took place yesterday --- too late for me to write --- Meanwhile we will make arrangements for the Congress ---. We must protest against the Criminal Clauses of the Bill. --- Are you doing anything towards our organisation of Labour in the Potteries? We must have men in the House who understand these questions or they will never be fairly dealt with ---. Let us combine for Labour Representation regardless of all the old cliques and parties.[4]

On Monday 6 March the Trades Congress started to consider this legislation. Owen represented the various potters' unions and led a delegation to lobby

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1. J.A. Dewey An examination of the role of Church and State in the development of elementary education in North Staffordshire between 1870 and 1903. University of Keele, thesis for Ph.D. 1971. pp92-3. See also Mill-Taylor Collection (British Library of Political Science), Correspondence of J.S. Mill. Vol.I, folio 383-7, item 161 : letter from W.Wood to J.S.Mill, 1870 December 28.

2. Advertiser. 1870, December 17, p6.

3. ibid.,

4. G.Howell Collection. Letter Books. Vol. 5 No. 445. 1871, February 19.

local M.P.s on the union bill.[1] Immediately the Congress closed Alfred Walton travelled to Stoke-on-Trent and spoke at a Hollow-ware Pressers' union tea meeting in Tunstall alongside William Owen.[2] The following day Walton spoke in the Swan Inn, Stoke-upon-Trent, and on Wednesday he accompanied William Brown at a miners' assembly in Tunstall talking on the trade union bill. So sudden an appearance in the constituency following the Trade Union Congress, and the neat association with Owen and Brown at the very moment each first reported back to their members on the significance of the Government's proposals, confirms the impression of a politician 'nursing' a constituency.

It is most significant that Walton was involved on this visit in the one local affair which at the time meant much more than proposals discussed in Westminster. The School Board election in Stoke-upon-Trent was being fought with much energy and in ways not a little dubious. For working men it was an important contest for the straightforward reason that some of their number were standing, and for the less desirable reason that some "Sham"[3] candidates claiming working class backing had been nominated too. The election was also important in that the religious issue was particularly pointed, the Rector of Stoke-upon-Trent being very keen to lead a Church of England majority on the Board. After the conclusion of the campaign Walton was able to make his most telling impact on the constituency because of the manner in which working men were alleged to have been defeated at the poll. The conjunction of their repulse at the hands of the middle class in an election solely concerned with the way working class children were to be educated, and the publication of Government plans to continue the equivocal position of trade unions as institutions promoting working class interests, underlay Walton's concluding

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1. Sentinel. 1871, March 11, p5.

2. Examiner. 1871, March 17, p2. The meeting was on Monday 13 March.

3. ibid.,

address to the working men of Stoke-on-Trent at this stage of his association with them.

Walton wrote to William Owen's Potteries Examiner,

> "I think the great majority of the working men, as well as many of the middle classes, who are in favour of unsectarian education, will be greatly disappointed at none of the working men candidates having been elected to sit upon the Stoke School Board. The cause of this is not far to seek. It was caused no doubt to a large extent by the coercion and intimidation recorded in the Examiner, and practised upon the working men, but it was produced also by the working men attempting to accomplish too much without an efficient organisation to carry their candidates ---.
>
> I am continually pointing out to working men that nothing can be done without organisation and united action, and yet a great many of them seem lamentably deficient of a correct knowledge of the immense value of a correct appreciation of the true principles of combination and well concerted action.
>
> Without this all elections, whether local or Parliamentary, are mere ebulitions of feeling and excitement without either plan or well-devised system to ensure success. It was the want of an organisation of this kind that enabled the enemies of working men and those with long purses to carry the elections everywhere at the last general election; and unless the working men will everywhere unite --- they will be cheated in the same way as they were last time. --- Let us take for instance five Pottery towns. What is to prevent say 100 of the best men in each of these towns forming themselves into branches of a general organisation in the district; and then each town appointing a delegate to form a central committee, which committee should appoint a Central Secretary.
>
> Surely, the five Pottery towns can muster 100 men each for so great and noble a purpose as this? It they cannot it would be quite useless to talk about the representation of labour in Parliament. But from what I have seen I have greater faith in the men of the Potteries than this. It is quite certain there is some of the best material for an organisation of this kind in the Potteries as there is in any part of the country ---"[1]

George Howell had merely asked Owen if he was doing anything about securing labour representation for Stoke-on-Trent. Walton analysed in

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1. Examiner. 1871, March 31, p2.

detail the reasons for the failure of local working men at School Board level. On that evidence he did not hold out any hope for winning a Parliamentary seat.

The message struck home. In May James Hand, secretary of the dormant Labour Representation League, undertook to reinvigorate it.[1] In June new officers for the central organisation were elected, George Salt becoming President, his experiences as President of the North Staffordshire Temperance Association no doubt standing him in good stead.[2] New rules and a new vigour were promised before two guests were introduced to the meeting dealing with this business. Alfred Walton and a colleague, Rev. W.W. Jubb, were welcomed as a deputation from the National Education League sent to the Potteries to forward the cause of educational reform. Whatever their credentials, Walton's appearance was timely.

During 1871 Walton did two more tours of the Potteries following his visit in June - that being his second visit in the year. Letters from him were frequently published in the columns of the Potteries Examiner, and in December William Owen discussed Walton's views on the housing question in a leading article. He mused aloud as to whether Walton should be invited to a special meeting on this issue.[3] Being able to work for the National Education League as an itinerant spokesman gave Walton his most publicised platform in Stoke-on-Trent, however. Moves to establish branches of the Education League in the Potteries commanded respectable Liberal support, William Woodall being among the first to bring League speakers to the area. In December 1869 George Dixon, M.P., President of the League, spoke in Burslem alongside George Melly.[4] The latter used Woodall to arrange a pre-meeting

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1. Examiner. 1871, May 5, p2.
2. ibid., June 17, p5.
3. ibid., December 2, p2.
4. Sentinel. 1869, December 18, p7.

dinner for the speakers proposing motions, one of whom was William Owen.[1] Walton spoke in Burslem in June 1871 in an effort to revive the National Education League branch there,[2] and in the course of the year spoke in all the towns of the constituency for the same purpose. Not only did this fulfil one of the special local requirements of Parliamentary hopefuls, each town wishing to have due respect paid to its self importance, but it also introduced Walton to a section of the constituency not inclined to identify itself as working class. At Education League meetings he spoke on platforms decorated with non-conformist ministers, mayors and even manufacturers.

Following these activities, and in the knowledge that some were determined to put up a working man's candidate at the next election, there was speculation about Walton's position. William Woodall reported gossip to George Melly in December 1871, which included a reference to two possible local rivals to Walton as Parliamentary candidates.

> "It appears that there is much talk in some circles about a Working Man's candidate and as far as I can judge there is no disposition to accept a Bolt Court man. Mr. Walton is much liked. Owen is named, and Mr. Mayer of Longton." [3]

In August 1872 it was alleged that George Odger was under the impression that Walton had already been selected by the unions in Stoke-on-Trent as their candidate.[4] Before he went to the first general gathering of the Labour Representation League in Birmingham in December 1872, George Howell made some notes on "candidates for Parliament" on a piece of paper bearing another comment dated 27 November.[5] Among men such as Latham, Burt, Halliday

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1. Melly Papers. XIV. 3735. W.Woodall to G.Melly, 1869, December 11.

2. Sentinel. 1871, June 17, p5.

3. Melly Papers. XVI. 4366. W.Woodall to G.Melly, 1871, December 16. Bolt Court in London contained the offices of the Beehive, Hartwell's paper.

4. Examiner. 1873, April 5, p6, letter from William Baddeley concerning a meeting with George Odger in August 1872.

5. G.Howell Collection. Rough notes for 1872.

and Kane who were apportioned constituencies, Walton was listed as the candidate for Stoke-on-Trent.

There were no formal moves made in the Potteries by leaders of unions to adopt a Parliamentary candidate until January 1873, but it was clear to Howell, and to others, that Walton had powerful backing in his bid to gain nomination at Stoke-on-Trent. William Mayer summed up the situation by saying that

> "there had been a little coquetry going on between Mr. Walton and that constituency"[1]

Nevertheless, the local Labour Representation League had drawn up rules governing the selection of candidates, and Walton had to be openly discussed along with other men before he finally achieved his ambition.

The selection process began at a meeting of members of both the Hollow-ware and Flat-ware Pressers' societies in January 1873, when Walton and Henry Broadhurst[2] were guests. The ostensible purpose of the assembly was to hear reports from delegates to the recent Trades Union Congress held in Leeds. William Owen had been the principal representative and had enjoyed a personal triumph by being elected to the Parliamentary Committee when both Walton and Broadhurst had failed.[3] He went out of his way, however, to praise the work Walton had put in at the Congress on behalf of the potters, who had sought support from the Congress in their campaign against 'good-from-oven' wage payments. Walton spoke next and when he had concluded two operatives moved:

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1. Examiner. 1873, March 29, p6.

2. ibid., January 25, p3
   Henry Broadhurst 1840-1911 : stonemason, trade union official and junior Minister in Gladstone's administration 1886. In 1873 he became Secretary of the Labour Representation League, and in 1875 followed Howell as Secretary of the T.U.C. Parliamentary Committee. M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent 1880-85; for Bordesley 1885-6; Nottingham 1886-92 and Leicester 1894-1906.

3. Leventhal, Respectable Radical, p171; Examiner. 1873, January 25, p7.

> "that this meeting is of the opinion that the time has arrived when there ought to be a direct representation of Labour in Parliament, and as the great majority of the electors in the borough of Stoke-on-Trent are working men, this meeting recommends that a delegate meeting should be called by the secretary of the Labour Representation League, of delegates from all the trade societies, to select a candidate to be ready for the next election to return to Parliament to watch over and advocate the interests of labour as well as the general interests of the borough."[1]

The motion was supported by a speech from Henry Broadhurst and carried unanimously.

The reason why this general assembly of union members, gathered for trade union purposes, took a political turn was undoubtedly because of decisions taken at the Labour Representation League meeting during the previous month. The fact that the pottery trade unionists were drawn into political action in this way indicated the depth of commitment among the leaders to the cause of labour representation. The meeting successfully associated a number of things in men's minds without the formality of public announcements, and neatly side-stepped any opposition rank-and-file members might have felt to political involvement.

First of all the meeting of the flat and hollow-ware pressers carried into effect the policy accepted by the Labour Representation League delegates in Birmingham. This was to contest elections "irrespective of old party ties"[2] and meant that labour groups in various constituencies were to break with the Liberal Party. There had been no time for public discussion of this policy in the Potteries because union leaders had been called away to the Congress in Leeds. There had been no debate in Congress either on the advisability of following the League's policy, for Walton's paper on the

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1. Examiner. 1873, January 25, p3.

2. Leventhal, op.cit., p131 : R.Harrison. Before the Socialists : Studies in Labour and Politics 1861-81. (London 1965) p299.

subject was taken as read. Nevertheless union leaders in Stoke-on-Trent were determined to press ahead with plans to promote a Parliamentary candidate and to secure the support of their members for the man of their choice.

Secondly, union leaders reinforced the idea which had been encouraged for some time, that Walton was a devoted friend to the pottery workers. No specific statement was made that he intended to put his name forward as a prospective Parliamentary candidate, but his claim to that position was underlined even so. There was little likelihood that officials of unions in the pottery industry would put any name other than Walton's forward to a Labour Representation League selection committee after the Leeds Trades Union Congress and Owen's warm endorsement of Walton's activities. Finally, the pottery union meeting emphasised the close association between local union officers and the branch of the Labour Representation League, and gave the latter the seal of union approval. The Chairman of the Flat Pressers' Society and delegate to the Leeds Congress, Thomas Lyth, was also secretary to the League branch. He addressed the meeting in his capacity as a delegate and confirmed Owen's remarks on Walton. He then silently noted the resolution passed by the assembly and addressed to him in his role as secretary to the League.

The presence of Henry Broadhurst, as much as that of Alfred Walton, demonstrated the importance local leaders put upon the moves undertaken at this meeting. There was no point in his being there unless it was to add weight to the political business arranged for the meeting. Broadhurst had no links with the Potteries or its industries, but he was a rising union leader in the van of the movement to put working men into Parliament. In 1867 Broadhurst had signed the London Working Men's Association's address calling for direct representation of labour in Parliament.[1] In Leeds, during the

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1. Humphrey, op.cit., p21.

course of the Trades Union Congress just concluded, he had appealed over the cautious heads of the delegates there to men in the constituencies they came from by speaking at a public meeting on behalf of labour representation. He moved that

> "this meeting calls upon all trade societies to put forward and support at the coming general election candidates of their own class, in order that mischievous clauses for the purposes of crippling the legitimate efforts of workingmen to help themselves may not be put into Acts of Parliament without being exposed and made known to the country at the time they are proposed."[1]

It was because of this enthusiasm for the cause of labour representation that Broadhurst was made secretary to the executive committee of the Labour Representation League shortly after his visit to Stoke-on-Trent.

For the efforts of union officials to launch a Parliamentary candidate in Stoke-on-Trent to be successful much depended upon the efficient operation of the local branch of the Labour Representation League. The rules of this organisation[2] covering the selection of a Parliamentary candidate called for the setting up of a committee consisting of all the individual members, and delegates from all trade and working men's societies in the constituency. This selection committee had power to proceed in its own way provided that it considered the claims of any person offering himself as a candidate. A separate campaign committee conducted operations until polling day. Power did not necessarily reside in the hands of trade unionists under these rules, for it was theoretically possible to have a large membership of non-union men outvoting society delegates. In practice the League in Stoke-on-Trent was under the control of people who were also union officials and no great effort seems to have been made to preserve even an appearance of independence.

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1. Times. 1873, January 17, p7.

2. Examiner. 1873, February 1, p4.

Of the men reported as speaking at the two meetings of the selection committee in March, almost all can be identified as unionists.

At the first meeting on 11 March George Salt, from the chair, correctly directed those attending to decide upon procedure first, according to the rules of the League.[1] A count of delegates showed "that nearly all the organised trades of the district were represented," and the press report indicated that there was a body of opinion which meant to see that the rules were carried out to the letter. It was felt quite strongly by some that, as one delegate put it,

> "many had received letters, and were understood to have come there to vote for Mr. Walton".

Procedural discussions, which occupied most of the meeting, were thought necessary to prevent an attempt to rush through the nomination and selection of one man, Alfred Walton. In the end a compromise was reached with three names being put up for nomination, and the meeting adjourned for two weeks while individual trade societies met to discuss these suggestions and to supply additional names. Alongside Walton, Lloyd James, recently the Secretary of the Executive Council of the Labour Representation League, and Mr. Reynolds, the editor of "Reynold's News", were formally proposed.

Small groups of support clearly existed for Walton's opponents, Lloyd Jones, for example, visiting the district in the following week to speak at miners' meetings. William Brown also addressed the same meetings but did not appear to commit himself fully to Jones' candidature. Others, William Mayer especially, did, but probably more out of spite against Walton and his promoters than from sympathy with Jones. At the adjourned meeting Mayer urged the claims of George Melly as a suitable candidate.[2] In the absence of Reynolds, Owen put the case firmly to the second meeting that it had but two working men to choose from, Walton and Jones. Others, more openly committed to Walton - chiefly

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1. ibid., March 15, p3.

2. ibid., March 29, p6.

officials in the Flat Pressers' and Hollow-ware Pressers' Unions - advocated an immediate vote, not another adjournment as some Longton delegates favoured. When this was taken, following the withdrawal of the Longton group to catch a train, Walton won handsomely, 35 to 3 against Reynolds. None of the remaining delegates voted for Jones.

On 29 September 1873 Alfred Walton opened his campaign in Stoke-on-Trent at a meeting in the Mechanics' Institute, Hanley.[1] William Owen was in the chair and two guest speakers, George Howell and Henry Broadhurst, added weight to the local efforts to eulogise Walton. Respectively they were secretaries to the Trades Union Congress Parliamentary Committee and the Labour Representation League Executive Council. Along with the secretary to the Hollow-ware Pressers' Society and the secretary of the North Staffordshire District of the Amalgamated Miners' Association, who also declared in favour of Walton, they formed an impressive array of attendants on the candidate. Without doubt the full authority of the trade union movement at local and national level was behind him. Much effort had been put into identifying Walton as a working man's representative who enjoyed the full confidence of union officials, without in any way being a delegate from any one society. Careful preparation had been put into the moves to secure Walton's nomination in a proper fashion, and financial arrangements had been made to ensure that he went to the poll. Walton himself agreed to pay the Returning Officer's expenses and a public fund was opened by his campaign committee.[2] In addition, the Miners' Union agreed to a levy of 3d per member to help pay campaign costs, which was collected in 1874.[3] The contrast with Robert Hartwell's situation was striking.

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1. ibid., October 4, p6.
2. ibid., August 30, p4.
3. Sentinel. 1874, February 7, p5.

Conclusion

In the Spring of 1870, if not before, union leaders in Stoke-on-Trent served notice on the ruling oligarchy of the local Liberal Party that a labour candidate would be found for the next election. This threat became a reality in March 1873 when Alfred Walton emerged as the nominee of the Labour Representation League. The significance of the events which surrounded the emergence of Walton as a working man's candidate was that they demonstrated a serious split in the Liberal 'interest', and more particularly a division in the community involved in the pottery industry. The events had no significance for Liberalism as an ideology or for the existence of a Liberal government. They were clearly connected with the struggle between the trade union movement and the Liberal administration then in power over the legislation of 1871 relating to union activities. Yet Walton did not appeal to the electors in the Potteries as a champion of particular causes, and the importance of his candidature did not lie in his desire for alterations in the 1871 trade union laws.

The unity of the Liberal 'interest' in the Parliamentary Borough of Stoke-on-Trent was always under strain and liable to fracture. The massive increase in the size of the electorate in 1867 and the predominance of working class voters thereafter compounded the problems of those who led the Liberal Party and sought to preserve a united 'interest'. In this new situation encouragement was given to the latent ambition which some men of the Potteries had to promote a Liberal candidate openly chosen by workingmen as their representative in Parliament. The Liberal Council of 1868 was designed to prevent a split in the constituency over this matter, but mistaken efforts by Party organisers to remove Robert Hartwell from Stoke-on-Trent, which went far beyond the intrigues neutralising Samuel Pope, undid all the good work put into the Council and divided middle and working class leaders from each other. The seriousness of this rift, which was unmistakable once Walton was adopted as a labour candidate, could not be measured until the results of a poll were announced. However, the mere size of the working class section of the

electorate was sufficient to make it worthy of study. This was especially the case after the Secret Ballot Act was passed in 1872, for it removed some of the most important means whereby local party organisers had managed elections. The evidence in Stoke-on-Trent is that the implications of secret voting for Liberal candidates from the middle classes, and for the unity of the 'interest', were not properly examined.

One reason for this may have been the community feelings thought to be common throughout the pottery industry. Liberal leaders were the industrial masters of the constituency, but the special nature of the pottery industry's employment structure, and pattern of ownership, allowed many craftsmen and self-employed tradesmen to identify themselves with the highest ranks in the industry because of their economic independence. There was an assumption by Liberal Party managers that this community of interests extended throughout the Potteries and that it included devotion to the political tenets of the Liberal Party. In the context of party politics as a whole in North Staffordshire in the nineteenth century it is certainly true, as Henry Pelling has pointed out in relation to the last years of the century,[1] that the loyalty of the potters to the Liberal Party is remarkable. To some extent, therefore, the assumption of Party leaders in the early 1870s that their workmen would remain faithful to Parliamentary candidates on the Liberal side was justified. However, it precisely because of this long term association of potters with the local Liberal Party that the short term conflict between pottery union leaders and their industrial bosses is significant and interesting.

Alfred Walton had the unique distinction of being the only Parliamentary candidate selected and promoted by operative potters to represent working class Liberalism in the House of Commons. His chief supporters were officials in the two unions for flat-ware and hollow-ware pressers. The League which

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1. H.Pelling. Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910. (London 1967) p.273.

arranged his nomination was dominated by those same officials, and, when Walton's re-nomination was under discussion in May 1878 it was Charles Bloor and Thomas Lyth, leaders of these unions in 1873, who again pressed Walton's claims. Officials in other unions, chiefly those of miners, fell in with the plan to run Walton in 1874 possibly because of the influence of William Owen. He too was a potter at heart, but his influence on local unionism, obtained through his successful newspaper, was superior to that exercised at the time by his only rival, William Brown. Owen was the only man able to weld the union movement in the Potteries district into one political force, and since there was an apparent harmony among all union officials in 1873, with no serious alternative candidate suggested by the miners, it is safe to conclude that Owen had much to do with the success of Walton as the nominee of pottery trade unionists.

The decade between 1868 and 1878 was significant in the history of labour movements in the Potteries because of the political conflict between leaders in pottery unions and their industrial masters. This significance is increased, in retrospect, by the fact that it was not to occur again - the miners were later to push forward candidates, chiefly Enoch Edwards in 1900 and 1906, but not the pottery unions. One of the reasons for this lack of interest by potters in politics after 1880 was perhaps the influence obtained by William Woodall, who was an M.P. for twenty years, but there may well be more vital explanations than this.

The other factor which throws the political conflict of the 1870s into relief was the fact that 1868 saw the establishment of the Potteries Arbitration and Conciliation Board as an expression of the desire by union leaders to work in harmony with their employers. The Board raised genuine hopes among pottery workers that some long standing grievances, as well as problems of daily routine, would be settled amicably. For a brief period all went well, but in 1869 the representatives of the operatives on the Board raised the question of changing

good-from-oven payments. During 1871 the Board was dead-locked on the matter and nearly broke up in the following year. No solution was found which was satisfactory to the workers, but the immediate crisis passed leaving the Board to limp on for some years. It finally collapsed in 1881, but the high hopes of 1868 had been dashed by 1872. Though there was no direct connection between the work of the Board and Parliamentary politics it cannot be without significance that the period when the Board was the scene of industrial conflict was also the time when union leaders were challenging the political supremacy of their masters. In the immediate weeks following the foundation of the Board union leaders had acquiesced in political arrangements made by their employers though they were not unaware of a demand from among their colleagues that a working men's representative be sent to Parliament. When the first flush of enthusiasm for the Board had disappeared, however, union leaders felt free to assert political independence.

The early 1870s was a distinctive period, therefore, in the development of the North Staffordshire Potteries. There were unusual and serious political differences dividing the community whose livelihood was dependent upon the dominating industry which characterised the area. These were parallel to industrial conflicts which had a long history and which had burst forth much more violently in 1836-7, and were to spark further trouble in 1881. Only in the 1870s, however, did the leaders of the working men go so far as to promote a Parliamentary candidate of their own to rival those selected by the oligarchy of employers in the pottery industry.

The differences between union leaders and employers in the pottery industry on political affairs were not ideological ones. They were not even about sharply divergent interpretations of the Liberal outlook on politics. There was, in fact, a very close agreement about policies Liberal governments should follow and about the style of leadership the Liberal Party should accept. The narrow issue which split the two groups was stated precisely by William Owen in 1871.

> "The Working men of the Borough of Stoke-upon-Trent are conscious that to attain to the full dignity of electoral manhood, they must be represented by one workingman out of the two Members the Borough is qualified to elect. --- it is not our object to discuss the qualifications of Messrs Melly and Roden, we have no desire to say anything against them, but we may say this, that both of them are members of the middle class, and in neither is the true idea of labour representation , of the government of the people by and for the people fulfilled; and, therefore, at the next election the working men of this Borough are determined to make choice of one candidate, leaving the middle class Liberal electors to do the same. If this can be amicably arranged, so much the better for the triumph of radical principles, but if the middle class desire to have the choosing of both candidates, the working men will still go on unswervingly in the course they have decided upon".[1]

For all that the quarrel was limited to the choice of Party candidates, and did not carry any implications about policy or a change in Parliamentary leadership, it was, nevertheless, about a crucial aspect of the constituency Party's existence. The prerogative of approving particular men as official candidates was a function of leadership, and to reduce the control over the choice of candidates exercised by established leaders was to undermine the existence of those leaders. The quarrel was, therefore, about power and the group which stood to gain was one hitherto seen as belonging to the subservient section of society, namely the working classes. There was little possibility that the oligarchy of manufacturers and professional men would surrender their superior position easily, so that potentially a conflict over such a fundamental matter could ruin the Liberal Party in the constituency of Stoke-on-Trent in the sense that it lost its Members of Parliament.

