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ANTI-CORN-LAW AGITATIONS IN SCOTLAND, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE ANTI-CORN-LAW LEAGUE

Kenneth John Cameron

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS.

The Corn Laws and the movement for their repeal were both indigen-:ous products of Scotland, although even in the eighteenth century, less intrinsically Scottish than the polemics of the debate would sug-:est. The evolution of aim, attitude, and vehicle of agitation in Scotland, and its contribution to the formation of the later Anti-Corn-Law League has been substantially ignored.

The peculiar identification of Manchester with the Corn Law question and with the League largely succeeded the latter's formation, and even then the conception of a "Manchester League" must be qualified. Although leadership was clearly vested nationally in Manchester, regions such as Scotland made substantial contributions to the free trade move-:ment in terms of local leadership, pecuniary donations, and ideas - there was a difference in emphasis between the well-defined aims of the League in Manchester and the more wide-ranging aspirations of the Scots repealers.

However, the strength of the League in Scotland has been exag-:gerated, partly due to a misinterpretation of Scottish support for Whig concepts of "free trade". In particular, its support among agriculturists and the working-classes has been grossly over-estimated. Even among the urban middle-classes, its principal source of strength, substantial pockets of protectionist sympathisers existed, especially in Glasgow. Nevertheless the assumption that the League's campaign was conducted in a distinct political, economic, religious, and social environment in Scotland was correct, and was evidenced by the com-:plexion of the interest groups which it attracted and the polemical debate which reflected separate (if similar) interests and social values, at least to some extent.

As a pressure group in parliamentary politics, the League's

activities on the Corn Law issue had been anticipated, albeit in milder forms, by free traders and protectionists in the late eight-:eenth and early nineteenth centuries. The schismatic tactics of the radicals, frequently emphasising the corn question, in the 1830's constituted recent precedents, emulated by the League. In Scotland, the apathy of the free traders in the field of registration - to some degree attributable to the distinct provisions of the Scots Reform Act of 1832 - gave the League cause for considerable concern. To some extent, this eased the embarrassment of the Whigs, under pressure in Scotland from both sides on the free trade question, who lost little ground on the issue, principally due to the conservative provisions of the Reform Act, and to the reluctance of the electors to forsake the Whigs and moderate reform for the radicals of the League and the excl-:usive aim of total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws.

The free trade movement was a British movement in Scotland, not a Scottish movement in Britain, but the region and locality in which it campaigned determined to some extent its characteristics.

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1. INTRODUCTION - The Corn Laws and Eighteenth Century Scotland.

Although the historian of the Industrial Revolution in Scotland considered 1780 a convenient date for the start of what he termed the first "stage" of the process of industrialisation,[1] the explosion of population and the growth of commerce and industry which it comprised, was a process of evolution which had no definitive start. The expansion of shipping on the Clyde from a tonnage of 5,600 to 22,896 between 1735 and 1783[2] was largely a fait accompli by this date. Nevertheless, the acceleration in economic growth conveniently termed the "Industrial Revolution" may be attributed to the last twenty years of the eighteenth century, although its roots were embedded in the period prior to it. From 1755 the population of Scotland rose from Webster's estimate of 1,265,380 to a figure of 1,608,420 by the first official census of 1801, and most of this increase was concentrated in the last two decades of the century. Geographically too the population growth was concentrated. The figures for several Lowland counties dependent on agriculture, such as Haddington, Linlithgow, Peebles, or Roxburgh were static in this period, whereas those counties in which the rising coal industry or "King Cotton" had taken root experienced a complete transformation. The population of Lanarkshire rose from 81,726 to 147,692, and the neighbouring county of Renfrewshire increased from 26,645 to 78,501. Old and new communities alike mushroomed, especially Glasgow which nearly trebled its population to 77,385 by 1801, and Paisley which more than quadrupled its population to 31,179.[3]

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1) Henry Hamilton: The Industrial Revolution in Scotland. p. 1.

2) ibid., p.4.

3) G.S. Pryde: Scotland from 1603 to the Present Day. pp. 140-41.

By the last quarter of the century, eighteenth century society was clearly in the melting-pot. The new trading and manufacturing interests in the urban communities were a challenge to accepted notions of economic and social order. The cities provided an environment in which the stratification of society without their boundaries was replaced by one based on economic success. Furthermore, new economic interests were provided with a scientific, incontrovertible religion of economic advance in 1776, when Adam Smith published his "Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations". Its acceptance was all but universal, and even agricultural protectionists did not venture to question the teaching of the great master, that commercial intercourse should be free, but merely asserted that he had made corn an exception to his general principles.(4) To the commercial and manufacturing classes of the growing industrial towns, especially on Clydeside, the new doctrine required immediate translation into practice as a general principle of commercial policy, although enthusiasm waned among some sections when its application to protected industries, notably linen, was suggested. Agricultural produce seemed a more eligible candidate for such experimentation, particularly in view of the popular equation in the towns of the price of corn with the cost of labour, and thus with the competitive ability of British manufactures in foreign markets.

Scrutiny of government policy in the late eighteenth century increased and produced demands for the repeal of the Corn Laws and free importation, although this implied the end of physical controls (with

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4) George Buchan Hepburn of Smeaton: Observations on the Bill for the sale of corn by weight. 1796. p.91.

some exceptions) rather than the end of all protection. The urban classes were still prepared to concede "moderate" protection, if only to obviate a charge of inconsistency in the case of other manufactures. Significantly, however, the Corn Laws were increasingly attacked not only on the grounds of their economic motivation, but also as a symbol of the political and social domination of the landed interest. It was easy for condemnation of the Corn Laws to stray into criticism of idle landholders whose lack of industry kept large tracts of the most fertile land in Britain "in shrubberies and pleasure grounds" as obstacles to agricultural improvement, with of course, appropriate quotations from Adam Smith in support of this thesis.(5) The increas-:ingly aggressive and self-confident attitude of the urban communities appeared, however, with them towards the end of the eighteenth century. Although a division of interests between town and country existed be-:fore then, the social cleavage expressed in terms of aims and the language in which they were formulated was less obvious.

The Corn Law controversy did not commence in Scotland with the Corn Act of 1815. Like its southern neighbour, Scotland had adopted legislation governing the importation and exportation of grain, prior to the Act of Union of 1707. As in England too, the northern legis-:lature was dominated by the landed gentry, and agrarian interests were reflected in the enactments flowing from it. Successive acts in the reigns of Charles II, James VII, and Anne(6) brought Scotland's Restor-:ation Corn Laws into a rough alignment with those of England, pro-:hibiting in particular the importation of victual from Ireland "whereby

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5) Anonymous: Observations on the Corn Laws, 1805. pp. 5-6.

6) The Acts were respectively 1672.c.3.; 1686.c.14.; and 1703.c.9.

the sale of corns growing within this kingdom has been stopped, and much money had been unwarrantably carried out of the kingdom".[7] The growing concern over the drain of specie especially forced greater concessions to mercantilist theory, and in 1703 the prohibition was made general, being made applicable to England (with some reservations)[8] and other countries. By the same act, the embargo on Irish victual was extended to Irish cattle, allowance was made for the confiscation of illegal imports, and previous penalties on participants in such a trade were ratified. Encouragement to domestic agriculture had also inspired legislation in 1695 which overturned a system of export duties in favour of export bounties when grain prices fell below fixed levels.[9]

The attempt to achieve a greater degree of self-sufficiency through the stimulus of increased prices represented a gain to home producers at the expense of domestic consumers. However, the interests of the latter, largely identifiable with the burghal interest, were not completely disregarded, and the effects of the new legislation were partially mitigated through the application of discretionary powers. The Act 1695. C.32 permitted the Lords of the Privy Council to prohibit exportation in times of dearth, when prices exceeded bounty rates,

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7) Anonymous: Essay on the Corn Laws.... in opposition to the inflammatory memorial for the merchants, traders, and manufacturers of Glasgow. 1777. p.7.

8) English wheat, peas, and beans for seed could be imported on payment of a surcharge.

9) The act 1695 c.32. substituted a bounty of 8 marks per chalder when wheat fell below £12 Scots per boll; bear, barley, and malt below £8 Scots per boll; and peas, beans, and meal below £6 Scots per boll.

Moreover, by the Act 1703.C.9., they were further empowered to sus-:pend the prohibition against importation when prices exceeded these rates.[10] Some attempt was therefore made to safeguard the interests of consumers in periods of scarcity, although the interests of the agriculturists and the fears of the mercantilists were paramount. Subsequent legislation in 1706-8 rapidly nullified the protection enjoyed by consumers. The Act 1706.C.7 (incorporated in the Treaty of Union) allowed export bounties on oats and oatmeal, equated the bear of Scotland with the barley of England, raised the export bounties to English levels, and ratified the prohibition of imports from Ireland or overseas "until more proper and effectual ways be provided by the Parliament of Great Britain for discouraging the importation of the said victual from beyond the sea". The coup-de-grâce for the Scottish consumer was the abolition of the Scots Privy Council in 1708, which removed the machinery and powers of mitigation in times of distress.[11] He was rendered defenceless.

However, the situation established by the legislation of 1706-8 was not seriously challenged until the dearth of 1740-41. The social distress engendered then was acute. In October, 1740, riots in Edin-:burgh and Leith forced the troops to open fire to protect granaries and retailers, and obliged the magistrates to subsequently agree to indemnify all losses by mobs to importers of grain through Leith. By 1741, the dearth of provisions in Edinburgh was so great that "the

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10) Report of the Committee of Directors of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce. 1787. p.4.; Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland. Vol. XI. pp. 109-11.

11) Report of the Committee of Directors of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce 1787. p.5.; Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland.Vol.XI.p.407.

clamours and importunities of these miserable objects made it very dis-:agreeable to walk the streets". Substantial imports of English grain through Leith took place in the early months of 1741,[12] but the distress of the metropolis was not unique. Aberdeen Town Council facing a simi-:lar situation agreed to purchase grain to relieve the dearth of food within the burgh.[13] By 13/11/1740, the Convention of Royal Burghs had intervened to complain that the prices of victual were so high that "the poorer sort of people, day labourers and others, have been, and are, in danger of starving for want" - a situation which they attributed to the restrictive legislation of the Scots Parliament (especially the Act of 1703) which prohibited the importation of foodstuffs except in dearth, and the subsequent removal of the means of mitigating the evil by the British Parliament.

The resurrection of discretionary powers "lodged by law in proper hands" in Scotland[14] was the Convention's answer. In place of the defunct Scots Privy Council, the Royal Burghs envisaged that these could be devolved on the Court of Session. Provost Patrick Lindsay, M.P. for Edinburgh, subsequently reported to the Convention that a meeting of twenty-one Scottish M.P.'s had concurred in this view, although there

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12) "Scots Magazine", 1740. pp. 482-84; 577. ibid., 1741. pp.45-46, 190. Between 25/12/1740 and April, 1741, over 15,000 quarters of Oats, 3,000 quarters of Wheat, and 11,000 quarters of Barley were im-:ported through Leith from England.

13) Minutes of Aberdeen Town Council, 6/4/1741.
In April, 1741, Aberdeen Town Council agreed to purchase at least 4,000 bolls of meal from the county or nearest seaport for the local populace.

14) Extracts from the Records of the Convention of Royal Burghs of Scotland, 1738-59. pp. 62-64. (hereinafter referred to as Con. R.B.S.)

had been disagreement over the circumstances during which importation could take place. Representing predominantly the landed interest, the Members had contended that with the exception of wheat (a relative-:ly unimportant crop north of the Tweed) the prices at which importation could occur under the 1703 act were too low. The burghal interest in the Convention voiced the consumers' view that they were too high, but agreed to adhere to the status quo as a more realistic aim.(15)

Exploiting the measure of agreement which did exist, Lindsay on behalf of the Convention (and at their expense) moved a corn-bill in Parliament which vested the powers of suspension previously held by the Scots Privy Council, in the judges of the Courts of Session, Justiciary, and Exchequer.(16) Nevertheless, the act 14 Geo.II.C.7. was not a total victory for the burghal interest. Important conces-:sions were made to the landed interest. Importation was permitted at price levels generally in excess of those of 1703, particularly for the staple food, oatmeal.(17) Moreover, it was governed by price levels of middling British corn, grain and oatmeal in the city and county of Edinburgh, which from its situation in the granary of Scotland was a "low-price area. Finally, the evidence on price levels was to be obtained from two persons in possession of landed estates of at least £400 Scots annual rental.(18) Although the Convention printed and

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15) ibid., p.65.

16) Or any nine of them, with five during vacation.

17) Importation was permitted when the price of wheat rose to 5/- per Winchester bushel, bear (or barley) to 2/3d. per bushel, oats to 1/8d. per bushel, and oatmeal to 13/4d. per boll.

18) Con.R.B.S.,1738-59. pp.66-68; Report of the Committee of Directors of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce. 1787. pp.5-6.

circulated four hundred copies of the act to the clerks of the royal burghs so that they would know how to apply to have their ports open for importation during a dearth,[19] the burghal interest was far from satisfied with its provisions. On 9/7/1741, the Convention's annual committee determined to apply for an explanation of the act. It further resolved that "as by the treaty of union, the export and import of the United Kingdom is to be upon one footing", the same regulations should apply to Scotland and England in respect of corn, except for the method of assessing corn prices. This power, the Convention agreed, could remain vested in the Court of Session, if it was not considered a proper function to be entrusted (as in England) to the justices of the peace.[20]

Although the price levels fixed by the legislation of 1741 especially that of the Scottish staple, oatmeal, were too high for the burghal interest to accept, it required a further dearth in 1755-57 to infuse fresh vigour into the dialogue on the complexion of the Corn Laws. The crisis commenced with a deficient crop in 1755, but was temporarily allayed by English imports. In 1756, however, inclement weather and a late harvest produced poor crops of barley and wheat, while supplies from England, Ireland, and Europe were substantially curtailed by corresponding crop failures in these regions. The popular reaction was an outcry against corn-dealers,[21] who assumed the role of

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19) Con. R.B.S., 1738-59. p.74

20) ibid., 1738-59. pp. 81-82.

21) Anonymous: Remarks on a paper entitled "Observations upon the grievances with respect to the present dearth of grain, etc." 1757. pp.1-2.

scape-goats, but more constructive attempts to relieve the suffering of the poor followed in the form of public subscriptions and fiscal rewards for importation.(22)

Significantly, it was the growing commercial community of Glasgow which led the assault on the Corn Laws. On 28/12/1756, the Convention of Royal Burghs agreed to the suggestion of the Provost of Glasgow to petition for the removal of import duties on grain while the prevalent high prices continued - a petition subsequently submitted by George Ross, the Convention's agent in London. The plea seemed timely as Parliament had already appointed a committee to consider the issue.(23) In response to pressure throughout Britain, and particularly to alleviate the riotous proceedings in those areas most acutely afflicted by high prices and social distress, a corn-bill was eventually passed prohib-:iting exportation until 25/12/1757.(24) Despite this concession, how-:ever, the Convention under continuing pressure from commercial inter-:ests, continued to agitate for a further advance. Ross was instructed to inform Scottish burgh M.P.'s that the Convention favoured a permanent prohibition of all exports of grain above a fixed price ceiling(25) and

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22) A public subscription was raised in Edinburgh in December, 1756, while in Glasgow, the magistrates and Merchants' House responded by offering a reward of £10 sterling for every thousand bushels of the first 20,000 bushels of sound Indian corn imported by 1st August, 1757, for the use of the city's poor. ("Scots Magazine", 1756. pp.622-23).

23) Con. R.B.S., 1738-59. p.534. The committee was appointed after the riots which followed the poor harvest and high prices of Autumn, 1756, and the dialogue on the policy of bounties which had raged in England since 1750-51, when Charles Townsend's pamphlet on the subordination of manufacturing to landed interests had been published.

24) D.G. Barnes: A History of the English Corn Laws from 1660 to 1846. pp. 21-25, 32, 37-38.

25) 26/- per quarter for wheat, 14/8d. per quarter for barley, and 18/- per quarter for oatmeal.

the removal of both the prohibition and duties on importation when prices rose to approximately two-thirds above these rates.[26]

No progress was made, however, towards the Convention's declared aim of assimilation with English practice until 1772-73, when a further severe dearth produced its usual quota of scape-goats - principally distillers (as consumers of grain)[27] and corn-dealers[28] - and vituperation against the legislation governing Scotland. Parliament's response was a new Corn Act on 1st January, 1774, which for the first time attempted to standardise regulations for both Scotland and England, as far as the separate judicial establishments in each country would permit such a fusion. Paradoxically, however, the Scottish burghal interest discovered that the fruits of uniformity were not uniformly sweet. Import and export levels of grain throughout Britain were raised,[29] but the peculiar Scottish grievance related to the treatment of oatmeal. Its import price was raised from 13/4d. per boll (corresponding in terms of real value to the import price of 16/- per quarter for oats) to 16/- per boll. The price at which the

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26) Con. R.B.S., 1738-59. p.540.

27) Anonymous: The Causes of the present scarcity and dearth of provisions assigned. 1772. p.3.

28) Riots took place in several localities including Dundee, Perth, and Newburgh. In Longforgan Parish, the residence of David Mylne of Mylnefield was ravaged by a mob from Dundee, in January, 1773. At a meeting on 10/3/1773, the heritors of Forfarshire denied that Mylne was "either a corn-dealer, meal-monger, or some such obnoxious person" or that he had been "screwing up the prices of grain".("Scots Magazine". 1772. p.692.; ibid., 1773. pp. 164, 329.)

29) Grain could be imported at nominal duties when the "market prices" in the maritime counties in which individual ports of entry were situated reached 48/- per quarter for middling British wheat, 24/- per quarter for barley or bear, and 16/- per quarter for oats.

staple diet of the labourers of Scotland could be imported was thus raised by twenty per cent, and above its just proportion in relation to oats. A reduction in the import price levels of the English staples, wheat, and wheat-flour, exacerbated Scottish irritation. Moreover, while the act permitted the warehousing of every other kind of victual when the ports were shut in readiness for the urban market when prices would rise and duties fall - a concession to the towns which could count on a more secure supply in times of dearth - oatmeal was an exception. It was excluded until the price in the home market climbed to 16/- per boll. Scottish burgh opinion protested vociferously against what was readily identified as discrimination.(30)

The remaining provisions of the act, however, went far to conciliate its prospective critics in Scotland. The commercial interests of the west of Scotland in particular were delighted at the cardinal principle of the new legislation. This terminated the concept of nation-wide importation regulated by Midlothian prices. Instead, ports opened and shut on the "market prices" ascertained by local sheriffs, in maritime counties in which individual ports of entry were situated. Prohibitions, duties, and bounties were thus determined over most of Scotland by local conditions. Thirteen years later, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce waxed enthusiastically about the halcyon days of the 1774 Corn Act, which had placed Scots "nearly on a footing with our fellow-subjects of England, particularly insofar as it has made the prices in each county, the mark of its wants and the rule for importation to supply its necessities". As a "dear grain"

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30) Minutes of Aberdeen Town Council, 15/3/1774; 31/3/1774.

market, Glasgow was enabled to import cereals with increased facility. If the act did not furnish the city with a cheaper supply of grain, it did at least provide a more constant and steady supply which "greatly promoted the increase and improvement of our manufactures, and the commerce connected with them: which have flourished more of late than at any former period".(31)

The growing sense of identity and self-interest on the part of the manufacturing and commercial interests in Glasgow, apparent in previous dialogues, was highlighted from 1777 when attempts to improve the machinery of the 1774 Corn Act threatened to rob Glasgow of some of the advantages which the city had derived from it. On 28/4/1777, Glasgow Town Council pronounced that a corn-bill aimed at regulating the corn trade of Scotland currently pending in Parliament was harmful to the trade and manufactures of "this part of the United Kingdom". The Council appointed a committee under Provost Robert Donald to concert measures with the merchants and traders of the city to oppose it, and agreed to contribute a proportional share of expenses incurred in such a stand.(32)

The Glasgow merchants proceeded to enlist the aid of the Con-:vention of Royal Burghs, which accepted and endorsed the memorial of the former. This objected to the proposals in the corn-bill for a reversion to the principle of Midlothian prices governing Scotland, as inimical to the commercial communities of the west which would be

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31) "Scots Magazine", 1777. pp.198-203; Report of the committee of directors of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce. 1787. pp.6-10.

32) Robert Renwick (ed.): Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Glasgow. vol.7. p.502.

deprived of imports until Edinburgh prices reached the requisite level. However, the Convention also concurred in objections to the limitation of the time of opening of ports to thirty days on the ground that this was insufficient time to permit imports from Ireland (Glasgow's princi-:pal source of supply) or elsewhere. The increasing commercial cons-:ciousness of the opposition was most clearly revealed when the quali-:fication of witnesses testifying to price levels, namely £400 Scots valued rental of landed estate, came under fire. Finally the Conven-:tion reiterated the traditional Scottish grievance over the regulations for oatmeal, concluding that the bill was highly prejudicial to Scotland in general, and to her manufactures in particular. Provost Donald was recommended to print and circulate the Glasgow memorial to the magi-:strates of all the royal burghs.(33)

When the Convention appointed a committee on 8/7/1777 to consider the bill in detail(34) and frame recommendations, the united front was soon broken. Most of the committee's suggestions were calculated to appeal to the Glasgow mercantile community.(35) However, the Convention also accepted the committee's recommendation to agree to the concept of Edinburgh prices governing importation for Scotland on condition that

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33) "Scots Magazine". 1777. pp.569-73; Con. R.B.S., 1759-79 pp.541-42.

34) Con. R.B.S., 1759-79. pp.550-51.

35) These included the need for three months' importation, the ware-:housing of oats, the qualification of witnesses to include substantial merchants, and a proposal that the Lord Provost of Edinburgh and the Provost of Glasgow - rather than the local sheriffs - should be given powers, together with the judges of Session and Exchequer, to determine when and at what rates importation should take place.

oatmeal could be imported at a rate not exceeding 14/8d. per boll, with oats at 16/- per quarter.(36) With this proposal in mind, the Convention appointed a second committee to co-operate with the Lord Advocate and the landed interest in framing legislation "for the benefit of this part of the United Kingdom".(37) However, despite its assertion that "for the sake of peace the resolutions of the Convention of Royal Burghs may be adhered to", Glasgow's concurrence was qualified. The Town Council insisted that its support was dependent on the regulation of importation by prices on a county basis, with Lanarkshire and Glasgow forming one district regulated by Glasgow prices. If this condition was not satis-:fied, Glasgow intended pressing for a reduction in the import price of oatmeal to 13/4d. per boll, as previously suggested.(38)

The outcome of the Convention's meeting with the Lord Advocate and the landed interest contributed nothing to ease the tension between Glasgow and the rest of the burghal interest. Agreement was reached on the importation of oats and oatmeal whenever the price of oatmeal on the Edinburgh Corn Market climbed to 14/8d. per boll, and on most of the other divisive issues.(39) The landed interest was not, however, prepared to concede the claim to warehouse oats if the ports were to be open for

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36) The committee urged as a safeguard that the court of enquiry should meet to ascertain price levels at least four times per year - as the sheriffs did - and more often if necessary, and that they should be furnished with weekly reports from the clerk of the Edinburgh meal and corn market.

37) Con. R.B.S., 1759-79. pp.562-64.

38) Robert Renwick (ed.); op. cit., vol.7., p.511.

39) The Convention dropped its proposed addition of the civic chiefs of Edinburgh and Glasgow to the proposed tribunal, and the landed interest agreed to the inclusion of mercantile witnesses and the production of weekly reports from the Edinburgh corn market.

three months. With the Convention equally intransigent on the issue, a second meeting failed to resolve the impasse.(40) In the face of this setback, the majority of the Convention reverted to the resolutions of the previous general Convention, with their demand for warehousing of oatmeal, its re-exportation like other grains, and the importation of oats at 16/- per quarter.(41) The delegate from Glasgow moved that the Convention should reverse its previous decision and press for the regu-:lation of importation on a county basis,(42) but this was rejected as con-:trary to the unanimous resolutions of the previous Convention. Des-:pite a dissident Glasgow, the Convention reiterated these and instructed its agent to print and distribute a copy to all the royal burghs.(43)

If the details of the proposals of 1777 produced an apparent division of interest between Glasgow and the other burghs, it was dwarfed by the overall demand of the burghal estate for cheap bread, and the clear-cut division between town and country which this both reflected and produced. This schism was observed by one anonymous political scribe of the period when he noted that if the Member of Parliament for Midlothian regarded the interest of his constituents in

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40) Con. R.B.S., 1759-79. pp. 566-67.

41) Glasgow Town Council had appointed its own committee to meet with the landed interest, but this initiative foundered on the question of importation on a county basis in addition to the issues which had undermined the Convention's own negotiations. Glasgow wished English legislation to extend to Scotland. (Robert Renwick (ed.): op. cit., vol.7., pp.512-13.)

42) The price of oats in Glasgow and the west was 1/- per boll higher than in the east, in the opinion of an agricultural spokesman. (James Anderson: An enquiry into the nature of the corn laws with a view to the new corn-bill proposed for Scotland. 1777. pp. 49-50.)

43) Con. R.B.S., 1759-79. pp. 570-71.

the county, he would be obliged to vote for the corn-bill, but if he heeded the prayers of his friends in the town, he would have to vote against it.(44) He was not alone in lamenting a division which resulted in manufacturers and merchants taking one side and the landed gentlemen and farmers the other.(45) The growing self-confidence and self-interested motivation of the expanding commercial communities, especially Glasgow, were apparent to a degree hitherto unparallelled.

The implication of urban, and in particular Glasgow, demands was understood by most agriculturists. As one anonymous agrarian pamph-:leteer observed, the demand for the reduction of the importation price of oatmeal to 13/4d. per boll - the pre-Union price level - had intro-:duced a new principle, that corn should be permitted to be imported even when there was no scarcity. This proposal, he blamed on "fine philosophical abstracted reasoning, drawn from liberal principles", and argued that the strategic necessity of self-sufficiency had under-:lain even Adam Smith's partial exception of corn from his general principles of political economy. His correlation of the Glasgow demands of 1777 with the publication of Smith's treatise in the previous year led him to refute the idea of mobility of labour from argiculture to industry, the equation of cheap provisions with manufacturing success, and the application of general principles to specific cases. The ob-jection of the Glasgow merchants to Edinburgh prices ignored the pre-:sence of the Forth and Clyde Canal as a means of shipping grain from the east,(46) but the underlying contest was not over such detail. The

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44) Anonymous: To the D(uke) of B(uccleuch) by one of your best friends. 1777(?). p.5.

45) Anonymous: Corn Bill Hints. 1777.

46) By 1775, the canal had been completed from the Forth to Stocking-:field, three miles north of Glasgow. (Henry Hamilton: Op.cit.p.232.)

innate virtues of rural life were glamorised[47] and the proposition was advanced that manufactures should be encouraged only as a stimulus to agricultural production. Having attained that object, one should not wish "for a greater degree of these nor a more numerous population than that pitch of agriculture can support".[48] Other agricultural apologists wrote in a similar vein, but behind the polemics about landowners becoming "mere beasts of burden to the trading and manu-:facturing parts of this kingdom", were genuine fears that unless agriculture shared in the rising prosperity and prices of the country, the relative economic and political importance of the landed interest would decline,[49] in the path of an emergent industrial society. Accord-:ingly, there was general, though not universal,[50] hostility to mercantile claims, on the part of the landed interest.

The failure of the landed interest to effect their aims in 1777 produced a truce, but by 1786 a group of landed proprietors precipitated

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47) If agriculture was depressed, manufacturers would in their "rural excursions, meet with no pleasing, no smiling object;
No plowman whistling o'er the furrow'd land,
No milk-maid singing blithe".
(Anonymous: Corn-bill hints. 1777. pp.7-8.)

48) ibid., pp. 2-4, 7-8, 10, 13-18, 20, 22.

49) Anonymous: Essay on the Corn Laws .... in opposition to the inflammatory memorial for the merchants, traders, and manufacturers of Glasgow. 1777. pp.6-10.

50) James Anderson of Monk's Hill, Aberdeenshire, addressed the Glasgow manufacturers in a more conciliatory tone, attempting to assure them that their fears were groundless. His concern was Scotland's probable inability to compete with foreign grain supplies, especially oatmeal, the average price of which had been a mere 13/- per boll for the best quality over a period of twenty years in the Midlothian fiars. To make up for years of deficiency, he argued that in certain years, and in certain areas (namely Glas-:gow) higher prices would be justifiable, but conceded that ware-:housing should be permissible. Imports should be available immed-:iately when prices rose, and farmers should not make unjust pro-:fits.(James Anderson: op.cit., pp.8-9, 12-13, 31,43,58.)

a further collision with the commercial interests of the west, when they proposed a revision of the Corn Act of 1774 to bring the law closer to the system adopted at the Restoration. This implied a prohibition of importation of foreign grain imports - on the plea that imports had exceeded exports by 300,000 quarters per annum under existing legislation. In pursuit of this aim, they revived the con-:cept of Midlothian prices, to be assessed by a jury of fifteen subs-:tantial landed proprietors and "respectable citizens of Edinburgh who are not dealers in grain". The latter concession to the burghal interest was qualified by the probability that the middle-classes of the metropolis would be more amenable to landed influence than those of certain other urban communities. Their further proposal that ports should be open or shut for three months at a time had even less merit from the burghal viewpoint, because of its implications for a period of dearth. Nevertheless, spurred on by what they considered the low grain prices of 1785-86, the landed proprietors prepared to lobby Scottish Members of Parliament, county conveners, and the Lord Advocate.(51)

The strength, complexion, and polemics of the urban reaction indi-:cated how much water had flowed under the bridge since the previous agricultural initiative of 1777. In 1783, the growing commercial and industrial interests of the west had combined in a permanent association to protect their intrinsic interests. Significantly, one of the dec-:lared objectives of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce was "to consider all matters affecting the Corn Laws of this part of the United Kingdom in particular, as being of the utmost consequence to its trade and

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51) Report of the committee of directors of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce. 1787; pp.31-36, Appendix.; "Scots Magazine".1786.pp.48-49.

manufactures."[52] Consequently, the proposals to impose further restrictions on the grain trade were immediately resisted by the new pressure group, and on blatantly self-interested grounds. On 18/10/1786, the Chamber urged the need for cheap labour - "the certain consequence" of plentiful supplies of provisions at "reasonable" rates - in order to make British manufactures competitive. The mercantile interests wished to modify the existing legislation by ending the concepts of bounties and prohibition, and substituting a moderate import duty. They totally opposed any modification of the 1774 Act which would entail importation on Edinburgh prices, as these were considered to be about ten per cent lower than in Glasgow.[53] The objections and fears of the Chamber were paraphrased two days later by Glasgow Town Council, which proceeded to canvass for further support from the merchants' and trades' houses of the city, the royal burghs, and the preses of the Convention, pointing out the size of the population in the west and the impact of such a demand on raising prices.[54]

The principal effect of the attempt by sections of the landed interest to render the Corn Act of 1774 more rigid was to induce the commercial interests of the west to question its intrinsic justification per se. Glasgow Chamber of Commerce made it clear that in campaigning for a continuation of the existing legislation as "the best that can be", there was "another and more effectual improvement", namely repeal of the Corn Laws and prohibition. In the course of their peroration

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52) Henry Hamilton: "The founding of the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 1783" in the Scottish Journal of Political Economy. 1954. Vol. I (i) p.45.

53) "Scots Magazine". 1786. pp.515-16.

54) Minutes of Aberdeen Town Council, 11/11/1786; Robert Renwick (ed.): op. cit., vol. 8. pp. 205-6, 209.

on this theme, the directors held forth the vision of Britain as an entre-pot for Europe's grain trade, in addition to the strategic (and popular) bonus of making her a "nursery for seamen". Moreover, the translation of such ideals into reality was not to be a long-term aim. The Chamber demanded immediate measures to modify existing restrictions on the grain trade (55) and the creation of juries (as in England) to ascertain prices. To the provisions of the 1774 Act for oatmeal, there was unequivocal hostility. The Chamber concluded that "His Majesty's subjects in this part of the United Kingdom are of right entitled to the same privileges with their fellow-subjects of England; and any part to deprive them of these, by a law particular to Scotland, is inconsistent with our safety, and with the meaning and spirit of the Union, incorporating both nations into one; and is an unjust violation of our rights as men, and as British subjects". A wide range of commercial and manufacturing interests in the west of Scotland concurred and associated themselves with the fears and demands of the Chamber of Commerce and Town Council in Glasgow. (56)

As in the preceding decade, however, the advanced sentiments expressed in Glasgow and its environs were not entirely representative of opinion in other burghs. To some extent, this difference in

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55) In particular, the Chamber wished permission to use the Forth and Clyde Canal for the transit of grain shipments from Glasgow to the east, and in the reverse direction. Also, they wanted vessels arriving with grain at a shut port to be able to proceed immediately to an open one without the formality of re-export-:ation.

56) These included the Glasgow Merchants' House, the Glasgow Trades, the master-manufacturers of Glasgow; the town council, manu-:facturers, and societies of Paisley; the town council and societies of Greenock; Port Glasgow, Saltcoats, Hamilton, Kil-:marnock, and Anderston. (Report of the committee of directors of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce. 1787. pp.13-14.)

emphasis reflected a division of interest due to the mechanism of the corn legislation. Thus Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, formed two years after its western counterpart, wanted Scotland to form one district with ports open and shut at the one time, determined by an average compiled in Edinburgh from quarterly reports by juries in particular counties. Located in Scotland's cereal counties, this proposal would have mitigated the relatively long time which would elapse before the metropolis would be permitted to import grain on the prevailing county average principle. The Edinburgh Chamber's plea was inevitably opposed vigorously in Glasgow.(57)

If the identity of interest among the burghs was destroyed by local considerations, this was equally true of the landed interest. In the process, the geographical division between the arable east and the pastoral west emerged almost as clearly as the cleavage between town and country. The grazing interests of the north and west, led by the Duke of Argyll and the freeholders of his county, the freeholders of Renfrew and Dunbarton, the Earl of Fife, and other landowners in Morayshire and Inverness-shire, supported Glasgow Chamber of Commerce in opposing a Midlothian average for Scotland as calculated to cause dearth in less fertile areas. Alluding to attempts to stimulate industry in the Highlands, notably by legislation of 1753,(58) the county of Argyll argued that it was vain to encourage fisheries and manufactures in the north "if by any alteration of the present Corn Laws, the power of supplying the inhabitants with grain at reasonable prices is to be

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57) ibid., 1787. pp. 15,21,23-30.

58) Henry Hamilton: The Industrial Revolution in Scotland. p.87 and note. The act was 26 Geo. II. c.20.

suspended, till the markets of the grain counties of Scotland are first glutted". The fact that Irish cattle were imported without restriction to compete with Highland cattle discouraged the prospect of sympathy among the pastoralists of the north and west for the cereal-producers of the east.(59) Even the Established Church clergy in the west - a later pillar of protectionism - shared the territorial attitude of the freeholders. Aware of the inadequacy of locally-grown cereal supplies, one of them noted in retrospect the danger implicit in the eastern proposals. Lauding the principles of the legislation from 1774, he observed that its passage was attributable "to the wisdom and humanity of the legislature; as if it had passed in the way in which the gentlemen of the east country would have had it, we should have been compelled, occasionally, to have lived only upon air and water".(60)

In 1787 a compromise suggestion had been advanced that the country should be regulated by district averages, and this principle had been incorporated into legislation for England in 1789.(61) The rumour that its terms would be extended to Scotland rekindled interest among the commercial interests of the west in the Corn Laws, and by January, 1790, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce had published the first of three

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59) The County of Argyll complained that Irish grain imports, the food of the poor, were already too much discouraged, unlike butcher-:meat, the staple of the opulant. (Report of the committee of directors of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce. 1787. pp.15-18.)

60) The Reverend Dr. John Smith of Campbeltown parish observed in 1794 that the quantity of corn raised in the parish fell far short of consumption - 2,500 bolls of meal had to be imported annually - but as a result of the recent Corn Law, oatmeal had not exceeded 1½d. per pound. (Old Statistical Account. Vol. 10. Argyllshire (Parish of Campbeltown), p.550.)

61) The act was 29 Geo. III. c.58.

diatribes on the issue. It reiterated the Chamber's belief in "a perfect freedom of trade", regulated solely by a small protecting duty, with an end to prohibition - a proposal which was attributed to Adam Amith. Long-standing complaints over discrimination against oatmeal and restrictions on the free movement of grain within Britain and Ireland were also given further publicity, but the Chamber's principal concern was over the delineation of the boundaries of the proposed district. They suggested that a suitable region might comprise Lanark, Renfrew, Dunbartonshire, and Argyll, with the possible addition of Ayrshire "to take in all the Firth of Clyde", but excluding the southern counties of the Solway. On 15/3/1790, the directors petitioned the House of Commons in these terms.(62)

Neither the delay in transmitting a petition, nor its eventual timing were fortuitous. It was the Chamber's immediate response to news of the first overt threat to add substance to rumour. On 8/3/1790, Her Majesty's Council for Trade had reported their concern on the need for adequate supplies of grain in view of Britain's growing dependence on imports, and concluded that these should be home-grown.(63) Glasgow Chamber of Commerce interpreted increasing dependence on imports as an indication of growing opulence, concurred in the Council's concern for adequate supplies, but not in the latter's conclusion. It also seized the opportunity to condemn the export bounty as illogical in view of

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62) Second Report of a committee of directors of the Chamber of Com-:merce and Manufactures in Glasgow, relative to the Corn Laws. (January) 1790. pp.4-12.

63) The "Representation" of the Committee of the Privy Council on Trade and Foreign Plantations, on 8/3/1790, paved the way for legislation of 1790-91. (See D.G.Barnes: op. cit., pp.54,61-62,64-65.)

the existing balance of trade in corn, as calculated to enhance prices to the domestic consumer at the expense of Britain's competitive ability.(64)

By 11/5/1790, Glasgow Town Council, spurred by the publication of a corn-bill in the Commons, had also taken up cudgels on behalf of the western mercantile and industrial interests.(65) Like the Chamber of Commerce, Glasgow Town Council considered that the growth of commerce and manufactures to "its present advanced state" rendered importation necessary at all times. The Council unsurprisingly shared the former's demands for an end to prohibition though not all physical controls,(66) but their main concern was with the terms of the proposed legislation, which seemed to be detrimental to Glasgow's interests in at least three major respects. Firstly, the Council disagreed with the concept of a district rather than a county average, but objected especially to the inclusion of Wigtown and Ayrshire in the fourteenth (Glasgow) region insofar as their corn production could keep the average for the entire district low and thus frustrate importation. Secondly, the Council demanded that Glasgow be included as a port for warehousing corn, with the twin advantages of receiving the commodity at a cheaper rate and the business of handling it. Lastly, it demanded that the exportation of certain quantities of grain from Greenock and Port Glasgow to the Isle of Man, Nova Scotia, the Bay of Chaleur, and Labrador should continue

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64) Third Report of the committee of directors of the Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures of Glasgow, relative to the Corn Laws. (April) 1790. pp.8-17, 30-32.

65) Robert Renwick (ed.): op.cit., vol.8.pp.351,356-57.
In late March, 1790, the Town Council had appointed a committee to confer with the Chamber of Commerce on the corn question. By 11/5/1790, the Council petitioned against the bill.

66) In periods of dearth, the Council wanted a cessation of all exports.

unimpeded.[67] The contents of the corn legislation of the late eight-:eenth century with their far-reaching implications for price levels in different localities inevitably orientated discussion towards details rather than underlying principles.

With this consideration to the fore, Glasgow Town Council, having defined their attitude to the bill, proceeded to muster support in opposition to it. The Convention of Royal Burghs were entreated to assist in an application to be heard by counsel at the bar of the House of Commons.[68] Predictably, the Convention responded enthusiastically to the demand from the west for equality with England on the perennial problem of oatmeal.[69] On 31/1/1791, the Convention resolved that in the event of importation of oatmeal to Scotland being governed by the price of meal instead of oats (as in England), such import prices should be fixed at a rate corresponding to the English price,[70] "and that import-:ation be made in every other respect free as in England".[71]

Demands from the Solway that Dumfries-shire and Kirkcudbright should be included in the Glasgow district (below) furnished a more

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67) Report of the committee of the Town Council of Glasgow appointed to consider the Corn-bill. 1791.pp.4,20.
Councillor Gilbert Hamilton, secretary of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce was one of the committee of seven members set up by the Town Council on the Corn Laws.
The proposed fourteenth district would comprise Argyll, Bute, Dunbartonshire, Renfrew, Lanark, Ayrshire, and Wigtown. ("Scots Magazine". 1791.pp.42-43.)

68) Robert Renwick (ed.): op. cit., vol.8. pp.400-2.

69) A. Colquhoun, M.P. to Henry Dundas, London, 3/5/1790, in Melville Papers. Mss 641.

70) The importation price for oats in England was 16/- per quarter.

71) Copy resolution of the Annual Committee of the Royal Burghs of Scotland, relative to the Corn Law bill, 31/1/1791, in Melville Papers. Mss.641.

immediate threat to local Glasgow interests, and was strongly resisted by the commercial classes in the city who feared that the proposed inclusion of Wigtown (and even Ayr) already posed a danger. They feared that these counties would provide on the one hand sufficiently substantial supplies of corn to prevent prices rising to importation levels, and on the other, fairly high prices due to transport costs from these counties to Glasgow.(72) The merchants of Glasgow anticipated that a division of the fourteenth district would be accompanied by two salutory results. Ports would be opened more quickly, enabling them to take advantage of cheap Irish grain (despite transport costs), and the trade would be retained in the hands of Glasgow merchants.(73) A combination of these fears and hopes inspired Glasgow Town Council to dispatch Lord Provost James MacDowall and the Town Clerk of the city to London to endeavour to extract the exclusion of Ayrshire, Wigtown, Dumfries-shire, and Kirkcudbright - especially the last three - from the fourteenth district.(74)

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72) A. McDowall to Viscount Melville, Bristol, 13/2/1791. in ibid., Mss. 641.

73) A. McDowall to Viscount Melville, n.a., 22/3/1791, in ibid. Mss.641. Not all landed proprietors were unequivocally opposed to the case advanced by the Chamber of Commerce in Glasgow. Noting the leading part in whipping up the agitation which that body had taken, I.F. Erskine suggested that Scotland should be split into two districts, comprising low- and high-priced counties respectively. But he hoped that that proposal would not only conciliate the manufacturers of the west, but also obviate the need for a system whereby Glasgow could import grain through Grangemouth and the Forth and Clyde Canal, even though the ports in the east were closed. (I.F.Erskine to Henry Dundas, Tower of Alloa, 18/5/1790. in ibid. Mss.641).

(74) Robert Renwick (ed.): op. cit., vol.8.pp.410-12. The Town Council rejected a request from the Trades'House of the city to invite public participation on the ground that the "constitutional bodies corporate" were using their utmost endeavours anyway - a reflection of the unease of the propertied classes at rousing organised demonstrations on such an emotive issue.

Although the commercial interests in Glasgow and district had taken the lead, as usual, in opposing the corn-bill, dissatisfaction with different aspects of it was also vociferous from sereral parts of the thirteenth (Edinburgh) district. From Dumfries and Kirkcudbright, the commissioners of supply expressed alarm that as predominantly pastoral counties, they would be obliged to defer importation until the grain of the cereal-producing Lothians had been exhausted. Like the consumers in the burghs they complained too of the discrimination against oatmeal, but as small-scale corn producers, their interests were not identical. The county of Dumfries demanded that the export bounty on its small-scale export trade in grain to the Isle of Man should be maintained as it was "of material consequence to this county". In view of the fact that they had no connection "either from vicinity of situation or similarity of circumstance" with the east, they demanded to be included in either the Glasgow district or in a new sixteenth district including Wigtown, and determined to employ counsel on their joint behalf.(75)

The burghs of the east were no more enchanted with the proposed structure and felt their local interests threatened. Under the county system, Edinburgh had been able to import grain when prices in the city and county of Midlothian had reached the prescribed level. The inclusion of several more grain-producing counties where prices in general, and of oats and oatmeal in particular, were lower, would defer importation. This could entail "great distress and very high prices along with perhaps disturbance at Edinburgh" - an alarming thought in view of previous food riots in the city and the shock of the 1780 Gordon riots in London -

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75) Resolutions of the Commissioners of Supply of the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, 1/2/1791; Extract. Minutes of the County of Dumfries, 2/2/1791. Both in Melville Papers. Mss.641.

before the average of the enlarged area would permit the port of Leith to be opened. In contrast, the market price of London governed the importation for nine adjoining counties, and Edinburgh saw no reason why the northern metropolis should not be regulated in a similar manner. Further, a new tax proposed for coastwise corn traffic would penalise both Leith and its consumers.(76) Moreover, the latter did not all reside in Edinburgh. Kirkcaldy demanded to be included as a port for direct importation of foreign grain, instead of being obliged to rely on Leith, observing that there was "an arm of the sea betwixt them and us of so many miles, which in tempestuous weather is ane impassible gulph, when we are like a separate kingdom from them". Inclement weather conditions apart, Kirkcaldy wished to avoid the additional time and expense of re-shipping grain, with its attendant wasteage incurred due to the operations of measuring and reloading, embezzlement, and rot.(77) Underlying, however, the disparate objections of the critics of the corn-bill in both east and west was a unifying theme - all feared high grain prices and wished to facilitate importation of foreign cereals.

A second theme which emerged to an even greater degree than hitherto was the political content of the polemical debate between the protagonists. George Hepburn of Smeaton adhered to the older tradition when he contended dispassionately that Britain's increasing failure to be self-sufficient was attributable less to an exploding population with its effects on consumption, and more to changes in the Corn Laws since

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76) Copy. George Chalmers to the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, 11/5/1790. ibid., Mss.641.

77) Petition of the Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of Kirkcaldy to the Privy Council, 28/12/1790. in ibid., Mss. 641.

1756 which had given insufficient encouragement to cereal production. His temperate argument and language was untypical.(78) More characteristic was Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, who contended that the only stable basis for national prosperity was agricultural success, and that commercial success should be based on (and secondary to) the former. Sinclair wanted "the special protection of the legislature" to induce industry on the part of the farmer as without self-sufficiency in food production, a nation was not truly "independent". Too much attention had been paid to "the interested information of the merchants and to the ignorant clamour of one class of consumers".(79) The principal recipients of Sinclair's invective were no less aware of the far-reaching implications of their aims. Glasgow Chamber of Commerce castigated the proposed corn-bill of 1790 in politico-social terms which fully anticipated those familiar during the following century, contrasting "the importation of oats to feed the sumpter horses of the opulent and luxurious on easier terms than that of meal to supply the necessities of the labouring and manufacturing part of the people".(80) The mid-nineteenth century struggle of industrial society for political and social influence commensurate with its economic power was foreshadowed - albeit on a limited scale - in the last quarter of the preceding century, although this fact was partially obscured by the orientation of the debate on the mechanism of succeeding pieces of legislation.

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78) George B. Hepburn of Smeaton: op. cit., pp.82-83.

79) Sir John Sinclair: Address to the Landed Interest on the Corn-Bill now depending in Parliament. 1791.pp.4,7-10,22-26,40.

80) Third Report of the committee of directors of the Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures of Glasgow,relative to the Corn Laws.pp.10-11.

Complaints from Scotland in the closing years of the eighteenth and early years of the nineteenth centuries perpetuated the same mixture of national and local grievances manifested in 1790-91, and seemed to justify at least some of the fears expressed at the time. In 1793, at the behest of Glasgow Town Council, the Convention of Royal Burghs gave a carte-blanche to their preses, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, to sign any memorial from Glasgow which demanded that the Privy Council would open the Scottish ports. Uniformity in legis-:lation on both sides of the Border had not matched expectations. Due to the high proof price of English wheat, importation of the product into England was permitted, although the Scottish ports were shut.(81) Dissatisfaction existed too when high prices obliged importation in 1795 and 1799.(82) On the latter occasion, Edinburgh found ground for complaint in the scarcity of grain in Scotland which she alleged had been created by exports of grain to England and Ireland. This had produced a dearth and price levels in the Lothians which exceeded the statutory ceiling debarring exportation, but paradoxically in view of the earlier fears of the peripheral areas of the thirteenth district, Edinburgh could not import grain until there was an overall rise in

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81) Robert Renwick (ed): op. cit., vol.8., pp.519-21. Although a quarter of English wheat was more expensive than its average Scottish counterpart, the former produced such a disproportionately greater quantity of flour that it was, in the view of the Scottish commercial interests, intrinsically cheaper.

82) Poor crops in 1799 and 1800 led to a scarcity of provisions. In Paisley, corn dealers and farmers were mobbed, and in Glasgow a public subscription to import oatmeal raised £15,000. (Anonymous: Letter from an Inhabitant of Paisley to his fellow townsmen. 1800.pp.9-10; Memorial for the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of the city of Glasgow. 1803. p.2.)

cereal prices throughout the region.[83] To exacerbate her sense of grievance, Glasgow took advantage of the situation to import wheat through Leith originally intended for the metropolis.[84] The fulfil-:ment of earlier predictions and fears added yet a further chapter to the saga of commercial and industrial frustration with existing restrictions on the grain trade.

More positively, it contributed to the growing consciousness of a distinct enonomic interest which had evolved in the west in the course of the late eighteenth century. By 1804, when a further attempt was made to standardise importation throughout Britain, by taking the aggregate of the maritime districts, thus threatening to terminate the district principle which had proved relatively satis-:factory from the Glasgow viewpoint, the western interests responded with undisguised local self-interest. They pointed out that the counties of Lanark, Renfrew, Dunbartonshire, Argyll, and Bute contained 3-400,000 inhaiitants, and that even with a good harvest, the domestic supply of corn was inadequate, forcing them to rely on imports from Ireland and North America. Moreover, prices of the staple, oatmeal, were allegedly 10-15% higher than the Scottish average (especially the east). Yet a regular supply of corn at a moderate and steady price was indispensible "for the maintenance of internal peace and good order" - a potent argument in view of the recent social convulsion in France. The western commercial interests reiterated their view of

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83) Although the prices in the Lothian markets were high - Edinburgh (58/11d.), Haddington (61/2d.), and Linlithgow (57/4d.) - and all exceeded the requisite importation price level of 54/-, the overall district average was only 53/4d.by 29/5/1799.

84) J. Stirling to Henry Dundas, Edinburgh, 29/5/1799. in Melville Papers. Mss.641.

1791 that "the advanced state at which commerce and manufactures have arrived in this country" demanded the abolition of physical controls except in periods of extreme dearth. They concluded by objecting to the proposal for uniformity, the rates and mode of assessment, and demanded that ports should be open for three months at a time, with a free transmission of grain throughout Britain, including Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom since 1800.(85)

The agitation continued into 1805 with Glasgow's intrinsic interest in the issue increasingly evident. Having appointed a committee to stimulate other public bodies to oppose the proposed corn law, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce proceeded two weeks later to petition through the M.P. for Glasgow, Boyd Alexander, that prices under prohibition had been raised more than was necessary "to secure to the farmer an adequate return for his skill and industry". The directors pontificated further that bounties on exportation and restrictions on importation of grain into any country which was not self-sufficient raised prices "in a greater degree to the consumer than is of advantage to the grower". As important as the Chamber's attempt to promulgate a foundation of economic principle for its assault on the Corn Laws, was its pragmatic response to the Government's amended proposal for separate national averages for Scotland and England. Although this seemed a concession to Glasgow's previous claim for local regulation, the Chamber was aware that an average embracing the whole of England (and not merely the maritime districts) would facilitate earlier

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85) Robert Renwick (ed.): op.cit., vol.9. pp.410-12,419; Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 11/7/1804; 26/12/1804. The Duke of Montrose agreed to present a petition for Glasgow Chamber of Commerce in December, 1804, but made it clear that he did not concur with its contents.

importation. This explained the apparent tergiversation of the Chamber in combatting it with a demand for a British average, together with internal free trade within Britain. The stimulus to the coasting trade was merely one bonus which Glasgow hoped to derive from these suggestions, but they did not stand in isolation. They were accompanied by demands for lower importation price levels, and the opening of ports for six months to permit American imports (86) - a significant advance on previous urban demands. Six months later, the city's Lord Provost had the satisfaction of reporting that the Corn Law ultimately enacted had secured several of the leading objects of the Town Council's previous petitions.(87) The increasing economic sense of separate identity among the mercantile and industrial magnates of the west was confirmed.

The agitation of 1804-5 and its predecessors in the late eighteenth century foreshadowed the events of the following forty years in several respects. In the first place, the changing economic environment which formed the backcloth to the confrontations and moulded their character continued to evolve on the lines established by the close of the eighteenth century. Between 1700 and 1800, the population of Scotland increased by an estimated 560,420, but in the first half of the nine-:teenth century, this figure was dwarfed by a further 1,280,322.(88) Equally important, the distribution continued to concentrate the increase almost exclusively in those areas in which the textile industries, especially cotton, flourished. For the corn question, the fact of this accelerating increase was of vital importance if only because it

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86) Robert Renwick (ed.): op. cit., vol.9.p.443; Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 22/1/1805.

87) Robert Renwick (ed.): op. cit., vol.9.pp.461-62.

88) D.F.MacDonald: Scotland's Shifting Population, 1770-1850.p.5.

represented a corresponding increase in the number of consumers. The commercial interests had already had occasion in the course of the eighteenth century struggles to draw attention to this fact, especially in the west of Scotland, and had extracted from it the apparently obvious conclusion that they could (and should) be supplied from external sources - as increasingly had taken place. In turn, the agriculturists had drawn from their viewpoint the equally legitimate conclusion that by fiscal protection marginal soils could yield domestic supplies to meet this demand. The continuation of the demographic trends of 1780-1800 into the following century added a new sense of urgency to the urban case.

Moreover, the growth in economic importance of the commercial and manufacturing interests which the population figures in part reflected, produced fear as well as self-confidence on the part of the emergent industrial communities. Even by the close of the eighteenth century, manufacturers were afraid that Britain's new role as the workshop of the world might be short-lived. Her hegemony over other nations was attributable to "our abundance of fuel, great skill of our artisans, our superior machinery, and great capital" but not "cheapness of living", and if any other country "should come anything near us in other respects, the low price which they pay for food, and the cheapness of labour, would soon turn the balance against us, and drive us out of the market".(89) The equation of the price of provisions with labour costs had been made repeatedly in the eighteenth century, but as other countries, notably Prussia, Belgium, France, and the United States of America fostered nascent industries under the umbrella of protective tariffs, the

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89) Anonymous: Observations on the Corn Laws. 1805. pp.15-16.

manufacturing and commercial interests of Britain turned with increasing urgency to free trade in self-defence, as the only apparent means of preserving Britain's industrial monopoly.

In one significant respect, the eighteenth century agitations differed from those of the following forty years - they were, or appeared to be, more self-consciously Scottish. Three principal factors served to contribute to this characteristic. In the first place, the legis-:lation governing Scotland until 1774 was largely framed by the pre-Union Scots Parliament, and its application was thus restricted geo-:graphically to north of the Border. Secondly, the British Parliament, when it ultimately did legislate for Scotland, insisted on apparently discriminatory legislation, especially in the case of oatmeal, which in Scottish eyes was readily equated with the subservience of peculiar Scottish interests and a negation of Scottish rights under the articles of Union. Finally, the principal vehicle of agitation on behalf of the burghal interest collectively was the peculiarly Scottish institution, the Convention of Royal Burghs.

Even in the eighteenth century, however, the Scottish content of the agitations was more apparent than real. Towards the close of the century, the debate over the details of successive pieces of embryonic legislation increasingly failed to mask the trend of the commercial interests of the west to question its intrinsic justification in the light of an exploding population and the gospel of Adam Smith. Clearly too, the agitations even in the eighteenth century were primarily moti-:vated by local considerations - especially the alleged effects of the Corn Laws on the economic well-being of manufactures and trade - although

the mechanism of the legislation in dispute tended to orientate the polemical debate from principles to details. The following half-century diminished the Scottish character of the debate. As the legislation governing Britain became standardised and national, as the demand for outright free trade came to the fore, and as the anti-corn-law movement became a platform for a variety of economic, social, and political radicals, the apparent (almost superficial) Scottish con-:text was submerged. This outcome was both aided and reflected by the evolution of a British anti-corn-law movement (assisted by a multiplicity of background factors including better communications) culminating in the Anti-Corn-Law League. The movement continued to be conducted in a different economic, social, political, and religious environment north of the Border - and this was reflected in attitudes to the debate and the composition of the contesting interest groups - but in this context, the local rather than the Scottish environment was the crucial factor. It was the rise of an industrial society and its challenge to the existing order which really originated the debate.

Moreover, the new towns of the Industrial Revolution, as has been pointed out, were not "insensate" ant-heaps.(90) They were not merely a forum for the conception of new economic, social, and political orders, but also facilitated the evolution of pressure groups and extraparlia-:mentary organisations to translate new dawns into reality. The formation of Chambers of Commerce in Glasgow and Edinburgh in the 1780's were a manifestation of a growing sense of separate economic interests in terms of general commercial policy. In the absence of a mass electorate, and the domination of the politics of interest

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90) Asa Briggs: The Age of Improvement. p.46.

(rather than the politics of ideology), they and other established corporate bodies individually and collectively represented the interested public insofar as it seemed safe or expedient to represent it. Other sections of the "public" unrepresented in these middle-class bodies also made their views on the corn-bills known through more traditional channels of protest, riots. Together these media of expression voiced the opinions of the two principal interest groups involved in the eighteenth century corn law agitations - the commercial/manufacturing interest and consumers.

Concurrently, however, with the corn law agitations, the eighteenth century had witnessed the rise of other extraparliamentary organisations, such as the Yorkshire Association, the Society for Constitutional Information, and the Scottish Convention movement of the 1780's, which had gradually developed techniques of agitation, political education, and pressure on Parliament on constitutional and political issues.(91) A growing debate had evolved too in the eighteenth century on the functions of a Member of Parliament and his accountability to his constituents. These developments were substantially divorced from the anti-corn-law agitations of the eighteenth century, although the underlying social and political implications of the claims of the growing urban communities were increasingly evident by the last quarter of the century. In the first half of the following century, however, the movements drew together and partially overlapped. The new economic interest which had fought the Corn Laws, frustrated in repeated attempts to secure commercial policies

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91) See Eugene C. Black: The Association; British Extraparliamentary Organisation, 1769-93.

based on free trade principles, turned to parliamentary reform as a means of promoting its own ideals. In turn, the political radicals (and other diverse interest groups) embraced free trade finding in it a collective platform from which they could launch a unified assault on the existing political and social order, as well as anachronistic commercial principles and policies. Free Trade became decreasingly a purely commercial question.

The increasing complexity of attitudes and interests rendered established corporate bodies, including chambers of commerce with their restricted aims and composition, insufficiently representative to function as effective vehicles of agitation. New associations which would include all those who subscribed to repeal of the Corn Laws, and exclude all those who did not - and the latter included more conservative commercial and industrial interests after Tooke's petition of 1820 - were essential. Their functions too were wider. They were required to borrow from the techniques of the eighteenth century extraparlia-:mentary organisations for parliamentary reform, and develop these in the context of the opportunities created by an enlarged (though not mass) electorate from 1832, increasingly conscious of the politics of ideology. Previous agitations had tended to be pragmatic responses to either parliamentary legislation in embryo or to dearths, but after 1832 an attempt was made to place the extraparliamentary agitation on a footing where it would operate continuously, independent of either proceedings in Parliament or fluctuations in the economic cycle.

In the evolution of these new aims and techniques of political association, which found its fullest and most successful expression in the Anti-Corn-Law-League, Scotland made an important - though not

primarily a self-consciously Scottish - contribution. It is an over-
:simplification to suggest that the League was "made" in Manchester.(92)
Undoubtedly, the leadership of Cottonopolis was important, but north of the Border, it was grafted on to an existing anti-corn-law movement. Moreover, the latter had its roots in the earlier, if less successful, campaigns of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The free trade tradition in Scotland was not born in 1839.

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92) Asa Briggs: Victorian Cities. p.97.

2. The Corn Law of 1815 and post-war Scottish-radicalism, 1813-19.

By 1813 the comparative boom in agriculture which had accompanied the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars was in danger of coming to a close. The renewal of imports of grain from Europe, together with an abundant domestic harvest (following years of dearth) combined to threaten the high price and rent levels which had pertained prior to 1813.(1) The danger to the economic prosperity of the landed interest, particularly marginal famers who had converted pastoral land to arable use in anticipation of continuing high prices, was acute. As their fears grew, enthusiasm for increased protection waxed, securing the formation of a Select Committee on the Corn Trade in 1813. The con-:frontation which ensued, prior to the presentation of the Committee's report and lasting two years, served to confirm the trends which were already apparent in the late eighteenth century, but more emphatically. There was a clear-cut division of economic interest between the cereal-producing landed interest and the commercial and consumer interests of the rapidly-growing urban communities. What was novel about the struggle of 1813-15, however, was the aggregate strength of the urban backlash and the pronounced political motivation of its participants, especially in the closing stages.

Resistance from the urban communities to the possibility of increased grain prices was immediate, and not surprisingly, the initia-:tive was taken by Glasgow. Before the report of the Select Committee had been presented to Parliament, the town council of the city had determined to petition against any increase in the importation price level of grain.(2) Special committees on the Corn Laws were created by

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1) D.G. Barnes: op.cit. Chapter 7.

2) Minutes of Glasgow Town Council, 24/5/1813.

the council in 1813 and 1814, which urged the city to employ all con-:stitutional and legal means to oppose any such enactment. Thereafter, annual petitions were presented against successive parliamentary pro-:posals for increased grain prices.(3) From other municipal corporations, such as Edinburgh, Dundee, Perth, and Inverness, similar sentiments were expressed.(4) Collectively, the Scottish burghs contested the pro-:posals through the traditional medium of the Convention of Royal Burghs. This followed the successful motion of the commissioner for Glasgow that the Annual Committee be awarded conventional powers to "use all constitutional means for preventing the adoption of any excess-:sive rise injurious to the nation at large, as well as to the commer-:cial and manufacturing interests of the country".(5)

Behind the universal protest of the official voice of burgh opinion lay an unprecedented degree of co-ordinated agitation, fre-:quently instigated by unofficial pressure groups. In Edinburgh and Glasgow, the nuclei of manufacturing and commercial interests represen-:ted in their respective chambers of commerce poured forth repeated petitions against the various corn-bills of 1813-15.(6) Moreover, in response to the example of Stirling Guildry which in March, 1814, had

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3) ibid., 3/6/1813; 24/2/1814; 5/5/1814; 24/2/1813.

