THE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE 'WESTMINSTER COMMITTEE' OF THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY,

with Special Reference to the Years 1807-22

(Volume I)

By W. E. Saxton.
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Chapter III
The Political Awakening of the 'Lower Orders' in Westminster, and the first 'Era' of Repression 1789-1800

The French Revolution, with its far reaching influence upon European society as a whole, was profoundly to affect the politics and the political structure of England. As its implications became, or were made, clearer, so it occasioned two main political reactions. On the one hand, and among the majority, in whom developments in France inspired distrust and fear, it strengthened a conservative attitude towards existing institutions, and a suspicion of all those who sought innovation. On the other, and among a minority, in whom they inspired enthusiasm, it greatly increased the demand for, and the hope of securing, reform, whilst heightening a sense of impatience with all those who resisted change.

But the Revolution served to rouse emotions and to unleash passions which, in mutual antagonism, were to drive men to extremes. Conservatism became the blind reaction of panic; Liberalism, the desire for a complete political reconstruction. Between defenders of the existing order and Reformers there developed an intense mutual hostility. Both directly, and indirectly, by
the controversy it served to rouse, the Revolution, stirred the imagination, not only of the existing 'political nation' but of ever increasing numbers hitherto outside it. The emergence of men of the 'low orders' upon the political scene, was to introduce an altogether new factor in politics.

By 1789, it is evident not only that a majority of the older Reformers and numbers among the middle classes soundly distrusted the politics and disliked the practices of the aristocratic parties, but that many among the lower middle shopkeeping and professional elements, and the more substantial artisans also, had become restless and discontented with aristocratic leadership. In the metropolis, particularly, the coalition of 1784 and the party wrangles, which ensued then, and in 1788, had excited considerable distrust. Further, the Westminster elections of both years had not only made those wrangles more vivid, but had intensified dislike of the corruption and the disorders, which the aristocratic parties had encouraged. Even before the full impact of the democratic impulse released by the

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1. cf. infra pp. 11, 44-44.
French Revolution, had been received in England, it seems large numbers of men were prepared, when opportunity offered, to express their dissatisfaction openly.

At the same time, there can be no doubt that, not only these men, but many others, who had, as yet, taken little or no interest in politics—save, perhaps, at elections and then only under pressure, or in the hope of personal gain—had their minds quickened by the French Revolution, and the argument it occasioned. It was to be of profound importance that, among the lesser men in society, there should develop a genuine political interest, an interest concerned not merely with personal or local, but with national matters; not merely with the social status of politicians, but with their principles.

In the 1790s, and for a long time thereafter, the greater number of those in the country regarded as the 'lower orders' were to remain politically inert, and of little political consequence. The poverty, ignorance, and indifference of the majority, and an inherent belief among many, that politics was the affair of the upper classes, long served to delay the intervention of the mass of the people in political affairs and permitted
the continued ascendancy of the aristocracy in government. Again, in the metropolis, and in growing industrial towns, the continuance of irrational 'mob' violence, at times of political excitement or economic hardship, continued to convince a majority of men that democratic government was undesirable, dangerous, and indeed, impossible.

With increasing clarity, however, particularly in the metropolis, it is possible to discern growing numbers of the more substantial elements among the 'lower orders', not only taking a closer and altogether new interest in politics, but preparing actively to assert a claim to share in matters of government. And whilst some came openly to support the 'loyalist' or constitutional cause against 'innovation', or to support one of the parliamentary parties, still more, believing in an altogether more radical approach, came to form and support their own independent political associations.