The growth of a body of opinion favouring the nomination of a working men's representative as a Liberal candidate in Stoke-on-Trent put a premium upon the reaction of established Party leaders. Actions taken by those leaders in the period prior to the 1874 election were important for the future development of their Party locally, and for the continuance of two Liberal Members in the House of Commons.

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1. Examiner. 1871, November 25, p4.

CHAPTER 4.

THE LIBERAL LEADERSHIP 1868 TO 1874 AND THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1874

CHAPTER 4

THE LIBERAL LEADERSHIP 1868 TO 1874 AND THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1874

Part 1. The Liberal oligarchy and reaction to the Labour Representation League.

The attitude of Liberal leaders in Stoke-on-Trent to the damage done to the Party by the events of November 1868 can be exemplified by that taken by William Woodall. After the death of his father-in-law, James Macintyre, in December 1868, Woodall took over the leadership of Burslem Liberals and improved his standing in the hierarchy of the Party in the Potteries. He was not without rivals as the successor to John Ridgway, but he outstripped men such as John Nash Peake, the tile manufacturer of Tunstall,[1] to become Member for Stoke-on-Trent in 1880. Woodall's career and opinions in the early 1870s were of special importance, therefore, because they commanded the respect of many in his Party.

Woodall's view of the Party situation was expressed in a letter to George Melly after the M.P. had visited Tunstall in December 1870.

> "I am much relieved to find you are "not dissatisfied" with your recent visit. The only consideration which I can find comfort in is that this Hartwell furore must spend itself in each town and that at any rate so far as Hanley, Longton and Tunstall are concerned, the day is well over. It will no doubt be much, very much milder in Burslem. Having regard to the peculiar character of Tunstall, to the old malcontent strength of the place, and to the present existence of a hostile organisation there, you came off wonderfully well on Wednesday. The vote was a conclusive one, but there is no concealing the fact that there is a large amount of widespread disaffection, and one may well hope for a prolonged life to the present Parliament."[2]

This letter showed that Woodall did not expect the bitterness brought about by the previous election to last much longer, though he recognised its strength and effects. One reason for this was that only in Tunstall did it appear to have

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1. John Nash Peake 1837-1905 : tile manufacturer. His early career was centred on his ambition to be a successful painter and he continued throughout his life to paint portraits of local worthies. Thomas Peake, his father, brought him into the family business, and from there he moved into local government and Liberal politics. John N. Peake was devoted to Tunstall and its improvement, and was Chief Bailiff in 1884 and 1885. For many years he was the leading opponent of the scheme to federate the Pottery towns.

2. Melly Papers. XV. 4141. W.Woodall to G.Melly. 1870, December 17.

deep roots in the past and in an active group continuing opposition to the leadership at the time of writing. In the end, therefore, Woodall concluded that all would be well for the M.P.s if Parliament remained in existence for its full term. Time would heal Party wounds and ensure the survival of the leading oligarchy.

In the same letter Woodall gave another reason why he felt confidence in further Liberal victories.

> "Notwithstanding all this your position in the Borough is a very strong one and I have not yet seen the combination that can displace you."

No doubt this was an assurance he was giving to Melly personally about re-election, but it expressed also a more general view that as Melly and Roden were certain to stand again in the constituency their record as Members, and sheer loyalty on the part of the electorate, would be sufficient to safeguard their seats. John Nash Peake was later to confirm that this was a view shared by all Liberal leaders.

Liberal leaders were still less impressed by the early efforts to establish a branch of the Labour Representation League in the Potteries than they were by the aftermath of the Hartwell affair. Woodall did not refer to the League in letters to Melly, and even after he reported that Walton and Owen were being considered as Parliamentary candidates, in December 1871, he did not conclude that the Liberal leaders ought to take counter-measures. Disaffection was expected to disappear as memories of 1868 faded, and, as the sitting Members were expected to be available for re-election, there would be no occasion to re-open the matter of selection procedures.

Methods of party management which had served the leadership well in the 1860s, under the control of William Brownfield and the committee of manufacturers, were continued into the new decade. Membership of the inner group changed somewhat, Woodall and Peake becoming the key political figures among the wealthier pottery owners. Some from the middle ranks of urban society gained

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1. Sentinel. 1875, January 21, p3.

in political stature - Christopher Dickinson, a flour miller of Stoke-upon-Trent for one - but they did not give new direction to policy or tactics. Divisions among Liberals were nothing new and the situation in the Party in the five years following the 1868 election was not thought to warrant drastic action on the part of the acknowledged leaders.

There was a need, however, to repair weaknesses in the organisation and to raise issues appealing to all sections. In the general circumstances of politics as they then existed the issue which most attracted attention was that of educational reform, and, as with Parliamentary reform in the previous period, the formulation of groups to advocate specific plans promised to bring organisational strength to the Liberal Party. For William Woodall education held a particular fascination and was an issue he was involved with throughout his career. Potentially educational reform was a flag round which Liberals of all classes could rally, and, by transcending class loyalties, it offered an opportunity for neutralising working class challenges to middle class management.

A meeting Woodall helped to organise in Burslem in December 1869 showed how he saw the possibilities at that stage of using the educational reform issue for the good of the Party. Ostensibly it was a town meeting with the Chief Bailiff in the chair, and called at the request of the citizens. Leading Conservatives, including H.T. Davenport, were invited to subscribe to the need for some reform; prominent working class leaders, William Owen and Edward Mayer, had invitations to propose the adoption of the programme of the National Education League, and the President of that League, George Dixon M.P., and local Member George Melly, were guests of honour. Even though Davenport was a known advocate of a rival Education Union plan, Woodall was able to predict before the meeting that the Dixon appeal, supported by Owen and Mayer, would win general approval. As an exercise in Liberal propaganda and as testimony to the underlying harmony of the Liberal cause headed by middle class leaders, the meeting was exactly what Woodall thought necessary. "The meeting is to be

an undoubted success", he wrote.[1]

He did not favour going further than this, as Melly clearly proposed. To the suggestion that there should be a private dinner party before the meeting to which Melly would invite the workingmen's speakers Woodall replied,

> "I have considerable hesitation about both Mayer and Owen. With regard to the first I don't think his presence would contribute either to his own comfort or that of the other guests and I am afraid that it might convey the impression that you were under some paramount obligation to conciliate him. Owen also is a very ticklish subject and easily spoiled. The other press men resent any special attention shown to him".[2]

Woodall was quite ready to use working class leaders and to appear on the same platforms with them, but he shunned anything which gave an impression of reduced middle class authority. Mayer had spoken strongly on the Hartwell issue; inviting him to private conclaves compromised the leadership of the oligarchy.

This first attempt to establish a branch of the National Education League in Burslem, and thereby to mend breaches in the Party, was not followed by an outburst of enthusiasm, and in the Summer of 1871 A.A. Walton and the Rev. W.W. Juhb had to do the work all over again. Their links at that time were very much with working class leaders, but Woodall gave his blessing to the resuscitation of the Burslem branch, writing to Melly,

> "I am not without hope that it will be useful as a centre of action in various ways. We agree that we are not ripe for a School Board contest yet".[3]

In the context of events that year, when School Board elections had been occasions of fierce class and denominational rivalry in Longton and Stoke-upon-Trent, when the Labour Representation League had emerged as a lively organisation

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1. Melly Papers. XIV. 3735. W.Woodall to G.Melly 1869, December 11.

2. ibid., XIV, 3738. W.Woodall to G.Melly 1869, December 13.

3. Melly Papers. XVI. 4369. W.Woodall to G.Melly 1871, December 3.

for the working classes, and in the absence of any other suitable organisation as a focus for Liberal activity, Woodall may well have seen the revival of the Education League as the best way of unifying the Party and repairing its structural weakness. Clearly he did not see it as a means of fighting a School Board election because he did not want such a body in Burslem at all.[1]

The Stoke-on-Trent Liberal Party was not unified either on the issue of education or by the formation of National Education League branches. Acceptance of Liberalism involved holding certain general views about the educational needs of society, but the scope for argument about satisfying them allowed room for important differences between groups to develop. Hanley Town Council, largely a Liberal body, voted in favour of applying for a School Board immediately after the passage of the 1870 Elementary Education Act. Longton Town Council did the same. Burslem Liberals, with William Woodall to the fore, refused to apply for a Board and waited until 1874 and Board of Education compulsion before electing one. Not all Liberals shared the same view as to the form of religious education should take in Board schools and a common front at election time was not always possible for that reason. Branches of the National Education League in the Potteries conformed to the local tradition so that each town had its own organisation and jealously guarded its independence. Liberals held important positions in each branch, but had none of the incentive to promote district unity which had been a powerful factor in the success of the Reform Unions in the 1860s. Liberals were now interested in the separate operation of different educational institutions at the local level, not in mutual support of a national campaign to put pressure on central government. From such a divided organisation the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent had little to gain.

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1. J.A. Dewey. An examination of the role of Church and State in the development of elementary education in North Staffordshire between 1870 and 1903. University of Keele, thesis, for Ph.D. 1971, p100.

Above all, the first School Boards in the Potteries were institutions reflecting the most serious of the weaknesses afflicting the Liberal Party - that of the failure on the part of the socially superior oligarchy to come to terms with the aspirations of working class leaders. William Woodall illustrated this failure by never recognising these aspirations in his speeches and writings. Contests for School Board places in three towns of the Potteries showed that Liberal leaders in general were scarcely more willing than any other members of the middle classes to satisfy the burgeoning ambitions of working men to participate in government.

At Hanley in 1870 one working man was elected to a Board of nine members. This was after a campaign in which, as that man, William Wood, afterwards wrote, the manufacturer candidates exerted all their industrial and financial influence in their own interest.

> "The result is that I am the middle man on the poll in a Board of nine members with the present Mayor of the Town and two large employers who had screwed all the votes they could out of their own employe[e]s below me. This is the more wonderful as the polling day was a thorough wet day and I was the only candidate who had no cabs or conveyances to carry my supporters to distant polling booths".[1]

Much effort was expended by the town's foremost politicians in an attempt to avoid a contest altogether by proposing only nine candidates. They succeeded in persuading workingmen to promote only one candidate, Wood, when initially two were put forward, but the ambitions of middle class figures, such as Frederick Wragge, one of the inner group in the Liberal Party, forced a poll. It was because of this middle class pressure to secure seats that Wood took pride in obtaining more votes than a powerful Liberal potter, Edwin Powell, and a noted Conservative iron manufacturer, Joseph Bull. Benjamin Boothroyd failed to win a seat at all despite his place among Hanley Liberal leaders.[2]

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1. Mill-Taylor collection. Vol. I. Item 161. W.Wood to J.S.Mill 1870, December 28. (British Library of Political Science, London).

2. Sentinel. 1870, December 24, p5.

In the Longton School Board election in the following month, January 1871, the hopes of working men were dealt a very similar blow by another middle class scramble for places. Much effort again was put into trying to reduce the list of candidates to nine. One of the three working men originally nominated withdrew, but the other two were elected with more votes than J.H. Goddard, one of the town's chief Liberals and colliery proprietors.[1] Rumours were reported of pressures exerted on voters more sinister than those described in this press account of the impact of the election upon the town:-

> "The walls were on Saturday thickly covered with bills of all sizes and colours, setting forth the merits of certain candidates, and giving depreciatory raps at others. On Monday morning there had been a great addition to the posters and squibs. There seemed to be a school board mania, to the upset of sober business thoughts. The election was upon the tongue of tradesmen and factory girls and boys; in fact, business seemed to be paralysed, and even the war news on this day - though of the greatest moment - was not sufficiently strong to pale the School Board excitement ---"[2]

Excitement meriting descriptions of this kind came not only from a general interest in the questions of educational reform, and the personalities involved in the contest, but also from the fact that working class candidates had been nominated for the first time. Of the nineteen names published at one stage all but two were identified as belonging to one religious denomination or another.[3] Of the remaining two, one was simply called "working man", and the other was given that title and a religious affiliation. Each fought his campaign alone, though both were trade unionists and Liberals.[4] Despite their failure to present a united front the success of working class candidates in this election was a matter of significance because of the fact of their

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1. ibid., 1871, February 4, p5.

2. Sentinel. 1871, February 4, p7. The war was between France and Prussia, and the event of "greatest moment" was the capitulation of French forces defending Paris.

3. ibid.,

4. They were George Wood and William Mayer.

identification with their class. They called attention to the separateness of their interest and threw into relief the class to which their opponents belonged. Small though the victory was, it was won in the name of the working class, and was achieved without any assistance or lead from above. Indeed, it was easy to view it as a victory over superior social forces and in the face of middle class pressure.

The contest for the Stoke-upon-Trent School Board certainly gave further grounds for this view, though on that occasion, in March 1871, Liberal middle class candidates were not so obviously set against Liberal working men. Stoke-upon-Trent was a town in which the Rector, Sir Lovelace Stamer, had considerable authority and in educational matters occupied an entrenched position. His Church of England party set out to capture the School Board, and Non-conformist opposition started from a disadvantageous position. None of the leading Liberals came forward as a candidate; Christopher Dickinson momentarily entertained the idea, but then backed down.[1] An assorted collection of Non-conformist tradesmen, minor manufacturers and agents, together with some working men, assembled to oppose the Church group whose solidarity and social status were imposing.

One candidate, agent for the Weaver Carrying Co., anticipated the tactics which afterwards were alleged to have been rife during the contest by including in his Address the hope that working men would not be subjected at wage paying time to the threatening question "How are you going to vote?", as had happened in a neighbouring town.[2] Complaints after the Church group's victory fulfilled these fears, according to the secretary to the campaign committee of one pair of candidates who called themselves working class representatives. He wrote of

> "intimidation, coercion and undue influence as never was witnessed in Stoke within the memory of the oldest inhabitant".[3]

1. Sentinel. 1871, March 11, p1.

2. ibid.,

3. Examiner. 1871, March 24, p2.

No working man won a place on the first School Board at Stoke-upon-Trent though more candidates of that class were nominated there than in Hanley or Longton. This conflict of working class ambition and middle class rule roused Alfred Walton to write in sharp tones to the Potteries Examiner, but he was more interested in fostering working class self-help than in castigating the middle classes for their oppressive actions.[1] He made no distinction between middle class Liberals and middle class Tories in their treatment of claims by working men to participate in government. Had he analysed the situation in the Potteries more closely he might have noted that though everywhere working men fought alone and without middle class help, in Hanley and Longton, where Liberals had a tradition of success in local government, they had won their way on to School Boards.

In the light of this, the interesting aspect of School Board elections in the Potteries was not so much the bitter taste of failure in Stoke-upon-Trent - attributable to the Tory hold on the town and the influence of the Rector - but rather the limited extent of working class success in Hanley and Longton. Conditions there were much more favourable yet only limited numbers of candidates had been put forward, and some even withdrew in the preliminary stages at the request of the middle class activists (the Mayor, in the case of Hanley). Told that one or two seats were all they could hope for, working men in Hanley and Longton set out to capture those and no more. To some extent, therefore, Liberal leaders recognised the claims of the working classes to have a voice on School Boards, but only a token one. They were not prepared to share power with their social inferiors on such vital matters as the education of working class children. It is true that the leading Liberals were not pressed very hard and their sop to the working classes was sufficiently placatory, but for politics in general the significance of the situation in Hanley and Longton was that it showed how little middle class Liberals were prepared to give to working class leaders by way of real power.

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1. See above p136

The first School Board elections in the Potteries highlighted the gulf between the managing politicians of the Liberal Party and their working class counter-parts, even though lines were not openly drawn between parties as for Parliamentary elections. None of the three contests in the Potteries was described as a fight between Liberals and Tories. Nevertheless, working men entered all three under the banner of their class with the intention of challenging the hegemony of the middle classes. They were able to do so only because of the low qualifications required of candidates in comparison with those obtaining in municipal and Local Board of Health elections. A practical alliance of working men and their social superiors could have operated in School Board contests. No such alliance was forged and the shock of total working class failure in Stoke-upon-Trent stimulated moves to revive the Labour Representation League and increased the determination of working class leaders to have their own Liberal candidate at a Parliamentary election.

Liberal leaders failed to see the consequences of their refusal to encourage working class participation in local government, beyond the nominal representation they allowed in Hanley and Longton School Boards, partly because other local elections, in which party fights did take place, misled them. Local Board and Council elections did not allow class conflicts to arise and victories by middle class Liberals were apt to deceive. William Woodall concluded that all was well with the Liberal Party in Burselm following his personal triumph in the Local Board of Health election of 1871.

Woodall was convinced that the opposition to his re-election to the Board of Health in 1871 was a Tory plot. He tried an innovation during the contest by holding a public meeting to address the voters, sending the bell-man round to announce this action. About this meeting he wrote:

> "The opposition was fairly represented especially by the Secretary of the Constitutional Association who admitted that the opposition candidates Ellis and Parker - with our Hughes as a decoy duck - had been started by them. We had some lively talking but nothing could be more satisfactory that the evidence that the Liberal Party is in as healthy a condition as you or I can desire. The teetotallers, the Trades union men, and all our old Radicals are

> united and if I am beaten it will be by the mis-use of the voting papers among the large residuum which knows not its right hand from its left".[1]

He was not beaten, and was able to write again to Melly

> "I knew that you would be pleased at my election --- I have to thank the knot of tories who tried so hard to win a party triumph, and who instead woke to a sense of their own importance when our friends were once aroused ---"[2]

The victory was not without its struggle - and cost. The public meeting itself was unusual and the expense Woodall incurred was hinted at in another letter to Melly.

> "I employed some 8 or 10 men as distributors of bills and as canvassers but not one shilling was spent in the slightest impropriety, and nothing on our part has been done which is in the most distant degree wrong or even equivocal. Our triumph is as honourable as it is satisfactory and complete."[3]

He concluded from this contest that if the Tories had won there would have been national rejoicing at a "Conservative reaction at Stoke", and though he hoped for a more "intelligent"[4] assessment by Liberals he obviously saw his Party as in good shape in Burslem. He went out of his way to describe local details for George Melly and to offer the view that he was depending on the same voters as Melly would in a general election.[5] The only purpose for stressing this was to convince Melly that the Liberal working class in Burslem would be steadfast for the Party if real danger threatened - that is from Tories. Echoes of the prescribed parrot cry of middle class Liberal leaders at election time can be detected in these opinions of Woodall's. 'Don't divide

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1. Melly Papers XVI. 4371. W.Woodall to G.Melly 1871, September 24.
2. ibid., 4367, October 17.
3. ibid., 4372, September 28.
4. ibid.
5. ibid.

the interest' was the call to working class voters who threatened to run a temperance man or one of their own kind as candidate. Tories were the real enemies and a real threat from them was the quickest way of bringing the recalcitrant to heel.

William Woodall gave no hint that he was different from his fellow leaders in seeing the necessity for an accommodation to working class aspirations. He was fully aware of them, however, and recognised danger in heavy handed opposition calculated to deflate them. On one occasion, when talk was rife of a working class candidate, he advised Melly before he addressed his constituents,

> "It will be important to avoid antagonism with either the principle of working class members or with the individual aspirants, but I have no fear of, or for, you on this score ---".[1]

It was not until the events of the election in January 1874 had demonstrated the reality of the divided Liberal 'interest', and the danger of seeking to obviate the consequences of working class ambitions by 'management', that Woodall referred to the imperative need to come to terms with the demands of working men.

Such effort as there was to organise working men for the Liberal Party, and to attempt a compromise alliance of candidates, was generally too feeble or too late, and can be traced only in Hanley. There the controversial James Bebbington was involved in two ephemeral organisations designed to harness working class interest in politics to the Liberal Party. The first was a Ratepayers' Association and the second a Hanley Liberal Association, apparently formed in 1870.[2] Bebbington tried to link the latter to the Labour Representation League but was firmly repulsed by the League men. In October 1873 there was a move to revive the moribund Liberal Association by William Wood and Bebbington together, and the possibility of linking Melly with Walton as official Party candidates was publicly discussed.[3] In the

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1. Melly Papers. XVI. 4366. W.Woodall to G.Melly 1871, December 16.

2. Examiner. 1871, May 12, p3.

3. ibid., 1873, October 18, p8.

following month Wood declined to offer himself for re-election as the working man's candidate for Hanley School Board, but Bebbington was accepted by a committee of working men as his replacement and triumphantly elected. On the basis of this new-found popularity Bebbington began to push for a Melly-Walton alliance by writing to George Melly in December 1873.

> "It is high time something was done in the matter - though, perhaps, something is being done, of which I may be unaware. Possibly the leaders of the Party who met at Colonel Roden's a few days ago decided on the course they intend to pursue - how far their policy may be adopted by the rank and file of the Party is another matter - one thing is certain they (the rank and file) now posses the power - and they know it.
>
> I have had several conversations with Mr. Wm.Wood ex-member of the School Board - on this matter - and the result of our deliberations are that we think we should like to see you and discuss more fully than can be done by correspondence.
>
> One thing I may say that with myself he is most anxious that your election shall be secured - I have also taken the opportunity of speaking to the leading members of my committee in the recent School Board contest - they being persons who have considerable influence amongst their fellow workmen as was pretty well shown by the result in my election by so large a vote - and as far as I have ascertained they are very desirous of your re-election as one of their representatives and along with you - Mr. Walton"[1]

William Wood was firmly associated with the Labour Representation League, having spoken at its selection meeting and sat on the platform at Walton's inaugural meeting in September.[2] Nevertheless, he had corresponded earlier with Melly about the dangers of the latter's position, warning of the possible loss of seats if a proper organisation was not set up to run Party affairs. He was of moderate views in some respects and not afraid to stand out against pressures from his own class. The fact that he took the chair at the meeting called to revive the Liberal Association so soon after a workingman's candidate openly started a campaign was some indication of where his sympathies lay. If

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1. Melly Papers. XVIII. 4680. J.Bebbington to G.Melly 1873, December 30.

2. Sentinel. 1873, September 30, p3.

he and Bebbington, in their conversations, decided to attempt a reconciliation within the Party on the basis of a Melly-Walton partnership this would be consonant with his own earlier actions and have wide appeal among working class Liberals: that was, after all, the professed aim of the Labour Representation League.

On the other side it is plain that the oligarchy met at Colonel Roden's house for dinner shortly before Bebbington wrote to Melly, and ruled out any immediate move for reconciliation. Of this meeting Woodall wrote,

> "We had present Wragge, Peake, Boothroyd, Cartlidge, Strick, Barlow, Goddard, Hughes. 10 in all. After talking about everything else Mr. Wedgwood opened the ball by proposing the re-forming of a Liberal Council. Immediately upon which Mr. Roden said he had talked with his colleague, that they were agreed the Boro' was too vast for management by a council, that he and said hon'-able colleague had perfect confidence in their friends in all the towns and would leave each town to manage its own business. This in a ragged and most ungraceful muttering way".[1]

Some dissatisfaction had been privately expressed at the behaviour of William Roden. This came from another member of the managing group, Christopher Dickinson, who also seems to have been one of those at the dinner.[2] Criticism had not mounted so far, however, as to be the basis for rejecting Roden, and no effort was made to push the idea of a Liberal Council. One reason for this was simply that the dissolution of Parliament in the following month, January 1874, allowed no time for pressure to build up. Without some positive reason for dismissing Roden, and in the absence of some unbelievably magnanimous offer by him to withdraw in the interests of Party unity, there was no chance of the Party managers being able to negotiate with Walton's supporters. Just over a year later J.N. Peake looked back at the situation and was reported as saying,

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1. Melly Papers. XIX. 4927. W.Woodall to G.Melly 1874, January 3.

2. ibid.

> "At the last election there was no Central Committee at all --- [the] services --- by Melly and Roden were so great as to warrant their being brought forward without consultation with the Party".[1]

Peake's summary of the 1874 election precisely described the reaction of the Party's managing group to the challenge from the Labour Representation League and the working class move for independent action. As had once seemed the case in 1868 the two sitting M.Ps had the right to expect support, and the oligarchy felt the duty of giving it. The difference between 1868 and 1874 was that on the first occasion one of the M.Ps. was not certain he wished to stay and was amenable to pressure from a rival seeking his seat, whereas in 1874 both Members were determined to stand. The last minute substitution of Roden for Grenfell in 1868 gave the opportunity for a working class challenge which was assisted by the management decision to use a Liberal Council. In 1874 there was little desire among Party leaders to repeat their previous experiences - Roden being clearly totally opposed to another Liberal Council, and no alternative candidate was pushing his claims. The major factor in the 1874 election, for which there was no precedent, was the existence of a working man's candidate who claimed all the Liberal virtues, advocated Gladstone's policies, stressed his popular selection, and stood independent of the Party. His presence demonstrated the division in the Liberal 'interest' just as surely as the feeble response of the Party's managers was testimony to their refusal to recognise the extent of the rift.