4) "Glasgow Chronicle", 10/3/1814; "Dundee Advertiser", 4/3/1814; 18/3/1814; 24/3/1815; Minutes of Edinburgh Town Council, 20/4/1814; 15/3/1815; Minutes of Dundee Town Council, 7/5/1814; 13/3/1815; Minutes of Inverness Town Council, 14/6/1813; 7/3/1814; W. Creech to Viscount Melville, Edinburgh, 26/5/1813. in Melville Castle Muniments. GD.51/5/298.

5) Minutes of the Convention of Royal Burghs. 15/7/1813; 21/1/1814.

6) "Dundee Advertiser", 4/3/1814; David Steuart to Viscount Melville, Edinburgh, 18/4/1814. in Melville Castle Muniments. GD.51/1/458.; Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 3/6/1813; 15/4/1814; 15/2/1815.

formed a corresponding committee to communicate with the chambers of commerce on the corn question,(7) the Glasgow body followed suit. It formed its own committee to correspond with other parts of the country "taking an interest in the question".(8) Together with similar initia-:tives by the town councils of Glasgow and Edinburgh, the activities of the Glasgow Chamber's corresponding committee had a salutory effect in gingering up more lethargic municipal corporations, such as Perth and Inverness, to add their voices to the urban chorus.(9)

Among other more representative bodies of urban middle-class opinion, the trades incorporations were conspicuous as a vehicle of protest, from communities as diverse geographically and socially as Glasgow, Aberdeen, Kirkwall, and Crail.(10) Even in predominantly agrarian areas, their demonstrations indicated that small pockets of trading or consumer interests shared in the consensus view of the larger urban centres. Furthermore, they too achieved a degree of combination which foreshadowed later developments. This was particularly true in Edinburgh, where the incorporations of the metropolis, Leith, Canongate, Calton, Easter and Wester Portsburgh established an aggregate committee on 7/4/1814 under James Innes,

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7) The Stirling Guildry Book. p.189.

8) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 15/4/1814.

9) Minutes of Perth Town Council, 2/5/1814; Minutes of Inverness Town Council, 14/6/1813; 7/3/1814.

10) Report by the committees appointed by different incorporations of Edinburgh, etc., to attend to the progress of the corn-law-bill now pending in Parliament. in "A collection of newspaper cuttings, pamphlets, etc., 1792-1847".; "Glasgow Chronicle", 3/5/1814; 21/5/1814.

The incorporations also included those of Ayr, Banff, Brechin, Dumfries, Dunfermline, Dysart, Elgin, Haddington, Hamilton, Irvine, Jedburgh, Kelso, Kirkcaldy, Kirkcudbright, Linlithgow, Montrose, Musselburgh, Nairn, Paisley, Peebles, Sanquar, St. Andrews and Stirling.

a former Convener of Trades.[11] This body proceeded to consider the corn question in depth, published "Observations" on the ministerial proposals, and co-ordinated petitioning activity by the constituent incorporations. With increased ambition, it formed a corresponding sub-committee, transmitted copies of its broadsheet to the royal burghs of Scotland as well as some of the principal manufacturing towns in England, and levied a subscription on the local trades to defray the expense of its agitation. Moreover, its communications were reciprocal. It received a request from the Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen to share the expense of retaining counsel in London to plead their case at the bar of the House of Commons, declining it only in view of the fact that several M.P.'s had taken up the question on behalf of the manufacturing interest.[12]

However, the petitioning movement of 1813-15 owed as much to spontaneity as to organisation, and the participants were not drawn from the limited confines of merely the middle-classes. Working-class sympathy with the protest was evident in the petitions of friendly societies,[13] and on a wider scale was expressed in mass petitions emanating from open meetings. In 1814 and 1815, Lord Archibald

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11) The secretary of the aggregate committee was a lawyer, William Gardner, W.S.

12) Report by the committees appointed by different incorporations of Edinburgh, etc., to attend to the progress of the corn-law-bill now pending in Parliament; Also, "Observations made by the sub-committee on the corn-law bill, on the 12th., April, 1814". Both in "A collection of newspaper cuttings, pamphlets, etc., 1792-1847".

13) "Glasgow Chronicle", 7/5/1814; 10/5/1814.

In Ayr, the friendly societies held a general meeting on 3/5/1814 to petition against the corn bill, while in Hamilton, they combined with the town council in a joint application.

Hamilton, M.P. for Lanarkshire, received petitions from Glasgow with over 18,000 signatures. On the latter occasion, these had been allegedly collected in less than four days after a public meeting chaired by the Lord Provost. Resulting from middle-class willingness to participate, unlike previous occasions, in a popular movement against the corn-bills, mass petitions proportionately as numerous emanated from a multiplicity of communities in the cotton and linen regions.(14) The appearance of malpractices, including intimidation, to secure signatures in isolated cases(15) did not detract from the popular character of the movement. Rather it reflected the scale of the activity, and the unfamiliarity of many of the participants with the correct procedure of petitioning. Not all were as fortunate as the Incorporated Trades of Rutherglen who were advised on the "regulation of their conduct" by Lord Archibald Hamilton,(16) and the Incorporated Tailors of Edinburgh were not alone in being unsure of the "proper channel of communication" for such a form of expression.(17) A group of knowledgeable petitioners in Glasgow, having received "frequent applications respecting the mode of conducting a petition to Parliament", attempted to resolve the dilemma by publishing a set of instructions. The necessity for this action reflected the foundation of truth in their contention that "the annals of our country do not record an

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14) ibid., 14/5/1814; "Dundee Advertiser", 10/3/1815.
Other mass petitions included Dundee (8-9,000); Perth (4,000); Hamilton (1,400); Pollokshaws (1,500); and Lanark (1,600). ("Glasgow Chronicle", 4/6/1814; "Dundee Advertiser", 10/6/1814; 17/3/1815.)

15) e.g. in Dundee and Forfar. ("Dundee Advertiser", 17/3/1815).

16) "Glasgow Chronicle", 21/6/1814.

17) W.R. Denison to Viscount Melville, Edinburgh, 20/3/1815. in H.O.(Scot.)Corr. R.H. 2/4/106.

instance wherein there was a more general and unequivocal expression of the public voice against any measure".(18) When the "Glasgow Chronicle" reported in March, 1815, allegations which had been made in England after riots in London that the corn-bill question was one which the lower classes could not understand, it felt obliged to concede that this assertion "may apply to the English". But triumphantly, the liberal organ concluded that it was certainly not true of the working-classes in Scotland "whose judicious resolutions, always we believe, composed by themselves, prove that they are at least as conversant with the subject as the higher classes".(19)

The "Chronicle's" complacency was premature. In March and April, 1815, working-class dissent in Scotland too found expression in unconstitutional action. In Glasgow, a mob stoned Kirkman Finlay's house in anger at his volte-face on the corn-bill,(20) forcing the Government to send six troops of dragoons from Hamilton to contain the situation. In view of the small size of the military establishment in Scotland, the eruption alarmed the authorities north of the Border.(21) In Edinburgh, the local militia took precautionary measures to anticipate "any unpleasant circumstances" which might accrue from "matters connected with a subject now or lately under public discussion".(22)

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18) Resolutions passed at a public meeting of the inhabitants of the city of Glasgow, 12/4/1815; Corn Laws: petition for repeal, 12/4/1815. Both in ibid.

19) "Glasgow Chronicle", 7/3/1815.

20) James Gourlay (ed.): The provosts of Glasgow from 1609 to 1832. pp.118-9.

21) Alexander Colquhoun to Viscount Sidmouth, Edinburgh, 31/3/1815. in H.O.(Scot.)Corr. R.H. 2/4/106.

22) Major Lewis Gordon to Viscount Sidmouth, Edinburgh, 25/3/1815. in ibid.

These steps were timely, as a minor disturbance broke out in the metro-:polis a few days later in which the Lord Provost's windows were, as in Glasgow, the prime target. Its revolutionary overtones were readily confirmed in the eyes of the panicky authorities when "inflammatory hand-bills" on the repeal of the corn-bill were found on one of the culprits.(23) In Perth, "a discontented spirit among the labouring classes, particularly the weavers" led to serious and recurring dis-:turbances,(24) culminating in the stoning of a magistrate, while in Clackmannanshire and neighbouring Stirlingshire, colliers, miners, and manufacturers furnished a nucleus for similar protests against the corn-bill.(25)

The riots were widespread, but would have been on a wider scale if some of the Government's adherents in Scotland had not acquiesced in the constitutional mode of petitioning, in order to avert the threat of disturbances which would have followed any attempt to frustrate legitimate self-expression.(26) Nevertheless, the alarm of both the

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23) Alexander Colquhoun to Viscount Sidmouth, Edinburgh, 31/3/1815. in ibid.

24) Robert Ross to the Duke of Athole, Perth, 21/4/1815. in ibid.

25) D. Boyle to the Lord Advocate, Edinburgh, 1/5/1815. in ibid.
Lord Justice Clerk Boyle reported that the local magistrates had detected "indications of a seditious tendency and approaching to a contempt of the authority of the law amongst the people of that county and neighbourhood".

26) One of those thus embarrased was Provost Wilson of Dunfermline, a loyal adherent of the Ministry. He felt obliged to apologise to Viscount Melville for having to transmit a petition to him on 16/5/1814, on behalf of the inhabitants of the burgh, as the signatories were "ill-informed and inadequate to judge" the issue. But he enclosed it "chiefly to prevent the clamour that probably would be the consequence of my refusing to comply with their request; and which might tend to injure the interest of the Government in this burgh - which I am most anxious to preserve". (G. Wilson to Viscount Melville, Dunfermline, 16/5/1814. in Melville Castle Muniments. GD.51/5/304.)

authorities and the urban middle-classes, who remembered the social convulsion in France or the militia riots of 1797 at home, was acute. Lord Justice Clerk Boyle perambulated the industrial areas reporting sedition and urging the formation of volunteer corps "of the better classes of the inhabitants" to counteract the working-class agitation and protect property.(27) Boyle shared the general concern at the inadequacy of the existing military forces in Scotland, but by 8/5/1815, Viscount Sidmouth had made it clear that these would not be augmented, and that responsibility for order would devolve on the yeomanry.(28) This gave little comfort to those who detected a "revolutionary" situa-:tion in reports that the rioters in Perth, Forfarshire, and Clackmannan were receiving instructions from Glasgow or another centre. Invariably, the authority for such imputations was mere rumour,(29) and they did not survive the cessation of rioting in early May, 1815. The anti-corn-bill demonstrations of 1813-15 were a multiplicity of local responses rather than one national movement, and if they differed from those of the preceding century, this lay less in the groping attempts at co-ordination which were made, and more in the scale and intensity of the urban protest.

In another respect too, the anti-corn-bill agitation of 1813-15 reflected a degree of continuity with those of the eighteenth century. Most of the later petitions and resolutions paraphrased the original plea of Glasgow Town Council on 24/5/1813 that "no advance might be

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27) D. Boyle to the Lord Advocate, Edinburgh, 1/5/1815. in H.O. (Scot.) Corr. R.H. 2/4/106.

28) Viscount Sidmouth to Lt. General Sir William Gordon, London, 8/5/1815. in ibid.

29) Robert Ross to the Duke of Athole, Perth, 21/4/1815; and, D. Boyle to the Lord Advocate, Edinburgh, 1/5/1815. Both in ibid.

made in the prices at which the importation of the different sorts of grain might take place".(30) This implied, though infrequently stated, a recognition of the right of agriculture to its existing level of protection in 1813. The concept of outright free trade in grain was postulated by some of the more radical elements in the agitation,(31) but it was conspicuously absent from the demands of the middle-class corporate bodies. The Incorporated Trades of Edinburgh were fairly typical when they conceded that agriculture was "beyond doubt, the first and most necessary of all the arts, and as such, entitled to the protection of the legislature", confining their criticism to "so great an extension of the import price of corn". In the event, and equally typically,(32) they favoured no extension.

By 1815, when the proposals of the original Select Committee had been drastically modified, the previous unanimity of the urban middle-class demands became dissipated. Conservative members of the urban communities were prepared, like Kirkman Finlay, to accept an increased measure of protection which would "secure perfectly, and beyond all doubt, our own agriculture from the effects of foreign importation in ordinary seasons, without being such as to augment to the consumer the unavoidable distress of unfavourable ones". With more than a

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30) Robert Renwick (ed.): op.cit. vol. 10. pp.178-9.

31) The inhabitants of Greenock argued that "from the bulky nature of its products", agriculture always enjoyed a natural protection through the cost of transportation. The inhabitants of Kilwinning were "not sufficiently acquainted with the political economy of nations to decide whether the corn laws should not be repealed in toto". ("Glasgow Chronicle", 12/5/1814).

32) Observations made by the sub-committee on the corn-law-bill on the 12th., April, 1814. in "A collection of newspaper cuttings, pamphlets, etc., 1792-1847".

particle of truth, he pointed out that no-one denied in petitions that the home grower required protection, to aid him against the disadvantages of heavy taxation, an inferior soil, and an uncertain climate, and that the debate centred on the required level.(33) However, even in the conservative Edinburgh Merchant Company, the adherents of Finlay's view were repulsed by "a very great majority" when they proposed increased agrarian protection to render Britain self-sufficient and to yield "that fair encouragement to the farmer for his capital and industry to which he was justly entitled".(34) The proposals by many middle-class corporations by 1815 for a level of protection in advance of existing levels were less a recognition of the intrinsic justice of the agriculturists' case, and more an appreciation of political reality. They represented an attempt to modify a measure which was obviously destined to be enacted, and many were qualified by the recommendation that any additional protection should be temporary.(35) Not even Finlay and the conservative minority advocated the level of protection eventually secured by the landed interest in 1815.

The polemical arguments of the urban interests reflected con-:tradictory attitudes towards the case for increased agrarian protection. The substantial measure of self-sufficiency and high

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33) Finlay believed that an import price level of 75-6/- per quarter for wheat would suffice to achieve his objective. On his own admission, his conviction that increased protection was required evolved during 1814-15 - during the depression in the price of grain. (Minutes of Glasgow Town Council, 25/3/1815.)

34) Minutes of the Edinburgh Merchant Company, 13/3/1815.

35) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 25/2/1815; Minutes of Glasgow Town Council, 24/2/1815; Minutes of Perth Town Council, 6/3/1815.

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prices reached in war-time conditions were readily cited as proof that no further protection was required.(36) The impact of peace-time conditions and the cessation of bad harvests on future price trends were conveniently overlooked. The Deacons of the Incorporated Trades of Dumbarton were more honest (if less politic) when they admitted that they had been prepared to accept high prices in war-time as a necessary evil, even although it had brought prosperity to the occupier of land, but that it was a "maxim of political economy"(37) that the price of provisions should find their own level. The possible repeal of the property tax on landed estate and the pace of agricultural improvements seemed calculated in urban eyes to provide adequate compensation for any loss sustained through lower price levels.(38) If additional redress was required, economical reform, a cut-back in public expenditure and therefore taxation, through dis-:banding the army and purifying the pension-list, were more palatable measures than tightening-up the Corn Laws.(39)

If the urban interests rejected the concept of increased agrarian protection as intrinsically justifiable for the prosperity of agri-:culture, they equally rejected the presentation of its case on national considerations. Both Glasgow Town Council and Glasgow

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36) Minutes of Edinburgh Merchant Company, 1/7/1813; Observations made by the sub-committee on the corn-law-bill on the 12th., April, 1814. in "A collection of newspaper cuttings, pamphlets, etc. 1792-1847".

37) The Dumbarton deacons asserted that "all the other produce of land sells at a rate so high as that many articles are yet placed beyond the acquisition of the lower classes". (Petition of the Incorporated Trades of the Royal Burgh of Dumbarton on the Corn-Laws, 10/3/1815. in H.O.(Scot.)Corr. R.H. 2/4/106.

38) ibid.; Also, The Stirling Guildry Book. p.190.

39) "Dundee Advertiser", 24/2/1815.

Chamber of Commerce rejected the plea of the Select Committee for self-sufficiency as inconsistent. The latter summed up the manu-:facturing and commercial attitude, observing that "the results upon which the Select Committee found their plea for altering the corn laws are at variance with each other, and the reverse of what this Chamber conceive ought to be drawn from the circumstances from which they are drawn".(40) Britain's increasing dependence on foreign grain was due, in urban eyes, not to agrarian decay, but to increasing consumption resulting from commercial and industrial success.(41) In the opinion of the urban middle-classes, Britain could never regain her former self-sufficiency, and the claims of the landed interest merely appeared self-interested.(42) Even if such a policy did bear fruit, as a result of increased protection, it would be "at an unnecessary expense to the great body of the nation".(43)

The motivation of the urban middle-classes was no more disin-:terested than that of the agriculturists. They assumed that wages rates were governed by the cost of provisions, anticipating a multiplier effect on prices which would render British exports of manufactured articles uncompetitive, and produce a flight of

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40) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 25/5/1815; 3/6/1813.

41) The Council's committee argued that "the excess of imports since 1765 has arisen, not from the decay of agriculture in consequence of the absence of restriction on impor-:tation, but from the increased consumption, of which the great prosperity of trade and manufactures affords the means and which it naturally induces". (Minutes of Glasgow Town Council, 3/6/1813).

42) "Glasgow Chronicle", 30/4/1814.

43) Minutes of Edinburgh Town Council, 20/4/1814.

manufactures and capital abroad.[44] Such attitudes were not novel, but the genesis of industrialisation in continental Europe, evident by 1813-15, rendered them more acute. In particular, the cotton industry of the west of Scotland, which since the close of the eighteenth century had been the premier industry of the country after agriculture felt threatened by the possibility of increased labour costs in the face of potential competition from France or other continental states.[45]

The fear of the working-class agitators, and consequently the violence of their reaction, was more acute. The dearth of 1813 was only the most recent reminder that Britain's population had out-:stripped its domestic food supplies, as the Edinburgh Trades correctly perceived.[46] The spectre of Malthus was a cogent threat. Moreover, even the prospect of high cereal prices could scarcely be greeted with equanimity. The corn-bill of 1815 was readily seen by working-class radicals as peculiarly oppressive to those at sub-:sistence level who would be denied "a participation in the Bounty of Heaven". Moreover, insofar as increased food prices would inevi-:tably lead to retrenchment in other spheres of individual expenditure, including education, its effects could be far-reaching. Not only did

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44) ibid., 20/4/1814; Observations made by the sub-committee on the corn-law-bill on the 12th., April, 1814. in "A collection of newspaper cuttings, pamphlets etc., 1792-1847.

45) Minutes of Glasgow Town Council, 5/5/1814.

46) In the space of ten years, Britain's population had risen by 1,611,882. (Observations made by the sub-committee on the Corn-Law-Bill, on the 12th., April, 1814. in "A collection of newspaper cuttings, pamphlets etc. 1792-1847".

it prejudice the peculiarly Scottish social value attached to working-class education,[47] but it could be productive of social disorder.

However, neither the working-class nor middle-class agitators were motivated purely by economic hopes and fears. The political content of the dialogue, so apparent even in the previous century, emerged more prominently in 1813-15. The attempt by the landed interest to secure a continuation of the high level of war-time prices was inevitably interpreted by the manufacturing and commercial interests as calculated "to put money into the pockets of the landholders at the expense of the other classes of the community". Even the farmer, it was anticipated, would benefit only temporarily from increased prices, as any increase in his income would be absorbed on the renewal of his lease by rent increases.[48] The protectionist plea for self-sufficiency for national strategic reasons met with little sympathy, and the per-:sistence of the landed interest in Parliament heightened the ground of suspicion that its supporters had "other and less patriotic ends in view".[49] Moreover, to a variety of urban interests increasingly ready to identify themselves with the nation as a whole, and the progress of

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47) Resolutions passed at a public meeting of the inhabitants of the City of Glasgow, 12/4/1815. in H.O.(Scot.)Corr. R.H. 2/4/106.

48) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 15/4/1814; Minutes of Glasgow Town Council, 24/5/1813; David Steuart to Viscount Melville, Edinburgh, 18/4/1814, in Melville Castle muniments. GD. 51/5/458.

49) "Glasgow Chronicle", 30/4/1814.

industry and commerce with the march of civilisation,[50] the concept of preferential treatment for the landed interest seemed anachronistic as well as inequitable.

The overall political motivation of the urban agitation was obvious to apologists of the landed interest. In particular, the landholders seemed "to be the great object of clamour, and they are held up as an avaricious set of beings, whose chief aim is to prey upon the necessities of the unfortunate manufacturer".[51] All agricul-:tural protectionists subscribed to the comforting verdict that the middle-class bodies of the towns had not considered the question from "a great national point of view", but merely as a piece of class legis-:lation with which they had charged the landed interest with a desire to oppress the poor".[52] Dubiety existed only on one point, the principal source of the urban agitation. Hepburn of Smeaton blamed the "sus-:picious jealousy" of the manufacturing interest, and questioned the consistency of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce's alleged demand for free trade in corn, in view of the high level of manufacturing protection.[53]

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50) The Incorporated Trades in Edinburgh reflected that "when Britain was a country of shepherds and warriors, we beheld her incon-:siderable in numbers or power, but when manufacturers found their way into the country, when the spirit of commerce actuated all, we have seen Britain rise to a pinnacle of grandeur and power unexampled in the annals of the world . . . Our manufacturing industry, and our mercantile enterprise have alone enabled our Government to make such Herculean efforts for the salvation of Europe". (Observations made by the sub-committee on the corn-law-bill on the 12th., April, 1814. in "A collection of newspaper cuttings, pamphlets, etc. 1792-1847".

51) John Campbell of Carbrook: A Letter on the proposed alteration of the Corn Laws addressed to Sir Henry Parnell, Bart. p.8.

52) N. Lowis: A Letter in defence of the claim for an increase on the import duty of grain. p.4.

53) The Speech of the Hon. Mr. Baron Hepburn of Smeaton on the subject of the Corn Laws. pp. 52-3, 56-7.

On the other hand, John Campbell of Carbrook, another agricultural spokesman, exonerated the "well-informed" manufacturers from leading the agitation, and laid responsibility at the door of the consumer interest represented by the tradesmen.(54)

There was an element of truth in Campbell's observation, insofar as the corn-bills of 1813-15 appeared to working-class opinion in Scotland peculiarly partial. Class legislation in the interests of the landed interest, to maintain prices, was contrasted with the rejection of the operative's demand for legislative protection to secure minimum wage rates in 1811-13 - an agitation in which Scotland had been in the forefront.(55) From stricken weaving communities, such as Strathaven and Paisley, petitions contrasted the readiness with which the landed interest in Parliament were prepared to legislate in their own interest, with the obloquy attached to the operatives' com-:parable attempts to fix a minimum price for their produce, their labour. Their conclusion was that "one class of the community ought never to be upheld and enriched at the expense and misery of any other

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54) John Campbell of Carbrook: op. cit., pp.39-40

55) Alexander B. Richmond: Narrative of the condition of the manu-:facturing population and the proceedings of government which led to the state trials in Scotland. pp. 12-15, 29, 33, 38-9.

classes belonging to the same community".(56) As Alexander Richmond, the lynch-pin of Kirkman Finlay's spy-ring observed, it was this contrast which stimulated a demand for parliamentary reform after the corn-bill was passed in 1815.

Until then, the question of parliamentary reform had been scrupulously omitted from resolutions and petitions, but the passage of the corn-bill in 1815 inevitably prompted some to enquire whether the lower chamber was truly representative of the popular will. By April, 1815, this was the dominant theme in some meetings in the west of Scotland. A public meeting in Glasgow on 12/4/1815 concluded that the passage of the corn-bill indicated that "the representation of the people in Parliament is radically defective". It pointed out the existence of pocket boroughs and the lack of representation for "great and populous towns", attributing a multitude of sins from the corn laws to the wars in which the country was perpetually involved - "and the intolerable load of taxes wherewith we are consequently burdened" -

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56) "Glasgow Chronicle", 3/5/1814; 12/5/1814; 31/5/1814.
A political songwriter of 1814 contrasted class legislation to enrich the landed interest with the refusal of Parliament to legislate for wages in 1811:-

"It is not many years since petitions were sent,
from all kinds of tradesmen, their wages to stent,
So that they might live by the sweat of their brow;
But these you rejected, and why not this too?

"But because ye're determin'd the poor to suppress,
And the wealth of the Landholder still to increase,
Such partial proceedings I ne'er knew before,
I pray you desist from what all does abhor".

(Anonymous: The Corn Laws, a new song. pp.3-4)

to the "overwhelming preponderance of a selfish aristocratical obligarchy".[57] In Strathaven, a working-class demonstration on 27/4/1814 asserted that the evidence taken before the Select Committee of 1813 had been "partial and interested", and that the landed interest in Parliament had acted as "a court composed of judge or jurors on their own case". The "obstinate precipitancy" of the measure had illustrated that "the higher orders in society consider the lower as merely subservient to their purposes" in war and peace. The disregard of the people's petitions indicated that "the protection of the people's rights and liberties by the House of Commons is a mere delusion, existing only in the dead letter of the constitution". A "thorough reform" of Parliament was essential if the petitions of the people were to be "candidly and conscientiously attended to". The chairman of the Strathaven meeting was a weaver, James "Perly" Wilson,[58] executed for his role in the "Radical War" in 1820. The roots of post-war Scottish radicalism were nurtured in the corn-bill crisis of 1813-15. The demand for parliamentary reform emerged from a feeling that an undefined balance of interests was not being safeguarded by the legislature, and from the apparent total inability of the urban interests in general, and of the lower echelons of society in particular, to influence parliamentary events.

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57) Resolutions passed at a public meeting of the inhabitants of the City of Glasgow, 12/4/1815. in H.O.(Scot.)Corr. R.H. 2/4/106.

Subsequently printed as a handbill, a copy of these resolutions was forwarded by Lord Provost Robert Ross of Perth through the Duke of Athole to Sidmouth, as evidence of organised sedition. (Duke of Athole to Viscount Sidmouth, Perth, 21/4/1815. in ibid.)

58) "Glasgow Chronicle", 3/4/1840; "Glasgow Argus", 17/6/1841.

This meeting was erroneously dated in 1819 by Alexander Wilson: "The Chartist Movement in Scotland." p. 309 note. D.Phil. thesis. Oxford, 1951.

The cessation of anti-corn-law activity by mid-1815 and its virtual disappearance until the middle of the following decade tended to conceal the link between the corn question and political radicalism. It has been assumed that the inactivity of the post-war years could be attributed to low prices over half of the seven years from 1815 - which offers no explanation for acquiescence in the years when prices were high - or to the proposition that the working-classes had "more pressing grievances to hold their attention".(59) In the Scottish context at least, such interpretations are barely adequate. The increasing propagation of the principles of free trade, particularly their implications for the corn trade, by the expanding periodical press, belied the suggestion that interest in the Corn Laws was dead. The participation of the "Scotsman" (from its commencement in January, 1817(60) and the "Edinburgh Review"(61) in the debate challenged the view that moderate middle-class urban reformist opinion accepted the "finality" of the Corn Law of 1815.

Not all moderate reformers after 1815 did imbue passionate anti-corn-law sentiment. Many of the Parliament House Whigs, such as Henry Cockburn, were less enamoured with the glamour of industry(62) than other observers of the industrial scene. Moreover, although Jeffrey, Cockburn, and the Whig reforming advocates of Edinburgh shared in the almost universal enthusiasm for the infant science of political

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59) D.G. Barnes: op. cit., p.157.

60) "Scotsman", 5/12/1818.

61) "The Edinburgh Review", July, 1819, pp. 57-61.

62) e.g. Lord Cockburn's reference to an area of Stirlingshire being "unpolluted" by manufactures. (Henry Cockburn: Life and Correspondence of Lord Jeffrey, Vol. 1, p.21).

economy, in the application of its more radical tenets to economic and social problems, they were conservative. Following Malthus, Jeffrey blamed the post-war depression on overpopulation, and con-:tended that it was "plainly impossible that it can be cured by any change in our commercial relations".(63) At the Pantheon meeting on 16/12/1820, the sole concession to free trade was a resolution which alluded to "an ignorant and illiberal system of policy as to the laws and regulations of trade".(64) By social function and political instinct, the Whig lawyers were primarily interested in organic constitutional and political issues. But in their preoccupation with this narrow definition of politics, they reflected as well as created the prevail-:ing mood. In Glasgow, a prominent free trader in later life and a leading merchant, James Oswald, was similarly occupied. In 1820, he chaired a meeting which advocated organic changes in the constitu-:tion, and paid only ambiguous lip-service to criticism of "impolitic restrictions and burdens" on trade.(65)

However, with the average price of corn in 1816-19 low only in contrast to years of peak war-time prices such as 1812-13,(66) the death of the corn question was more apparent than real. It merely found expression in what seemed, in view of the Corn Law of 1815 and of the

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63) Henry Cockburn: ibid., vol. 2., pp. 189-90.

64) Henry Cockburn: Report of the proceedings of the general meeting of the inhabitants of Edinburgh, December 16, 1820. pp. 23-5.

65) "Scotsman", 30/12/1820.

66) D.G. Barnes: op. cit., Appendix B., p. 298.
The annual average price in England Wales fell to 67/10d. per quarter for wheat by 1820.

subsequent repressive measures of the Liverpool administration, a more realistic demand for parliamentary reform. The passage of the Corn Laws, and its effects in raising the price level of "the first staple of consumption" and disrupting trade, were squarely attributed to "the partial and corrupt representation of the people in Parliament" by the Paisley reformers in October, 1816. Constitutional reform was their panacea.(67) The banner bearing the legend "Bread or Blood!" which fluttered over the Magdalen Yard Reform meeting in Dundee in November, 1819, was far from unique, and anti-corn-law slogans adorned many radical rallies.(68) The parliamentary reformers of the post-war period did not draw their wide base of popular support from a universal pre-occupation with the intricacies of constitutional law, or even from an intrinsic interest in the political complexion of the incumbents in power. Parliamentary reform was not merely an end in itself, but a means to several ends, one of which was a revision of the Corn Laws.

In his attempt to furnish a pedigree for the Anti-Corn Law League, Archibald Prentice undoubtedly exaggerated when he later claimed that "from 1815 to the period when some considerable parliamentary reform was seen to be inevitable, its necessity was mainly argued from the impolicy and the injustice of the Corn Laws".(69) Nevertheless, there was substance in his contention that resentment against the 1815 Corn Law provided a popular head of steam for radicalism. Not only did

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67) Robert Brown: History of Paisley. vol. 2., pp. 165-68.

68) Robert Brown: ibid. Vol. 2., pp. 184-5; An Account of the proceedings of a meeting held at Dundee, 10th., November, 1819; Also, W. Norrie: Dundee Celebrities of the Nineteenth Centry. p. 39.

69) Archibald Prentice: History of the League. vol. I., p. 1.

its outcome seem to prove the need for constitutional change in order to produce "impartial legislation", but the sustained ferocity of the debate over the Corn Laws in 1813-15 contributed much to the evolving consciousness of a separate political and economic identity throughout the urban communities. If the dread of revolution prevented the immediate adoption of parliamentary reform by the manufacturing and commercial interests,(70) this did not long survive the dissipation of the threat. When the landed interest in Parliament proved an intractable barrier to the implementation of their new comprehensive free trade faith in the case of corn, the logical road out of the impasse had been indicated already by the radicals. From the confrontation of 1813-15, the issues of Corn Law repeal and parliamentary reform were intertwined. Sometimes they became separated, but they were never totally divorced.

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70) The intense fear of revolution on the part of the more influential members of the propertied middle-classes in Scotland, during the post-war era, was adequately reflected in the address of Aberdeen Town Council to the Prince Regent in 1819. They venerated "the unparalleled excellence of our happy constitution in Church and State", contemplating with concern the attempts of radicals "under the specious but delusive pretence of reform, assembling numerous and often tumultuous conventions of the people, and by seditious harangues inflaming their minds against the Rulers of our country", aided by "that most powerful engine of mischief, a profligate and licentious press", and oblivious of "the dreadful example of revolutionary France". (Minutes of Aberdeen Town Council, 23/11/1819).

3. The Turn of the Tide - the Emergence of Free Trade, 1820-32.

Despite the modification of the original proposals of the Select Committee of 1813, by 1815 when the new Corn Law was eventually enacted, the landed interest had secured a considerable increase in the degree of legislative protection enjoyed by agriculture. The urban interests who contested the various bills in 1813-15 were con-:sciously on the defensive, had moderated their own suggested amend-:ments accordingly, and felt totally vanquished when the Corn Law received the royal assent. The fact that the new law did not accede to the full demands of the agriculturists detracted little from the triumph of the landed interest. Ten years later, however, the latter had commenced the long retreat from the high-water mark of agrarian protection, and by 1832, the landed interest was forced to fight the Reform Bill partially in defence of a reduced level of pro-:tection. This transformation, achieved in the face of relatively little anti-corn-law agitation in urban areas, was attributable to the slow acceptance of a more comprehensive free trade philosophy by urban interests and the disillusionment of the landed interest with existing forms of protection.

In 1813-15 agricultural opinion in Scotland had a profound faith in the efficacy and necessity of a high level of physical prohibition of cereal imports. The lack of an agricultural agitation in 1813-15 corresponding to that in the burghs cannot be construed as evidence to the contrary. More accurately, it reflected the faith of the agricultural interest in the purpose and capacity of its parliamen-:tary representatives to ensure an adequate degree of protection. This optimism was not unjustified in view of the premise of the chair-:man of the Select Committee, Sir Henry Parnell, that "the interests of the agricultural labourers and of the farmers as forming so great

a part of our national wealth and strength have a great claim to protection, even independent of the leading object of a sufficient supply of corn".[1] Besides, Scottish agriculturists could rely, as one protectionist succinctly stated, on Viscount Melville's "knowledge of country matters" to protect their interests.[2]

However, by 1815 the modifications to the original proposals of Parnell's committee had eroded some of their faith in Viscount Melville. In the premier wheat county of East Lothian, the agricul-:turists raised meetings in Dunbar and Haddington to petition for higher levels of prohibition than those proposed in the 1815 bill. They contended that the proposed level for wheat would barely ensure the farmer against actual loss, and that to provide a "fair" remunera-:tion, it should be raised. The rates for barley and oats should be correspondingly raised.[3] Robert Dundas of Arniston was undoubtedly correct when he pin-pointed distress and alarm in November, 1815 to areas of lately-let and high-rented arable farms, those lands of "a middling and inferior quality" which inflated war-time prices had converted in the Lothians as elsewhere from pastoral use. He was less representative of his class when he contended that even reduced import levels would permit the Scottish farmer to cultivate wheat advantageously, with the gradual return of inferior lands to their

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1) Copy. Sir Henry Parnell to John Gladstone, London, 26/5/1814, in Buccleuch Muniments. GD.224/511.

2) F. Walker to Viscount Melville, Haddington, 2/2/1815, in Melville Castle Muniments. GD.51/5/307.

3) F. Walker to Viscount Melville, Haddington, 18/2/1815, in ibid., G.D. 51/5/307.

"original and proper purpose".[4] Faced with the prospective burden of ruinously high rents contracted on the assumption of continuing high war-time prices, and subject to the additional embarrassment of Scotland's traditional long leases, many tenant farmers were turning in desperation to the advocacy of palliatives, notably the conversion of money to corn-rents.[5]

Nevertheless, although the agriculturists as a class felt their prosperity was dependent on adequate and increased protection, they equally felt bound to justify their case on grounds other than that of self-preservation, in the face of free trade polemics from the manufacturing and mercantile interests. This had been apparent even in the closing agitations of the previous century, but it was more evident by 1813-15. Significantly, even the messiah of prohibition in agriculture, the Earl of Lauderdale, did not attempt to confute the principles of free trade in general, but merely contended that it was prejudicial to impose them unilaterally on one species of trade and employment. In the case of agriculture, however, he found that legislative interference was essential anyway, due to the uncer-:tainty of the produce and the necessity for an adequate supply.[6] Hepburn of Smeaton too was haunted by the spectre of Adam Smith, and declined to challenge the great master. He contended, instead, that

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4) Copy. Robert Dundas to Sir John Sinclair, Arniston, 14/11/1815, in ibid., GD.51/5/313.

5) Robert Brown: Letters on the Distressed State of Agriculturists. (Edinburgh, 1816).p.54; Also, Robert Wilson: An Enquiry into the Causes of the High Prices of Corn and Labour.

6) A Letter on the Corn Laws by the Earl of Lauderdale. pp. 4-5, 7, 19-21.

the economist had favoured protection for agriculture, as "the last upon which the experiment of free trade should be tried". Like Lauderdale, Hepburn averred that Britain's increasing imports in the second half of the eighteenth century were attributable to lack of encouragement for domestic agriculture, and recommended "as near a recurrence to the former system as the great changes that have taken place and the great increase of the wealth and population of the empire will allow". (7)

To reinforce their case for additional protection, the landed interest readily cited the strategic need for national self-sufficiency as evinced during the period of the "Continental System", and coloured this with Malthusian gloom. (8) The alleged peculiarly onerous burdens, taxation and gratuitous services exacted from the landed in-:terest, also furnished the basis of claims for consideration. The former in Scotland included the land tax, stipends, teachers' salaries, the construction and repair of manses, churches, and school-:rooms, poor-rates, and rogue money in addition to unpaid services as justices of the peace or commissioners of supply. (9) But as one of their urban apologists admitted, although the agriculturists were prepared to stress their burdens for propagandist purposes, their objective was

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7) The Speech of the Hon. Mr. Baron Hepburn of Smeaton on the subject of the Corn Laws. pp. 4-5, 7, 19-21.

8) John Campbell of Carbrook: A Letter on the proposed alteration of the Corn Laws addressed to Sir Henry Parnell, Bart. pp. 8, 34-5, 46-7.

9) N. Lowis: A Letter in defence of the claim for an increase on the import duty of grain. pp. 17-8.

not a removal of taxes but the encouragement of agriculture.[10] These complaints were subsidiary to the cardinal point which Hepburn of Smeaton crystallised when he repudiated the claim of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce for free trade in corn as inconsistent in view of the existing level of manufacturing protection.[11] As long as the manu-:facturing and commercial interests retained a substantial measure of protection in their own sphere of economic activity, the landed in-:terest enjoyed a strong argumentative position when the Corn Laws were assailed.

From 1820, however, the representative bodies of the major manu-:facturing and commercial interests in Britain officially promulgated a new commercial code founded on the principles of free trade. The latter had been preached with liberal (and selective) quotations from Adam Smith in previous anti-corn-bill demonstrations, but no attempt had been made to advocate these consistently and comprehensively. However, Tooke's petition to Parliament on 8/5/1820 formulated a demand from the merchants of the city of London for the acceptance of univer-:sal free trade principles, in manufactures as well as commerce. Con-:taining the "elements of free trade", it has been considered the first outright challenge to the protectionist policy of the landed interest.[12]

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10) Robert Ainslie: Practical Observations for the Landed and Agricul-:tural Interest on the Question of Corn and Money. p.10.

However, the agriculturists acquiesced in the terms of the 1815 Corn Act partly because they anticipated that the Property Tax would be repealed. When the Government proposed to continue it in 1816 in an amended form, there was a violent reaction from the landed interest in Scotland, in contrast to their relative inertia in 1813-15. (Petition of the County of Edin-:burgh on the Property Tax. 4/3/1816. in Melville Castle Muniments. GD. 51/5/313; "Edinburgh Evening Courant", 7/3/1816)

11) The Speech of the Hon. Mr. Baron Hepburn of Smeaton on the subject of the Corn Laws. pp. 56-7.

12) D.G. Barnes: op.cit., pp. 157, 177; Henry Ashworth: Recollections of Richard Cobden, M.P., pp. 18-9.

Its significance was primarily symbolic, and it did not stand in isolation. It reflected as well as created public interest. The threat to the landed interest contained in the renunciation of manu-:facturing protection was not confined to the metropolis.

Similar indications of a wind of change were apparent in Scotland before Tooke's petition was presented in Parliament. In April, 1820, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce resolved to petition against all high import duties as these were counter-productive insofar as they pro-:voked retaliation. Although corn was not listed specifically as worthy of special attention,[13] the implications of the Chamber's new religion were all-embracing. The directors attributed the recent depression to Britain's previous commercial policy, and proposed that the international trend should be reversed unilaterally by Britain "without regard to reciprocity of benefit between us and any particu-:lar nation".[14] Predictably, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce also sub-:scribed to the new faith. Paraphrasing the Edinburgh petition, the western body upheld the ideal of trade restored to a "free state" with an international division of labour and capital in those spheres which were "naturally profitable".[15] Testimony to the spread of the heresy was furnished when even the conservative Edinburgh Merchant Company - "the only respectable mercantile body this unmercantile place possessed" in the view of the Whig, Cockburn[16] - petitioned

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13) Not without some regard for the city's intrinsic commercial in-:terests, the Chamber specified Baltic timber, iron, raw silk and French linens as particularly worthy of attention.

14) Minutes of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, 20/4/1820.

15) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 2/5/1820.

16) Henry Cockburn: Memorials of His Time. p. 332.

the House of Lords to "modify the restrictive code of our commercial laws".(17)

However, the danger to the landed interest was not immediate, and the radical economic principles of the 1820 petitions should not be exaggerated. Their key-note was caution, and if they proclaimed adherence to a new philosophy for commercial relations, this was subject to qualification. Glasgow Chamber of Commerce with deference to the protectionist interests within its own ranks, added that "no alteration of the laws . . . be attempted till after a full investigation of the particular case".(18) The proliferation of vested interests in the existing system ensured the retention of an element of pragmatism, rather than permit the formulation of an unequivocal doctrine for universal and immediate translation into reality. Nevertheless, the petitioning activities of 1820 reflected a demand for a shift of emphasis in commercial policy, and one which contained far-reaching, albeit long-term implications for cereal protection. This reality was highlighted when the agriculturists demanded increased protection in 1822. Glasgow Chamber of Commerce resisted their claim on the plea that the existing level of cereal prices would prevent a reduction of wage rates, and therefore impair Britain's competitive ability. In defence of this self-interested motivation, and in refutation of the agrarian claim that they wanted free trade merely in agricultural produce, the directors pointed to their petition of 1820. The latter, they held, proved their fidelity to the belief that "with as much speed

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17) W. Trotter to Lord Melville, Inchture, 9/8/1820. In Melville Castle Muniments. GD. 51/5/332.

18) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 2/5/1820.

as a due regard to cases involving particular hardships would admit, the trade of the country should be thrown entirely open".(19)

Yet the protest of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce at the new Corn Law of 1822 was isolated. The broad range of manufacturing and consumer interest groups which had campaigned against prohibition in Scotland in 1815 was silent, and there was no widescale attempt to utilise the new position of strength acquired in 1820. The low corn prices from 1822 which prompted the reappraisal of the former legislation contributed to this apathy, but this factor had not prevented the agitation of 1815. More pointedly, urban opinion was divided on whether the new legislation was an improvement on the 1815 law. The reduction in the level of physical prohibition, and the substitution of a measure of fiscal protection was interpreted in some quarters as an advance towards free trade principles.(20) But even more important, as the "Glasgow Chronicle" conceded, it seemed futile to petition against the legislation of 1822 in view of the failure of such activity, (from the urban viewpoint) in 1815.(21) It was the continuing lack of urban faith in the responsiveness of the political system, which shielded the landed interest and the Corn Laws from the challenge of free trade.

When the free trade measures of Huskisson and the other liberal Tory ministers from 1823 served to restore a degree of urban faith in

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19) ibid., 16/5/1822.

20) The underlying principle of the 1822 act was the substitution of fiscal protection for prohibition in the case of wheat above 70/- per quarter, but the section of the 1815 act prohibiting the importation of wheat below 80/- per quarter was never repealed. The "Scotsman", however, merely regarded the new legislation as calculated to perpetuate existing price fluctuations. ("Scotsman", 18/5/1822)

21) "Glasgow Chronicle", 14/5/1822; 23/5/1822.

the propensity of the existing political system to permit change, it was the appearance of a political opportunity, rather than an economic stimulus,[22] which initiated a general free trade agitation against agricultural protection. Satisfaction with the performance of the Huskisson school in office was widespread. The Convention of Royal Burghs recorded their approbation of "all those liberal and enlightened acts of government, by which in adopting the principles of free trade, they have protected our commerce, increased our manufactures, and without lessening the revenue, have greatly reduced the burdens of the people".[23] In the lower echelons of society, a similar renewal of faith in the existing political system due to the ministers' pursuit of a free trade programme was discernable. At a mechanics' meeting in Glasgow, they were held to have adopted "many of the liberal prin-:ciples of the age", with the result that the distinction between Tory and Whig had been "almost lost".[24] In turn, past performance had stimulated future expectations. The urban interests demanded free trade in corn too, or "the effects of this liberal policy will be the reverse of what is intended."[25] When Joseph Hume toyed with the notion of bringing forward his own measure on the Corn Laws, if no ministerial

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22) Although corn prices were high in 1825, relative to those of 1823-24, they failed to approach war-time levels. (D.G. Barnes: op. cit., Appendix B.P.298)

23) Minutes of the Convention of Royal Burghs, 14/7/1825.

24) "Glasgow Chronicle", 18/11/1826.

25) The attitude of the Incorporated Weavers of Forfar was echoed by the free trade "Glasgow Chronicle" which contended that the Corn Laws were "the keystone of free trade", and that relaxa-:tions "cannot safely be attempted in other articles while the price of food, and of course, the rate of labour, are kept up by monopoly", (Glasgow Chronicle", 7/2/1826; 11/3/1826)

measure was forthcoming, he was assailed by the "Scotsman" which con-:tended that the corn question was an issue "which can be advantageously brought forward by none but them".[26] Mere rumour that the ministers were contemplating such a revision sufficed to produce a number of free trade and protectionist petitions in 1825.

The complexion of the free trade attack in 1825-28 proved less radical than agricultural alarmists feared. The keynote of caution in the original petitions of 1820 continued to temper the demands of the urban manufacturing interests. The desirability of ultimate repeal was canvassed in some petitions, but these were mainly of working-class origin,[27] and represented the traditional consumer interest, rather than the economic free trade interests embodied in the chambers of commerce. Representative bodies of middle-class urban opinion tended, like the Convention of Royal Burghs, to discard motions for total re-:peal in favour of requests for "ample justice" for the landed interest.[28] Their conception of justice, however, bore little relation to agrarian views, and in supporting the substitution of fiscal protection for physical prohibition, they agreed with Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce that a "fair and moderate protecting duty" should be "on the lowest

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26) "Scotsman", 2/12/1826.

27) "Dundee Advertiser", 17/8/1826; "Glasgow Chronicle", 23/2/1826; 28/11/1826.

28) Minutes of the Convention of Royal Burghs, 12/7/1827; "Scotsman", 14/7/1827.

possible scale".[29] Only in the Edinburgh Merchant Company did a group of conservatives led by the Tory publisher, William Blackwood, submit a plea for the retention of prohibition in order to keep poorer soils under the plough, but they too were worsted.[30] In regarding 1820 as a threshold for the free trade movement, it is dangerous to assume that the immediate sequel was a demand for total repeal of the Corn Laws. In the mid-1820's, partly from principle and partly from expediency, there was widespread recognition of the claim for at least a measure of cereal protection. What the urban interests would not accept was the principle of physical exclusion.

The danger to the landed interest in 1825-28 lay as much in the intensive as in the extensive nature of the free trade claims. The urban middle-classes, after the emergence of physical-force radicalism in Scotland in 1819 had correctly diagnosed the Corn Laws as part of the motivating force behind the movement. They were not disposed to understate the connection or the danger to property incumbent in such a movement. In their petition of 1822, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce had alluded to the radicalism of 1819-20 as evidence of social dis-:content engendered by high cereal prices allegedly attributable to the Corn Laws.[31] This same brand of conservatism ran through the free trade agitation of 1825-28, when the Corn Laws were readily identified as "the certain fore-runner of misery, crime, disaffection, and

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29) Minutes of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, 5/4/1825; 13/1/1827; See too, Minutes of Glasgow Town Council, 21/11/1826; Minutes of Dundee Town Council, 14/6/1826; 6/12/1826; Minutes of Perth Town Council, 15/3/1827.

30) Minutes of Edinburgh Merchant Company, 29/1/1827; "Scotsman", 31/1/1827.

31) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 16/5/1822.

political commotion".[32] Typical of his middle-class origins, Robert Wilson of Hawick blamed the appearance of trades unions on the in-:consistency of parliamentary legislation to maintain prices but not wages. "Impartial legislation" was essential to the maintenance of the existing political and social order, and the socially divisive Corn Laws were an exception to this maxim.[33]

Paradoxically, however, the ghost of 1819 substantially negatived the strength which it bequeathed to the free trade agitation, insofar as the fear of social disorder on such an emotive issue made the urban middle-classes reluctant to initiate a popular agitation in 1825. They preferred to protest through the medium of established, corporate and mercantile bodies from which the lower echelons of society were excluded. In Edinburgh, the middle-classes did take the field in a public demonstration, but only after the "Scotsman" had lamented the lack of such activity and urged that the stigma be removed.[34] A similar situation prevailed in Glasgow. When the operatives of Gor-:bals, Hutchesontown, Lauriston, and Tradestown organised a demon-:stration on 22/2/1826, they discovered that no-one "of some conse-:quence" was prepared to take the chair. It had to be filled by a weaver. The identification of the organisers with trades unionism did not contribute to a rapprochement with the middle-classes.[35]

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32) "Scotsman", 25/11/1826.

33) Robert Wilson: A Disquisition on the Corn Laws, with a few Observations on Pauperism. (Hawick, 1826). pp. 40, 42, 94-5.

34) "Scotsman", 23/4/1825.

35) "Glasgow Chronicle", 23/2/1826.
A previous demonstration organised by Glasgow weavers on 1/6/1826 was also led by combination leaders. (ibid., 3/6/1826)

In Dundee, the provost declined a request for a public meeting on the plea that it would be more prudent to petition through existing in-:corporations,[36] although the majority of the prospective demonstra-:tors belonged to none.

With middle-class dissent largely confined to the transmission of petitions from corporate bodies, the popular agitation was left substantially to the working-class free traders, with weavers fre-:quently to the fore. In the process, it tended to degenerate into more negative channels, cataloguing the grievances and fears of the latter. Their fear was destitution and unemployment, and they anti-:cipated that repeal would enable them to "live better, be better clothed, and better lodged". Unlike the Irish, the Scottish working-classes had known better days.[37] They abhorred grants and public subscriptions as they constituted charity "which destroys that feeling of independence which had raised Scotsmen high in the scale of civilised society".[38] The weakness of this intellectual base for the agitation was evinced by the diversionary interests of some of the participants. The weavers of Scoonie and Wemyss contemplated the extension of the English Poor Laws (with their compulsory assessment for a poor-rate) to Scotland, as an alternative to repeal.[39] In other areas, notably Paisley, demands for parliamentary reform were twinned with Corn Law

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36) "Dundee Advertiser", 30/11/1826.

37) "Glasgow Chronicle", 18/11/1826.

38) ibid., 25/11/1826; "Dundee Advertiser", 17/8/1826.
Subscriptions for the relief of the manufacturing districts were being raised in Edinburgh, by May, 1826. ("Scotsman", 13/5/1826)

39) "Scotsman", 10/1/1827.

repeal,[40] although these were exceptional. One orator was warmly received by mechanics in Glasgow when he advocated parliamentary reform as the only practical way to repeal the Corn Laws, as "the lords of the soil were the lords of representation", but his viewpoint was not endorsed. The mechanics determined not to deviate from their strict aim as "in 1819 when a similar system was pursued, it disgraced the country and terminated in bloodshed".[41] Nevertheless, if the working-class agitation did not tarnish its respectability by permitting itself to be openly tainted with political radicalism, it largely failed to project the more positive, broad free trade philosophy which had promoted the petitions of 1820.

The working-class agitation suffered from a further serious limitation: it failed to evolve a vehicle of protest which would be other than ephemeral. This was illustrated by the transitory character of the movement in Dundee, despite sound local leadership. Part of a general petitioning movement throughout the linen communities of Tayside,[42] the agitation in Dundee deprived of middle-class leadership, was conducted by the operatives on their own account. They acted responsibly, condemning the incidence of riots in England, and rejecting demands for total repeal in favour of more practical objectives, notably opening the ports and releasing bonded wheat.[43]

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40) "Glasgow Chronicle", 21/11/1826; "Scotsman", 16/8/1826; "Dundee Advertiser", 9/11/1826.

41) "Glasgow Chronicle", 18/11/1826.

42) ibid., 11/3/1826; 25/7/1826; "Dundee Advertiser", 18/1/1827;

43) ibid., 17/8/1826.

On receipt of their first petition, Peel testified to the "patience and good feeling" of the labouring classes in the city. (ibid., 24/8/1826)

Led by James Saunders, a weaver from Scouringburn, they endeavoured to place the agitation on a more systematic footing, by electing a committee, transmitting further petitions (with over 8,000 signatures adhibited to each) to both Houses of Parliament on 17/1/1827, and pub-:lishing an exposition of their case entitled "The Mechanic in his own defence". In this, they refuted local prohibitionist claims that they were merely "a foul mouth'd multitude" - in itself a commentary on the social composition of the free trade agitation in the city - and prophesied cheap food and steady employment through reciprocity of trade.(44) A year later, however, the agitation in Dundee was in the doldrums: a petition against the ministerial proposals of 1828 secured a mere 2,000 signatures.(45)

Improved trade, apparent even in Paisley by early 1827,(46) and more important, the knowledge that the concessions wrung from a grudging legislature were "the best which the all powerful lords of the soil would allow them to pass",(47) served to defuse the movement in Dundee and elsewhere of all but the most intransigent and optimistic spirits. The mitigation of social distress and the dissipation of

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44) Although the author of "The Mechanic in His Own Defence", Dundee 1827, purported to be an artisan "more accustomed to handle the tools of mechanism than the pen of erudition", its voca-:bulary, grammar, and composition belied the suggestion. It was probably written by George Kinloch of Kinloch, Senior, who wrote on the corn and currency questions after his return from exile in 1823, and who was reputed to have written a "valuable pamplet" on the Corn Laws in 1827. (see W. Norrie: Dundee Celebrities of the Nineteenth Century. p. 41)

45) "Scotsman", 31/5/1828.

46) "Glasgow Chronicle", 13/1/1827; 13/2/1827; 17/2/1827.

47) "Scotsman", 5/4/1828.

political opportunity to make a greater advance removed the two stimuli of the agitation, and it collapsed. Without middle-class leadership, it was over-dependent on the politics of hunger and temporary enthusiasm. The way out of the impasse was signposted in Gloucestershire, with the formation of an "Anti-Bread-Tax Association" in Charford,(48) a society established to agitate specifically and continuously for one objective. Only on such a footing could the urban interests - manufacturers, merchants and consumers - effectively utilise the new position of strength which they had acquired by adopting a consistent free trade programme to wring further concessions from the landed interest. But that implied a degree of faith in the flexibility of the existing political system which the apparent failure of Huskisson and the liberal Tories in 1828 largely dispelled. The terms of the corn bill of 1828 seemed to embody a further triumph for the landed interest, if less sweeping than that of 1815, and to indi-:cate how little progress had been made since 1820 in translating the principles of free trade into practice in the case of cereals.

However, the transformation which had take place since 1820 was more far-reaching than either free traders or protectionists deemed politic to admit. Despite the apparent weakness of the urban agita-:tions, the landed interest had been placed squarely on the defensive. This result was attributable not only to the promulgation of free trade principles, but also to the prevalence of agrarian distress which de-:stroyed the euphoria anticipated by the agriculturists in 1815. The latter made the painful discovery that low prices were due, not to

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48) "Dundee Advertiser", 14/12/1826.

massive imports from abroad, but to the super-abundance of domestic production and Irish imports.[49] The Corn Law of 1815 had merely pre-:vented imports which would have exacerbated the situation. However, even a perceptive agrarian analyst, like James Cleghorn, was so totally committed to the premise that the landed interest had an indisputible right to protection, (due to their allegedly utilitarian function in society) that he could only suggest palliatives which were peripheral to the central problem - tightening up the existing Corn Laws and offering a compensatory reduction in landed burdens.[50] As David Low, professor of agriculture at the University of Edinburgh, and an urban apologist of the landed interest, observed, increased protection was self-defeating. A critic of the concept of prohibition, which he contended caused violent price fluctuations and retaliatory exclusion of British exports, he advocated a further extension of the counter-:vailing duties introduced in 1822. But although he wholeheartedly shared Cleghorn's premise that the landed interest had an undeniable right to protection, he was even less successful in producing a panacea for their distress, merely embracing the hope that "time will alleviate,

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49) One anonymous pamphleteer alleged that the law of 1815 based on the principle of prohibition had been useless, as British farmers had to face unrestricted foreign competition for three months after wheat prices reached 80/- per quarter. The main problem, however, was lack of domestic consumption. (Anony-:mous; Letter to His Grace, Alexander, Duke of Hamilton and Brandon on the subject of the present situation of agriculture in Great Britain and the means of ameliorating it. pp. 18-20, 31).

50) James Cleghorn: On the Depressed State of Agriculture. pp. 63, 73-80, 84-5, 97-8, 102-19, 126, 130-2.

and may remove it".[51] The proven failure of prohibition, recognised by the most articulate spokesmen of the landed interest, rendered existing levels of agricultural protection vulnerable to assault at precisely the moment when the urban interest groups were formulating a more coherent free trade programme.

Thus weakened, the landed interest in Scotland as in the South were obliged to justify the exemption of agriculture from the apparently incontrovertible truths comprising the principles of free trade. Neither Cleghorn nor Low had attempted to question the in-:violability of the latter, but had merely contended that the doctrine should exclude agriculture as the landed interest shouldered an allegedly disproportionate share of fiscal burdens and unremunerative duties. They were followed in this assertion by most prominent leaders of agricultural opinion in Scotland, like the Marquis of Tweeddale, Lord John Hay, or James Gibson-Craig. Their "warm advocacy" of free trade principles prudently excepted corn which could be im-:ported "at almost any price, however low".[52] No matter how sound free trade principles were when applied to trade, they seemed to spell ruin

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51) David Low: Observations on the Present State of Landed Property, and on the prospects of the Landholder and the Farmer. pp. 39-53, 56-8, 68-9, 80-1, 97-102, 122.

Low suggested that tenants should be given relief through rent abatements or an allowance in the rent for capital investment. Grain rents he rejected on the ground that increased prices did not always compensate for the de-:ficiency in quantity, and that the heaviest rent could be demanded when capacity to pay was at a minimum. Also, the price of grain was no criterion for pastoral lands, and the underlying concept ran counter to Low"s laissez-faire belief that the farmer, like every other trader, should benefit from a rise in the price of his produce.

52) "Glasgow Chronicle", 23/4/1825.

for agriculture, especially in Scotland where two-thirds of the total acreage could be considered "inferior".(53)

The ultra-prohibitionists entertained less respect for the apostles of the dismal science, "these etherial agriculturists in the sublunary profession".(54) Henry Stephens of Balmadies, the pro-:hibitionist leader in Forfarshire, dismissed free trade without qualification, "a doctrine as erroneous in principle as it has proved calamitous in its operations to these interests in which it has been tried". Feebly, he contended that free trade in corn was inconsis-:tent with the (diminishing) export bounty still enjoyed by the local linen industry.(55) Sir John Sinclair, the veteran self-appointed defender of the landed interest, was equally undeterred. He bluntly refused to recognise that agrarian distress was attributable to causes other than the inadequacy of existing protection, and adhered firmly to the premise that the pre-1822 legislation anchored on the concept of physical exclusion was "the climax of wisdom". Any concession to Ricardian notions was anathema to Sinclair as a threat to the economic, social, and political dominance of the landed interest.(56)

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53) Letter to a Member of Parliament on the contemplated changes in the Corn Law. pp. 4, 9, 12.

54) An Essay on the Philoso-Political Economy of the Modern Athens. p. 4. (In a series of five articles published in Dundee and Edinburgh, in 1825-7, for private circulation, entitled Charles Gray of Carse; Thoughts on the Corn Laws, etc.)

55) Corn Laws: The Mechanic in His Own Defence. p. 18; "Dundee Advertiser", 18/1/1827.

56) Sir John Sinclair, Bart.: An Answer to a tract recently published by David Ricardo, M.P. pp. 4-9, 11-5; ibid.: Address to the Owners and Occupiers of Land in Great Britain and Ireland. pp. 3-4, 15, 26; ibid: On the Corn Laws. pp. 3-4.

The weakness of the prohibitionist polemical argument, due to urban acceptance of free trade principles in manufactures and commerce, was partially illustrated by their emphasis on the social and political dangers inherent in free trade. Stephens saw the question - like the more radical urban free traders - as a class con-:flict between the agriculturists, whome he identified as "Britannia's right arm", and the urban middle-classes. The justification, he offered for the entrenched privileges of the former was their numeri-:cal strength as the largest class in the country.(57) Sinclair feared social revolution if "the only individuals who have a solid and per-:manent interest in the public prosperity" were reduced to "the same miserable state as the commercial".(58) But even without the alarmism of the agriculturists' prophet of doom, the political implications of universal free trade were all too clear. In large tracts of rural Scotland, the existing political and social hierarchy was grounded on an economic foundation of arable agriculture, and if one should ". . . drive out the plough; for the farmer substitute the shepherd and the grazier - the connection between landlord and tenant is dissolved, and the constitution is no longer the same".(59)

The failure of prohibition and the difficulty of countering the apparent consistency of the economic case propagated by the free traders combined to produce a pallid agitation in defense of the prohibitionist

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57) AS QUOTED IN, Corn Laws: The Mechanic in His Own Defence. pp. 1-4, 13; "Dundee Advertiser", 18/1/1827.