Among the latter, distrust of the aristocracy, and dissatisfaction with what they regarded as the evils and inadequacies of aristocratic government, produced on the one hand a determination to work for parliamentary reform; on the other, dislike and often contempt for the ignorance, debauchery, venality and
violence of 'the people', as well as an awareness of the damage their cause suffered from the distrust their behaviour inspired, produced a determination to stand against all those practices, which demoralised and brutalized them. Concerned to rouse among 'the people' a realisation that they had not only political importance, but a right to share in government, they were equally concerned to educate them. 'The people' were to be made aware that they could never make their weight felt, nor improve their lot, unless they helped themselves and recognised their true interests. 'They' must acquire political knowledge, and discard prejudice and the hope of petty reward. 'They' must learn to judge politicians according to their principles, and political matters on their merits. 'They' must learn too, to behave in ordered fashion, to demonstrate their orderliness and organize themselves, in order to mobilise their strength. If this attitude was not unfamiliar among middle class reformers of an earlier generation, its adoption by men who had themselves sprung from the ranks of 'the people' was to be of far greater significance both as a symptom and a cause of their improving character.
The appearance of a political interest and spirit of independence among classes of men hitherto prepared to leave political matters to their social superiors, during the French Revolution era, not only extended the field of political conflict, but greatly embittered its character.

On the one hand, the governing classes, already frightened by the course of the Revolution in France, became convinced, by the stirring of the 'lower orders' and the appearance of radical leaders of humble origin, that agitators were seeking to delude 'the people', to draw them away from their 'natural' leaders, and to ferment Revolution in England as well. Whigs, no less than Pittite 'Tories' and Independents, adopted this view, and though a handful of the Whigs came, for a while, to make a stand against governmental repressive measures, and to advocate parliamentary reform, yet they, like other 'respectable' men who believed in moderate reform, were frightened into believing their actions would only encourage wilder schemes. Distrust of all popular movements involving the 'lower orders' was to survive in the minds of parliamentary politicians and the property owning classes, long into the nineteenth century.
On the other hand, those who first became politically conscious at this time and who, in immature enthusiasm, were led to demand the most sweeping political reforms, were profoundly embittered by the uncompromising and reactionary attitude which confronted them. The repression they suffered appeared to justify the arguments of radical publicists, that the aristocracy were bent on holding down 'the people,' in order to preserve their own declining hold on political power.  

Their experience of the attitude of parliamentary politicians generally, and of the Whigs in particular, not only seemed to confirm the experience of early reformers, but, more than anything, accounts for the bitterness felt long afterwards by large numbers among the 'lower orders' for the entire governing class.

After 1788, though the city of Westminster remained a stage for the activities of politicians all over the country, yet, increasingly large numbers of the rank and file of her inhabitants began to take an independent and active part in politics themselves. The evidence of popular radical meetings and societies in the heart

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1. cf. infra, pp.33-38.
of the capital itself, inevitably drew the closest attention from the government, and in no place can the effects of its repressive policy have been more keenly felt and resented. At the same time, now that their interest was roused, the close contact with the affairs of government and with parliamentary politicians, which Westminster electors enjoyed, served not only to heighten their interest still further, but to diminish their reverence for the established order per se, and to increase their dislike and distrust for the aristocracy.

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Initially, and to outward appearances, the Revolution in France produced no clear nor strong reactions in the country as a whole. It would seem, however, that at first it roused no sense of alarm. Many thinking Englishmen seemed inclined to equate the action in France with the English Revolution of 1688, and to have adopted a patronising attitude. There was a tendency to view it as the domestic affair of France, and, whilst some welcomed the embarrassment of an age-old and ever potential enemy, others looked upon it as a move likely to lead to the opening of new markets for
English manufacturers.¹

Thus, though the small band of Reformers and individuals among all classes greeted the news with enthusiasm, it seems at first to have excited no widespread demand for reform, nor, for the moment, to have hardened feeling against it. Not until November 1789, when Price's subsequently famous sermon "On the Love of our Country" was delivered, did opinion begin to divide more clearly. Price's enthusiasm for the Revolution and his obvious desire that it should serve to inspire Englishmen to complete their own Revolution of a century earlier, by carrying out political reforms and by removing dissenters' disabilities, roused considerable attention. Immediately, it excited strong conservative disfavour.²

In February 1790, Burke, spurred in part by Price's attitude, gave a warning in parliament of the dangers of the Revolutionary impulse.³ Despite the protest of more liberal Whigs, Burke's attitude set the tone among