Part II. The 1874 general election and the consequences of the division in the Liberal 'interest'.

> "The news of the dissolution came upon the district like a thunderclap, but as soon as the first astonishment had subsided, steps were devised for making up by vigorous effort for the unpreparedness of all parties."[2]

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1. Sentinel. 1875, January 21, p3.

2. ibid., 1874, January 31, p6.

This Liberal description of the state of political affairs in Stoke-on Trent in January 1874 was only partially true. The Conservative Party had selected Robert Heath as its candidate in April 1873 and he had spoken several times to gatherings of supporters. There could have been no doubt about the intentions of Alfred Walton either, for he was speaking as the "working man's candidate for the borough"[1] two weeks before the election was announced. The only ones who were unprepared for a fight were the leaders of the Liberal Party. Their unwillingness to grapple with the central problem of their Party left them with no alternative to supporting Melly and Roden in a contest on two fronts.

The campaign was brief, sharp and without unusual aspects. The Conservatives reverted to an earlier practice of advertising lists of names, several hundred in all, of men who were said to form committees "for the return of Mr. Robert Heath".[2] Apart from this way of impressing the electors with the strength of support behind the candidate the Conservatives followed the Liberals and working men by holding numerous open meetings addressed by the candidate and prominent local people.

Groups with special interests such as the Licensed Victuallers, and their temperance opponents, the Good Templars, resolved to fall in behind the Conservative and Liberal candidates respectively, and Roman Catholic priests were said to have agreed to advise their parishioners to vote for Heath.[3] Some trade union meetings presumably recorded resolutions to fight for Walton, but the loss of the relevant files of the Potteries Examiner prevents any full statement being made about the manner in which his campaign was conducted.

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1. ibid., January 24, p5.
2. ibid., 1874, January 31, p1.
3. ibid., p5.

Approximately nineteen thousand men were entitled to vote, the overwhelming majority of them doing so for the first time, chiefly because there had been no need for a poll in 1868. Apart from the very brief contest at the by-election early in 1868 this election was the first in Stoke-on-Trent since 1865, and the first using a secret ballot. Experience in election campaigning was somewhat lacking, and, so far as it existed, bore little relevance to the new situation of secret voting. There was only a short time available for election activity anyway, the poll being arranged within two weeks of the announcement of dissolution, so that the contest did not allow dramatic developments in party organisation to take place.

Colonel Roden was especially upset at Gladstone's decision to hold an immediate election. At the hurriedly assembled meeting of canvassers and Party managers on 26 January Roden had to explain that Addresses could not be printed quickly enough for circulation before the meeting.[1] Another cause of the difficulties in which the Liberal candidates were placed was that there was no Party agent to handle routine business. A solitary reminder of the deficiencies of the Party in this respect had been published in the previous August,[2] and the Party had been represented at the Registration Court only by George Wigley. Under the pressure of immediate need the candidates turned in January 1874 to the eldest son of the former Agent, and invited C.E. Challinor to act for them. He was a young man with no experience of the work, but he was local and had a respected pedigree. He contrasted on both counts with the men Melly had been able to introduce into the situation in 1868, and he may have been Roden's choice. Roden's seat was the one for which there was a contest - there being widespread agreement, even among Conservatives, that Melly should be returned, and it was Roden's reluctance

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1. Sentinel. 1874, January 31, p6.

2. ibid., 1873, August 15, p4.

TO THE
ELECTORS
OF STOKE-ON-TRENT.

Who pitied England's sons of toil
When they, like chattles to the soil,
Were bound by labour's heavy coil?
The Liberals!

Who strove to raise them from the dust,
To stand like men and from them thrust
Oppression's power and laws unjust?
The Liberals!

Who give themselves up to the cause
Of Working-men, and never pause
Until they give them equal laws?
The Liberals!

Who have obtained the cheapened bread,
That hungry children may be fed,
And comforts through our homes be spread?
The Liberals!

Who have removed the heavy tax,
On knowledge placed in ages lax,
And showed us Wisdom's upward tracks?
The Liberals!

Who have our children's welfare sought,
And passed a Bill, with blessing fraught,
Established Schools where all are taught?
The Liberals!

Who gave to us the Ballot Bill,
So that we all may vote at will,
And keep our occupation still?
The Liberals!

Who have removed the army's curse,
Of power purchased by the purse,
And placed the better o'er the worse?
The Liberals?

Who will pursue the onward way,
Nor from it for one moment stray,
But hasten Freedom's glorious day?
The Liberals!

And now my little yarn is spun,
Vote *MELLY & RODEN* every one,
And join with me to shout "Well done".
The Liberals!

Election squib 1874.

to assist in preparations for an election which had contributed so much to the Party's state of unreadiness. He had every reason to be disturbed by the action of the Prime Minister.

George Melly did his best to take the pressure off Roden by representing the election as something far more important than a mere battle of personalities, or a local struggle between different social groups. It was not, he claimed, that voters should refrain from dividing the constituency Liberal Party because this would mean victory for a local Tory, but that electors should decide first whether they wanted Gladstone and Bright in power, or Disraeli. Since men in the Potteries could hardly want the latter, the only way they could help ensure power to Gladstone was to return Roden as well as Melly. Any hesitation about this, and any consideration of Walton as a Gladstonian supporter, could only let the second seat go to the Conservatives - so at any rate Melly argued.

The Conservative response was straightforward and limited. Heath spoke on almost every occasion it seemed with but one theme - that Gladstone sought personal power by advocating dangerous policies. These he described and criticised in some detail both in relation to events since 1868 and in the plans Gladstone advocated in his address to his own constituents. In a minor key, Heath commended himself as a local representative, a tolerant Churchman and as one well versed in labour affairs.

Alfred Walton spoke chiefly on the twin themes of the great need for the House of Commons to hear at first hand the working man's point of view on every question, and his devotion to Gladstonian reform. Like Melly and Roden he was at great pains to identify for his audiences those particular changes for which he would vote in the House. Trade union matters occupied much of his attention, but he was equally keen to present himself as being fully informed on other great issues facing the Government.

The secret ballot conditioned the conduct of the campaign. Melly largely anticipated the course it would take in his first speech after he had explained the great question facing the electorate. The question would be answered, he said, only after

> "hard work, by candid and straightforward expressions of opinion --- and it will finally be solved by secret voting"

He went on to say to his canvassers and supporters

> "No more word of intimidation, nothing more of personal influence; you may tell people how you are going to vote, and people can believe you if they like, but between you and your God and your conscience will be the decision. These are the words which, as our canvassers, you should tell to our people, and it will be by your labour, your industry, your own eloquence in your own individual circles, that you will aid this great constituency to answer the question ---".[1]

This view that reasoned arguement would play a big part in the electioneering process was correct in so far as acts of intimidation and corruption were not complained of and there was no repetition of 1868 in efforts to buy off Walton. The short duration of the campaign, however, may have been a factor assisting in keeping excitement low until polling day. Events then took a serious turn for the worse, the closing hours of polling being a time of widespread rioting. In the heavy fog which wreathed the Potteries all day there was plenty of opportunity for mischief but nothing disastrous occurred until towards 4.00 p.m., when the booths closed. Hanley and Tunstall suffered the worst, especially their public buildings and rooms used by Conservative committees. Afterwards the Conservatives complained that but for these riots Heath would have had 1,500 more votes, but Liberals strenuously argued that all who wished to vote had done so before the trouble began .[2]

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1. Sentinel. 1874, January 31, p6.

2. Melly Papers. XIX. 4892. J.N.Peake to G.Melly 1874, no date.

No matter how right Melly was in anticipating a contest of reasoned argument he was wrong about the result. His confidence in a victory for the Party leaders, expressed in terms of Roden's election, was misplaced.[1] The official result was

George Melly	6,700 votes
Robert Heath	6,180
W.S. Roden	5.369
A.A. Walton	5,198[2]

Heath's success confirmed all the worst fears of those who had warned of the dangers inherent in having three Liberals seeking two seats. As one of Melly's rarer constituency correspondents said

> "For the result of the contest I was fully prepared, and, when you were over at the School of Art meeting, I told you what it would be. Mr. Roden voted right at crucial times; but a constituency wants more than that. He is personally unpopular among Conservatives, moderate Liberals and even Radicals; does nothing to conciliate, and much to alienate."[3]

William Woodall reported much the same.

> "Now the cry is "didn't we tell you so", and we are pointed to Bebbington and the Roden party at Hanley whose airs and dictation have offended keenly so many."[4]

Three reasons for the Liberal defeat were seen at the time as important, much the most devastating being the unexpectedly powerful challenge made by the workingman's candidate, Alfred Walton. The other two were the personal unpopularity of Roden, apparent even among his social equals, and Conservative Party chicanery. This latter was described by J.N. Peake as "Beer and Bills".[5]

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1. Melly had wagered on the result with J.H. Goddard, one of the Longton leaders, and paid up very promptly when losing. Goddard had clearly expressed doubts to Melly about the Party's chances of victory much earlier, but must have accepted assurances of success as others in his position did. (ibid., 4890. J.H.Goddard to G.Melly 1874, February 9)

2. Sentinel. 1874, February 7, p8.

3. Melly Papers. XIX. 4928. C.W. Bond to G.Melly 1874, February 6.

4. ibid., 4929. W.Woodall to G.Melly 1874, February 7.

5. ibid., 4892. J.N.Peake to G.Melly 1874, no date.

No doubt all three reasons were valid; but not of equal weight. Walton clearly had substantial support and took votes which might otherwise have gone to Roden. It is impossible to say, however, whether the 812 votes required to lift Roden above Heath would have been forthcoming if Walton had withdrawn. J.N.Peake was convinced at first that a plot existed to push Tory voters into declaring for Heath and Walton.[1] His evidence was "bills" or posters seen in the local Conservative agent's office on polling day. Woodall mentioned seeing ominous numbers of ballot papers from Longton marked with this combination.[2] Conservative advice of this kind certainly did harm to Roden for it encouraged workingmen to believe that they kept faith with their class, their Liberalism and their local pride all at the same time. It also prevented Conservatives from voting for Roden (the more Conservative-minded Liberal), and thus inflating his total figures, by pressurising them to waste one vote on the inevitable loser (Walton) in accordance with their duty to the Party. The plea to vote for Heath and Walton also echoed the Tory-radical alliance of an earlier age and helped to bring 968 people to split their votes in this way.[3]

Roden's unpopularity was noted in private, but was not publicly debated. As a factor behind his failure it is no more measurable than the other cause discussed immediately after the poll - that of "beer". According to Peake Conservative influence over the drink trade affected the result. Walton thought so too. He made a vehement denunciation of beerhouse keepers, claiming that

> "I should have been at the head of the poll if the publicans had not voted against me"[4]

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1. ibid., XIX. 4892. J.N.Peake to G.Melly, no date. 1874
2. ibid., 4929. W.Woodall to G.Melly, 1874, February 7.
3. Examiner. 1875, January 16, p8.
4. Beehive. 1874, February 21, pp8-9.

The Licensed Victuallers did agree on a policy of plumping for Heath, but Peake maintained that working class leaders had some arrangement with Conservative organisers to obtain votes for Walton, even though such votes were opposed by the publicans. The Conservatives did not live up to their promises and Walton's cry might, therefore, have been sour grapes. It was not the vested interest in drink which hurt him (he inclined towards temperance, but the Good Templars actually approved Roden), rather it was the broken promise of alliance.

The only reason which made sense for the Liberal failure to retain both seats at Stoke-on-Trent was the disunity of the Party. "Beer and Bills" were not significant factors; three Liberal candidates were. This was the lesson which William Woodall drew from events and described to his Party workers on the night of the declaration of the poll.[1] Owen and his fellow trade unionists had made their point and shown their power. According to one account, 2,566, or slightly under 50% of Walton's votes were plumpers. Roden had 172; Melly 165.[2] Not only had the Labour Representation League members promoted a candidate successfully, therefore, they had also marshalled their voters effectively. Walton had not entered Parliament but he had denied the local Liberal leaders their prize.

The obvious consequence of the divisions among Liberals, exemplified by the candidature of A.A. Walton, was the loss by the Party of one of its seats. This was a severe blow to the established leadership for it was the first occasion when its election management had been tested in the new age of a working class electorate. It was clear that the voters had not deserted

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1. Melly Papers. XIX. 4929. W.Woodall to G.Melly 1874, February 7.

2. Sentinel. 1878, June 3, p3. These figures are contained in an anonymous letter and must be treated with caution. A full analysis of the poll was not published locally at the time of the election.

Gladstonian Liberalism; it was equally clear that local mismanagement was to blame for the failure to gather all Liberals behind two candidates. The situation seemed all the more disastrous because it had its part in destroying Gladstone's majority in the House of Commons, thus leading to a Conservative government.

The development of the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent after 1874 was bound to be affected by the division along class lines, which was so clear cut that a separate working man's organisation had been created to rival that of Liberal manufacturers. Any initiatives towards healing the breach were equally bound to come from the middle class leaders for it was their status, power and objectives which were under pressure. Trade union leaders had made their demands known; they had apparently proved their ability to prevent the established leaders of the Party from controlling both seats, but they had not declared against the Party as such, nor even against middle class leadership. They sought satisfaction of a claim which they presented as one of justice - an equal share in the selection of official candidates. There was more than one way of arranging for this, however, and it was in the interests of the traditional leaders to suggest one which would remove the independent working class organisation from the constituency.

CHAPTER 5.

THE LIBERAL-LABOUR ALLIANCE

CHAPTER 5

THE LIBERAL-LABOUR ALLIANCE.

Part I. An enforced Liberal-labour pact and the 1875 by-election.

The complacency of those who thought themselved to be at the head of the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent was rudely shaken by the discovery in 1874 that a workmen's section was sufficiently powerful to unseat one of their nominees for Parliament. There was more than one reaction to the obvious need to take into account in future plans the interests of labour, but no general enthusiasm for the negotiation of an alliance between trade union leaders and middle class managers. The existence of the Labour Representation League branch in the Potteries made an alliance of equal partners a possibility, and it may be that this was in Woodall's mind immediately after the close of the election. Certainly he was involved in moves to build a bridge of some kind between the 'old' party and labour, the results of which had their effect in 1875.

Woodall explained the situation as he saw it, and his immediate ideas for the future, in a letter to Melly on 7 February 1874.

> "it appears to me the future would be much improved if we could get Walton withdrawn on condition of our withdrawing Roden. But I fear neither he nor his supporters will agree to this. I believe he is an honest man and reasonably educated. But he is not a man that we could comfortably work with. His skin and linen were very dirty and his manner is neither that of a gentleman, nor a workman. All this perhaps is no business of ours, but I feel so strongly that our future is so dependent upon our leaving the second Liberal to be nominated by the Trades Union people, that one cannot help groping about to find a way of making their candidate acceptable to middle class prejudices, as may be"[1]

The basic assumption which Woodall made was that the trade union leaders would continue to hold their organisation together. Therefore, it followed that they should be allowed to present their own candidate next time without opposition. Woodall admitted in this same letter that Roden's chances of

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1. Melly Papers. XIX. 4929. W.Woodall to G.Melly 1874, February 7.

re-election were now gone, but he was obviously prepared to use him for Party purposes, trading his withdrawal in order to obtain Walton's removal. There was little chance of this deal succeeding if only because it was so plain that Roden had shot his bolt, so that the labour men would gain nothing. Woodall was thus driven to conclude that the only hope lay in influencing the choice of trade union candidate in some way so that he might be less objectionable than Walton. One way of achieving this end, he proposed, was to use the forthcoming election for a School Board in Burslem.

> "Now I am hoping that the Tories will give us a contest for the Burslem School Board. It will serve to re-unite our two sections and be the means I hope of getting up an understanding which will influence the whole district".[1]

In this contest Woodall and four other candidates stood together in an open alliance, advertising themselves as "the Liberal Five".[2] One of the five was William Owen, and he came second in the poll with Woodall third.

This successful campaign for places on a School Board by a group of candidates working together, and including the main trade union spokesman in the pottery industry, was a striking contrast to all previous local government contests in the district. It carried no guarantee that a Parliamentary election could be fought in the same manner, but it must have gone some way towards Woodall's objective of reuniting the middle and working class sections of the Liberal Party.

Woodall was not alone in the view that the second Liberal candidate ought to be nominated by trade union organisations,[3] and there was at least one other open association between labour leaders and middle class Liberals in 1874, apart from the Burslem School Board election. This took the form of joint support for East Anglian agricultural labourers locked-out by their

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1. ibid.
2. Sentinel. 1874, February 28, p3.
3. Melly Papers. XIX. 4928. C.W.Bond to G.Melly 1874, February 16.

masters. A public meeting sponsored by a committee of pottery owners and operatives was held in the second week of June, and E.F. Bodley, a Hanley manufacturer, was treasurer to a gift fund to which a number of prominent men contributed.[1]

Nevertheless, this evidence of an improving harmony between labour leaders and Party bosses fell short of proof of a real alliance between the two groups for purposes of Parliamentary politics. The Labour Representation League continued its activities, collecting a testimonial of £100 for Alfred Walton presented to him in June at a dinner in Hanley.[2] There was no mention of any agreement imminent about future election arrangements, and the conclusion must be that none was made.

A quite different approach to the problem of bringing the two sections of the Liberal Party together again was made in Stoke-upon-Trent under the aegis of Christopher Dickinson. He had come to the leadership of the Party in that town quite recently, and set out after the 1874 election to reunite his fellow citizens without making the assumption that at the next election one candidate would be nominated by the trades unions. In his view it was not enough for employers to associate publicly with workmen in local elections or at protest meetings. The whole Party had to be reconstructed on a new basis.

Dickinson helped to establish a Liberal Club for Stoke-upon-Trent which was opened in Brook Street in July 1874. The aim was to provide an institutional base for the Party very similar to the Conservative Clubs which were thought to have been so useful to Heath in preparing for his electoral success. Dickinson wanted working men to enjoy "personal intercourse", to play games, to read periodicals and to absorb Liberalism "with moderate and good refreshments".[3]

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1. Sentinel. 1874, May 16, p5; June 13, p7.

2. Advertiser. 1874, June 27, p5.

3. Sentinel. 1874, May 2, p8.

This was not the first occasion when a Liberal Club had been suggested - an abortive effort had been made in Hanley late in 1873 - but it was the first to succeed. Two hundred members were reported at the opening ceremony and the institution became the focal point of the Party in the town of Stoke-upon-Trent as Dickinson wanted.[1]

Dickinson's attempt to keep the public informed of what he saw as the motivation and negotiations behind the Club, which was made in a letter to the Staffordshire Sentinel, showed that political harmony was not easily achieved, and that sections in the Party remained suspicious of each other's motives.

> "Sir,
>
> The notice in a leading article appearing in one of the local papers and also a letter on the subject, do not give an exact account of what has taken place[2] in the matter. I would, therefore, remark that at the close of the general election the old Liberal Party in our town felt that it would be desirable to have some organisation, and the favourers of the working men's candidate were also of the same opinion, and took steps towards bringing it about. But as it seemed right, if possible, to unite the two sections, means were taken to bring it about, and the old party agreed to join the new one on the understanding that no candidates names should be adopted - that it should be altogether left for the united action of the whole district when the time came for its consideration. At our general meeting, held last week, for the adoption of the rules and the appointment of officers and committee, Mr. Walton's name was proposed as a vice-president. To this we declined to accede, as breaking through the understanding, and at once cutting us off from the support of the middle class in the town, without whose assistance I did not believe the Club would answer. The meeting supported my view of the subject, and rejected Mr. Walton's name by a large majority.
>
> If at the next general election the operatives of the district still desire one of their own class (which I conceive to be a matter of considerable doubt) the best possible man should be selected, and one who should, as far as may be, also gain the support of the general body of the electors".[3]

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1. ibid., July 25, p6.
2. This was a reference no doubt to the Potteries Examiner
3. Sentinel. 1874, May 2, p8

The foundation of a Liberal Club in Stoke-upon-Trent demonstrated a number of aspects of the Party in its post-election state. The very notion of emulating Conservative strategy in its most patronising form was unpopular with some. Nevertheless, working men in one town accepted the need to reorganise the Party, but, like their social superiors, did not intend to lose by the joint effort at founding a Club. Workingmen's leaders saw it as a move, among other things, to oust Walton which they determined to prevent by getting him elected as a vice-president. Dickinson's tactless paragraph in his letter, indicating his opinion that a working class candidate was highly unlikely anyway, proved the correctness of working class judgement. Dickinson only said in public, however, what Woodall had already written in private - that the object of the 'old' party must be to influence the choice of the trade union candidate if there had to be one.

The Club at Stoke-upon-Trent was conceived as part of a reorganisation of the Party. It was meant to be the first of a series throughout the Potteries and was designed as both a propaganda medium and an election headquarters from which the Party leaders would direct operations before and during Parliamentary contests. The circumstances of its birth were such that it was not free from the suspicion of being a tool in the hands of the 'old' party and a move in the delicate game of selecting candidates. The Labour Representation League did not cease with the appearance of a Club in one of the Pottery towns and Walton was not removed from the lists because of this attempt to re-write the rules of the tournament.

By comparison with the Conservative investment in Clubs and institutions the Stoke-upon-Trent Liberal Club was both late and small. In that town itself a Conservative Club had existed since July 1873, and in 1874 had £2,000 available to build new premises in Glebe Street.[1] Before August 1869

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1. Advertiser. 1874, October 24, p2.

five Conservative newsrooms had been opened in the whole district, and these blossomed into social centres over the next few years. It is also significant that no area organisation was involved with, or sprang from, the Liberal Club. Unlike the Conservative Association there was no linking Liberal body under the presidency of some committed and prestigious leader. The Stoke-upon-Trent Club was the work of a few men in one town, a parochial response to the larger problem of Party unity.

The main reason why there were no more striking advances towards the reunification of the Liberal Party at the instigation of its middles class directors was that they felt no sense of urgency. A long Parliament seemed assured. There was no agreement amongst them as to the best way to recapture the labour section, and no willingness to make arrangements with the trades union in advance of an actual election. Unhappily for this group, described by Dickinson as of the 'old' party, time was not an ally. A most unexpected event upset their calculations. George Melly resigned his seat.

The by-election, held during the first six weeks of 1875 and brought about by Melly's departure for business reasons, was a catalyst for action within the Liberal Party. Its timing could hardly have been worse for the fragile unity of the Party, and it forced a substantial section of the leadership to act according to the judgement of those who had accepted that a trade union candidate was now a necessity. The fact that this decision was made inevitable by events, rather than by conversion through reason, was no help in the outcome, either to those who courageously gave this lead or to the labouring men who were so anxious for it. Alfred Walton was officially adopted by the Party, but he lost to a rank outsider whose victory brought shame to the Borough. The possibility of a genuine partnership of two organisations forming an alliance of equals was thus killed.

Melly's integrity was the cause of some of the confusion covering the Liberals during the by-election. A few thought he resigned when there was no necessity, especially when the consequence might be a working man representing

the Borough. Others were more upset by his decision to inform both former Liberal candidates, Roden and Walton, of his action at the same time. Melly's letter of resignation was dated 31 December 1874 and Walton dated his Address to the Electors of Stoke-on-Trent on 1 January 1875, and met with his allies in the Borough before signing it.[1] Walton, in fact, stepped into Melly's shoes as neatly as Roden had taken Grenfell's place and as Melly himself had once taken over from Schneider. Suspicion was at once aroused that the succession had been a 'fix', and had to be openly rejected by Christopher Dickinson among others.[2] It was, of course, a section of 'old' party which resented Melly's action, knowing from past experience how such matters were arranged.

There was no doubt that Melly's courteous action in telling Walton of his intentions at the same time that he told Roden gave Walton an advantage. Melly did not necessarily intend this to be the case, but Roden no longer lived in the constituency[3] and his reputation had suffered considerably at his defeat in 1874. Roden's connections were very largely with Hanley and the Party there had shared in Roden's misfortunes. Walton was able to react quickly to Melly's sudden departure because he had friends active in the area whose organisation gave him a power base. Roden's base had disappeared.