58) ibid., 21/9/1826.

59) Thoughts on the Corn Laws by a Farmer. p. 3. (In a series of five articles . . . entitled Charles Gray of Carse: Thoughts on the Corn Laws, etc.)

legislation of 1822. Sinclair struggled to counter total indifference from sections of the grazing interest of the north who conceived that they had no intrinsic interest in the retention of protection for cereals.(60) In reply, he pointed out the comprehensive nature of the free trade movement of the 1820's, observing that once the Corn Laws succumbed to the new doctrine, consistency would demand its extension to pastoral farming. The drovers of Scotland would be unable to compete with the steam-boats of France and Flanders in transporting livestock economically to the southern markets.(61)

In 1826, Sinclair launched a personal crusade to rouse Scottish agriculturists from their slumber. He wrote county conveners to initiate petitions, published further pamphlets, and made personal appearances at agricultural meetings. His tour-de-force was a meeting of representatives of the landed interest from several Scottish counties in Edinburgh which he chaired on 17/1/1827. This agreed to circularise county conveners with a request to present petitions for adequate protection.(62) But the response to his efforts was tepid: the landed interest preferred to await the course of events in Parliament.(63) His fellow-prohibitionists ~~co-religionists~~ met with no more success. The

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60) The County of Inverness determined by 32 to 7 votes that it would not support a petition against an alteration of the Corn Laws, as it had no intrinsic interest in maintaining protection for cereals. (James Barron: The Northern Highlands in the Nineteenth Century, vol. 2., p.13)

61) "Dundee Advertiser", 21/9/1826.

62) ibid., 23/11/1826; "Scotsman", 15/11/1826; 24/1/1827; "Glasgow Chronicle", 25/1/1827.

63) The landed interest in Perthshire on 3/10/1826, at a meeting chaired by the Earl of Kinnoull, decided to reject Sinclair's suggestion of a committee as premature, as no specific proposals had emanated from the Ministry. ("Scotsman", 10/10/1826; "Dundee Advertiser", 5/10/1826).

county of Forfar declined to give official sanction to the pro-:hibitionist petition raised by Stephens,[64] and even in Scotland's granary, the county of Midlothian merely sanctioned the formation of a committee to keep a watching-brief on proceedings in Parliament.[65]

The Ministry's conversion to the concept of fiscal protection sealed the fate of Sinclair and his prohibitionist disciples. Approval in principle of the ministerial proposals was almost uni-:versal, due to agrarian disenchantment with the fruits of prohibition. Accordingly, criticism was centred on the technical details of the proposed measures, and the need to raise the level of protecting duties for individual local staples.[66] In East Lothian, a minority of pro-:hibitionist diehards led by William Aitchison of Drumore made a final stand for the exclusion principle, but were trounced at the local county meeting.[67] Most East Lothian freeholders were prepared to settle for a "protective duty so high as to prohibit imports except in times of scarcity".[68] The revised ministerial proposals of 1828, representing a measureable advance in the proposed level of duties,[69] largely satisfied Scottish agrarian demands. Due to the strength of the landed interest in Parliament, and the weakness of the urban free

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64) "Scotsman", 17/2/1827; "Dundee Advertiser", 15/2/1827.

65) "Scotsman", 4/10/1826.

66) ibid., 24/3/1827; 28/3/1827; 3/5/1828; "Glasgow Chronicle", 20/3/1827; 25/3/1827; 31/3/1827.

67) "Scotsman", 16/4/1828.

68) ibid., 31/1/1827.

69) D.G. Barnes: op. cit., p. 200.

trade agitation outside,[70] the landed interest had successfully surrendered prohibition in exchange for a prohibitive level of pro-:tection.

However, the landed interest paid a price for its victory. The free trade programme of the liberal Tories from 1823 had restored a considerable volume of urban middle-class faith in the propensity of the existing political system to respond to external pressure from urban economic interests for commercial policies reflecting more accurately their own increasing importance. At first, few middle-class free traders followed Robert Wilson of Hawick in openly twinning a demand for free trade in corn with a demand for the representation of the trading and commercial classes in Parliament, in order to pro-:duce "better" legislation.[71] By the winter of 1826-27, however, the agrarian backlash in Parliament was sufficiently apparent to produce several demands for reform of "the Commons' House of Parliament" if the landed interest succeeded in frustrating the Ministers' intentions.[72] Although the terms of the 1828 Corn Act did not produce an immediate wholesale demand for parliamentary reform, they did serve to confirm the lesson of 1815, that "impartial" legislation could not be expected from a legislative body, the composition of which was over-:whelming associated with a separate and conflicting economic interest. The 1828 Corn Act was the greatest concession, limited though it seemed,

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70) The free trade "Glasgow Chronicle" lamented that it would be long "before Ministers hazard their places on behalf of those who have not even thanked them for their generous exertions". "Glasgow Chronicle", 20/3/1827)

71) Robert Wilson: op. cit., pp. 87-8.

72) "Scotsman", 16/8/1826; 21/11/1826; 17/2/1827.

liable to be extracted from the existing legislature. Consequently, the aspirations of the urban manufacturing and commercial interests for what they regarded as the essential corollary of the free trade measures already enacted, the substitution of "moderate" duties on corn, became centred on a programme of parliamentary reform.

The effects of this metamorphosis were not immediate. Low average corn prices in 1829-32 together with substantial imports after the 1828 Corn Act[73] served to temper urban interest in the Corn Laws. Moreover, when the Reform Bill agitation did emerge in 1830, anti-corn-law sentiment was not the principal or immediate motivating force. Nevertheless, it furnished an underlying current which moulded atti-:tudes on both sides to the expediency of constitutional changes. In the Borders, a Tory observer confessed, that the farmers were cam-:paigning against the (English) Reform Bill because they were "terrified about the Corn Laws being terminated".[74] Moreover, once reform was clearly a fait accompli, similar fears for the well-being of the landed interest stimulated the latter to demand increased representa-:tion in the reformed legislature for the Scottish counties to secure "the better protection of the agricultural interests".[75]

The anxiety of the agriculturists regarding the implications of reform for the Corn Laws was not misplaced, except retrospectively in view of the conservative nature of the changes produced by the 1832 Act. The aspirations of the manufacturing and commercial interests,

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73) D.G. Barnes: op. cit., Appendices B & C.

74) William Scott to Alexander Pringle of Whytbank, M.P., Edinburgh, 4/1/1831 in Buccleuch Muniments. GD. 224/580.

75) "Dundee Advertiser", 7/7/1831; 28/6/1832.

and their hopes from reform, were adequately expressed by David Charles Guthrie of Dundee, who pontificated that the end of all government was to legislate in the majority interest. He conceived that the Reform Act would not only produce that desirable state (or "our high expectations will be grievously disappointed"), but that now the consumers had a voice in the election of their legislators, he would rejoice "to see the interests of the manufacturers of Dundee treated with that attention which their importance demands" through repeal of the Corn Laws.(76) By 1832, the urban manufacturing and commercial interests who had previously embraced free trade had followed the radicals in adopting a commitment to parliamentary re-:form. The two aims were indissolubly intertwined. Both reflected the demand of the urban middle-class interests for not only commercial policies based on the principles of free trade, but also a recognition in political and social terms of their growing relative economic importance. The urban equation of manufacturing success with the national weal and the march of civilisation was an old theme by the 1820's, but it was reiterated with increasing conviction and virulence.(77) By 1832, the landed interest was on the defensive on all fronts.

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76) Report of the Reform Jubilee Procession and Dinners, (Dundee, 1832).

77) e.g. Robert Wilson of Hawick contended that "the generality of landed gentlemen are to be ranked among the unproductive classes . . . and placed as a dead weight on the industry and enterprise of the nation". The question was whether Britain would "retrograde to a state of pastoral imbecility, to the idle cruelties of game-shooting and the chase, and all the other exploded avocations of feudal times, or whether this powerful empire shall continue to make progress in the attainment of wealth, civilisation, intelligence, and fame". (Robert Wilson: op. cit., pp. 33, 72.)

Between the passing of the Corn Law of 1815 and the Reform Act in 1832, there was little effective extra parliamentary agitation against the Corn Laws. The demonstrations of 1825-27 in terms of organisation looked back to the previous century, rather than forward to the societies of the succeeding decade. Yet the watershed in the evolution of the anti-corn-law movement was not 1832, but 1820. The adoption of free trade principles, though not without qualification, in a more coherent and systematic code, disarmed the agriculturists of their trump card in defending protection for cereals, the incon-:sistency of previous urban claims. The manufacturing and commercial interests with a strengthened polemical base could and did take the offensive, albeit in a circumscribed manner. There were anti-corn-bill demonstrations before 1820, but the free trade movement for repeal of the Corn Laws traced its roots to that date.

4. Precursors of the League: the evolution of an organised anti-corn-law movement in Scotland and its failure, 1833-38.

The 1820's contributed, albeit qualified, the principles of free trade to the evolution of the anti-corn-law movement, but the failures of the decade had been important. It bequeathed to the 1830's at least three major problems. Firstly, despite the promulgation in a more assertive manner of a new commercial code, no systematic, continuous agitation for its application had been conducted except in 1825-28, principally because a demand for organic constitutional changes had seemed more realistic. Secondly, even during the agitation of 1825-28, the movement in Scotland had failed totally to evolve any improvement on the vehicle of agitation which had ruled in the eighteenth century and in 1813-15. No attempt was made to create any permanent co-ordinating machinery, and the agitation depended on spontaneous, individual initiatives. Thirdly, the agitation of 1825-28 had been bedevilled by social divisions between the propertied middle-classes and the working-classes, both of whom were acutely aware of the shadow of the radical disturbances of 1819-20. The succeeding decade, after 1832 saw successive attempts to rectify each of these problems through the medium of societies launched with the specific and exclusive aim of repeal of the Corn Laws through the application of the principles of free trade. The perpetuation of the first and third of the problems of the 1820's into the post-Reform Act era limited the success of the contribution of the 1830's in furnishing a forward-looking vehicle of agitation, but the societies of 1833-38 were nevertheless the direct ante-:cedents of the later and more successful Anti-Corn-Law League.

In the beginning of 1833, the prospect of repeal of the Corn Laws and the application of the principles of free trade to the grain trade seemed favourable to those who had anticipated that free trade

would follow reform. The landed interest had already experienced defeat in the Reform Act at the hands of the alliance of middle- and working-classes which had carried it, and thus strengthened, the latter appeared poised for further gains. Thus the absence of an agitation on the corn question was principally attributable to faith in the Reform administration and the reformed Parliament to proceed with the measure, rather than urban disinterest. When the radicals in Edinburgh of the Scotch Metropolitan Union met in January, 1833, to consider petitioning for repeal of the Corn Laws, they failed to agree that it was necessary "until the real designs of the Ministry were known",(1) and although a few petitions for repeal were trans-:mitted in the first few months of 1833, including one from Perth with 4,000 signatures(2) probably stimulated by the introduction of Whitmore's motion into Parliament on 30/4/1833 - the Whig Government still commanded the confidence of the radicals. The issue was not forgotten - Kirkman Finlay was hissed at a Whig dinner in Glasgow for urging gradualism in dealing with it(3) but the competition of other public questions and the fear of rocking the boat of the Reform Ministry combined to silence those sections of reform opinion, such as the Whig "Scotsman" who were disturbed by the opposition of the

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1) "Scotsman", 12/1/1833.

2) ibid., 4/5/1833; "Glasgow Argus", 6/5/1833.

3) "Scotsman", 18/5/1833.

Earl of Ripon, on behalf of the Ministry, to Earl Fitzwillaim's motion on the Corn Laws.(4)

The demand for an agitation specifically on the corn question emanated from two sources. Through his "Edinburgh Magazine" which commenced publication in April, 1832, William Tait, a radical and publisher, warned of the dangers of disappointing public expectations on the issue, perceived the question as part of a general confront-:ation between radical and whig, and conceived that the latter party was "supposed to include every man who, disapproving of our Corn Laws, is of opinion that it would be inexpedient to alter them".(5) In a more influential position was William Weir, editor of the "Glasgow Argus", the official organ of the dominant section of the Glasgow whigs founded in February, 1833. An advocate by profession and more radical than his employers, he had been co-founder of Edinburgh Political Union (in company with William Tait, James Aytoun, and George Kinloch, junr.),(6) but gave precedence to the Corn Laws as "the most important question that can be mooted in our legislative assemblies", attacking the timidity of the Whig administration and promising not to let the subject rest.(7)

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4) The "Scotsman" condemned the "Glasgow Argus" for decrying the Reform Ministry on the ground that such an attitude would merely result in the return of a Tory Government. ("Scotsman", 20/4/1833; see too, ibid., 18/5/1833).

5) "Tait's Edinburgh Magazine", vol.2., pp. 815-17; vol.3., pp. 58-9.

6) Minutes of the Proprietors of the "Glasgow Argus", 4/2/1833; "Tait's Edinburgh Magazine", December, 1833, p.386; "Dundee Advertiser", 16/5/1834.

7) "Glasgow Argus", 20/5/1833; 7/10/1833; 17/10/1833.

Despite the demand of Weir in the columns of the "Argus" for an organised agitation on the Corn Laws, no interest was shown in the proposal in Scotland until the end of the year. Two factors served to stimulate interest in the proposal. In October, an anti-corn-law society, with a specific aim and fee, was formed in Nottingham (with another shortly after in London), and in Scotland some of the agri-:culturists made the fatal mistake of following the Marquis of Chandos, the protectionist leader in England, and took the initiative in defending the existing Corn Laws; this furnished Weir with the excuse to demand a requisition to the Lord Provost for a public demonstration as Glasgow was "at present silent, not satisfied".(8) Nevertheless, the first reaction came from Edinburgh, not Glasgow. On 20/11/1833, a Mechanics' Anti-Corn -Law Association was formed, with a wide social base ensured by a membership fee of 3d. and a further 1d. for every public meeting attended. The artisans who founded it, led by a local cabinet-maker, Boyd, anticipated better employment from reciprocity of trade and cheaper food. Behind these aspirations, however, lay complaints of the growing division in industrial society between"the man of affluence" and the labourer, resulting in legislation such as the Corn Laws, which they contended bore heavily on low-income groups. Following the example of the burgh reform agitation, they determined to exclude all extraneous issues, such as the ballot or triennial parliaments, until the Corn Laws were repealed, and issued a declaration for total repeal by

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8) Grant Duff of Eden addressing Banffshire Farmer Club dwelt on the danger of an alteration of the Corn Laws, especially for Scottish farmers as the "soil of this country was entirely different from the rich and fertile meadows of England" (ibid., 31/10/1833; 21/11/1833)

constitutional means, although they left open the divisive question of whether this should be gradual or immediate.[9] Weir contrasted the "business-like manner" of the Edinburgh mechanics with Glasgow's apathy, and condemned in particular the prevalent opinion in the city that no progress could be made "till scarcity shall make the people feel the effects of the Corn Laws".[10]

By December, 1833, the Lord Provost of Glasgow had received a requisition for a public meeting on 19/12/1833 to form an anti-corn-law society, but it was different in complexion from the movement in Edinburgh. The requisionists were middle-class Whigs, appealing to middle-class, commercial interest groups - "bankers, merchants, manufacturers, and other traders" - at a time, 1 pm.,[11] calculated to discourage large-scale working-class participation. From the start, the agitation was subject of a schism. The principal actors - James Oswald, M.P., Colin Dunlop of Tollcross, James Dennistoun of Golfhill, Henry Dunlop, John Fleming, C.J. Tennant, and Peter Mackenzie - represented different shades of reformist opinion. Oswald, Colin Dunlop, Henry Dunlop, and Tennant had all served their political apprenticeship on the management committee of the "aristo-:cratic" Glasgow Reform Association, dissolved in October, 1832,[12]

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9) The principal participants were William Biggar (printer), P.M. Knox (teacher), Mr. Reed (slater), James Alston (joiner), and George A. Fleming (painter). (ibid., 25/11/1833; "Scotsman", 23/11/1833.

10) "Glasgow Argus", 25/11/1833.

11) ibid., 2/12/1833; 16/12/1833.

12) Glasgow Reform Association. report. Glasgow, 1831 pp. 17-20. (Mitchell Library); "Dundee Advertiser", 11/10/1832.

while Mackenzie had been a prominent figure in the "popular" Glasgow Political Union, also defunct.(13) The latter succeeded in frustrating the intention of the "conservatives" that it should be made socially exclusive by imposing a membership fee of twenty shillings in favour of a still exclusive fee of five shillings, to permit more of the "humbler classes" to participate,(14) although the society was still safely in middle-class hands. The socially-exclusive, whig dominance of the society was confirmed in the ballot for the committee at the first general meeting of subscribers on 6/1/1834, when apart from Weir, only one other radical - James Wallace, a former committee member of Glasgow Political Union - was elected.(15)

On 9/3/1834, at a public meeting, the split reappeared, when Peter Mackenzie proposed that James Ewing, Glasgow's second M.P., who - unlike Oswald - had refused to attend the meeting, should be "tested" on the Corn Laws. This was rejected by the more con-:servative wing who carried an amendment that the committee should wait on every Liberal M.P. to ask for his support for the society's petition - a substitution which did little to ease Ewing's embarrass-:ment. On tactics too there was a division of opinion. Allan

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13) Glasgow Political Union: Objects, Rules and Regulations. Glasgow, 1831. (Mitchell Library); Peter Mackenzie: Reminiscences of Glasgow and the West of Scotland. vol.2, p.266.

14) "Glasgow Argus", 19/12/1833.
William Gray, a jeweller, was appointed interim secretary, but subsequently superseded by William Weir.

15) The first committee comprised John Fleming of Clairmount (mer-:chant); Walter Buchanan (merchant); Charles Tennant (St. Rollox Chemical Works); Alexander Dennistoun (merchant); James Wallace (tea merchant); Colin Dunlop of Tollcross (Clyde Iron Works); William Dunlop (cotton spinner); William Bankier (manufacturer); John Whitehead (merchant); William Gray (jeweller), William Weir, and Hugh Smith. (ibid.,6/1/1834)

Fullarton of Overton, a former committee member of the Reform Association, condemned the inefficiency of the Reform Act and the "flagrant coalition" of Whigs and Tories, concluding that the ballot was necessary, forcing the chairman, Lord Provost Robert Grahame, to rule him out of order, while the first president of the society, the conservative Colin Dunlop of Tollcross, was obliged to intervene to urge the need to sink differences of opinion in other fields, behind the one aim of repeal of the Corn Laws.(16) Such a prospect was impossible. On 14/2/1834, James Moir, a former committee member of the Political Union (and subsequent Chartist) had tabled a notice of motion favouring the reduction of the entry fee to one shilling to widen the social basis of the society and ensure a mass membership extend-:ing to at least the more affluent working-classes. This proposal was resisted by the conservatives associated with the former Reform Association - Dunlop, Buchanan, and W.P. Paton - on the weak ground of a technicality, that it involved an alteration to the society's con-:stitution. On 1/4/1834, in Moir's absence, it was moved by Dr. Thomas Lightbody and Samuel Southernden, and accepted by the society. This reverse for the conservatives was followed by another at the same meeting when Moir and Lightbody were added to the committee, which was otherwise re-elected in its entirety. The confirmation of Weir as secretary for a further year - a natural recognition of his initiative in the cause - was a further gain to the radical wing, and was only partly off-set by the election of Colin Dunlop as first president.(17)

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16) ibid., 24/2/1834.

17) ibid., 17/2/1834; 3/4/1834.

Despite its internal divisions, however, Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Society assumed a period of fervent, if short-lived activity, and established the pattern of future anti-corn-law agitation in Scotland. Arrangements were made with a local bookseller to distribute a regular supply of tracts on the Corn Laws (especially Earl Fitzwilliam's "Address to the landowners of Great Britain" and the "Corn Law Magazine", a publication of London Anti-Corn-Law Society) giving particular attention to agricultural areas. This was in line with Weir's repeated assertion that the prime purpose of such a body was to "diffuse knowledge" on the issue. The second function which he conceived it should fulfil was that of a vehicle for the expression and transmission of public sentiment, and this role materialised when the society determined to petition in support of Joseph Hume's parliamentary motion on the Corn Laws on 6/3/1834.(18) A systematic canvass for signatures produced 60,000 within two weeks(19) - a commentary on the degree of organisation achieved by the nascent association, and on Weir's own initiative in urging this form of activity.

The prototype set up in Glasgow was adopted in other areas. In Edinburgh, the middle-classes had shown no enthusiasm for the Mechanics' Anti-Corn-Law Association formed in November, and the "Scotsman" lamented that the Whig Government had "little chance to succeed, till the public calls more unanimously and decidedly for a change",(20) but on 24/1/1834, a meeting of "merchants, gentlemen, and others" took place preparatory to calling a public meeting to form an

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18) ibid., 17/2/1834; 20/2/1834.

19) ibid., 3/3/1834; "Tait's Edinburgh Magazine", April, 1834. p.214.

20) "Scotsman", 16/11/1833; 8/1/1834.

association "of all classes" pledged to repeal of the Corn Laws, when resolutions were adopted and an interim committee appointed.[21] The formation of an anti-corn-law association ensued.[22] From the outset, the agitation in Edinburgh was dominated by John Wigham, junr., a shawl manufacturer and merchant, who was deputy chairman of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce. On 28/1/1834, Wigham persuaded the Chamber by a majority vote to petition for total repeal as the Corn Laws were "unjust in principle". A Quaker, his attitudes reflected a com-:bination of moral principles and commercial interest. He contended that the Corn Laws bore most heavily on those with limited pecuniary resources, especially operatives in the export trades, that they entailed a continous danger of social unrest, and that as the Chamber agreed in principle with freedom of trade, it was logical that it should extend to grain.[23]

Wigham determined, however, to widen the support for the agitation, by promoting a requisition to Lord Provost James Spittal for a public meeting to consider the propriety of petitioning for outright abo-:lition.[24] The list of 150 requisitionists contained the names of radical Whigs, like Duncan McLaren, Ralph Richardson, Andrew Millar,

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21) ibid., 25/1/1834; "Glasgow Argus", 27/1/1834.

22) "Tait's Edinburgh Magazine", January, 1834. p.512.

23) Minutes of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, 28/1/1834.

24) The aim of the agitation of 1833-34 was abolition - immediate or or gradual - of the Corn Laws, and not as suggested by one authority, a dispute in 1828-41, between the rival merits of a sliding scale or a fixed duty, with the radicals supporting the latter "unanimously". (C.R. Fay: The Corn Laws and Social England. p.86)

and John F. Macfarlane, and of middle-class radicals like William Tait and James Aytoun.[25] The meeting, held on 14/3/1834, revealed that Wigham had succeeded in creating a "union of all classes" in so far as several of those who had been prominent in the Mechanics' Association - such as P.M. Knox (teacher) and G.A. Fleming (artisan painter) - took part in the proceedings, but the fabric of unity among the middle-classes was less secure. Although Spittal, on Tait's motion, occupied the chair, he indicated that he did not support total and immediate repeal, contending that the corn growers were subject to peculiar burdens which foreign growers did not bear, and merely postulated that repeal could take place at an unspecified time in the future. On behalf of the more radical Whigs, Wigham was "very much inclined to doubt their title to so much sympathy" and urged "Free Trade over the World" and "Equal Laws for the good of all" through the force of moral persuasion. To placate all shades of opinion, the meeting adopted the compromise formula of a "speedy abolition" of the Corn Laws as contrary to "the principles of free trade". However, the rift in the Edinburgh agitation applied to tactics as well as aims. The "conservatives" overwhelmingly frustrated a proposal to censure the Lord Advocate, Abercromby, one of the city's Members for failing to support Hume's motion for a revision of the Corn legislation.[26] Despite the internal divisions, however, the metropolitan agitation, like that in Glasgow, achieved sufficient

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25) "Scotsman", 8/3/1834.

26) ibid., 15/3/1834; "Glasgow Argus", 17/3/1834.

unity of purpose to produce a petition against the existing Corn Laws containing 17-18,000 signatures.(27)

Paradoxically industrial Dundee, despite its history of previous anti-corn-law agitation, was the tortoise of the 1833-34 agitation; probably attributable in part to previous fustrations and to the death of George Kinloch, in early 1833. By the end of January, 1834, the free trade "Dundee Advertiser" had joined the "Scotsman" in lamenting general apathy towards the formation of anti-corn-law associations, observing that "even Dundee, which is seldom last in popular movements, seems to be asleep on this all-important subject". The "Advertiser" counselled the necessity of a public meeting and the formation of a body to continue the agitation,(28) but when the challenge was accepted, the initiative came, as in Edinburgh, from the working-class radicals. The Trades Unions of the city on 14/2/1834 petitioned against both the Corn Laws and the connection between Church and State. The principal movers - Edward Buik (flax-dresser), James Buik (weaver), Alexander Young (flax-dresser), James Whyte (ironmonger), and John Penny - were of predominantly working-class origin, and several of them, including Edward Buik, James Buik, and John Penny, were prominent members of Dundee Political Union. As such they had limited faith in the degree of transformation which had been achieved by the Reform Act. James Buik observed the futility of petitioning the existing legislature,

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27) "Tait's Edinburgh Magazine", June, 1834. p.359.

28) "Dundee Advertiser", 31/1/1834.

Letters urging repeal of the Corn Laws appeared in the columns of the "Advertiser" in 1833-34. (ibid., 5/7/1833; 29/11/1833; 24/1/1834).

but urged the need for anti-corn-law associations.[29]

By May, they had been joined belatedly by the middle-classes. Provost Alexander Kay received a requisition from 125 "merchants, manufacturers, and others" including Edward Baxter (of the flax-spinning firm), George Duncan (future M.P. for the city), George Kinloch of Kinloch, Junr., and Bailie William Christie (chairman of the local Political Union).[30] The ensuing meeting, on 14/5/1834, indicated that a union of all classes had taken place. With most of the mills closed, and the trades unions in full support, a demon-:stration of 10-15,000 took place in the scene of previous radical rallies in Dundee, Magdalen Yard. The mixed social composition of the movement was reflected in the selection of speakers, who included James Brown (flax-spinner), William Christie (banker), George Milne (solicitor), and Edward Buik, James Buik and Alexander Young, representing the operatives. The radical complexion of the Dundee Whigs precluded the possibility of a schism, unlike Edinburgh, and there was unanimous approval for the dominant theme of the agitation that by submission to the Corn Laws, the urban classes were depriving themselves of "the practical benefits of reform" (George Milne) and that the Whig administration under Grey had been "mere nibblers at reform" (John Penny). The danger that such radical attitudes would lead to the conclusion that organic constitutional changes were essential as a prerequisite to repeal of the Corn Laws was countered by William Weir, who impressed on the Dundee free traders that Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Society had recognised the necessity for other reforms

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29) ibid., 21/2/1834.

30) ibid., 9/5/1834.

too, but had merely determined to give priority to the corn question as one of the most important. Weir feared that the division of opinion over the issue of a comprehensive or a restricted aim which had threatened to disrupt the Glasgow agitation in its formative stages would afflict the movement in Dundee. Significantly, he also realised the futility of spontaneous, unco-ordinated local demonstra-:tions, and utilised the platform of the Magdalen Yard meeting to advocate the need for co-ordinated activity among the anti-corn-law societies of Scotland and England, with simultaneous petitioning.(31)

The Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Society formed as a result of the meeting commenced with a representative interim committee of 49 - mainly drawn from the middle-class manufacturers, merchants, and shopkeepers of the city - but including at least ten members of working-class origin, principally flax-dressers in the linen industry. The latter included James Saunders, the Scouringburn weaver(32) who had been chairman of the Dundee operatives' anti-corn-law committee in 1826-27. Moreover, although the offices in the society were principally filled from the middle-classes - George Kinloch (advocate and landowner), president; Baillie William Christie, vice-president; George Milne, Secretary; and William Moyes (merchant), treasurer - the entry fee of sixpence with no further contribution except for special purposes ensured that it would be open to all but the lower-paid, generally unskilled artisans. The major division of opinion within the society was not a social or a political one, but a difference of opinion on the

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31) ibid., 16/5/1834; "Glasgow Argus", 15/5/1834.
The participants also included two radical Whig members of the landed interest, George Kinloch of Kinloch, junr., and Patrick Chalmers of Auldbar.

32) "Dundee Advertiser", 16/5/1834.

tactical question of whether to implement Weir's advice in favour of simultaneous petitioning, or whether to reject it in favour of an immediate petition. Like its Edinburgh counterpart, Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Society determined on the latter course.(33)

Outside the larger centres of population, some attempt was made to emulate the examples of the anti-corn-law societies formed in the former. On 10/3/1834, an anti-corn-law demonstration attended by 2,000, and chaired by Lord Provost Adam Pringle was held in the North Secession Meeting-house, Perth, when it was agreed to form an association, to agitate for repeal.(34) In Fife, Strathmiglo, Ceres, Leslie, Dysart, and Auchtermuchty also followed suit. The broad social basis of the city societies was also accepted as the pattern for the associations established in the small burghs. The entry fee to the society at Ceres was 3d.(35) However, the existing radical associations also furnished a vehicle for the agitation. Markinch Political Union had petitioned for repeal on 12/2/1833, along with other projects of parliamentary reform,(36) and in 1834, Balmerino Political Union(37) and Errol and Carse of Gowrie Political Union(38) did likewise. In most areas, however, the agitation was based on transient public meetings, frequently held in Dissenting churches - an augury of the future - and chaired by middle-class civic leaders. The demand for repeal of the Corn Laws was not infrequently

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33) ibid., 23/5/1834.

34) "Glasgow Argus", 17/3/1834; "Scotsman", 15/3/1834.

35) "Glasgow Argus", 5/5/1834; 12/5/1834; 2/6/1834; "Scotsman", 12/4/1834.

36) ibid., 20/2/1833.

37) Dundee Advertiser", 14/3/1834.

38) "Scotsman", 12/3/1834.

interspersed with requests for further measures of parliamentary reform, notably triennial parliaments.[39] The demonstrations were stimulated by the example of others, rather than by any systematic attempt to organise them, although William Weir preached the necessity for activity in Greenock, while attending a local Whig dinner, with some success - a requisition was submitted to the provost who subsequently chaired a demonstration of 1,000.[40]

By the Autumn of 1834, the agitation had faltered. In Dundee, the alliance forged between the working- and middle-classes proved too brittle to survive the increased tension in the linen industry between masters and operatives. Edward Baxter and William Christie were in the forefront of an attempt to break the Dundee and Lochee Weavers' Union[41] - a dispute regretted by the "Dundee Advertiser" because it prevented a united campaign against the Corn Laws,[42] in view of the identification of working-class repealers with the trades unions in the city. When the urban interests in Dundee patched up their differences again on Wellington's accession to office, it was for a different purpose - defence of the Reform Act.[43] In Edinburgh too, a split took place. Completely disillusioned with the Whigs who had left all the major monopolies untouched, and having concluded that no progress could be made with meaningful reforms on issues such as the

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39) ibid., 22/1/1834; 22/2/1834; "Glasgow Argus", 20/1/1834; "Dundee Advertiser", 7/3/1834.

40) "Glasgow Argus", 13/2/1834; 20/2/1834; "Tait's Edinburgh Magazine", April, 1834. p.214.

41) "Dundee Advertiser", 13/6/1834; 20/6/1834; 27/6/1834; 4/7/1834.

42) ibid., 11/7/1834.

43) ibid., 5/12/1834.

Corn Laws, before a further measure of parliamentary reform, the working-class radicals hived off to form their own "Edinburgh Association for a further improvement in the Representation of the People" on 20/8/1834.(44) The formation of a new anti-corn-law association in Anderston on 2/9/1834 was hailed by the "Glasgow Argus" as evidence that the movement had "not been arrested, although for some months its progress has been scarcely perceptible", but the admission was more important than the counter-claim, and condemnation of public apathy constituted one of the principal themes in the speeches of the deputation from Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Society, who attended the inauguration.(45) Although the new association maintained a flicker of life in an agitation which had disappeared elsewhere, by transmitting a free trade petition to Colin Dunlop, M.P., on 9/2/1835,(46) even the apostle of the exclusive aim of Corn Law repeal, William Weir, had begun to doubt whether any progress could be made under the existing constitution of Parliament, and had placed a new emphasis in the columns of the "Argus" on the ballot as the necessary prerequisite to more meaningful reform in other spheres.(47)

What Weir failed to appreciate was that lack of interest in the Corn Laws was attributable less to the inadequacy of the Reform Act

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44) "Scotsman", 23/8/1834.

45) Both Walter Buchanan and Dr. Thomas Lightbody castigated public apathy on this issue. The latter was not surprised at the Government's refusal to concur in the motion for repeal "when the people themselves were so cold and apathetic on this point". The new association had an entry fee of 3d. ensuring a broad social base, probably under Lightbody's influence as the prime mover in the project. ("Glasgow Argus", 4/9/1834).

46) ibid., 12/2/1835.

47) ibid., 9/11/1835.

of 1832, and more to economic conditions. The good harvests and low prices of 1834-36, in which the principal problem was agrarian distress, ensured that there was no economic or social impulse for a sustained agitation. Although the commercial and manufacturing interests had been represented in the agitation of 1833-34, the initiative had devolved on the political radicals and the motivation of the movement had been political - frustration and disappointment with the Reform Act - rather than economic. Without the spur of economic distress, the interest of the commercial interests was liable to remain largely on an academic and political plane, despite their belief in principle in total repeal as consistent with the principles of free trade. To the radicals, however, the situation also provided a dilemma. The agitation had shown the apparent inadequacy of the 1832 Reform Act, and had underlined the basic division of aims and philosophy dividing them from the more conservative Whigs. Two responses were open to them. They could recognise the futility of attempting to carry individual reforms such as Corn Law repeal - which was merely one of a number, albeit an important measure - and broaden their aim to encompass organic constitutional changes as the prerequisite for other reforms, as Weir himself had considered the only escape in 1835 when the agitation was stilled. Alternatively they could resolve to rectify the deficiencies of the agitation of 1833-34, especially its lack of co-ordination, and regard Corn Law repeal as long-term but attainable aim, providing that sufficient effort was put into propagating its need among the middle-classes. From 1836, a growing division of opinion emerged between the two schools of thought in Scotland, each of which grew in strength with the waning of prosperity in 1837-38.

For the anti-corn-law movement, the formation of the London Anti-Corn-Law Association in 1836 marked a significant development, principally because the association's title was misleading. Instead of a purely local society, it was in a territorial sense, a national committee with members drawn from several parts of Britain, including such prominent Scottish free traders as Patrick Chalmers of Aulbar, M.P. Robert Wallace, M.P. William Ewart, M.P., William Tait, Dr. John Taylor, and William Weir (who joined subsequently to its form-:ation). Politically and socially, it was less "national" in com-:plexion: all the Scottish members of it were middle-class radicals, albeit of varying hues. For the future, however, it set several pointers. It recognised the necessity for a long-term, systematic, co-ordinated anti-corn-law agitation through local anti-corn-law societies, the promotion of public meetings on the subject (in isolation from extraneous issues), and the education of public opinion through the distribution of tracts and the insertion of propaganda in metropolitan and provincial newspapers. The aim of total repeal of the Corn Laws was accepted from the agitation of 1833-34, but the London Association's plan of campaign indicated that the predominant vehicle of previous agitations - the short-lived, local protest, arising spontaneously - was ineffective, and had to be jettisoned. The societies of 1833-34, which were then the exception to the character of the agitation as a whole, were to be promoted as the norm to counter the prevalent apathy, but no longer to act in

isolation: they were to be co-ordinated.[48] That the lofty hopes of the 1836 London Anti-Corn-Law Association failed largely to be translated into reality does not detract from its significance as a collation of ideas - from individuals such as William Weir who had been advocating co-ordinated petitioning in 1834 - for future application. Not least important, it was an opportunity for anti-corn-law advocates from different parts of the country to become acquainted with each other, and collectively with those who espoused their cause in Parliament - such as Hume, Grote, Roebuck, and Molesworth - although in most cases, they were familiar with each other anyway, as fellow-advocates of other radical objectives.

Moreover, in Scotland at least, the statement of aims of the London Anti-Corn-Law Association was no dead letter. In 1837-38, Weir succeeded in realising in the west of Scotland (and in certain other localities) the aspirations of the London Association. Although the organisers of the latter have been summarily dismissed (by Cobden's biographer, unsurprisingly) as poor organisers,[49] such a description could not be applied to Weir. His relative success, however, derived mainly from a change in economic and social con-:ditions in Scotland in 1837-38, which provided a head of steam for a popular movement. At the beginning of 1837, there was little to betray the end of the "boom" of the mid-1830's, and the "Scotsman" commenting on John Clay's parliamentary motion for a revision of the

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48) Archibald Prentice: op.cit. Vol. 1, pp.49-50.
Also; "London Anti-Corn-Law Association for procuring the Total Repeal of the Corn Laws", London, 1836, in J.B. Smith Papers, Vol. 1, Ms. 923.2. S 333.

49) John Morley: The life of Richard Cobden, Vol. 1, p.143.

existing Corn Law of 1828 in favour of a fixed duty, observed that although Peel's law was bad in principle, the moderate price of grain "and the comfortable state" of the labouring classes had deprived the subject of interest, while the laws had been rendered "almost nugatory by the late great improvements in agriculture".(50) By the end of April, however, a recession had hit the "Comfortable state" of the weavers in the linen industry of Perth, where the prices of some fabrics were reduced by 15%, over 1,000 weavers were idle in Pollokshaws, while the weavers in the cotton trade in Crieff petitioned the local gentry for employment.(51) Within a month, public subscriptions to relieve distress were being raised in Paisley (where 2,000 were unemployed), Edinburgh, and Glasgow.(52) Other areas followed suit. With hundreds of weavers idle, Dunfermline raised over £1,000 to relieve local distress, which was exacerbated by influenza, typhus fever, and measles. Moreover, as late as July, 1838, although the depression had considerably abated, there were still over 600 weavers in the town out of employment.(53) The situation was further aggravated by a rise in grain prices, which although still "moderate" were measureably higher than those of 1834-36.(54) Those on low incomes were thus squeezed from both sides, facing an increased price of bread, with reduced purchasing power. The stage was thus set for a renewal of working-class interest in the

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50) "Scotsman", 22/3/1837.

51) ibid., 22/4/1837; 26/4/1837; 29/4/1837.

52) ibid., 6/5/1837; 13/5/1837; 7/6/1837.

53) Ebenezer Henderson: Annals of Dunfermline and Vicinity, 1069-1878 pp.642-3.

54) D.G. Barnes: A History of the English Corn Laws. App. B.

Corn Laws, as the section of the community most acutely affected, in so far as the cost of the "necessaries of life" comprised a considerably more significant proportion of the household budget.

The revival of interest in the Corn Laws occurred spontaneously, rather than in one universal burst of enthusiasm. In June, 1837, a public meeting in Strathmiglo (where a society existed in 1834) petitioned for relief for the working-classes through repeal of the Corn Laws, and the adoption of free trade,[55] while 7,000 attended a mass anti-corn-law demonstration on a field north of Forfar (Windmill Brae), when deputations from Dundee, Kirriemuir, Letham, Carseburn, and other weaving communities in Forfarshire were present. The meeting was primarily working-class in composition, while two of the speakers (R. Proctor and A. Morrison) were weavers, Moreover, the aim of the demonstration was instant relief by allowing grain to enter the home market free of duty "to afford temporary relief to the working-classes in the unprecedented state of distress". Nevertheless, the middle-classes provided the majority of the speakers - W. McLeish (vinter), P. Thornton (manufacturer), and significantly for the future, two dissenting ministers, the Rev. Mr. Lowe (Independent) and the Rev. Mr. Mackay (Methodist) [56]. The theme of working-class participation apparent at the Strathmiglo and Forfar meetings also extended, however, to the formation of anti-corn-law associations. In June, Kirkcaldy Anti-Corn-Law Association, consisting chiefly of the working-classes, or at least non-electors of the burgh, was formed, and proceeded to issue a circular on the

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55) "Scotsman", 21/6/1837.

56) ibid., 5/7/1837.

Corn Laws to the electors of the burgh during the 1837 election.[57] In Glasgow an anti-corn-law association was organised in the suburbs of Cowcaddens, Blackquarry, and Springburn - the second society in the suburbs of the city - to co-operate with the existing Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association in promoting petitions. It held its first public meeting on 28/8/1837, when one of the moving spirits was Mr. McGavany, a handloom-weaver, who dwelt on the theme that high prices for bread arising from the Corn Laws forced those near subsistence level to work longer hours, thus depriving them of utilising the time "for relaxation, for educational purposes, and for the general improvement of their minds"[58] - a repetition of a peculiarly Scottish social attitude on the value of education for the masses.

Despite these local protests, there was little indication at the end of August, 1837, that a more systematic agitation would emerge. Concurrently with a report on the formation of Blackquarry Anti-Corn-Law Association, Weir made the revealing admission in the columns of the "Glasgow Argus" that "a temporary apathy on the part of the public is no apology for remissness; it is, on the contrary, an additional argument for exertion". A similar admission was implicit in the plea of Anderston Anti-Corn-Law Association two months later, when they issued an address calling for a cessation of activity on "questions of little or no moment" and a concentration on "one well-directed movement" for the removal of the Corn Laws, "nor slacken in our zeal for the accomplishment of this object until success shall have

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57) David Forrester to George Wilson, Kirkcaldy, 19/3/1840, in Letter Book of the Anti-Corn-Law League. Vol. 3, No. 453. (hereinafter referred to as L.L.B.)

58) "Glasgow Argus", 31/8/1837; "Scotsman", 2/9/1837.

crowned our labours".(59) The first steps towards the object of a "well-directed" movement were taken early in the following month, when delegates of several anti-corn-law associations in Glasgow and district, including Anderston, Blackquarry, and Auchinearn, met in the Harness-weavers' office, Trongate, to form a co-ordinating committee, of which William Weir was elected chairman, and John Mackinnon, secretary of Anderston Anti-Corn-Law Association, secretary. At the committee's next business meeting later in the same month, it indicated that its official style - the Central Anti-Corn-Law Associ-:ation for the West of Scotland - was misleading in so far as its interest extended beyond any possible such geographical definition. Having heard reports of anti-corn-law associations in existence or in embryo in Hamilton, Partick, Pollockshaws, Gorbals, Paisley, and Crieff, it determined to commence a preliminary subscription to finance its activities, formed a committee to issue an official Address, and instructed Weir to correspond with Colonel Perronet Thompson, author of the celebrated "Catechism on the Corn Laws".(60)

The "Address" of the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association published in December, 1837, invited all suburbs and villages near Glasgow to send delegates to the committee, and communications from more distant associations, thus recognising the impossibility of forming a truly "national" committee for geographical reasons. The Address further invited all requiring information to enquire of the Central Association, which would indicate the source of it. Its declared aim was to provoke discussion and petitions, and "should

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59) "Glasgow Argus", 12/10/1837.

60) ibid., 4/12/1837.

our organisation and our means extend sufficiently, we will adopt the plan, so successfully pursued by the Anti-Slavery society, of sending lecturers through the country". Weir concurred in the dual role ascribed to the central Association, of disseminating information, setting up corresponding societies, and getting up petitions, and once a position of strength was secured, "the missionary system is what will do the deed". He added the example of O'Connell's Catholic Association to that of Clarkson's anti-slavery movement as a model for the Central Association, and hoped that in order to extend the effective influence of the Association, more distant associations would appoint local residents living in Glasgow as delegates to the joint committee.(61)

The extent to which the Central Association lived up to its founders' expectations, however, was severely circumscribed. Principally for geographical reasons, it remained orientated largely within the confines of Glasgow and its suburbs, despite its interest in other areas. The delegates present invariably represented associations within the city, and indeed, even the Address setting forth its aims, was officially released on behalf of five Glasgow societies - Anderston, Auchinearn, Blackquarry, Springburn, and Tollcross. Even in Glasgow, the development of new associations in the suburbs, subsequent to the formation of the Central Association, although they undoubtedly owed something to the interest in the issue created by it, were largely formed by local initiative. Thus the inaugural meeting of Pollockshaws Anti-Corn-Law Association, held during the same evening as a business meeting of the Central

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61) ibid., 4/12/1837.

Association, was chaired by Bailie Leckie, and the moving spirits were Andrew Rankin (shoemaker) and Charles McGrigor (weavers' secretary). Neither Weir nor Mackinnon were present. A new association formed in Bridgeton, in December, 1837, also pursued an active and largely independent course, publishing their own Address, and dividing the village into districts to be the individual responsibilities of members of the Association committee, who would utilise it for canvassing.(62) The Central Association exercised little, if any, control over the freedom of individual associations, leaving them to devise their own rules. The Central Association merely framed rules for its own conduct, including the terms on which delegates from the constituent associations were received, and fixed subscriptions from the latter to cover unavoidable expenses.(63) Apart from the co-ordination of the petitioning activities of individual associations prior to the introduction of Villiers' parliamentary motion in the House of Commons in February, 1838, the Central Association's own activity in Glasgow was restricted to instructing Weir to request the directors of Glasgow Reform Associ-:ation to co-operate, and to seek similar assistance from Glasgow Town Council.(64)

Outwith Glasgow, the influence of the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association was also strictly curtailed, although its interest was widespread geographically. Its meetings were effectually debarred by distance from participation by delegates from local associations,

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62) ibid., 1/1/1838; 1/2/1838; 8/2/1838.

63) ibid., 15/1/1838.

64) ibid., 1/1/1838; 15/1/1838.

and Weir's hope that distant associations would be represented by citizens resident in Glasgow failed to materialise. Reports of the activities of local associations in being or in embryo were made, however, to meetings of the Central Association. Members of the Central Association appeared on the platforms of local anti-corn-law associations,(65) but as in Glasgow, the local associations were completely independent. Thus Saltcoats Anti-Corn-Law Association formed on 2/1/1838, determined to limit their activities to a small quarterly subscription to purchase books and other means of receiving and communicating information on the subject.(66) The Central Association was, however, as it set out to be, a means of co-ordinating petitioning activity, and a source of information and advice on the agitation. Girvan free-traders were advised by the Central Association to form a permanent committee or association - it did not matter which option was adopted - "as the struggle for the abolition of the Corn Laws was not likely to be brought to a successful issue in one day".(67)

Local leadership and initiative was the prerequisite for successful agitation within any locality, and in Perthshire the Central Association had an agent who provided a northern counterpart of Weir's activities in Glasgow. On 22/11/1837, an anti-corn-law association was formed in Crieff, with the intention of co-operating with the Central Association in Glasgow. Office bearers appointed included Alexander Fyfe (surgeon) as secretary, and J. McNab (solicitor) as

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65) ibid., 15/1/1838.
66) ibid., 8/1/1838.
67) ibid., 1/1/1838.

treasurer.[68] McNab and a delegation from Crieff proceeded to agitate the question in Perth, while Fyfe turned his immediate attention to the reformers of Dunning.[69] By early January, 1838, Dr. Fyfe was enabled to report to the Central Association, that six associations were ready to co-operate with the former - Crieff Anti-Corn-Law Association, Errol and Carse of Gowrie Political Union, Dunning Anti-Corn-Law Association (formed by Fyfe), Perth Radical Association (promised Fyfe to move when Glasgow wished), Methven Anti-Corn-Law Association (formed by McNab and Fyfe), and Auchterarder Reform Association. There were also, in Fyfe's view, associations at Stanley and Bankfoot which would be prepared to co-operate, Comrie was forming an association, and Fyfe intended "trying" Dunblane.[70] Fyfe further verified that there was an association in Dunfermline, prepared to co-operate with the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association.[71]

However, there was a two-way communication between local anti-corn-law leaders such as Fyfe, and the Central Association, which went further than merely submitting reports of local activities to the joint committee in Glasgow. Tracts were exchanged for distri-:bution and local viewpoints expressed to the Central Association on further activity which it could undertake - an indication of faith in its potential ability to put such aspirations into practice. Fyfe was one of the first to suggest to the Central Association that it should endeavour to establish contacts in England and Ireland, and

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68) ibid., 4/12/1837.
69) ibid., 1/1/1838.
70) ibid., 15/1/1838.
71) ibid., 8/2/1838.

probably as a result of this, Weir was instructed to correspond with likely parties in these countries,[72] although the concept of Glasgow as a missionary centre had been implicit in the first Address of the Central Association. Crieff Anti-Corn-Law Association determined to distribute copies of the Glasgow Address, and further opened up a subscription in Crieff to assist the Central Association in its activities, "especially to enable the (Central) Association to send active and prudent agents into England and Ireland, to lay before the people the enormous evils arising from the Corn Bill, and to organise associations". They urged other associations to send their "mite" for the same purpose.[73] The expression of similar sentiments after the defeat of Villiers' Motion in Parliament had confirmed that there was no short-cut to success, by Dysart Anti-Corn-Law Associ-:ation, who in sending copies of their own local Address to Glasgow for distribution in agricultural areas, offered to share the cost of publishing an Address and agitating the corn question in Ireland, produced a new determination among the members of the Central Association to make Glasgow "a permanent centre of missionary agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws". They instructed Weir to take practical steps with the merchants of the city.[74] The selection of Ireland was not fortuitous; as Weir observed in the columns of the "Argus", the sister island furnished "a fine natural field for manufactures" once the Corn Laws were repealed, and the Irish would then have the money to purchase food.[75]

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72) ibid., 15/1/1838.
73) ibid., 8/2/1838.
74) ibid., 23/8/1838.
75) ibid., 3/9/1838.

The Central Association had already endeavoured, however, to translate the ideal of a missionary centre into reality, perhaps emulating the example of Dr. Thomas Murray of Edinburgh, whose lectures on the Corn Laws had reputedly produced a salutary effect in the east of Scotland.(76) On 3/4/1838, the Central Association unanimously agreed to a resolution from Auchinearn for lectures on the Corn Laws in every parish in Scotland,(77) but this too remained a dead letter except in so far as it was carried out by others. Perth Radical Association invited Mr. Nairn, a local flax-spinner, to give a lecture on the Corn Laws, but it was delivered to a meeting of the association.(78) On 4/6/1838, the Central Association agreed to request liberal papers to give full coverage to a lecture to be given by the Rev. Alexander Harvey, a local dissenting minister, to the Working Man's Association in Glasgow on 14/6/1838, but was obliged to defer the question of employing "missionaries" and lecturers due to a poor attendance.(79) The question was raised again when the Central Association unanimously adopted a motion from Anderston to address the merchants and manufacturers of Glasgow on the propriety of employing missionaries throughout the country,(80) and a month later, the Association agreed on a memorial to the commercial interests of the city requesting their co-operation in raising funds to try the experiment of "a missionary system against

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76) ibid., 22/3/1838.
77) ibid., 9/4/1838.
78) ibid., 30/4/1838.
79) ibid., 7/6/1838.
80) ibid., 9/7/1838.

the Corn Laws" similar to that against colonial slavery.[81] By the close of 1838, however, opinion in Glasgow on the Corn Laws was, as Weir conceded, "lukewarm",[82] and there was little hope of obtaining the financial resources for such a project.

Despite its failure to put into effect the second of its declared objectives - the establishment of a missionary system based on Glasgow - the Central Association had achieved some success in its first one. It had distributed tracts, given advice to emergent local anti-corn-law associations, and stimulated interest in the question in those areas in which its views had been propagated - Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Ayrshire, West Lothian, Fife, and Perthshire. Moreover, its call on local associations for petitions in support of Villiers' motion to reach London by the last week in February, 1838,[83] had evoked a considerable response,[84] with several mass petitions - Girvan (1,500 signatories), Gorbals (9,000) and Kirkcaldy (1,700).[85] The Central Association also served to bring anti-corn-law associations in different parts of Scotland together - including those, such as Kirkcaldy,[86] which had been in existence prior to the formation of the Central Association. The necessity for a missionary system was also realised, but foundered on the

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81) ibid., 2/8/1838.

82) William Weir to Archibald Prentice, Glasgow, 24/12/1838 in Letter Book of the Anti-Corn-Law League, Vol. 1, No. 2.

83) "Glasgow Argus", 1/2/1838.

84) ibid., 5/2/1838; 8/2/1838; 12/2/1838; 15/2/1838; 22/2/1838; 22/3/1838.

85) David Forrester to George Wilson, Kirkcaldy, 19/3/1840, in L.L.B., Vol. 3, No. 453.

86) "Glasgow Argus", 9/7/1838.

problem which subsequently beset the Anti-Corn-Law League north of the Border - the reluctance of Scottish free traders to provide finance on an adequate scale for a sustained agitation. The Central Association marked a stage in the evolution of the anti-corn-law movement in Scotland and in Britain - it was a pilot scheme for the aspirations of the otherwise abortive London Anti-Corn-Law Association to be translated into at least partial reality on a local scale. The relative success of the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association for the West of Scotland must be measured, above all, against the fact that as Villiers personally conceded when introducing his motion in Parliament in early 1838, there was "no particular excitement on the subject, . . . the country generally being in a healthy state".(87)

The Central Anti-Corn-Law Association was more successful than the later League in one respect: it succeeded in averting the antagonism of those radicals who had determined after the failure of 1833-34 to give priority to comprehensive parliamentary reform to the exclusion of all extraneous issues. It further retained the support of many other ultra-radicals who subsequently identified themselves with the Chartist movement. Even in 1836 when prices of corn were low, and wages comparatively high, the Corn Laws were a principal object of ultra-radical criticism,(88) but with the depression of 1837, this attitude correspondingly hardened. Dr. John Taylor demanded the abolition of the Corn Laws at a Chartist

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87) "Scotsman", 21/2/1838.

88) "Dundee Chronicle", 20/2/1836; 27/2/1836; 26/3/1836; "Glasgow Argus", 26/12/1836 (quoting the "Perth Chronicle").

rally on Glasgow Green on 14/6/1837, observing that they "would leave it to the speculating philosopher to talk about triennial parliaments, the vote by ballot, and education and endowed churches - let them speculate on these as much as they will - but we must have food before we can enjoy any of them".(89) At the same time, however, he concurred in a decision of Edinburgh Radical Association that no radical should support any candidate in the forthcoming election who was unprepared to endorse triennial parliaments, the ballot, and household suffrage, as well as the "speedy and total repeal of the Corn Laws".(90) In the Leith election of 1837, Taylor was prepared to give only modified support to J. Erskine Murray of Aberdona, a free-trader and member of Leith Radical Association, whose platform included "a more equitable division of the franchise", as he (Taylor) was only prepared to fully sanction a candidate endorsing universal suffrage, annual parliaments, and the ballot(91) - the principal planks on the Chartist platform. Thus in 1837, ultra-radical opinion favoured total repeal of theCorn Laws, indeed regarded such a step as an integral part of its programme, but merely one feature among many. There was no sense of conflict between advancing further organic changes to the constitution, and engaging in an agitation against the Corn Laws.

In these circumstances, the support of most ultra-radicals for the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association or any other vehicle for protest against the Corn Laws was natural. Several radical associations declared their adhesion to the Central Association,

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89) "Glasgow Argus", 15/6/1837.

90) "Scotsman", 1/7/1837.

91) ibid., 5/7/1837.

either by sending delegates or transmitting petitions at the Association's request. These included Errol and Carse of Gowrie Political Union,[92] Whitburn Political Union,[93] Strathaven Reform Association,[94] Kirkintilloch Reform Association,[95] Dumbarton Reform Association,[96] and Bridgeton Radical Association.[97] Moreover, several prominent Chartists played a significant role in local anti-corn-law associations. Dr. John Taylor was appointed by Hamilton Anti-Corn-Law Association as their delegate to the Central Association.[98] Another prominent Chartist, John Rodger, was treasurer of Bridgeton Anti-Corn-Law Association, and an active member of the Central Association,[99] while the Association's energetic organiser in Perthshire, Dr. Fyfe, was one of the Chartists participating in the Calton Hill meeting, on 28/5/1838.[100] Perhaps more significantly for the future, however, was the absence

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92) "Glasgow Argus", 7/12/1837.

93) ibid., 15/2/1838. Also; Leslie Wright: Scottish Chartism, p.37.

94) Strathaven Reform Association, formed on 30/1/1838, with the objects of extension of the suffrage, ballot, triennial parliaments, repeal of the Corn Laws, had 600 members. They nominated James Thompson (cotton-broker) as their delegate to the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association for the West of Scotland. (-"Glasgow Argus", 22/2/1838.)

95) ibid., 8/3/1838.

96) "Scotsman", 21/2/1838.

97) On 30/7/1838, the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association agreed to admit a delegate from Bridgeton Radical Association, and from any similar organisation including repeal in its plat-:form; also, to correspond with any such organisation. (-"Glasgow Argus", 19/7/1838).

98) ibid., 15/1/1838.

99) ibid., 8/2/1838; 22/3/1838.

100) "Scotsman", 8/12/1838.

of James Moir, who had taken such an active part in the activities of the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Society in 1834, and to a lesser extent of ultra-radical leaders, such as Abram Duncan and Edward Fraser, from the ranks of the anti-corn-law movement in 1837-38.

There was, however, until mid-1838 no clear-cut party for either repeal of the Corn Laws or further parliamentary reform - merely a difference of emphasis among Scottish radicals on the priority which they attached to either plank of the one platform, and shades of opinion on the degree of parliamentary reform required. Thus at the Calton Hill ultra-radical meeting of 28/5/1838, Edward Fraser spoke at some length on "the damnable Corn Laws" and on other measures of the Tories and Whigs "between whom he did not see much difference . . . All those evils would be cured by Annual Parliaments, etc.".(101) His sentiments on the subject were echoed by other speakers at the same meeting. In the same month, a Chartist rally on Glasgow Green, addressed by the Birmingham radical, Thomas Attwood, M.P., and chaired by James Moir, witnessed the presence of numerous banners with inscriptions decrying the continued existence

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101) ibid., 30/5/1838.

of the Corn Laws.[102] On the other side of the coin, many of the anti-corn-law meetings endorsed other complaints too. Thus the Gorbals Anti-Corn-Law Association originated in a requisition asking for a public meeting to petition for the twin objects of the ballot and repeal of the Corn Laws,[103] and at the ensuing meeting on 8/12/1837, Weir, Alexander Hedderwick, and Dr. Thomas Lightbody spoke in support of both objects.[104] Weir addressed a further public meeting in Glasgow in the course of the same month, in favour of the ballot and an extension of the suffrage, during which he proclaimed his adhesion to "the abstract principle of universal suffrage", but moved no resolution to that effect as he had to carry other reformers along with him.[105]

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102) Banners carried slogans such as "Repeal of the Corn Laws", "From Corn Laws and Election Bribery, Oh, Lord, deliver us", "Mens' Food should not be taxed - we ask no concession - we demand our rights; free trade in corn". From Ruther-:glen, a large flag bore the legend:-

"Our rights to obtain,
"Let the masses decree
"That we both have the will
"And the power to be free.
"A free trade in corn, let the millions loud thunder -
"Join our ranks, oppressed brothers,
"You once obeyed your country's call,
"The rights you gained you gave to others,
"Press forward now for rights to all".

("Glasgow Argus", 21/5/1838; 24/5/1838; "Scotsman", 26/5/1838.)

103) "Glasgow Argus", 30/11/1837; 7/12/1837.

104) ibid., 11/12/1837.

105) "Scotsman", 3/1/1838.

From 22/2/1838, the editorial of the "Glasgow Argus" was headed with the caption of "Short Parliaments; Extension of the Suffrage; Redistribution of the Electoral Districts; Vote by Ballot".

The schism among Scottish radical opinion which occurred in mid-1838 was attributable in the first instance to the suggestion of the "Birmingham Journal" that it was vain to attempt to obtain a repeal of the Corn Laws until universal suffrage had been acquired, but underlying the new "hard-line" approach were other factors. In the first place, there was a growing division between the new ultras - such as Fraser - prepared to accept nothing short of the entire programme embodied subsequently in the Charter, and the "respectable" middle-class radicals like William Tait or James Aytoun, who were prepared to accept reform (including repeal of the Corn Laws) by instalments, albeit large ones. The latter had boy-:cotted the Calton Hill ultra-radical meeting of 28/5/1838.(106) Secondly, the new ultras were aware of the pull of the anti-corn-law movement as a rival attraction to the working-class (and middle-class) support which they in turn hoped, and required, to gain. In Scotland, working-class involvement in the agitation of 1837-38 had again been apparent, frequently to the forefront, in the formation of local anti-corn-law associations (above), in the transmission of an operatives' petition against the Corn Laws,(107) and in the evidence of J.C. Symons, Assistant Commissioner for the Handloom Weavers' Commission, who found that in Kilmarnock, the weavers attributed

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106) "Scotsman", 30/5/1838.

107) "Glasgow Argus", 23/7/1838.

From the manager, clerks, mechanics, tenders, dressers, weavers, etc., of Messrs. John and Archibald Reid, Glasgow. Others from the female operatives in the muslin manu-:factories of Glasgow, and by the operatives of Charles Todd's Springfield Works, Glasgow. (-"Glasgow Argus, 24/1/1839; 14/2/1839).

manufacturing distress to the operation of the Corn Laws.[108] The weavers of Cupar were of a similar mind, considering that an abo-:lition of the Corn Laws would be "productive of great relief to them, as well as to the country generally".[109] Finally, there was the indisputable fact that despite the apparent success of the anti-corn-law agitations of 1833-34 and 1837-38 in demonstrating public opinion on the issue, the so-called reformed Parliament had treated the expression of public feeling with disdain, producing a situation which was not dissimilar generally to 1815 or 1828, and evoking a similar response - if the existing composition of Parliament was a bar to progress, constitutional reform should be the key to further legislative reform.