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¹ S. Maccoby, *English Radicalism 1786-1832*, pp.24-26; G.S. Veitch, op.cit, Ch. V. passim.
² ibid.
³ S. Maccoby, op.cit. p.31
conservative elements, already becoming alarmed. The 
hostile reception given to a renewed effort to secure 
the repeal of the Test Act, and to Flood's parliamentary 
reform proposals - the latter probably intended to 
publicise the matter before the imminent general election 
— must have shown Reformers which way the wind was blowing.¹

The attitude shown in parliament, and the apparent 
apathy towards, or distrust for, reform, in the country at 
large, must have dampened the earlier optimism of 
Reformers that the general election would strengthen 
their hand. In any event, no concerted electoral 
campaign was undertaken to rouse interest in reform, and 
the elections held in June 1790, turning in most areas 
upon customary, personal or local issues, passed off 
quietly enough.

In Westminster, however, where Horne Tooke became 
a candidate, a strong independent and anti-aristocratic 
temper was revealed, which, at this time, is likely to 
have owed little to the French Revolution. More

¹ S. Maccoby, op. cit. pp. 32-3
G.S.Veitch, op. cit. pp. 113-115, suggests Flood 
was making a tactical move designed to secure 
the pledges of Pitt and Fox to support 
parliamentary reform, on the eve of the election.
directly, it was inspired by irritation at a recent agreement between Fox and the Pittites to avoid a contest. Each party was to set up one candidate only. Publicly announced as intended to prevent a recurrence of the disorders of the last two elections, it was, it seems, principally brought about by financial exhaustion and desire to avoid incurring further fantastic expense. But the substantial support for Horne Tooke's direct attack on the attitude and electoral practices of the parliamentary factions, reflected the dissatisfaction with the conduct of aristocratic party men, growing at least since 1784.

News of the coalition, made public late in March 1790, almost immediately excited controversy. Within a few days it was advertised as a subject for debate at two of the debating societies, the existence of which reflected the growing interest of the lower

1. Times, March 24th, 31st, 1790; A. Stephens, op. cit. 11, 83-4; Life of Thelwall, pp. 64 et seq. Place papers, B.M. Add. MS 27, 849, f. 130.
   G.S. Veitch op. cit. pp. 116-7
2. Times, March 25th, 26th, 29th, 1790
middle and tradesmen classes in political questions, and
their willingness to pay a small charge for admission
to specially staged debates. In the debate held at
the Coachmaker's Hall, though a majority ultimately
voted their approval of Fox's conduct, the violent
attack on the coalition made by John Thelwall, the
moving spirit of the society, attracted considerable
attention.

Thelwall, as already noticed, had become disgusted
with party politics in 1784, and his dislike for
aristocratic government had led him, for some years
thereafter, to support Pitt and to uphold the position
of the King. Like others, however, especially after
1788, he had come to lose faith in Pitt as well, and his
denunciation of both Pittite and Whig factions as seeking
by one means or another to prevent the free voice of
the electors being heard, and his recommendation that

1. Times March 31st, April 8th, 1790.
2. Times, April 8th, 1790; Life of Thelwall, p. 71.
4. Life of Thelwall, p. 45
an independent candidate be set up, seems to have excited considerable sympathetic agreement outside.

Thereafter, letters and comments ascribing the disorders of the last two elections to the aristocratic factions, expressing dislike of the compact to 'preserve the peace' and urging the setting up of an independent candidate, to give the electors the chance of expressing their opinion, appeared increasingly frequently in the press.¹ Until the last moment, however, there was no sign of any third candidate either coming, or being, put forward.