The situation which emerged from the way Melly departed from the constituency was that a section of the 'old' party had been hoisted with its own petard, and had to adopt the arguments so often used against it in the past in order to obtain from the labour men a chance to put up a middle class candidate. The 'old' party as a whole was not united on the necessity for making out such a case. At a second meeting of Walton's supporters on

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1. Examiner. 1875, January 9, p4.
2. Advertiser. 1875, February 6, p5.
3. Sentinel. 1877, April 27, p3.

January 4th, in the Mechanics Institute, Hanley, E.F. Bodley held out an olive branch from some of his fellow manufacturers. The meeting was primarily of representatives of the local trade union lodges and William Brown, the miners' agent, was in the chair. Walton told the meeting how he had spent the day visiting many gentlemen in the Borough securing promises of support, and that he understood that Roden had refused to stand. William Owen then reported that he had been authorised to state William Woodall's support for Walton as the official Party candidate.[1] Finally, Bodley addressed the trade union men indicating his agreement with Woodall and offering to help arrange for others of the middle class to back Walton. For the labour section of the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent this meeting was a landmark.

The matter was not finally arranged on the 4th January because those who opposed Walton had scarcely had time to organise themselves, and some official Party meeting was required to formalise Walton's candidature. Two letters in the Staffordshire Sentinel indicated the attitude of some in the 'old' Party at this point. The first was printed on the day the news of Melly's resignation was published, and could only have been written with prior knowledge of the event. It was signed "Conservative", and might have been a kite flown by the editor. The message it contained was that if Roden stood the Conservatives might support him as the writer promised to do.[2] Three days later a reply from A. Smith, almost certainly the former promoter of Hartwell and Walton noted:-

> "The old Whig's are again at their old game - vote red, vote anything, but don't vote for a popular candidate. --- It was this cry that sent Mr. Pope away from the district, it was this cry that caused a split amongst us after that gentleman had gone away, and this cry will send Mr. Walton back to London defeated,

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1. Woodall could not speak for himself as he was Returning Officer for the Borough at the time and theoretically impartial.

2. Sentinel, 1875, January 1, p3.

> but not disheartened, if workingmen listen to it. Too often have I heard it, and as often been disgusted with the cry "Don't divide the Liberal interest". It is worn out ---"[1]

Another meeting on 4 January had a bearing on Walton's chances. This was a gathering of Temperance men from various societies in the Potteries hurriedly assembled to consider common action in the forthcoming contest. The chairman, J.Stubbs, wanted a vote of confidence in Walton as the only serious prospect as a candiate, but others successfully prevented any resolution of this kind. Samuel Pope had already received, and replied to, a private telegram from his keenest local friends. This was reported to the meeting, alongside a resolution alleged to have the support of Hughes, a political ally of Woodall in Burslem, to the effect that Melly should be asked to retain his seat even though he ceased to be active in politics. This move was virtually ruled out of order as Melly had accepted the office at Chiltern Hundred, so the meeting at last agreed to seek a joint consultation with representatives of the Liberal Party duly elected in each town. This decision was tantamount to a refusal to support Walton in his manoeuvre to steamroller through his adoption without going through the procedure of a Council.[2]

The decision at the Temperance meeting was indicative of the attitude taken up by a central group of Liberals. Those who spoke at the meeting were not manufacturers and leading tradesmen in the Potteries. They did not reject Walton out of hand as the "old whigs" had done. These middle rank Liberals had a special interest in temperance to serve, but they also sought to employ a structured selection procedure. Perhaps, for some, this was refuge from an open declaration against Walton, but it was a legitimate

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1. ibid., January 4, p3.

2. ibid., . 1875, January 5, p2.

course of action to adopt and was a comment on the tactics of both labour and "Whig" leaders.

The council meeting of the 'old' party, or its leaders, took place in Hanley on 6 January. It was not fully reported, though the Staffordshire Advertiser printed a list of names of people present under the chairmanship of J.N. Peake. The group of eight decided that it was inexpedient to bring out a rival to Walton, but called another meeting a week later, which was intended to be more representative of the Party, for the purpose of taking a final decision.[1] William Woodall was not present, for, as Returning Officer for the Borough on this occasion, he felt it his duty not to associate openly with any candidate.

In the eyes of Christopher Dickinson, one of those attending, this assembly was the Liberal Council. He described it as such when he presided over a special gathering in Brook Street of members of the Stoke-upon-Trent Liberal Association, called as a result of the Council decision to consult the separate town organisations. Dickinson succeeded in persuading this meeting to agree to unite behind Walton as the official Party candidate, and was himself elected as the sole representative of the town to the next meeting of the Liberal Council.[2] Burslem Liberals meeting the same day were reported as refusing to acknowledge Walton,[3] despite a renewal earlier in the day of the promised support of the Council.

The formal adoption of Alfred Walton as the Liberal candidate for the Borough of Stoke-on-Trent was signalised by the statement Christopher Dickinson made dated 13 January. It was drawn up at the adjourned meeting of

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1. Advertiser. 1875, January 9, p2.
2. Examiner. 1875, January 16, p6.
3. Sentinel. 1875, January 12, p3.

the Council, or town representatives, held on that same day. Dickinson's statement reviewed the events which had taken place since Melly's resignation, but avoided any rehearsal of arguments in favour of Walton.

> "When the generally and deeply regretted determination of Mr. Melly to retire from Parliament became known I received letters from members of our party, of various social positions and views, asking me to invite one or two Liberal electors of each town to a conference. I presume these letters were sent to me because I was chairman of a Liberal Council which once existed in the borough. I sent out the invitations, and at a meeting held in the Mayor's parlour, Hanley, on the 6th inst., it was recommended that the Liberal electors in each district be at once called together and consulted as to the policy to be pursued by the Liberal Party at the forthcoming election, in the hope of securing united action, and that two or more representatives from each town meet on Wednesday, the 18th inst., at the same place, to report the result. The Liberal electors were called together and every effort made to learn the real feeling of the party. The result, as reported at the representative meeting today, is embodied in the following resolution, which was passed unanimously, viz:- "That Mr. Walton, the choice of 5000 voters at the late election, to be the candidate of the united Liberal Party in the forthcoming struggle---" 1

There was nice irony in Dickinson being the agent announcing to the Party that Walton was its candidate. Less than a year earlier he had publicly stated that another working man's candidate in the Borough was highly unlikely. There was also a completeness about the victory scored by the labour group which was registered in Dickinson's statement. Walton had dangled before the Party from the very beginning a particular deal which had attractions, and which might have been included in the resolution adopting Walton. As it was, he was accepted without acknowledgement of a quid pro quo. Walton had tentatively promised working class support for any middle class candidate at a future election, to run as partner to Walton or his successor; if the Party leaders would take up his candidacy at the by-election. Eventually a special gathering of trade union representatives did pass a resolution to this effect on 26 January which was reported by James Bebbington

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1. Advertiser. 1875, January 23, p1.

to the Liberal Party leaders on 6 February.[1]

This resolution honoured the essential objectives of the Labour Representation League as set up in Stoke-on-Trent, and as restated by the new national President, William Newton, at a dinner at Anderton's Hotel in Fleet Street on 7 January 1875.[2] It stated

> "that animated by an earnest desire for the unity of the Liberal party in this Borough, and so to secure the return of two Liberals, we, the delegates of the various Trades' Societies and representatives of the working classes generally of the Staffordshire Potteries, having been duly appointed to attend this meeting, do hereby agree that we cordially approve of, and accept the intimation given by Mr. Walton at one or more public meetings, to the effect, that if the Liberal Party support him (Mr. Walton) at the ensuing election, so as to secure his return, his (Mr. Walton's) friends would, at the next general, or other election, support any candidate whomsoever, that the Liberal Party may select, in conjunction with Mr. Walton, or any other candidate who may be selected by the working classes, and pledge ourselves to carry out the same into effect".
>
> Signed on behalf of the meeting, James Bebbington, Chairman.

The formal inauguration of a Liberal-Labour alliance, arranged between two independent organisations at meetings between 13 January and 6 February 1875, was a peak political achievement for trade union leaders in the Potteries and a watershed in the development of the Liberal Party. Some leading Liberals felt compelled to conclude that one of the two Party candidates had to be the choice of labour after Walton's vote was seen in 1874. They were forced to act according to that conclusion in January 1875 by the accident of circumstances which enabled Walton to present himself first in the field on Melly's withdrawal. Manufacturers were reluctant to accept the need to behave honourably, but a sufficient number of them did so to commit

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1.. Advertiser. 1875, February 13, p6.

2. Henry Broadhurst Collection (British Library of Political Science, London) Labour Representation League Minute Book, 1875, January 4 (newspaper article added to the minute).

the Party officially to Walton. J.N. Peake and Christopher Dickinson were important members of this group, the former being particularly open about the part he played in swinging middle class Liberals behind the labour candidate.[1] The reality of power lay in the hands of the trade union group, however, and they had high hopes for the future on the basis of a successful alliance.

Nevertheless, the alliance was a leap in the dark. Neither set of leaders involved in the pact could guarantee that their respective sections would honour the arrangement. On the working class side the Labour Representation League was not organised for canvassing, and had no means of delivering the votes of the mass of the electorate for Walton. Labour leaders entered the alliance in all sincerity, no doubt in some cases feeling that it represented all that they had worked for since 1868, perhaps even 1857. Much depended on victory, however, for the alliance was based on expediency, not conviction, and its continuation depended upon working class voters following those who claimed to lead them.

There was no doubt that the 'old' Party, the middle class section, was seriously split. The Conservative candidate, H.T. Davenport, a member of the well-known family of manufacturers and leading Conservative dynasty in the area hoped to profit from the split among Liberals. The other candidate, Dr. E.V.H. Kenealy, was considered to be an intruder, and was dismissed by many Liberals as a piece of Conservative chicanery. He had obtained much publicity and spurious popularity for his part in the recent Tichborne case. No doubt he too saw his chance of further glory in the divided state of middle class Liberal opinion.

One sign of the extent of middle class divisions was the equivocal position taken by the Staffordshire Sentinel. This pillar of the Liberal establishment

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1. Sentinel. 1875, January 21, p3.

was openly accused by William Owen, in the columns of the Potteries Examiner, of turning Conservative for purposes of the election. Owen charged Potter, the editor of the Sentinel, with the crime of demanding payment for leading articles written in favour of Melly, and of forestalling the appearance of a Conservative journal in the district by adopting its political position.[1] He went on to say that

> "The principle of labour representation is scoffingly derided by this paper, and upon Mr. Walton and his supporters is heaped all possible abuse and slander".

Kenealy, too, attacked the Sentinel, forbidding his friends to buy it or to trade with anyone advertising in it,[2] for it held no brief for his candidature. This was not surprising for Thomas Potter had always recommended men of business preferably local, as M.Ps.s, and while he wanted them 'advanced' in opinin, he did not support lawyers, outsiders or persons he considered mediocrities. In 1875 he reflected the bewilderment of loyal Liberals and took the line of least resistance by embracing the cause of H.T. Davenport and thus remaining true to some of his principles.

The results of the poll were expected to show the defection of part of the 'old' Party to Davenport, and some even to Kenealy, but Walton's success was thought certain on the basis of solid working class support. It was for this reason that Peake, Dickinson, Bodley and Woodall had thrown their combined weight behind the labour man. They hoped in this way to save the organisation of the local Party and to recover the reputation which middle class leaders had lost in 1868 and 1874. When it was announced that Kenealy headed the list at the end of the count those favouring the alliance were as shocked as anyone. Their decision to join with labour leaders was not

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1. Examiner. 1875, January 16, p5.

2. Sentinel. 1923, April 16, Jubilee Edition - memoirs of R.W. Ship, a reporter who joined the paper in 1871.

reluctantly taken because they feared to lose both seats, but because of a natural inclination to hold on to power as long as possible. The judgement of men such as Woodall that trades union organisers could command one of the constituency's seats in Parliament in the post - 1867 conditions was found to be faulty and the alliance of equal organisations unnecessary.

The voting figures were:-

Dr. E.V.H. Kenealy	6,110	
A.A. Walton	4,168	
H.T. Davenport	3,901	
	14,179	Total on register 18,607.

One explanation for these results was clearly that Kenealy was supported equally by Liberals and Conservatives, with a substantial portion of Roden's friends taking a revenge on Walton either by not voting at all, or by declaring for Kenealy.[1] But the more disturbing explanation for labour leaders was meloncholically spelt out by William Owen in his last leader in the Potteries Examiner, which he must have hoped would have recorded a triumphant farewell as he moved on to a new career in Wolverhampton.

> "STOKE-ON-TRENT UNDER ECLIPSE.
>
> The name of Stoke-on-Trent has become a political bye-word in the land, and papers of all political creeds have already given effect to public opinion by pouring contempt upon the electors who find their beau-ideal of a legislator in the vilest reviler of the century."[2]

The Liberal defeat, Owen stated, was partly because former Melly-Roden supporters abstained - a tactic he found particularly displeasing - but he was more bitterly upset by the betrayal of the Liberal cause by working men.

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1. Advertiser. 1875, February 20, p4.

2. Examiner. 1875, February 20, p4.

> "There is, however, another side to this question which bears upon the working men. While many middle class Liberals and their followers and friends thus looked coldly on or openly betrayed themselves, so must many, very many, of those 5000 who supported Mr. Walton last year have gone over to Dr. Kenealy.
>
> Variable as the shade
> By the light quivering aspen made.
>
> Many working men appear to have no minds of their own, and love to wander loosely in politics as free from consistency as pious, earnest, thoughtful convictions ---- It is useless to blame where there is not wisdom enought to feel. We do not wonder, however, that some of the enemies of progress have this week adduced the result of Tuesday's election as a proof that the franchise has been extended too far ---"1

The by-election of 1875 in Stoke-on-Trent represented at one and the same time the occasion when the nearest approach to a real partnership of labour and Liberal Party leaders was made, and so was a pinnacle of achievement for trade union officials, while also being a watershed in the relations between the two class sections of Liberals. The reason why the currents flowing toward an alliance of equal, responsible organisations of labour and of middle class Liberals were diverted into another stream was because the loss of the second seat brought the local Party to its nadir. Not only that, but the loss was sustained in the full glare of national publicity attracted by the personality of the new Member, Kenealy. The constituency was made to share in his infamy, and the local Liberal Party was held to blame for his election. Kenealy could not even find the two ceremonial sponsors for his introduction into the House of Commons.

Newspapers throughout the country poured scorn on the voters of Stoke-on-Trent, and the respectable citizens of the Potteries were in no doubt as to their shameful position. Locally recriminations were widespread, Owen, for example, contrasting the spitefulness of the middle classes against Walton

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1. ibid.

and the operatives, with the legitimate aspirations of the latter which he invited his readers to recognise.[1] Liberals who had abstained, or voted for Davenport, were linked with Roden, but they denied seeking vengence for his absence, and their counter-charges that Walton was responsible for splitting the Party, fertilised the seeds of discord and threatened the foundations of the Party in the Borough. In the aftermath of the 1875 by-election a new beginning was necessary to ensure the survival of the Party.

Part II. The return to a Liberal Council and the middle class embrace.

The 1875 by-election had produced a Liberal-labour alliance almost analogous to arrangements made between national states. Even though it was half-hearted on one side and scarcely fully acknowledged, it was, nevertheless, a compact between two sovereign groups each having an independent life of its own. Each group had a potential for separate development and the alliance was capable of further amplification. The aspirations of leading representatives of workers in the Potteries might have been accommodated within the Liberal Party and expressed at constituency level in class-orientated organisations, thus opening a new phase in the history of the local Liberal Party in which trade unionists would have had an established position. There was no opportunity for fulfilment, however, after Walton's ignominous defeat. The Labour Representative League declined into obscurity and middle class Liberals needed to lick their wounds. A different kind of relationship between Liberals of all classes was worked out in the succeeding three years, not expressed in a compact arranged between independent organisations, but in a Council similar to the one previously in existence in the Party. The partnership agreement of 1875 was abandoned.

The demand for partnership had arisen alongside the revitalised trade union movement of the early 1870s. One of the reasons why a regrouping of

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1. ibid.

Liberal forces became possible was a recession in union affairs in the second half of the decade. The union of miners, for example, was under severe pressure early in 1874 and in July William Brown led the men to accept a 10% wage cut to avoid the greater, self-inflicted, losses of a strike.[1] He even took half the district out of the Amalgamated Association and into the National Union later in the year in order to escape the consequences of the militancy of the former body.[2] He admitted that in 1875 membership was in decline.[3] Among the potters, too, unionism lost favour, though perhaps their greatest misfortune was to lose William Owen at the very moment of defeat at the 1875 by-election. He moved to Wolverhampton to continue working as a publicist for the union movement on a wider front, and to give particular encouragement to the miners and ironworker of the Black Country. Owen had been a potent binding force among the disparate craft societies of the pottery industry and his venture into wider fields came at a bad moment for them.

Another reason why workingmen's leaders in the Potteries were more amenable to a change in the form of the Liberal Party was that at national level the second half of the 1870s saw an easing of tension on the trade union political front. In 1875 the Conservative Government changed the trade union legislation of 1871 and by the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act granted some of the rights unionists had been seeking. George Howell resigned as secretary to the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress in the same year because he believed the essential political work of the movement was over. Even the Labour Representation League changed in character, taking more moderate courses as new leaders appeared, in particular Henry Broadhurst as secretary. In an Address to the People of

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1. Sentinel. 1874, July 25, p3.

2. The Labour Press and Miners' and Workmen's Examiner. 1874, October 10, p5; p1.

3. Examiner. 1876, January 1, p7.

Great Britain, issued in November 1875, the League announced

> "we are by no means insensible to the great service rendered to the people of this country by the Liberal Party, and where they have failed to to meet our wants, we ascribe such failures to an imperfect knowledge of our requirements more than to a want of sympathy. --- we have ever sought to be allied to the great Liberal Party, to which we, by conviction, belong ---".[1]

The spirit of this commitment to the Liberal Party, over and above belief in Liberalism, had already been reflected in the Potteries in the columns of the Potteries Examiner. In his very first leading article the Rev. T.D. Matthias, who succeeded Owen as editor within three weeks of the 1875 by-election, argued that though the course followed by labour men since 1868 was understandable and justified, nevertheless what was now required was unity not division. Clearly it was not possible to forget the quarrels of the past, but it was necessary for them to be set aside if the Party was to recover its former position of having two members of Parliament.

Nothing specific was done to translate this ideal into practice until the end of 1875. Two unrelated moves were then made which started a process of renewal in the Party. One stimulus to action was a rumour, confirmed as truth in January 1876, that Colonel Roden intended to be a candidate again for the Borough.[2] It was not clear whether he sought 'official' status, or wished to revert to the much earlier tradition of standing in Liberal colours but independent of Party invitation. Either way he posed a potent threat if only because he was first in the field.

At the same time the officials of the Liberal Club at Stoke-upon-Trent discussed in committee the advisability of reviving a Council.[3] A full meeting of the club, on 20 January 1876, agreed to seek the co-operation of Liberals in other towns of the Parliamentary Borough after listening to their secretary catalogue the divisions of the Party. He saw at least six elements

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1. Howell Collection - quoted in A.E.P.Duffy. The growth of trade unionism in England from 1867 to 1906 in its political aspects. Ph.D. thesis London University 1956, p69.

2. Examiner. 1875, December 18, p4; 1876, January 22, p5.

3. ibid., 1876, January 22, p5.

in the Liberal 'interest' of varying strengths, namely the Church Disestablishment group, the repeal of the 25th clause of the 1870 Education Act faction, a small body for the repeal of the Contagious Disease Act, as well as the old Whig party, the new labour party and a Tichborne party. The secretary argued that only a Council elected by the rank and file of the Party as a whole could weld these various factions together, and others agreed that the earlier Council had not been wrong in principle, but only in practice.[1]

During February and March 1876 earnest and lengthy discussions in private and public in all the towns of the Borough led to the election of a Council in April. The initiative and leadership throughout came from the middle classes, with great stress being laid on the enterprise and foresight of Christopher Dickinson, President of the Stoke-upon-Trent Club, for sparking off the process. Each of the large public debates on the manner of electing and using a Council was chaired by a socially prominent figure - William Woodall in Burslem, J.N. Peake in Tunstall, John Ridgway in Hanley[2] - and the small preparatory committees were dominated by middle class men. Both newspapers of the Borough, the Staffordshire Sentinel and the Potteries Examiner, backed the proposal and strenuously argued for a united Party with no pre-conditions attached to the establishment of a Council. T.D. Matthias, for the Examiner, was at pains to emphasise the need for two new candidates, not naming any preferences, but by implication declaring against Walton.

Alfred Walton had not removed himself from the Borough, but he had written in January 1876 that he would not stand except by invitation, which at the time was a hit at Roden.[3] Walton accepted that working men might

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1. Sentinel. 1876, January 22, p8.
2. John Ridgway was nephew of the former leader of Liberal opinion in the Potteries, also called John Ridgway.
3. Sentinel. 1876, January 29, p7.

prefer another person in his place, but he did not resign his claim upon their attention. Matthias, on the other hand, not only failed to press Walton's case, but in his most forthright statement on the Liberal Council dropped the idea of one candidate being specifically of the working men's choosing.

> "As a working man party, we will go into the general council with clean hands and impartial dispositions. We pledge ourselves to abide by the decisions of the majority, whether it be for us or against us, provided we are satisfied that the Council is a fair, honest and honourable one. --- We have the key of the situation. But, having the power to use, we will not abuse our privilege ---. We are naturally and justifiably jealous of our rights as working men. We are Liberals to the backbone, and the marrow in the midst of that. In fact we are the vanguard of the grand army of Liberal progress ---"[1]

The plan adopted in March 1876 for a Council was, therefore, a negation of the alliance created at the by-election of 1875. Middle class hands were not tied to a pledge for the candidates to be selected according to the requirements of two separate, class-defined sections of the Party. Majority decisions of the whole Council were to determine both candidates. Only in anonymous letters to the Potteries Examiner was there evidence that some saw that this policy was to invite the destruction of the just claims of labour.[2]

The matter causing most discussion, as reported in the press, was the size of the Council in relation to the size of the electorate. This was inevitable in view of the agreement to have majority decisions of the Council on crucial issues. At individual town meetings resolutions were passed in favour of 1 representative for every 100 electors on the register, after long debates on a rival 1 to 50 proposal. The final delegate meeting accepted

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1. Examiner. 1876, March 11, pp4-5.

2. Examiner. 1876, March 11, p8; March 25, p8.

1 to 50, however, which meant having a Council of 394 members.[1] An important detail as to whether the towns should all elect representatives on a uniform set of rules, or be free to make their own rules, was decided in the tradition of the Potteries. Each town section independently arrived at its prescribed number of representatives and adopted conflicting regulations governing their behaviour and especially length of service. Hanley's delegation were due for re-election each year; others had no idea how long they were to serve. The chief element of uniformity which was achieved was that all the elections were held on the same day - 4 April 1876.

The elections went off smoothly by all accounts. Only a few persons raised the question of how well working men were represented. At the Hanley meeting a complaint was made that the prepared list of men available for election was unfairly balanced against the operatives, and a proposal was made that two working men should be elected for every one other.

> "The Chairman regretted that the question of class had been introduced."2

T.D. Matthias supported the chairman's attitude and the complaint was buried in the complexities of dealing with 119 nominations taken in groups of five. At Stoke-upon-Trent Frederick Wragge urged that they should get out of the practice of recognising and speaking of class distinctions!

The composition of the Council in terms of the religious and political opinions of its members, their social status and special interests, cannot be analysed to any useful degree. Men were elected to the Council for their personal position in the community and not as representatives for sections or 'interests'. Though in some cases press reports stated occupations or addresses these do not necessarily carry any implications about the individual's views.

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1. ibid., March 18, p8. In the event 398 was the total. Hanley had 119; Burslem, 86; Stoke, 40; Tunstall, 44; Fenton, 34; Longton, 75.

2. Sentinel. 1876, April 8, p7.

on trade unions, temperance or church disestablishment. It was, of course, deliberate choice on the part of those who sought to have a Council that this was the case. They did not seek a Council representative of views or 'interests'. They were careful to engage a sufficient number of wage-earning employees, as experience at two previous elections suggested was expedient, but there was no overt effort at involving a fair proportion of union officials and non-unionists, of Church of England communicants and Non-conformist chapel attenders. The qualifications for membership of the Liberal Council in Stoke-on-Trent defy analysis.