The stand taken by the Birmingham radicals was rapidly adopted in Scotland by those ultra-radicals who had remained aloof from the activities of the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association. Indifference to the anti-corn-law movement was replaced by antagonism, and in turn by active opposition. Abram Duncan was the first to earn the rebuke of the "Glasgow Argus" for calling for universal suffrage, rather than repeal of the Corn Laws, as the former would "cure all the evils of the body politic", producing in turn a Chartist demand that the "Argus" would support universal suffrage.[110] Duncan's hostility increased, and at a second meeting on Calton Hill, Edinburgh, on 11/9/1838, he denounced the anti-corn-law movement "as an expedient got up by the whigs to distract the attention of the

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108) ibid., 4/6/1838.
109) ibid., 20/8/1838.
110) ibid., 30/8/1838; 6/9/1838; 10/9/1838.

working-classes from the more pressing and more useful agitation".[111]

A similar line was adopted by James Moir, who called on the working-classes not to lose sight of universal suffrage by agitating for repeal of the Corn Laws, contending that the agitation against the Corn Laws had been whipped up by the whigs to divert attention away from the growth of radicalism. He added the further warning that whereas repeal of the Corn Laws would doubtless follow universal suffrage, the converse was not true.[112] In Edinburgh, the radical staymaker, Peddie, who had also participated in previous anti-corn-law demonstrations (below) observed the despair of the working-classes for repeal till the state of representation in Parliament had been changed.[113]

However, while ultra-radical opinion in Scotland adopted the Birmingham "line" that universal suffrage should precede repeal of the Corn Laws, there was general acceptance of the necessity for the latter, and when the radicals of Perth formed a new radical reform association in Errol on 4/9/1838, its objects comprised both repeal of the Corn Laws and universal suffrage.[114] A few dissentients appeared, however, from this general attitude, including Moir. By September, 1838, some Chartists were questioning the wisdom of repeal of the Corn Laws at all, without a concurrent reduction of the National Debt, accepting the protectionist view that wages followed prices, that repeal would also result in reduced wages, and

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111) "Scotsman", 12/9/1838.
Edward Fraser was also present.

112) "Glasgow Argus", 6/9/1838.

113) ibid., 31/12/1838.

114) ibid., 1/10/1838.

that the working-classes would therefore have to pay the same level of taxation from reduced means. Some ultras advocated countering the activities of the Corn Law repealers, resulting in a further schism in the Chartist ranks, between those such as Moir who favoured such action, and those like Alexander Hedderwick of Glasgow, who believed that the anti-corn-law agitation should be left alone, while the Chartists ploughed their own furrow.[115] Moir's extremist position arose at least in part from his dissatisfaction with the numbers adjoining the recently-formed Glasgow Universal Suffrage Association: he warned members of it not to be led away by the Corn Law agitation.[116] Support for his position came from Edinburgh and Midlothian Universal Suffrage Association, whose president, John Duncan, warned J.J. Darling, an Edinburgh solicitor and free trader, that if an anti-corn-law meeting was called in Edinburgh over the winter of 1838-39, the U.S.A. would move an amendment for universal suffrage as "the only measure which can confer any benefit" on the people. Duncan further indicated that he feared "cheap bread" might be a prelude to "cheaper labour", and argued that any agitation against the Corn Laws should be waged within the vehicle of the Midlothian Universal Suffrage Association.[117] From the viewpoint of Weir and the Corn Law repealers, it made little if any difference whether the opposition of the ultra-radicals stemmed from their non-adherence to the cause of repeal, or their opposition to the means by which it was being pursued. In either case, the Chartist movement was a

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115) ibid.,17/9/1838.

116) ibid., 20/9/1838.

117) "Scotsman", 19/9/1838.

counter-magnet for working-class support which had hitherto been channelled into the anti-corn-law movement, or at worst, had been indifferent. Indeed, the fact that most Scottish Chartists recognised the legitimacy of the cause of repeal, and differed from the free traders only on the means by which the end was to be achieved made them potentially more dangerous rivals for working-class sympathy, which in Scotland had been consistently to the fore-:front in all the anti-corn-law agitations.

The allegation of the "Birmingham Journal" that it was vain to attempt to secure repeal of the Corn Laws until universal suffrage had been obtained, and its adoption by the ultra-radicals in Scotland forced Corn Law repealers to define their attitude - hitherto undefined - on the question of universal suffrage. They also felt obliged to justify an agitation for repeal of the Corn Laws in the face of the apparent futility of securing any concession from the House of Commons as constituted, after the rejection of Villiers' motion. Weir's reaction was to contend that an agitation for repeal of the Corn Laws would produce either repeal - what some Chartists feared - or "such a demonstration of the inadequacy of the 'Reform Parliament' to obtain justice, as would induce a sufficient minority of the enfranchised to unite with the unenfranchised to force an extension of the suffrage". Weir further contended that it was only by "ripening the public mind" to the condition of the lower classes that an extension of the suffrage could be "peaceably ob-:tained".(118) As a political radical, albeit a "respectable" one, Weir could not regard the corn question in isolation from his

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118) "Glasgow Argus", 6/8/1838.

aspirations for further parliamentary reform, and argued conversely from the Chartists that an agitation for repeal of the Corn Laws would be the more certain means to the end of a further instalment of organic constitutional changes, as "every monopoly that is destroyed sends fresh recruits to the cause of all",[119] in so far as one monopolist interest tended to support another. However, Weir conceived that by a strict separation of extraneous issues from the central aim of Corn Law repeal, it would be possible to draw on a wider base of support, and on other interest groups, for a campaign for what he regarded as the attainable aim of repeal of the Corn Laws.[120] rather than the mirage of universal suffrage.

Considering as he did that repeal of the Corn Laws would be a major step towards the fulfilment of parliamentary reform, which he felt free to agitate as an individual concurrently anyway, Weir did not see such a concept as contradictory to his philosophy as a radical. On the contrary, the anti-corn-law movement fulfilled, if Weir was correct in his political assessment, a complementary role to the Universal Suffrage agitation. On the same argument, the

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119) ibid., 10/9/1838.

120) On behalf of the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association, Weir wrote to Lord Brougham, that while their immediate aim was repeal of the Corn Laws, they were aware of other abuses which they traced "to defects in our legislative and represen-:tative systems. So far from wishing to divert public attention from those other urgently-required ameliorations in our institutions they will be found individually prompt to lend their aid to any movement for that end which affords a reasonable prospect of success. The restriction of their combined efforts to the question of the Corn Laws originated in the belief that this restriction would admit of the co-operation of many who might differ on other points - that it would bring to bear upon the organised defenders of the Corn Laws, a more numerous and concentrated organisation". (- ibid., 11/10/1838).

universal suffrage movement, though not complementary to the anti-corn-law agitation, was not - unless the former showed hostility - necessarily an antagonist.

Other free traders of a less radical hue than Weir, however, regarded the universal suffragists in a less indulgent light. The "Scotsman" which favoured repeal of the Corn Laws was extremely critical of the Chartists from a multiplicity of middle-class, whig fears and prejudices, which included the charge that they retarded the progress of reform on "really practicable measures" - such as Corn Law repeal - by "fostering a dread of change".(121) Moreover, the disruptive tactics of the universal suffragists provoked counter-sentiments from some free traders. A Chartist rally in Hawick addressed by Abram Duncan and Edward Fraser was protracted till very late to prevent an amendment being moved - with the obvious approval of the "Scotsman" - that "universal suffrage was at present uncalled for; and that the efforts of the people ought rather to be con-:centrated against the continuance of the Corn Laws".(122)

By the beginning of 1839, open hostility reigned between the majority of Scottish Chartists - whether from opposition to repeal or to the vehicle whereby the issue was being agitated. When several free traders in Edinburgh employed J.R. Reed, "a member of the working-classes" to give two lectures on the Corn Laws in late December, with a nominal admission charge of 2d. to encourage working-class participation, the second of these witnessed "a rather stormy discussion" between free traders and Chartists on which issue was

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121) "Scotsman", 29/8/1838; 1/9/1838; 22/9/1838; 3/11/1838.
122) ibid., 10/10/1838.

the priority - repeal of the Corn Laws or the Charter[123] - a discussion in which both parties appeared equally numerous. In Dumfries, on 24/1/1839, Chartists nullified an anti-corn-law meeting by succes-:sfully moving an amendment that the Corn Law was wrong in prin-:ciple, but that the current agitation against it was injudicious. The amendment was argued, however, on the fear that abolition would cause rural depopulation, an over-supply of labour in the towns, and lower wages, which it was contended was the motivation of the "Cotton Lords" in undertaking the campaign.[124] Further anti-corn-law meetings were captured by the Chartists in Kilmarnock and Glasgow, inspiring the free trade "Glasgow Chronicle", a radical Whig journal, to urge both parties to compromise and unite, in the belief that there was no hope of any change so long as the existing composition of Parliament was perpetuated.[125] In some localities, however, the Chartists concurred in repeal meetings, notably in Greenock and Kirkcaldy. At the latter meeting, active working-class participation was apparent, with George Howie, a flax-dresser, as one of the principal speakers.[126] There was no clear-cut social cleavage between the working- and middle-classes in Scotland on the

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123) ibid., 22/12/1838; 29/12/1838; "Glasgow Argus", 31/12/1838.

124) "Glasgow Argus", 31/1/1839.

125) "Glasgow Chronicle", 18/2/1839; 23/12/1839.
On 8/1/1839, the directors of the recently-formed Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association had rejected a proposal from Glasgow Universal Suffrage Association to include universal suffrage in their aims, (and the threat of opposition if the former did not comply) on the ground that it was in-:consistent with the object of the Association.
(-"Glasgow Argus", 10/1/1839).

126) "Glasgow Argus", 31/1/1839; 7/2/1839.

corn question by 1839, but the radical interest was increasingly divided on the issue of which question - or more accurately, which aspect of the one question - parliamentary reform or the Corn Laws, should receive priority. For the radicals, these were inextricably connected. As a body, the middle-class radicals, such as Weir or Erskine Murray, regarded the latter as the most effective, feasible blow at the social and political predominance of the landed interest, while working-class radicals, such as Peddie in Edinburgh, viewed parliamentary reform as the expedient means to the end of "just" legislation to ameliorate social and political grievances, including "dear bread".

The 1830's were a formative, if largely unsuccessful, period for the advocates of free trade in corn. The preliminary agitation of 1833-34 established the aim of total repeal in most areas, although the allied question of whether it should be gradual or immediate was frequently left conveniently vague. This aim was accepted by the later League in its more successful agitation. However, the major experimentation of 1833-38 was in the vehicle of protest. The anti-corn-law societies of 1833-34 were the first permanent associ-:ations formed in Scotland to agitate for repeal, and marked the transition belatedly from an agitation based largely on eighteenth century techniques, to its nineteenth century equivalent. The lack of co-ordination between the individual societies, and their con-:sequent limitation as machinery for missionary activity was realised and to some extent rectified in the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association in 1837-38, which attempted to put into effect on a regional scale the aspirations of the founders of the London Anti-Corn-Law Association of 1836. The evolution of an increasingly sophisticated

organisation, relying less on spontaneous enthusiasm, and accepting the obligation of a long-term proselytising role did not emerge suddenly with the League in 1839; it had its origins in the earlier and less successful societies of the 1830's, and in techniques borrowed from other agitations of the period, especially the anti-slavery movement. Nevertheless, the Central Association was substantially a failure. Geographically, despite its interest without the west of Scotland, it was largely Glasgow-based. In 1837-38, there was no organised anti-corn-law movement in Edinburgh, Dundee, or Aberdeen. More important, it failed to attract the support of interest groups other than a small core of radicals, many of whom were turning to universal suffrage as the panacea for all ills and the road to all further reform. Even the commercial interests who had participated, largely from immediate political frustration, in 1833-34, absented themselves in 1837-38. If more successful agitation was to be conducted, it had to be more widespread geographically and gain the adherence of middle-class interest groups. After 1833, however, the unsuccessful projects which had largely been fostered by Weir indicated that there would be an anti-corn-law movement in existence to take advantage of any future commercial distress and channel manufacturing discontent against the Corn Laws. The League learned from previous experience and especially from previous failures.

5. The emergence of the Anti-Corn-Law League in Scotland, 1839.

In mid-1838, Glasgow seemed, and was, the focal point of the anti-corn-law movement throughout Britain, although its influence was substantially confined to Scotland. Within a year, the focal point of an enlarged agitation had migrated south, and Manchester was the unquestioned leader of the movement, or perhaps more accurately, collection of local movements which comprised the anti-corn-law agitation. However, although a key factor in the renewed agitation of 1839 was the leadership of the Manchester free-traders - a leadership they retained until 1846 - it would be an exaggeration to suggest that the Anti-Corn-Law League was "clearly stamped from the start with the designation 'made in Manchester'".(1) The League was moulded in a Manchester crucible, but the ingredients represented commercial and industrial areas in several parts of Britain apart from Lancashire, who contributed to its formation in ideas and material resources. There was some degree of continuity before and after the League's formation: some anti-corn-law asso-:ciations (such as Kirkcaldy formed in 1837)(2) which had adhered to the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association subsequently were associated with the League. In short, the League did not start with a blank slate, but merely witnessed the assumption by Manchester of the leadership of a movement which was already in existence. There was a two-way transmission of ideas, men, and resources between Manchester and the rest of Britain, which has been insufficiently recognised.

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1) Asa Briggs: Victorian Cities. p.97.

2) David Forrester to George Wilson, Kirkcaldy, 19/3/1840 in L.L.B., vol. 3, no. 453.

The loss of leadership by Glasgow was far from clear in mid-1838, because although the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association's influence was concentrated in certain restricted areas in Scotland, it was the closest approach to a co-ordinated agitation as envisaged by the London Association of 1836, and some of its members had been demanding the extension of its activities to England and Ireland, with lecturers and correspondence. By late 1838, however, it was increasingly clear, that the Central Association in Glasgow had not the resources at its disposal to translate the hopes of some of its leaders for the evolution of a "missionary system" into practice. Whereas in February, 1838, the "Glasgow Argus" could boast that the masses were alive to the importance of the corn question, and that any meeting in a populous district would be numerously and enthusias-
:tically attended,(3) the growing hostility of the ultra-radicals in the latter half of the year, forced Weir to question the value of public meetings, missionary lectures, and petitions to Parliament. Weir was also obliged to recognise that not only the tactics might be wrong, but also the composition of the anti-corn-law movement. The Central Anti-Corn-Law Association had relied heavily on the support of a political interest group - the radicals. With this interest group subject to the pull of the counter-magnet of universal suffrage, he conceived that the enlistment of another interest group - a commercial and industrial one - would suffice as a substitute. Weir sought the support of the manufacturers, merchants and traders of industrial towns (such as Glasgow and Dundee), to replace the unenfranchised

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3) "Glasgow Argus", 22/2/1838.

classes who were "obviously intent on riding their hobby of universal suffrage", and who "won't dismount, whistle on them as you may".(4)

As the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association was "if not absolutely defunct, . . . in a hopeless state of suspended animation" by the end of 1838, Weir was approached by some electors in Glasgow's first ward to form a new one, which he did (but on a wider basis than for one municipal ward) after the distraction of the municipal elections of November 1838 were over.(5) The new Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association, formed in the Black Bull, at a meeting chaired by James Dunlop of Clyde, and convened by circulars addressed to electors in each of the nine municipal districts of the city, was different in social and political complexion from its predecessor. It represented the industrial and commercial middle-classes of Glasgow, epitomised in its first chairman, Alexander Johnstone of Oakbank, (cotton spinner). Weir as secretary constituted a hangover from the radical nature of past agitations in the city, and a recognition of his own services to the movement.(6) Significantly, however, the new association attempted to retain a considerable lower middle-class base, by retaining an entry fee of only one shilling (what Moir had advocated in 1834) although this was sufficient to deter the influx of working-class Chartists.

William Weir had, however, a specific purpose in forming the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association, other than merely combatting the prevalent apathy which existed in Glasgow in late, 1838, and putting the excitement which existed "into working shape". He had conceived the idea of pressing Parliament to be heard by counsel at the bar of

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4) ibid., 20/12/1838.

5) ibid., 7/1/1839.

6) ibid., 3/1/1839; 7/1/1839.

the House of Commons. As a member of the Scottish bar, he contended that Parliament was a court of justice, which could listen to a law-plea in support of repeal of the Corn Laws.(7) Weir was not suffi-:ciently sanguine to believe that the landed interest which dominated Parliament would be prepared to accept the case for repeal merely because it was presented by counsel, but he hoped that taking the issue directly to Parliament would stimulate interest in the question of the Corn Laws, if only because "the wrangling and disruption in the Commons after would keep public attention. The game played against the Orders in Council might be played again against the Corn Laws".(8) Weir envisaged Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association from the beginning as the vehicle for propagating what was his idea,(9) and at the inaugural meeting of the nascent association, the chairman and committee were directed to prepare an immediate petition to the Commons craving to be heard by counsel and to present evidence at the bar of the House, to ask for total repeal, to procure signatures for the petition, to obtain subscriptions to a guarantee fund - already urged by Weir through the "Argus"(10) - and when it was sufficiently advanced, to intimate to, and seek the co-operation of various chambers of commerce, free trade associations, and anti-corn-law associations in its support.(11) It was clear from the start that Glasgow could make no impact on Parliament

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7) ibid., 27/12/1838.

At the inaugural meeting of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association, William Craig alluded to the deputions sent to Westminster by the Anti-Slavery Movement. (ibid., 7/1/1839.)

8) William Weir to Archibald Prentice, Glasgow, 24/12/1838 in L.L.B., vol. I, no. 2.

9) "Glasgow Argus", 21/1/1839.

10) ibid., 27/12/1838.

11) ibid., 3/1/1838.

on its own, and that the support of other industrial communities was essential for the success of Weir's proposal, and before the new Glasgow association was formally initiated, the "Argus" had urged a delegation from Glasgow to proceed to Manchester, and expound it at the anti-corn-law dinner to be held by Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association in late January, 1839.[12]

Manchester's involvement in the anti-corn-law movement in 1838 was tardy. No anti-corn-law association existed until October (subsequently joined by Richard Cobden).[13] However, its business-like manner of setting to work, with lectures in Manchester and Birmingham by A.W. Paulton, raising subscriptions, and above all the "capture" by the Manchester free traders of the local chamber of commerce, in December, when they carried a petition for total repeal of the Corn Laws,[14] created a considerable impact in the Scottish liberal press,[15] which hailed the last as an indication that the agitation was gaining strength. The Manchester Chamber of Commerce petition established Lancashire as the Mecca for the free trade movement throughout Britain, insofar as it indicated a willingness on the part of the mercantile community in Manchester to move on the question. This fact was noted by the Scottish delegates not only in attending the Manchester anti-corn-law dinner on 23/1/1839, but also in their speeches at the event. Alexander Johnstone expressed "the feelings of obligation which the men of Glasgow entertain towards

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12) ibid., 27/12/1838; 7/1/1839.

13) Archibald Prentice: op. cit. vol. I, pp. 73-74.

14) ibid., vol. I, pp. 64-65, 77, 79-88, 91-93.

15) "Glasgow Chronicle", 20/12/1838; "Scotsman", 22/12/1838; "Reformers' Gazette", 29/12/1838, p. 423.

those of Manchester, who first brought forward this question (Corn Laws) while we were slumbering". The Hon. J. Erskine Murray who attended as in interested individual from Edinburgh, noted that prior to the proceedings of Manchester Chamber of Commerce, "the inhabitants of Edinburgh were asleep on the question", and that the facts and figures produced during the debate in the Manchester chamber had "shocked them out of their lethargy", although no anti-corn-law association had been formed in the city.(16)

Although the example of Manchester was lauded in Scotland, Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association was unprepared to assume the role of a "camp follower". Armed with Weir's idea for an agitation to be heard at the bar of the House of Commons, they sought the co-operation of Manchester in its pursuit. When Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association appointed Johnstone and Weir as their delegates to the Manchester anti-corn-law dinner on 23/1/1838, they went with the intention of craving a forenoon conference with Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association and the delegates of other manufacturing towns "to make a common plan of attack" and to provide for "a closer and more energetic co-operation in the future".(17) One of the directors of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association, Walter Buchanan, had gone so far as to suggest that the Glasgow delegates should request the assembled delegates in Manchester to establish "a central Anti-Corn-Law Board, so as to centralise as much as possible the efforts of the people for

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16) "Glasgow Argus", 28/1/1839; also, J. Erskine Murray to John Hill Burton, Greenock, 27/1/1839, in Hill Burton Papers, Mss. 9391 f. 233.

17) "Glasgow Argus", 10/1/1839; also, William Weir to James Chapman, Glasgow, 9/1/1839, in L.L.B. vol. I, no. 31.

the repeal of the Corn Laws".[18] Moreover, the ideas propounded by Weir and Johnstone were accepted in Manchester. The concept of carrying the anti-corn-law case to Parliament had already been accepted by Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association, prior to the dinner,[19] but at the latter function, Weir's authorship of the idea was recognised, and he was toasted (by Archibald Prentice) for his personal contribution. Similarly, Cobden, on behalf of Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association proposed to set up an anti-corn-law board in London comprising members of different associations "acting with one common object", with a view to enlisting the aid of favourable M.P.'s, and to collect and arrange evidence to be sub-:mitted to Parliament.[20] The demand for co-operation came from Glasgow, rather than Manchester. The latter responded to this pressure: it did not initiate it.

However, Manchester leadership of the anti-corn-law movement emerged increasingly, before the Anti-Corn-Law League was officially launched. The anti-corn-law dinner was succeeded by the promulgation of the constitution and rules of the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Asso-:ciation, which accepted a national commitment. Paraphrasing those of the abortive 1836 London Association, they committed the Manchester free-traders "to obtain by all legal and constitutional means, such as the formation of local Anti-Corn-Law Associations, the delivery of lectures, the distribution of tracts, the insertion of articles in the public papers, and forwarding petitions to Parliament, the total

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18) "Glasgow Argus", 21/1/1839.

19) ibid., 14/1/1839.

20) ibid., 28/1/1839.

and immediate repeal of the corn and provision laws".(21) Increas-:ingly, Scottish free-traders looked to Manchester for guidance. Thus on 31/1/1839, Dr. N.N. Forbes, a free-trader in Inverness requested the Manchester Association for a copy of the resolutions embodying its rules, and for any advice the Association could give "in aiding to promote the great object in view", in addition to a hand-bill on the subject.(22) Organised anti-corn-law associations in Scotland also looked to Manchester for guidance. In March, Hawick Anti-Corn-Law Association twice communicated with Manchester, request-:ing guidance on future activities towards total and immediate repeal,(23) and subsequently ordering pamphlets from Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association.(24) Even Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association requested a copy of the resolutions adopted by the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association as to the evidence proposed to be adduced in the event of the House of Commons granting leave . . . "for the guidance of the (Glasgow) Association".(25) On the same date (28/1/1839), Weir gave the "unqualified assent" of Glasgow to the Manchester Association rule that "party or political topics" should be strictly excluded from

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21) Archibald Prentice: op. cit., vol. I, p. 104.

22) N.N. Forbes to J.B. Smith, Inverness, 31/1/1839, in L.L.B., vol. I, no. 82.

23) W. Scott and A. Scott to J.B. Smith, Hawick, 4/3/1839, in ibid., vol. I., no. 119.

Hawick Anti-Corn-Law Association was formed on 29/1/1839. ("Scotsman", 26/1/1839).

24) W. Scott and A. Scott to Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association, Hawick, 30/3/1839, in ibid., vol. I, no. 141.

25) D. Murray to J. Chapman, Glasgow, 28/1/1839, in ibid., vol. I, no. 75.

the agitation.[26] The leadership of Manchester was unquestioned in Scotland before the Anti-Corn-Law League was formed.

Nevertheless, William Weir and Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association continued to be the principal source of activity north of the border, and concurrently with securing the support of Manchester for the "Glasgow plan", they endeavoured to attract active participation in the scheme in Scotland, with particular attention to commercial and manufacturing interests. Through the columns of the "Glasgow Argus", and by direct communication, Weir urged other communities to support Glasgow, with some effect. There was an enthusiastic response from the commercial classes of Dundee. The local Chamber of Commerce called a meeting in early January, 1839, of "bankers, flaxspinners, manufacturers, and ship-owners" to consider the Corn Laws. The resulting meeting, chaired by Alexander Balfour, president of the Chamber, commenced with the reading of a letter from Weir asking for the co-operation of Dundee for the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association, and concluded by acceding to the request, and setting up a local committee to prepare and transmit petitions to the Houses of Parliament.[27] This committee subsequently raised a public subscription to pay for expenses incurred in employing counsel at the bar of the House of Commons.[28] Weir likewise communicated with Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, which resulted (on John Wigham's motion) in a memorial against the Corn Laws being drawn up by the Chamber.[29] Further letters

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26) "Glasgow Argus", 28/1/1839.

27) ibid., 14/1/1839; "Dundee Advertiser", 4/1/1839; 11/1/1839.

28) "Glasgow Argus", 28/1/1839; "Dundee Advertiser", 18/1/1839.

29) Minutes of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, 16/1/1839.

from Weir, and Shearman (Secretary of the Anti-Corn-Law delegates in London) requesting the Chamber's support in presenting petitions to be heard at the bar of the House and to appoint a delegate to London, concluded with Wigham's selection for the task.(30) On 21/1/1839, an anti-corn-law association was formed in Aberdeen, which resolved to furnish evidence at the bar of the House.(31) The following day, the mercantile community of Arbroath agreed to subscribe to any general fund raised for the purpose of petitioning to be heard by counsel at the bar of the House of Commons "as determined in Manchester and other influential towns".(32) Other urban communities in Scotland responded in a similar fashion to Weir's challenge,(33) either convening public meet-:ings or petitioning through established incorporations. Support for an agitation to be heard by counsel was widespread in mercantile circles, who, in common with the propertied classes in general, still hesitated to engage in a "popular" agitation on such an emotive issue. This was not least true in Glasgow, where the local anti-corn-law association made a significant individual contribution to furnish effective support for Weir's scheme. They set up a committee under the chairmanship of Alexander Graham (author of a free trade pamphlet in 1835 on the tax on cotton wool) to collect evidence from both mercantile and landed interests on the operation of the Corn Laws,

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30) ibid., 5/3/1839.

31) "Glasgow Argus", 27/1/1839; "Scotsman", 26/1/1839.

32) "Scotsman", 26/1/1839.

33) e.g. Anti-Corn-Law meetings held in Perth, Kilsyth (an association formed), Leith (ditto), Dalkeith, Kirkcaldy, Perth Guildry Incorporation, Greenock Chamber of Commerce, Dunbar, etc. (Scotsman", 26/1/1839; 2/2/1839; 6/2/1839, et seq.)

for submission at the bar of the House, on the assumption that Par-
:liament would grant leave to present it.(34) Furthermore, they raised a petition in support of the plea, which attracted 43,000 signatures (excluding the suburbs of the city, unlike the petition of 1834), and having secured by mid-January, a subscription of £500 to cover necessary expenses - although this sum was meagre in contrast with those subscribed in Manchester - the Association ensured that it would be continuously represented at the meetings of the anti-corn-law board in London, by appointing eight delegates headed by Weir and Johnstone, to act in rotation on their behalf.(35)(36) The industrial and commercial classes of Glasgow - or more accurately, some of them - and of the rest of Scotland, gave Manchester and Glasgow anti-corn-law associations in 1839, support which they had previously denied to the defunct Central Anti-Corn-Law Association and Weir's former hopes for a missionary system based on Glasgow.

The rejection by the House of Commons of Villiers' motion of 18/2/1839, that J.B. Smith, R.H. Greg, and others be permitted to present evidence at the bar of the House(37) killed Weir's scheme with one blow. It did not, however, shake the determination of the anti-corn-law board in London to continue the agitation. On the contrary, it was the immediate spur prompting the formation of the League. Significantly, the rules for the new body - a permanent

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34) "Glasgow Argus", 14/2/1839; "Glasgow Chronicle", 13/2/1839.

35) Archibald Prentice: op.cit., vol. 1., pp. 91-93.

36) "Glasgow Argus", 21/1/1839; 31/1/1839; 4/2/1839; 14/2/1839.
The other delegates included Charles Todd, Walter Buchanan, John Tennent, William Gemmill, and Alexander Graham.

37) Archibald Prentice: op. cit., vol. 1., pp. 112-3.

union to agitate for repeal, modelled at least partly on the example of the German Hanse of the Middle Ages (38) - were drawn up by Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association, who further transmitted a circular inviting the adhesion of the various local associations. (39) Moreover, the decision to form a permanent union had been taken in Manchester at a meeting in the Corn Exchange on 7/3/1839, when delegates from several parts of Britain were present, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dundee. Scottish free-traders had, however, played an active part in the proceedings, notably Weir, Alexander Johnstone, George Kinloch, jnr., the Hon. J. Erskine Murray of Aberdona, and John Wigham: the last-named had indeed moved the formation of a "union of those great communities represented on this occasion". (40) Although the League was from the start Manchester-orientated and - based, free-traders in Scotland (and the rest of Britain) were not passive spectators, but took a leading part in its formation. Moreover, at its inauguration, it was the intention of the League to have delegate meetings at each of the principal towns represented, and not merely at Manchester (or London). (41) The overwhelming dominance of Manchester was not planned: it grew.

Although the anti-corn-law delegates in London were not despon-:dent at the defeat of Villiers' motions, and had reacted to the

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38) ibid., vol. I., p. 115.

39) "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 16/4/1839.

40) Archibald Prentice: op. cit., vol. I., pp. 118-22.

The formation of the Anti-Corn-Law League was officially declared by the anti-corn-law delegates in London on 20/3/1839, after the defeat of Villiers' second motion to consider the Corn Laws. (ibid., vol. I., p. 124).

41) ibid., vol. I., p. 124.

situation by placing the agitation on a permanent basis for the exclu-:sive end of repeal of the Corn Laws, it was not clear either before or immediately after, that the declaration of the Anti-Corn-Law League would not possibly remain an ideal rather than a reality; a repetition of the 1836 London Association. The attitude of the Whig administration to the corn question produced the inevitable division of opinion among the anti-corn-law advocates - or at least, those of radical persuasion - what reaction they should adopt. The League was formed against a background of a growing schism between Whigs and middle-class Radicals, and many of the latter in early 1839, at least contemplated a general attack on the former on a broad range of commer-:cial and political issues rather than the exclusive aim of Corn Law repeal, which had been adopted by the nascent League. Thus Richard Cobden was engaged on the project of exploring the possibility of commencing a new newspaper in Manchester which would advocate not only "free trade in its utmost meaning ..... corn, coffee, or sugar", but also parliamentary reform, the ballot, extension of the suffrage, shorter parliaments, national education, "progressive reform and retrenchment"[42], and having been introduced to John Hill Burton (the Edinburgh historian, advocate, and free trader) by the latter's brother-in-law, James Erskine Murray, and having invited the opinion of William Tait (the radical publisher) of Hill Burton's capabilities,[43] negotiated with the latter as a potential editor for the journal.[44]

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42) Richard Cobden to John Hill Burton, Manchester, 25/3/1839, in Hill Burton Papers, f.11(37).

43) Copy letter. Richard Cobden to William Tait, Manchester, 2/4/1839, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers, 30.

44) Richard Cobden to John Hill Burton, Manchester, 11/6/1839, in Hill Burton Papers, f. 11(50).

In his letter to Tait, Cobden had observed that nothing had tended more to push forward reform than the anti-corn-law agitation. Sir John Bowring had earlier anticipated that the frustration of the movement by Parliament and Government would stimulate a demand for organic changes,(45) and in May, 1839, William Tait and Hill Burton attempted to secure Bowring as a Radical candidate in Leith against the new Whig Lord Advocate, Andrew Rutherfurd.(46) William Weir reflec-:ted the attitudes of leading Scottish free-traders - such as Hill Burton, Erskine Murray, or Tait - when he urged the formation of a new Radical party to take over from the Whigs and Tories, with a wide-ranging programme of political and social reform, including short parliaments, the ballot, extended (but not universal) suffrage, equal electoral districts, entire freedom of trade and industry, entire freedom of religion, separation of Church and State, and direct taxation in relation to income. Weir looked to "men at present provincials unhackneyed in the ways of existing parties" to form the basis of such a party, and looked to Manchester for leader-:ship.(47) There was a degree of fluidity in radical opinion in early 1839 on whether to agitate for the exclusive aim of repeal of the Corn Laws or to pursue a broadly-based programme of reform. Despite the League's adoption of Corn Law repeal, there was no final commit-:ment on the part of many free traders to agitate for this aim to the exclusion or detraction of others. The League had adopted the

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45) John Bowring to John Hill Burton, London, 2/2/1839, in ibid., f.20(15).

46) John Bowring to John Hill Burton, Paris, 3/5/1839, in ibid., f. 20(16).

47) William Weir to Richard Cobden, London, 24/3/1839, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers, 1(14).

exclusive aim of Corn Law repeal from the constitution and rules of the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association, but its success was dependent on its adoption by other anti-corn-law associations too.

In Glasgow, it was far from clear that the League's aim would be endorsed. There had been in Glasgow (unlike Manchester) a continuous anti-corn-law agitation, albeit of varying importance, throughout the period from 1833, and the rejection of Weir's scheme by the House of Commons after so many previous frustrations had created a strong feeling of "utter hopelessness" of carrying repeal without a further instalment of parliamentary reform, and some of the more advanced spirits had gone so far as suggesting that the local anti-corn-law association should be merged with one for the extension of the suffrage. Through the "Glasgow Argus", Weir deprecated such a reaction, from the fear that English opinion was not ripe for such a transformation, and urged that meantime both agitations should proceed simultaneously.(48) Weir's singlemindedness in excluding other issues - commercial and political - from the aims of the anti-corn-law agitation was of recent origin. He had personally invited the delegates to the anti-corn-law board in London to enquire of their constituents whether the agitation should not be broadened into one for free trade in general (especially with regard to the sugar and tea questions), and had also raised the question of further

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48) "Glasgow Argus", 1/4/1839.

parliamentary reform as a means to the end of Corn Law repeal.(49) The mixed reaction of the English delegates - especially the hostility of the Woollen Interest of the West Riding of Yorkshire - had, however, convinced him that even an extension of the agitation's aim to comprise free trade in toto could only be purchased at the cost of disunity. Consequently on 3/4/1839, at a meeting in the Trades Hall, Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association declared their adhesion to the Anti-Corn-Law League, and to its limited and exclusive aim of Corn Law repeal. The resolutions (prepared by Weir) which embodied this decision also contained, however, "standing instructions" to future Glasgow delegates to the councils of the League "to impress upon that body the necessity of extending its sphere of operation, and consti-:tuting itself into a free trade League, for the purpose of protecting the rights of industry from the deleterious effects of landlord legis-:lation so long as the legislative bodies shall remain unreformed". A further "standing instruction" bound Glasgow delegates to urge the League to co-operate "with all and every class of citizens who shall be actively engaged in promoting such a peaceable but thorough-going reform of our electoral system, as shall leave no class of the community without its due share of influence in the legislature and shall render the House of Commons amenable to the real people, and not alone to a preponderating landed interest". The adoption of

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49) ibid., 25/3/1839.

Weir informed the delegates in London that they "must not shrink from asking the question of what it was that had made these arguments of non-avail. It would perhaps, in such case become necessary to inquire what was the constitution of that body which rendered it insensible to arguments by which others were convinced?"

this individualistic and radical stance by Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association was welcomed by Weir in the "Argus", whose editorial interpretated the resolutions as "perpetuating their union, even after the repeal of the Corn Laws until trade shall be emancipated from all trammels", and as a radical and an advocate, Weir could not but express his satisfaction that Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association had reserved the right to urge the League "to the expediency of availing itself of any real national movement for parliamentary reform, to throw its weight into the scale, and seek, by this means, to secure a more impartial tribunal to sit in judgement on its case".(50)

A declaration of adherence - albeit with strings - to the Anti-Corn-Law League did little, however, to dispel the prevalent despair in Glasgow, and in Scotland generally, of making any progress on the corn question, without a further measure of parliamentary reform. The attitude underlying the adoption of Weir's resolutions at the Trades Hall meeting on organic changes, continued to frustrate any anti-corn-law agitation in Scotland. Thus although Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association had agreed in its declaration of adherence to the League at the Trades Hall to provide a due financial contribution to its efforts,(51) and subsequently promised the specific sum of £500,(52)

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50) The Woollen Interest of the West Riding was the most adamant on the exclusive aim of Corn Law repeal. The other principal interests represented at Manchester - the Iron District of Warwickshire and Staffordshire, the Cotton Interest of Lancashire, and the Cotton and Linen Interests of Glasgow and Dundee - accepted the broad principles of Free Trade.

51) "Glasgow Argus", 4/4/1839.

52) William Weir to J.B. Smith, Glasgow, 23/4/1839, in L.L.B., vol. 2, no. 169.

Weir felt obliged a few weeks later to take the Association to task, lauding Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association and their missionary efforts, and castigating Glasgow for failing to show the same zeal, as it was "not intermitting bursts of enthusiasm, but steady, unintermitting exertion that will carry the repeal of the bread-tax". In particular, Weir called on Glasgow to bestir itself and generously fill in the subscription papers which were in process of circulation towards the support of the League lecturers.(53) The lethargy of the free-traders in Scotland was noted in Manchester too. The Anti-Corn-Law Circular" observed the prevalence of apathy in Scotland, attributing this to "the sickness of hope deferred", and contended that basically there was more support for repeal in Scotland, and that once Glasgow - "the Manchester and Lancashire of Scotland" - was aroused, it would in turn have a powerful effect on England.(54) Outwith Glasgow, the situation in Scotland was even less favourable for the prospects of the League. Relatively few anti-corn-law associations existed, and they were displaying a similar lack of fervour. Even in the three other main cities, despite the existence of nuclei of free-traders in all, only one (Aberdeen) had an official anti-corn-law association. Moreover, the future appeared if anything, more bleak, as the dismissal of William Weir by the proprietors of the "Glasgow Argus" in May (below) threatened to deprive the embryonic League in Scotland of the services of the man who had been in the forefront of every anti-corn-law agitation in Scotland since 1833,

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53) "Glasgow Argus", 20/5/1839; 23/5/1839.

54) "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 28/5/1839.

and who appeared to be the most likely candidate to mobilise free-trade opinion north of the Border behind the League.

Fortunately for the future of the League in Scotland, however, Weir's dismissal was not immediately effective. He remained as editor of the "Argus" until the end of June,(55) and in spite of his desire to secure an engagement in London, and to fulfil a term of one month as a lecturer for the League,(56) probably in England, Weir did not leave Scotland until September, by which time the emissaries of the League had made an initial impact on Scottish opinion, in the persons of A.W. Paulton (lecturer) and J. Shearman (joint secretary to the League), and had been able to utilise Weir's personal contacts and knowledge in the furtherance of their cause. The possibility of a lecture tour by Paulton in Scotland had been mooted before the formation of the League. When Weir and Johnstone returned to Glasgow from the Manchester anti-corn-law dinner in January, they reported that they had been advised to invite Paulton to lecture in Scotland to counter the disruptive activities of the Chartists who had just succeeded in "capturing" another anti-corn-law meeting in Perth.(57) The decision by the League council to send both Paulton and Shearman to Scotland in May-June, 1839, however, may be attributed in part to a plea from Weir in April that a League lecturer was required in Scotland as Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association had found that "prophets have little honour in their

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55) "Minute-Book of the 'Glasgow Argus'", 21/6/1839.

56) William Weir to Richard Cobden, Glasgow, 7/5/1839, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers, I(16).

57) "Glasgow Argus", 4/2/1839.

own country"[58], and in part to their alarm at the lack of support, especially of a financial nature, for the League in Scotland.

Paulton commenced lecturing in the suburbs of Glasgow with an enthusiastic reception in the Baronial Hall, Gorbals, on 31/5/1839, which obliged him to hold a second meeting in the same district in a larger building, and after further lectures in Cowcaddens, Calton, and Anderston,[59] he proceeded to Greenock where he concluded a meeting on 8th., June, conducted by the provost and bailies, with the formation of an anti-corn-law asso-:ciation.[60] However, Paulton's reception in Glasgow and district was not a completely triumphant progress. On 10/6/1839, he addressed a poor audience in Cowcaddens[61] on his return from Greenock. On 22/6/1839, he was forced to take comfort from the fact that little interest had previously been shown at all in Ayr, when he addressed a small audience.[62] However, poor attendances were less of a problem to Paulton in many areas than the presence of hostile Chartists. At a meeting in the Rev. Alexander Harvey's Church in Calton, James Moir was present and argued that nothing could be achieved until an extension of the franchise had taken place. Paulton agreed with Moir's viewpoint, advancing a personal opinion that the Corn Law repealers should join the Chartists in

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58) William Weir to J.B. Smith, Glasgow, 23/4/1839, in L.L.B., vol. 2, no. 169.

59) "Glasgow Argus", 3/6/1839.

60) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Greenock, 9/6/1839, in L.L.B., vol. 2, no. 225.

61) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Glasgow, 11/6/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 227.

62) "Glasgow Argus", 27/6/1839; 2/7/1840.

securing such an object, and merely defended his lecture tour on the ground that he was doing good diffusing knowledge on the Corn Laws, as a popular Parliament would repeal them. As a result of Paulton's concession, the Chartist amendment was withdrawn, and the Corn Laws were unanimously condemned.(63) At other meetings, however, Paulton's personal views on parliamentary reform did not suffice to stem Chartist opposition. He had a "skirmish" with them at Paisley on 18/6/1839 in front of a "bumper audience",(64) and the following day, frustrated an attempt by Chartists to disrupt "a tolerably well-filled" meeting in Hamilton.(65) Having refuted Paulton's views, and stated that the League had neither time nor money for any object other than Corn Law repeal(66) - the orthodox Manchester "line" - Shearman likewise attracted hostility from the Chartists when he lectured in Partick.(67)

Shearman's functions as envisaged by the League had not included lecturing - which was Paulton's province - but merely to take advantage of the interest which the latter was anticipated to create, to organise anti-corn-law associations and to look after the financial arrangements for the League in Scotland. Shearman's connections with the English Dissenters had, however,

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63) ibid., 17/6/1839; also, A.W. Paulton to Richard Cobden, Glasgow, 16/6/1839, in L.L.B., vol. 2., no. 229.

64) "Glasgow Argus", 20/6/1839.

65) A.W. Paulton to George Wilson, Kilmarnock, 21/6/1839, in L.L.B., vol. 2, no. 233.

66) "Glasgow Argus", 17/6/1839.

67) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Glasgow, 20/6/1839, in L.L.B., vol. 2, no. 232.

given rise to the suggestion that he might be able to enlist the support of their counterparts in Scotland in the anti-corn-law agitation, as they had previously participated in the anti-slavery agitation (68) - a hope which was encouraged by the facility with which Dissenting Churches had been made available to Paulton for his lectures. Shearman was eminently more successful in pursuing this additional project than in expediting his allotted tasks. Having conferred with the Rev. Dr. Ralph Wardlaw and the Rev. William Anderson, prominent leaders of the Dissenters in Glasgow, on the prospect of forming a religious association in Scotland to fight the Corn Laws, the latter had agreed to identify himself with Shearman's mission to the extent of intima-:ting from the pulpit that Shearman would lecture in his chapel on the immoral and irreligious tendency of the Corn Laws, while both Wardlaw and Anderson resolved to defer the question of a committee pending the return of the Rev. Dr. Heugh, another promi-:nent Scottish Dissenter from England. (69)

William Weir, like most prominent Scottish free-traders an active Dissenter, (70) anticipated in the "Glasgow Argus" that if successful, the formation of such a committee would "circle like electric spark along the chain of the churches in Scotland affi-:liated on the principle of religious liberty and equality" (71) - or those accepting the voluntary principle. Probably, the idea

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68) "Glasgow Argus", 13/6/1839.

69) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Glasgow, 20/6/1839, in L.L.B., vol. 2, no. 232; also, "Glasgow Argus", 17/6/1839.

70) "Glasgow Argus", 18/1/1838.

71) ibid., 17/6/1839.

of soliciting the support of the Dissenters was Weir's brainchild. Apart from giving votes of thanks at some of Paulton's meetings in Glasgow,[72] Weir's contribution to the mission had been - as always - that of the inconspicuous organiser. As secretary of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association, he had made the arrangements for Paulton's itinerary in Glasgow and district.[73] He also endeavoured to prepare the ground for him in Edinburgh and the Borders, urging the free-traders in Hawick and Kelso to communi-:cate with Edinburgh in preparation for Paulton's arrival there, and also requesting John Hill Burton in the city to get organised to some degree prior to Paulton's arrival, at least to the extent of appointing a secretary to receive communications.[74] In his letter to the latter, Weir waxed enthusiastically about the success which Shearman had already achieved with the Rev. William Anderson, and predicted that "the nest will follow, and if we can set the puritans in array against the Corn Laws as they took the field against the slavery of the blacks, we will have enlisted a potent auxiliary", and having achieved success in Glasgow, Weir had no doubt that Shearman would carry recommendations to all the evan-:gelical dissenters in Scotland from there. In a further commu-:nication to Hill Burton, Weir confirmed that they were "getting the saints (among the dissenters) to open against the Corn Laws"

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72) ibid., 3/6/1839; 10/6/1839.

73) ibid., 3/6/1839.

74) William Weir to John Hill Burton, Glasgow, 15/6/1839, in Hill Burton Papers, Mss. 9391/243.

and expressed the view that if they only worked half as well as they did against slavery, he would be satisfied.(75)

Shearman's promising start with the Dissenters was endangered however, by his failure to secure financial support for the League. Although the committee of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association had voted Shearman as secretary of the League £500 shortly after his arrival in the city, nothing had materialised allegedly because of the fear of an election with Tory and Chartist candidates threatening to oppose the return of James Oswald.(76) Urged by Cobden and Ballantyne (joint secretary of the League) to return to Manchester, via Edinburgh, Shearman urged George Wilson (chairman of the League) on the necessity of his remaining in Glasgow for two reasons: firstly, he wished to conclude arrangements for a religious league against the Corn Laws, and secondly, having unsuccessfully attempted to solicit even £100 from Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association who would give nothing till the election was over, he intended trying them again the day after the election.(77) Alarmed at the prospect of Shearman's departure, Weir also pleaded with Wilson to permit the former to stay at least a further week or ten days in Glasgow. He urged the importance for the whole of Scotland of enlisting the support of the Dissenting clergy, and noted the progress in this respect which Shearman had already made through his lectures on the moral and religious aspects of the

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75) William Weir to John Hill Burton, Glasgow, 18/6/1839, in ibid., Mss. 9391/245.

76) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Glasgow, 20/6/1839, in L.L.B., vol. 2, No. 232.

77) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Glasgow, 21/6/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 234.

question. He confirmed that it had been "the devil's own work to squeeze money out of Glasgow pockets on this occasion", and indicating that he personally intended speaking candidly to the Association once the "excuse" of the election was over, he requested Shearman's support for this purpose, on the spot. Finally, Weir added a warning that if Shearman preceded Paulton to Edinburgh, he was in grave danger of encountering apathy (78) - a commentary on the lack of interest in the metropolis. The meeting with the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association proved abortive: only seven members of the Association appeared, and Shearman could not succeed "in screwing anything out of them". They agreed to conduct a canvass on behalf of the League, in the face of Shearman's threat to conduct a personal canvass of the city if they did not succeed. Significantly, they pled that one reason for the difficulty in obtaining finance had been Paulton's views on suffrage reform as a prerequisite for Corn Law repeal, which despite the resolutions of the Local Association in the Trades Hall, did not endear the mission to the monied free-traders of the city. Shearman accepted this as a bona fide reason for his failure to make any headway, had remonstrated with Paulton in vain to drop this argument, and urged George Wilson to intervene. The only cheering news which Shearman was able to impart to Wilson was that Dr. Heugh had indicated that the Dissenting clergy would be prepared to join an agitation if others took part - a significant breakthrough for the future - and almost equally encouraging for the poverty-stricken

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78) William Weir to George Wilson, Glasgow, 21/6/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 235.

League in the present, that he had been invited to Kirkintilloch and Kilsyth to lecture" . . and to make collections".(79)

Again however, events proved Shearman's hopes to be illusory. In Kilsyth, he addressed a large audience, but as it comprised largely the working-classes, with few monied people, no collection could be made, and in Kirkintilloch a crowded and enthusiastic meeting produced only £1.(80) The fact that lack of financial support for the League was prevalent in Scotland apart from Glasgow was likewise verified by Paulton, who vainly invited "a very numerous meeting of respectable tradesmen" in Kilmarnock to show with more tangible evidence than compliments, their support for repeal, concluding that the Scots had an "itching palm for gold".(81) To Shearman, however, remained the prime task of overcoming the pecuniary problem. He reported to Ballantyne that his sole object - which was untrue- since he came to Scotland, had been to obtain money, but how to obtain it had baffled his ingenuity. In part his pessimism had arisen from the objection of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association to his idea for a personal canvass of the city. Instead, they had appointed paid collectors, but Shearman was left on the horns of a dilemna. If he collected himself, he would fall out with the Glasgow committee - the most important association in Scotland - but if he left it to them, there might be no limit to the length of time he (and the League in Manchester) would be

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79) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Glasgow, 28/6/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 238.

80) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Glasgow, 5/7/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 244.

81) A.W. Paulton, to George Wilson, Perth, 3/7/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 243.

obliged to wait. Before returning to Glasgow in the hope of obtaining at least a first instalment of £100 to transmit to Manchester, Shearman determined to test his fortune in Edinburgh.

When Shearman followed by Paulton arrived in the metropolis, no anti-corn-law association existed in the city, but partly due to Weir's prompting, a few local free-traders had assembled prior to their arrival, and appointed a sub-committee of six under the chair-:manship of John Wigham to "assist" the emissaries of the League to obtain accommodation in which to conduct their lectures. Having overcome an initial difficulty in refusing to stir until they had been given a definite assurance that Paulton would come too, the sub-committee fulfilled their allotted tasks, booking the Waterloo Rooms for two lectures by Paulton, and a Dissenting meeting-house for two lectures "in a political, moral, and religious point of view" by Shearman. A difference of opinion arose, however, on the latter's prime function in coming to the city. To Shearman, Edinburgh was a potential source of finance to assuage the wrath of the League council in Manchester, at his failure in Glasgow. The sub-committee had opened subscription books, although Shearman harboured no sanguine expectations of a substantial return. He hoped rather that he would be permitted to supplement their efforts with a personal canvass on his own.(82) To Wigham and the Edinburgh free-traders, however, Shearman's presence was for other purposes. Wigham regretted that the League had instructed Shearman to make exertions in collecting funds, thereby frustrating their arrangements,

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82) J. Shearman to John Ballantyne, Edinburgh, 14/7/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 246.

at least "until the experiment of addressing religious bodies, including females, shall have been tried - being strongly impressed with the sentiment that until this class of the community shall become interested, the real weight and influence of society will not be brought to bear on this important subject, nor will any pecuniary assistance worth naming be obtained". As a Quaker, Wigham contended that the support of the Dissenters by engaging in a moral-religious crusade against the Corn Laws was essential for success,(83) and pointed to female participation in the Society for improving the condition of India - which was no less political than the Corn Laws - as an example to the League. He requested in conclusion that the directors of the League would give Shearman permission to lecture in Edinburgh instead of collecting finance. He further suggested that to avoid duplication, Shearman and Paulton should conduct different circuits, with the former organising socities "for continuously diffusing information and for obtaining funds".(84)

The opposing concepts of Shearman's function in Scotland - the view of the League in Manchester and that of its adherents north of the border - placed Shearman in a nutcracker. Concious that there was an impression in Manchester that he was neglecting his mission of obtaining money for other objects he preferred to pursue,

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83) " . . and if ever it shall go abroad in this country (i.e. Scotland) that this subject cannot be supported on prin-:ciples of religion and morality - or that lecturers who do not base their arguments on them are preferred - the sup-:porters of the Anti-Corn-Law League will be ranked with Chartists and Infidels, and the more influential part of the community will stand aloof from us".

84) John Wigham to George Wilson, Edinburgh, 15/7/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 242.

he reiterated his difficulties with Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association, and urged the League to approve his new proposals whereby he would endeavour to satisfy both viewpoints, by holding meetings at each new locality to argue the free-trade case, making an on-the-spot collection, publishing an address on the League's case in the local press, and accompanied "by some respectable inhabitants, call upon and solicit from, the middle classes and the higher, where not Tory, subscriptions". Shearman anticipated that by following this course, he would overcome one difficulty he had experienced in Glasgow - that he had no local person to introduce him if he made a personal canvass for subscriptions - and also the objections of Paulton, Hill Burton and others, who thought that he degraded the League by canvassing for funds personally. Shearman further expressed the hope that the League would "take the opinions of such as are acquainted with the mode of things in Scotland", and intimated to the League chairman, George Wilson, that he intended spending a few days in Glasgow trying to stir them up again, before returning to Edinburgh "to pick up which crumbs may fall".(85) Another of the League's agents in Scotland, Sidney Smith, the Edinburgh phrenologist who passed into the League's employment as an itinerant lecturer, did not concur in Sherman's view that a collection should be attempted in the metropolis, noting that although Paulton's tour had been "triumphant", his "Chartism" had alienated supporters "with purses and votes" in both Edinburgh and Glasgow, even if he had been favourably-received by many of the working-classes. In particular, many of the middle-classes attending his first Edinburgh lecture had

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85) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Edinburgh, 15/7/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 248.

threatened not to return to the second one, unless he removed some of the "excresences" from it, such as his description of the working-classes as "the only source of wealth - the only producers". Smith urged the inadvisability of attempting to raise any sub-:scription in Edinburgh till Paulton's first lecture (and its heresies) were forgotten.(86)

Smith's pessemism may, however, have betrayed some slight animosity on the part of a fellow-lecturer, because on Shearman's return from Glasgow, he achieved some success in arousing interest in the metropolis. His initial step - addressing a large audience in the Rev. Dr. Peddie's dissenting church - was marred after "all was going well for a collection", by a disruption on the part of Chartists, who failed to respond to appeals by John Wigham and Duncan McLaren to disperse in case they would not get the use of the church again.(87) However, despite this setback, Shearman was able to report that the existing Edinburgh committee was forming an anti-corn-law association, and securing subscriptions. Although nothing was yet to hand, Shearman hoped to remit £150-200 per annum, reposing confidence in the committee which contained "some good and

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86) Sidney Smith to George Wilson, Edinburgh, 20/7/1839, in vol. 2, no. 249.

87) "Scotsman", 27/7/1839.

Duncan McLaren's involvement in the anti-corn-law movement was of recent origin. Having been converted to the cause of free trade in corn by John Wigham, he took a prominent part in an anti-corn-law meeting in Edinburgh on 21/1/1839, in support of Weir's campaign to be heard by counsel at the bar of the House of Commosn. (Report of the Proceedings of the Peace Conference at Edinburgh, October 12th, and 13th, 1853, p. 33; "Scotsman", 23/1/1839).

fine men like Wigham".(88) He illustrated his degree of trust in the committee by continuing to Dundee and Kirkcaldy - a trust that was justified, when Edinburgh Anti-Corn-Law Association was formed in his absence at a meeting in the Merchants' Hall, Edinburgh, on 29/7/1839, at which the leading participants were John Wigham (in the chair), Duncan McLaren, Dr. Thomas Murray (the lecturer on political economy) and George M. Sinclair (who had acted as an interim secretary of the former committee). The new association, which established a wide base of support like Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association by adopting an annual membership fee of one shilling, but unlike the western body, it did not indulge in any political "excresences". The new association declared its intention "to co-operate with the Anti-Corn-Law League of Manchester for the purpose of disseminating information on the subject of the Corn Laws" - but significantly like the Glasgow Association - the Edinburgh body also accepted as its aim "otherwise promoting the cause of unrestricted commercial enterprise".(89)

The second major centre of population in Scotland without an organised anti-corn-law association, Dundee, was the magnet which drew Shearman from Edinburgh before the metropolitan association was officially launched, and in Tayside, the ground had been partially prepared for him. Weir had dispatched Paulton to Dundee at the beginning of the month, and the latter had delivered lectures in the city on 9-10th, July, in which he had urged the working-classes of Dundee to support the League in removing the Corn Laws,

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88) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Edinburgh, 23/7/1839, in L.L.B., vol. 2, no. 250.

89) "Scotsman", 31/7/1839.

on the ground that such a union of the middle- and working-classes would secure an extension of the suffrage. By this time, there was an anti-corn-law association in embryo, with Alexander North as secretary, which at the close of Paulton's lecture presented an address in gratitude to the "Manchester Anti-Corn-Law League".(90) However, Paulton's lectures having been badly-advertised, were poorly attended, and the task of completing the formation of the association devolved on Shearman when he arrived in the city at the end of July. The Baxter brothers (linen manufacturers) who were "religious men" - active lay dissenters - responded to Shearman's approach by offering to organise two lectures for him in the Ward Road Independent Chapel on 30-31st, July, when the latter addressed "a numerous and respectible audience".(91) On the advice of the Baxters, Shearman also agreed to participate in a debate with the Chartists, when the latter contended that the anti-corn-law agitation was merely a whig ruse to divert support from the Charter, that repeal would result in reduced wages for the working-classes, and that it would not be achieved anyway without an extension of the suffrage, to which points, Shearman replied that the League was opposed by Whigs as well as Tories and Chartists, that expension of trade would produce an expanding demand for labour and that "relatively" wages would be higher than food prices, and that there was more widespread support for Corn Law repeal than the Charter. The debate which delayed Shearman's

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90) "Dundee Advertiser", 5/7/1839; 12/7/1939; "Glasgow Argus", 8/7/1839.

91) "Glasgow Argus", 2/8/1839; also, J. Shearman to George Wilson, Dundee, 27/7/1839, in L.L.B., Vol. 2, No. 252.

departure after Paulton, was attended by 800 members of the working-classes.(92)

In Forfarshire, Shearman's utility to the anti-corn-law movement was once more impaired by his instructions from the League in Manchester. Thus he worked the Montrose/Brechin/Arbroath area for a week to secure subscriptions and to form associations, but without success, and determined to leave the area to the Baxters.(93) Paulton, on the other hand, had been well-received in Forfar where he had been requisitioned to speak, and had subsequently formed an anti-corn-law association in addition to obtaining a list of 40 subscribers to the "Anti-Corn-Law Circular". Paulton was obliged to admit, however, that although zealous, there were few wealthy supporters of the League in Scotland without the four main centres of population.(94) Increasingly strained relations between the two emissaries of the League in Scotland exacerbated the situation. Shearman continued to blame his lack of success in obtaining subscriptions on the favourable impression which he contended Paulton was making on the working-classes at the expense of alienating middle-class sympathy,(95) while the latter objected to Shearman's practice of dogging his footsteps as a lecturer, and conceived that Shearman as secretary of the League should have concentrated on fund-raising.

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92) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Dundee, 2/8/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 257.

93) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Montrose, 8/8/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 260.

94) A.W. Paulton to George Wilson, Peterhead, 14/8/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 263.

95) J. Shearman to George Wilson, Montrose, 10/8/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 262.

Moreover, while he conceded that no large subscriptions could have been obtained, as the Scots were "a thrifty people - their religion and their purse-strings being about equally sacred in their eyes" - he believed something could have been acquired in many places, if Shearman had been more energetic and had not tarried for seven weeks in Glasgow - (96) a criticism which was hardly valid, as Paulton had personally indicated that the League's wealthy adherents in Scotland were resident in the major cities.

In the North-East, the League mission achieved a similar mixture of partial success and partial failure. Paulton's lectures, in what was one of the most acutely protectionist areas of Scotland, were relatively well-attended, even if they did not equal the triumphal progress indicated in the lecturer's reports to the League, which indicated that one of his meetings in Peterhead was packed to suffocation, (97) that he had lectures to "very large audiences" in Fraserburgh, and had achieved similar tales of success in Banff, Elgin - "a very aristocratic little place" - and the Tory stronghold of Forres. In most of these, Paulton had been able to locate distributors for the "Circular", with the assistance of James Adam, editor of the Liberal "Aberdeen Herald". Paulton concluded his northern circuit by repairing to Inverness, where he incorrectly claimed to have introduced the Corn Law question for the first time - an anti-corn-law meeting in the burgh on 13/2/1839 produced a petition

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96) A.W. Paulton, to George Wilson, Montrose, 6/8/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 259.

97) A.W. Paulton to George Wilson, Peterhead, 14/8/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 263.

with 1690 signatures (98) - and where the provost of the town placed the court-house at his disposal for two meetings, the second of which was overflowing.(99) Shearman's reception was less enthusiastic. Despite Paulton's report to Wilson that the League would receive £50 from Aberdeen Anti-Corn-Law Association,(100) there was no sign of it materialising when Shearman arrived in the city, although he had taken measures to try to secure it.(101) The news of his recall to Manchester released his feelings about the niggardliness of the Scots and of the Aberdeen free-traders in particular towards the League, in contrast to their generosity towards Dr. Chalmers' Church Extension fund - which was especially galling to Shearman as a dissenter - but his difficulties had further been increased by the "conversion" of Thomas Bannerman, one of the leading manufacturers and free-traders in the city, to the concept of a fixed duty rather than total repeal.(102) However, a resolution by Aberdeen Anti-Corn-Law Association that they would raise £100 for the League, together

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98) "Scotsman", 23/2/1839.

99) A.W. Paulton to George Wilson, Glasgow, 5/9/1839, in L.L.B., vol. 2, no. 269.

100) A.W. Paulton to George Wilson, Montrose, 6/8/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 259.

101) J. Shearman to John Ballantyne, Aberdeen, 16/8/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 264.

102) J. Shearman to John Ballantyne, Aberdeen, 18/8/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 265.

Shearman reported that he "had a most uncomfortable time of it. Oh, the miseries of the man who comes to Scotland a-begging . . . Here, that outrageous imposter and law-breaker, Dr. Chalmers, has got upwards of £4,000 out of these Aberdonians, and they have not done anything for us yet . . . Scotland is a most horribly priest-ridden, money-loving, whiskey-drinking place. You ought to have a special prayer meeting called for it at Manchester".

with an encounter with the Edinburgh radical, James Aytoun, who encouraged him as to the volume of support for the anti-corn-law movement in Scotland, left Shearman in better heart when he departed from Aberdeen from Hull, omitting speaking engagements in Kirkcaldy, Ayr, and Kilmarnock in his desire to return to Manchester.(103)

Prior to his departure from Scotland, however, Paulton had to conduct a lecture tour in one further circuit - the South-West. Travelling 20-50 miles per day for sixteen days, he lectured to "large and respectable" meetings at several towns, which were characterised by their close association with dissenting con-:gregations: in several cases (Sanquhar, Stranraer, Wigtown, Newton Stewart, Annan, Lockerbie, and Langholm) the meetings con-:vened in dissenting churches, and several dissenting ministers participated at Paulton's meetings. The urban middle-classes were also prominent in the proceedings, which resulted in the formation of anti-corn-law associations at several places, including Thornhill, Newton Stewart and Stranraer.(104) The formation of the last - the "Stranraer and Rhinns of Galloway Anti-Corn-Law Association" - was the most successful outcome of Paulton's tour in the South-West. Formed after Paulton's lectures, it immediately recognised the leadership of Manchester by applying to the League for a copy of the rules of Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association

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103) J. Shearman to League H.Q., Aberdeen, 21/8/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 266.

104) "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 1/10/1839, 15/10/1839; also, A.W. Paulton to Sidney Smith, Dumfries, 25/9/1839, in L.L.B., vol. 2, no. 270.

in order to adopt them, and invited instructions from the League.[105] The Stranraer Association was a model association for the League in Scotland. Having seen a request in the "Anti-Corn-Law Circular" for a list of the office-bearers of every local association,[106] this was promptly transmitted to Manchester, and having built up a membership of two hundred by the beginning of December,[107] the association appointed its president, Anthony McMaster, as their "accredited" delegate to the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Banquet to be held on 13/1/1840.[108] In his regular reports to Manchester, the secretary of the association, James H. Ross, frequently eulogised Paulton for the deep impression he had made in the South-West.

The impact made by Paulton and Shearman, except in exceptional localities such as Stranraer, appeared at first transistory. In October, the "Glasgow Argus" noted the lull in activity which had followed the excitement of Paulton's tour, and a correspondent enquired whether Glasgow was "still asleep".[109] The "Argus" had explained the lack of activity by referring to the fact that the centre of the stage was occupied by the municipal elections, but observing the continuing apathy which followed them, it was obliged to concede that Glasgow had suffered an "irreparable loss" with

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105) James H. Ross to Sidney Smith, Stranraer, 2/10/1839, in L.L.B., vol. 2, no. 271.

106) James H. Ross to Sidney Smith, Stranraer, 15/11/1839, in ibid., vol. 2, no. 286.

107) "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 10/12/1839.

108) James H. Ross to J.B. Smith, Stranraer, 3/1/1840, in L.L.B., vol. 3, no. 321.

109) "Glasgow Argus", 10/10/1839.

the departure to London of William Weir,[110] who left the city in September.[111] The lull was, however, despite Weir's loss, more apparent than real. Before Shearman and Paulton had arrived in Scotland, there was scarcely any support for the Anti-Corn-Law League without Glasgow, and that within, was subject to considerable qualification. The League mission established not only organised associations in all the large and many of the smaller centres of population in Scotland, thus guaranteeing that an agitation against the Corn Laws which had been in danger of petering out, would continue, but also the fact that such an agitation would look to Manchester for leadership. This was confirmed not at the League's formation, but by Paulton and Shearman when they combatted the apathy in Scotland which was the sequel to the rejection of Villiers' motion in 1839. Significantly, even the correspondent of the "Argus" who complained of lack of activity in Glasgow in October, 1839, looked to the south for a lead, and enquired whether "the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law League" intended petitioning?

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110) ibid., 9/12/1839.

111) ibid., 12/9/1839.

6. Manchester Leadership, 1840-46.

The ascendancy which the Manchester free traders had acquired in Scotland during 1839 remained substantially unimpaired throughout the remainder of the League's existence, 1840-46, and it was under their guidance and direction that the anti-corn-law movement in Scotland reached the apex of its success as a pressure group. With little exaggeration Scottish free traders and official Scottish anti-corn-law publications referred to the League with such appellations as "the Manchester League" or "the League of Manchester",(1) and although the League did not integrate Scotland into the regional organisation with full-time agents which it established in England and Wales, the extent of its active involvement north of the Border militates against the proposition that the framework was not extended to embrace Scotland because "the League felt that the local free traders could be left to look after the work there".(2) However, as in 1839, Manchester's hegemony was subject to the qualification that Scotland did not give blind obedience to the dictates of the League Council, and in no instance was that more apparent than over the central aims of the agitation. Apart from a modification of the objective of total repeal of the Corn Laws - which found some support in Glasgow in December, 1839,(3) but little countenance from most Scottish Leaguers thereafter - there were two potential lines of deviation from the orthodox position of the League. These were the twin heresies to which Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association

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1) "Scotsman", 25/3/1840; 17/3/1841; 14/4/1841; "Corn Laws: The Nature and Effect of these oppressive Statutes". p.8. Published by Edinburgh Anti-Corn-Law Association. Edinburgh, 1839-40. (Goldsmith Library)

2) See N. McCord: The Anti-Corn-Law League, 1838-46. p.180.

3) ibid., p.72.

under Weir's influence had succumbed in 1839 - the extension of the agitation to embrace free trade in general and its extension to incorporate parliamentary reform.

Throughout the era of the League, the Scottish free traders were allured by the former and systematically agitated for a comprehensive programme of tariff reform including repeal of the Corn Laws. This difference in emphasis between Scotland and Manchester was particularly evident after the publication of the report of the Select Committee on Import Duties of 1840, and in the "Great Scottish Free Trade Demonstration of April, 1841, organised by Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association, it led to a serious rift with Manchester and the English free traders who declined to send a deputation to the meeting. Noting the absence of a delegation from the south, James Adam, secretary of Aberdeen Anti-Corn-Law Association, observed that Manchester had "bogled at the extent to which they had carried their views on this occasion, which were much more extensive than the mere repeal of the Corn Laws", but on behalf of Aberdeen, he intimated that "the larger views of the present meeting were much more in accordance with their sentiments than the confined and dogmatical notions of the Manchester people". In a similar vein, Walter Buchanan, vice-president of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association, denied that the revision of the commercial tariff interposed obstacles to the repeal of the Corn Laws, and contended that comprehensive fiscal reform including repeal of the Corn Laws seemed more likely to excite interest among the mercantile classes. Accordingly, the demonstration urged a revision of import duties in general, and attacked the local Glasgow protectionist interests - the

West Indian Sugar and Canadian Timber monopolies - in particular.[4]

The Scottish attachment to free trade in everything remained, with Corn Law repeal forming the principal but merely one plank in what were called not infrequently "anti-corn-law and free trade" demonstrations.[5] As the "Glasgow Argus" observed in 1844, they wanted "cheap wine for our cheap bread, as well as cheap sugar".[6] On the eve of repeal, in 1846, George Duncan, M.P. for free trade Dundee, anticipated that as the Corn Laws were "the key-stone of monopoly", their removal would pave the way for other commercial reforms, com-:mencing with the West Indian Sugar interest.[7] Scottish persistence in pursuit of general free trade did not perpetuate the rift with Manchester. A difference of emphasis remained, but it was swept aside in an informal compromise. The Scottish free traders although still attached to the notion of general free trade gave precedence to the Corn Laws, while in turn the leaders of the League especially in their Scottish tours widened their field of fire to embrace other commercial issues. On 6/11/1842 (in Manchester) Cobden underlined the distinction between the agitation of the League and that of 1815 by observing that the current agitation was "of a more comprehensive character ..... it aims at all monopoly, and seeking to establish

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4) "Glasgow Argus", 1/4/1841; 22/4/1841; 3/5/1841; "Scotsman", 24/4/1841.

In accord with the mode of action prescribed at the Great Scottish Free Trade Demonstration, the directors of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association determined to petition for repeal of the Corn Laws and a revision of Import Duties in general. ("Glasgow Argus", 10/5/1841).

5) Enclosure in Walter Wilson to Earl of Minto, Hawick, 17/1/1844, in Minto Mss. 123/2.

6) "Glasgow Argus", 28/11/1844.

7) "Dundee Advertiser", 13/1/1846.

Free-trade principles".[8] Two years later, in Aberdeen, he came even closer to the Scottish position by stating that it should be "expressly understood that the Anti-Corn-Law League was a Free-trade League. Its object was the overthrow of all monopoly in whatever shape it might exist ..... the Corn Law was the keystone of monopoly, and with its fall the whole arch would fall".[9]

While the attachment of the League in Scotland to comprehensive tariff reform might be regarded with disquiet for tactical reasons by the Manchester free traders, it did not endanger the unity as an all-party movement for commercial reform. The possibility of a schism loomed much larger with the prospect of sections of the move-ment in Scotland embracing parliamentary reform. In 1839, Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association had flirted with this heresy, although other Scottish associations had generally adhered to the orthodox Manchester position, on the strict exclusion of all extraneous issues. In 1840, more societies north of the Border adopted the rules of the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association together with their non-political clause, such as the new anti-corn-law association formed in Stirling in February,[10] and the long-established one in Kirkcaldy in March.[11] By December, Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association, in order to counter Chartist intrusions reaffirmed that their sole object was to procure the repeal of the Corn Laws and that "no motion whatever which is not in accordance with

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8) R. Cobden to H. Ward, Manchester, 6/11/1842, in Gleig Mss.3870.

9) "Aberdeen Herald", 13/1/1844.

10) Robert Smith to League H.Q., Stirling, 30/1/1840, in L.L.B. vol.3.no.348.

11) James Aytoun to George Wilson, Kirkcaldy, 3/3/1840, in ibid., vol.3.no.405.

this rule will be entertained".[12] In Glasgow too, Weir's departure and the ascendancy of the more conservative Whig free traders ensured that the Glasgow Association's interest in parliamentary reform would wane. In October, the possibility of co-operation with Lanarkshire Universal Suffrage Association was forfeited at a joint meeting when the Anti-Corn-Law Association delegation declined to unite with the Chartists on the "Durham" test of household suffrage, triennial parliaments, and the ballot, with the implementation of the entire Charter by instalments. The Leaguers argued that their sole object was Corn Law repeal.[13] The "Glasgow Argus" reiterated this position shortly after, observing that the agitation for repeal of the Corn Laws "ought to be kept entirely separate from that for every description of political change ..... the Corn Law question is above all others that which can be most advantageously grappled with".[14]

The accession of a Tory Government in 1841, and more particularly Peel's fiscal measures of 1842, produced a new attitude among many free traders in Scotland on the expediency of pursuing the Manchester line. In Glasgow several prominent free traders of both Radical and Whig colours, headed by Alexander Johnstone of Shieldhall, Walter Buchanan, John Tennant, William Bankier, and John Hamilton were appointed a committee to circulate among the electors of the city a treatise by Joseph Sturge on a "Reconciliation between the Middle and Working Classes". They also agreed that without a cordial union

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12) "Dundee Advertiser", 18/12/1840.
Paradoxically this meeting was chaired by Councillor Alexander Easson, the future founder-chairman of Dundee Complete Suffrage Association.

13) "Scottish Patriot", 3/10/1840.

14) "Glasgow Argus", 28/12/1840.

between these interests in society "no system of just and impartial legislation will ever be obtained".(15) At a meeting of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association in the same month, they were given support from an unexpected source. James Acland, an itinerant League lecturer from Manchester, proposed that the city should petition for the dismissal of the Peel administration and for the appointment of ministers pledged to "secure to the people the constitutional right of a full, fair, and free representation in Parliament".(16) With the prevalent economic distress of 1842, its social consequences, and the failure of both the Chartists and Free Trade movements to make any impact on the existing legislature, the demand for a union of reformers behind an ill-defined programme of organic constitutional changes and free trade was adopted in several parts of Scotland.(17) Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association responded by rescinding their previous decision and agreed to permit a discussion of Sturge's proposals at a future meeting.(18) Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association forthrightly attributed the current industrial unrest and social disturbances to "partial legislation" and urged that "the substitution of a representative body, truly representing

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15) ibid., 7/7/1842.

Johnstone, Buchanan, and Bankier had earlier been three of the five Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association delegates who had declined to co-operate with Lanarkshire Universal Suffrage Association.

16) "Scotsman", 19/2/1840

However, Acland had been formerly imprisoned for his activities as a Radical agitator. It was still a grave indiscretion for an emissary of the League Council to make, but there was a comparable crisis in the League in England, where the militants led by Prentice were urging a refusal to pay taxes and the possibility of a mass lock-out to force the Government's hand. (See N. McCord: op. cit., pp.58,123-25.)

17) "Scotsman", 19/2/1842; 9/7/1842; 13/8/1842.

18) ibid., 26/2/1842.

the people in their various classes and interests, is indispensible in their judgement to the national weal". Supporting this motion, Thomas Davidson observed that although as an anti-corn-law association, they had hitherto refrained from participating in party politics, they conceived that on this occasion they should join the general demand for a representation of all classes and interests in Parliament on such a basis that would give adequate protection to property.(19) Slateford and Colinton Anti-Corn-Law Association had already furnished an example of direct involvement in parliamentary reform demands by petitioning for the dismissal of the existing ministers and their replacement by those who would "promote an extension of the suffrage".(20) In the north too, a soirée organised by the Aberdeen Anti-Corn-Law Association provided a platform for similar demands of a union of all classes behind an extension of the suffrage as the only means of effecting any change in the "agricultural House of Commons".(21) The Aberdeen Association went further, following this up with a joint meeting with the local Chartists when resolutions were passed condemning the Corn Laws and demanding the implementation of the Charter. Among the participants were James Adam and Dean of Guild George Thompson (future Lord Provost of the city). The latter declared that he was "one of those who refused to go on any longer with the League, unless it recognised

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19) ibid., 28/9/1842; "Glasgow Argus", 26/9/1842.

20) "Scotsman", 5/3/1842.

21) Mr. Park (Fraserburgh) stated that he was "an out-and-out repealer of all monopolies, not excepting the suffrage monopoly" and being "by no means sanguine of any good resulting from all the Corn-law demonstrations and all the corn-law petitions that are poured in upon the agricultural House of Commons ....nothing ..... will now do, but complete suffrage". ("Aberdeen Herald", 26/2/1842.)

the full right of the people to equal representation".(22)

Several active free traders subsequently formed branches of the Complete Suffrage movement in pursuit of their aim of uniting the free trade and Chartist movements for a common goal. These included prominent Radicals such as James Turner of Thrushgrove and W.P. Paton in Glasgow, Patrick Brewster and Provost John Henderson in Paisley, James Aytoun, William Tait, and John Dunlop of Brockloch in Edinburgh, James Adam and George Thompson in Aberdeen, and Alexander Easson in Dundee, as well as several Dissenting clergymen also active in the ranks of the League, such as the Rev. Dr. Ritchie (Edinburgh) and the Rev. W. Marshall (Leith).(23) Significantly, however, the vast majority of the free traders in Scotland were not prepared to join the Complete Suffrage Union, including such radical Whigs as Duncan McLaren who in March, 1842, had been prepared to accept universal suffrage as the price of a union of reformers, providing that the working-class radicals dropped other points from the Charter.(24) What McLaren and the majority of middle-class reformers in the ranks of the League could not swallow was the total acceptance of the Charter which seemed implicit in the C.S.U. Consequently by the Autumn of 1842, the Complete Suffrage movement was being roundly condemned by the most influential organs

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22) ibid., 12/3/1842.

23) ibid., 12/3/1842; "Glasgow Argus", 6/10/1842; "Glasgow Constitutional", 8/10/1842; "Scotsman", 20/8/1842; 5/10/1842; 30/12/1843; "Dundee Advertiser", 31/3/1843. See also, L.C. Wright: op. cit. pp.139-41.

24) D. McLaren to R. Cobden, Edinburgh, 7/3/1842. in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 1.(53).

of the League in Scotland.[25] Moreover, the possibility of extracting an extension of the suffrage from the existing composition of Parliament seemed even more remote to even more radical free trade organs than free trade itself, in addition to its politically divisive threat to the League.[26] Some free traders nevertheless persisted, remaining to hiss Fox Maule at the Glasgow Free Trade banquet of January, 1843, when he tactlessly criticised those who were chasing the "fantasy" of universal suffrage rather than devoting their efforts exclusively to the League.[27] The majority of free traders in Scotland were only too well aware of the danger implied in Cobden's warning to Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association in January, 1844 that the extension of the League's programme to embrace any political question such as the ballot or an extension of the suffrage "would at once split us into shivers and we should become a rope of sand".[28] After 1842, the deviation of the League in Scotland parliamentary reform ceased and the anti-corn-law associations, irrespective of the sympathies or activities of individual members, adhered to the orthodox Manchester line.

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25) The "Scotsman" (1/10/1842) observed that "by whatever name the Complete Suffrage Union may be called, Chartism is blazoned on its banner: and to hold it up as a means of uniting 'political reformers of all shades of opinions' is ..... an absurdity and a delusion". To the "Argus" (28/11/1842) the sole point at dispute was "whether the original name of the Charter shall be maintained or whether it is to give place to the designation of Complete Suffrage".

26) The "Dundee Advertiser" (8/9/1843) noted that "an extension of the suffrage with the present Parliament is not only hopeless, but impossible ..... Besides, it is a subject on which the most useful party in the country are greatly divided in opinion ..... We see no way so short as that which Mr. Cobden and his party have chosen - none so sure".

27) "Glasgow Argus", 12/1/1843.

28) ibid., 11/1/1844.

Acceptance of the aims of the League - albeit with some qualification - in Scotland, was facilitated and accompanied by acceptance of Manchester leadership, in particular that of Richard Cobden who was the indisputible high priest of free trade throughout 1840-46 on both sides of the Border. Recognition of Cobden's contribution was universal, and evidenced in the volume and language of the addresses of sympathy which he received on the occasion of the Drummond assassination. Most of these paraphrased Annan Town Council in condemning the attempt to misrepresent Cobden's words and destroy his character "and thus to injure the noble cause of which you are at present the most conspicuous advocate".(29) Two months earlier, Cobden's stature had been similarly recognised when several of the leading Scottish burghs at the instigation of the free traders - including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Perth, and Stirling - had conferred the status of freeman on him as the apostle of free trade.(30) In 1846, on the successful termination of the League's campaign, Cobden once again received a spate of congratulatory addresses from middle-class bodies in Scotland, lauding the "foremost and chiefest among our national benefactors".(31) Sir George Mackenzie of Coul, Bart., a free trade

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29) Address of the Magistrates and Town Council of Annan, 17/3/1843, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers, 525. See also, ibid., 522-587 for other addresses from Scotland.

30) Richard Cobden to George Wilson, Stirling, 18/1/1843, in Wilson Papers; Minutes of Glasgow Town Council, 8/12/1842; 22/12/1842; 11/1/1843; Roll of Eminent Burgesses of Dundee, 1513-1886, pp. 277-78; "Scotsman", 4/1/1843; 11/1/1843; 14/1/1843; 21/1/1843.

31) Address of the Inhabitants of Busby to Richard Cobden, 30/6/1846, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers, 592. See also ibid., 593-98, 602 for other addresses from Scotland.

landowner desired to erect a college of commerce in his honour,[32] while his patronage was sought by former Leaguers.[33] No Scottish free trader approached the eminence of Cobden (or even Bright). The most prominent Scottish free trader after Weir's departure, or more accurately after his return from political semi-retirement in 1841,[34] was Duncan McLaren, but his contribution was largely limited to Edinburgh where he became the driving force behind the local Anti-Corn-Law Association although he never held office in it. Without the metropolis, his role - although an extremely important one - was restricted to that of an organiser, liason with the dissenters among whom he was nationally-known, and Cobden's confidant north of the Border, through whom the latter sounded out Scottish opinion on the tactics of both the League and himself in Parliament.[35] With the partial exception of McLaren, the League in Scotland possessed local lieutenants rather than generals, and looked south for the latter. The situation was not inaccurately reflected in 1847 when Edinburgh Anti-Corn-Law Association prior to dissolution, raised a testimonial to Cobden and Bright (divided equally between them) and accorded votes of thanks to those local free traders who had served it in office during its existence - John Wigham (chairman throughout the period), John Gray,

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32) G.S. Mackenzie to R. Cobden, Roslin, 30/6/1846, in ibid. 2(51).

33) Earl of Buchan to Richard Cobden, Broxburn, ? December, 1846, in ibid., 73; Alexander Russel to R. Cobden, Cupar, 13/4/1844, in ibid., 1(90).

34) J.B. Mackie: The Life and Work of Duncan McLaren. vol. 1. p.45.

35) Thus when Cobden wanted the opinion of "leading minds" on the possibility of an "electoral union" to superintend registration on behalf of the League, he consulted McLaren among others on the proposal. (Copy. R. Cobden to D. McLaren, Manchester, 3/12/1843, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers.71. See also, Cobden/McLaren correspondence in ibid. 2.)

John Howison, and Archibald Thomson.(36)

The tendency of the Scottish free traders to look south for leadership was stimulated not only by a lack of nationally-known adherents in Scotland, particularly in 1839-40, but also by the organisation of the anti-corn-law movement north of the Border. Unlike the contemporaneous Chartist movement in Scotland, or its own immediate predecessor, the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association for the West of Scotland, the free trade movement north of the Tweed failed to evolve any permanent co-ordinating machinery between the constituent anti-corn-law associations. The closest approach to co-ordination in Scotland on a nation-wide basis was the presence of visiting delegates at some of the major anti-corn-law demonstrations in Glasgow - particularly the "Great Scottish Free Trade Demonstration" of April, 1841, when delegates from as far afield as Aberdeen and Stranraer attended, or the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Demonstration of 14-15th., January, 1842, when delegates from at least twenty-one communities in Scotland outside Glasgow were present including Aberdeen, Dundee, Kirriemuir, Auchtermuchty, and Linlithgow.(37) On a regional level, the anti-corn-law associations in the north-east and Tayside sent delegates to free trade meetings in Aberdeen and Dundee respectively. However, these rallies and McLaren's nation-wide conference of Scottish Dissenters in 1842 - which was not nevertheless a delegate conference from Scottish anti-corn-law associations - were purely transient. No comparable

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36) "Scotsman", 12/8/1846; 13/1/1847.

37) ibid., 19/1/1842; "Glasgow Argus", 22/4/1841.
Stirling Anti-Corn-Law Association appointed fourteen delegates to the Great Scottish Free Trade Demonstration of 1841. ("Scotsman", 10/4/1841)

machinery to the Council and committee structure of the League in Manchester (or even the weekly meetings at Covent Garden or Drury Lane) existed north of the Border. Consequently, the co-ordination of the individual anti-corn-law and free trade association depended on personal contact between individuals, and on the League Council which filled the vacuum.

The continuing interventionist role by the League Council in Scotland in 1840 and after, was at least partially involuntarily assumed, and stemmed from the perpetuation of the circumstances behind Paulton's mission in 1839 - the failure of Scottish free traders to take the initiative, the desire to indicate that the free trade movement had support without Manchester, and the hope that Scotland would contribute to the expense of running the agitation. Thus at the outset of 1840, with Paulton and Shearman removed from the scene, apathy once again prevailed in most parts of Scotland, except Tayside where two members of Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association, Alexander North and Thomas Wighton, had been engaged in a vigorous proselytising mission, culminating in the formation of embryonic anti-corn-law associations in Lochee, Broughty Ferry, Coupar Angus, Blairgowrie, Alyth, and Kirriemuir.(38) However, their sustained campaign was the exception which proved the rule, and although anti-corn-law meetings and petitions were widespread in Scottish urban areas prior to the discussion of Villier's motion in Parliament,(39) there was little indication that the agitation would be other than an ephemeral protest. The

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38) ibid., 4/1/1840; 11/1/1840; "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 23/1/1840; 6/2/1840; 5/3/1840; 19/3/1840; 21/5/1840.

39) "Scotsman", 11/1/1840; 15/1/1840; 18/1/1840; 22/1/1840; 25/1/1840; et seq.

reluctance of the free traders in Glasgow in particular to take the initiative after Weir's departure worried Cobden, who proposed that Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association should organise a dinner in the Trades' Hall when deputations from other towns in Scotland as well as Manchester, Leeds, and English centres could be present. Cobden was optimistic that such a demonstration would "infuse a new spirit into the Scotch mind, and rouse Glasgow to what it ought to be - the centre of agitation upon the Corn question for West Scotland". At the same time, he advised John Hill Burton to encourage the neighbouring towns and villages near Edinburgh to petition for repeal, and enquired whether Edinburgh too could organise an anti-corn-law dinner.(40)

Cobden's suggestion to the Glasgow free traders conveyed by John Wigham met at first with an encouraging response. On 20/4/1840, Alexander Johnston of Shieldhall, president of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association circularised Scottish Leaguers inviting deputations from the various anti-corn-law associations in Scotland to attend a delegate meeting in Glasgow in May to express their disapprobation of Parliament's rejection of Villier's motion and to arrange "a plan of future operations for obtaining a repeal of the Bread Tax". Johnstone further invited Cobden, Sidney Smith, and a couple of lecturers from Manchester to come north and assist "to stimulate" their efforts.(41) The League Council responded by sending Archibald Prentice (a Scot who had left Glasgow in 1815) and George Wilson, its chairman. At the meeting,

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40) R. Cobden to J.H. Burton, Manchester, 18/1/1840, in Watson Collection. Mss.578.

41) Alexander Johnstone to Sidney Smith, Glasgow, 25/4/1840, in L.L.B., vol. 4.no. 513.

held on 8/5/1840, Prentice lectured the assembled directors of the Glasgow Association on the necessity to become "the central point of agitation for all Scotland, as Manchester was for all England", and urged them to establish committee rooms, print propaganda, and employ a clerk as well as volunteer lecturers in surrounding areas. The readiness of other Scottish free traders to accept Glasgow leadership was expressed by Wighton who (along with North) represented Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association at the meeting. He observed that "the people of Scotland had been accustomed to look to Glasgow, and they now looked to it; but the trumpet gave them an uncertain sound". Nevertheless, despite the presence of the League delegation, the meeting broke up, deferring the consideration of a programme (on Walter Buchanan's motion) to a future date.(42) No progress was made, however, with Cobden's specific proposal, and in August, he visited Scotland personally, and having met "a score or two" of Leaguers in Glasgow where he "gingered" them into holding the next great anti-corn-law banquet in Glasgow, which he trusted would thus relieve Manchester of the expense and trouble of arranging one,(43) he proceeded to Edinburgh where he urged the metropolitan free traders on 2/9/1840 to co-operate with Glasgow in the proposed banquet in order to indicate that the anti-corn-law movement was not confined to Manchester, in addition to urging them on the need for petitioning, the distribution of tracts, and lectures.(44)

Cobden's visit appeared at first sight to have the desired effect,

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42) "Glasgow Argus", 11/5/1840.

43) R. Cobden to F. Cobden, Edinburgh, 31/8/1840, in W.S.R.O. Add. Mss. 6011.

44) "Scotsman", 9/9/1840.

although it did not diminish the tendency of the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association to look south for guidance on the most trivial matters. By October, the Glasgow free traders planned an important demonstration for January, 1841, when they hoped to seat 14-1800 at dinner, but they urged Cobden to attend together with English M.P.'s and to fix the period of the meeting for their own convenience. The Association's secretary further requested the services of the League's itinerant lecturer, James Acland for a month prior to the meeting to visit the main towns of Scotland.(45) A month later, Murray threatened that the meeting might be cancelled unless the Glasgow Anti-Corn- Law Association had an assurance that Villiers or some other English Members would be present.(46) In December, a member of the Glasgow Association, George C. Dick, met the League Council in Manchester and arranged that the demonstration should take place during the Easter recess, preparatory to the reintroduction of the question in Parliament. Paradoxically, the sudden burst of energy by the directors of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association following Dick's report to them on 30/12/1840, which the League Council might otherwise have welcomed, was marred by its direction. The Association not only appointed a committee to prepare an Address to the people of Scotland - which doubtless met with the League's approval - but impressed and alarmed by the report of the Select Committee on Import Duties which had just been published, they resolved to print and circulate officially an abstract of the minutes of evidence.(47) When the "Great Scottish Free

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45) David Murray to R. Cobden, Glasgow, 29/10/1840 in L.L.B., vol.5.no.772.

46) David Murray to G. Wilson, Glasgow, 11/11/1840 in ibid., vol.5. no. 787.

47) "Glasgow Argus", 31/12/1840.

Trade Demonstration" materialised in April, 1841, organisationally as successful as Cobden would have wished, its complexion precluded his attendance and that of any League delegation.

The rift with Manchester in 1841 was rendered less serious than it might have been insofar as Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association had shown more initiative than Prentice conceded. In March, 1840, they had appointed John Waugh of Edinburgh as an itinerant lecturer, and in that capacity he addressed meetings, distributed tracts, and prepared petitions in numerous villages in Ayrshire, Stirlingshire, and Dunbartonshire. In 1841, he lectured for sometime in the Lothians, before returning once again to Ayrshire in May, when he was instrumental in producing over fifty petitions.(48) Waugh was the only professional lecturer to be employed by the free trade movement in Scotland independently of the League, although the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association on 1/6/1840 following Prentice's advice to them, had optimistically advertised for working-class lecturers for the surrounding areas,(49) but his efforts were supplemented by those of volunteers, such as the Rev. Alexander Harvey, a Glasgow dissenting minister, whose expenses were defrayed by the Association,(50) or George Thompson, the anti-slavery lecturer, who performed similar services for the movement in Edinburgh and Leith in November, 1841.(51) The rapprochement between Scotland and Manchester by the close of 1841, and the feeling of lethargy which was prevalent by the end of the year opened the door

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48) "Scotsman", 28/3/1840; 28/4/1841; 5/5/1841; 29/5/1841.

49) "Glasgow Argus", 1/6/1840.

50) ibid., 6/8/1840; "Scottish Patriot", 15/8/1840.

51) John Wigham to R. Cobden, Edinburgh, 11/11/1841 in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 1(46).

once more to the transmission of League lecturers to the north, and by December, two of them - John Curtis (52) (an American) and James Acland - were both in Scotland. The latter had been dispatched by the League Council to Glasgow that month to prepare the ground for the Anti-corn-law demonstration to be held in Glasgow in early January, 1842, to offer his services to the delegates of any local associations represented at it, and to promote the forthcoming League bazaar of 31/1/1842. (53) Despite considerable Chartist opposition, Acland's lecturing had such a salutory effect, that Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association prevailed on the League Council to permit him to return the following year (which also gave him the opportunity to promote the League's £50,000 fund in Scotland) when he undertook a lecture tour of the west of Scotland from January to April, at the direction and expense of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association. (54) Before returning to Manchester, Acland also made a foray into Perthshire in May where he lectured widely, distri-:buted tracts, and formed anti-corn-law associations in Dunblane and Doune - the first official League agitation in the Highlands. (55) In addition to Acland, however, the League's case was presented annually in Scotland from 1842, following the League's decision that its leaders

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52) "Scotsman", 18/12/1841; 25/12/1841.

53) James Acland to George Wilson, Glasgow, 10/1/1842, in Wilson Papers; "Glasgow Argus", 23/12/1841; 27/12/1841: 13/1/1842; 20/1/1842; 24/1/1842; 31/1/1842; 21/2/1842; "Aberdeen Herald" 26/2/1842. In early 1840, Acland had been in Scotland at a social function organised by Stranraer Anti-Corn-Law Associa-:tion. ("The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 20/2/1840)

54) "Glasgow Argus", 26/12/1842; 9/1/1843; 13/2/1843; 2/3/1843; Acland's personal expenses amounted to £102:12:9d., and his expenses in connection with raising subscriptions, printing and delivering circulars amounted to £324:18:1½d. (ibid., 16/10/1843).

55) ibid., 5/6/1843.

should take the field, by high-powered deputations from the Council consisting of Richard Cobden or John Bright (or usually both) together with Colonel Perronet Thompson, R.R. Moore, and (separately) Archibald Prentice. Typical of these whistle-stop tours was that of January, 1844, comprising Cobden, Bright, Thompson, and Moore. Having jointly attended the principal anti-corn-law banquets in Glasgow and Edinburgh, the mission split into two deputations, one heading north to Aberdeen, the other south to Dumfries, on itineraries arranged by Edinburgh Anti-Corn-Law Association.(56) After 1841, the interventionist role of the League Council in Scotland was unquestioned.

However, the concept of a "Manchester League" must be qualified in several respects, not the least of which was the part played by Scottish free traders in England. The transmission of personnel over the Border was a two-way process. In addition to expatriate Scots such as Prentice, the representatives of Scottish anti-corn-law associations played a prominent part in the delegate conferences and political rallies of the League south of the Border, although they were precluded by geography from taking part in the business committees of the League in Manchester which dealt with day to day policy decisions. Scotland was well-represented numerically at most League conferences in Manchester or London. Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association appointed twenty-two delegates to the League's "national" meeting in Manchester

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56) The northern deputation visited Perth, Aberdeen, Dundee, Cupar, Leith, and Jedburgh, while its southern counterpart went to Greenock, Paisley, Ayr, Kilmarnock, and Dumfries. (ibid., 18/12/1843; 11/1/1844. See also correspondence of R. Cobden to his wife, C. Cobden, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 78.)

on 30/1/1843, including three members of Parliament.[57] Scottish delegates took a leading part at some meetings. On 1/4/1840, on the absence of J.B. Smith of Manchester, the delegate meeting in London was chaired by Alexander Johnstone of Shieldhall,[58] while Duncan McLaren performed the same function at the League's London conference of 1842, in addition to addressing a League rally in Manchester.[59] The membership of the League's general Council included Lord Kinnaird,[60] and John Wilson of Dundvan, a director of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association.[61] Individual Scots also lectured for the League in England, including George Thompson, who, on the advice of John Wigham, was invited by the League Council, to speak in Manchester.[62] A more permanent acquisition was Sidney Smith, an Edinburgh solicitor, who on the recommendation of William Tait, entered the service of Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association in January, 1839, (prior to the League's official formation), subsequently becoming secretary of the League in succession to the inefficient Ballantyne in July, 1839, editor of the "Anti-Corn-Law

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57) "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 16/1/1840; "Glasgow Argus", 30/3/1840; 23/1/1843.
Though resident in London, William Weir was appointed one of the Glasgow delegates to the London conference on 24/3/1840.

58) ibid., 6/4/1840.

59) ibid., 13/10/1842; J.B. Mackie: op. cit., vol.1, p.49.

60) "Dundee Courier", 28/4/1843.

61) "Scotsman", 20/12/1845.

62) John Wigham to J.B. Smith, Edinburgh, 27/12/1839, in L.L.B., vol.2. no. 309; Handbill, n.d., Papers of J.B. Smith. vol.3. Ms.923.2. S.333.
Thompson subsequently acted as a paid lecturer for the League in England, as well as Scotland. (George Thompson to George Wilson, London, 10/8/1842, in Wilson Papers.)

Circular", and founder and secretary (for seven years) of the Metropolitan Anti-Corn-Law Association in London.(63)

The infusion of Scottish free traders into the councils of the League was parallelled, especially after 1842, by an infusion of Scottish financial aid, although Cobden and other Leaguers on both sides of the Border remained critical of the size of the Scottish contribution. To Cobden, finance was of prime importance. He did "not give a rush for the zeal that won't give money, or beg it for us. The sole test of our power and usefulness lies in the Exchequer - we can't win our battle without the sinews of war".(64) The same attitude was observed by Scottish delegates in Manchester. William Lang of Glasgow on his return observed that the Manchester free traders "set about Corn-law repeal as a piece of business - they made it no holiday matter, and they went to the meetings of the Anti-Corn-Law League as the gentlemen now present would go to their counting-houses".(65) Scotland's lack of animation in this respect had been a principal motive for Paulton's mission in 1839, and it recurred as a prime factor in Cobden's tours of 1842-44. The latter complained as bitterly as his predecessor, and with the same national bias, that at his Scots meetings, "to name money was like reading the riot act to disperse them".(66) In particular, in Glasgow "it was all cry and

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63) "A Brief Memorandum of circumstances connected with the first operations of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and the formation of the Metropolitan Anti-Corn-Law Association" by Sidney Smith, in Place Papers. Add. Mss 27,822. ff.152-63. (B.M.)

64) Richard Cobden to George Wilson, London, 1/10/1841 in Wilson Papers.

65) "Glasgow Argus", 23/2/1843.

66) Copy. R. Cobden to C.A. Cobden, Sunderland, 23/1/1844. in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 78.

little wool so far as money is concerned". In Cobden's view, the Glasgow free traders did not understand how to hold a business meeting, caring too much "for speeches by mere politicians and Whig aristocrats". Nevertheless, the situation had by 1844 improved out of all recog-:nition since Paulton's visit, and in that year even Cobden antici-:pated that Glasgow would contribute £4,000 to the League's fund.(67) Moreover, Cobden was forced to concede that he could "take no credit for Manchester doing what she had done; for it was better situated than any other town in the kingdom for working out an agitation against monopoly. But Glasgow had its West Indian, its timber, and its other monopoly interests, spreading their ramifications throughout the whole social system."(68) Despite Cobden's criticisms, the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association had been less unbusinesslike than he implied. In promoting the previous 1843 subscription of £50,000 they had divided the city into districts, appointed collectors, distributed tracts to all 8,500 electors in Glasgow, and raised £2,500 within the city (of which £1,927 was remitted to Manchester after the deduction of expenses), in addition to transmitting Acland and depu-:tations to promote the fund in neighbouring towns such as Greenock, Ayr and Paisley.(69) In Edinburgh, where McLaren personally took charge of the local appeals, over £1,100 was raised in 1843 - a proportionately more impressive sum in the light of Edinburgh's economic and social complexion. However, in relation to contributions from other comparable

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67) Cobden had a higher opinion of the business-like manner of the Edinburgh free traders, McLaren and Wigham. (Copy. R. Cobden to C.A. Cobden, Glasgow, 11/1/1844, in ibid., 78.)

68) "Glasgow Argus", 19/1/1843.

69) ibid., 21/11/1842; 2/2/1843; 16/10/1843.

English centres, such as Bristol (£1,000) or Liverpool (2,200)[70] - the principal Scottish contributions were not low. The succeeding League appeals of 1844 and 1846 attracted increased financial support from Scotland with the increased targets. On the latter occasion, Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association alone raised eight individual contributions of £500 in addition to several in excess of £100.[71]

Scottish support was also given on a wide scale to the national fund-raising bazaars held by the League in Covent Garden and Manchester. In 1845 several Scottish communities had their own stalls at Covent Garden, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Paisley, Dunfermline, and Shetland. Facilitated by the knowledge that the bazaar furnished them with an opportunity to exhibit their products "to strangers from all parts of the world", Scottish manufacturers contributed representative local products (at the League's request) such as Paisley shawls illus-:trating "the poetry of the loom", damask table-cloths from Dunfermline, and linen products from Dundee.[72] In Edinburgh, a ladies committee led by Mrs. Wigham, Mrs. Wemyss, and Mrs. Renton (the wives of prominent members of Edinburgh Anti-Corn-Law Association) made fancy goods for their stall due to the absence of manufactures peculiar to the capital, while local committees were established in Glasgow and Dundee to procure

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70) "Scotsman", 4/2/1843.

71) ibid., 17/1/1846.

72) "Glasgow Argus", 12/5/1845; "Scotsman", 8/1/1845; 15/1/1845; 25/1/1845; 24/5/1845; "Dundee Advertiser", 7/2/1845; 8/4/1845; 29/4/1845; 2/5/1845.
On a promotion visit to Edinburgh, R.R. Moore appealed for articles "peculiarly Scottish, such as these made of tartan" which would be especially saleable. ("Scotsman", 2/4/1845.)

articles for the sale.[73] Having held a special exhibition of the Edinburgh contribution - at an appropriate admission charge of sixpence to swell League funds - prior to its dispatch, the Edinburgh Association negotiated with two steam navigation companies to share its carriage free of charge to London, together with that of ladies from Scotland travelling south to superintend the Scottish stalls. However, although Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association entered into similar arrangements with the Leith, Dundee, and Aberdeen Steam Shipping Companies and the London Shipping Company, the League Council had some difficulty in procuring salesmen for the Scottish stalls as relatively few travelled to London.[74] The Scottish contributions to the League bazaars were important not only because of the financial contribution contained therein, but also as an indication of the total involvement of the free trade movement north of the Border in the national activities of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and the degree of organisation which it produced on their part under the auspices of the Manchester free traders.

In another respect too the concept of a "Manchester League" must be qualified: in Scotland, despite the direct involvement of the League Council and its agents, the burden of missionary and propa-:gandist activities fell on its local adherents. They organised the public meetings and demonstrations, dinners, banquets, and soirees, and organised the collection of subscriptions and goods for the League bazaars which provided Cobden's "Sinews of war". On the nuclei of

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73) ibid., 8/1/1845; 15/2/1845; 22/2/1845; 5/3/1845; 9/4/1845; "Dundee Advertiser", 21/3/1845; 4/4/1845.

74) ibid., 8/4/1845; 2/5/1845; "Scotsman", 19/4/1845; 30/4/1845; 24/5/1845.

free trade activists in the anti-corn-law associations fell too the task of promoting the League's petitioning activities which were one of the principal functions it fulfilled as a pressure group. In 1840, the petitions of the city of Glasgow excluding its suburbs contained 50,000 signatures while the corresponding petition from Edinburgh could boast a record 23,750.(75) By 1842, the free traders were able to measure their progress by the increase in the figures to 54,600 and 28,000 respectively. On the latter occasion, over two hundred petitions with a gross total of 73,344 signatures had been transmitted from the city and its suburbs. The free traders also succeeded in identifying divergent social and occupational groups with repeal. In 1842, Glasgow's "female" petition attracted 11,400 signatures, an indication of its success in spreading its social base. Moreover, in some areas such as Pollok, the free traders commanded the support of several separate petitions from professions and trades in the area, notably medical practioners, teachers, shopkeepers, and bakers. Dissenting congregations too petitioned in their own right. However, in Glasgow, the strength of the Anti-Corn-Law Association among the industrial magnates of the city facilitated the systematic production of widespread petitions from their enterprises. By the beginning of February, 1842, the "Argus" was enabled to report triumphantly that eighty-three separate petitions for repeal had been transmitted to one of the local Members of Parliament from different cotton mills, power loom manufactories, and workshops in the city.(76)

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75) "Glasgow Argus", 20/1/1840; 30/1/1840.

76) ibid., 31/1/1842; 7/2/1842; 10/2/1842; 14/2/1842; 17/2/1842; 21/2/1842; 28/2/1842.

The free traders further endeavoured to identify the economic and social hardship in industrial areas and in particular industries in 1842 with the cause of repeal by holding delegate conferences and collecting statistical information for propagandist purposes. The encouragement for this activity came, as usual from the south. The cotton, woollen, and hosiery trades of the West Riding of Yorkshire had convened a joint meeting of deputies from the textile districts in Leeds in 1841, and at a League meeting in Manchester on 17/11/1841, similar activity was urged on Scottish free traders. Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association responded by convening a conference of repealers connected with the linen industry in Tayside and Fife (and a substantial number of Dissenting ministers to furnish a moralistic tone to the proceedings) on 6/1/1842 in Dundee when dele-:gates from different areas reported on local distress in the industry or districts and exhorted the virtue of free trade as a panacea for their difficulties.(77) At a two-day demonstration in Glasgow on 14-15th January, 1842, although of a less specific character, sessions were devoted to reports from deputies from all over Scotland on the state of trade and social distress in their respective localities, which culminated in the reading of a paper prepared by a statistician, Alexander Watt, which attempted to trace the reduction of deposits in Savings Banks in direct proportion to the rise in the price of bread.(78)

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77) "Scotsman", 4/2/1841; Report of the Great Anti-Corn-Law Meeting held at Dundee on Thursday, 6th January, 1842.

78) "Scotsman", 19/1/1842.

Particular attention was paid by free traders in Scotland (and England) to the need to identify bodies assumed to be representative of manufacturing and commercial interests with the cause of repeal, notably chambers of commerce. On 6/1/1839, having experienced the successful take-over by the Manchester Leaguers of the local chamber of commerce, Cobden enquired of William Tait what Glasgow Chamber of Commerce was doing on the corn question, and asked him to "rub" them in his review of the anti-corn-law movement in "Tait's Edinburgh Maga-:zine". He further observed that the chambers of commerce had done more harm than good hitherto, and "had suppressed all active minds beneath their own leaders' temperaments". He hoped that the Glasgow free traders would "effect a change of administration in the Chamber there" following the example in Manchester of Wood's deposition.(79)

His observation on the hostility of the directorate of the Glasgow Chamber to total repeal of the Corn Laws was accurate. Four days before he wrote Tait, the free traders led by Alexander Johnstone, John Fleming of Clairmont, and Walter Buchanan, had moved a series of motions at the Chamber's annual general meeting, deprecating the failure of the directors to join Manchester Chamber of Commerce in petitioning against the Corn Laws. These also proposed changing the constitution to make it obligatory for the chairman to call a general meeting on receipt of a requisition by twenty members (and mandatory for the directors to execute the instructions of such a meeting), and recommended the directors to print and circulate to members all the resolutions of the Chamber on the Corn Laws since 1783 in addition to giving all members

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79) Copy. R. Cobden to W. Tait, Manchester, 6/1/1839, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 30.

access to the Chamber's records. Finally, they recommended the directors to petition for an "alteration or abolition" of the Corn Laws. Concurrently, the chairman of the Chamber on behalf of the directorate had moved that no rules or regulations of the Chamber could be revoked without notice at a previous general meeting.(80) Deferred to a special meeting on 8/2/1839, by which time the directors had also rejected the idea of a petition on the Corn Laws or the printing of previous ones which "referred to a state of the Corn Laws altogether different from the present", Alexander Graham and John Fleming (in Johnstone's absence) proposed his motion which was overwhelmingly lost. This left the entire executive power of the Chamber for twelve months without review vested in the hands of a directorate of twelve out of 239 members.

The totality of the defeat of the free traders was recognised by the "Argus" which urged them to break away to form another Chamber.(81) When the directors Annual Report to the Chamber at the annual general meeting on 4/1/1840 noted their unanimous opinion on the impolicy of abolition of the Corn Laws, the free traders led by Buchanan renewed the attack, giving notice that at the Chamber's general meeting in July, they would propose an amendment to the constitution transferring more power to the general meeting from the directorate. This proposal they did not implement probably because to their surprise, they were more successful in the election to the directorate than they had anticipated, returning Walter Buchanan to the Board.(82) His election brought no marked improvement in the success

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80) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 10/2/1838; 29/12/1838; 2/1/1839; "Glasgow Argus", 3/1/1839.

81) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 16/1/1839; 8/2/1839; "Glasgow Argus", 11/2/1839.

82) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 4/1/1840; "Glasgow Argus", 13/1/1840.

of the free traders in the Chamber. Even when he modified his request to widen its appeal by asking the Chamber in 1840, 1841, and 1842 to petition for an "alteration" or a fixed duty, he was defeated on each occasion, forcing the "Argus" to urge once more the establishment of a new Chamber of Commerce on free trade principles.(83) After the annual general meeting of 1842, when Buchanan's motion was defeated by 54 to 39 votes, the free traders gave up the attempt to capture Glasgow Chamber of Commerce as a lost cause.

In areas where urban protectionist interests were weaker than Glasgow, the free traders more successfully utilised mercantile bodies as a platform for pushing free trade doctrines, and Edward Baxter, Alexander Low, and Thomas Neish in Dundee Chamber of Commerce,(84) John F. Macfarlane, R.B. Blyth, Duncan McLaren, and Adam Black in Edinburgh Merchant Company,(85) and John Wigham, R.B. Blyth, Duncan McLaren, and Archibald Thomson in Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce took a leading role in promoting petitions for total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws in addition to other free trade objectives. The last body after its contribution to the League's formation in 1839 continued to be particularly strongly identified with it in terms of personnel and sentiment. Not only did the committee of Edinburgh Anti-Corn-Law Committee meet in its premises, but the Corn Laws were the first item on the secretary's annual report every year from 1840-43.(86) One hundred copies of its petition on

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83) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 13/3/1840; 9/12/1841; 3/1/1842; "Glasgow Argus", 6/1/1842.

84) Minutes of Dundee Chamber of Commerce, 14/12/1844; 2/4/1846; 2/7/1846.

85) Minutes of Edinburgh Merchant Company, 26/3/1840; 24/3/1841; 12/5/1841; 29/9/1841; 29/5/1846.

86) Minutes of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, 15/1/1840; 20/1/1841; 6/4/1841; 19/1/1842; 7/4/1842; 6/1/1846; 30/5/1846.

comprehensive revision of Import Duties in 1841 were printed and circulated among the burghs, counties, and chambers of commerce of Scotland with a request for their co-operation behind the free trade cause, and the Chamber only ceased petitioning for total repeal of the Corn Laws on 10/1/1844 on receipt of an assurance from its secretary, John F. Macfarlan, that the exertions of the League "rendered all such steps unnecessary".(87)

The free traders also introduced the corn question, following precedent, into municipal politics to identify civic bodies with the League. In Glasgow with its protectionist interests, the issue was a particularly fruitful weapon for the Whigs and they employed it readily. Alexander Johnstone moved several petitions between 1838 and 1841, but until the Whigs gained an outright majority on the Town Council in November, 1842, the free traders were obliged to support petitions for the modified aims of an "alteration" in the existing laws or a fixed duty, and take satisfaction that they had at least secured a condemnation of the status quo.(88) The Whig free traders celebrated their electoral triumph by giving a notice of motion at the first meeting for a petition in favour of total and immediate repeal which their majority voted through the Council the following month together with freeman status for Cobden. In February, 1843, they proposed a further petition, charitably "on the understanding that those members of Council who formerly voted in the minority shall

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87) ibid., 6/4/1841; 10/1/1844.

88) Minutes of Glasgow Town Council, 12/4/1838; 3/5/1838; 26/7/1838; 28/11/1839; 9/1/1840; 11/2/1841; 18/2/1841; 27/5/1841; 17/6/1841; 10/2/1842; 10/3/1842; "Glasgow Argus", 13/1/1840; 22/2/1841; 21/6/1841.

not be held committed to the principle of the petitions".[89] In other towns too, such as Edinburgh,[90] Dundee,[91] and Perth,[92] local free traders were active in municipal corporations proposing petitions or resolutions in favour of total repeal, but what characterised Glasgow was the semi-official involvement of the local anti-corn-law association in municipal politics at the hustings. The pattern was set in November, 1841, when the Whig candidates for the Town Council asserted that "the municipal body of such a city as Glasgow should be composed of men holding clear and decided opinions on the great commercial questions which have been prominently brought before the country". Their election speeches dwelt on the Corn Law theme, while their past records of activity in the anti-corn-law movement and the unfavourable votes of their opponents on the issue in the Council were publicised by the "Glasgow Argus". The joint committee for James Lumsden (proprietor of the "Argus") and Councillor William Cross, the Whig candidates in the fourth municipal ward, was chaired by another prominent Glasgow free trader, John Whitehead, and during the campaign sat daily in the rooms of the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association. The celebration

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89) Minutes of Glasgow Town Council, 24/11/1842; 8/12/1842; 22/12/1842; 23/2/1843.

90) Minutes of Edinburgh Town Council, 22/1/1839; 19/2/1839; 26/2/1839; 24/3/1840; 7/4/1840; 2/2/1841; 9/2/1841; 16/2/1841; 11/5/1841; 18/5/1841; 21/9/1841; 28/9/1841; 8/2/1842; 14/3/1843; 21/3/1843; 28/3/1843; 25/4/1843; 28/10/1845; 3/2/1846; 17/2/1846.
Adam Black, as assessor for Edinburgh, also carried a resolution at the Convention of Royal Burghs to petition for free trade, especially in corn. (Minutes of the Convention of Royal Burghs, 13/6/1842; 13/7/1842.)

91) Minutes of Dundee Town Council, 1/3/1839; 25/2/1841; 4/3/1841; 15/3/1841; 3/2/1842; 17/2/1842; 16/1/1843.

92) Minutes of Perth Town Council, 12/2/1839; 6/1/1840; 11/5/1841; 3/1/1842; 7/2/1842; 17/1/1843; 1/5/1843.

dinners which followed the gains of the Liberals appropriately toasted Free Trade and repeal of the Corn Laws.(93) In 1842, the electors of Glasgow were exhorted to vote for the "reform and Free Trade candidates", and in both 1842 and 1843, free trade remained the central theme of the Whig municipal campaigns. At the celebration dinner following the latter, Councillor Brodie acknowledged the victors' debt to the Anti-Corn-Law League, attributing their triumph partly to the progress which it had made.(94)

The most ambitious attempt to identify an interest group with the cause of free trade culminated in the national conference of Scottish Dissenters in 1842. Although McLaren has reaped the credit for the enlistment of the Scottish Dissenters behind the League - and his contribution was considerable - the groundwork had been prepared for him.(95) The basic sympathy of the Dissenters for repeal had been illustrated during Paulton's visit in 1839, and the concurrent success of Shearman's initiatives towards them were already apparent in the number of Dissenting clergymen who addressed anti-corn-law meetings in 1840-41,(96) at a time when McLaren was in semi-retirement from public life or taking only a limited and local role in the anti-corn-law agitation. One of the most prominent leaders of the Scottish Dissenting clergy, the Rev. Dr. Heugh, had been a speaker at the Great Scottish Free Trade Demonstration of April, 1841,(97) in 1840 all the Dissenting

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93) "Glasgow Argus", 28/10/1841; 1/11/1841; 4/11/1841; 22/11/1841; 25/11/1841.

94) ibid., 17/10/1842; 20/10/1842; 24/10/1842; 27/10/1842; 3/11/1842; 2/11/1843; 6/11/1843; 9/11/1843.

95) eg. G.S. Pryde: Scotland since 1603. pp.200-1.

96) "Scotsman", 11/1/1840; 16/5/1840; 15/5/1841; 26/5/1841.

97) ibid., 24/4/1841.

clergy and some of the congregations in Dundee had petitioned for repeal,[98] and in May, 1841, 86 Dissenting clergymen in Glasgow had followed suit.[99] On 13/1/1840, the Rev. William McKerrow of the Scotch Secession Church had attended the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law dinner, but when the League held its conference for ministers in August, 1841, no fewer than 30 members of his Church were present in addition to 12 members of the Scots Relief Church and some other Scots clergy. Important delegations left from Glasgow (led by the Rev. Alexander Harvey) and from Edinburgh, where a meeting of the Dissenting clergy of the city on 26/7/1841 had determined that they could accept the invitation from Manchester as the Corn-laws were indefensible on moral and religious grounds as well as economically, concluding by urging all ministers to go "even at the expense of personal inconvenience". Moreover, although the most prominent leaders of the Dissenting clergy, Dr. Heugh and Dr. Ralph Wardlaw, were both unable to attend, they indicated their approval of its aims and objects.[100] At the conference, several of the Scottish delegates took an active part including the Rev. Dr. Ritchie of Edinburgh (who proposed a resolution which condemned the "Bread Tax" as "anti-Christian"), the Rev. James Blair (Dunfermline) the Rev. W. McDougall (Kilmarnock), the Rev. D. Ronald (Saltcoats), and the Rev.

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98) "Dundee Advertiser", 27/3/1840; 3/4/1840; 22/5/1840.

99) "Scotsman", 15/5/1841.

100) ibid., 18/1/1840; 28/7/1841; 11/8/1841; 14/8/1841; 18/8/1841; 21/8/1841; 25/8/1841; 18/9/1841; "Glasgow Argus", 16/8/1841; 23/8/1841.

Thomas Struthers (Hamilton).[101] After the conference, Harvey and Dr. Heugh addressed an anti-corn-law demonstration in Glasgow on the theme that the Corn Laws were a "national sin".[102]

The approach to the Dissenters in Scotland had not been left entirely to the Council of the League. In the course of 1841, Scottish free traders too had officially approached Dissenting bodies for assistance. The United Associate Presbytery in Dundee recommended its congregations to meet with a view to furthering the object of repeal, after a memorial to them by Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association.[103] By November, Edinburgh Anti-Corn-Law Association had appointed a sub-committee to meet a committee of Dissenting ministers in order to promote systematically petitions from their congregations, with the former offering to furnish ready prepared petitions whenever required.[104] It was from this approach by Edinburgh Anti-Corn-Law Association, and stimulated by the further example of a conference of the Welsh Dissenting clergy at Caernarvon in the first week of December,[105] that the concept of a national conference of Scottish Dissenters emerged. A preliminary meeting of ministers and members of Dissenting Churches in the Broughton Place Session-house at the beginning of December, determined to hold a national conference of Dissenting clergy and laymen in Edinburgh on 11-12th., January, 1842, and appointed a committee of thirty-nine to

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101) "Scotsman", 28/8/1841.

102) ibid., 25/9/1841.

103) "Dundee Advertiser", 30/4/1841.

104) John Wigham to R. Cobden, Edinburgh, 11/11/1841, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 1(46).

105) "Scotsman", 11/12/1841.

make the arrangements, comprising the ministers from Edinburgh who had attended the previous Manchester conference together with several others, and twenty-four lay Dissenters including John Wigham, Archibald Thomson, Adam Black, John Gray, and Duncan McLaren - all of whom had served the committee of the anti-corn-law association. As a former active member of the Scottish Central Board of Dissenters, through which he was acquainted with Heugh, Wardlaw, and other Dissenters from different parts of Scotland, McLaren was not an unnatural choice for the convener-:ship of the organising committee.(106) The success of the conference, sub-:sequently extended because of the numbers to three days, which gave an impressive display of Dissenter solidarity in Scotland for repeal - over two hundred ministers and about five hundred laymen agreed to take part - was attributable in no small measure to the energy of McLaren as convener. 976 circulars were sent to Dissenting congregations (including Roman Catholics, Methodists, and Episcopalians who declined to attend), letters of invitation from McLaren to several sympathetic Members of Parliament such as Joseph Hume, were transmitted, while the tickets of admission were distributed from McLaren's own warehouse.(107) His personal contribution was noted by both Cobden, who was precluded from attendance by illness, and by the conference which gave him a special vote of thanks.(108) His zeal and energy were further recognised when he was appointed convener of the committee elected to carry out the instructions of the conference, especially the printing and circulation

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106) ibid., 6/1/1838; 11/12/1841.

107) ibid., 18/12/1841; 22/12/1841; 1/1/1842; 8/1/1842.

108) ibid., 12/1/1842; Also, John R. Fyfe and William Skeen (editors): Report of the Speeches delivered at the Conference of Ministers and members of Dissenting Churches, held at Edinburgh on the 11th., 12th., and 13th., January, 1842. p.129 (Edinburgh, 1842) herein-:after referred to as Edin. Diss. Conf. Report.

of its "Address to the People of Scotland", which had to be reprinted after the prevalent demand had absorbed the first edition of one thousand copies.(109)

The expectations of the League from the conference had been considerable. On 10/1/1842, Acland urged George Wilson, the chairman of the Council, not to be "fidgetty" about Scotland, that once the priests came out in support, things would be done.(110) The immediate success of the conference too raised free trade hopes. George Thompson informed Wilson that on no side of the Atlantic had he witnessed such a gathering, concluding that the doom of the monopolists was sealed and "the handwriting is on the wall".(111) On balance, free trade expectations of the galvanising effect of the conference were disappointed. As in the south, 1842 was a crisis year for the League in Scotland with the danger that the agitation for repeal would be swallowed up in a new demand for parliamentary reform, and when the League launched a new and more successful campaign in Scotland at the end of the year, McLaren and the free trade press in Scotland counselled them to commence their agitation in the large towns north of the Border in Glasgow, because of the alarm of the commercial interests at the economic situation in 1842, and their determination on the slight recovery by December to ensure that it would not recur by implementing a further instalment of free trade.(112) It was not until January, 1843,

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109) ibid., p.128.

110) James Acland to George Wilson, Glasgow, 10/1/1842 in Wilson Papers.

111) George Thompson to George Wilson, Edinburgh, 15/1/1842, in ibid.

112) Copy John Bright to R. Cobden, Rochdale, 7/10/1842, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 66.; "Glasgow Argus", 8/12/1842.

that Cobden, a critical judge, could report triumphantly to George Wilson, that "Scotland is fairly up now, and we shall hear more in future from this, north of the Tweed, upon the Corn Laws".(113) Nevertheless, McLaren's conference did have some long-term effect by encouraging Dissenting ministers to appear in even greater numbers than hitherto at free trade demonstrations, which helped to contribute both an evangelical zeal and a moralistic cover to the self-interested motivation of the commercial and manufacturing interests in 1843-44.

It was insufficient to maintain the momentum of the movement in the increased economic prosperity at the close of 1844, when the economic interests began to lose some interest in free trade in their enjoyment of current good fortune. By December, 1844, the directors of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association determined to hold no free trade demonstration in January through fear that a "repetition per annum might tire the public".(114) When the Association set up a committee on 4/1/1845 to arrange for a Glasgow donation to the League bazaar in May, they did so with lack of enthusiasm, but relied on the judgement of the League leaders that one should be held. Several of those present, including Walter Buchanan and Alexander Graham felt obliged to labour the point that "still waters run deep" and that the League was stronger than ever - a confession that this was not the case.(115) When the League

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113) Richard Cobden to George Wilson, Stirling, 18/1/1843, in Wilson Papers.

114) James Oswald to Andrew Rutherfurd, Glasgow, 22/12/1844, in Rutherfurd Papers. Adv. Mss. 85.1.3.

115) "Glasgow Argus", 6/1/1845.

resumed its petitioning and proselytising activities at the end of 1845 and the beginning of 1846, it did so against the background of a further economic crisis. The latter created the new climate of opinion in which Henry Cockburn could observe as early as 1/11/1845 that the Corn Law was "plainly ringing in. Cobden and the League have done much against it, but Aquarius more".(116) In Scotland this was true, as in the south, but the League had prepared public opinion for the change by persuasion or threat, and through local free traders conducting the most energetic and sustained agitation on the Corn Laws ever witnessed north of the Border, but despite the truth of the claim by the "Glasgow Argus" after Cobden's triumphant tour in Scotland in January, 1843, that "the notion entertained in some quarters that this is a mere Manchester movement" had been "very much worn away"(117) - it was only achieved after direct and repeated intervention by the League Council, and under Manchester example and leadership.

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116) Henry Cockburn: The Journal of Henry Cockburn. vol.2, p.128.
117) "Glasgow Argus", 13/2/1843.