Some things of interest can be said about the Council, especially in comparison with the previous body of that name existing in the 1860s. It came into being for the purpose of giving official status to Liberal candidates at elections, just as the former Council had done. It sprang out of experiences men had undergone in that earlier body, and, though it no doubt also reflected knowledge gained about Liberal organisations in Birmingham and elsewhere,[1] it was peculiarly moulded to the specifications of the Potteries community. In contrast to 1868 the Council of 1876 was arranged without an election immediately pressing and before candidates were being openly nominated by particular groups. The impression that it was to be a genuine arena in which the real power of decision was to be exercised was even stronger than before, though the evidence that this was in fact the case was thin. In reality the 1876 Council was the product of some of the group responsible for the earlier body; it was elected at similar open meetings from carefully prepared lists of nominees; and it was formed to do exactly the same job - that was to unite the Party behind candidates ostensibly selected by majority opinion. It was a move to put the clock back to the time before class differences were spotlighted by the second Reform Act.

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1. Examiner. 1876, March 18, p8. James Bebbington was reported as saying that he had written to Schnardhorst at Birmingham to obtain details of how the '400' worked there.
   Sentinel. 1877, April 5, p3. An anonymous letter writer claimed that the Stoke-on-Trent Liberal Council was modelled on the "Birmingham Six Hundred".

The early work of the Council was shrouded in secrecy. It was plainly tackling a number of new areas of responsibility, in particular planning its own procedures, voicing what it took to be agreed opinions on contemporary issues, and constructing a 'platform' for the next election. Secrecy was a policy determined on very early, much influenced by the arguments of J.N. Peake, its chairman, but it was a policy which could not remain for ever, and was broken when the last, and most controversial, planks of the platform were in debate. It was inevitable that some should want to appeal to opinion outside the Council at that point, and should challenge the principle of secrecy in the course of battle.

The issue which brought out the first fierce struggle within the Council was whether to add a seventh plank accepting the principle of the Temperance Movement's Permissive Bill to the six resolutions already adopted. These were to campaign for household suffrage in county constituencies, a redistribution of Parliamentary seats, land law reform, the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England, a national system of education controlled by elected representatives and a retrenchment of government expenditure.[1] After a leak of information to the Alliance News, the national journal of the Temperance Movement, the Permissive Bill principle was accepted and the secrecy policy challenged. The next controversial task undertaken, therefore, that of finding two candidates, officially begun in February 1877, was dealt with concurrently with a battle over whether to work in camera or not. Beside these twin struggles the earlier temperance fracas paled into insignificance.

In February the ground rules for selecting candidates were set by a motion proposed by the chairman and carried without much reported opposition.

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1. Sentinel. 1877, February 15, p3.

This laid down that

> "any member of the Council shall be at liberty to seek out and propose to the Council any gentleman whom he may consider a fit and proper candidate to represent the constituency, providing that he shall give to the Council a written statement to the effect that such a gentleman is willing to contest the borough, if selected, and also that in the event of his not being selected by the Council to retire from the borough"[1]

By this rule the principle of majority decision was preserved and the possibility of splits in the Party guarded against. Colonel Roden's position was made interesting by this rule too, for it was by no means certain that he would submit himself to Council scrutiny though he was not without friends on that body. It was hardly likely that he would be able to secure a majority vote and his only course of action appeared to be that of challenging the authority of a body whose predecessor had been his own ladder to success.

Officially the first name paraded before the Council in accordance with its regulations was that of John Morley.[2] Three weeks later Henry Broadhurst wrote on behalf of the Labour Representation League in London to say that while Morley was indeed a suitable candidate, Alfred Walton had a prior claim on the loyalties of the electorate and until he had announced a decision on his actions Broadhurst would have to withhold any endorsement of Morley. Anonymous writers to the local press raised William Woodall as a possible candidate,[3] with special claims to represent working men, and in view of his eventual selection it may be considered that for some time he had been pushing forward his own name. He seems also to have intended to bring about the return of his long-standing friend and earlier

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1. Sentinel. 1877, February 28, p3.

2. ibid., March 1, p8.

3. John Morley 1838-1923: radical journalist. He was editor of the Fortnightly Review, 1867 to 1882, and a leading figure in both the National Education League and the Liberation Society. M.P. for Newcastle-upon-Tyne 1883-95; M.P. for Montrose Burghs 1896-1908.

3. Sentinel. 1877, April 11, p3.

hero, George Melly, as his partner, for it was known that Melly's business troubles were fewer and he was once again willing to stand for the Potteries. In the absence of Melly's papers for this period collusion between the two men can only be guessed not proved.

In the event only Melly, Walton and Woodall gave the necessary assurances to the Council to retire if not selected, and so they were the only candidates accepted for consideration. Before voting on them the Council called all three to address a special meeting, but this had to be postponed from 17 May to 8 June and then reassembled on 28 June for reasons some might have thought suspicious.

Meanwhile a crucial decision was required on the method of voting in the Council. There were a variety of views on how this vote was to be conducted. Early stages of the argument were reported in one local newspaper, but as the meeting was adjourned so as to give time for further thought, the secrecy rule hid the remaining debates. In the end a description of the vote was given to the press after the meeting on 28 June.

> "The voting was then proceeded with, the General and Local secretaries undertaking the duty of distributing and collecting the voting cards, the hall being marked out into divisions each secretary taking a division. Cards bearing the name of Mr. Walton were first passed round, it being understood that every person present wrote his name on the card, while those voting for Mr. Walton were to place a cross against his name. These having been collected, and placed aside, the same process was gone through with cards bearing the names of Messrs Woodall and Melly respectively. The voting being completed, it was agreed that the mover and seconder of each of the candidates should act as scrutineers in the counting of the votes."[2]

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1. Sentinel. 1877, April 25, p3. An anonymous letter writer defending Roden said that "In my opinion the Council is a gigantic sham, and instead of being named a "Liberal Council", should be known by its proper appellation of "Messrs. Melly and Woodall's Central Committee"." Examiner. 1876, December 9, p8. A report of a Temperance gathering addressed by Woodall included reference to a rumour that Woodall would be a candidate at the next election.

2. Sentinel. 1877, June 29, p2.

William Woodall. (The Illustrated Record of Eminent Men. September 1892.)

The result was announced as 195 votes for George Melly, 193 for William Woodall and 128 for Alfred Walton. Melly and Woodall, therefore, were proposed as the two candidates, and accepted nem. con., Walton's proposers gallantly giving their support.

Superficially the Liberal 'interest' had been regrouped in March 1876, with the 'old' Party and the labour section submerging their differences in the cause of Party unity. Trade union leaders were in a weaker strategic position after the by-election, yet they undoubtedly felt themselves to be not guilty of causing the débâcle in 1875. Walton had done nothing wrong and there was no overwhelming reason why he should give way to a new Party candidate. Nevertheless, the whole Party was under some obligation to recover its former situation of controlling both seats and united action had always been the ambition of labour leaders. That being the case they could not reject the move to resurrect the Council, especially when it was enlarged to four hundred members. No precondition was required that Walton withdraw, so that the situation appeared to be that it was a middle class partner who was needed for him, and working men were being given the chance to help select him.

In contrast to 1868 this new Council worked very slowly. It put off consideration of candidates at the suggestion of its organisers and sought agreement on the broader issues of Liberal policies. Nothing came up at this stage, which became public knowledge, to suggest that some specifically working class interests were discussed - not even the controversial wages issue of good-from-oven. The Permissive Bill caused a row, but it could hardly be said to be a matter known to have wide appeal among the working class voters. In fact, the platform agreed upon by the Council was unexceptional, which meant that it did not necessitate a working class spokesman to present it to the House of Commons.

In view of this, and since no bar was placed upon Walton's name being entered for consideration, the middle class Liberals who had created the Council regained the initiative in local Parliamentary politics. Working men

on the Council knew that the voting method for finally selecting two representatives was crucial, but being honourably determined to ask for only one candidate to stand in their name they failed to insist that the same self-denying ordinance should be accepted by their middle class associates. The consequence was that both the candidates who clearly came from the superior social ranks were voted in as official nominees.

The long drawn-out proceedings of the Liberal Council, from its inception in April 1876 to the adoption of candidates fourteen months later, did not look as just and equitable in retrospect as some had expected. Not until November 1877 did Melly and Woodall formally report their acceptance of the nomination, and a complaint was made in January 1878 that no further Council meetings had been held to prevent a challenge to the validity of their position.[1] This was an open sign of opposition breaking surface again.

A demand was made for a review of the situation because neither Melly nor Woodall was representative of the working classes. Some had put the latter forward in this guise, but it was rejected. The burden of the case for a review was that the adoption of the two candidates was the result of a smoothly operated trick perpetrated on ever trusting leaders of working men.

Circumstantial evidence supporting this view might have been found in such episodes as that on Friday 8 June 1877, at the Liberal Council meeting specially called to hear the address of rival prospective candidates. The Chairman apologised profusely for only Melly and Woodall being present, it having slipped his mind to inform Walton of the invitation so that it was too late for him to come. However, he implied that the members might as well

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1. Sentinel. 1878, January 18, p4; letter from T. Moore.

hear the two speakers they did have and invite Walton again. To his credit Melly declined this suggestion and caused a special additional meeting to be called to hear all three together.[1] It was, in fact, alleged that the chairman, and manufacturers who supported a policy of refusing to inform the press of all but the barest essentials, were conspiring to cover up a plot to bring in middle class candidates. The essential argument that such a plot existed turned on the voting procedure adopted by the Council for members to signify their choice.[2]

Alfred Walton wrote to Thomas Moore[3] about the voting method and its effect in January 1878.

> "With regard to the selection of candidates, I never for a moment supposed that any other mode could have been adopted or thought of than - one vote for one candidate - or otherwise I should have refused to go to the vote at all. --- I consented on the condition that one vote only should be given to each candidate [and said] that the dual vote was the exact instrument to be used by the middle classes to coalesce and out vote any labour candidate ---."4

Later Walton elaborated his argument and conclusion.

> "The most simple minded can see that the certain result of the use of the dual vote by the united action of the supporters of two candidates can completely out-vote any one candidate even though he may have a large majority of single votes. This was exactly what was done at Stoke -----. The fact is the middle class element largely dominates in influence, if not in numbers, in these so-called "Liberal Councils" ----".5

What Walton said, in fact, was that he had 128 supporters on the Liberal Council who voted for him, and, with only two or three exceptions, him only.

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1. Examiner. 1877, June 9, p8.
2. Sentinel. 1878, January 11, p3.
3. Thomas Moore was listed on the Hanley delegation to the Liberal Council as a commercial traveller.
4. Sentinel. 1878, January 24, p4.
5. ibid., February 7, p2.

However, the system of dual voting, agreed upon by the majority present at the appropriate meeting, gave each member two votes - Melly's supporters, therefore, either by agreement or tacit understanding, used both their votes, one for Melly, one for Woodall; and Woodall's followers did the same. Each gained over 190 votes, the slight difference between them being accounted for by the fact that two or three of Walton's group did use the second vote, inclining to Melly rather than Woodall. Assuming Melly and Woodall supporters were equally divided, Walton said that the 190 votes cast for them meant that only 195 men had one of these candidates as his first choice. As the two minorities combined forces, however, the majority at the meeting which preferred Walton as first choice was defeated.[1] This he regarded as unjust.

The basis of Walton's view - that a dual voting method was used - was confirmed by an anonymous correspondent to a newspaper who rejected Walton's conclusion that the method produced an unfair result. He gave the definitive resolution, proposed by James Bebbington, and passed by the Council, which said

> "that in the selection of candidates, to be brought before the constituency. the votes for each candidate be taken singly. In voting for each candidate a card to be furnished to each member of the Council present at the time of voting, bearing upon it the name of the candidate to be voted for, each voter to indicate his choice by placing a cross against the name of the candidate he votes for, and writing his name upon the voting card. In case a voter does not wish to vote for a candidate, the card to be returned blank. The same process to be observed in reference to each of the candidates; none of the votes to be counted till the voting be completed. On counting the votes the two candidates receiving the highest numbers to be deemed to be selected."[2]

No reference was made directly in the motion to members having two votes, which was the method Walton's supporters were determined to oppose. By

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1. H. Broadhurst Collection (British Library of Political Science, London). Minute Book of the Labour Representation League 1873-1878, end section of rough notes. Broadhurst made a note of votes cast on 28 June 1877 but did not date it.

2. Sentinel. 1878, January 30, p4.

emphasising that votes were to be taken "singly" it could be understood in a heated atmosphere such as a Council session that the method produced a simple majority decision. It was accepted, and the working men promoting Walton were thus doomed to failure.

Opposition to the candidacies of Melly and Woodall centred first of all on Thomas Moore, a commercial traveller living in Hanley, and delegate for that town on the Liberal Council. He used the correspondence columns of both the Staffordshire News (Dr. Kenealy's short-lived enterprise) and the Staffordshire Sentinel to release frustrations created by the absence of Council meetings. The most significant thread which ran through the attack on the middle class candidates, however, was that of the 'labour party', as it was frequently called. The core of this group consisted "of those members of the Liberal Council who voted for the labour candidate".[1] Moore may have had personal scores to pay off, or ambitions to serve, to judge by the replies to his letters which local newspapers printed, and he adopted a role as patron to ill-used labour for these purposes. Without a real and important grievance to fan and a sizeable body of support to assist him, however, Moore could not have influenced events to take the course they followed in 1878. The presence of a labour party in Stoke-on-Trent was the most vital factor affecting Liberal politics in the constituency after Melly and Woodall had been adopted in 1877.

The importance of this factor was shown by a visit Henry Broadhurst made to the Potteries at the end of November 1877. He was reported, briefly, as speaking in his capacities as secretary to the Trades Union Congress Parliamentary Committee, and as secretary to the Labour Representation League. His ostensible purpose was to lecture on the work of the Congress and he appeared on the platform with the local union agents Brown, Rhodes,

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1. ibid., 1878, January 11, p3.

and Matthias.[1] However, private conversations turned on the situation of the labour party in the Borough and the chances for a true representative of the working classes at an election. Broadhurst reported the conclusions to the executive committee of the League in London, which agreed that

> "should five candidates go to the poll who are now before the constituency a Labour candidate would stand a good chance of success".[2]

The labour section of the Liberal Party was not a united group, however. One part of it had its views articulated in the columns of the Potteries Examiner. Here, Matthias sought to argue that if there was confusion in the Liberal Party it was because of "the large defection of the Liberals of Stoke, when "the learned Doctor" was voted for",[3] but he could not help noting also that

> "Now even, though two well known Liberals have received the impremature of the Council of 400, a considerable amount of heart burning and divergence of feeling prevails in our midst. Our wish is, whilst maintaining a steady and an unflinching maintenance of our labour representative programme, to aim at consolidating our Liberal majority in the borough, so as to return two honest, decided and unsophisticated Liberals to St. Stephen's next time to truly and duly represent us. ----- We do not by any means despair of the situation. When we cannot get the whole pound we must wisely agree to take it by instalments. --- We must "learn to labour and wait". But whatever course we adopt, or whatever tactics we pursue, let us be true to Liberal principles, and unanimously resolved that we ourselves will be no parties to internal squabbling amongst ourselves."

Matthias amplified this oblique reference to a division in the labour section, and reiterated his own view that the majority choice of the Liberal Party as a whole should not be questioned, in a further article.

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1. Examiner. 1877, December 1, p8.

2. H.Broadhurst Collection, Minute Book of the Labour Representation League, 1877 December 14.

3. Examiner. 1878, January 12, pp4-5.

> "We dislike quarrelling, especially with friends, and we desire to avoid ought that would resemble anything like a harsh judgement on those whom it is our warmest wish and fullest desire to count as our faithful compeers ---- If the major number of the Council make a particular choice, and fix definitely upon any special two --- then it is our incumbent and honourable duty to fall in with the express decision of the larger number, and not become factious because of the rejection and non-acceptance of our own pre-conceived views and cherished opinions."[1]

Support for Matthias was openly expressed by Charles Bloor, one of the leading officials of the Hollow-ware Pressers' Union. He voiced a suspicion that discontent among workingmen was being fostered by a clique attached to Thomas Moore. The cause of this was their disappointment at not obtaining John Morley as candidate. Bloor condemned this group as but recent converts to the labour cause and not representative of its supporters of long standing.[2]

The dissident half of the labour section came out into the open at "a meeting of those members of the Liberal Council who voted for the labour candidate"[3] held in the Town Hall, Hanley on 10th January 1878. Clearly this gathering of the whole labour party was arranged because a substantial force of activists felt the arguments of Matthias and Bloor to be tendentions and spurious. They shared Walton's view that the selection of Woodall and Melly had been rigged and they felt that the spirit of the 1875 agreement had been betrayed. To judge by the names of the speakers at the meeting the dissidents were not led by union officials and agents, but were very much open to the influence of Thomas Moore.

Two particular matters were aired by the labour malcontents. One was expressed in a bitter attack upon the editor of the Potteries Examiner. A member, it was reported, in a "very earnest speech"

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1. ibid., 1878, January 19, p5.
2. Sentinel. 1878, January 16, p3.
3. Sentinel. 1878, January 11, p3.

> "stated that the labour representation had been betrayed and sold. The editor of the Potteries Examiner had pledged himself to defend the labour representation, but he did the very opposite, and if they referred to that paper thet would find that it rang with the praises of Mr. Woodall. The speaker went on in very strong terms, to condemn the conduct of Mr. T.D. Matthias and others. He thought there would be a labour candidate in the field at the next election".[1]

The other significant move was a motion to select an independent labour candidate, proposed by one Jeffries. This followed a suggestion that an independent labour organisation should be set up. Both these ideas were directly contrary to the lead given since the by-election by union officials and their newspaper, and were indicative of the mood among some politically active workmen in the Borough. Jeffries supported his motion by saying that

> "the labour section made one mistake, and that was having anything to do with the middle classes".[2]

The crux of the problem facing this meeting of the labour group was whether to act independently of the Liberal Council, as the dissidents demanded, or to seek to alter council decisions by action from within. Brunt, secretary to the Stoke-upon-Trent Liberal Club , wanted a commitment t o work within the Council, but this positive decision was not approved. Thomas Moore's motion, however, being more flexible in interpretation, was agreed. It said:-

> "that from the evidence before the meeting there is great reason to believe that certain leading officers of the Council were determined to prevent a fair consideration of the merits of possible candidates, and this meeting therefore refuses to regard the choice of the Council as final."[3]

Moore's hit at Peake, as chairman of the Liberal Council, was malicious and his proposal did not lay down any particular mode of action. Nevertheless,

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1. ibid.
2. ibid.
3. ibid.

it opened the way toward that reconsideration of candidates which discontented working men required. Once again the middle classes were faced with the spectre of an independent labour organisation opposed to its candidates and, on the evidence of 1874, strong enough to damage their chances of gaining both Stoke-on-Trent seats.

No immediate action followed the outburst of discontent in January, though the letter columns of local papers continued to bear witness to the personal conflict of Moore and Peake and the interest in the general subject of Liberal representation. Moore reported a rumour that one of the official candidates would withdraw, and implied that this would be, in his view, the wrong one - namely George Melly. Moreover, he suspected that this arrangement would be made without consulting the constituency rank and file.[1] He was right in thinking that the only way to smooth out the ruffled feelings of his allies was to withdraw one of the official men, and correct in anticipating that it would be Melly who would go. No public proof was offered that when this did in fact occur, at the end of April, that it was the result of behind-the-scenes intrigue. Melly's letter of resignation mentioned pressure of commercial business as the reason for his retirement,[2] but in the context of events earlier in the year - and of the nature of his own character - there was a suspicion that he responded to a request from persons unknown in the Potteries.

By withdrawing from Stoke-on-Trent George Melly saved the day for his middle class friends. Before an independent labour organisation was recreated to promote its own Parliamentary candidate Melly gave the Council

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1. Sentinel. 1878, January 18, p4.

2. Sentinel. 1880, April 24. Melly had real business worries arising from the health of his elder brother Charles Pierre. In 1880 a lunacy enquiry was held into his sanity following a shooting incident, and reference was then made to trouble starting in 1878. (quoted by G.Richards. The struggle for Labour representation in Stoke-on-Trent 1874-1880, dissertation for M.A., University of Keele, 1973).

a second chance to embrace a man more directly to the liking of the dissident group. There is also a possibility that union leaders were worried about the part they had played in association with the traditional ruling oligarchy of the Liberal Party, and were glad of this opportunity to move closer to the grass roots demand for an independent Labour candidate - or at least a candidate chosen more obviously by labour leaders. The evidence for this is the disappearance at this time of T.D. Matthias from the editorial chair of the Potteries Examiner. The issue of 27 April 1878 carried a new imprint, indicating that new proprietors were running the paper for the unions, with a new editor, George Taylor Platt. If Matthias was removed for his political opinions, and for his failure to be true to the cause William Owen had passionately launched in the paper, it would not have been the first time that the union officials had sacked an editor for a betrayal of their objectives. Certainly, Bloor and other union leaders reappeared shortly afterwards at the head of the movement to replace Melly by a nominee of the labour section of the Liberal Party.

The time available to trade union leaders for their manoeuvres was expanded by moves to hold elections for town delegates to the Liberal Council. Hanley held annual elections, due in April but postponed until May, but other towns were compelled to re-elect their delegates by a decision of the Council itself,[1] at the suggestion of Moore and union officials such as William Wood. A whole month elapsed, therefore, between Melly's resignation and the first meeting of the Council to consider the question of candidates. During this time union leaders concentrated on regaining their control over the labour party and appeared to neglect the Council elections. Two meetings of labour supporters were held, Charles Bloor acting as chairman of the first and George Salt, a former President of the local Labour Representation

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1. Sentinel. 1878, May 17, p3.

League, was in the chair at the second.[1] Some members were keen to delay the choice of a labour candidate so as to give the maximum consideration to the problem, but Bloor led the majority in quickly re-adopting Alfred Walton.

The two meeting of the labour party in May 1878 showed that the Labour Representation League had ceased to function, but union leaders were, nevertheless, still able to take charge of the working class section of the Liberal Party. Walton's supporters were still led by Thomas Lyth, Bloor and Rhodes, the agent for the engineers in the district. A second feature of the meetings, however, was the increasing doubt thrown on the wisdom of promoting Walton as the working man's candidate. He was not personally suspect; he was just not a winning candidate and not appealing in the eyes of socially superior Liberals. On simple grounds of expediency, therefore, some argued for a new man.

Walton's case was put to the Liberal Council at its first gathering after re-election, but the motion to substitute him for Melly to the exclusion of consideration of others was defeated. Instead the Council took up Moore's suggestion that it adopt a new procedure whereby a list of preferences was first established before invitations were issued to candidates to consider nomination for the Borough. The field was thus thrown wide open.

Party managers aimed at agreement on one candidate and did not seek to foment trouble be encouraging a multitude of applications for the vacancy. They also intended to remove Walton if they could, and must have been pleased to see the divergence of views as to his suitability which had marked the latest discussions among the labour leaders. On the other hand, the labour

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1. Examiner. 1878, May 18, p7 : May 25, p5 : Sentinel May 23, p3.

section had proved its power in 1874 and had threatened to reorganise itself since January 1878 because no candidate representing working men had been adopted by the Council. Walton was not intransigent and had clearly indicated that he did not wish to stand if a better working man's candidate could be found. He even suggested that the Executive Committee of the Labour Representation League would send a man from London to challenge the Liberal Party in the Potteries rather than let the cause of labour go unadvocated.[1] In these circumstances it would not have been unnatural for Party managers to suggest to the union officials a possible deal. The essence of such an arrangement would have been the withdrawal of Walton by the labour section, in return for a guarantee that a moderate-minded working class representative, nominated by the unions, would be accepted by the Council.

Direct evidence that a pact of this kind was made is not available, yet in effect this is what happened. Walton retired at the suggestion of the local labour leaders,[2] and at the meeting when this was announced on 5 June, Thomas Lyth, acting as secretary to the labour group, moved that Henry Broadhurst be adopted in Walton's place. The engineers' agent, Rhodes, reported his members as favouring J.S. Wright of Birmingham, who had been a candidate at Newcastle-under-Lyme, but this was not a formal move to have him adopted by the labour section. The only real opposition to Broadhurst within the labour section came from Charles Bloor, who wanted to continue pressing Walton's claim.