7. Scottish Opinion and the Corn Laws:

(1) Urban free trade interests and the Anti-Corn-Law League, 1839-46.

The success of the Anti-Corn-Law League as an extraparliamentary pressure group lay not only in its organisation and missionary acti-:vities, but also in its skill at recruiting into its ranks, interest groups within society, which it endeavoured to associate openly with the cause of repeal. The prevalent opinion fostered by Scottish free traders at the time was that in Scotland the cause of free trade was triumphant and that the obstacle to its realisation was England. William Ewart, the Whig Member for Dumfries-shire, believed in 1842 that nowhere was the cause of Free Trade "more strong, silent and speedy than in Scotland. From Scotland, it will spread to England."(1) The Reverend Dr. Heugh, a prominent figure in the ranks of the Scottish Dissenting clergy concurred, and trusted that "Scotland and Ireland will continue to point the finger, not of scorn, but of stern reproof, to their sister England, until the blush of honest shame shall cover her; until England shall repent and amend; and then the people of the three portions of the empire shall, with united voice, demand this petition, or rather claim of right that these (Corn) laws be abolished."(2) The notion that Scotland was particularly favourable to the doctrines of the League was also entertained by Sir Robert Peel, who admitted to Bright in 1846, that he had "no conception of the intense feeling of hatred with which the Corn Law had been regarded, more especially in Scotland".(3)

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1) Edin. Diss. Conf. Report 1842. p. 84

2) ibid., p. 60

3) John Morley: The life of Richard Cobden. vol. 1. p. 357.

With some justification, modern scholars have made the same assumption.[4] However, it is easy to exaggerate the League's strength north of the Border; as in England, the success of the League in Scotland varied in relation to the environment in which it worked, and the occupational, social and political outlook of those whose adherence was sought. As in the south, the League's strongholds were principally in urban society, where it could appeal to several interest groups. Yet this must be qualified: there were significant pockets of protectionist support in the urban middle-classes. If the forums of urban opinion such as municipal corporations and chambers of commerce tended, albeit not universally, to support the League, this was at least partly attributable to the exclusion from them of the working-classes whose loyalty to the League was dubious, and more especially their ultra-radical mentors. The corollary of the League's strength in Scottish urban society was its weakness in the landward areas as a whole, although it could claim individual successes.

The growth of manufacturing activity in Europe and latterly in the United States of America, together with the consequent increasing competition faced by British manufacturers had been one of the principal motivating factors (if not the main one) behind urban support for all agitations against the Corn Laws since the end of the eighteenth century. Moreover, it was a threat which grew more potent with time. In 1833, several Glasgow cotton magnates, in their evidence to the Select Committee on manufactures, commerce, and shipping,

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4) eg. L.C. Wright: Scottish Chartism. p. 117.

testified to the alarm of all exporting industrialists when they noted the growing competitive position of France, Austria, Switzerland, the United States, the German states, and Russia.(5) Further reports by later select committees, especially that on import duties (1841) confirmed the continuing growth of foreign manufactures and competition, and a corresponding growth in the alarm of Scottish manu-:facturers. The tendency of other states to promote their own manu-:factures behind the protective umbrella of tariff walls gave parti-:cular cause for concern. One of the background factors to the timing of the formation of the Anti-Corn-Law League (in the Spring of 1839) was the knowledge that in this respect, 1841 would be a vital year for British export interests. In that year, the articles of the Zollverein were to be submitted to a revision, a recommendation of the United States legislature that duties should be levied on im-:ported merchandise purely for financial reasons would fall to be implemented, and the commercial treaty between Britain and Brazil would expire and fall due for renewal. The "Argus" counselled that if Britain wished more liberal terms from these vital export markets, a liberalisation of her own commercial policy was imperative.(6) The inevitable loss by Britain of her role as the hare of the Industrial Revolution demanded a readjustment of attitudes on the part of British manufacturers; but to a complex problem, the anti-corn-law

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5) Minutes of evidence of the Select Committee on Manufactures, Commerce, and Shipping, 1833. (evidence of Kirkman Finlay, Henry Houldsworth and William Graham). pp. 38-9, 71, 309-31.

6) "Glasgow Argus", 22/4/1839.

movements (culminating in the League) offered the comfortingly simple solution - free trade.

When Glasgow Young Men's Free Trade Association in their address to Cobden in 1843 lauded "those principles which can alone redeem our commerce from its present appalling state",(7) they echoed the sentiments of most of the League's urban adherents. It was, as Alexander Johnstone of Shieldhall claimed, not a political, but "almost altogether a commercial question", and in this context" . . . there is no part of the country more interested in the repeal of the Corn Laws than Glasgow . . . the very existence of Glasgow depends upon the abolition of the Corn Laws".(8) Pictorial illustration of the theme was permitted in the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association's Free Trade banquet of January, 1843, when the decoration of the hall included paintings of the Genius of Commerce descending on the City and harbour of Glasgow with the corresponding mottos, "Free Trade with the whole World" and "Let Glasgow Flourish".(9) The composition of Glasgow's economy, and its heavy dependence on export markets, ensured that the city had an intrinsic commercial rather than a political attachment to the cause of Free Trade.

In their evidence to various Select Committees, Glasgow manufacturers especially in the cotton industry, and whether of free trade opinions or not, had repeatedly expressed the view that repeal of the Corn Laws by cheapening food (and presumably labour) would

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7) Address of Glasgow Young Men's Free Trade Association to Richard Cobden, 5/5/1843, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers, 545.

8) "Glasgow Argus", 23/12/1839.

9) ibid., 9/1/1843.

increase the competitive position of British manufactures in export markets, and by causing a reciprocal reduction of tariffs in overseas markets, provide easier access to them.[10] The reports of Mr. Symons and Dr. Harding, Assistant Commissioners for the south and east of Scotland for the Royal Commission on Handloom Weavers in 1834-35 also asserted that manufacturing opinion on the Corn Laws was unanimous (which was not true), but confirmed more accurately the fears of Scottish manufacturers that the Corn Laws produced retaliatory tariffs and encouraged other countries to manufacture on their own account "in order to supply themselves with those articles which the exclusion of their corn prevents them from purchasing from Great Britain".[11] As "the manufacturing and commercial metropolis of the North",[12] Glasgow epitomised these attitudes.

The cotton industry in particular, Scotland's premier trade, seemed peculiarly vulnerable to retaliatory tariffs. The majority of Glasgow's cotton products - perhaps three-fourths of the total - equivalent to £24 millions, were exported, of which the colonies took a mere £5 millions, according to Walter Buchanan, who anticipated that if Britain could "furnish our workmen with cheap bread under an altered Corn Law, Britain will continue to produce the cheapest goods in the world".[13] The new American tariff of 1842 with higher rates

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10) See evidence of Henry Houldsworth in Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Manufactures, Commercem and Shipping, 1833. p. 313; evidence of William Craig and Thomas Davidson in minutes of evidence of the Handloom Weavers' Commission, 1834-5. pp. 118, 128-31, 158-59.

11) Reports of Symons and Harding in report of the Handloom Weavers' Commission, 1834-5. pp. 51-52.

12) "Glasgow Argus", 7/12/1843.

13) ibid., 23/12/1839.

for British exports followed by the increased Prussian duties on imports of cotton (and iron) in 1844 seemed to confirm the League's case in the eyes of many of Glasgow's cotton manufacturers. In 1841, the value of British cotton-twist exported to Germany had been £2,406,936 and the Prussian proposals entailed doubling and trebling the duties on them. The iron trade of Glasgow was also hit by the new Prussian tariffs of 1844, which proposed a duty of fifty per cent of the value of pig iron imports, a serious blow to the Scottish iron industry which was a major exporter to the German states.(14)

Moreover, if Glasgow's principal exporting industries were sub-:ject to retaliatory tariffs, the cotton industry in particular was peculiarly handicapped by Britain's own import duties. In 1836, Alexander Graham, a leading Glasgow cotton spinner had published a treatise on "The Impolicy of the Tax on Cotton Wool", and this re-:mained until its repeal by Peel in 1845, a continuous complaint allied by Graham to his objection to the Corn Laws.(15) A further duty which irritated the cotton interest was the duty on foreign soap, especially olive-oil soap, which the cotton manufacturers considered milder and "more adapted for bringing out colours" in cottons. In Alexander Johnstone's opinion, this gave a distinct advantage to French dyers and printers.(16) Furthermore, in Glasgow, as in other

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14) ibid., 26/9/1842; 5/2/1844.

15) ibid., 22/2/1841; 18/3/1844; "Scotsman", 22/3/1845.

16) Evidence of Alexander Johnstone. Minutes of evidence of the Select Committee on Import Duties. 1840. Vol. 5. pp. 136-9.
As a manufacturer in cotton, Johnstone exported to the U.S.A. Mexico, Brazil, Chile and Peru. His complaint against im-:port duties included those on foreign flour which cost him £1,200 per annum, as well as cotton wool (£1,087:10:0d.), and dyes (£150). ("Glasgow Argus", 28/1/1839).

areas of Scotland, the manufacturing interests were subject to the deleterious financial effects of the considerable protection enjoyed by Canadian timber over its rivals from the Baltic. This imposition affected a variety of industrial and manufacturing interests - cotton spinners and weavers, ironmasters, and brewers - to a varying degree, insofar as it was "short only of food as regards universality of consumption".(17) Not least among those affected was the Incorporation of Coopers in Glasgow who asserted in a memorial in 1844 that the heavy duties on their raw material excluded their products from foreign markets.(18)

Allied to the free trade manufacturers and industrialists of the city, and largely sharing identical opinions, were certain merchant and shipping interests in Glasgow dependent on foreign trade. Not only did they anticipate that increased trade would flow from the removal of protective tariffs on articles such as corn, timber and sugar, but they also had an intrinsic interest in the liberalisation of commerce. Profit margins and consumer demand for articles such as coffee were equally curtailed by the financial penalties and physical prohibitions exercised in the name of colonial preference.(19)

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17) "Scotsman", 25/3/1846.

18) Memorial of the Incorporation of Coopers of Glasgow, 10/10/1841, in Dalhousie Muniments. GD. 45/7/23.

19) Bailie Mitchell, a prominent Glasgow free trader complained in 1841 that under the prevailing colonial preference for coffee, he was debarred from importing the item direct from St. Domingo and Haiti. His vessel was obliged to return via the Cape of Good Hope where it discharged and reloaded the article, paying port-dues, tax and insurance, and costing the consumer nearly 1d. per pound more in the process. ("Glasgow Argus", 22/2/1841).

Moreover, except for those who benefited directly from it, the shipping interests of Glasgow found cause for complaint in the Canadian timber monopoly, which allegedly enhanced the cost of ship-:building by artificially inflating timber prices. Similarly, the Corn Laws increased the cost of victualling ships, but their influence was primarily symbolic. They were "the giant monopoly by which all other monopolies are upheld", (20) and provided through the League a common platform from which assaults could be launched on a multi-:plicity of commercial obstacles. This factor governed the decision of the Scottish free traders to agitate on a wider platform than in the south. In view of the intrinsic commercial interest of Glasgow in the Corn Laws, directly and symbolically, it was not surprising that the interest groups immediately concerned should be reflected in the League's principal adherents in the city. Commercial and industrial enterprises, as well as individuals, figured prominently in the Glasgow subscription lists to the funds of the League. Unsurprisingly, they were led by the cotton industry, its ancillaries, the iron in-:dustry, and international mercantile concerns. (21)

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20) ibid., 11/1/1844.

21) ibid., 15/1/1846; "Scotsman", 20/12/1843.

In 1846, the eight largest subscribers to the League Fund (with £500 each) included Charles Tennant & Co. (St. Rollox Chemical Works), J. & A. Denniston (international mercantile house), Samuel Higginbotham (power-loom cloth manufacturer), William Dixon of Govan (ironmaster), John Wilson of Dundyvan (ironmaster), Buchanan, Hamilton & Co. (East India Merchants), and Colin Dunlop & Co. (ironmasters). Heading further substantial contributors from the cotton industry were Duncan McPhail & Co. and Alexander Graham of Lancefield (£200 each). The same interests - cotton and iron - were reproduced in the League fund lists of smaller towns in the Lanarkshire conurbation, such as Airdrie, the site of the Dundyvan iron works.

If Glasgow manufacturers felt they had a commercial interest in repeal of the Corn Laws, this notion was equally held in the other principal commercial community in Scotland, Dundee. The linen in-:dustry of Tayside had been protectionist in sympathy as late as the 1820's, but Huskisson's repeal of the export bounty had severed any interest the industry had retained with the cause of protection. When the linen manufacturers found increasing tariff barriers raised against them in France and the United States of America in 1840-42, they had little hesitation in attributing these hurdles to Britain's restrictive commercial policy, and in regarding Free Trade as the panacea for their troubles. During the economic depression of 1842, when the five principal linen manufacturers in the Dundee area had only twelve out of a possible thirty warping mills in constant employ-:ment, and when trade in osnaburgs and dowlas especially (though not in all articles) had declined, the Dundee free traders convened a meeting of the linen industry of the area - a direct appeal to an interest group by the League - to demonstrate in favour of free trade, and to attribute all evils from bankruptcies to petty theft to the lack of free trade.[22]

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22) "Dundee Advertiser" and Supplement, 7/1/1842; "The Witness", 15/6/1842; Report of the Great Anti-Corn-Law Meeting held at Dundee on Thursday, 6th, January, 1842.

At a free trade meeting in Dundee on 9/1/1839, David Baxter reported the growth of foreign manufactories, for spinning and weaving linen yarns by steam power. He had seen several in Belgium which "would not disgrace the town of Dundee and he could assure them that they would find it very difficult to compete with them. The Corn Laws were not the only thing that would require to be repealed, in order to restore our trade with these countries". ("Glasgow Argus", 14/1/1839).

As in Glasgow, the manufacturers of the east attacked the Corn Laws not in isolation, but as part of a comprehensive programme of tariff reform. Edward Baxter attributed the retaliatory measures of the Zollverein and the United States (and the anticipated measures by Brazil) to the fact that "we would not admit the corn, and the timber, and the sugar of these countries".(23) The tentacles of the linen industry spread into all the towns of the region - Perth, Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy, Arbroath and Forfar - and in them too, the linen industry furnished a phalanx of support for the League. However, in Dundee and some of the other towns on Tayside, the linen manufacturers were not the only interest group regarding the corn Laws as a commercial question. Flax spinners, although the most prominent participants in terms of labour and fiscal contributions to the League in Dundee, were accompanied by ancillary interests notably shipping, marine insurance and banking. Many of the free traders had direct connections with foreign trade, including Edward Baxter (of Baxter Brothers, the linen manufacturers) who was the U.S.A. Vice-consul in Dundee, Thomas Neish, the Russian Vice-consul and William Thornton, their Prussian counter-:part.(24) In smaller linen centres, such as Arbroath, the same diversity of interests was represented in the free trade party.(25)

Shipowners provided nuclei of support for free trade in other east coast ports. In Leith, the shipping and international mer-:cantile interests objected to both the timber and corn monopolies.

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23) Report of the Great Anti-Corn-Law Meeting held at Dundee on Thursday, 6th January, 1842. p. 48.

24) "Dundee Advertiser", 24/11/1843; 19/1/1844; 13/1/1846; 16/1/1846.

25) "Scotsman", 26/1/1839.

The duty on Baltic timber was prohibitive, equalling nearly two hun-:dred per cent of the cost of the article. If the Canadian timber monopoly was overturned, they anticipated that there would be an increase in total trade through Leith, and that being cheaper and more durable than American red timber, it would be preferred for ship-building. Moreover, repeal of the Corn Laws would produce not only a regular import trade in foreign cereals for Leith, but also "if they could import provisions cheaper from abroad, of course the wages of the ship-builders would be less".(26)

In Aberdeen too, the League found support from several of the more prominent ship-owners in the town, notably Dean of Guild George Thompson, Henry Adamson, and Alexander Nicol of Nicol and Munro. Collectively, they were the owners or agents of twenty-four brigs and barques in the port.(27) Their complaint, articulated by J.H. Wilson of the "Aberdeen Herald", was that the proportion of the import trade of Aberdeen in the hands of foreign shipping interests was steadily in-:creasing at the expense of local ship-owners. This they attributed (like the Leith ship-owners) to the Corn Laws which by enhancing food prices deprived them of the opportunity of victualling their vessels on equal terms with their rivals, and more especially to the timber duties, which obliged them to build their ships from Baltic timber

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26) Evidence of William Muir (general merchant) in the Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Timber Duties, 1835. pp. 333-36; Evidence of John Mitchell (merchant) in the Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Import Duties. 1840. pp. 223-33; and the evidence of John Smith (Ship-owner) in Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on British Shipping. 1844. pp. 149-50.

27) "Aberdeen Herald", 27/1/1844.

at double its original value, or use inferior native timber which "from the very nature of the material, will be shaken from their fastenings before they get half-way through the first voyage". British vessels were also effectually excluded from certain export trades, especially the herring trade to the Baltic from the North-east ports such as Aberdeen and Peterhead, because they were under-cut by foreign shipping interests. Moreover, the herring trade itself in ports like Banff attributed their failure to secure greater markets in Europe to the Corn Laws which produced retaliatory tariffs "hence a great number of coopers and others connected with the herring trade . . . feel the consequences of the present laws".(28)

The League's appeal on the Corn Laws cast a wider net on urban middle-class society than was embraced in the large exporting indus-:tries and those dependent on them for a livelihood in the mercantile and shipping interests. The multiplicity of shareholders in the new railway companies could be given the glittering prospect that their investments would be more profitable when the reduced value of land following Corn Law repeal entailed that it could be purchased "to greater advantage", in addition to the reduction in the value of labour.(29) Moreover, the indirect commercial interest in free trade - which would benefit all consumers of grain and other commodities - also influenced the mass of small manufacturers, merchants, tradesmen, and commercial classes in urban society who provided goods or

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28) Edin. Diss. Conf. Report, 1842. pp. 99-101.; "Aberdeen Herald", 26/2/1842.

29) "The Late Commercial Crisis, being a retrospect of the years, 1836 to 1838" by a Glasgow Manufacturer. Glasgow, 1839. p. 99.

services, and who identified their prosperity with the level of demand in the major industrial and commercial concerns. Acutely aware of the multiplier effect of prosperity or depression in the latter, they accepted the thesis that free trade would benefit them too. Consequently, when the smaller burghs of northern and north-eastern Scotland participated at an anti-corn-law soiree in Aberdeen in February 1842, their reports on the state of trade in their respective localities placed the blame (predictably) on the lack of free trade, despite their non-industrial complexion. Thus although "the circumstances and situation" of Inverness did not permit Baillie McAndrew "to point out special facts indicating any particular manifestation of the effect of the corn-laws on the trade or condition of society", he concluded that "trade, credit and industry were suffering in general with the country. As Banff too had "no manufactories of any description, nor any public works whatsoever, the direct bearing of the evil" was "not so obvious to the people's minds", but in the opinion of a local Dissenting minister, the community felt "all the baneful effects common to the nation at large". (30)

In all urban centres, those members of the middle-classes took a prominent part in the Anti-Corn-Law League, but their importance varied with the economic and social complexion of the locality in which they resided. In Glasgow and Dundee, they were dwarfed (especially in terms of financial contributions to the League) by the direct interests - manufacturing and its ancillaries. In Edinburgh, however, the situation was the near antithesis of that in the industrial centres. In the metropolis, manufacturing and mercantile interests on an

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30) "Aberdeen Herald", 26/2/1842.

international scale were comparatively few, and this was reflected in the composition of support for the Anti-Corn-Law League, which drew heavily on the distributive trades and professions for sympathy. The latter, especially advocates, writers to the signet, the medical pro-:fession, and the Dissenting clergy comprised 22-23% of the total num-:ber of identifiable subscribers to the League Appeals of 1843 and 1844, in contrast to 10% of the identifiable subscribers to the 1844 Fund in industrial Dundee. The lack of an industrial base in Edinburgh was reflected too in the nature of the contributions. In 1843, of nearly 1,200 donations, only four exceeded £10, and of these only one £50.(31) Cobden was impressed with the total contribution from Edinburgh and the total number of contributors, correctly considering that it was a tribute to Duncan McLaren who had taken personal charge of the appeals, but he was less accurate when he observed that it came from a community "not interested directly, and decidedly the most intellectual judges of the question",(32) although there was a grain of truth in his generali-:sation.

Even Edinburgh was not devoid of all direct interest in free trade. As Adam Black observed, the city's publishing industry was restricted in the potentially numerous English-speaking market of the United States of America, because of an American duty of twenty per cent

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31) "Scotsman", 12/5/1841; 25/1/1843; 28/1/1843; 20/1/1844; 24/1/1844; "Dundee Advertiser", 22/12/1843; 26/1/1844.

32) R. Cobden to F. Cobden, Edinburgh, 15/1/1843, in W.S.R.O. Add. Ms. 6011.

Duncan McLaren too argued that Macaulay was right in his assertion that Edinburgh had "less direct interest in the free trade issue than any town in the empire". (D. McLaren to R. Cobden, Edinburgh, 14/3/1842, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 1(55).

ad valorem, which he contended was in retaliation for British pro-:tectionist policies. This more than outweighed the protective duty on foreign imports enjoyed by British publishers.(33) The paper manu-:facturers of the city concurred, and four of them contributed £100 each to the League Fund of 1846.(34) Moreover, as a largely non-industrial community, Edinburgh was more readily attracted to the glamour of industry than those more intimately acquainted with it, comparing "the rude and antiquated operations of the English farmer, with the refined, complicated and beautiful processes of the cotton-spinner, weaver, engineer and paper-maker",(35) and if the Edinburgh "Scotsman" felt some envy at Glasgow's industry, it could at least find consolation in the hope that "with the repeal of the Corn-Laws, manufactures might speedily rise around us".(36)

If Cobden considered that the "intellectual judges" of the corn question resided in Edinburgh, the appeal of the Anti-Corn-Law League to the intellectual mainstream of the time, to religious enthusiasm, and to the social conscience was much wider, directed at all sections of urban society, in all parts of the country, and not least in Scot-:land. The League was able to present the cause of free trade as the logical application of the concept of an international division of labour beloved by prevailing economic doctrine, at a juncture when the scientific inevitability of the tenets of the economic faith advocated by the disciples of Ricardo were only ineffectually challenged. To

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33) Edinburgh. Diss. Conf. Report. 1842. pp. 124-25.
34) "Scotsman", 17/1/1846.
35) ibid., 8/1/1842.
36) ibid., 16/1/1839.

the free trade "Dundee Advertiser", it was a science "with which every class ought to be conversant, as it teaches not only the true position which all classes of society hold relatively to each other, but also the policy which in a national point of view is so essential to secure to industries and honourable exertions their true reward". In the view of the organ - and others - Cobden's stature rested not on his capacity as a propagandist, but because he had "fortified him-:self with principles which no oratory, however captivating ..... can now for one instant unsettle". (37)

To its appeal as the proselytising agent for doctrines in keeping intellectually with the spirit of the times, the League was able to claim Divine approval. Free trade could be equated with the Word of God, the cause of international brotherhood and peace, and the march of civilisation. Dissenting clergymen readily confirmed that Britain's role as the workshop of the world was attributable to a Divine scheme for the universe, which conveniently coincided with the precepts of the economists. (38) On a similar theme, the "Dundee Advertiser" pre-:dicted that "not till this era of perfect freedom arrive will jealousies cease, and quarrels cease . . . those at the extremities

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37) "Dundee Advertiser", 22/3/1839; 5/5/1843.

When Hamilton Town Council reversed their decision of the previous year and petitioned for total repeal in 1843, it was attributed by a local free trader to the effects of Acland's proselytising work in the area at the time "and the pressure of the times". (Walter Black to R. Cobden, Hamilton, 24/3/1843 in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 548)

38) At an anti-Corn-Law soiree in Dundee, the Reverend William Borwick acknowledged the contribution of the Supreme Deity. Britain "was fitted for manufacturers - other more genial and fertile countries were fitted for agriculture, He had given us the highway of the ocean - He had given us steam and wind".

"Dundee Advertiser" (Supplement), 7/1/1842.

of the World become as brethern and as friends, and as mutually dependent upon and obliged to one another".(39) Comfortingly, the economic and messianic motivations could be construed as opposite sides of the same coin. The Reverend Dr. Ritchie, a prominent Edinburgh dissenter, reflected a widely-held notion when he hailed the iron steamer as "the predestined instrument of the world's re-:generation . . . Success to the attempt to carry into Africa's in-:terior the steamer, the harbinger of our manufacturers ! . . . . thanks to free trade, the shout will be heard - Africa is civilised! Slavery is abolished!"(40)

Paradoxically, the slavery question posed a dilemma for some Scottish free traders, many of whom participated actively in the anti-slavery movement. In conformity with the principles of free trade, they should have favoured the introduction of Brazilian sugar into the British market, but the fact that it was slave-grown pro-:duced a crisis of conscience and a conflict of aims. The issue split the Anti-Slavery Convention of June, 1843, when the "Free Trade Abolitionists" seceded rather than accept the orthodox anti-slavery tactic of urging the boy-cott of slave-grown sugar. One of those who withdrew was the Edinburgh anti-slavery lecturer, George Thompson, who urged the admission of slave-grown sugar at the League meeting in Covent Garden on 17/5/1844, although he was opposed by Glasgow Emancipation Society which contained several free traders, notably the Reverend William Anderson, the Reverend Dr. Burns (Paisley), the Reverend Dr. Ritchie (Edinburgh) and William Turner.(41) The divergence

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39) ibid., 24/2/1843.

40) Edin. Diss. Conf. Report, 1842. pp. 106-7.

41) "Glasgow Argus", 18/4/1844; 20/5/1844; 5/8/1844.

of interests had, however, existed for some time. In May, 1841, at an anti-corn-law rally in Edinburgh, John Wigham regretted that the Anti-Slavery Society, with which he had been associated, opposed the proposal for free trade in sugar, and contended that there were other methods of dealing with the slave trade than by "burdening" the people.(42)

A further collision of interests occurred for those Scottish free traders who were concurrently active in the temperance movement. Among those who held office or were otherwise active in the latter were Edward Baxter and Alexander Low in Dundee, the Reverend R. Forbes of Aberdeen, the Reverend Dr. Ritchie in Edinburgh, and above all, Robert Kettle in Glasgow, who was both a director of the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association and president of the Glasgow Total Abstinence Society.(43) Because of the identity of membership between the free trade and temperance movements, Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association pru-:dently made a regular habit of reserving seats at their free trade banquets for temperance advocates, where they could partake of coffee or tea instead of sherry or port like the remainder of the company, and at a correspondingly reduced price of admission.(44) Such a concession did not, however, prevent the temperance advocates from critically viewing the attitudes of other Leaguers in the light of their own principles, and on 2/1/1843, at a meeting chaired by Robert

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42) "Scotsman", 12/5/1841.

43) "Dundee Advertiser", 2/1/1846; W. Norrie: Dundee Celebrities of the Nineteenth Century. pp. 368-74; Bon Accord Directory, 1842-43. p.9.; "Scotsman", 8/3/1845; Andrew Aird: Glimpses of Old Glasgow. pp. 422-23.

44) "Glasgow Argus", 6/1/1842; 28/12/1843; 11/1/1844.

Kettle, in the Reverend William Anderson's John Street Church, they met "to consider the inconsistent conduct of those individuals who are seeking the abolition of the Corn Laws and yet supporting by their conduct and example, a system by which upwards of 60 million bushels of grain are annually destroyed".(45) To some social reformers, the free trade movement was complementary to the cause of temperance, insofar as the reduction of tea duties - part of the free trade pro-:gramme - offered "a cheap substitute for intoxicating liquors".(46) To others, however, the possibility of a clash of interests and of conscience seemed more real. Thus one Dissenting minister invited to McLaren's Edinburgh Conference of 1842 feared that a reduction in the price of grain from repeal of the Corn Laws might result in a diversion of more of it into the production of ardent spirits, and if he thought that free trade in corn would make whisky cheap, he con-:fessed that he would change his mind "and become a friend to the Corn Laws. For great would be the sin committed, and the misery entailed by lowering the price of intoxicating liquors".(47)

The identification between the personnel of the free trade move-:ment and those of the anti-slavery and temperance movements indica-:ted a preoccupation with social reform in Scotland which has also been identified in the contemporaneous Chartist movement north of the Border. Other appeals to the social conscience in Scotland confirmed

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45) ibid., 2/1/1843.

46) "Scotsman", 16/5/1846.

47) Duncan McLaren (editor): The Corn Laws condemned on account of their injustice and immoral tendency, by upwards of five hundred ministers of different denominations resident in Scotland. Edinburgh, 1842. p.51.

it. To the "Dundee Advertiser", the free trade movement followed the Catholic Emancipation struggle and the Reform Bill as "the most necessary and philanthropic struggle of them all".(48) Insofar as protectionist commercial policies could be castigated as the cause of economic stagnation and distress, all social ills such as unemployment, low wages, the growth of emigration societies on Clydeside, and rising crime rates in Forfar, could be attributed to the one scapegoat, the Corn Laws.(49) These complaints were general, but in Scotland they were supplemented by attitudes which were peculiarly Scottish in terms of social values, such as the claims of the schoolteachers and Sabbath schoolteachers of Eastwood that due to poverty, the education of the children in the district was being neglected, with 1,200 of them receiving instruction only in reading in the Sabbath schools.(50) Neglect of attendance at Church allegedly due to a lack of suitable attire(51) and resistance to the levying of a compulsory assessment for poor relief "before repealing every law which tends to render food dear" as "unjust to those who pay it and double unjust to many of these who would be at present compelled to

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48) "Dundee Advertiser", 21/4/1843.

49) Edin. Diss. Conf. Report. 1842. pp. 16, 30-1, 33, 39-41, 65, 92-3.

50) "Glasgow Argus", 27/5/1841; 31/5/1841.

51) Edin. Diss. Conf. Report. 1842. pp. 16, 45.

> The Rev. Mr. Lowe (Forfar) enquired how they could go to Church, as "the last blush of virtuous shame has not yet fled from the cheek of the poor man, although the last rag of once Church-going coat has nigh fled from his back . . .How can a father purchase a coat for himself, or a gown for his wife, when his hungry children cry in his face for more food than his wages will purchase to set before them?"

receive it",[52] were further manifestations of middle-class attitudes with a peculiarly Scottish sentiment.

The projection of the League's case on a moralistic basis appealed to a wide cross-section of the socially-conscious members of the middle classes in Scotland, but foremost among these were the Dissenters. The Dissenting Churches in the eyes of the Established Church clergy had been "hatched midst the turbulence of public agitation",[53] and their previous participation in political and social reformist move-:ments (especially the anti-slavery movement) had given the claim some credence. The Reverend Dr. David King and the Reverend William Anderson, both of Glasgow, were fairly representative of the Dissen-:ting clergy when they added the Anti-Corn-Law League to a portfolio of political and social reformist activities already embracing the anti-slavery and temperance movements.[54] Even lay Dissenters such as John Wigham referred to the League in private correspondence as the "cause of mercy and justice."[55] The Dissenting clergy added a semi-religious appeal to the agitation, turning it into a crusade for doctrines "second only to those of Revelation".[56]

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52) "Glasgow Argus", 22/4/1841. (A speech by Dr. Buchanan, Professor of the Institutes of Medicine, Glasgow University)

53) Rev. James Esdaile: The Voluntary Church Scheme without its foundation. pp. 5-6.

54) Elizabeth King: Memoir of the Rev. David King, LL.D., pp. 95, 100, 105; George Gilfillan: Life of the Rev. William Anderson, LL.D., pp. 92, 97, 128.

55) John Wigham to League H.Q., Edinburgh, 30/9/1840 in Letter Book of the Anti-Corn-Law League. Vol. 5, No. 729; see too "Scotsman", 6/6/1846.

56) Rev. Andrew Sommerville: Free Trade in Corn and other commo-:dities. p. 5.

The "Inverness Courier" (19/1/1842) regretted that the Dissenting clergy treated it as a religious question, pre-:ferring to "see it handled as a branch of political economy, unconnected with those more solemn considerations which arise out of divine revelation".

However, the appeal to the Dissenters was also sectarian. In terms of ecclesiastical politics, it presented an opportunity to launch an attack on the Established Church which had a pecuniary in-:terest (below) in high corn prices. Against the background of the Voluntary Controversy, it supplied the Dissenters an emotive addition to their argument. The Established Church could be assailed for having "patched up an alliance with the landlords to make the poor man's loaf dearer, and the demand for his labour less, and his wages lower, in order that rents and stipends might be kept up", and "as collateral sharers in the spoils of an unjust monopoly - one even tempting them, in the secrecy of their hearts, to contradict and re-:call the weekly public prayer of their lips for plenty in the land". (57) Consequently, although several of the Dissenting ministers invited to the 1842 Edinburgh conference had grave reservations on the expediency of being involved in what they contended was a purely secular politi-:cal issue, with possible damage to the League by association in the public mind with a sectarian religious body, many of those who accepted the invitation to attend, welcomed the opportunity for Dissenting participation on a sectarian basis as an opportunity to strike a blow at the Established Church. Some of them urged that the ministers of the Church of Scotland should be invited to attend, if only because their refusal to do so "would tend to show who were on the side of suffering humanity". (58)

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57) "Glasgow Argus", 26/2/1838; 11/1/1844.

58) Duncan McLaren: (ed.): op. cit., pp. 3, 6, 10-13, 14, 23, 25, 40, 44, et. seq.

To political radicals too, the agitation presented itself as an opportunity to launch an attack, with less danger to urban property than Chartism seemed to entail, on the existing political balance in society. The Corn Laws could be condemned - as they had been habi-:tually - as a piece of class legislation, a tax on the industrious poor (or the urban middle-classes) for the benefit of a slothful, parasitic, and avaricious aristocracy. The veteran Aberdeen radical, James Adam, contrasted the amount of the poor rate for the parishes of St. Nicholas and Old Machar, estimated at £5,000, with the £35,000 which he estimated the citizens of Aberdeen paid for the Corn Laws "to support the rank and station of the landowners . . . 2/6d per pound to the needy poor, and 17/6d. to the greedy rich."(59) To the "Dundee Advertiser", the political battles of the 1840's could be simplified as a struggle between the "aristocracy" and the "people", in which the Corn Laws were part of a general struggle following the disappointing results of the Reform Act.(60) In a similar vein, the Glasgow free trader, Alexander Graham, saw Cobden and free trade as the latest in a series of struggles for the amelioration of the human race, with a pedigree which comprised Knox, Luther and Calvin and the Reformation, Wilberforce and Clarkson and the abolition of slavery, and O'Connell and Catholic Emancipation.(61) In this context too of an

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59) "Aberdeen Herald", 26/2/1842.

> William Nairne of Logicalmond, a flax-spinner, saw the land-:owners as "Britain's homicidal oppressers . . they have turned thousands of helpless women and hunger-bitten children, in fluttering rags, to the pelting of the storm . . like the frogs of Egypt, they have come into our very ovens and kneading-troughs, and rendered them empty". ("Dundee Advertiser", 18/1/1844).

60) "Dundee Advertiser", 6/10/1843.

61) "Glasgow Argus", 16/10/1843.

inevitable evolution of human enlightenment, the League as a vehicle of agitation, as opposed to the corn issue, appealed to middle-class reformers. The "Argus" considered that it marked a new stage in agitation insofar as unlike previous political combinations, it depended on a real, if circumscribed, public involvement, and like some other free traders, looked forward to its use for "other purposes of political agitation".(62) The more conservative Alexander Dunlop, the Free Church lawyer, represented another school of thought, when he intimated his jealousy "of any great association being likely to be permanent, which by its great and gigantic power would at all seem to crush and overbear individual private opinion", but he reconciled himself to the League's existence by arguing that it was a necessary evil to counter-balance the "League of the Aristocracy" ranged against it, and because it was temporary.(63)

The political appeal of the League was not restricted to radicals and those who desired changes in the existing political and social order. It also attracted conservatives, and those who wished to stabilise political and social relationships below if not above them. The fear of social convulsion, an apparently iminent threat in view of the activities of the more militant Chartists in the Newport rising (November, 1839) and the Plug Plot disturbances (August 1842), was a potent argument in the League's armoury. Thus one anonymous pamphleteer drew attention to the social and political implications of defending the Corn Laws - an issue in which "the belly

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62) ibid., 13/1/1845; "Scotsman", 28/1/1846; Rev. E. Drummond to R. Cobden, Edinburgh, 4/2/1845, in W.S.R.O. add. Mss. 6013.

63) "Scotsman", 17/1/1846.

is . . . the subject of the agitation", and lauded the League as "the only true conservatives - men who are not given to change, to whom political convulsion is certain loss, revolution irreparable ruin", concluding that unless the Corn Laws were sacrificed, it "will not be the repeal of the Bread-tax alone that will suffice".(64) Following the Plug Plots of August, 1842, Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association drew attention to "recent disorders and insubordination exhibited in various parts of the country" which constituted "the most serious alarm for the peace of society and the ultimate safety of our national institutions", and sought protection against the im-:plicit threat to property through a repeal of the Corn Laws - "partial legislation".(65)

The demand for repeal of the Corn Laws as a concession to working-class opinion was based on two distinct and partly contra-:dictory attitudes. Some, such as the Reverend William Borwick, a Dissenting minister in Dundee, believed that free trade was a "safety-valve", the economic benefits of which would alleviate material hard-:ship among the working-classes, and thus the impulse for social unrest.(66) To the Tory, Dr. Thomas Chalmers, however, repeal of the Corn Laws was only to be hoped for because it would not in his view upset the existing social and political balance in society by pro-:ducing any marked encouragement to the growth of commerce or manu-:factures. The positive benefit which he anticipated would flow

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64) "Letter to his Grace, the Duke of Wellington, on the Corn Laws, by a Forfarshire Merchant" pp. 14-15.

65) "Glasgow Argus", 26/9/1842.

66) "Dundee Advertiser" (Supplement), 7/1/1842.

from repeal was the removal of "a topic of agitation and conflict, and so tend to the restoration of a better understanding among the various classes of society" and thus too the removal of another ex-:pedient to make way for the true cure for the ills of society - a Christian education.(67) The "Aberdeen Banner " - which followed Chalmers into the Free Church fold - also followed him on this question. It accused the Corn Laws of embittering "the mutual feeling of the aristocracy and the democracy for generations", urging repeal "for the sake of all that is humane, conservative and philanthropic".(68) Despite their difference in emphasis, however, both Borwick and Chalmers would have agreed with Lord Dunfermline that Cobden had re-:moved a great danger when his success "proved that universal suff-:rage is unnecessary".(69) The League's appeal to those of a more con-:servative hue was clinched in the crisis of 1846 when potato riots took place in northern Scotland.(70) The Edinburgh Merchant Company petitioned in May in favour of Peel's proposals for repeal as "calculated to allay the feelings of animosity which have existed between different classes of the community".(71)

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67) "Scotsman", 3/12/1845; "Kelso Mail", 13/8/1841; Thomas Chalmers: "On Political Economy, in connection with the Moral State and Moral Prospects of Society" 1832. pp. 520-21, 536-37.

68) "Aberdeen Banner", 12/1/1844.

69) Copy. George Combe to R. Cobden, Edinburgh, 27/12/1845, in George Combe Papers. Mss. 7390.

70) In February, 1846, several farmers in Nairn were assaulted, a detachment of troops was sent from Fort George, and thirty-nine rioters were imprisoned. ("Scotsman", 21/2/1846). In Inverness, a mob attempted to prevent the shipment of potatoes to London, and the military were twice called out to restore order, but there was "no sacrifice of life". (R. Grant to Lord Dalhousie, Inverness, 7/2/1846 in Dalhousie Muniments. GD. 45/7/23).

71) Minutes of Edinburgh Merchant Company, 29/5/1846.

However, it would be an over-simplification to compart free traders (or protectionists) into a clear-cut division between those whose interest was direct or indirect, commercial, political or moralistic. In most free traders, several influences helped to mould outlook on the corn question, and these were reflected in their pronouncements on the issue. Duncan McLaren reflected the outlook of a Dissenter, political Radical and substantial merchant. Edward Baxter felt an intrinsic interest commercially in the question as a large-scale manufacturer, but he was also an active Dissenter and social reformer. Untypical of the majority of free traders, was Walter Buchanan of Glasgow who had a direct mercantile interest in the Corn Laws, but was otherwise a member of the Established Church and by no means on the radical wing of the Whigs.(72) As such, he was an object of suspicion to the dedicated Radical, William Weir,(73) who in company with other journalists like William Tait or James Adam were equally interested in the exploitation of the issue for politi-:cal purposes.(74)

Similarly, it would be an over-simplification to classify all opinions as either free trade or protectionist. These were

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72) Memoirs and Portraits of One Hundred Glasgow Men. Vol. 1. pp. 57-8.

73) William Weir complained, with radical prejudice, that Buchanan was deficient in character, deferring "too much to the con-:ventional tone of the society in which he moves - more Tory as Whig men - and is afraid to act upon his own con-:victions". (W. Weir to R. Cobden, London, 23/12/1839, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 1. (25).

74) Adam saw a general collapse of existing parties taking place in 1842 and argued that there was no place for a middle-of-the-road party, Conservative or Whig - but that the choice lay between ultra-Toryism and "a practical recognition of the theoretical Whig doctrine that the people are the only legitimate source of power". (James Adam: Complete Suffrage. preface.1842.)

alternate poles of a debate rather than clearly-defined divisions. The Glasgow free traders in 1839 were not the only adherents of the League who were prepared to accept less than "Total and immediate" repeal. In 1843, a Leaguer in Leith, George McCallum advocated a small fixed duty for revenue purposes as it would be less irksome than direct taxation.[75] The principal task of the League in Scotland in the urban areas was to convert to total and immediate repeal, those whom Prentice described as "warmly attached to whiggism as associated with its former services to liberty, and therefore, looked favourably on the scheme of a moderate fixed duty, for which the late whig ministers would contend".[76] Opinions on the Corn Laws between those of ultra-free trade and ultra-protectionist were multifareous and shaded imperceptibly into each other.

A further complication in urban society was the qualified support of the working-classes in Scotland. It is impossible to sustain the thesis that the hostility of the Chartists in Scotland to the League was confined to a small minority of "physicals" who were out of step with working-class opinion which was generally favourable to repeal of the Corn Laws. There was a less defective communication between the Universal Suffrage Central Committee for Scotland and working-class opinion than has been suggested, and few free traders - despite their public statements - would have

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75) George McCallum to Mrs. G. Wilson, Leith, 16/1/1843, in Wilson Papers.

76) Archibald Prentice: op. cit. Vol. 1. pp. 294-95.

concurred in the view that they met "little real opposition".[77] Although it is possible to identify support from Chartists for the League in some localities, such as Kelso, Kirriemuir, Dysart or Newburgh,[78] these were exceptions rather than the rule. In the large towns especially, the widespread nature of Chartist disturbances at League meetings in 1839-43 (with some later), and more particularly, the numbers involved at individual meetings belied the suggestion that it was a small knot of extremists, quite apart from the dubious value of the division between "physicals" and others. When James Moir "captured" the Glasgow League meeting on 28/1/1842, in the City Hall, carrying an amendment for the Charter (on the admission of the "Glasgow Argus") by a majority of three to one, there were over 4,000 present.[79] The obloquy of a similar Chartist success at a meeting of Edinburgh Anti-Corn-Law Association in the Assembly Rooms on 10/5/1841, when Adam Black was obliged to vacate

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77) Leslie Wright suggested that the decision of the Universal Suffrage Central Committee for Scotland to break up League meetings was "contrary to the general wishes of those people it was supposed to represent" and "up to the end of 1841 few League meetings were disturbed - except by the Physicals". In Scotland, he contended, "only . . . a small minority - but a fanatical minority" supported O'Conner's line, and in Scotland the League met "very little real opposition". (L.C. Wright: op. cit., pp. 90-91, 116-18). Cobden's biographer, Morley, expounded the same theme. See John Morley: op. cit., vol. 1, p. 156. A more satisfactory analysis based on Chartist sources, of Chartist attitudes to the Corn Laws has been made by Dr. Wilson. See Alexander Wilson: op. cit., Chapter 10.

78) "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 20/2/1840; 5/3/1840: "Scotsman" 8/2/1840.

79) "Glasgow Argus", 31/1/1842; "Scotsman", 19/2/1842.

the chair,[80] had a lasting effect, and in March, 1842, Duncan McLaren confessed to Cobden that the Association had been forced to give up the idea of a public meeting through fear of the Chartists and the damage which their intervention could do to the cause of the league.[81] Appeals by members of the League to Scottish Chartists to support the free trade movement were a tacit recognition of their failure to do so,[82] and significantly, even the Chartist members of the Dissenting congregations, almost invariably strongholds of the Anti-Corn-League, opposed the movement to the chagrin of their pastors.[83] Moreover, when Baillie William Christie of Dundee broke with the Chartists because of O'Conner's rejection of the League, his action was sufficiently exceptional to be noted.[84] As a body, the Chartists in Scotland adhered to the policy of disrupting League meetings (along with those for other public objects), despite the private dis-:approval of some individual adherents on the principle or expediency of such tactics.

What characterised Chartists in Scotland was not their failure to oppose the Anti-Corn-Law League, but their motivation. Although some of them were suspicious that low wages could be equated with cheap food,[85] an attitude which had been expressed previously by some

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80) ibid., 12/5/1841.

81) D. McLaren to R. Cobden, Edinburgh, 14/3/1842 in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 1. (55).

82) "Scottish Patriot", 1/8/1840; Archibald Prentice: op. cit., vol. 1. p. 291; Edin. Diss. Conf. Report, 1842. p. 103.

83) Duncan McLaren (ed): op. cit., pp. 7, 32.

84) Memoranda of the Chartist Agitation in Dundee, 1892. p. 69.

85) "Glasgow Argus", 11/5/1840; "Scotsman", 12/5/1841.

working-class witnesses to the Handloom Weavers' Commission in 1834-35 despite the opinion of Symons, one of the Assistant Commissioners for Scotland, who had claimed that the weavers condemned the Corn Laws "as with one voice",(86) most Chartists in Scotland opposed the League, not repeal of the Corn Laws, accepting the viewpoint of Moir that the Whigs had "cheated" the working-classes during their period in office, and that the only mode of ensuring repeal was through universal suffrage.(87) The principal organ of the Chartists in Scotland, the "Scottish Patriot", engaged in scathing attacks on the Corn Laws and rebuked the landowners for attempting to "insult the understanding of the working-classes by telling them that cheap bread will make low wages". The "Patriot" echoed Chartist hopes by predicting that the League's rebuff in Parliament would force free traders to consider suffrage reform, and lauded the League's intervention in the Walsall by-election (1841) as an indication that the Leaguers were "in earnest in their war against the monopoly of food", but the hostility

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86) Report of the Handloom Weavers' Commission, 1834-35, pp. 51-2; Minutes of Evidence of ibid., pp. 72, 87, 90, 99, 251.

One of those expressing such fears was James Buik, a leading member of Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Society in 1834. Another, Hugh Mackenzie, on behalf of the Central Committee of Handloom Weavers, transmitted a letter to the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Demonstration of 14/1/1842, enquiring whether repeal would benefit them, or whether wages would be cut. ("Glasgow Argus", 17/1/1842)

87) "Glasgow Argus", 27/1/1842; 14/10/1841.

Moving a Chartist amendment at a League meeting in Glasgow, on 11/8/1840, Moir noted that they "were all fully convinced long ago, of the evils of the Corn Laws, and they were as fully convinced of the uselessness of their attempting their repeal in the manner pursued by the Anti-Corn-Law Association". ("Scottish Patriot", 15/8/1840)

of the "Glasgow Argus" after Weir's departure, and its in increasing-:ly Whig and middle-class political tone was a further factor miti-:gating against any possibility of support for the anti-corn-law association.[88] To the League, however, it made little practical difference what motivated Chartist hostility: it was a serious oppo-:sition in almost all urban areas.

Moreover, there was little real divergence if any between the attitudes of the Chartists and those of the working-classes collec-:tively. As a body, the latter were noticeably absent from the anti-corn-law agitation of 1839-46 throughout most of its life. In part this was due to the League's enforced reaction to Chartist in-:cursions; meetings were frequently held in the afternoon to dis-:courage large-scale working-class attendance, and admission charges to lectures and demonstrations had the same effect.[89] In January, 1844, Leith Anti-Corn-Law Association decided to permit access to the gallery during a free trade meeting without an admission charge to allow "respectable" workmen to attend, but the committee still retained control over the entrants by prudently making admission by ticket.[90] The membership of the anti-corn-law associations was placed on a similarly socially-exclusive basis by pecuniary imposi-:tions. Those associations adopting the Manchester constitution

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88) "Scottish Patriot", 11/7/1840; 25/7/1840; 15/8/1840; 3/10/1840; 26/12/1840; 2/1/1841; 10/1/1841.

89) The admission charge to the Great Scottish Free Trade Demonstra-:tion, including dinner, was eight shillings. Rates of admission to lectures were much lower. Cobden's meetings in Aberdeen on 15/1/1844 had entry fees ranging from 3d. to 2/-. ("Glasgow Argus", 8/4/1841; "Aberdeen Herald", 13/1/1844).

90) "Scotsman", 13/1/1844.

in its entirety demanded an entry fee of 5/-, and even Edinburgh which had established itself in 1839 on a relatively "popular" basis with a fee of one shilling revised its constitution on 9/3/1843 to debar those contributing less than 2/6d. to the funds of the League from voting rights.(91)

The increasingly middle-class nature of many of the League's demonstrations in Scotland from 1839 - dinners, banquets, and soirees - was both a result and a cause of working-class abstention. Nevertheless, participation by individual members of the working-classes underlined the absence of the remainder. Working-class attendance at League demonstrations, including those of a social nature, where the admission charge was not too prohibitive to the labouring "aristocracy", together with working-class donations to the League funds of 1843 and 1844, especially in Edinburgh, testified to individual participation, and support.(92) In some anti-corn-law associations, the working-classes were represented more directly. An address by Kelso Anti-Corn-Law Association to Cobden in 1843, although overwhelmingly middle-class in composition, also contained the signatures of four labourers and three weavers, and even the hostile Tory "Kelso Mail" had previously recognised working-class support for the League in the locality.(93) In Arbroath, the secretary of the association formed on 22/1/1840, R.N. Anderson, (a solicitor), was able to report to the League that the operatives in the area were

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91) ibid., 11/3/1843.

92) "Scottish Patriot", 15/8/1840; "Dundee Advertiser", 19/1/1844; 26/1/1844; "Scotsman", 25/1/1843; 28/1/1843; 20/1/1844; 24/1/1844.

93) Address of Kelso and District Anti-Corn-Law Association to R. Cobden, n.d., 1843. in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 555.; "Kelso Mail", 12/5/1841.

sympathetic, having disdained the efforts of the Chartist "demagogues" - an assertion partly justified by the presence of four flax-dressers, three weavers, and a ship-carpenter on the association's general committee.(94)

These were, however, exceptions which proved the rule, and the notice taken of them by middle-class Leaguers in Scotland indicated their extraordinary nature. Despite earlier reports that operatives had taken a leading part in the formation of the Stranraer Anti-Corn-Law Association in 1839, its secretary, James Ross confessed (optimistically) in January, 1840, that the working-classes of the district were "only just beginning to find out the bearings of the matter".(95) Moreover, the efforts of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association at enlisting working-class participation met with little success. The Glasgow Operatives' Anti-Corn-Law Association, the counterpart of similar bodies in Liverpool and Manchester, left virtually no activity on record, while the Anti-Corn-Law Association's soiree on total abstinence principles especially for the working-classes on 15/1/1842, was restricted to the minority of relatively affluent tradesmen who could afford the admission charge of 1/3d.(96) Nevertheless, the absence of working-class active involvement in the anti-corn-law agitation may not be attributed merely to the unsuitable vehicle provided by the League for such participation. As on previous occasions, the

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94) R.N. Anderson to League H.Q., Arbroath, 1/2/1840 in Letter Book of the Anti-Corn-Law League. vol.3, no. 349; "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 6/2/1840.

95) James H. Ross to J.B. Smith, Stranraer, 3/1/1840 in L.L.B. vol.3, no. 321.

96) "Glasgow Argus", 6/1/1842; 8/5/1843.

working-classes could have conducted an agitation in their own right. The address by the weavers of the western district of Perth in support of Cobden was an exceptional example of working-class initiative in support of repeal and the League.(97)

The propensity for participation and the basic sympathy of the working-classes for the aim of the League was underlined by the working-class agitation of 1845-46, when operatives in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and other centres faced with the prospect of high food prices for their staple, the potato, organised public meetings, formed committees, and transmitted petitions in favour of total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. Delegate meetings of operatives from Glasgow and neighbouring communities led by Robert Sinclair, a weaver from Springburn, were held at the beginning of 1846 when deputations were appointed to call on various parties, while a petition was transmitted to Lord Brougham.(98) In Edinburgh, Charles Ross, an operative, chaired a meeting on 29/1/1846, of delegates from forty workshops in the city, when an attempt by some recalcitrant Chartists to disrupt it was defeated, and resolutions were passed to petition for repeal through Macaulay.(99) However, the vigour and spontaneity of the working-class agitation of 1845-46, when Chartism was on the wane, heightened the contrast with the lack of involvement in 1839-44, when the most tangible support given to the League by the

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97) Address of the Handloom Weavers and other inhabitants of the Western District of the City of Perth,n.d., (probably 1843) in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 574:

98) "Glasgow Argus", 24/11/1845; 22/1/1846; 29/1/1846; 2/2/1846; 5/2/1846; 9/2/1846; 12/3/1846; "Scotsman", 22/11/1845; 26/11/1845.

99) "Glasgow Argus", 5/2/1846.

working-classes as an entity was signatures on mass petitions and workers' petitions organised by the League itself.(100) Collectively, the working-classes in Scotland supported repeal: they may be counted accordingly as a free trade interest in urban society. As a group, however, their support for the Anti-Corn-Law League was minimal. In Scotland as in the south, the latter had its roots in the free trade interests of the urban middle-classes.

However, although the volume and complexion of free trade support in Scotland have been respectively exaggerated and misinterpreted, the movement north of the Tweed was not merely a microcosm of the League nationally. Similar free trade interest groups did emerge in Scotland, but these were influenced (as in previous agitations) by an economic, political, social, and religious environment which was distinctive both within Scotland as a whole and within her localities. The participants in the northern movement, and their attitudes, reflected the interaction of several influences - national, regional, and local. The National Anti-Corn-Law League was the aggregate of a multiplicity of local movements, rather than one homogeneous entity.

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100) P.M. Stewart, M.P. received a number of working-class subscribed petitions in February, 1842, including those of the workers in Auldhousefield Bleachfield and Weaving Factory, Auldfield Cotton-spinning and Weaving Factory, Millholm Paper Manufactory; Greenbank Dye Works, Thornliebank Calico-printing Works, and the coal-hewers in Cowglen Coal Works and at Titwood. ("Glasgow Argus", 10/2/1842.)

8. Scottish Opinion and the Corn Laws: (2) The Agricultural Interest and its urban apologists, 1839-46.

One of the cardinal themes of the propaganda of the Anti-Corn-Law League in 1839-46 was that in Scotland, agriculturists having undertaken considerable improvements were less dependent than south of the Border on the Corn Laws for protection, and were accordingly more sympathetic to free trade. The theme was set by the "Anti-Corn-Law Circular" in August, 1839, when it quoted out of context selected evidence from Scottish witnesses to the Select Committee on Agriculture (1836) in support of the contention that "the embarrassed condition of the English landlord and farmer was there traced to the benumbing influence of their dependence on the fallacious idea of protection by corn laws, while the superior condition of proprietor and tenant in Scotland was attributed to the fact that in that country confidence in the corn laws had been gradually abandoned".(1) In reality, none of the witnesses, including Robert Hope of Fenton Barns, had renounced totally the concept of protection.(2) Paulton too on his return from Scotland reported at a public dinner in his honour in his native Bolton that nowhere had he been more favourably received north of the Border, than in the agricultural districts.(3) During his sojourn there he had been less enthusiastic, and more accurate, observing privately to George Wilson that the Scottish farmers were no less "bigotedly prejudiced"

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1) "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 6/8/1839.

2) Select Committee on Agriculture (1836). See Minutes of Evidence.

3) "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 12/11/1839.

than those of the south.(4) Moreover, despite the public reports of the impression which Paulton was alleged to have made among the farmers of the south-west, the despair of the free traders to make any significant headway among the farmers in Galloway was voiced by James Ross, secretary of the new Anti-Corn-Law Association in Stranraer, who confessed that they "could not make much" of the farmers in his area: their rents (1839) were at a high pitch, but they still supported the Corn Laws.(5) Nevertheless, the Leaguers persisted in their theme. On 17/1/1843, Cobden claimed in Stirling at a free trade demonstration, that "in Scotland, there is to be found in the ranks of the supporters of free trade a much larger proportion of the enlightened and enterprising agriculturists and landowners than we can boast of in the south".(6) The important qualification employed by Cobden, however, was the adjective "en-:lightened", because although the League in Scotland did recruit individual farmers into its ranks, such as William Murray of Polmaise who chaired the Stirling demonstration attended by Cobden, it un-:doubtedly failed to recruit the Agricultural Interest, especially tenant farmers, as an entity.

The attachment of Scottish agriculturists to the Corn Laws was scarcely surprising. The fact that large areas of Scotland depended less on cereal production and more on a mixed farming economy did not

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4) A.W. Paulton to George Wilson, Perth, 3/7/1839, L.L.B., vol.2, no. 243.

5) James H. Ross to Sidney Smith, Stranraer, 15/11/1839, in ibid., vol.2., no. 286.

6) "Glasgow Argus", 19/1/1843.

detract from their interest in protection.[7] They fully realised the implications of repeal of the Corn Laws on the protection which other agrarian commodities also enjoyed - a danger which was brought home to them by the comprehensive nature of the movement in Scotland and its declared adherence to free trade "principles". Moreover, under the protective umbrella of the Corn Laws, marginal lands throughout Scotland had been extensively taken into cultivation. Paulton lamented what he conceived to be the misapplication of capital in "actually growing corn half-way up the Pentland Hills behind Edinburgh, on the very summit of the Grampian range, near Aberdeen, and along the rocky steps of the mist-clouded hills of Argyllshire",[8] and even once allowance has been made for his exaggeration, Scottish witnesses to various Select committees on Agriculture furnished evidence of a similar nature. The island of Lewis produced a surplus of corn in most seasons,[9] like several other parts of the Highlands, while throughout 1827-36, Inverness exported substantial quantities of wheat, as well as oats and barley, to England.[10] Large areas of upland and marginal land in north and south were peculiarly

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7) "Glasgow Chronicle", 21/1/1839

Leslie Wright has argued that "Almost every class in Scotland wanted Corn Law repeal and the League met very little real opposition", which he attributed partly to the fact that "Agriculture was not tied so exclusively to corn - more concern was felt over legislation regarding sheep, cattle, and oats". (Leslie C. Wright: op. cit., p.117)

8) "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 12/11/1839.

9) Select Committee on Emigration 1841. Evidence of Thomas Knox, chamberlain of the Isle of Lewis, in Minutes of Evidence. p.175.

10) Select Committee on Agricultural Distress, 1836. vol.2., Appendix 21.

vulnerable to any regression in prices which might be the sequel to repeal. David Hunter of Blackness made the point when he contended that nine-tenths of Scotland was poor land, despite the quantity of grain grown for export to England.(11) The "Perthshire Courier", a Tory and agricultural paper, concurred and reverted to the League's conventional argument by noting that in a country which had already executed (on the League's own admission) widespread improvements, there was no scope for these as a safety-net in the event of a recession in prices.(12) The loss of cultivation and the consequent loss of capital on marginal lands, extensively invested in improve-:ments, thus formed one of the stock arguments of Scottish agricul-:turists, including those from the cereal-producing Lothians,(13) where the same fear existed, albeit on a diminished scale. This was the basic fear underlying the agricultural reaction to the agitation for repeal. To all agriculturists the same prospect of reduced prices implied at least curtailed profits, reduced rents for landowners and the possibility of having to face the same rent despite a reduced income for tenants, an acute danger in view of the usual leases of nineteen or twenty-one years in Scotland.

In most areas, however, the diversification of Scottish agriculture changed the complexion of the economic threat rather than diminishing it. The reduced protection accorded by Peel in

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11) David Hunter of Blackness: The Corn Law Question shortly investigated. (1839). p.18.

12) "Perthshire Courier", 8/2/1844.

13) "Scotsman", 24/1/1846; "Kelso Mail", 15/5/1841; "Inverness Courier", 28/2/1844; "Aberdeen Journal", 20/3/1844.

his successive fiscal measures of 1842 and 1844 to a variety of agrarian produce, cereals, root crops, and livestock, evoked a sharp response from agriculturists throughout Scotland against free trade in toto. The principal Scottish objections to Peel's proposals were listed by the Perthshire Association for the Protection of Agriculture in a memorial in 1842. Firstly, they objected (as an important area for root crops) to the reduction of the import duty on potatoes from 40/- to a nominal 3/4d. per ton. For several years, over 23,000 tons had been exported annually from Perth, and the agriculturists feared that they could not compete in the London market with the produce of France, Belgium, and Germany. Their second complaint was to the reduced protection for live cattle, and to the mode of im-:posing a duty on a flat rate principle, irrespective of weight or size, which they contended would favour foreigners who would import heavy cattle. Thirdly, they feared that the removal of the previous prohibitive duties on starch and the substitution of nominal ones would swamp the market with foreign imports. Fourthly (and signi-:ficantly last in order) the Association objected to the reduced duties on oats and barley as peculiarly injurious to the lighter soils of Scotland.(14) The complaint from Perthshire was echoed in the north-east, Forfarshire, Midlothian, and Dumfries-shire.(15)

All of the problems faced by the Lowland districts were re-:produced in a more acute form in the Highlands and Islands.

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14) Memorial of the Perthshire Association for the Protection of Agriculture. 1842. in Add. Ms. 40613. ff.50-I. (B.M.)

15) See Buccleuch Monuments. GD. 224/511.

The arable farmers of the eastern seaboard of Ross complained bitterly that the protective duties on barley and oats (in relation to wheat) were disproportionately low, and that the cost of freightage to London was greater than from Hamburg.(16) However, the principal concern in the north was the threat to the export trade to London of livestock. A principal part of the agricultural revenue of the north was derived from the shipment of live cattle to the south, which the end of prohibition threatened with ruinous competi-:tion,(17) especially in lean cattle. A similar fear governed the shipment of sheep, both three-year old ewes and cross-lambs which were sent south for fattening. The opinion of the north was that "the purchasing and feeding portion of the country may benefit, but the breeding parts of the country, especially Scotland and the north of Scotland may suffer severely", depending on the extent of foreign importation.(18)

In the islands, the same attitude prevailed. The farmers in Skye noted that in the west, the grazing interest frequently drove their stock several hundred miles to the appropriate markets and that the expense per pound weight of sending small cattle exceeded

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16) "Inverness Courier", 6/1/1842; 23/3/1842; 20/4/1842; 24/1/1844; 14/2/1844; "Perthshire Courier", 8/2/1844.

17) The steam-ship opened up the markets of the south, especially London, to the stock-breeders of the north of Scotland, although it was one of the factors in the declining usage of the drove roads. See A.R.B. Haldane: The Drove Roads of Scotland. chap. 12.

18) "Inverness Courier", 6/1/1842; 23/3/1842; 30/3/1842; John Mackenzie (Agent, Bank of Scotland in Inverness) to Treasurer, Bank of Scotland in Edinburgh, Inverness, 21/3/1842. in Clerk of Penicuick Muniments. GD.18/3509.

the amount of freight and duty which European breeders would pay, as a result of the flat rate mode of assessment. They further complained that since the decline of the kelp trade and the cessation of public works, smaller tenants were solely dependent on limited sales of cattle and partial fishing, both of which would be adversely affected by any decrease in the price of meat.(19) The Hebrides further feared that not only would the small cattle reared in the islands be unable to compete, but also that Peel's proposals for nominal duties on fish imports would cripple the cod and ling fisheries of the north-west, if it produced imports from Europe where fish were caught in greater abundance and thus more economically.(20)

Moreover, the north as a whole felt the threat of Peel's proposed reduction of duties on Canadian timber in 1842 which together with the danger to agrarian exports had far-reaching reverberations. The ships involved in this trade could be rendered redundant, and therefore incapable of returning with lime, coal, and bone manure direct to the port of embarkation, which had made the price of these imports more moderate and permitted the widespread use of the first and the third of them on the improvement of arable lands in the north.(21) With such a plethora of protectionist interests, all of which felt collectively threatened by the free trade

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19) "Inverness Courier", 20/4/1842.

20) ibid., 13/4/1842.

21) Copy letter. John Mackenzie (Bank agent, Inverness) to the Treasurer of the Bank of Scotland in Edinburgh, Inverness, 19/3/1842 in Clerk of Penicuick Muniments. GD.18/3509: "Inverness Courier", 23/3/1842.

movement, Inverness-shire was hardly the "neutral" county on the corn question which the protectionists of the county claimed, and it was no surprise when Dean of Guild C. Rose of Inverness, a member of the League, failed to find a seconder when he moved an amendment for total repeal at the county meeting on 1/3/1844.(22)

In addition to the economic threat felt by most agriculturists, the agitation for repeal appeared to many as a political threat to property in general and the landed interest in particular. Barclay of Balgone (Abernethy, Perthshire) accused the League of attempting "to raise an aristocracy of cotton upon an aristocracy of land",(23) and agriculturists reacted to free trade glamorisation of industry and commerce, with an equally distorted picture of the countryside. An idyllic rural society was contrasted with "the puny race which rush up like mushrooms in the contaminated atmosphere of large towns and dense factories", with all the attendant hazards to morals which life in such an environment could create.(24) If the aims of the agitation implied a political threat, most agriculturists were no more enamoured with the adherents of it, whom they identified as political

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22) ibid., 13/3/1844.

23) "Perthshire Courier", 18/1/1844.

24) James Carmichael of Raploch: Review of the Evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Agricultural Distress. 1836. 1838. p.132.

radicals, unable to control the passions which they had released.(25) John Waldie of Hendersgate Park, a Border farmer, confessed that although he feared the effects of both a fixed duty and total repeal almost equally, he would support the former as he did not like "the majority of the people who are so violent about the Corn Law abolition".(26)

However, the dislike of the agriculturists was directed too at the vehicle of the agitation, which seemed to have revolutionary implications. The "Perthshire Courier" lamented that "the worst feature in the case of the League, and generally of the present times, is the organised form in which discontent is embodied and prosecutes its object", and recalled the halcyon days when societies

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25) The protectionist attitude to the political implications of the activities of Leaguers was illustrated in a political song entitled "An Advice to the Members of the League, by an East Lothian Ploughman", attributed to Howden of Lawhead, a tenant of Lord Haddington, which observed:-

"But to me it seems BRIGHT, that it cannot be right,
Foul seeds of dissension to sow - to sow;
So COBIE take heed, for protection ye'll need,
Should Democracy's storms rude blow - rude blow.

"From lawless assembling refrain - refrain -
From lawless assembling refrain - refrain -
You may calmly Petition, but by threat and sedition,
I scarce think your likely to gain - to gain.
Sae Radicals bide ye at hame - at hame -
Sae Radicals bide ye at hame - at hame -
And by sophist oration, mislead not the Nation,
Or the bullets may riddle your wame - your wame".

- Enclosure in John Richardson to Lord Dalhousie, Haddington, 9/1/1844. in Dalhousie Muniments. GD. 45/7/23.

26) John Waldie to Earl of Minto, Hendersgate Park, 16/3/1844 in Minto Mss. 123/2.

for the propagation of "revolutionary or unconstitutional opinions" were "only known by means of their annual convivial meetings".(27) Even those members of the landed interest with some sympathy for the League had reservations about its mode of agitation (or its very existence). Lord Melgund (of the House of Minto) disliked "great agitating organised combinations", and although prepared to place the League in "A higher and more intellectual class", he still con-:sidered it in the same category as Orange and Ribbon societies, Chartism and Political Unions.(28) Fox Maule too did not approve in general of such association for the purpose of urging legislation, but perceiving the unrevolutionary character of the League, he gave it his blessing as he had never known one "which had such beneficial objects in view, or urged them with such legitimate and laudable weapons".(29) Maule's involvement in the League was, however, con-:siderable, and in the eyes of most agriculturists, economic and political fears were inextricably entwined.

In such a hostile climate of opinion, the League's success in agricultural districts was accordingly limited. Paradoxically, the League was able to claim by 1846 that many of the wealthiest land-:owners in Scotland were free traders - including the Duke of Sutherland, Sir George Mackenzie of Coul, Bart., Lord Kinnaird, Lord Panmure, Lord Dunfermline, the Duke of Hamilton, the Duke of Buccleuch, and the Earl of Minto - and that support for protection

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27) "Perthshire Courier", 4/1/1844.

28) Lord Melgund to Walter Wilson, Minto, 10/2/1844, in Minto Mss. 123/2.

29) "Glasgow Argus", 11/1/1844.

came from smaller landed proprietors.(30) That a considerable number of landed proprietors supported the League, especially in latter years, was indisputable. On 1/2/1844, C. Thomson, of West Lothian Agri-:cultural Association, requested Lord Dalhousie to express his sentiments on the Corn Laws by letter to an anti-League meeting in the county, thereby strengthening their hands, because he regretted to say that "many of the landlords in this county entertain favour-:able views of the proceedings of the League".(31)

However, both free trade claims and protectionist fears gave a misleading impression of the impact which the League made among the wealthiest landed proprietors. They were motivated by political and national considerations rather than a conviction that repeal of the Corn Laws would hold any economic advantage for agriculture. Noting the adherence of Lord Kinnaird, one of the most active supporters of the League, to free trade, the "Perthshire Courier" observed that he was a strong party-conscious Whig, who was "interested in any tactics by which that party may be restored to office".(32) Despite the "Courier's" cynical exaggeration, Kinnaird was not oblivious of the sectarian advantage for the Whigs to be identified with the popular movement for free trade, and its electoral potential. The "conversion" of Fox Maule by George Hope's essay on free trade, and Maule's anticipation that the effect of repeal on England would be to make "the gardens of the sluggard there ... a little more like the gardens of this industrious land",

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30) ibid., 9/2/1846.

31) C. Thomson to Lord Dalhousie, Linlithgow, 1/2/1844. in Dalhousie Muniments. GD.45/7/23.

32) "Dundee Courier", 1/12/1843; "Perthshire Courier", 11/1/1844.

were probably factors of less importance in determining him to identify himself with the League, than the potential economic benefit to the nation as a whole which he hoped would rub off on agriculture. Moreover he could not fail to see the political advantage to the Whigs of championing the cause and the dangers of failing to do so, especially with Peel in office. Maule believed, before most landed proprietors, that the Corn Laws were lost, and that free trade was inevitable "either from the principles of a Liberal Government, or the fears of a Tory Government".(33) His father-in-law, Lord George Abercromby, also accepted the in-:evitability of repeal, and subscribed to the view that it should be conceded in order to terminate the agitation.(34)

Kinnaird, Maule and Abercromby were fairly early to identify themselves with the cause of Repeal, but the adherence of some of the other landed proprietors claimed by the "Glasgow Argus" to subscribe to free trade was more belated and qualified. The Earl of Minto (and Lord Melgund) declined the invitation of Walter Wilson and Hawick Anti-Corn-Law Association to identify himself with the Anti-Corn-Law League by chairing a League meeting for Cobden and Bright in Jedburgh on 20/1/1844.(35) Minto indicated that his agree-:ment with the principles of free trade were "quite consistent with a wide difference of opinion as to the extent to which under given

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33) "Glasgow Argus", 17/1/1842; 12/1/1843; 19/1/1843; 11/1/1844.

34) Lord Abercromby to Fox Maule, Airthrey, 20/2/1842. in Dalhousie Muniments. GD.45/14/627.

35) Walter Wilson to Earl of Minto, Hawick, 25/12/1843, in Minto Mss. 123/2; Also, copy. Earl of Minto to Walter Wilson, Minto, 27/12/1843. in ibid., 123/2.

circumstances any single principle should prevail . . and as to the means by which an object desirable in itself may be most advanta-:geously attained". He further did not concur in "those ulterior objects, altogether unconnected with the establishment of free trade, to which the corn law agitation owes a good deal of its support".(36) The alarm created by Cobden's meetings in rural areas in Scotland during his 1844 tour (and his incursion into East Lothian in 1843) was also felt by Minto. By March 1844, he was endeavouring to call an anti-corn-law meeting without a direct assocation with the League, on the promise that it was better "for those chiefly dependent upon the profit of agriculture, that they should take a timely part in a cautious and prudent change in which their voice would be heard than that they should vainly stand out for a season till forced to a much larger surrender which they might have averted - We have all heard of the merits of a stitch in time".(37) Minto recognised that the interests of the manufacturing and agrarian interests were incom-:patible,(38) and his reaction was conservative - he hoped that a small sacrifice of protection would save a larger one.

If Minto's adherence to free trade in corn was luke-warm, that of his opponent in county politics and at Westminster, the Duke of Buccleuch, was non-existent, despite the claim of the "Argus".

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36) Copy. Earl of Minto to Walter Wilson, Minto, 17/1/1844, in ibid., 123/2.

37) Copy. Earl of Minto to James Elliot, Minto, 18/3/1844, in ibid., 123/2.

38) Notes on the Corn Laws by the Earl of Minto, in Minto Mss. 123/2.

He had been president of the Border Association for the Protection and Encouragement of Agriculture, but his loyalty to Peel overcame his reservations on the Prime Minister's proposals for repeal, and in 1845, he determined to continue to support him in office, as a member of his cabinet.(39) When Cobden subsequently observed that the politically-conscious protectionist landowners would sacrifice the three years of additional decreasing protection which Peel proposed in order to salvage their political influence,(40) his observation was as relevant to the past as the future. Moreover, the distinction drawn between the wealthy and inferior landowners was a valid one: the former had wider interests, orientated nationally rather than locally in politics and society, and equally important, unlike the latter, they had the pecuniary resources to cushion them against the economic consequences of repeal.

Among smaller landed proprietors and tenant farmers, however, the League made substantially less impact in proportion to their numbers. The attendance of farmers at Cobden's meetings, in-:variably recorded by League annalists like Prentice,(41) or the free trade press in Scotland, cannot be translated as a universal commit-:ment on the part of those present to free trade doctrines; less still to their alleged benefits to agriculture. Moreover, the League endeavoured to maximise the publicity which it could derive

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39) Duke of Buccleuch to Sir Robert Peel, Montagu House, 22/12/1845, in Peel Papers. Add. Ms. 40,581 ff. 196-201 (Brit. Mus.)

40) R. Cobden to Lord John Russell, London, 6/2/1846, in Russell Papers. P.R.O. 30/22/5A.

41) Archibald Prentice: op. cit., vol. 2, pp.150-51.

from those farmers who were sympathetic to it, by encouraging them to take an active part in free trade demonstrations. Thus Cobden advised McLaren that "practical agriculturists" should be seen at the Edinburgh Dissenters' Conference of 1842, denouncing the Corn Laws,(42) and McLaren obliged by mustering twenty-one. Sympathetic landed proprietors were also invited to fill titular office as presidents of local anti-corn-law associations. On its formation in December 1841, Falkirk and District Anti-Corn-Law Association invited Sir Gilbert Stirling, Bart., a prominent landowner in the county to accept such an office.(43)

However, despite the League's attempt to exaggerate its support among the smaller landed proprietors and tenant farmers, it undoubtedly did draw some support from these groups. Almost invariably they were politically-conscious Whigs, and frequently substantial tenants who had been noted for their zeal in improve-:ments, and were therefore to some extent cushioned (like the most prominent landowners) from the potentially deleterious economic effects of their political opinions. Their attitude was summed up by William Murray of Polmaise, an active Whig, free trader, and improver, whose opinion was that agriculturists in general were "all too fond of living a life of indolence" and whose answer to falling prices - apparently oblivious to the logical consequence of his

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42) "Scotsman", 12/1/1842.

43) ibid., 1/1/1842; New Statistical Account. Vol.8. County of Stirling. Parish of Larbert. p.356.

Lord Kinnaird, president of Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association, and Sir John Maxwell of Pollokshaws, president of Pollokshaws Anti-Corn-Law Association, were further examples.

advice on prices - was that farmers "ought to try to produce double the quantity produced".(44)

The dissenting congregations too probably produced more than their just proportion of farmer repealers, thereby accounting for the number at McLaren's conference, but the Dissenting clergy were obliged to admit that even in these citadels of free trade, the farmers - especially in the north-east and the Highlands - were antagonistic to repeal. The almost complete division of sentiment on an occupational basis was lamented by one pastor in the Borders, who observed that three-fourths of his congregation depending on trade and manufactures were zealous free traders, but that "the remaining one-fourth being of the agricultural class, are strongly prejudiced on the other side".(45) George Hope of Fenton Barns reflected all of these influences - a substantial tenant farmer who occupied a farm which had had considerable improvements carried out on it, a politically conscious radical Whig who saw the issue as a party one in which the Tories were the opposition, and a strong Unitarian.(46)

Farmer-repealers of Conservative persuasion, such as Kennedy of Myremill in Ayrshire, who participated at one of Bright's meetings

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44) "Glasgow Argus", 19/1/1843.

45) Duncan McLaren (ed.) op. cit., 1842; p.35. See too ibid., pp. 1, 3, 4-8, 11-13, 17-18, 20-21, 23, 26, 28, 35, 42-45, 47.

46) C. Hope: A sketch of the life of George Hope of Fenton Barns, compiled by his daughter. pp. 75-6, 86-7, 131; "Scotsman", 16/8/1843.

in Ayr on 16/1/1844, were a sufficiently rare species to evoke comment from the free trade press,[47] but their number increased with the crisis of 1845-46, when former staunch protectionists like James Adam Gordon of Knockespock (Aberdeenshire) had come to the con-:clusion - like many proprietors - that protection was finished, and that any state was "better than that of the uncertainty and agita-:tion of which all parties are now the victims". Like many other Tories, he preferred change to be undertaken, if it was unavoidable, by Peel,[48] rather than by a Whig administration. His motivation, like that of Hope, was political - although of a diametrically opposite nature.

Nevertheless, in two areas the Anti-Corn-Law League did make some in roads into agricultural areas, and the cereal-producing county of East Lothian, untypical of Scotland's mixed agrarian economy, was one of them. Cobden and Bright addressed a meeting in Haddington on 27/10/1843 at Hope's request which subsequently passed resolutions for free trade, and evinced sufficient enthusiasm to encourage Cobden in the view that the farmers of East Lothian would commence an agitation against the Corn Laws which would be "a nucleus for independent action amongst their class elsewhere".[49] In addition to Hope, several other tenant farmers had actively participated at the meeting, and although eighteen of the eighty-one farmers reported to have attended the meeting subsequently

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47) "Glasgow Argus", 18/1/1844.

48) ibid., 19/1/1846.

49) John Morley: op. cit., vol. 1, p.285.

published a disavowal of the proceedings,[50] the meeting shocked the protectionist press which considered that it was "a striking feature of the times that a meeting with such an object should receive any public support in the richest and most advanced agricultural district in the country".[51] To the free trade press, it was an unqualified triumph for the League - but[52] it was more limited than they allowed. Hope had had considerable difficulty securing twenty-five names for the requisition which Cobden demanded as a prerequisite to coming, and the nucleus of free trade farmers was dwarfed by a public affir-:mation of faith in protection by 160 farmers and proprietors in the county published almost immediately after the meeting.[53] Moreover, Cobden had caught the protectionists off their guard by proposing resolutions at the meeting: instead they had expected only speeches and were unprepared. Nevertheless, even a Haddington Tory, John Richardson, was obliged to concede that some responsible tenants in the county did favour free trade in corn.[54]

What had also facilitated Cobden's success was, as Richardson admitted, a schism among the protectionists, many of whom had lost faith in the sliding scale as a means of maintaining grain prices

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50) "Scotsman", 28/10/1843; 1/11/1843; 8/11/1843.

In addition to Hope, several other tenant farmers actively participated at the meeting, including John Rennie of Oxwell-mains, Miller of Newhouse, and Waterson of Balgonie.

51) "Perthshire Courier", 9/11/1843.

52) "Scotsman", 1/11/1843.

53) C. Hope: op. cit., pp. 107-8, 112.

54) John Richardson to Lord Dalhousie, Haddington, 9/1/1844, in Dalhousie Muniments. GD. 45/7/23.

and were prepared to experiment with a fixed duty, which also held forth the prospect of keeping the manufacturers quiet.(55) A more important underlying cause of the League's limited success in the county was the impersonal relationship between landlords and tenants throughout most of Haddingtonshire, "where the tenant is only looked upon as a medium of the due payment of rent and treated accordingly".(56) Friction on a number of issues, notably the Game Laws, as well as high rents, served to destroy any identity of outlook between owner and occupier of land. The League exploited these differences to the full. George Hope's own contribution to the debate, in a prize essay published and circulated by the League, was grounded on the premise that there was a division of interest between landlord and tenant. He argued that tenants on corn rents, like most farmers in East Lothian, had no intrinsic interest in high grain prices, as they paid their rent in kind and their labour costs largely in kind; and that on the contrary, tenants on grain rents unable to pay their full rent in grain during deficient years when prices were high faced the problem that the monetary value of the deficient quarters was higher. Free trade, he anticipated would cut out such fluctua-:tions, in addition to enriching the largest number of agricultural consumers in the urban areas, which he envisaged would have a

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55) John Richardson to Lord Dalhousie, Haddington, 24/1/1844 in ibid., GD.45/7/23.

56) "Perthshire Courier", 2/11/1843; 9/11/1843.

multiplier effect on the rural economy.[57] Where Hope's thesis was weak was that not all farms in East Lothian (far less without the county) were on corn rents, that some of these had maximum rent levels fixed and were thus able to exact the full benefit of high prices on what was a fixed rent level, and that not all labour costs far less other expenses of cultivation were paid in kind.[58] One dissentient at the Haddington meeting, a farmer on a corn rent, conceded that it did not matter to him what the monetary value of the corn was which he paid to his landlord as rent, but made the telling point that "the price of all the surplus corn which belonged to him-:self being increased by the operation of the Corn-Laws was so much gain to him".[59] The importance of Hope's essay was less, however, its limited influence among the tenant farmers of East Lothian, and more the apology which it furnished other free traders such as Fox Maule, who was allegedly converted by it,[60] for propounding the notion that tenant farmers had no interest in the Corn Laws, and would not suffer through repeal. It salved the urban conscience.

The limited nature of the League's impact on rural society was illustrated by both the apathy of the agricultural protectionists

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57) "Scotsman", 4/2/1843.

Hope merely elaborated ideas which his father, Robert Hope of Fenton Barns, had already propounded in his evidence to the Select Committee on Agriculture, 1836. Minutes of Evidence. Third Report. vol. 2., pp. 19-25.

58) See ibid., Third Report. vol. 2., pp. 33-43, 49-56;

59) "Scotsman", 28/10/1843.

60) ibid., 14/1/1843.

until 1844 and the strength of the reaction which followed Cobden's incursion into East Lothian. Apart from a series of protest meetings at the beginning of 1839 while Villier's motion was before Parliament,(61) and a similar response to Peel's budgetary proposals over the first four months of 1842,(62) the protectionists had been relatively quiescent.

Moreover with exceptions such as the revival of the Perthshire Association for the Protection of Agriculture, first formed in 1834 during the agitation of the early anti-corn-law societies, which presented a memorial to Peel (above) in 1842, they had been relatively unorganised. The activities of the League in rural areas in the winter of 1843-44, including its essay into southern Scotland pro-:duced a sharp reaction in the beginning of 1844. The Border Association for the Protection and Encouragement of Agriculture, the prototype of other Scottish protectionist societies, which had been formed during the agricultural alarm of 1834, (and which had been defunct since then) was hurriedly reconstituted in January, 1844, after a few agriculturists played an active part at a League meeting in the Borders and in view "of the infernal lies the League told in East Lothian . . . that the tenants had no interest in the perfor-:mance of the Corn Laws". A committee was established to raise a subscription to publish tracts.(63) In Midlothian, a protectionist

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61) ibid., 20/2/1839; 23/2/1839; 2/3/1839; 20/3/1839; 23/3/1839; "Glasgow Argus", 21/2/1839; 4/4/1839.

62) "Scotsman", 20/3/1842; 30/3/1842; 2/4/1842; "Inverness Courier", 6/1/1842; 30/3/1842; 20/4/1842; 27/4/1842.

63) See Buccleuch Muniments. GD.224/503.

association formed on 14/2/1844 set to work raising a subscription, and came to an arrangement with the "Edinburgh Weekly Journal" (a Tory paper) which placed the paper under the control of the associa-:tion in return for its employment for circulating protectionist propaganda.(64) Mass petitions and affirmations of faith in protection from agriculturists were also raised - with over 2,000 signatures from Perthshire(65) and about 6,000 in Aberdeenshire.(66)

The contrast between the volume of support accorded to the protectionist "Anti-League" of 1844 and the League's most ambitious sally into an agrarian stronghold in East Lothian was not mitigated by the latter's complete success in another rural area, where con-:ditions were unique. In 1839, an anti-corn-law association had been founded in Shetland by a native of the county, Arthur Anderson, who had subsequently engaged in shipping in London, becoming managing director of the Oriental and Peninsular Steam Navigation Company. The association's success was illustrated in the transmission from the islands of petitions containing 7,000 names for repeal of the Corn Laws.(67) In Shetland, the motivation of a basically rural society for free trade was largely economic: other free trade interests, such as the Dissenters,(68) were virtually absent from the archipelago.

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64) W.B. Callander of Prestonhall to the Duke of Buccleuch, Edinburgh, 24/2/1844, in ibid., GD.224/511.

65) "Perthshire Courier", 22/2/1844; 7/3/1844.

66) "The Aberdeen Journal", 21/2/1844.

67) John Nicolson: Arthur Anderson; a founder of the P. & O. Company. pp. 88, 101.

68) New Statistical Account, County of Shetland. vol. 15. p. 175.

Two factors served to produce an economic interest in free trade. In the first place, agriculture was overall at subsistence level. Indeed the islands produced corn - principally oats and barley of an inferior quality - for less than half the population in even a relatively good harvest.(69) Consequently, the islands were nett importers of cereals, and their geographical isolation together with the existence of the second factor favouring free trade, a commercial fishing interest, made Europe a more likely source for these than the mainland of Britain. The Shetland Fishery Company which employed about eight thousand men was cramped by protection in several spheres. It could not command an advantageous foreign market - and the domestic one was too restricted - because of the effect of import duties, the Corn Laws, on the grain which Spain offered in return for cod. Moreover, the islanders felt that their competitive alility vis-a-vis their principal rivals, Norway and Newfoundland, was curtailed by the relatively high cost of victualling their boats (due to the Corn Laws) and by the heavy fiscal burdens on most articles (especially timber) required to prosecute the industry.(70) The peculiar situation in Shetland was laboured emotively by League propagandists even in urban areas,(71) but its unique character made it

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69) ibid., vol. 15. pp. 11, 15, 20, 27-8, 42, 65, 78-9, 89, 120, 158; "Scotsman", 28/3/1846.

70) John Nicolson: op. cit., pp. 95-100; Also, printed circular relative to the Shetland Fishery Company, sgd. Arthur Anderson, London, 25/5/1842 in Irvine of Midbrake Papers. R.H.4/35/387 (III).

71) eg. Colonel Thompson at an anti-corn-law demonstration in Dundee, on 28/3/1845. ("Dundee Advertiser", 4/4/1845).

a very minor qualification of the thesis that the small proprietors and tenants were as a body strongly in sympathy with protection, despite some dubiety on which was the most expedient form.

If the League made little headway with small proprietors and tenants, its success among agricultural labourers was equally disappointing. Their names occurred frequently in protectionist requisitions and petitions - forty-two of them were included in the Forfarshire requisition of 1844 (72) - and it would be no more valid to attribute their appearance purely to influence than in the case of workers' signatures in free trade petitions from urban areas. The protectionists emphasised the dangers to their class of a diminution of wages following repeal and the probability of rural unemployment. (73) That farm-servants even in Dissenting congregations shared such fears was conceded by several of their ministers. (74) An exception which proved the rule was a petition in February 1842, from 104 agricultural labourers in Pollock which stated that "as the Corn and Provision Laws had not been enacted for their benefit, so they did not fear their repeal". It doubtless owed much to the fact that the most extensive landed proprietor in the county, Sir John Maxwell of Pollockshaws, Bart., was president of the local anti-corn-law association. (75) Closely allied in sentiment to agricultural labourers

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72) "Dundee Courier", 16/4/1844. See too "Aberdeen Journal", 21/2/1844.

73) "Dundee Courier", 13/2/1844.

74) Duncan McLaren (ed.): op. cit., pp. 42, 50-51.

75) "Glasgow Argus", 10/2/1842.

were other occupations directly dependent on agrarian prosperity - millers, wrights, and smiths - whose names also adorned numerous protectionist petitions.(76) Petitions from allegedly "agricultural" parishes, such as Inverarity, Glamis, Aberlemno, Charleston, and Kinnettles, all in Angus, for free trade cannot be read as support from agriculturists; the linen industry was represented in several of these as well as the distributive and other trades.(77)

The adherents of the "Agricultural Interest" were not all engaged in even indirectly agrarian occupations. The claims of the export-intensive manufacturing interests were not universally accepted by the urban middle-class. The assumption which some made was that outwith Manchester and similar large industrial centres, the prosperity of the merchants and distributive trades was primarily dependent on the prosperity of the agriculturists. This was a potent argument not only in small market towns such as Kelso,(78) but also in larger urban centres which were not self-consciously industrial in complexion. On 30/6/1846, Councillor Lyon Mackenzie unsuccessfully moved an amendment in Inverness Town Council, that they should not express their approbation of repeal of the Corn Laws

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76) This category comprised 8% of the identifiable subscribers to the Perthshire protectionist petition of 1844. ("Perthshire Courier", 22/2/1844; 4/3/1844).

77) "Scotsman", 26/5/1841; New Statistical Account. County of Forfar, Parishes of Aberlemno, Glamis, Inverarity, and Kinnettles, pp. 219-24, 236-7, 347, 633.

78) "Kelso Mail", 12/5/1841; 15/5/1841.

in view of "the peculiar circumstances of the burgh of Inverness".[79] Probably its isolation from the south, its own relative lack of an industrial self-consciousness (indicated partly in the absence of the conventional manufacturers' pressure group, a chamber of commerce) and its important function as a market centre for the protectionist interests of the north-east with which it was closely associated, were the underlying factors behind the apathy for free trade in Aberdeen. This was almost the only place in Scotland, according to Cobden, "where the capitalists seem to have taken no part in the Free Trade movement".[80] Acland made similar observations during his so-:journ in the city, and even James Adam was forced to admit that by January, 1844, the local anti-corn-law association was "almost defunct".[81] Some of the middle-classes in Aberdeen undoubtedly subscribed to the views of a local manufacturer and active protec-:tionist, James Hadden, junr., who argued that there was no likeli-:hood of reciprocity from Germany, in return for the unilateral initiative for free trade advocated by the League, and with the removal of agricultural protection "the consequent ruin of the best home market would ensue".[82] In industrial centres such as Dundee, protectionist organs like the "Dundee Courier" propounded the same theme,[83] but made no headway.

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79) Minutes of Inverness Town Council, 30/6/1846.

80) Copy. R. Cobden to C.A. Cobden, Aberdeen, 14/1/1844, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 78.

81) "Aberdeen Herald", 26/2/1842; 20/1/1844; "Aberdeen Journal", 20/3/1844; "Aberdeen Banner", 12/1/1844.

82) "Aberdeen Journal", 20/3/1844.

83) "Dundee Courier", 16/1/1844.

In Edinburgh, however, a minority Tory group argued with some justice that the metropolis had an intrinsic interest in the fate of the agriculturists. Through Sir William Drysdale and other Conserva-:tives on Edinburgh Town Council, they noted their concern at the competitive ability of Scotland with its unduly high proportion of marginal land, and above all the effects on Edinburgh "for (excepting the nobility) she still forms the residence of the wealthiest of the landowners of Scotland. The principal business before the Supreme Court and of the gentlemen of the law resident in Edinburgh is derived from the landowners, and by them chiefly are our schools and teachers supplied with pupils, and our shops with customers. But were any material diminution to take place in their incomes, they would be compelled to forego the luxuries of a large city, to remain on their estates, and to educate their children at home or in provincial towns as was the case in former times. The rents of houses would sink to a degree that is difficult to calculate, and like Genoa, Edinburgh would become a city of empty palaces". They further argued that even if it was shown, which they did not admit, that repeal of the Corn Laws would benefit manufacturing centres like Glasgow or Manchester, the responsibility of Edinburgh Town Council was to safe-:guard the interests of its own citizens.(84)

The economic motivation of the urban apologists for agricultural protection was as diverse as that of the free traders. Their strength in Glasgow was attributable less to a disproportionate number of believers in the primacy of agriculture in the national

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84) Minutes of Edinburgh Town Council, 26/2/1839.

economy, and more to the existence of separate urban protectionist interests who felt obliged to defend protection for agriculture as its removal, and the substitution of the principles of free trade, would lead through consistency to the abrogation of their own peculiar privileges. The West Indian sugar interest who feared that competition from foreign sugar interests - slave-grown, and therefore cheap, in Brazil - would destroy both their monopoly of the sugar trade and their tropical estates, through a reduction of home prices to the consumer,(85) were the principal bastion of protec-:tionism in the city. They were especially strongly organised in Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, supported by the Glasgow East India Association (after the equalisation of West and East Indian sugar in 1841)(86) and the Canadian timber merchants who benefited from the exclusion of Baltic timber through a rigid application of colonial preference.(87) When Glasgow Chamber of Commerce considered the report of the Select Committee on Import Duties on 8/2/1841, they intimated their dissent from the proposition that existing import duties should be simplified according to a "well-defined intelligible principle". On the contrary, they argued that it was "right and expedient to maintain moderate preferential duties in favour of our manufactures, domestic and colonial agriculture, and fisheries". Any dubiety about their order of importance was dispelled when they reiterated

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85) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 8/2/1841; "Glasgow Argus", 18/2/1841.

86) ibid., 29/3/1841; 13/5/1841.

87) Minutes of Evidence. Select Committee on Manufacturers, Commerce, and Shipping. 1833. Evidence of Allan Gilmour, ship-owner. pp. 523-30. See too Gilmour's evidence to the Select Committee on Timber Duties, 1835. pp. 235-46.

that it would be "inexpedient" to make any alteration in the duties protecting Britain's tropical colonies (88) - the sugar estates. Free trade in sympathy when this could be pursued in safety, (89) they defended protection for agriculture not for its intrinsic merit, but because it would be "impolitic and inexpedient" to abolish the Corn Laws, as such a measure would require "a corresponding abolition of all protecting duties upon manufactures", (90) and of greater importance, although less openly admitted, certain branches of commerce.

The appeal of protection attracted more than local interests who felt an intrinsic self-interest in the issue of repeal. Other members of the urban middle-classes of conservative persuasion sensed an indirect interest and acted as apologies for agrarian protection. Typical of those was Donald Bain, an Edinburgh accoun-:tant, who attributed Britain's growing wealth to agricultural inno-:vations - an attitude which probably owed much to the contemporary scene in Scotland - rather than to commercial or industrial ex-:pansion. To Bain, agriculturists were the best market for home manufactures, and he repudiated the view that reciprocity would follow the unilateral adoption of free trade by Britain, arguing

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88) Minutes of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 8/2/1841.

89) The Chamber campaigned for the reduction of the duties on cotton wool and urged representations against the new duties imposed on cotton and iron by the Zollverein - all of which affected their members. Similarly, the Chamber objected to Peel's proposals for an increased colonial preference for coffee in 1842, as it was calculated to raise prices of coffee and thus injure the sugar suppliers in the Chamber. ("Glasgow Argus", 9/1/1845; 12/1/1846; The Memorial of the Directors of the Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures in the city of Glasgow respecting the proposed change in the coffee duties, 20/4/1842 in Clerk of Penicuick Muniments. GD.18/3509)

90) "Glasgow Argus", 13/1/1840.

that Britain could not expect to continue as the purveyor of the whole world, but should accept that national self-interest would force other states to turn increasingly to protection. He feared too a loss of specie through the purchase of foreign cereals, but his real objection was emotional rather than economic. Agriculture furnished employment "healthily . . . and in circumstances calculated to leave their morals pure", whereas factory chimneys frequently in-:dicated "sites of dependence and misery; of avarice on the one hand, and ignorance and poverty on the other; of enforced over-work, or reckless idleness and beggary; of feeble minds and b:dies - of disease and early death".(91) Sir Archibald Alison, the high Tory sheriff of Lanarkshire, produced a similar diagnosis, and enquired whether it was desirable that "the zone of tall chimneys, sickly faces, brick houses, and crowded jails, which at present spans across the whole of England and part of Scotland should be doubled and trebled in breadth?" In particular, from his experience as an agent of law and order, in an area suffering from the social disloca-:tion caused by the Industrial Revolution, he feared the effects of rural depopulation on the cities - the danger that starving crofters from Mull, lacking subsistence would come to the Lowlands, spreading typhus fever, and becoming a permanent burden on the poor rates.(92)

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91) Donald Bain: The Egregious and Dangerous Fallacies of the Anti-Corn-Law League. 1843. pp. 5-6, 19-23, 56-58.

92) Sir Archibald Alison: Free Trade and Protection. 1844. p.43; Free Trade and a Fettered Currency. 1847. p. 20.

Both Bain and Alison were primarily motivated by a combination of the economic fear that free trade would not fulfil the expenta-:tions of its advocates - but ruin agriculture in the process - and the political fear that it would, with a train of further political and social consequences to exacerbate those which had already appeared from the changing economic balance in society. At its most extreme, the latter fear produced the hysterical reaction of the "Glasgow Constitutional" which condemned Cobden as "the foe of our matchless constitution, the libeller of our patriotic aristocracy, the sower of civil strife, the apostle of false principles" while it recognised only a choice "between two extremes; Peel and safety - Liberalism and revolution".(93)

In both urban and rural society, especially the latter, the Agricultural Interest had a fairly reliable ally in the Established Church. The signatures of parish ministers in rural charges decorated many protectionist petitions, whereas the appearance of a Church of Scotland minister, among free trade petitioners, rendered him the object of special notice.(94) Only two members of the Established Church responded to the invitation to attend the League's 1841 conference of clergy of all denominations in Manchester, and only two others - although important as individuals - sent sympa-:thetic apologies, Dr. Thomas Chalmers and Dr. Robert Candlish.(95)

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93) "Glasgow Constitutional", 5/2/1842; 14/1/1843.

94) John Selkirk to R. Cobden, Jedburgh, 21/3/1843, in W.S.R.O. Cobden. Papers. 554.

95) "Scotsman", 7/8/1841; 21/8/1841; 18/9/1841; Archibald Prentice: op. cit., vol. 1., p. 246.

Those clergy who did support free trade fell into two categories. In the first instance were those such as the Reverend Messrs. Reid and Thomson of Dundee (96) or the Rev. Dr. Burns of Paisley (97) who represented industrial centres where the economic and social effects of a trade recession were felt most acutely, and where enthusiasm for free trade doctrines was almost universal among the middle classes. The second category consisted of those whose motivation was individualistic, such as Dr. Chalmers on the one hand or the two Chartists, Patrick Brewster (98) and William Wyper, (99) on the other.

In part the response of the Established Church clergy stemmed from their general identification with the forces of conservatism against social and political change, their distrust of enthusiasm, and their tendency to vote (in rural areas especially) almost solidly for Conservative candidates. (100) The Rev. Thomas Smith, a Church of Scotland missionary in Calcutta, voiced the fears of many of the parochial clergy when he dreaded the abolition of the Corn Laws as

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96) "Dundee Advertiser", 3/4/1840.

97) ibid., 26/3/1841.

98) "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 9/4/1840.

99) Aformer Dissenting clergyman, Wyper was received into the Church of Scotland by the presbystery of Annan on 7/10/1840, despite Chartist opinions and activities. On 16/3/1840, he had also delivered a lecture against the Corn Laws in the Relief Church. ("Glasgow Argus", 23/3/1840; 15/10/1840)

100) In 1837, 17, clergy of the Established Church in Midlothian voted Tory, none Whig. ("Scotsman", 23/8/1837). Similar complaints were voiced by the Whig, Henry Cockburn, and noted in: Leslie C. Wright: op. cit., p. 97.

"very hurtful to the country and to Scotland in particular - by turn-:ing the greater part of the land into pasture, and the greater part of the agricultural population into manufacturers . . . the best days of Old Scotland are over".(101) The general identity of social attitudes prevailing between patrons and the Established clergy (especially the "Moderates") was attributed to some extent to the pressure which the former could exert on heretics. When the Marquis of Abercorn, the Earl of Glasgow, and other heritors of the Abbey Parish served a libel on Patrick Brewster on 15/2/1843, they charged him with intro-:ducing wordly affairs into his sermons, such as the Corn Laws.(102)

The mode of financing the Established Church in Scotland added an economic pressure. By the Act of 48.Geo.III.c.138, the parochial clergy had, since 1808, drawn their stipends as the monetary value of a fixed quantity of grain, the value of which varied according to the market price. Proposed at a time when grain prices (in war-time) had been rising, it had been eagerly accepted by the parochial clergy, but many viewed repeal as a direct threat to their material standard of living.(103) Insofar as town councils were obliged to keep urban stip-:ends in line with those in the landward areas in order to maintain the quality of recruitment, the direct vested interest of the Established Church clergy in the price of corn was not confined to

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101) Thomas Smith to Catherine Smith, Calcutta, 14/2/1843, in Smith Family Papers. Mss. 7185(I).f.10.

102) Robert Brown: op. cit., vol. 1. p. 105.

103) "Scotsman", 12/1/1839.

the landward parishes.(104) By the time of the League, the Established Church was more prudent than it had been in 1827, when it petitioned officially against any alteration in the existing Corn Laws on the ground that "any measurehaving the effect of producing a diminution in the value of corn must reduce those stipends below the amount contemplated by the legislature".(105) It refrained from taking any official part in the Anti-League, contenting itself with resisting the attempts of free traders such as Brewster or the anti-corn-law associations of Forfar and Kirriemuir to enlist the aid of sections of the Church of Scotland hierarchy for the cause of repeal, on the ground that the issue was entirely a civil one (and sometimes, individually that it would ruin agriculture).(106) Nevertheless, individual members of the Established Church were acutely aware of the economic implications of repeal on their stipends. The Rev. John Tulloch, then minister of the rural charge of Kettins in Perthshire, condemned "those confounded blustering Cobdenites" who

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104) Thus the minister of the High Church of Paisley drew a stipend of £300 per annum. So few urban clergymen in the Established Church engaged in the anti-corn-law movement, that the "Argus" could observe that " . . . there are exceptions, but these are so rare, that, when mentioned, they are regarded as wonders". ("Glasgow Argus", 24/5/1841).

105) The petition further observed that no class were "more deeply interested in the decision of this question" than the parochial clergy, and complained in particular that the proposed import duties on barley and oats were "manifestly too low" and "most detrimental to the petitioners, the amount of whose stipends almost entirely depends upon the prices of these descriptions of grain". ("Glasgow Argus", 26/2/1838; James Barr: The United Free Church of Scotland. p. 282).

106) "Scotsman", 10/2/1845; "Dundee Advertiser", 16/4/1841; 30/4/1841.

threatened the clergy with "genteel beggary" and confessed that they had squeezed "every drop of his old Whiggery" out of him.(107) The same fear motivated the parochial clergy in Ross-shire to petition Peel on 17/2/1846 for compensation for the anticipated reductions in their stipends to enable them to maintain their "undefined high rank in society" and the "corresponding mode of life and of bringing up our families".(108) The "Scotsman", with its free trade sympathies, doubt-:less over-simplified the motivation of the Established clergy, when it contended that those who were favourable to free trade generally derived their stipends from particular local arrangements, such as that of Dr. Candlish from the Annuity Tax in Edinburgh.(109) However, the clergy were not oblivious to the potential economic reper-:cussions of repeal on their own situation, and economic as well as political and social factors combined to identify the Established Church in general with the Agricultural Interest.

The Agricultural Interest was unable to command any sympathy from the body of Dissenters or Roman Catholics,(110) who in general entertained free trade sympathies, but they did gain the neutrality

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107) Mrs. Oliphant: Memoir of the life of John Tulloch, D.D., LL.D., p. 73.

Tulloch subsequently became Principal and Primarius Professor of St. Mary's College, St. Andrews.

108) Lewis Ross to Sir R. Peel, Invergordon, 10/2/1846, in Peel Papers. Add. Mss. 40,585, ff. 126-9.

109) "Scotsman", 11/12/1841.

110) The Roman Catholic clergy were invited to McLaren's conference of Dissenting clergy. Most did not reply, but of those who did, nearly all favoured total repeal of the Corn Laws, al-:though unprepared, mainly from theological reasons, to participate in a joint religious demonstration. (Duncan McLaren (ed.): op. cit., p.53.)

or passive sympathy of two further denominations in addition to the Established Church. After 1843, some ministers and distinguished lay members of the Free Church, such as the Rev. Robert Aitkin of Willison's Free Church, Dundee,[111] or the Rev. Mr. Mackenzie of North Leith,[112] and D.M. Makgill Crichton of Rankeilour,[113] followed those prominent members of the Free Church whose sympathies with free trade had preceded the Disruption. Nevertheless, although Alexander Graham at a Glasgow Free Trade banquet in January, 1844, at which Fox Maule and Cobden spoke, was able to observe that the function was "not entirely without some representation of . . . the Free Church of Scotland", he was clearly unimpressed with their numerical strength, and proceeded to argue that as the Free Churches rested on voluntary contributions, "they owe at least some sympathy to the cause of free trade".[114] Graham's attempt to enlist the Free Church as a further interest group behind the League was a confession that this had not already happened. This was scarcely surprising in view of the fact that the Evangelicals in 1843 had not defected from sympathy with the voluntary principle, but had accepted it of necessity

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111) "Dundee Advertiser", 19/1/1844.

112) Mackenzie preached on 4/11/1845 to the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale of the Free Church in Dr. Candlish's Church, Edinburgh, on the impolicy of Laws which made the food of the poor scarce and dear. ("Scotsman", 5/11/1845)

113) ibid., 13/6/1846.

114) "Glasgow Argus", 11/1/1844.

in the anticipation that they would eventually replace the original Church of Scotland as a purified Establishment. Consequently, the Free Church clergy did not - despite the action of some individuals - adhere to the League, and they abstained as a body from taking a part in the issue. If the Agricultural Interest secured the neutrality of the Free Church - a major success in view of its urban orientation - it was even more successful with the Scottish Episcopal Church which was almost unanimous in its condemnation of free trade in corn. In part, this may be attributed to a disin-:clination on the part of the Episcopalians to be considered as "Dissenters".(115) Although it was not the Establishment in Scotland, the Episcopal Church was the Scottish counterpart of the Established Church in England, and accepted the establishment principle. Draw-:ing substantial support from the landed interest by the 1840's, it reflected their conservative social and political attitudes. Thus, in Forfar, the Episcopal minister refused to sign the local anti-corn-law petition, as he was not convinced by the arguments of either J.R. McCulloch or even Adam Smith.(116)

That the Anti-Corn-Law League commanded some support from the Agricultural interest in Scotland was indisputable, and the League endeavoured to exaggerate both the numbers and their degree of commitment to the cause of free trade. The League's success in

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115) Duncan McLaren (ed): op. cit., pp. 54-56.

116) William Sturrock to the Editor of the "Anti-Corn-Law Circular", Forfar, 2/3/1840, in L.L.B., vol. 3, no. 397.

attracting the support of the largest landed proprietors facilitated its propagandistic assertions, but also indicated the limitation of its impact. Those Scottish agriculturists who did give their adherence to the League were usually acting from a political motivation - whether radical or conservative - and had come to the conclusion that protectionist fears of agricultural distress were exaggerated. However, with the exception of Shetland, the League failed ~~to~~ totally to engage the loyalty collectively of an agricultural community, and the existence of a mixed farming economy hardened opinion behind protection, rather than free trade. The stock-raising areas viewed the Anti-Corn-Law League, like the Scottish urban free traders, as a free trade League, with all the economic dangers to other agrarian interests implicit in the success of such a body. Nevertheless, the existence in both rural and urban society of other interest groups who felt, from a variety of motives - political, economic, and social - a bond of sympathy with the agriculturists, detracted in some degree from the appearance of a straight clash between urban and rural society. Similarly, they serve to modify historical interpretations which - have exaggerated the League's success in vanquishing opposition north of the Tweed.

9. The Corn Law Question and Scotland's Parliamentary Representation

Central to the motivation of any extraparliamentary agitation, whether for or against the Corn Laws, was the belief that it would influence to some extent at least the course of the deliberation on the issue in Parliament. In this context, the attitudes of individual Members of Parliament were of crucial importance and were closely scrutinised. Moreover, the corn question was not debated in a political vacuum: it was an integral part of the political and constitutional struggles of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, contributing to mould attitudes towards political change in other directions. Above all, it seemed at several stages an opportunity to test the effectiveness of the existing political system as a medium of representing "popular" opinion, and constituted a stock radical argument for reform. Before the anti-corn-law agitations reached their most successful era (and in part a cause of this), the existing political system was changed by the first Reform Act, 1832, which in Scotland to a greater degree than in the south, produced radical changes in the composition of the burgh electorates. But radical as these were, the "reformed" structure was still sufficiently conservative to ensure that burgh Members would not be open to electoral sanctions from the urban middle-classes, on the scale which the radicals had hoped and the conservatives had feared. Moreover, the perpetuation of many of the least redeeming features of the eighteenth century electoral system and practices contributed to produce a substantial degree of continuity before and after 1832.(1) Furthermore, it would

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1) See Norman Gash: Politics in the Age of Peel, Also, G.S.R. Kitson Clark: "The Electorate and the Repeal of the Corn Laws" in Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 1951, 5th., series. I., pp. 109-26.

be dangerous to assume that electoral and other pressures on Members of Parliament on the corn question commenced with the Reform Act and were non-existent prior to that event. Even under the unreformed regime in Scotland, issues as well as influence were important factors in determining the relationship between M.P.'s and their numerically limited constituents.

The late eighteenth century was a period of innovation in some constituencies in the relationship between Members of Parliament and their constituents. The radicals in London and some other commer-:cial centres in England attempted, especially in the General Election of 1774, to extract "pledges" on future conduct from parliamentary candidates as a prerequisite for electoral support.(2) Such advanced thinking and attempts to transform representatives in to delegates in the radical interest was not feasible under the circumscribed electorates of the Scottish burgh constituencies where voting power was vested exclusively in self-perpetuating town councils. However, Scottish Members of Parliament discovered as early as 1777 that the anachronisms of the unreformed electoral system north of the Border did not shield them from the demands of their constituents on issues such as the current corn-bill agita-:tion. The Annual Committee of the Convention of Royal Burghs instructed their agent to transmit to all the royal burghs a copy of the resolutions passed by the previous annual Convention, and ratified by the committee, together with a request to them to write

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2) Lucy S. Sutherland: "Edmund Burke and the relations between Members of Parliament and their constituents" in Studies in Burke and his time. pp. 1005-21. (Published by Alfred University, New York, 14802).

their individual M.P.'s to oppose the bill as contrary to the resolutions.[3] If 1777 marked the first systematic lobbying of Scottish Members on the corn-bill issue, the latter had at least been made aware of the Convention's view on previous occasions. In the agitation of 1740, Patrick Lindsay, M.P. for Edinburgh, was energetic in presenting the Convention's case, and had his expenses reimbursed as a consequence.[4] He further acted as a liason with other Scottish M.P.'s on the Convention's behalf.[5]

After 1777 the pressure on Scottish M.P.'s to reflect the opinions of the growing urban communities - particularly Glasgow - steadily increased. In the corn-bill agitation of 1786, the Lord Advocate found that his office gave him no immunity from the expectations of his constituents. On 20/10/1786, the Town Council of Glasgow authorised the provost "in the name of the magistrates and council to write to the Lord Advocate, their member in Parliament, to oppose any alteration that may be proposed in Parliament of the present Corn Law, tending to raise or increase the price of grain".[6] In the controversy of 1790-91, the Member for Glasgow, William McDowall of Gartland, was "requested to go to London as soon as he can conveniently, to take charge of this business on

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3) Extracts from the Records of the Convention of Royal Burghs, 1759-79. pp. 570-1.

4) ibid., 1738-59. p. 68.

5) ibid., 1738-59. p. 65.

6) ibid., vol. 8, pp. 205-6.

behalf of his constituents". Glasgow Town Council further entreated all the other burghs and counties of Scotland, and the Convention of Royal Burghs, to assist the city in an application to be heard by counsel at the bar of the House of Commons, against the corn-bill, and to "instruct" their Members of Parliament to support it at Westminster.(7) McDowall's diligence on the council's behalf earned him their approbation.(8) As M.P. for Renfrewshire in 1805, McDowall, in company with Boyd Alexander, the new M.P. for Glasgow, and Lord Archibald Hamilton, M.P. for Lanarkshire, were lauded by Glasgow Town Council for "their disinterested, zealous, and enlightened exertions in promoting the progress through Parliament of the late corn statute" which had obtained several of theCouncil's leading objects.(9)

The concept that a Member of Parliament should act on his constituents' behalf and with regard to their opinions on issues which seemed to intrinsically affect their interests, such as the Corn Laws, was reinforced in the crisis of 1813-15. Scottish burgh Members were again expected to adjust their parliamentary conduct to their constituents' views, by being "instructed" to oppose the corn-bill and present petitions against it. Sir David Wedderburn, M.P. for Perth district of burghs received such requests,(10)

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7) Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Glasgow, vol. 8, pp. 400-2.

8) ibid., vol. 8., p. 420.

9) ibid., vol. 9, pp. 461-62.

10) Minutes of Perth Town Council, 7/3/1814; Minutes of Dundee Town Council, 7/5/1814.

but his counterpart in Inverness received more precise directions. The latter was instructed "to oppose any bill to be brought in for altering the present Corn Laws, and in case he is of opinion that a petition to both Houses of Parliament is expedient . . . he will inform the Provost thereof, that such a petition may be made out, and transmitted without delay".(11) Not least among those Scottish Members who found the expectations of their constituents embarrassing was Kirkman Finlay, M.P. for Glasgow. Lord Provost of the city, and chairman of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, he entered Parliament as a popular representative of the city's commercial interests - a popu-:larity which increased when he opposed the original corn-bill of 1813. Glasgow Town Council placed on record their "satisfaction and pride" at "the unremitting assiduity, with which he has attended to every measure, connected with the general welfare of the country, and more particularly to those, in which his constituents are interested".(12) By March, 1815, however, Finlay was prepared to accept the Ministry's modified proposals, and felt obliged to assure the Council that although his views differed from theirs, he was prompted purely from sincere motives and conviction. Glasgow Town Council accepted his assurance, expressing their conviction that his conduct had "proceeded from the most sincere and disinterested zeal for the welfare of his constituents and of the nation at large".(13) Finlay's

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11) Minutes of Inverness Town Council, 7/3/1814.

12) Minutes of Glasgow Town Council, 2/7/1813.

13) ibid., 25/3/1815.

past record of service to the commercial interests of Glasgow and opposition to the Corn Laws, together with a reserve of respect for the independent judgement of a Member of Parliament allayed the feelings of the "electors" of Glasgow. The radical non-electors of the city were less impressed with their virtual representative: they mobbed his house.(14)

The apex of pressure on Scottish Members from their constituents on the corn question under the pre-1832 constitution was realised in 1826 when the decision of the Liverpool administration to defer consideration of the issue until after the election made it for the first time a central theme of an election campaign. In agricultural areas, with their marginally wider electorates, parliamentary candidates gave appropriate assurances of fidelity to the Corn Laws, as in the case of Captain Wemyss in Fife, who indicated that the Liverpool Ministry had members too "wildly speculative".(15) Others qualified their adoption of protection in place of prohibition by assurances, such as that of Home Drummond in Stirlingshire, that in determining the level of duties, he would err on "the safe side" from the viewpoint of the agricultural interest.(16) With the tentacles of influence of the landed interest reaching into the burgh

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14) James Gourlay (Ed.): The Provosts of Glasgow from 1609 to 1832. pp. 118-19.

Finlay's decision to contest Malmesbury instead of Glasgow in 1818 was unconnected with the corn question. In 1818, the casting vote in the finely-poised Glasgow district of burghs fell by rotation to Renfrew, a Whig interest. ("Glasgow Constitutional", 9/3/1842).

15) "Scotsman", 1/7/1826.

16) "Glasgow Chronicle", 1/7/1826.

constituencies too, parliamentary candidates in these were unable to indulge in the luxury of following entirely their own predelic-:tions. The radical, Joseph Hume, contesting Montrose Burghs, had one eye on Lord Panmure, their patron, when he gave the vague assurance that he would put the Corn Laws "on such a footing as, without destroying the interests of the growers, would place the consumers in a situation that would enable them successfully to compete with others" - a sufficiently equivocal statement to draw the vituperation of a meeting of Glasgow operatives on 16/11/1826, who accused him of trying to "blink" the question.(17)

The vacillation of both Hume and other parliamentary aspirants was understandable, as in other areas, attempts were made to extract "pledges" on future parliamentary conduct on the corn question. In Inverness-shire, the Rt. Hon. Charles Grant, a member of the Ministry directly concerned with the Goverment's proposals for an alteration to the Corn Laws(18) was a vulnerable and valuable prey to electoral pressure. In November, 1825, (and again in January, 1826), the ultra-tories and ultra-prohibitionists in the county, led by Mackintosh of Raigmore and MacDonald of Glengarry endeavoured to estrange Grant from his constituents. They proposed meetings of the county to both censure the Ministry's conduct on the corn question and to secure a pledge from Grant on his own future parliamentary conduct - a gambit which attempted to capitilse on the genuine fears

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17) ibid., 4/7/1826; 18/11/1826.

18) Grant was vice-president, and subsequently president of the Board of Trade. ("The Complete Peerage", vol. 5., p. 677).

of the county freeholders. These manoeuvres Grant and his adherents only overcame with some difficulty.(19) Moreover, the ultras persisted in their attempts to brand Grant as a free trader during the 1826 General Election, albeit without success.(20) But the concept of pledges was not confined to the counties or to the prohibitionists. In the Perth district of burghs, the commissioners representing Perth and Dundee were instructed by their respective town councils to extract a pledge from their Member of Parliament, Hugh Lindsay, that he would support the substitution of a moderate protecting duty for prohibition.(21) Even within a political system grounded on the politics of influence, ideological issues still played a contributory role, if only insofar as they influenced the wielder of influence. Moreover, on socially-divisive questions, such as the Corn Laws, influence frequently reinforced opinions and attitudes already entertained.

The first election fought under the Reform Act furnished a clear indication of radical anticipation that on issues such as free trade, the legislation of 1832 should be the starting-point and not the terminus of reform. To ensure the speedy advent of the new dawn, the already familiar concept of pledges was readily re-:surrected by the Radicals for widespread use. Proffering advice

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19) See Bught Muniments. GD.23/6/746; GD.23/6/606.

20) Charles Grant to James Grant of Bught, London,,2/3/1824 in ibid., GD.23/6/746/59; and, Mackintosh of Raigmore to Forbes of Culloden, n.a., 5/6/1826. in ibid., GD.23/6/611.

21) Minutes of Dundee Town Council, 14/6/1826; Minutes of Perth Town Council, 12/6/1826; "Dundee Advertiser", 15/6/1826; "Glasgow Chronicle", 17/6/1826.

to the newly-enfranchised electors of Glasgow, one anonymous scribe postulated the need to extract pledges from parliamentary candidates on a multiplicity of prevailing issues. The abolition of the Corn Laws and the general removal of all restrictions upon trade and commerce rated fourth and sixth respectively in his revealing order of priorities. Nevertheless, he recognised that the enforcement of pledges was more difficult than their extraction. They were not all so "accurately defineable both as to their extent and immediate operation" as (for example) triennial parliaments. In particular, the Corn Laws might admit of a pledge "to the full extent in point of principle", but dubiety could still exist "whether they shall be abolished at once or prospectively, and if in the latter mode subject to what contingencies?"(22) However, the concept of pledges was taken up as the most efficacious mode of forestalling candidates giving "general promises and a thousand qualifications", and one radical organ drew up a list of thirty-five (including free trade) to which the ideal reformer should subscribe.(23)

The radical nature of their contents, and their encroachment on the freedom of conscience and action of an individual Member of Parliament, ensured that sympathy for the notion of pledges would be limited in the restricted electorates created by the 1832 Reform Act. Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, the more conservative of the two Whig candidates contesting Renfrewshire spurned the whole idea of

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22) Anonymous: Letter to the Electors of Glasgow under the Reform Bill. pp. 12-14.

23) "The Political Examiner", 8/9/1842. p. 10. See also, R.M. Cowan: The Newspaper Press in Scotland. pp. 80-82.

pledges on principle. This did not prevent the defeat of his opponent, Robert Cunninghame Bontine, who had been prepared to accept them.(24) Pledges were an early admission of radical fears and weakness, rather than strength. Where there was a demand from the electorate for the adoption of a radical programme on issues such as free trade in corn, pledges were unnecessary. In Dundee, four candidates vied with each other in protesting their bona fides on the corn question, with victory finally accorded to the most radical of them, George Kinloch, senior.(25) In Edinburgh, however, where enthusiasm for free trade was less securely anchored in commercial interests, the situation in 1832 was quite different. With impunity, the Rt. Hon. James Abercromby could scatter ambiguous claims to having always "voted on the side of the consumer".(26)

The same radical disillusionment with the Whigs from 1833 which manufactured anti-corn-law societies from that year, also produced a number of unilateral radical parliamentary candidatures. One of the most persistent, James Aytoun of Edinburgh, contested several constituencies on a wide-ranging programme which gave priority to

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24) See Cunninghame Graham Muniments. GD. 22/2/158-9.

25) Address to the Prospective Electors of Dundee, 10/6/1841 in Airlie Muniments. GD. 16/40/55; Election addresses and reports of Dundee candidates in 1832 in "Old Dundee Collection", D.7172(1) (in Dn.P.L.); and "Dundee Advertiser", 9/6/1831; 23/6/1831; 30/6/1831; 28/6/1832; 5/7/1832; 26/7/1832; 2/8/1832.

26) Report of the proceedings at the public meeting of the electors of Edinburgh on Thursday, 2nd August, 1832, pp. 6,9-11.

At this meeting, the chairman, Sir James Gibson-Craig, a leading Edinburgh Whig, denounced the entire concept of pledges. Abercromby promised to endeavour "to cheapen the food of the people," but without inflicting an injustice on any other class of the community.

further parliamentary reform, but which also embraced abolition of the Corn Laws, the continued existence of which was "disgraceful to a reformed Parliament to have allowed to exist a single session".(27) Yet even Aytoun placed the Corn Laws seventh and last in his electoral platform,(28) and the defeat of the radicals was general. Even when, like Alexander Johnstone of Oakbank (later Shieldhall) or William Dixon of Govanhill, they emphasised the commercial radicalism of free trade, their parliamentary aspirations remained unfulfilled.(29)

Two principal factors served to play a restricting role on radical initiatives on the free trade question. Firstly, the anti-corn-law movement was in the doldrums during the middle years of the decade, reflecting its failure to arouse much active sympathy outwith radical and a few commercial circles. Secondly, the parliamentary performance of the Scottish burgh Members matched up to the limited expectations of their conservative constituents. Nine Scots burgh Members supported Whitmore's Corn Law motion of May, 1833,(30) and sixteen adhered to Villiers' motion in 1838. By the latter occasion, interest in the question was reviving, and while two absent M.P.'s paired off

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27) "Mr. Aytoun's speech to the constituency of Edinburgh", in "A Collection of Newspaper Cuttings, Pamphlets, etc., 1792-1847". (N.L.S.)