William Wood assured his fellow working men that if Broadhurst were adopted there would be no further repetition "of the painful history of Liberalism in the borough since 1868".[3] Lyth, however, gave a clue as to why he favoured Broadhurst when he said that

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1. Sentinel. 1878, May 28, p2. Letter from A.A. Walton.

2. Sentinel. 1878, June 26, p4. Letter from A. Smith.
   Examiner. 1878, June 8, p7.

3. Examiner. 1878, June 8, p7.

> "They had the mouthpiece of the Council, and several others who were praising their man [Broadhurst] for the excellent speech which he delivered in Exeter Hall, along with Mr. George Odger, on the Eastern Question".[1]

Lyth's reference to J.N. Peake commending Broadhurst for his work on behalf of the Liberal Party's Eastern Question Association was a clear indication that Lyth expected Broadhurst to find favour in the Council. Lyth admitted that he had been communicating with Broadhurst, and Walton had already stated that a nominee from the Labour Representation League might come from London. Possibly there was an agreement between these men in advance of the labour section meeting that Broadhurst was a suitable candidate for all concerned.

Newspaper reports of the meetings of the labour section drew particular attention to speakers stressing the need to work closely with the Council, and to act in the spirit of co-operation with the middle class members of it. In view of this prevailing mood, and the absence of real opposition to Broadhurst's nomination among representatives at labour section meetings, it seems to be a reasonable conclusion that in adopting Broadhurst the unionists felt assured of his acceptance by the 'old' Party. They would be hardly likely to have adopted a man knowing him to be persona non grata with the Party managers.

Broadhurst was not the only possibility suggested to the Liberal Council. J.S. Wright, Lloyd Jones, Colonel Roden, and later Illingworth of Bradford and Henry Lee of Manchester were all mentioned, though only Wright, Broadhurst and Roden had any substantial following. These three were invited by letter from the Chairman, J.N.Peake, to accept nomination as the new rule laid down, but only Broadhurst replied in time for the adjourned meeting of the Council. However, while this second meeting was in progress telegrams arrived declining the invitation on behalf of Wright and rejecting it by Roden. The latter's words angered many as they were read out.

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1. ibid.

> "Had no idea you wanted an answer. Hope this is not trickery as usual. Pray assure all that if living I intend fighting Stoke at next election against all comers".[1]

Roden's fuller reply by letter did nothing to improve matters and antagonised rather than attracted his one-time associates in Stoke-on-Trent. He questioned the ability of the Council to conduct an election and described both Melly and Woodall as "unfit candidates".[2]

A conclusion which can be drawn from the Liberal Council deliberations on candidates to replace Melly is that very little effort was made to stave off the adoption of a labour nominee when that was to be Henry Broadhurst. Four men were written to other than Broadhurst, but one was Roden who had already declared his intention of standing in defiance of the Council. The Party Managers could hardly accept him without breaking with the spirit of the Council. By inviting him to show his contempt for the Council the managers enjoyed the best of all worlds - they played fair by giving Roden a chance, and yet obtained his rejection to the satisfaction of the labour section. Illingworth and Lee were respectable politicians worthy of consideration, but never likely to seriously entertain standing in the Potteries. Their letters declining to be drawn into the local dispute showed their awareness of the situation [3] and the danger of becoming involved. They were not nominated by leading establishment figures in the Party and cannot be counted as serious possibilities for Melly's place. J.S. Wright, on the other hand had recently canvassed Newcastle-under-Lyme to test the chances of support, and had attracted some attention from a small group of unionists. He was nominated at the Council by W.E. Brownfield, a

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1. Sentinel. 1878, June 21, p4.
2. ibid., 1878, June 24, p3.
3. Examiner. 1878, June 29, p8.

a son of a former chairman of the Liberal Council, with support from Mayer of Longton. On these grounds Wright may be judged to have been a genuine contender with Broadhurst.

Even so, Party managers could well have encourages the nomination of some rivals to Broadhurst, knowing that they stood little chance of acceptance. It was useful, for appearances' sake, to go through the motions of selection. As it turned out, no one but Broadhurst agreed to abide by the conditions of nomination and to stand on the 'platform' agreed by the Council. Peake spoke strongly in favour of the Party taking up a working man's candidate, and endorsed Broadhurst as a man with considerable knowledge of what working men wanted, and "great familiarity with parliamentary affairs".[1] It is unlikely that he would have been so assertive without the agreement of Woodall, though the latter was not publicly associated with Broadhurst's nomination. It is not surprising, therefore, that Broadhurst was adopted with the support of the middle class Council members.

Finally, it can be noted in relation to the possibility of a deal between some Liberal and labour leaders, that at least one trade union official was reported as finding it strange that at the Council meeting, when all fell in line behind Broadhurst, the only people not given time to eulogise the candidate and press his claims were the representatives who spoke for labour. A motion was put to invite Broadhurst to speak to the Council, and Charles Bloor commented that he

> "thought Mr. Bebbington's resolution a wise one, but was sorry that as it was a working man's question, that the Council had not had their views with regard to Mr. Broadhurst's candidature. It appeared to him that the working men were smothered away by the caresses of their friends (cries of "No, no", and "that is an insult")".[2]

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1. ibid.

2. ibid.

To all outward appearances Henry Broadhurst became one of the official Liberal Party candidates for the Borough of Stoke-on-Trent because the labour section of the Party forced him on the Liberal Council. Broadhurst's own account of the origins of his candidature was that the "Liberal and Labour Party"[1] met to arrange it and that their combined pressure overcame his reluctance to stand. The Staffordshire Sentinel obituary for Broadhurst perpetuated the notion that he was the choice of the Labour Representation League branch in the Potteries, and accepted by the Liberal Council only because labour leaders claimed to have command over 2000 votes which might thereby be cast for the Liberal Party.[2]

There seems to be a circumstantial body of evidence, however, which suggests that the Liberal Party managers achieved the ambition William Woodall conceived in February 1874. This was to find a way of having a trade union candidate to satisfy the aspirations of working class voters, but one whose personality and political outlook were acceptable to middle class prejudices.[3] After the débâcle at the by-election in 1875 it seemed possible to avoid a union candidate altogether and Woodall may even have led the way toward Melly's readoption. That this was a mistake was made apparent by the meetings held in 1878 by union officials and members of the Liberal Council, who still sought a working man's candidate. The danger lay in the resurrection of the Labour Representation League which had died after the by-election. To forestall this it was necessary to get a sufficient number of working men's leaders in support of a man whose credentials as a labour representative were strong, but whose general opinions were

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1. H.Broadhurst. The story of his life from a stonemason's bench to the Treasury Bench told by himself. (1901) pp 94-5.

2. Sentinel. 1911, October 25. (see Local Newscuttings vol. 5 - H.R.L)

3. see above page 175.

favoured by the middle classes.[1] Assuming that such a candidate could be presented as the choice of an assembly of representative working men there seemed little doubt that harmony would return to the Liberal Party as a whole.

There is no conclusive proof of the existence of an arrangement whereby a Woodall-Peake management group engineered the selection of Broadhurst by the labour section of the Liberal Party. It is not without significance, however, that the Labour Representation League branch did not exist during this period, though some efforts were being made to re-establish it. Meetings of working men were described by the press as of the 'Labour party', and were clearly ad-hoc assemblies. Broadhurst was not formally nominated as the result of discussions in a properly constituted committee of the Labour Representation League, or any other permanent, self-regulating society. Alfred Smith particularly pointed to the undemocratic and confused situation out of which Broadhurst emerged, referring to the "doings of the self-styled Labour League".[2] He wrote:-

> "When we were first connected with the Labour League, it did exercise some influence on the minds of the trade unionists and non-unionists of the borough; but when the great Doctor overthrew Messrs. Walton and Davenport, the Labour League vanished into thin air ----. During these past weeks certain gentlemen have been pretty busy in Labour Representation League matters, that were aforetime, when wanted, conspicuous by their absence --- and very likely we should never see them again if a Labour League was established on the same solid basis that it was before ---. We then

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1. For an account of Broadhurst's political work in the mid-1870s which attracted middle class attention see E.M. Palmegiano, Henry Broadhurst and working class politics 1869-1880. Ph.D. thesis, Rutgers State University New Jersey, 1966. Chapts. 4 and 5.

2. Sentinel. 1878, June 26, p4.

> did form a League, but not to act as dictating Guardians to the electoral body in the borough, or self appoint ourselves as secretary, chairman, etc as the present ones have done --- Surely such proceedings as these are open to be very tightly questioned, from the fact that this non-representative promiscuously-called meeting of anybody's or nobody's in particular, passed a resolution adopting Mr. Walton as the future candidate, who consented --- but submitted quietly a few days after the second meeting to the dictum of Mr. Lyth ---"[1]

Lyth admitted the truth of the substance of Smith's case, but tried to excuse the high handness of his actions by saying that "There was great difficulty in getting men together."[2] He also stressed on the same occasion that it was important to work with Woodall and his friends on the Council so that their votes could be added to those of the working men. No doubt these were reasonable points, but they did not increase confidence in Broadhurst as the freely chosen representative of the working class section of the Liberal electorate - not even that part of it in trade societies and political associations.

The last election fought in the constituency of Stoke-on-Trent as established in 1832 - that of 1880 - gave all sections of the Liberal Party the triumph they desired, and justified any manuoevres undertaken to remove Walton. Woodall and Broadhurst were elected despite the tenacity of Kenealy and the reputation of Robert Heath, the Conservative Member of Parliament since 1874. Roden began the campaign, but soon retired because the official candidates were too well entrenched. Another independent, and somewhat mysterious Liberal, John James Jones, threatened to appear, but was told in no uncertain terms that he had no chance, and so withdrew. The Liberal-Labour victory was demonstrated as complete by the analysis of voting figures, which showed solid support for both candidates, the only

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1. ibid.

2. Examiner. 1878, June 29, p7.

plumping which was worthwhile being for Heath.

Woodall	12,130	116 plumpers	} 11,124 joint vot
Broadhurst	11,379	47 plumpers	
Heath	5,125	3,584 plumpers	
Kenealy	1,091	244 plumpers [1]	

After at least twelve years of political activity a Member of Parliament was elected at Stoke-on-Trent in whose selection some working men's leaders could be said to have taken part. At the same time the 'old' Liberal Party had survived as the controlling group in the vastly enlarged constituency which in 1880 enjoyed the reputation of adding a third M.P. to the Lib-Lab group hitherto composed of Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt.

1. Advertiser. 1880, April 10, p4.

CHAPTER 6.

A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF LIBERAL - LABOUR RELATIONS AND THE RELEVANCE OF EVENTS IN STOKE-ON-TRENT TO THE NATIONAL PICTURE.

CHAPTER 6.

A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF LIBERAL - LABOUR RELATIONS AND THE RELEVANCE OF EVENTS IN STOKE-ON-TRENT TO THE NATIONAL PICTURE.

This study has examined the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent in the period 1862 to 1880 in order to explain in detail those events which historians have hitherto but briefly noted in accounts of an episode in national political history - the association of the Labour Movement with the Liberal Party. The nature of the relationship between working men and the Liberal Party, the growth of that relationship, and its consequences for the Party and for Parliamentary politics in general, were matters of concern to politicians throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, and have exercised historians since. Stoke-on-Trent has received some notice largely because it elected Henry Broadhurst to the House of Commons in 1880. There he joined two other members claiming to speak for labour, but Broadhurst did so as the official nominee of his constituency Liberal Party. He thus epitomised a Liberal - Labour association implicit in politics for some long period prior to his election, but made explicit by the appearance of his two predecessors in the Commons, Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt. They had been elected for Stafford and Morpeth respectively in 1874 and again in 1880, and were the first spokesmen for labour in Parliament who were themselves of working class origins.

Working class involvement in Liberal politics can be traced at two levels. One is that of London-based trades union Presidents and Secretaries, M.P.s, Party Whips and national organisations. The other is at constituency level. The place of Henry Broadhurst in relation to working class politics in London before 1880, in relation to the involvement of the Trades Union Congress in Parliamentary politics, and his connections with Liberal leaders in the House of Commons, have been the subject of one detailed examination,[1] and have

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1. E.M. Palmegiano, op. cit.

attracted much comment. This study of the constituency party which provided Broadhurst with his first Parliamentary seat, and the only addition which Liberal-Labour enthusiasts were able to make to their group in the 1880 election, counterbalances the emphasis hitherto placed upon the link between Liberal and labour leaders at the level of national politics. It examines the response of one set of local politicians to the fundamental issues raised by the growth of a relationship between the Liberal Party and organised labour. These included the manner in which this link was to be made, and the effect it would have on the Party. Conclusions which arise from a study of the activities of politicians in a constituency setting, however, nee to be set against general views of the Liberal-Labour relationship so as to give a final balanced picture.

The growth and operation of the Liberal-Labour entente have been examined by the two groups of historians, each primarily interested in the subject for the part it played in wider fields of political activity. One group has been seeking to explain the origins of the independent Labour Party, which has clearly been a force in the period since the third Reform Act. These writers have been looking for roots in working class activity before the second Reform Act and even earlier. The other group of historians has included those interested in the working of politics, political organisations and pressure groups across the whole spectrum in the mid-nineteenth century period, together with those chiefly concerned with the various fractions of the whole which collectively made up the Liberal Party. No special analysis of the rise and fall of the Liberal-Labour relationship in its own right has yet been made.

The doyen of the labour school of historians, G.D.H. Cole, worked on the premise that the objective for working class political activity was the overthrow of Capitalism. He was compelled to note, however, that

> "From some time before the middle of the century --- instead of fighting against capitalism [the working classes began] to accept their lot within it."[1]

New movements in trade unions, co-operatives and Friendly Societies, which did develop, were essentially limited in scope, sprang from self-interest and were almost devoid of political influence. These distinct movements, even when linked together in the 1860s,

> "Were quite unlike the earlier agitations, in that there was in them not even the most indirect threat of revolutionary action, and no aim beyond the securing of certain defined and limited reforms".[2]

F.E. Gillespie took a more optimistic view than Cole and saw positive advantages for labour in co-operation with the middle classes. Her work was the first attempt to describe the initial stages of an alliance between the Liberal Party and the labour movement.[3] The value of that alliance to labour was that it

> "offered to working men a needed training school in politics --- when labour had outgrown the framework of the Liberal alliance and when changed economic conditions made it no longer serviceable, labour was sufficiently experienced and disciplined in political methods to become an independent party."[4]

For Miss Gillespie the key issue which brought the working and middle classes together in the post-Chartist age was the reform of Parliament, and it was through their combined exertions to secure the second Reform Act that "the foundations of the Liberal-Labour alliance were laid".[5] Working men

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1. G.D.H.Cole, A Short History of the British Working Class Movement 1789-1925. Vol. II 1848-1900. (London 1926) pp. 14-16.

2. ibid., p19.

3. F.E. Gillespie, Labor and Politics in England 1850-1867 (Durham, North Carolina, 1927).

4. ibid., p290.

5. ibid., p11.

were motivated to this end by Chartist preaching, and encouraged by newspapers specially aimed at the artizan classes, such as Reynold's Newspaper, but the political activities of trade unionists were among the most important reasons why the alliance was established.

Trade unionists became involved in Parliamentary politics out of sheer self-defence. They felt the need to combat the Master and Servant Law and the application to trade disputes of the common law of conspiracy. Particularly from the builders' strike in London, starting in 1859, there began a new political movement on the part of trades societies. Both the militant organisers involved in strikes, such as that centred on the North Staffordshire iron trade in 1865, and the moderate officials, whose policies were conciliatory towards employers, had a part to play in creating the labour side of the alliance with the Liberals. The consummation of this came with the formation of the Reform League, and the campaign to achieve the second Reform Act at the time when unions were threatened by a Royal Commission of Inquiry and the decision in the case of Hornby v. Close.[1]

It was some years before a labour historian looked closely again at working class politics in the age between the Chartists of the 1840s and the socialists of the 1880s. In 1965 Royden Harrison continued Gillespie's theme in a series of essays concerned with the role of working class activity in the timing and content of the second Reform Act, the 1868 general election, the republican organisation of the 1870s and the work of the Positivists.[2] Harrison did not set out to write a comprehensive account of working class politics in an age he thought grievously neglected by

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1. The decision of the Judges in the Hornby v. Close case revealed to trade unionists that they were not protected in law against their own officers' failure to deal honestly with financial accounts. This was an unexpected decision in view of the way unionists interpreted the Friendly Societies Act, 1855, and was taken to be an attack upon their existence.

2. R.Harrison, Before the Socialists : studies in Labour and Politics 1861-1881. (London 1965).

historians, but to rehabilitate the notion that this was a period of some significance in the progress of the labour movement as a whole, and to underline the Gillespie thesis that the second Reform Act was essentially the product of working class pressure.

He came to the conclusion that

> "the period 1861-1881 belongs to the political, rather than to the socio-economic, chronology of labour." [1]

He thought that it can best be studied under three heads : 1861-7 and Reform : 1867-75 the politics of the Labour Laws agitation : and 1875-81 the consolidation of Lib-Labism. Harrison did not agree with Cole that working class politics were completely eclipsed, though he recognised that labour politics lacked

> "a clear ideological basis and came into being in relation to much more limited and modest objectives than was the case in earlier or later periods."[2]

He preferred to stress the most optimistic aspects of the working class scene and found that the London Working Men's Association, the Land and Labour League, and the work of Professor Beesly and Frederic Harrison were noteworthy contributions to the advancement of labour's cause. In the end, however, Harrison concluded that working class political movements were entangled in a Liberal net until the socialists of the 1880s found an escape route.

The major revision which labour historians have made in the account of the Liberal-Labour alliance since Miss Gillespie wrote her pioneering book is to suggest that it was a betrayal of the masses.[3] The ranks of the

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1. ibid., p2.

2. ibid., p3.

3. E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Labour aristocracy in nineteenth century Britain' in Democracy and the Labour Movement, edit. J.Saville (London 1954)
   E.P. Thompson, 'Homage to Tom Maguire' in Essays in Labour History edit. A.Briggs and J.Saville (London 1967).
   Harrison, op.cit.

Labour Movement in the third quarter of the nineteenth century were largely recruited from a narrow band of superior workers, some of them independent craftsmen, collectively identified as 'labour aristocracy'. They controlled the all-important trade unions, which they organised in the interest of their own kind, and they did not welcome the labouring populace into other institutions which they led, such as Co-operative Societies.[1] Those working men who had the vote before 1867 came largely from this stratum, and it was the labour aristocrats who gained most from the enfranchisement of urban householders after 1867. In so far as there was a Liberal-Labour alliance, therefore, it was between the middle classes amd those immediately below them in the social scale, not between the total urban working population and the bourgeoisie. However much trade union leaders claimed to represent the whole range of working classes - and they did this often - labour historians suspect the validity of their claims, so deep was the economic and social gulf between the artizan and the labourer. This being the case, the interests of the proletariat were not reflected in the Liberal-Labour alliance.

The most recent writer to examine aspects of the alliance from the labour side, F.M. Leventhal, did so in a biography of George Howell.[2] Leventhal noted that historians who judge working class history in terms of the progress of revolutionary consciousness dismiss the age when the alliance with the Liberals was formed as "a period of regression".[3] In his view, however, this is mistaken and shows a misapprehension of the development of the Labour Party in the twentieth century. He concluded that

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1. Harrison, op.cit., p32.

2. F.M. Leventhal, Respectable Radical : George Howell and Victorian Working Class Politics. (London 1971)

3. ibid., p215.

> "the loss of heroic vision which marked Howell's generation --- was not an historical aberration. The tradition was passed on to the modern Labour Party ---. While the 'New Jerusalem' has survived as a Socialist dream, working men in practice have settled for tangible gains, even if it meant accepting only the half-loaf, and their leaders have sought them through the traditional channels of voluntary associations and Parliament. Howell belongs to the mainstream of English labour history ---".[1]

Despite this difference of opinion as to whether the labour leaders who arranged the alliance with middle class Liberals were representative of the main line of progress in the English working class movement, or traitors to the socialist vision, there has been some agreement among labour historians on the chief aspects of the labour contribution to the alliance. The Chartist dream of manhood suffrage was the initial motivating force, trade union officials provided the leadership, and a cheap press encouraged the rank and file by exhortation. Liberal radicals who were moved to speak out on political issues which raised moral questions, such as that of the American Civil War, found a ready hearing among artizans, and, having begun an association with working class leaders on one matter, found it difficult to resist linking with them on others. The campaign for the Second Reform Act was thus an occasion of real co-operation between Liberal Party activists and labour leaders, when each recognised the value of the other. This was followed by the secret pact between the Liberal Chief Whip and George Howell, whereby the Reform League's last task became that of acting as election agency for the Party in 1868. For Royden Harrison this agreement "marked the real beginning of the Lib-Lab era in working-class politics".[2]

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1. ibid., p216.

2. R.Harrison, op.cit., Chapter 4 : quotation from p209.

The association between the Liberal Party and trade union leaders was most forcefully demonstrated when some of the latter appeared as candidates for election to Parliament, claiming to stand on a Liberal 'platform'. The first men to do this stood in 1868. Their dual role as Liberal/Radicals, and representatives of the labour 'interest' hitherto locked-out of the House of Commons, gave a new meaning to the Liberal-Labour relationship which has been of interest to historians of politics in general, and the Liberal Party in particular.

The most comprehensive and scholarly survey of the political scene at the time of the birth of the Liberal-Labour alliance was that produced by H.J. Hanham.[1] The only earlier work of note to cover similar ground had been that by M.Ostrogorski,[2] but its polemical nature and its concentration upon the last quarter of the nineteenth century make it less useful than it might have been for the topic at present under consideration.

Hanham's intention was to study party history and the "problems of the ordinary party politician and the growth of party organisation"[3] after 1867. He concluded that there was much continuity between constituency party activity over the whole period 1832 to the 1880s, and, in contrast with Ostrogorski, did not find a significant break taking place at the time of the Second Reform Act. Hanham considered both sides of the Liberal-Labour alliance, scarcely ever using that title and without leaving much room for the concept in his account of working-class radicalism.[4] Indeed, he thought that in the twenty years after 1867 the chief interests of working class

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1. H.J. Hanham, Elections and Party Management : Politics in the time of Disraeli and Gladstone. (London 1959)

2. M.Ostrogorski, Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties. (London 1902).

3. Hanham, op.cit., p VII.

4. ibid., pp 323-43.

leaders were social, not political. The Reform League was the most important and most interesting working class political organisation, he considered, while the Labour Representation League was so dependent on middle class support in the constituencies,[1] and so easily "dwarfed out of existence" by Gladstonian Liberalism and "Beaconsfieldism",[2] that he did not think it merited further investigation. Working men generally were carried along by the current of Liberalism, as they had been before 1867, and not until the Democratic Federation was established in 1881 was the way prepared for the rise of the Labour Party.[3]

On the Liberal side of the alliance Hanham was chiefly concerned with the rise of the caucus, a phenomenon which had been an obsession with Ostrogorski. The caucus method of organising party work in constituencies replaced the earlier Associations and Registration Societies, and involved electing a ruling Council of several hundred representatives from divisions or wards of the constituency. It was the seriousness of the losses in the 1874 election which prompted this type of reorganisation, the aim of which

> "was not to put into practice any theory of representation, but to provide a framework within which all sections of the party could work together, and within which nearly all the local leaders, whig, moderate, or Radical, could be found a place".[4]

The result was that the working class vote was 'managed', ostensibly in the wider interests of the party, but usually to the disadvantage of any labour group in the caucus. The Liberal Party as a whole gained a new form and meaning as individual caucus groups joined together to form a National Liberal Federation in 1877, so that in the 1880s the Liberal Party was a very different kind of institution from that with which working men had associated in the 1860s.

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1. ibid., p327.
2. ibid., p324.
3. ibid., p328.
4. ibid., p125.

The historian who has concentrated most closely on the development of the Liberal Party outside the House of Commons is John Vincent. His examination of the formation of the Liberal Party[1] led him to two general conclusions of significance to this present study. Firstly, in contrast with Hanham, whose work was on the institutions and the organisations of the party, Vincent regarded the party as pre-dating its structures, coming into being as the result of "a habit of co-operation and a community of sentiment"[2] experienced by many inhabitants in the fast-growing towns of industrial England. Ordinary people accepted Liberal Parliamentarians as spokesmen for a party to which they belonged in sentiment, no matter whether they had the vote or not.