28) "Report of the speeches delivered on the hustings on the nomination of candidates", 28/5/1834, in ibid.

29) "Glasgow Argus", 29/12/1834; 15/1/1835; 14/2/1837; 17/5/1838; 14/2/1839; "Scotsman", 12/7/1837, 22/7/1837.

30) "Glasgow Argus", 23/5/1833.

The Scots burgh Members voting for Whitmore's motion were J. Dunlop (Kilmarnock), James Ewing and James Oswald (Glasgow), R. Ferguson (Kirkcaldy), W.D. Gillon (Falkirk), Sir John Maxwell (Paisley), Laurence Oliphant (Perth), Sir H. Parnell (Dundee), H. Ross (Montrose), and R. Steuart (Haddington).

in its favour, only three "skulked" from the division, although the triumvirate included such influential Whig mandarins as Fox Maule and Sir John Campbell.(31) With Scotland's burgh Members generally in step with electoral opinion on the corn question, they did not experience the embarrassment of Lord Dalmeny, M.P. for Stirling Burghs, who was censured in 1837 by the electors of Dunfermline (one of the constituent burghs) for his insufficiently radical attitudes to a number of issues, headed by the Corn Laws. Yet even in Dalmeny's constituency, the revolt was largely confined to the radical stronghold of Dunfermline, and their proposal to put a candidate in the field at the succeeding General Election (of 1837) did not come to fruition.(32) In general, the Scottish burgh Members accurately reflected the attitudes (and apathy) of their electors on the corn question throughout the 1830's, if not those of the free trade activists. Through the "Glasgow Argus", William Weir exhorted the need for more anti-corn-law societies on the model of Glasgow to exert pressure on Scottish Members to vote for Hume's fixed duty motion of 1834.(33) His appeal was a reflection of the prevailing climate of opinion, rather than the failure of the reformed political system to adequately represent it.

In areas, such as Glasgow, where the free trade movement did command more widespread and active support, the movement was more

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31) ibid., 19/3/1838.

32) "Scotsman", 7/1/1837; 15/7/1837; 19/7/1837; 26/7/1837; 29/7/1837.

33) Anti-Corn-Law Societies founded on the model of Glasgow, would in Weir's opinion, have as one objective, the exertion of pressure on Scots M.P.'s to vote for Hume's motion of 1834 for a fixed duty on corn, and to "prevent shufflers from avoiding to commit themselves by keeping away". ("Glasgow Argus", 13/2/1834).

effectively represented in Parliament with little overt pressure from below required to make Members toe the line. Both of the city's first two M.P.'s after the Reform Act, Oswald and Ewing, supported Whitmore's motion, and from the beginning the former took a leading part in the anti-corn-law movement.(34) In 1835, he was joined by Colin Dunlop of Tollcross, president of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Society, who displaced Ewing when the latter declined to oppose Wellington's administration.(35) Only after Oswald's temporary withdrawal from politics and the death of Dunlop, was a novel situation produced by the arrival of two new actors, one of whom was at first non-commital. Lord William Bentinck was merely prepared to advocate a gradual abolition of the Corn Laws, accompanied by an "equitable compromise between the agricultural and manufacturing interests".(36) Weir castigated Bentinck's compromising terms as evasive, declaring that "the representative of a manufacturing district ..... must be decided on this point as his constituents are". Weir was more satisfied with the other aspirant, John Dennistoun, a total repealer.(37) Nevertheless, a crisis was averted by Bentinck's statement that he would "go" for total repeal or any obtainable amendment and the "Argus" supported him in 1837 in order to remove the possibility of a split reform vote in the face of a strong Tory challenge.(38)

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34) ibid., 19/12/1833.

35) ibid., 3/4/1834; 15/1/1835; "Scotsman", 21/1/1835.

36) "Glasgow Argus", 15/2/1836.

37) ibid., 1/12/1836; 22/5/1837; 25/5/1837.
Dennistoun was a brother of Alexander Dennistoun, a director of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Society in 1833-34. (ibid., 3/4/1834)

38) ibid., 24/7/1837.

However, the dubiety which had prevailed over the candidates' views in Glasgow produced a development with implications for other constituencies and future occasions. Anderston Anti-Corn-Law Association organised a public meeting of 5-6,000 in Hyde Park to be addressed by the two Whig candidates, when they pledged themselves to total repeal.(39) This interventionist role by the anti-corn-law movement officially in a parliamentary election foreshadowed the events of the following decade. A logical progression of thought and action followed when the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association for the West of Scotland requested Joseph Hume in the succeeding session of Parliament for a list of Scottish M.P.'s voting on Villiers' motion in 1838, for subsequent publication and distribution, "that the people may know in future whom to trust".(40) These limited forays, officially undertaken, into parliamentary elections and the relationship between Members and their constituents were in part a manifestation of universal radical frustration with alleged Whig lethargy in promoting reform. They reflected too, however, the increasing acceptance by more radical opinion in the free trade movement, of the justification for schismatic tactics in parliamentary politics. This was a further respect in which the ground in Scotland had already been prepared, before the advent of the League.

With the revival of interest in the corn question from 1838, and particularly from the formation of the Anti-Corn-Law League in early 1839, a new situation emerged. Whig inertia and Melbourne's implacable hostility to change evoked an even more aggressive attitude

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39) ibid., 27/7/1837.

40) ibid., 22/2/1838.

on the part of more radical free traders towards Whig Members and candidates unwilling to give unqualified approval to total and immediate repeal. At the Trades' Hall meeting of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association on 3/4/1839, when the free traders of the city decided to adhere to the nascent League, Weir proposed that candidates unprepared to endorse the League's aim should be denied electoral support.(41) On issues such as the ballot,(42) radicals had frequently suggested that Whig candidates should be "tested" for satisfactory answers, and that their production should be regarded as a sine qua non of electoral support. However, free trade appealed to a wider range of interest groups, and was therefore by implication a more serious threat to the parliamentary Whigs. Although this proposal was the logical sequel of those previously made by Weir and by the Central Anti-Corn-Law Association, the possibility of its imminent implementation on a wide scale sparked off a debate within the League in Scotland, whether it should be executed, and under what circumstances.

Weir's Whig employers on the board of management of the "Glasgow Argus", never outright ministerialists on economic and commercial policy, were prepared to overlook such a proposal at a public meeting. Like Weir's advocacy of political reform as one of the aims of Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association, it was an individual opinion. However, when Weir made his personal viewpoint the editorial policy of the "Argus" - the official organ of the Whigs - such a provocation could not be

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41) ibid., 4/4/1839.

42) As late as 3/1/1839, Sir John Bowring had suggested to John Hill Burton, that Radicals should make the ballot the sine qua non for supporting Whig candidates at the following election. (John Bowring to John Hill Burton, Portsmouth, 3/1/1839, in Hill Burton Papers. F.20/12.)

disregarded. Through its columns, on 22/4/1839, he urged Glasgow reformers with votes in Ayrshire to abstain in the pending by-election, rather than support the Whig candidate, James Campbell of Craigie House, as the latter endorsed a fixed duty rather than total repeal. To underline the far-reaching implications of his proposal, Weir further predicted that the reform electors of Glasgow,with votes in Lanarkshire, Stirlingshire, Dunbartonshire, and Renfrewshire, had sufficient strength to remove any recalcitrant Whigs, but should commence by making an example of Ayrshire.(43)

Implicit too in Weir's advice on county constituencies such as Ayrshire was the possibility that if it was effective, the outcome would be the return of a Tory on a split reform vote. Many radicals in the course of the 1830's had been reconciled to this prospect.(44) They anticipated that this would either coerce the Whigs into more radical postures, or produce a polarisation of support between ultra-toryism or radicalism, to the advantage of the latter. Like many radicals, Weir increasingly saw little meaningful difference between Whigs and Tories, both of whom appeared in the guise of aristocratic

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43) "Glasgow Argus", 22/4/1839. Campbell advocated a duty of eight or ten shillings per quarter on wheat, although the average duty paid in 1828-39 under the sliding scale had been a mere six shillings.

44) In the Perthshire election of 1834, William Tait, the Edinburgh Radical, saw no difference between the Tory and Whig candidates on any issue which mattered, and urged an independent reformer to stand in the Radical interest and face "an honourable defeat at the hands of the two Conservative factions". ("Tait's Edinburgh Magazine", (June, 1834), pp.277-78. See too, "Duncan Macklewham's Opinion of the two candidates addressed to his brother Sandy in Crieff", Perth, 24/3/1834, in Abercairney Muniments. GD.24/1/1068.)

factions with equally vested interests in maintaining the Corn Laws. Less radical Whigs did not concur in this diagnosis of the situation, and he quickly came under fire from "certain professing reformers" for his counsel on the Ayrshire by-election. By 1839, however, Weir was determined to force a showdown on the issue. Totally unrepentent, he rejected "such trimming between our own convictions and the wheadling of others" on the principle that "he who is not with us is against us". When he followed this up by urging that the vacant constituency of Leith should not be wasted "on a half-:informed, half-hearted professor of friendship to the cause of Corn Law repeal", namely the new Whig Lord Advocate, Andrew Rutherfurd, who was an adherent of gradualism, (45) he contended that his attitude merely "acted up to the resolutions of the anti-corn-law delegates" in urging voters not to support candidates unwilling to adopt the aim of the League. The Whig proprietors of the "Argus", who were at that point toying with the concept of a moderate fixed duty anyway, could not overlook the numerous complaints about the editorial policy of the journal, and on Weir's repeated refusal to be more discreet, they dispensed with his services. (46)

In his determination to force a collision with those Whigs who had reservations on total and immediate repeal, Weir was out of step with free trade opinion, not only in Glasgow, but in most parts of

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45) "Glasgow Argus", 29/4/1839; "Scotsman", 27/4/1839.

Weir's vituperation included the irrelevant point that Rutherfurd as a lawyer could not adequately represent a mercantile constituency. ("Glasgow Argus", 3/6/1839)

46) William Weir to Richard Cobden, Glasgow, 7/5/1839, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 1.(16): Minutes of the proprietors of the "Glasgow Argus", 6/5/1839; 8/5/1839; 9/5/1839.

Scotland. A fellow-radical and co-founder of the Anti-Corn-Law League, the Hon. James Erskine Murray of Aberdona, withdrew his proposed candidature against Rutherfurd in Leith from the fear of a Tory gain on a split reform vote.(47) In the succeeding by-election in Edinburgh, Weir again clashed with the attitude of the local free traders, when he castigated the "sins of omission and commission" perpetrated by T.B. Macaulay, including his abstention on Fryer's motion on the Corn Laws in the first reformed Parliament.(48) Despite Macaulay's gradual approach to total repeal, the free traders including Erskine Murray, William Tait, John F. Macafarlan, Duncan McLaren, and John Wigham, Junr. supported his campaign. Seconding his nomination, Wigham indicated that he did so, because Macaulay had declared emphatically that he "will do all in his power to enable us to get rid of these laws". Only James Aytoun wavered and determined to withhold his support from the Whigs.(49)

Support for Weir's stand came from the radicals of the linen centres, Dunfermline and Dundee. In the former, a second vote of censure was passed on Lord Dalmeny by his constituents on 11/10/1839. Although their grounds of complaint were not concentrated on the corn question, but were wide-ranging with emphasis particularly on the Church issue, their adoption of James Aytoun, the Edinburgh radical, to stand against Dalmeny at the next election,(50) became an opportunity for polarising support on the free trade issue. Dunfermline

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47) "Scotsman", 27/4/1839.

48) "Glasgow Argus", 3/6/1839.

49) "Scotsman", 25/5/1839; 1/6/1839; 5/6/1839.

50) ibid., 16/10/1839; 2/11/1839; 25/12/1839.

Anti-Corn-Law Association at a meeting chaired by Provost James Morris on 12/3/1840, celebrated its formation by agreeing to withhold electoral support from any candidate unprepared to adopt the aim of the League. To obviate any dubiety which could pertain to questions on the hustings, they urged C.P. Villiers to bring forward not only his annual motion for an enquiry into the Corn Laws, but also a resolution for total repeal to "enable the constituencies to judge of the fitness of their present representatives to be returned to future Parliaments".(51) In Dundee too, the local anti-corn-law association determined to adopt an interventionist role in parliamentary elections at a meeting chaired by the radical George Kinloch of Kinloch, Junr. Prudently, they agreed to appoint committees in each parliamentary district to ascertain the numbers favourable to total and immediate repeal "in order to obtain a knowledge of the strength which can be brought to bear on this question in Dundee."(52) The eventual purpose of this exercise was fairly clear. Nevertheless, these movements were the exception, not the rule, and in most areas if the free traders were dissatisfied with the machinery of the existing electoral system as a medium for representing their views in Parliament, this feeling was insufficiently strong to outweigh party considerations.

The failure of the Whig administration to respond to the renewed pressure of the League in the winter of 1839-40 served to increase the sympathy of a broader section of free trade opinion for a more effective means of translating urban sympathy into voting figures in the division lists than the apparently futile activity of petitioning. Moreover,

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51) ibid., 21/3/1840.

52) "Dundee Advertiser", 29/11/1839.

this sentiment was reinforced by the difficulty of maintaining public interest. By the close of 1840, the threat of falling corn and bread prices was beginning to worry moderate Whig free traders like Wigham. On 30/9/1840, with the support of McLaren, he urged the League to increase the pressure on sitting Whig Members, by encouraging as many electors as possible to sign a request to their individual M.P.'s to support repeal. He anticipated that in most cases, the request would be so numerously signed "as to deter any member from treating the request with neglect", in addition to its value as a means of "keeping with the intercourse it is intended previously to have with the electors".(53) Those sections of free trade opinion more closely identified with the parliamentary Whigs continued, however, to resist any attempt to engage in any tactics which could divide the Whig interest and endanger the stability of the Melbourne Ministry. One of their organs, the "Scotsman" reported that the Government was "obliged to govern for all parties" and that it could not be expected to act immediately upon the views of an extraparliamentary movement agitating an issue which was "as yet in a state of progression" in public opinion.(54) However, opinion within the League in Scotland continued to swing towards the assumption that Scotland's parliamentary representation, at least in the burghs, could be rendered a more effective and unanimous voice for the free trade movement in the legislature.

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53) John Wigham, Junr., to League H.Q., Edinburgh, 30/9/1840, in L.L.B., vol. 5., no. 729.

54) "Scotsman", 2/9/1840.

There was a further aspect to the problem in Scotland, which made it peculiarly urgent. No Scottish Member of any standing was pre-:prepared to openly identify himself with the free trade movement, despite the near-phalanx of votes from the burghs which attended Villiers' motions for an enquiry into the corn question. This fact was brought home to the Scottish free traders at the close of 1840 when Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association was engaged in organising the Great Scottish Free Trade Demonstration of the following Spring. The Association's secretary, David Murray, was obliged to request the presence of several eminent English free trade Members, from the fear that otherwise there would be insufficient inducement to attract Scottish free traders from a distance to the function, as "with the exception of Mr. Macaulay ..... there is no representative of any of our burghs who is likely to attract many to our meeting", and from the latter's connection with the Ministry - he was Secretary for War - he was unlikely to be present.(55) The handful of Scottish Members in 1840, such as William Ewart or Edward Ellice, who were prepared to attend League functions carried little prestige with them.

The growing schism within the free trade movement on the problem of bringing the parliamentary representatives into line with what the League conceived to be the opinions of their constituents was under-:lined by two by-elections in January, 1841, and the reactions which they evoked. On 27/1/1841, the radicals in Kirkcaldy Burghs fielded Dr. John Bowring, the former radical free trade M.P. for Kilmarnock, against the Whig nominee, Colonel Ferguson, The latter, a nephew of

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55) David Murray to George Wilson, Glasgow, 11/11/1840, in L.L.B., vol.5., no.787.

the late Member, and a total repealer on the corn question (which he made the principal plank on his electoral platform) was opposed by Bowring on the basis that Ferguson's rejection would be "the triumph of that principle (commercial reform) over local feelings and associations".(56) Ferguson's substantial majority - 218 to 131 votes -(57) was a discouraging start for the radical free traders, but their defeat was overshadowed by the League's official participation in the Walsall by-election three days later when they permitted the Tories to top the poll by forcing the withdrawal of the Whig candidate.

Voicing Whig and conservative free trade opinion, the "Scotsman" deprecated the schismatic tactics of the League in Kirkcaldy and Walsall in being prepared to sacrifice the "general interests of reform" for their own exclusive aim. That the Whig nominee in Walsall had been prepared to vote for repeal of the Corn Laws if an enquiry showed this to be desirable made the League's action from the Whig viewpoint, a test of the extremes to which the radical free traders were prepared to go in pursuit of their aims. The "Scotsman" con-:demned the League's readiness to contest any constituency "whatever the consequences" as an attempt to blackmail sitting Liberal M.P.'s to vote for repeal against the dictates of conscience in order to retain their seats, a proposition which offended the conception of a Member's freedom of action. In conclusion, the organ urged "a less costly means" of turning public opinion on the issue.(58) The "Glasgow

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56) "Scotsman", 9/1/1841; 20/1/1841.

57) ibid., 27/1/1841; Also, T.Wilkie: The Representation of Scotland. p.87.

58) "Scotsman", 6/1/1841; 9/1/1841; 16/1/1841; 20/1/1841; 27/1/1841; 3/2/1841.

Argus" now safely out of the hands of the Radical, Weir, also voiced Whig protests against the League's "impolitic" mode of action in Wal-:sall, and though conceding that such action might be justifiable in Manchester or Glasgow where it could be enforced, warned that this was not the case in smaller boroughs such as Walsall.(59)

In the anti-corn-law associations, however, the free trade activists enthusiastically endorsed the League's action. On behalf of Edinburgh Anti-Corn-Law Association, John Wigham transmitted a message to the electors of Walsall, pointing out that every burgh representative in Scotland favoured repeal - a debateable claim depending on the definition of "repeal" - and trusting that the English boroughs would follow suit.(60) Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association exhorted the Walsall electors not to return a "bread taxer" to Parlia-:ment.(61)

The division of opinion on the tactics to be adopted towards the Whigs, however, parallelled a further schism in the ranks of the free trade movement in Scotland by January, 1841. Both the "Scotsman" and the "Glasgow Argus" and the section of conservative free trade opinion which they represented had by then transferred their allegiance from total repeal to the concept of a fixed duty, bringing them into harmony with the change of attitude by the Whig administration, on the grounds that public opinion was not ready for total repeal and that a fixed duty was a practical first step.(62)

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59) "Glasgow Argus", 5/1/1841; 28/1/1841; 6/5/1841.

60) "Scotsman", 9/1/1841.

61) "Dundee Advertiser", 15/1/1841.

62) "Glasgow Argus", 4/2/1841; "Scotsman", 6/1/1841.
The tone of the "Argus" changed considerably with Weir's departure. On 28/1/1841, it argued that there had been "a most unnecessary, as well as unwise, amount of abuse expended upon the individuals composing what is usually denominated the landed interest". ("Glasgow Argus", 28/1/1841).

The League's action at Walsall reflected the increasing impatience of active free traders with the parliamentary Whigs, but in turn it stimulated free traders in other parts of the country, including Scotland, to take similar action. Within ten days of the Walsall poll, the committee of Forfar Anti-Corn-Law Association convened an electors' meeting which considered correspondence between the Associa-:tion and the local M.P., Patrick Chalmers of Auldbar, indicating that he refused to pledge himself to vote for total and immediate repeal. The correspondence on the issue had almost certainly commenced prior to the Walsall poll, but the intransigent line taken by the local association owed much to the stimulus of uncompromising example.(63) Despite Chalmers' past services to the free trade movement, the Forfar Leaguers could not overlook his loyalty to the Whig concept of a fixed duty, and with only three dissentients, resolved to support no candidate unwilling to accede to total and immediate repeal.(64) A month later, a meeting of 403 electors in Dundee agreed to a resolution by Edward Baxter, president of the local anti-corn-law association, to support only an outright free trader. All other qualifications for for public office should be ignored as the Corn Laws were "the chief grievance in the country - a question of all others the most important".

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63) An active member of Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Society in 1834 and London Anti-Corn-Law Association in 1836 (above), Chalmers had also served the League after its inception, as a member of Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association, and as a delegate for Arbroath Anti-Corn-Law Association at the League Conference in London in 1840. (George Canning to J.B.Smith, Arbroath, 28/12/1839, in L.L.B. vol. 2 no. 310; also, George Canning to League H.Q., Arbroath, 10/3/1840, in ibid., vol.3, no. 423.)

64) "The Anti-Corn-Law Circular", 25/2/1841.

As in Forfar, there was no resistance to the hardline approach, and only one dissented.(65) In the Lord Advocate's constituency too, there were rumblings by the Leith free traders in April, 1841, that the Corn Laws should be made"a hustings question" and that every constituency should "act like Walsall".(66) Even in Glasgow, where the adherence of the local Members, Oswald and Dennistoun, to total repeal, removed any casus belli, there was still a discernable division between Whig and Radical free traders on the efficacy of supporting the Whigs if they were unprepared to adopt the aim of the League, leading to a clash at the Great Scottish Free Trade Demon-:stration in April, 1841.(67)

However, despite the portents of possible League intervention in a number of Whig constituencies in the 1841 General Election, few materialised in Scotland. In most areas, free traders supported the local Whig candidates, even when (like Fox Maule), they advocated a fixed duty of eight shillings to provide a measure of protection for agriculture.(68) In Edinburgh too, the Whig candidates, Macaulay and Gibson-Craig, received free trade support despite their ambiguous

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65) ibid., 25/3/1841; "Dundee Advertiser", 12/3/1841; 28/2/1840.

66) "Scotsman", 14/4/1841.

67) At the demonstration, Alexander Johnstone clashed with John Dennistoun. The former asserted that if the Whig Ministers were unprepared to adopt an enlightened commercial policy, they should quit "the cabinet of this commercial state", while the latter regretted that there was a large and influential party (the League) willing to accept only total repeal, and although accepting their aims, he contended that their immediate realisation was impossible. He had faith in the Whigs, "a ministry favourably-inclined", and contended that public opinion must first be mobilised on the issue, as on the Slavery question. ("Scotsman", 24/4/1841)

68) "Perthshire Courier", 24/6/1841; 1/7/1841.

reservations on repeal as "a work of time."[69] Only in the radical linen towns, where there was no danger of Tory gains on split reform votes did the free traders precipitate a collision with the Whigs. In Dundee, led by Edward Baxter, they sponsored J.B. Smith, president of the Anti-corn-Law League (and the defeated League candidate at Walsall), in opposition to a local Whig, George Duncan. Local associations and the support of the more conservative free traders and Whigs led by Provost Kay gave Duncan a winning margin of 577 to 445.[70] A more satisfactory result from the League's viewpoint came from Stirling Burghs, where Lord Dalmeny scraped home over Aytoun by 439 to 420 votes, although the latter had swept Dunfermline with the support of the Anti-Corn-Law Association.[71] The League's only real success was the return of Alexander Johnstone in Kilmarnock Burghs, but his victory was facilitated by the support of the local Whigs and the defection of the former Member, James Colquhoun, to the Tories.[72]

Despite the dissatisfaction of the radical free traders with the attitude of many of Scotland's parliamentary representatives to the aim of total repeal, and their alleged failure to represent public opinion on the issue, the League failed totally to displace any of them. It is impossible to attribute this to the failure of the electoral system to represent the attitudes of the electorate. If Lord Dalmeny and other urban Whigs could command considerable influence in the smaller burghs, the same pressures could be exercised by the free

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69) "Scotsman", 11/8/1841.

70) ibid., 3/7/1841.

71) ibid., 26/6/1841; 3/7/1841; 7/7/1841.

72) ibid., 19/6/1841; 7/7/1841; "Glasgow Argus", 14/6/1841; 17/6/1841; 28/6/1841.

trade manufacturers, like Edward Baxter. If the opinion of the burgh Members did not always coincide with the aim of the League, this was attributable rather to the fact that the urban electors were on the whole either unwilling to accept total and immediate repeal or if they did, were unprepared to give it precedence over their general party affiliation. If the electoral system failed to represent the free trade movement of urban Scotland as adequately in Parliament as the Leaguers wished, this was less a reflection of its failure to express the sentiments of the preponderating sections of the electorate in 1839-41, and more the League's failure to convert the latter, including most of their own activists like Wigham or McLaren to the expediency of unilaterally pursuing the uncompromising aim of total and immediate repeal. Although the burgh electors of Scotland as a body favoured free trade insofar as the concept was represented by the modified programme of the parliamentary Whigs, their commitment to the radical objectives of the League was more qualified.

The lack of progress by the League among the Whigs both in and out of Parliament together with the example of registration practised with some effect by the Conservatives prior to the 1841 election and their ensuing victory disillusioned a wider segment of free trade opinion with the efficacy of relying on the existing complexion of the electorate (and in some cases, the existing constitution) to return a favourable legislature, attracting their sympathy for enlarging the radical electorate by emulating Tory electoral manipulation. This was facilitated south of the Border by the existence of the forty-shilling freehold qualification, which the legal agents of the League

were able to exploit with considerable effect.[73] In Scotland, however, the League operated within a different legal and political framework. Strictly entailed estates constituted an impediment to this activity in the counties, and this was supplemented by the further obstacle of the requirement of property of £10 annual value which effectually made votes five times more expensive to create north of the Border.[74] Probably this factor (as well as the strength of the Tory party in the south) inspired a group of Dundee free traders in 1845 to intimate to the League Council their willingness to purchase forty-shilling freehold qualifications in the English counties, to be selected by the League.[75] Nevertheless, a limited attempt was made in Dundee and Edinburgh to register urban voters in the free trade interest. In the latter, the Anti-Corn-Law Association published a request to all free traders in the city to register their claims to enrolment through the General Liberal Committee,[76] but in Dundee, the local Association adopted a more active role, setting up a sub-committee to assist electors in filling up their claims of enrolment, and to encourage others to apply too.[77] In other areas, the free traders apparently relied, as in Glasgow,[78] on the local Liberal registration committees, and took no steps to specifically encourage Leaguers to file their claims.

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73) Minutes of evidence before the Select Committee on Votes of Electors. pp. 192-93. (Evidence of George Wilson)

74) "Glasgow Argus", 28/11/1844.

75) "Scotsman", 22/11/1845.

76) "Dundee Advertiser", 14/7/1843.

77) "Scotsman", 8/7/1843.

78) "Glasgow Argus", 10/7/1843.

The lack of zeal by the Scottish free traders, particularly in Glasgow, in attempting to secure the return of total repealers gave considerable concern to Cobden and the League Council, who privately did not concur in their public approbation of Scottish endeavours. In December, 1843, Cobden advised McLaren - by then his principal liason in Scotland - to make certain that the Glasgow free traders did not nominate "any half and half man" (a fixed duty Whig) to contest the Kilmarnock by-election following Johnstone's death.(79) The League Council had considered the possibility of direct inter-:vention in Kilmarnock, and were prepared to do so if the Glasgow free traders failed to act. The principal obstacle to Manchester intervention was Cobden's belief that a Scotsman was a preferable candidate for a Scots burgh: an Englishman crossing the Border was "in danger of stumbling over some Church or banking prejudice".(80)

The following year, Cobden attempted to arouse interest in Scotland in the possibilities of registration. He invited Alexander Russel, editor of the "Scotsman" - once more in the League fold - to take up the question after studying the law and practice of county registration in Scotland. Cobden did not share the attitude of many Scottish whiggish free traders that Scotland had already played her part by returning parliamentary majorities for the ambiguously-worded motions put forward annually by C.P. Villiers. He argued that it was in the power of the Scots middle-classes in the burghs to qualify them-:selves for the counties under the Scots Reform Act of 1832, and that

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79) Copy. Richard Cobden to Duncan McLaren, Manchester, 3/12/1843, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 71.

80) R. Cobden to John Bowring, Salisbury, 17/11/1843, in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 15.

they should be urged to do that. In particular, he contended (like Weir) that an impression could be made in Lanarkshire, Ayrshire, Stirlingshire, and Dunbartonshire, where manufacturing interests were strongly-represented. Moreover, in the last of these, in addition to the calico printers and glass manufacturers, a large number of villa residences belonging to Glasgow merchants were placed - "in fact, Glasgow, if it did its duty like Manchester, ought to carry Lanark-:shire, Ayrshire, and Dunbartonshire".(81) Support for Cobden's criticism came from the "Glasgow Argus" (also returned to the repeal camp by 1844). The organ admitted the peculiar difficulties in the way of registration in Scotland, but counselled Scottish reformers to be more vigilant.(82)

In general the League's exhortations fell on stony ground, and its electoral effort north of the Border after 1841 remained concen-:trated on attempting to win the support of existing electors through the distribution of tracts and the holding of lectures.(83) Few practical steps were initiated to implement the League's declaration of 11/2/1842 that electoral support should be denied to all except total repealers at the next election, and that free traders would abstain in a division where no outright Corn Law repealer took the field.

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81) R. Cobden to Alexander Russel, Manchester, 6/11/1844, in Letters to Alexander Russel. Mss.1845.

82) "Glasgow Argus", 28/11/1844.

83) In 1843, the League distributed packets of tracts to the electors of Ayrshire, Clackmannanshire, Dunbartonshire, Perthshire, Renfrewshire, Ross and Cromarty, Stirlingshire, Ayr, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Glasgow, Haddington, Kilmarnock, Leith, Montrose, Paisley, and Stirling. (Report of the Council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League (1843) in Wilson Papers.)

The exception to the general inertia in Scotland was Edinburgh. This was scarcely surprising in view of the presence of Duncan McLaren, one of the moving spirits behind the League's hardline approach nationally, which he termed a "resolution of action".(84) Moreover, previous schisms in the ranks of the Edinburgh Whigs, in which McLaren had been a leading actor on behalf of the Dissenters, made the metropolis fertile ground for such a policy in view of the identification of religious dissent and free trade. Accordingly, when the League's resolution was circulated to the multifarious free trade bodies, it was endorsed by the committee of Edinburgh Anti-Corn-Law Association with little opposition,(85) and subsequently transmitted to the two Edinburgh Members with a request to support Villiers' motion.(86) This initiated an attempt to transform the M.P.'s into parliamentary delegates on the free trade issue. It lasted two years, and included the use of blackmail, with the Anti-Corn-Law Association threatening to field rival candidates unilaterally on the League's behalf.(87) Moreover, throughout the dialogue, the local association received active encouragement and guidance from the League Council, through John Bright and Archibald Prentice. The Council hoped not only to give a demonstration of the strength of free trade sentiment in a "free" constituency (removed from landed

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84) "Scotsman", 16/2/1842.

85) By 18 votes to 3, at a meeting chaired by the Radical, William Tait.

86) ibid., 23/2/1842.

87) "Scotsman", 13/4/1844.

influence), and to intimidate Macaulay and Gibson-Craig, but also to overawe other Whig Members into following the League line on the assumption that Edinburgh was a weathervane of Whig opinion.(88)

However, the cardinal point which emerged from the confrontation was the League's failure to achieve its short-term objectives. Although both parties in the dispute compromised to some degree, the two Members retained openly-stated reservations on the expediency of voting for total and immediate repeal, and the wrangle with Gibson-Craig was not finally resolved until Russell's "Edinburgh Letter" of 1845 committed the Whigs as a whole to repeal.(89) Despite the League's warning to the M.P.'s that with eight hundred electors in Edinburgh adhering to the Complete Suffrage Association, no-one unprepared to accept total repeal "would now have the certainty of being returned, were an election to take place",(90) the ranks of the free traders were not unanimous. The more Whiggish and influential members of the Anti-Corn-Law Association, led by Lord Provost Adam Black, James Moncrieff, Montgomery Bell, and James Crawfurd resisted McLaren's intransigent policy, rendering some dubiety whether unilateral candidatures by the League in Edinburgh would have been successful.(91)

The principal obstacle to League incursions into parliamentary elections in Scotland was the strength of the Whigs. In attributing

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88) J.B. Mackie: The Life and Work of Duncan McLaren. vol.1., pp. 261, 268-75; "Scotsman", 11/5/1844.

89) ibid., 11/5/1844; 1/6/1844; 3/8/1844.

The electors in the Complete Suffrage Union remained convinced that the two M.P.'s were "by no means fit representatives of the great body of the inhabitants". (ibid., 20/7/1844.)

90) J.B.Mackie: op. cit., vol.1., pp.249-50, 255, 257-9; "Scotsman", 14/1/1843; 11/3/1843.

91) ibid., 8/3/1843; 13/4/1844; 17/4/1844; 11/5/1844.

the free trade movement ~~with~~ TO the sympathy of the prosperous urban middle-classes, it is easy to exaggerate their readiness to sacrifice traditional loyalty to the Whigs and reform in general, or their sense of commitment to the uncompromising aim of total and immediate repeal. Further bolstered up by the traditional role of influence operating within the relatively conservative framework of the 1832 Reform Act, the Whigs were enabled to withstand the threat of a serious League challenge in most constituencies.

The resilience of the Whigs extended in Scotland to county constituencies, and provided the basis for the League's claim that Scotland as a whole demanded free trade. The proliferation of small manufacturing towns and villages in counties such as Forfar (92) undermined the electoral prospects of the protectionists by swamping them with electors favourable to free trade. Yet, even in constituencies devoid of industrial interests, the Whig Members were rarely counted in the protecionist lobby, although they were frequently sufficiently prudent to avoid joining the free trade one. (93) Despite their apparent vulnera-:bility to Tory charges of failing to defend intrisic (N) agrarian interests, the county Whigs had a considerable propensity for survival. In 1831, the Ross-shire Tories attempted unsuccessfully to stigmatise the Whig, J.M. Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth as a free trader. (94) Even in

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92) The Tory "Dundee Courier" lamented the fact that the agricultural interest in the county was unrepresented, because of the proliferation of manufacturing burghs and villages where the ten pound feuars were able to outvote the landed proprietors and their tenants. ("Dundee Courier", 16/4/1844).

93) In March, 1838, when Villiers' motion came before the House of commons, only one Whig county Member voted for it, while nine Scots county Members abstained from the division. ("Glasgow Argus", 19/3/1838).

94) I. MacLeod to J.M. Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth, Invergordon, 19/7/1831, in Seaforth Muniments. GD. 46/4/133/3.

1835, when his parliamentary conduct in failing to support two motions by the Marquis of Chandos to alleviate agricultural distress had provided them with additional leverage, their success was restricted to reducing his majority.[95]

What frustrated the protectionists in Scotland was paradoxically the conservative complexion of the first Reform Act. The economic fears of the tenantry were submerged by the influence of the Whig landed proprietors in Scotland, few of whom were prepared to desert to the Tories on the corn question. The one major exception was the Duke of Roxburgh, one of the two principal Whig interests in Roxburghshire, who defected to Peel in 1841 over the proposals of the Melbourne ministry for a fixed duty. The loss of the votes of his forty tenants and "the batch of mushroom votes which his Grace made"[96] together with Tory diligence at registration in the Jedburgh area, was sufficient to turn the tide in a marginal constituency.[97] Yet despite the almost universal fear of free trade among the Roxburghshire farmers,[98] the Hon. J.E. Elliot dropped only fifty-five votes (or one in fifteen) of his previous total.[99] A few rural seats

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95) See Seaforth Muniments. GD.46/4/80/2; GD.46/4/158-9.

96) D. of Roxburgh to Earl of Minto, ? , 15/5/1841, in Minto Mss. 120/1; Also, E. Selby to the Earl of Minto, Minto, 24/5/1841, in ibid., 119/6.

97) See election correspondence of 1841 Roxburgh election in ibid., 120/1.

98) Minto's factor, E. Selby, observed that he had "not met one farmer who did not fear the alteration of the Corn Laws on agriculture". (E.Selby to the Earl of Minto, Mindo, 24/5/1841, in ibid., 119/6.)

99) Elliot was defeated by 830 to 748 votes. (T. Wilkie: op. cit., p.260)

in Scotland did change hands to the Tories' advantage in the 1841 election, but their transfer may be related to extraneous factors, Tory zeal in the registration courts or a change in the complexion of the county interests.(100) In most county constituencies, the politics of ideology played an extremely circumscribed role, saving the Scottish Whigs much embarrassment in the process.

Nevertheless, the dialogue over the Corn Laws did furnish a fillip to the growth of ideological politics in Scotland as in the south. This became apparent during the crisis of 1846, when "public opinion" served to dent the previous supremacy of the politics of interest. The Anti-Corn-Law League representative who contested the Falkirk Burghs by-election of April, 1846, failed to defeat Peel's cabinet minister, Lord Lincoln. However, the former secured a moral victory by coming within six votes of victory, despite the defection of the influential Hamilton interest to the Tories and Lincoln's peculiar appeal as a valuable asset to Peel in piloting repeal through Parliament.(101) Moreover, not only did the weight of electoral opinion within an individual constituency make itself apparent, but "national public opinion" contributed to the passage of repeal by inducing previously committed protectionist Tory M.P.'s to follow Peel into the free trade lobby. Despite the attitudes of

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100) e.g. The loss of Argyll was predicted when the death of the Whig incumbent led to the succession of a Tory to the peerage. (Andrew Rutherfurd to Fox Maule, Edinburgh, 24/10/1839, in Dalhousie Papers. GD. 45/14/642(1).)

101) "Scotsman", 7/2/1846; 4/3/1846. See too the Newcastle Papers, Ne.C. 4,659; 4,662(b); 12,390-1; 12,415.

their own agricultural constituents, these included Sir Thomas Hepburn, M.P. for Haddington, and Elliot Lockhart, M.P. for Selkirkshire.(102)

Despite the shortcomings of the post-reform political structure in radical eyes, it proved sufficiently flexible during the final crisis on the corn question to respond to pressure from below. In Scotland, as in the south, a major contributory factor was the existence of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and its success as an extra-parliamentary pressure group in mobilising opinion in 1839-44. This underlined its potential influence during a period of acute crisis, frightening conservatives into sacrificing repeal in order to salvage the existing political and social order. In their ranks, the Scottish Whigs were prominent. The League's apparent lack of initiative north of the Border in generally adopting militant schismatic activities did not detract from its long-term contribution to the attainment of repeal.

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102) "Scotsman", 7/2/1846; 4/3/1846; 27/5/1846.

10. CONCLUSION

The history of the anti-corn-law movement in Scotland has been the victim of inattention by scholars rather than misinterpretation. Unlike the contemporaneous movements for parliamentary reform, including the Chartist agitation of the post-Reform Act period, the campaigns for a modification or repeal of the legislation governing the importation of grain, have been, in the Scottish context, the central theme of no account. Some of the agitations have been noted in a peripheral context, as part of the background to separate themes such as Chartism in Scotland, or the free trade movement throughout Britain, but no attempt has been made to evaluate the movement in the Scottish setting. Consequently, although some aspects of the Corn Law question, notably Chartist attitudes to the Corn Laws (1) and the treatment of the issue by the periodical press in Scotland, (2) have been the subject of valuable analyses, the evolution of the aims, attitudes, and activities of the free traders north of the Border, and their relationship to the movement south of the Tweed has been largely ignored. It would be untrue to suggest that scholarship has disregarded the possibility that the movement in Scotland, and Scottish opinion towards it, would not necessarily mirror the same reflection as its counterpart in England, and primarily based on League propaganda of the period and Mackie's flattering biography of Duncan McLaren, the vacuum in the history of the agitations before 1839 has been followed by the incongruous interpretation that Scottish opinion was peculiarly favourable to free trade and the Anti-Corn-Law League in the 1840's, and that the responsibility for rallying opinion

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1) See Alexander Wilson: op.cit., esp. Chapter 10.

2) R.M. Cowan: The Newspaper Press in Scotland, 1815-60.

in Scotland behind the campaign was by implication attributable to the personal contribution of Duncan McLaren. These partial truths may not be accepted without considerable qualification.

The fact that the Anti-Corn-Law League was merely the last and most successful anti-corn-law agitation of a lengthy line of pro-:genitors was recognised in December, 1845, by Henry Cockburn when he observed that none of the great internal questions which had arisen in his time had "been inventions of the day. They have all had their rise in an older soil, and the fruit that each has yielded in its season has been the result of long elaboration. Yet though thus prepared, that fruit has always been 'harshly plucked'".(3) Dissatisfaction with the legislation governing the grain trade was in Scotland as in the south, a phenomenon already familiar by the mid-eighteenth century, before the take-off period of the Industrial Revolution and before Smith furnished an economic philosophy of free trade. The motivating fear of the earliest agitation of 1741, and one which was present as late as the concluding one of 1846 (as evidenced by the meal riots in the north of Scotland) was the fear of famine and starvation. The vehicle of protest utilised by some of the agitators of 1741 and repeated as late as 1847 was the least sophisticated form of demonstration, a riot.(4) From such rudimentary beginnings, limited in aim and form, the Anti-Corn-Law League in Scotland could trace its origins.

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3) Henry Cockburn: Journal of Henry Cockburn. vol.2., pp.134-5.

4) "Scotsman", 23/1/1847; 27/1/1847; 30/1/1847; 3/2/1847; 10/2/1847; 27/2/1847; 3/3/1847; 6/3/1847; Alexander Falconer to Cosmo Innes, Nairn, 27/1/1847, in Rutherfurd Papers. Adv. Ms. 85.1.3.

The Corn Laws were not entirely English in origin. The legis-:lation regulating the grain trade of Scotland until 1774 was based on Acts of the Scots Parliament (albeit based on English example), insofar as they could consistently be perpetuated by the articles of Union of 1707. The removal of the mitigating machinery, inherent in the abolition of the Scots Privy Council, and the amendments to the Scottish legislation proposed by the British Parliament, parti-:cularly the singularly harsh treatment of the Scots staple, Oatmeal, were readily identified in Scottish eyes with a denial of their rights as British citizens under the Treaty of Union. Also the orientation of the debate around the mechanism of the legislation governing Scotland as opposed to the rest of Britain, together with the existence of the peculiarly Scottish institution, the Convention of Royal Burghs, as the focal point of agitation, daubed the anti-corn-law agitations of the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century with a Scottish character which was to a considerable extent superficial. Their aim was far from being peculiarly national in the Scottish context: they wished an assimilation of the Scottish Corn Laws to those of England on the assumption that the latter would be more favourable to the interests of the Scottish burghs. The apparent Scottish character of the earlier agitations rapidly diminished in the last quarter of the eighteenth century when all-embracing British legislation superseded the previous legislation peculiar to Scotland, re-orientating the debate around the details of the legislation insofar as they applied to regions of Scotland rather than the latter as a whole. Furthermore, the debate was increasingly revolved around the concept of prohibition of grain imports in toto, a proposition which was assailed by the

growing commercial communities of Britain, including Glasgow, who conceived that it was inimical to their interests, particularly in the light of the new economic faith of inevitable progress through a liberalisation of trade promulgated by Adam Smith, and published in 1776. The polemics of the debate in the closing decades of the eighteenth century, with their increasing recognition of the political nature of the contest involved in the clash of class interests, anti-:cipated most of the dialogue familiar to the Leaguers in the 1840's, a fact which has received insufficient recognition.

Although the agitations against the Corn Laws north of the Border by the close of the eighteenth century were clearly a British movement in Scotland rather than a Scottish movement in Britain, they were nevertheless a native product. They had arisen from pressures within individual communities within Scotland, not as a result of stimulation from without. If events followed a similar pattern on both sides of the Tweed, they reflected a similar response by similar growing commercial communities to similar apparent restraints on their interests. This theme was perpetuated in the evolution of the movement in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. When Tooke's petition of 1820 formulated a demand for new principles of economic policy based on a more consistent application of the concept of free trade, it was not presented in isolation. A simultaneous response was recorded in Scotland, reflecting the transition throughout Britain from the eighteenth century negative approach to the Corn Laws to the more positive free trade philosophy of the mid-nineteenth century. When the transition in aim was parallelled by the evolution of a more sophisticated vehicle of agitation than the former sporadic petitioning

which prevailed as late as the 1820's, this too was reflected in events north of the Border. The anti-corn-law societies formed in England in 1833 were rapidly emulated by similar associations in Scotland, and the latter owed as much to Radical experience of extraparliamentary organisations in the Reform Bill era as to English example. Scottish persistence in the campaign for free trade in corn, without the stimulus of interest from the south, was reflected in the successive attempts by William Weir and other Scots repealers to furnish the agitation with an effective vehicle for political education, demonstration of public sympathy, and pressure on Members of Parliament in the 1830's. The Central Anti-Corn-Law Association was a mini-League in the Glasgow area which provided a melting-pot for ideas on a missionary system and whose failure illustrated the necessity of adequate financial resources to fulfil them. Many of the free traders who campaigned for the League in Scotland in the 1840's, including Duncan McLaren, John Wigham, Edward Baxter, and Walter Buchanan had already gained experience of the futility of unco-ordinated local activity in the early 1830's, and some of the organisations which campaigned for free trade in Scotland in 1837-38 remained to adhere to the Anti-Corn-Law League after its formation in 1839. The latter did not fall heir to a total vacuum north of the Border.

On the contrary, the stimulus for united action by the industrial and commercial interests throughout Britain came from Scotland, in particular from William Weir who had consistently urged the need for co-ordination since 1833-34, and who had endeavoured through the abortive Central Association to put into practice the concept of a

widespread and sustained agitation envisaged by the Radicals who formed the London Anti-Corn-Law Association of 1836. He persuaded the free traders throughout Britain to pursue his common plan of attack - an agitation to be heard by counsel at the bar of the House of Commons, and when it failed (as he probably expected) to achieve its immediate ostensible purpose, he and other Scots free traders proposed the need for a permanent union which materialised in the Anti-Corn-Law League. The concept of the League as "born in Manchester" has little substance. It was when the Scottish free traders, with notable exceptions like Weir himself, having tasted defeat frequently during the course of the decade, relinquished hope of attaining any meaningful progress on the issue without further parliamentary reform, and consequently failed to respond with enthusiasm to the League's appeals for further agitation and money that the latter felt obliged to respond to Weir's invitation to adopt an interventionist role in Scotland. The mission by Paulton and Shearman in 1839 was the first of repeated initiatives by the League Council to prod the Scottish free traders from their lethargy and to encourage them to undertake a sustained agitation. The complaints by Cobden and other English (and some Scottish) Leaguers about Scottish apathy until 1843 were legion and may not be summarily dismissed as mere national prejudice. From 1839-42, considerable pressure was required from the south to encourage the Scots to engage in wide-spread political education and fund-raising, and if the League Council did not intervene more directly to an even greater extent, this was due less to their faith in the unilateral activity and enthusiasm of the Scots and more to their experience during Paulton's mission of 1839

of the futility of attempting to rouse support by by-passing the local free trade "activists". From 1839, Scottish free traders looked increasingly to Manchester for leadership, but it was a crown which the latter accepted with some reluctance. The League Council was sensitive to criticism that the "National" Anti-Corn-Law League was merely a Manchester (or at best Lancashire) movement, and made repeated requests to Glasgow to take a more prominent, if not an equal, role in order to rebuke protectionist allegations. The increasing identification of the League with Manchester was a product of the events after its formation rather than before then.

The concept of a "Manchester League" must be qualified further, in several respects. In the first place, Scottish financial resources for the free trade agitation were directed into the central coffers of the League, and although Cobden and other English Leaguers lamented with jaundiced eyes the failure of the movement in Scotland to provide a larger proportion of the total, the amounts remitted from most Scottish urban communities after 1842 compared not unfavourably with the sums raised by English communities of a similar size and economic composition, with the exception of Manchester which was in some respects in an economic and social league of its own. Moreover, individual Scottish free traders, such as Sidney Smith or Archibald Prentice (a Mancunian by adoption) played conspicuous roles in the movement in England. Free Traders in Scotland too played, as far as distance would permit, a prominent role in the councils of the League, particularly McLaren who emerged as the principal confidant of Cobden and Bright in Scotland, but also others including George Hope of Fenton Barns and John Wigham. There was a two-way transmission

of ideas and resources, and Scotland was not the only recipient. Above all, the concept must be qualified insofar as the League's success - like that of previous agitations - depended ultimately on local initiative and leadership. The roots of the agitation sprang from individual localities and the interest groups represented therein, and the strength of the demonstration in favour of repeal rested on their enthusiasm and activity. Where these were substantially absent, as in Aberdeen, the arguments of Cobden and the oratorical powers of Bright, made little impact. In this context, the role of McLaren can be readily exaggerated. He was primarily a local lieutenant rather than a Scottish national leader of the movement. With the exception of his role in the Edinburgh Dissenting Conference, the importance of which in rallying the Dissenters was circumscribed as most of them already adhered to the cause, his principal function in the movement in Scotland was as an effective fund-raiser and propagandist in the metropolis. Moreover, it was a role which he only fulfilled to any considerable extent from 1841. The spadework required to launch the League in Scotland was primarily undertaken by William Weir, and in Edinburgh by John Wigham.

In another respect too, the concept of a Manchester League must be modified. The aims of the free traders in Scotland were less well-defined than those of the movement south of the Border. In the first instance, the Scottish free traders were unprepared to place the agitation on the exclusive basis of Corn Law repeal, but emphasised other free trade objectives too, particularly the need for the abolition of the sugar, coffee, and timber monopolies. Although this led to a rupture only in 1841 between the movement in Scotland and in the south,

it was a difference in emphasis which remained throughout its existence. Secondly, some of the more Whiggish Leaguers in parts of Scotland were prepared at certain junctures to contemplate the possibility of a modification of the aim of the agitation in the name of expediency, notably in 1839 and 1841. Thirdly, the free trade movement in Scotland had since before the inception of the League been an integral part of the movement for general reform: it had not been isolated from it. The failure of Parliament to legislate to secure minimum wages for Scottish operatives in 1812 in contrast to their enthusiasm for legislation to maintain food prices had converted free traders in 1815 into Radicals in 1819-20, and this pattern was repeated whenever the movement for practical reform such as free trade seemed to reach an impasse within the pale of the existing constitutional system. The same frustration furnished part of the motivation for the Reform Bill agitation of 1831-32, and the emergence of the Chartist movement in Scotland in the latter half of the 1830's. Even after the League's formation, it remained an inherent characteristic of the movement in Scotland. In 1839, Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association adhered to the League subject to the reservation that the former retained the right to urge organic constitutional change too, and when the League was in the doldrums in 1842, the same reaction was widespread in Scotland, in contrast to the English reaction in favour of industrial and fiscal sanctions. The adherence of some Scottish free traders to the Complete Suffrage Union in 1844 was a repetition of the same reaction, which would have been more widespread if the League had not appeared to be making substantial progress in Scotland by that time. However, the

willingness of the movement in Scotland was not attributable to a peculiarly strong contingent of Radicals in its ranks. They were of course present, but the demand for political reform from the movement became serious only when the manufacturing interests determined that it was necessary to advance the cause of free trade. When the latter was making headway, it was quickly dropped, and no less quickly than after the final success of the League in 1846.

The thesis that Scotland was peculiarly fertile ground for the Anti-Corn-Law League and for free trade was advanced frequently by free traders at the time, and has been echoed by modern scholars, but it is easy to exaggerate the truth of this assumption. If this proposition had been as valid as sometimes claimed, it would not have been necessary for the League to engage in such an interventionist role north of the Border, and to display such anxiety that it could not stimulate more effort in Scotland. Nevertheless, the environment in which the League operated in Scotland was not an exact replica of the situation in the south, and this factor determined not only the composition of the interest groups for and against repeal, but also to some degree the nature of the argument. The foundation for the League's claim that Scotland was favourable to free trade rested on the foundation - an apparently effective litmus test of Scottish sentiment - of Scotland's parliamentary representation. A disproportionately high number of the parliamentary lobby for Villiers' successive motions represented Scottish constituencies, and relatively few Tory Members were returned from north of the Border to vote the other way. However, Villiers' motions were sufficiently broadly-based in their phraseology, as some

Scots radicals observed (above), to constitute little guidance if any on their supporters' sympathy for the aim of the League - total and immediate repeal. Many of the Scots, inside and outside Parliament who supported Villiers' annual motions for an enquiry into the Corn Laws were committed in sentiment to a more modified aim, particularly a moderate fixed duty. Only a handful of Radical Members from Scotland supported the League's aim, and as individuals, they carried little weight. Whiggish Scotland was clearly sympathetic to an alteration of the existing legislation, to "free trade" in a qualified form, with perhaps total repeal as a distant objective, but the volume of support for the League's unqualified and exclusive aim was severely circumscribed. Even some of the League's own declared adherents in Scotland expressed at different junctures, reservations on the principle or expediency of going the whole way.

The League's strength in Scotland was drawn, as in the south, primarily from the urban middle-classes. The manufacturers, particularly in export trades or those penalised by import duties on raw materials, such as the cotton industry in Glasgow, the linen industry in Dundee, or the publishing trade in Edinburgh, saw potential economic advantages in free trade if applied as a universal principle. Unlike England, the shipowners in Scotland frequently played an important role in the movement, especially in the east of Scotland, where the prospect of a boom in the grain, fish export, and Baltic timber trades seemed likely to outweigh any disadvantage which might follow the application of free trade principles to the navigation laws. The "direct" urban interests were supported by the substantial number of adherents from the professional and merchant classes who felt an

indirect interest in the prosperity of industry and commerce, and who looked to the economic philosophy of free trade as the most likely means to secure it. However, substantial economic interests even in urban society were weighted against the League, especially in Glasgow which unlike Manchester had to contend with the West Indian Sugar, East Indian, and Canadian Timber monopolies and their rami-:fications throughout society within its own precinct. Moreover, in most other Scottish towns, protectionist minorities of varying strength, but of some consequence in Edinburgh and Aberdeen in parti-:cular, identified the national weal with the prosperity of agri-:culture and the landed interest and their purchasing power in their own communities, and shared the alarm of the rural areas at the dangers allegedly inherent in repeal.

In rural Scotland, with the exception of Shetland where a sub-:sistence agricultural community dependent on imported food and commercial fishing made the League's economic arguments peculiarly potent, the free trade movement had no economic case. The pastoral bias of agrarian industry in large areas of Scotland served to rally the grazing interest behind some of the eighteenth century anti-corn-bill demonstrations, but when the movement for free trade principles emerged, threatening the protection for livestock, timber, fish, and marginal arable production of cereals, which the north enjoyed, they (like the urban protectionist interests in Glasgow) rapidly jumped to the defence of the protection of corn from fear of the domino principle. Indeed, because of the widespread prevalence of marginal lands, the substantial investment of capital in improving them (and others), and the frequency of long leases with rents assessed in the anticipation

of high cereal prices, Scottish agriculturists felt a peculiarly strong economic threat from the principles of free trade. Only, among some of the larger tenant farmers in the cereal-producing Lothians, where corn rents were widespread, and which with the size of their establishments cushioned them to some extent against the potential hazards of repeal, were a few voices raised in favour of the League, but as with the larger proprietors who felt similarly secure, their motivation was not economic, but political.

Political considerations, contradictory in aim, whipped up considerable support for the League in a country with a widespread commitment to at least some progress towards reform. The middle-class Radicals, as in England, played a prominent role accepting Corn Law repeal not merely as a desirable end in itself, but also as a stick with which to beat the landed interest, and insofar as the movement met with frustration, as an opportunity to demonstrate the need for further organic constitutional changes. However, in this context, the attitude of the Chartists and working-classes in Scotland towards the League has been misinterpreted by some scholars. Despite the sympathy of the Chartists and working-classes for repeal of the Corn Laws - few in Scotland followed O'Connor into protectionist notions - their attitude to the League from tactical motives was negative. The Chartists were only marginally less disruptive than in the south, and the thesis that there was a lack of communication between the Chartist leaders in Scotland and the Scottish working-classes is untenable: the latter gave practically no active support to the League other than signatures to petitions organised by the middle-classes or attendance at meetings in some localities similarly

organised. They took no initiative on their own account until 1845, when the prospect of repeal and high food prices both loomed large on the horizon, but their participation at that stage (and in previous anti-corn-law agitations) underlined the unacceptability of merely attributing their abstention to the inappropriate complexion of the League as a vehicle for working-class demonstration. On the other hand, the absence of active ultra-radical participation in the free trade movement in Scotland was increasingly compensated for by the attraction of "conservative" reformers to the ranks of the League. The Scottish evidence underlines the importance of "conservatives" as well as radicals in the League's success. Without the adherence of those, such as Buccleuch or Chalmers, who were prepared to support repeal not from a belief in its intrinsic merits, but as a sacrifice necessary to prevent a more revolutionary one, the League would not have gained its point in 1846. Almost all the leading landed proprietors in Scotland fell into this category, and their influence rather than their numbers was important to the success of Peel's proposals.

Appeals to religious sectarianism, religious and moralistic idealism, and the social conscience, invariably found fertile soil in Scotland, and in this respect, the League was no exception. To the Dissenters, the issue presented an opportunity to attack the financial basis of the Established Church - one of the central points of debate in the Voluntary Controversy anyway - on the eve of the Disruption. The Dissenters clearly seized this weapon before 1842, and McLaren's Edinburgh Conference was a reflection rather than a cause of their sentiment. Only the adherence of the Free Church at the outset to

the Establishment principle frustrated the attempts of the League to enlist the latter as a further active interest group in the cause. As in England, there were few exceptions to the rule that the Established Church clergy declined to participate in the free trade movement, although their support for the protectionist standpoint was on an individual, not a corporate basis. The crisis in ecclesiastical politics in Scotland, furnished the League with a different environ-:ment north of the Border, but the League's appeal was not based ex-:clusively on religious politics. The free traders' selected biblical quotations in support of the thesis that protection for corn offended the Supreme Deity struck a responsive chord in Scottish minds. More-:over, on the moral front, the League appealed to many as the cause of the poor, sentenced to perpetual poverty for the sake of an affluent aristocracy - a natural sequel to the moral crusades which had already attracted many free traders into the anti-slavery and temperance movements, even where these involved conflicting ideals and crises for the middle-class conscience. The Corn Laws could be portrayed as the root of many, if not all, evils, and attachment to peculiarly Scottish social values - notably the value of working-class education, Church attendance, and independence of poor relief - with an appeal beyond the restricted confines of the middle-classes, was reflected in the polemics of the debate north of the Tweed. On the other hand, the protectionist cause did not lack a moral-political appeal too. The social problems of an emergent industrial society in Lanarkshire merely convinced Alison of the desirability of conserving the existing economic complexion of the state, especially the economic importance of agriculture, and the political importance of the landed interest, in

order to preclude a further erosion of moral and social values. A monopoly of the social conscience did not rest with the League.

If the origins of the free trade movement as an extraparliamentary association, its adherents and their attitudes, reflected to some extent the fact that it functioned within a different environment in Scotland, this was equally true of the League's intrusion into parliamentary politics. As in its propagandist activities, the League was not the first agitation to put pressure on Scottish parliamentary representatives. Issues as well as interests played a role in the relationship between Members and their constituents in the late eighteenth century, and by 1826, the former could be acutely embarrassed if their views on the Corn Laws did not coincide with those of the electors, especially during an election. The conservative complexion of the Reform Act of 1832, even in Scotland, ensured that Radical expectations of acceptable "popular" views on the Corn Laws from Scotland's parliamentary representation would not be realised, and the free trade cause was one of the issues which drove increasingly a wedge between the different wings of the Reform interest. Increasingly too, the Radicals endeavoured to apply electoral sanctions to either return advanced liberals to Parliament or blackmail those of a conservative hue into adopting a more radical line. The League's interventionist role was a continuation of this trend by a more broadly-based and more effectively organised pressure group. Its relative lack of success, notably in the Falkirk Burghs constituency, even on the eve of repeal, was evidence of the severely circumscribed progress which the politics of ideology, as distinct from those of interest, had

made even in a radical urban seat, sixteen years after the Reform Act, although the small tory majority indicated some advance in that direc-:tion.

One of the principal differences between the League's activities in Scotland and England was in the field of registration of electors. The apathy of the Scots free traders, partly attributable to the greater financial hurdles imposed by the Scottish Reform Act, was a continuous source of concern to Cobden and the League. In this context, as in the other aspects of the movement's activities and strength in Scotland, too much credence has been attached to its propa-:gandist image with its assumption that Scotland was almost a solid phalanx for free trade. Moreover, in the field of political and elec-:toral pressure on parliamentary aspirants, the activities of the free traders were parallelled by those of the protectionists. Despite this pressure from both sides, however, it would be easy to exaggerate the difficulties of the Whigs. Only in exceptional circumstances, notably when a leading interest in county politics was persuaded to desert their ranks, such as Roxburgh in 1841, did they lose a seat, a loss of support which was probably at least counterbalanced by the appeal of free trade (even in a modified form) in urban areas. The power base of a Member of Parliament was below. Consequently, this ensured that their views were in general in line with sufficient of their constituents to preclude the possibility of rejection.

The point that political movements in Britain operated to some extent within different economic, social, and political environments was reiterated in the history of the Corn Laws and of the Leaguers after 1846. A rearguard action in defence of protection for corn was fought in the Highlands from 1847-57 to the embarrassment of the

Liberal Member for Ross-shire, James Matheson of Achany.(5) If the Corn Laws took an uncommonly long time to die in Scotland, the demise of the communion of spirit in the League was more rapid and complete. When Cobden attempted to rally the Scots free traders of 1846 behind his peace movement of the 1850's, he found little response, and felt compelled to concede that in no part of Britain had the movement fewer partisans than in Scotland.(6) Nevertheless, although the contribution of Scotland to the growth of the free trade movement has been unrecognised, an accurate assessment of the League may not permit the continued exaggeration of differences between the movement on both sides of the Border which were minimal. Like most political movements of the nineteenth century, the free trade agitations constituted a British movement within a distinct environment north of the Border, and the analysis of its activities and support in Scotland emphasises the importance of locality as well as region in shaping its composition and character.

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5) See Munro of Allan Muniments. GD. 73/333. and Seaforth Muniments. GD. 46/4/178-180.

6) Copy R. Cobden to D. McLaren, Bognor, 19/9/1853 in W.S.R.O. Cobden Papers. 29.

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