> "This mutual convergence of provincial feeling and Parliamentary politics was not accompanied by, still less brought about by, changes in central or local party organisation."[3]

The agencies which brought this Party of sentiment into being were a cheap daily press mushrooming in the late 1850s, the actions of organised labour, militant non-conformity, the Reform agitation organisations of the 1860s, and Gladstone.[4] Even though the Parliamentary Liberal Party was manifestly out of step with, and in no way representative of any of these agencies in general, through their action Parliamentary Liberals were made the vanguard of a new, national party, which, in the end, was transformed by those same agencies.

Vincent offered three general reasons why town dwellers were amenable to the persuasions of Liberalism as conveyed by the agencies he listed. First of all, in the eyes of the masses, Liberalism was equated with, or derived from, manliness. This meant "the rejection of the various forms of patronage,

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1. J.Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857-68 (London 1966; Penguin edit. 1972).

2. ibid., p290.

3. ibid., p33.

4. ibid., p33.

from soup and blankets upwards, which had formerly been the normal part of the greatest number."[1] Being a Liberal, rather than merely recording a Liberal vote, meant aspiring to social and economic independence, and led on to notions of political independence too. Secondly, Vincent stressed the "Christian dimension of Liberalism,"[2] guessing, in the absence of absolute proof, that for many Liberals political opinions were derived from a religious belief in a way which cannot now be traced. Thirdly, there was for the first time a very evident rational defence of the notion that society as a whole might be improved.

The second significant conclusion to which Vincent came, therefore, was that working men were as naturally Liberal as their social superiors and for much the same sort of reasons. He thought that the working classes positively rejected a party of their own in the 1870s. He theorised that those in the working masses who were politically aware did not see politics as a way of securing social changes overnight, but rather as a means of expressing their own audacity and shrewdness, of obtaining a feeling of participation in a wider national life and the excitement of partisanship in a demonstrably superior cause, together with

> "the prospect of gradual improvements in living conditions and in the justice of social arrangements, improvements assuredly not unconnected with their own and their leaders' endeavours. This made the Gladstonian Liberal Party as suitable a party for the working men as for any other class".[3]

Ostrogorski, Hanham and Vincent all played down the significance of labour actions in the political world of the period 1860-80. They agreed that the National Reform League had a short burst of important activity and

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1. ibid., p14.
2. ibid., p16.
3. ibid., p116.

that it was largely composed of working class members. Hanham and Vincent agreed that the League was not followed by any worthwhile moves to establish a separate working men's party in the 1870s, and that one of the most important signs of the continuity of political developments over the third quarter of the nineteenth century was the loyalty of the working class section of the Liberal Party.

Their views have been adopted by D.A. Hamer in a study of Liberal politics in the time of Gladstone,[1] which is based upon the premise that since 1867, at least, parties have been coalitions, not homogeneous units. The Liberal Party, according to Hamar, was a coalition of two types of sectional opinion. Labour (or Lib-Labism) was an example of the great permanent blocs, or overlapping "frames of mind",[2] of which the Party was composed. Indeed, about 1868 and for some time after, Labour was the best integrated of all the sections of the Liberal Party, and one of the signs of working class contentment with labour's status in the Party was the Gladstonian outlook of men such as Burt and Broadhurst.

Two other writers have suggested that the political efforts of labour were not as successful as even some of those already mentioned wish to believe. F.B. Smith first of all, but Maurice Cowling[3] especially, have investigated the making of the second Reform Act, and neither concluded that its timing or contents were decisively affected by working class agitation. Cowling attacked R.Harrison's analysis of the Reform League's campaign and found that its passage was not capable of being explained as a simple consequence of the League's activity. Cowling stated that

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1. D.A.Hamar, Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery : A study in Leadership and Policy. (Oxford 1972).

2. ibid., p3

3. F.B. Smith., The Making of the Second Reform Bill. (London 1966). M.Cowling, Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution : the passing of the Second Reform Bill. (London 1967).

> "because the Reform League was politically active at moments of crisis, it is easy to attribute outstanding importance to its role. This is doubly easy when the historian has an interest in the working class movement ---"[1]

Nevertheless, this was not a denial of the existence of a relationship between organised labour and middle class Liberals. However much it reduced the scale of importance of that relationship it did not change the need to explain the nature of it, and the reasons for it.

A sociological approach to these political matters can be found in the works of D.C. Moore and T.J. Nossiter, whose views attracted comment from P.F. Clarke in 1972.[2] These historians, and John Vincent also,[3] have examined the composition of the electorate in constituencies where surviving Poll Books have been found to be specially informative. They have been looking for signs of the influences bearing upon voting behaviour and party allegiance. Their main aim has been to try to evaluate the extent to which social factors interacted with opinions, influence and corrupt practices in determining the outcome of elections. Stoke-on-Trent has not been one of the constituencies studied because only one Poll Book, that for 1841, is sufficiently full of detail. So far it has been thought too early to draw general conclusions about the relative strength of the various pressures affecting the voting behaviour of working men.

It is pertinent, however, to note P.F. Clarke's comment that it is gratuitous to ask why voters between 1832 and 1872 showed such loyalty toward the existing Conservative and Liberal Parties.[4] They could not

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1. Cowling, op. cit., p3

2. D.C. Moore, 'The other face of reform', in Victorian Studies, V, (1961)
'Concession or Cure : The Sociological Premises of the First Reform Act' in Historical Journal, IX, no. 1, (1966).
'Political Morality in Mid-Nineteenth Century England : Concepts, Norms and Violations', in Victorian Studies, XIII, (1969).
T.J. Nossiter, 'Recent work on English Elections', in Political Studies XVIII, (1970).
P.F. Clarke, 'Electoral Sociology of Modern Briatin', in History, Vol. 57, 1972 Feb.

3. J.R. Vincent, Pollbooks. How Victorians voted. (Cambridge 1967).

4. Clarke, op. cit., p33.

help but take this position in view of the registration procedure and the power exercised by party agents. The result was that the parties virtually selected the voters. Clarke also emphasised the propensity for partisan activity, so characteristic of Victorian elections, to become self-reinforcing, thus building up an immunity to change. Voting habits and allegiances developed by young men prior to 1867, it might be argued therefore, continued long after enfranchisement, and were even transmitted to a second generation. This political phenomenon has to be included in any list of factors drawn to explain the willingness of working class voters to settle for a subordinate role in the Liberal scheme of things in the 1870s.

The association of working men with the Liberal Party in the middle years of the nineteenth century, variously described as an alliance, as the expression of a compound ideology called Lib-Labism, and as a betrayal of revolutionary aspirations, cannot be fully illuminated by a study of one constituency. Stoke-on-Trent's importance, however, was that it had candidates speaking on behalf of labour at four elections starting in 1868, and it was a constituency particularly affected by the tension set up by the mutual explorations of Liberal and labour leaders searching for a modus vivendi. This tension was not new in 1868, but had been generated over a considerable period before. Conclusions drawn from political developments in the Potteries, therefore, ought not to be ignored when assessing the real nature of the Liberal-Labour association.

Political parties as they developed in the Potteries after 1832 were typical of others in similar urban settings in that control was exercised by some of the leading manufacturers of the dominant local industry. Their power was derived from their influence over employment, their spending habits, their social prestige and their commercial contacts with the world

outside North Staffordshire. These manufacturers had little desire to create political organisations as such because they considered them foreign to the constitution and contrary to their own interests. For them the Potteries was a commercial region of unique characteristics, deserving representation in the national legislature so as to preserve and promote its special nature. They considered the six towns a domain over which it was natural for them to exercise political control. The harmony of industrial interests which these men sought to have represented in the House of Commons was not possible over the whole range of social, religious, local and national issues current in politics, but they sought to resolve their differences at election time by arranging to have Members of Parliament with the commercial instincts of potters, and general opinions which satisfied the opposing groups in the constituency. There were occasional conflicts, as in 1837 and 1852 when two M.P.s of the same political complexion were elected, but for the most part the first three decades in the existence of the Stoke-on-Trent Parliamentary borough witnessed little change in the situation as it was created in 1832.

The Liberal Party, therefore, was manifest only in so far as a substantial group of manufacturers referred to themselves as members of it; a proportion of the voters pledged themselves to vote for candidates professing to speak for it; and a handful of paid agents saw to the registration of voters and so worked on behalf of it. There was no outward and visible sign of its continuous presence. However, there was only one way to become fully involved with it, and that was to possess a vote.

On the other hand, Liberalism was a current in the sea of political opinion touching ever wider sections of the population. It did not need a party organisation to push it along, and it could not be confined to

the electorate. Election managers in Stoke-on-Trent in the 1830s and 1840s may not have wanted continuously operating political organisations, but they did want their outlook to be shared by all classes. Self-styled Liberal leaders projected their views by means of various organisations, some of a religious, others of a social nature, and thereby helped to expand the Liberal 'interest' in the Potteries. This was not inconsistent with power remaining in the hands of a tiny group of electors until the issue of extending the franchise again became a dominant one. Then the exclusive character of the Party, and its insubstantial nature, were brought into question.

It was implicit in demands for the vote that men had the right to belong to a party. As matters stood in the 1840s and 1850s in Stoke-on-Trent there was scarcely such a thing as a Liberal Party for new voters to join. Events in the late 1850s and early 1860s, however, within a context of increasing pressure for Parliamentary reform, conspired to give the Party a more tangible form, and, as a result, produced grounds for an expectation that, when new voters were created by Parliamentary legislation, they would be admitted to a share in the decision-making processes of the constituency Liberal Party. The significance of this expectation was that it had considerable consequences for the Liberal Party in the Potteries as a factor encouraging the development of a labour section in the Party. The fact that these consequences were not made plain until after the passing of the 1867 Reform Act does not detract from the importance of the change in the form of the Party made two years previous to the Act, or reduce the importance of the aspirations working men derived from that change in form.

The evolution of the Liberal Council from a group of self-appointed pottery manufacturers, undefined as to numbers, length of service or powers, into an elected body of a fixed percentage of the electorate, theoretically

open to any Liberal voter and for the duration of one election only, was the key feature identifying the change in the Liberal Party's state. H.J. Hanham was of the opinion that more extensive changes of a similar nature in boroughs in the 1870s, each of which gave rise to a caucus, were not instituted in response to any theory of representation, but were expedients adopted by managements to enable different groups to find a place in the Party. This conclusion can equally be drawn from the way in which the Liberal Council developed in Stoke-on-Trent in the 1860s, and, therefore, supports Hanham's thesis that there was a continuity of action over the middle years of the century. In Stoke-on-Trent it has to be emphasised, in connection with this, that it was the creation of a Council as an elected body before the Liberal proposals to extend the Parliamentary franchise to parts of the urban working classes were implemented that was most important. The two reasons for this were that such a Council gave a new form to the Party, and thereby enabled voters to identify themselves with it through electing Council members, and secondly that an elected Council raised the hope that when working men were enfranchised they might succeed in influencing the choice of Liberal Parliamentary candidates to their own advantage.

It has already been noted that Vincent considered the Liberal Party to have been in existence as a party of sentiment before any structural organisations were built to support it. From the point of view of an examination of the Potteries it is clear that Liberal sentiment abounded in the 1850s when no formal organisation kept a party continuously in existence. The actions of temperance supporters in the early 1860s, however, compelled Liberals in Stoke-on-Trent to take the first steps towards a fully structured party organisation. While the Party came into existence, therefore, as a consequence of a rising tide of sentiment, it was not long before its amorphous character was changed into a more definite form, in Stoke-on-Trent at least.

In the further development of the Liberal Party in the Potteries this change in form was at least as important a factor as the manner in which

the Party was created, and the part played by the Temperance Movement in causing the change deserves to be emphasised. It was this Movement which first opened the eyes of working men to their political opportunities inside a constituency Liberal Party. The Movement provided a candidate, Samuel Pope, who came to personify the challenge to the ruling Liberal clique, and who showed that interests other than those of commerce ought to be represented in the House of Commons. The Movement also provided working men with a social centre around which their lives could be satisfactorily and permanently arranged. In this it contrasted strongly with the Liberal Party which was a most insubstantial institution in urban society in the middle of the nineteenth century. It was also the leaders of the Temperance societies who negotiated with Liberal Party managers for the Council, and thereby demonstrated that when electors were strongly organised they could effect worthwhile changes in their local Liberal organisation.

Vincent concluded that there was nothing fundamental at stake within constituency Liberal organisations in the 1860s and 1870s,[1] which was why party managements, such as that in Stoke-on-Trent, felt safe in satisfying local demands of active groups for the formation of representative institutions.

> "Their object was to distribute power wide within the constituency, while retaining the authority to ensure stable Parliamentary representation."[2]

As an example of a managing oligarchy which behaved in this way Vincent quoted Christopher Dickinson holding an open meeting in November 1868 in the Potteries to obtain ratification for the Liberal Council's nomination

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1. Vincent, op.cit., p127

2. ibid., p129

of Melly and Roden. Vincent recognised that those representative institutions marked a real change in the state of those local parties which employed them, but his Stoke-on-Trent example can be taken as evidence for considering that something of fundamental importance was brought to the surface by the establishment of Councils. This was the issue of organised labour influencing the selection of Parliamentary candidates, and even of presenting its own.

An important conclusion to be drawn from an examination of the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent is that there was a latent ambition among working class voters, and non-voters, to select a Parliamentary candidate of their own. This ambition was not openly discussed in terms of the rights of working class voters to be fully represented in the House of Commons until August 1868. Nevertheless, it can be detected in the reported address of the former Chartist, Samuel Robinson, to the electorate in 1862 and was implicit in the support offered to Samuel Pope by working men in 1857 and 1859. Even earlier than this, in 1847, William Evans complained bitterly about the failure of the Liberal oligarchy to select two candidates because it was hoped to avoid a contest altogether. He called for candidates pledged to the six points of the Charter and, in effect therefore, chosen by working class spokesmen. He wrote

> "Never mind boys! if we are cruelly and wickedly denied our political rights, we can shout : and we can make publicans, shopkeepers and other middlemen <u>hear</u> that shout. And these, you are fully aware, can decide the fate of a parliamentary election in this borough --- We'll have nothing short of a Duncombe, a Lovett or a Sturge! ----."[1]

There was no organised movement swelling up in the lower ranks of society capable of realising this ambition at the various times these spokesmen in the Potteries were reported as calling for Parliamentary

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1. <u>The Potters' Examiner and Workmans' Advocate.</u> 1847, June 12, pp 190-191.

candidates chosen by working men. There was no thought either that these candidates should themselves be of the working classes. The immediate political aim of working men's leaders was to acquire a vote for the mass of town workers, and energy and attention were concentrated upon this objective. In the Potteries Reform League branches had a hard time surviving as separate working class organisations and there was little scope, or need, for working men to demand independent representation in the mid-1860s because their social superiors led the way in matters of Parliamentary reform. When the vote had been acquired in 1867 working class leaders did not demand an immediate share in the control over constituency representation, but the ambition to have a candidate chosen by the rank and file of the Liberal Party was not dead. On the contrary, it had been considerably encouraged by changes in Liberal Party organisation instituted by the controlling group of manufacturers.

The encouragement of working class aspirations was an unforeseen and unplanned result of the establishment of an elected Council. Liberal Party managers in the Potteries did not invoke the elective principle in order to be fair to the rank and file, and they did not intend that official candidates should be selected by working men on the Council. They saw the Council only as a democratic cloak over the continuance of oligarchy. Party managers were content with the Council as a successful defence of their dominating position, and were hopeful that it would remain effective when the restrictive franchise of 1832 was changed.

In view of the desire among some working men's leaders in Stoke-on-Trent to choose their own Member of Parliament, and in view of the example given to those men by Temperance leaders and the assistance afforded by the rules of the Council, the conduct of the 1868 general election can be seen as crucial for the development of the Liberal Party in the Potteries.

It was crucial because it tested the relationship between Party managers and those who spoke as leaders of the labour section, and because the operation of the Council was a trial of the intentions and sincerity of the middle class oligarchy. Until September 1868 the signs were that the introduction of an elected Council had resulted in that harmonisation of interest which Party managers sought. By the end of November 1868 leading working men had swung round to the view that the local Liberal establishment had failed to live up to expectations and that this was disadvantageous to those respectable labour leaders who had advised their fellows to take the Council and its candidates at face value.

The conclusion to be drawn from developments in the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent during the early 1860s is that those working class leaders with ambitions to see a representative of their 'interest' go from the constituency to Parliament were inspired by the actions of the Temperance Movement and middle class managers in the Party to believe that they could achieve their objective within the Liberal Party. Those working men were few in number and had no organisation to support them, but their political roots lay in the Chartist movement and they enjoyed widespread sympathy in the Borough. They had not thought of their candidate being of the working classes, but the arguments used to support a representative of respectable status whose views suited working class leaders were capable of being adapted to support a man of lowly social station. To some small extent, therefore, an independent labour view on political matters was maintained in the Potteries during the post-Chartists age. The most significant factor holding back the advance of the idea of labour representation was the absence of any lively, successful, independent working class organisation in the Potteries from which labour leaders could spring to take control of the constituency Liberal Party.

The consequence which experiences in 1868 had for leaders of working men in Stoke-on-Trent was that even more of them were convinced of the necessity of promoting a Parliamentary candidate initially selected only by themselves, and that, if necessary, they should run him against official nominees. The precise point when this decision was taken cannot be identified, but the men involved can. They were leading officials in trade unions in the pottery and mining industries. Moreover, these men were at the head of a movement which was springing into new life and was much closer to being representative of working class attitudes than was the Temperance Movement. Their decision to challenge their industrial masters in the field of politics cannot be lightly dismissed as not fundamental to developments in the Liberal Party. It was to affect the Stoke-on-Trent party for a whole decade at least.

It was fortuitous that economic circumstances should cause an expansion of unions in the chief industries of the Borough and give new vitality to a labour movement just at the moment when some of those who organised unions determined to take up political activities. No doubt the rapid increase in the strength of unions affected the judgement of their leaders, and increased the determination of officials to succeed in their ambition. The primary factors, however, which set trade unionists on a political course derived from the internal politics of the local Liberal Party. Secondary factors concerned with the political and legal position of trade unions in general, and the example set by London-based national union organisers, had a part to play in further stiffening the resolve of labour men in the Potteries but did not of themselves initiate the demand for a working class Member of Parliament for Stoke-on-Trent.

The story of Alfred Walton's candidature in Stoke-on-Trent, and of the adoption by the Liberal Party there of Henry Broadhurst, is not only

of local significance but is part of the wider history of the Labour Representation League. This organisation was ignored by Hanham because he thought its story duplicated that of a more important body, the Reform League,[1] and because he considered it too heavily dependent on middle class support and leadership, Vincent, too, had a poor opinion of it and its impact on Liberal politics, arguing that working people rejected all attempts to separate out their section of the Liberal Party. Royden Harrison preferred to look closely at a contemporary organisation, the Land and Labour League, because its programme shared the vitality of the popular radical, even republican, tradition. The Labour Representation League was not considered to be satisfactory to the rank and file of the labour movement, though it satisfied its careerist leaders who wanted a means of entering the House of Commons. Harrison suggested that there is evidence to support a republican view that the Labour Representation League was a tool for Gladstone.[3] At its best, in Harrison's opinion, the Labour Representation League came close to establishing an independent labour organisation early in 1873, but was so prone to blowing hot and cold on the matter, and was so affected by the movement to secure alterations in the trade union legislation of the Liberal Government in 1871, that nothing came of this.[4]

None of these judgements can be accepted without qualification on the basis of evidence derived from the Stoke-on-Trent constituency. In one way or another the Labour Representation League branch in the Potteries exercised an influence on Parliamentary politics for a whole decade, and

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1. Hanham, op.cit., p327.
2. R.Harrison, op.cit., pp215-7.
3. ibid., p.228.
4. ibid., pp299-301.

grew out of experiences gained during the previous ten years. As an organisation the League was never strong, but in its prime, during the 1871-5 period, it was a genuine part of the trade union-led working class movement. It had far greater impact on the Borough than the Reform League had ever had, for all that this had been considered the most significant working class political movement in the age between the Chartists and the Socialists. In the Potteries it was the Reform league which had been dwarfed out of existence by the strength of middle class efforts to secure Parliamentary reform, whereas the Labour Representation League members led the strongest working class political movement in the area since the Chartists. It might even be considered that in some ways the men of the 1870s were more successful than those of the 1840s.

One aspect of the Labour Representation League in the Potteries which deserves to be emphasised was the apparent freedom from direction by the London executive committee and the degree to which the branch simply gave expression to an entirely local demand for a working class Member of Parliament. It could hardly be called a vehicle for careerist national union organisers to use as transport into the House of Commons, despite Alfred Walton's link with it. He was clearly chosen by men in the Potteries, possibly by William Owen in the first place, and he had to work at nursing the constituency. By the time Walton went to the poll in 1874 he was a familiar figure in Stoke-on-Trent, and had not taken a sudden interest in the area in the hope of a quick ride to Westminster. Henry Broadhurst contrasted with Walton in this respect, but then he was not chosen by a properly constituted League selection committee and his nomination as a working man's candidate was suspect for that reason.

It is true, of course, that the efforts made to secure representation for the working men of the Potteries in Parliament were well within a Liberal framework. There is no evidence that unionists, or any others

in the Potteries, rejected Liberalism as an outlook on life, or that they rejected the Gladstonian style of leadership. There is much to be said, therefore, for R.Harrison's summary that

> "One can understand neither the movements nor the men of the mid-Victorian Labour Movement if the ambivalent attitudes of workmen are not understood. Liberalism at the front of the mind, and old working-class sentiments and traditions at the back of it, produced the characteristic vacillations and inconsistences."[1]

In Stoke-on-Trent in the 1870s there was a genuine move to have working men represented in the House of Commons by one considered to be of their number and capable of defending their special interest, while at the same time keeping faith with the tenets of Liberalism. It cannot be denied that this move failed in 1874 and 1875, and that the position of Broadhurst in 1880 was equivocal. There was, however, a determined effort made to succeed in 1874, sufficient to impress the 'old' Liberal Party with the need to treat the working class vote with extreme care. This attempt to put a labour man into Parliament under Liberal colours should not be underestimated through over-concentration on Broadhurst, nor should the reality of its working class roots be lost in generalisations about the Labour Representation League's links with employers in other constituencies.

It can also be concluded from the history of the labour Representation League in Stoke-on-Trent that the impact it had on the development of the constituency Liberal Party was far from negligible, and extended beyond the lifetime of its organisation. As with the Temperance Movement before it, the electoral potential of the League frightened the middle class activists into a second reorganisation of the constituency party. Labour representatives were not elected directly by their peers to the new governing Council, but, as in 1868, it nevertheless contained a large number of working men. The mere rebuilding of this organisation , which

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1. ibid., p207.

had collapsed in 1869, on similarly representative principles was a significant consequence, however, of the pressure exerted by the League. The threat that the League itself might be resurrected in 1878, sometime after it had clearly ceased operations, was sufficient to bring middle class Liberals to a compromise on candidates whereby Henry Broadhurst was brought in to assuage the ruffled feelings of working class spokesmen.

The decade which followed the 1868 general election was one during which the Liberal Party in Stoke-on-Trent came to terms with working class voters. Both of the groups of leaders, that speaking for the Party and the other for organised labour had well established traditions deeply rooted in local industry, the Non-conformist chapels, and the social scene in the Potteries. They both had a political past to live up to, also. Men such as J.N. Peake and William Woodall were conscious of their predecessor and the Ridgways, Brownfields and Wedgwoods, and, on the other side, the trade unionists looked back to Mark Lancaster, John Ridgway and Jeremiah Yates, the heroes of the first successful unions and the Chartist movement. For each of these sets of leaders in the 1870s the agreement reached in 1878 to promote one pottery manufacturer, William Woodall, and one trade union official Henry Broadhurst, as partners on the Liberal Party election platform was both a relief and an achievement. It symbolised the end of at least two decades of open political tension during which men and masters had been sparring partners, sometimes fighting in earnest, sometimes in harmony. The combination of Woodall and Broadhurst resolved what had been the fundamental problem of Liberal politics in Stoke-on-Trent since at least the mid-1850s - defining the nature of the relationship between Liberals, as enfranchised in 1832, and working men, whose Liberal outlook was tinged with class interest.

For those who look for the roots of an independent and sovereign Labour Party in the tangled narrative of politics in the Potteries in the nineteenth century there are few rewards. Robert Owen's socialistic ideals found no

political expression in the area, despite the family tie between him and the most important native-born working class leader operating in the Borough, William Owen. Local Chartists did not make a special hero of Feargus O'Connor, and Ernest Jones had little impact that can be traced. Robert Hartwell satisfied the demands of a special situation for a few, but made no break in the solid support major working class spokesmen gave to the official Liberal candidates he opposed. The memory of Chartist agitations was kept alive and some ineffective calls were made for M.P.s truly representative of the opinions of, if not chosen by, working class voters. Otherwise only in association with attempts made by members of the Labour Representation League to put their own candidate into Parliament can some hints of a desire for a truly distinct Labour Party be found.

The division which existed among opponents of conservatism was not, therefore, between clearly defined ideological groups, one of which constantly threatened to fly off into a separate existence unless the other compromised its principles. Rather it was a division between groups whose social status could be fairly clearly recognised, and whose daily problems and frustrations were entirely different, but whose common principles were often not adequately defined, though constantly debated. Status was thus the vital factor differentiating one group of Liberals from another. This was especially obvious in towns before 1867 and during campaigns to secure Parliamentary reform. The fundamental problem for an urban constituency Liberal Party, ill-defined and insubstantial in the case of that in Stoke-on-Trent in the early 1850s, was how to accommodate a wide range of social groups within a flimsy organisation, while retaining the traditional power structure.

The problem did not become a reality in Stoke-on-Trent until after the huge increase in the electorate in 1867. It appeared in an early form, nevertheless, when the Temperance Movement put up Samuel Pope as a candidate. His chief support lay in strata of the working classes from

which only a minority of voters came, but his cause was one thought to be entirely in the interest of the working man. The need to come to terms with Pope's friends put a premium on organisation, not a strong point with those hitherto of the Liberal Party. When the size of the post-1867 electorate was recognised the organisational requirements for preserving the Liberal Party were not a little alarming to some. As the first effort to meet them was demonstrably below the expectations of spokesmen for working men, that first effort was abandoned and a period of rival organisations followed. Perhaps inevitably the Party suffered its worst disasters ever by losing first one and then its second seat. The consequence was a new attempt to build an organisation strong enough to hold together groups whose different status had been reflected in different degrees of power when they had previously worked together in 1868.

The extent to which the harmony achieved in 1878 survived the successful election of Woodall and Broadhurst was never properly tested. Before another election was held the constituency was split into two single member divisions. The northern half, chiefly composed of Burslem and Hanley was Woodall's home territory, while the southern division contained the Tory stronghold of Stoke-upon-Trent. Woodall naturally stood for Hanley in 1885, and Broadhurst moved on to Bordesley in Birmingham, not risking defeat at Stoke-upon-Trent. Both the new divisions continued to elect Liberals, however, Woodall defeating Conservatives in straight fights until he retired in 1900, and Stoke-upon-Trent choosing W.L. Bright and then G. Leveson-Gower until 1895. A Lib-Lab candidate did not contest either constituency until Enoch Edwards, treasurer of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, stood in Hanley in 1900 in Woodall's place. The Conservative narrowly defeated him just as a Conservative had won Stoke-upon-Trent in 1895. These Tory victories were a short interlude, however, in a long period dominated by the Liberals. In 1906 both seats were gained

by Lib-Labs, Edwards and John Ward, the latter not dropping his Liberal title until 1925. Enoch Edwards had been a close witness of the arrival of Broadhurst in 1873 for Edwards then held a leading post in the North Staffordshire Miners' Union. At all events, the long gap between Broadhurst's selection and the next Lib-Lab success in the Potteries might be taken as evidence of the strength of the Liberal hold over working men in Stoke-on-Trent. Their Liberalism was certainly deep rooted and the support working men continued to give Liberal candidates after 1880 might, in addition, be thought an expression of loyalty to the Party which had given them a chance to put up their own man in 1880.

It is possible to argue, however, that the context of local politics was so severely changed by the redistribution of seats in 1885 that the claims of labour leaders to control at least one seat in the Potteries suffered as serious a setback then as the Liberal Party had suffered by the advancement of those claims in 1874. But for redistribution a more specifically labour candidate than Broadhurst, and a local man too, might have been put on the Liberal platform in Stoke-on-Trent in 1885 and the Liberal-Labour alliance further developed. As it was, labour candidates, even in Liberal colours, had a hard time staking a claim in single member constituencies, as George Melly sadly noted.[1] In the long term this continued refusal by local Liberal Parties to adopt labour representatives boded ill for the Parliamentary Liberal Party and drove labour leaders to consider the formation of an independent party of their own.

1. Melly Papers. XXVII. 6386; 6389. G.Melly to F.Schnadhorst and to W.E. Gladstone, 4, 5, and 18 February, 1891.

Appendix A.

William Owen. 5 December 1844 - 13 October 1912.

William Owen was an active leader and constant publicist of movements to improve the lot of working men and their families for at least thirty years. He came to the forefront of trade union organisations in the pottery industry in 1867, when he was only twenty two years old, and he retired from the presidency of the North Staffordshire Trades and Labour Council in 1897 aged fifty two. No other native of the Potteries had a better record than his of working on behalf of the labouring classes in the nineteenth century, and perhaps none has improved on it since.

Of the several strands which made up his career journalism was important for it gave him his livelihood, but it was as a trade union negotiator for operative potters that he was chiefly praised by his contemporaries. He was, in addition, a platform orator of considerable power, a sensitive politician, a would-be lawyer, a poet and writer of fiction and, to begin with, a potter. The North Staffordshire Potteries were his home and the stage for his most successful activities, but he is without memorial in that area and is almost unrecorded in the national roll of labour leaders. William Owen deserves more notice, in North Staffordshire at least, as one of the finer products of a notably prolific industrial region.

Owen was born in Burslem, in December 1844, as the last of John Owen's seven children. His mother's family name was Collinson. John Owen was a potter's printer and was himself the son of a Welsh soldier drafted to the Potteries on some occasion of trouble there. This soldier was said to be a relative of the great Robert Owen, being born in Newtown, Montgomeryshire.[1] William Owen himself never seems to have claimed kinship with Robert despite the many opportunities which his newspapers gave him for self-glorification.

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1. Sentinel. 1912, October 14, p2. This is the obituary notice of W.Owen. (Hereafter referred to as Sentinel obit).

The peak of Chartist and trade union activity in the Potteries, which characterised the 1840s, had passed before William Owen was of working age. He was apprenticed at Pinder's pottery in Burslem, as a turner, presumably when the glories of the Great Exhibition and the relative prosperity of the early 1850s were talked of more often than the tribulations of strikes and riots which immediately preceded his birth. He remembered in his last years, however, how as a boy he had been struck by the memories of old men in the workshop and the savagery they recalled when speaking of the way masters treated their men.[1] Such conversations and his own circumstances must have made a large impact on Owen's young mind in view of the determination he brought in later life to efforts to change the working and social conditions which circumscribed the lives of working people in the Potteries.

Owen was brought up to attend the Anglican church in Burslem for he was a Sunday school teacher there,[2] but what formal education he had outside the church is not known. There was a local grammar school which took a small number of free pupils for English lessons, and a National School connected to the parish church, but whether a potter's printer could have afforded to give a son, albeit the youngest, much of a schooling is open to doubt. Nevertheless, William Owen acquired much more than the rudiments of reading and writing before he was twenty two because, by then, his literary skill had sufficiently impressed his colleagues in the pot bank for them to invite him to edit their union newspaper.

Union members in the Potteries had supported the publication of a weekly journal since 1843 when William Evans had started The Potters' Examiner and Workman's Advocate. During the 1850s this was replaced by

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1. Sentinel. 1907, November 25, p6.

2. Sentinel obit.

The Potter,[1] possibly still under Evan's control for part of its life for he was made editor when it was refounded on union instructions in February 1864 as The Potteries Examiner and Workman's Advocate. The union committee controlling the paper found Evans unsatisfactory, however, and appointed Owen as his successor. Another Burslem workman, Robert Glass, was initially favoured by some for the post, but Owen took up the job on 27 July 1867[2]. Possibly at the same time the title of the paper was reduced to the more simple one of The Potteries Examiner.

Just before his twenty third birthday, therefore, William Owen made the change from daily labour at the potter's lathe to making up a weekly newspaper. He thereby devoted himself to the cause of unionism and its expansion among the labouring population of North Staffordshire, and moved to the head of the local societies. There is no evidence as to how Owen convinced his colleagues that he was capable of being successful as an editor (Glass had at least written a speech delivered at Gladstone in 1863 when the foundation stone of the Wedgwood Institute was laid),[3] but an anecdote related by Owen suggests that he had made some mark as a controversialist. He said he changed his place of worship to the Weslyan Chapel following an argument with the Rector, Dr. Armstrong, over which side to support in the American Civil War. Armstrong had publicly debated the question with the Weslyan minister, who favoured the North and Owen was converted by the latter to the cause of Lincoln- and Weslyanism - as a result.[4]

Trade union officials thought of the Examiner as a means to a specific end. It was meant to serve the local union movement as a bond to hold it

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1. H.Barrett Greene. Trade Union Congress 1905 - souvenir. p58.
2. Trans. Hollow-ware Pressers' Union. 1864, February 29 : June 20. Examiner. 1873, March 29, p4.
3. Examiner. 1880, January 3, p5.
4. Sentinel.obit.

together. It was supposed to exhort and inspire the members and to persuade others to join a society. Above all, it was a notice board and advertisement sheet keeping members informed of lodge and district activities. From the issues which survive of those composed by Owen it seems clear that he had more grandiose ambitions, and wanted the Examiner to become a comprehensive, regional newspaper able to beat those journals which already served the middle classes, but without losing the working class readership to which his paper was confined when he took it over. During the first period of his editorship, therefore, until he left in 1875, Owen was regarded primarily by his fellows as a union leader who was provided with an independent income by his work editing and selling the trade paper. Union and political activities dominated, and were expected to command, his life. Owen's own journalistic ambitions, and successes, received little public notice, but he may well have gained just as much satisfaction from these as from his work as a union agent, secretary and negotiator.

The most important achievement of Owen as a union leader was his first - the establishment of a Potteries Board of Arbitration and Conciliation in 1868. It was widely acknowledged that Owen's persuasive writing and patient tact, when dealing with lodge officers of various separate craft unions, were the chief reasons why the men agreed to abide by rules, which the Board administered, for settling workshop disputes. Owen gave credit to Thomas Hughes for the idea, but something may have been taken from A.J. Mundella who had introduced a similar scheme in Nottingham shortly before. Without assistance from the employers' side, which came chiefly from M.D. Hollins, the Potteries Board could not have been started, but even Hollins saw Owen as the principal architect.[1] He was also one of the chief

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1. Royal Commission on Trades Unions 1867/9, 10th Report, p86-9 evidence of M.D.Hollins.

participants for he acted as secretary to the ten operatives facing a solicitor who was secretary to the ten masters.

Despite the suspension of the Board in 1871 and a dispute late in 1872, both of which were concerned with arguments on the good-from-oven principle governing payments to hollow and flat-ware pressers, the Board was counted as a success. It handled numerous minor matters to the satisfaction of the men and a testimonial was got up to Owen in 1873 as a result. He was only a few pounds richer by this, but it was solid proof of the reputation he had won as a leader, and for "fearless advocacy and sagacity"[1] in defence of claims before the Board. Owen was now at a peak of achievement he was never quite to reach again. In 1873 he was elected to the Trade Union Congress Parliamentary Committee which showed the respect he had gained at the national level of union organisation. The dangers he ran on behalf of his colleagues were demonstrated in 1872 when he was sued for libel at Gloucester Assizes. The case was brought by a Liberal manufacturer of Longton, Thomas Barlow, and a fellow J.P., whose impartiality as magistrates when dealing with a dismissed operative Owen questioned. Damages of £50 were awarded against Owen.

The Board was not a panacea for all the ills of the pottery trade and an umpire was required to break the deadlock of equal representation of masters and men. The decision of Lord Hatherton in 1879 was particularly disliked by the men and Lord Brassey failed to change it in 1881. As a result the potters struck, left the Board, and underwent one of the most serious industrial battles of Owen's career. Despite this, Owen and his fellow union officials helped to end the conflict and set out to reconstruct the Board. Owen was not regarded as a militant and a second testimonial,

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1. Examiner. 1873, March 29, p4.

this time of one hundred guineas, was raised in 1882 to show the respect Owen had won on both sides of industry. Even H.T. Davenport, M.P., of the Conservative dynasty of potters, sent a donation and letter in praise of Owen, though the testimonial began in the Burslem Liberal Club.[1]

The Board was not reconstructed until 1885 and it collapsed finally in 1891. Owen went through a temporary phase of unpopularity at this time, particularly with employers, for his strong speeches on the failure of pottery owners to spend money to end the dust problem which was ruining the lives of men in certain branches of the trade. In the end, it was a wage dispute which killed the Board, however, and ended hopes Owen had conceived of a straightforward, peaceful means of removing such disputes from the pottery industry. The arbitration negotiations of 1891 and strike in 1892 were times of great stress for William Owen, though he won much praise for his personal conduct and the skill with which he presented the men's case.

In 1869 Owen had been sent to the second Trades Union Congress and from this gathering he drew further inspiration for two projects he was then involved with. One was the Board of Arbitration, but the other was that of promoting a labour candidate for Parliament in Stoke-on-Trent. Owen was drawn to Alfred Walton by their common enthusiasm for arbitration and most of the credit for the successful launching of Walton as prospective M.P. for the Potteries in 1873 must go to Owen. Though Walton failed at the first attempt, Owen must have had the highest hopes that Walton would win the by-election in 1875, and so crown Owen's own career in the area which was then ending.

To further his career as a labour leader, and perhaps to start a new one as a lawyer, Owen moved in 1875 to Wolverhampton. His zeal for

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1. Sentinel. 1882, June 3, p10.

industrial arbitration had brought him into contact with the County Court Judge, Rupert Kettle, who was an acknowledged expert in the same field. Kettle seems to have promised to assist Owen read for the law, and it may have been Owen's intention to move closer to Kettle that persuaded him to move to the Black Country.[1]

Whatever his fanciful ideas, the basis of Owen's move lay in the third successful organisation he had initiated in the Potteries. This was the Co-operative and General Printing Company which he had persuaded all the local unions, including those for miners and ironworkers, to support. This was floated and took over the proprietorship of the Potteries Examiner in June 1871.[2] Owen was the general manager and responsible for the expansion of business, both in newspaper publishing and general printing. His first move was to repair the defects of the Examiner, which had been "its want of a full account of the local events."[3] Thus he made a regional paper out of a trade journal and quickly created a powerful rival to the established pillar of Liberalism, the Staffordshire Sentinel. In 1873 it was claimed that 7000 copies of the Examiner were sold each week.[4] More significantly for Owen's own career he started to print material for the T.U.C., and about August 1873 began the publication of a new paper, the Labour Press and Miner's and Workmen's Examiner. It was to expand this newspaper as the organ of mine workers' unions, and to improve its regional editions for Cannock, Derbyshire and Leicestershire, Shropshire, and Wednesbury, that Owen went to Wolverhampton.

The office which Owen had in Wolverhampton was at 28 Market Street. He may have opened this before leaving the Potteries in February 1875, for

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1. Sentinel obit. It is also worth noting the curious parallel here with Enoch Bennett, Owen's friend and business associate in the 1880s. Bennett (better known as Arnold Bennett's father), trained as a solicitor in Burslem through spare time reading.

2. Examiner. 1871, June 2, p2.

3. ibid.

4. ibid., 1873, March 29, p4.

in the previous November he had started another weekly newspaper published from that addresss, but printed by his Co-operative Company. This was The Wolverhampton Times and Bilston, Willenhall, Wednesfield and Sedgley Journal. This new paper was avowedly Liberal in politics, but did not have a long life. Three changes of name and a merger with the Labour Press (simplified to The Miner in 1877), which was already merged with its regional editions, together with two changes of partner, suggest that Owen had difficulty in rooting his papers in the area and had financial problems. The latter was certainly true for he would not consider a union request to cut the price from 1d to ½d per copy in 1878, as the paper was not even paying its way at the larger sum.[1] It is likely that Owen left his Market Street address, therefore, in 1879 to return to the Potteries after one last throw to recoup his fortunes. This was an evening paper, the Daily Midland Echo, established in December 1877, but disappearing early in 1879. His one remaining paper, now called The Midland Examiner and Times, was last heard of in September 1879.

In January 1880 Owen resumed his control over the Potteries Examiner, having prepared the way for his return from at least November 1878.[2] He was clearly made welcome by those in the area who had wished him well when he had left five years earlier, despite not returning as a national union organiser, or as a lawyer, or a successful newspaper publisher. From this time on he restricted his activities to the North Staffordshire region, perhaps realising that his potential as a labour leader was best exploited on familiar ground. He continued to seek profit and secure employment as a newspaper editor and publisher, trying another evening paper just for Burslem in 1881. It was called the Daily Mail and sold for ½d. He tried

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1. The Miner. 1878, January 5, p5.
2. Examiner. 1878, November 16, p5 : 1880, January 10, imprint.

a satirical weekly, Spice, but this did not last much longer than the Examiner or the Mail, both of which collapsed.

The times were not favourable for Owen's ventures for the pottery industry was vexed by wage disputes and unions were plagued by divisions and doubts. The 1881 strike cleared the air and left Owen free, once it was over, to concentrate again on his papers. He started a new one on a commercial basis, not on union support, and called it The Staffordshire Knot. It began as a weekly paper in an office in Percy Street, Hanley, on 13 May 1882. It expanded to include a daily evening edition, and then a daily morning one, at ½d each in 1885; and then Owen branched out to Crewe where he established the Crewe Star in 1888, and shortly after began a companion to it, The Weekly Star. How many shorter-lived papers Owen spawned in this second career in North Staffordshire is not known, but he did try a story magazine, The Archer,[1] in 1880, and printed The Watchman for the potters' strike committee in December 1881. As in Wolverhampton he did not find it easy to compete with journals which were aimed only at the middle classes and had greater financial resources than he was able to command. In 1892 Owen had to end his work as a newspaper man, though he is reputed to have sold the Crewe Star at a reasonable price.[2]

Owen's last leading role was as president of the North Staffordshire Trades and Labour Council during its first four years of existence from 1893 to 1897. This Council gave some unity to the whole trade union movement in the area and went a long way towards fulfilling one of Owen's most cherished ambitions. He was a natural choice for president if only because of his leadership of the National Order of Potters, a union he had helped to found after the collapse of the strike of 1881. Both this union and the Trades

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1. ibid., 1880, January 24, p4.
2. Sentinel obit.

Council were to flourish, after Owen retired from active public life in 1897, because of the foundations he had done much to lay. He reappeared from time to time to make some apt remarks on a significant occasion, but generally he lived quietly until he died at home in Longport in October 1912.

Owen's political career began with the foundation of the Labour Representation League branch in Stoke-on-Trent in 1870. He might have been its nominee at the 1874 election but he chose not to push himself forward. He did take up local government responsibilities, however, by joining the 'Liberal Five' on the new Burslem School Board in 1874. This aspect of his work was interrupted by his move to Wolverhampton, and it was many years before he returned to it, this time by serving on Burslem Town Council. There were other occasions when he showed his political aspirations, and his very political nature. These included arranging for William Brown to stand at Tamworth as a miners' candidate for Parliament,[1] and his own brief appearance as a prospective candidate for Newcastle-under-Lyme Liberals in 1886. This last had about it the air of hurried improvisation and had little chance of success. Owen did go to the poll in the same year in the Ecclesall division of Sheffield as a Gladstonian Liberal. Again he had little hope, and was made to look somewhat foolish when some of the typographical printers with whom he had disputed a trade matter in Stoke-on-Trent went across to Sheffield to demonstrate their opposition.

William Owen said something publicly on almost every issue of importance which affected the Potteries in the last thirty years or so of the nineteenth century. He had a part in nearly all organised attempts to inquire into or to improve the prosperity and happiness of the local working people. He was moved by religious conviction and personal

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1. Examiner. 1874, April 4, p8.

experience to work for change and betterment, and his fertility of invention reinforced a belief that the Potteries could be turned into a far more pleasant place more suited to the dignity of human existence than it was, provided there was sufficient cheerful will. He was not a socialist, but a social reformer : he was an idealist, but not an extremist. Above all, he was a giver not a taker. He died a poor man in material goods, but he lived a full and vigorous life in the service of others. The nearest thing there is to a memorial of him is a history of the trade union movement in the Potteries, written by his son, dedicated to William Owen as a leading official while he was still alive, yet scarcely mentioning his name or recording anything as his achievement. It epitomises Owen's own selfless devotion to the labour cause.[1]

1. H. Owen. The Staffordshire Potter (1901)

Appendix B.

Candidates at Parliamentary elections in Stoke-on-Trent 1832 - 1880.

Candidates	Split votes	Plumps	Total	
1832 General Election				
J.Wedgwood	822	22	844	
J.Davenport	625	57	682	
R.E.Heathcote	588	74	662	
G.M.Mason	232	36	268	No. on register 1,348.
1835 General Election				
J.Davenport and R.E.Heathcote elected unopposed.				
1836 By-election				
Col. G.Anson elected unopposed and replaced R.E.Heathcote.				
1837 General Election				
W.T.Copeland	665	20	685	
J.Davenport	656	4	670	
M.Bridges	472	0	472	
F.C.Sheridan	467	2	469	
1841 General Election				
J.L.Ricardo	128	755	881	
W.T.Copeland	595	19	614	
Hon. F.D.Ryder	495	2	495	No. on register 1,682.
1847 General Election				
J.L.Ricardo	788	166	954	
W.T.Copeland	494	325	819	
T.P.Healey	312	72	384	
1852 General Election				
J.L.Ricardo	891	30	921	
F.Leveson-Gower	835	13	848	
W.T.Copeland	197	572	769	
1857 General Election				
W.T.Copeland	478	785	1,261	S.Pope did not go to poll.
J.L.Ricardo	693	129	822	
F.Leveson-Gower	695	68	764	
1859 General Election				
J.L.Ricardo	955	301	1,256	
W.T.Copeland	539	534	1,073	
S.Pope	552	25	557	No. on register 2,221. F.Leveson-Gower and T.P.Healey did not go to poll.

Candidates	Split votes	Plumps	Total	
1862 By-election				
H.R.Crenfell			2,080	S.Pope did not go
A.J.B.Hope			318	to poll.
W.Shee			52	No. on register 2,494.
1865 General Election				
A.J.B.Hope	256	1,207	1,463	
H.R.Crenfell	1,539	34	1,575	
G.Melly	1,265	11	1,274	No. on register 3,189
1868 By-election				
G.Melly			1,489	
C.M.Campbell			1,420	No. on register 3,446
1868 General Election				
G.Melly and W.S.Roden elected unopposed as R.Hartwell did not go to a poll.				
1874 General Election				
G.Melly			6,700	
R.Heath			6,180	
W.S.Roden			5,369	
A.A.Walton			5,198	
1875 By-election				
Dr.E.V.H.Kenealy			6,110	
A.A.Walton			4,168	
H.T.Davenport			3,901	
1880 General Election				
W.Woodall			12,130	J.J.Jones and W.S.
H.Broadhurst			11,379	Roden did not go to
R.Heath			5,126	poll.
Dr.E.V.H.Kenealy			1,091	No. on register 19,376

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Acknowledgements.

An acknowledgement for help given during the writing of this thesis is due to W.E.Townley, Dr.J.A.Dewey and to colleagues at Madeley College of Education for inspiring it; to John Saville and Dr. J.M.Bellamy of the University of Hull, Dr. S.Coltham of the University of Keele and Robert Copeland, Director of Spode Ltd. for assistance with particular problems; to Stuart Hobson for granting access to his father's collection of papers on trade union history; to the late J.H.S.Tupholme, Editor of the Evening Sentinel, Stoke-on-Trent, for information on his newspaper's early days; and to E.J.D.Warrillow for the photograph of Colonel Roden, one of many in his possession illustrating the history of the Potteries.