It would seem that Horne Tooke, who had withdrawn his support from Pitt after the election of 1788, in disgust with the behaviour of both parties, was encouraged to stand as an independent, by the obvious signs of restiveness; but that he deliberately concealed his intentions, either for tactical reasons - to avoid giving the parties any chance of setting up another candidate - or for effect. Whatever the reasons, however, it was only on the day before the election

¹. *Times*, April-May, 1790, passim.
². A. Stephens, op. cit. 11,51 et seq. Place Papers B.M. Add MS. 27849, f.146
that he notified the High Bailiff of his intention to stand, and only when nominations were being taken on the Hustings, that he publicly offered himself as a candidate.\footnote{1} His address, published simultaneously in the papers, proved sensational and deserves quotation at some length\footnote{2}:

"I think it my duty on the present occasion to solicit your votes. \ldots\ The evident junction of two contending parties in order to seize with an irresistible hand the representation of the City of Westminster and to deprive you even of that shadow of election to which they have lately reduced you, calls aloud, in every independent mind, to frustrate such attempts and makes me, for the first time in my life, a CANDIDATE."

"The enormous sums expended, and the infamous practices of the two last elections for Westminster—open bribery, violence and murder, with the scandalous chicanery of an unfinished scrutiny, are too notorious to be denied and palliated by either party, and the only refuge of each has been to shift off the common criminality on the other."

"Upon whom and how they will shift off the common criminality, equally heavy on both, that neither of them has made even the smallest attempt, by an easy parliamentary and constitutional method, to prevent the repetition of such practices in the future. Where amongst all their hideous volume of taxes and penalties can we find one salutary statute to regard the right of the people, upon which alone all right of taxation depends."

\footnote{1}{Place Papers, B.M. Add. MS., 27849. f.129.}
\footnote{2}{Times, June 17th, 1790; Annual Register, 1790; Chronicle 14th June, p.208.}
"Your late representatives and your two present candidates have between them given you a complete demonstration that the rights of electors, even in those few places where an election appears to remain, are left without protection and their violation without redress. And for a conduct like this, they who never conceived any means to secure a peaceable and fair election after all these hostilities come forward, hand in hand, with the same general and hackneyed professions of devotion to your interest.

"Gentlemen, throughout the history of the world down to the present moment, all personal factions and parties have proved dangerous to the liberties of every free people, but THEIR COALITIONS, unless resisted and punished by the public, are certainly fatal. I may be mistaken, but I am firmly persuaded there remains in this country a public, both able and willing to teach its government that it has more important duties to perform besides levying of taxes, and arrangements for boroughs. With a perfect indifference for my own personal success, I give you an opportunity of commencing that lesson to those in administration which it is high time they were taught."1.

The novelty of the aim - to disturb the very peace which, in the political view of the eighteenth century, it was so important to preserve - was as striking as the address itself, with its attack on the aristocratic parties, its emphasis on the importance of studying the

1. He concluded by promising to pay the "fair and honourable" expenses of the election, and of a petition too, if it were necessary, and by offering to resign if electors found a more suitable person to represent them.
A. Stephens, op. cit. 11. 83–4.
principles of political conduct, and its plea for measures to prevent electoral corruption and disorders in the future. There can be no doubt it both reflected and crystallised the awakening feelings of many ordinary electors.

Other reforming candidates before—in the seventies and eighties—had urged the importance of judging politicians by their principles, and had pledged themselves to seek measures of reform. Many had professed to stand against electoral corruption. Few, however, as determinedly, refused to curry favour with the electors, or to rouse 'mob' enthusiasm in their support, as Horne Tooke.¹ He refused to distribute cockades and favours, which increasing numbers of men felt to be degrading, refused to open public houses to treat electors and, indeed, refused to incur any expense at all, save those arising from advertisement charges, and from the legal costs of the

¹ cf. Reply by 'Veritas' to Horne Tooke's Letter to the Editor of the Times (1807) (Horne Tooke was then defending Sir Francis Burdett in a quarrel which had developed between him and James Paull, cf. infra, II, v, ii). 'Veritas' quotes letters of Horne Tooke to Paull which show Tooke believed he made every effort to avoid exciting the people.
election. Though there must have been others like Thelwall, who canvassed voluntarily on his behalf, he himself made no effort to canvass or to arrange for others to do so, and there seems to have been no organised committee conducting matters on his behalf.

It was symptomatic of the changing temper among Reformers, who as candidates or committee men were concerned with elections that they should increasingly parade a determination to avoid demoralising practices, and should seek to demonstrate the good order which resulted whenever the people were properly led. At the same time, in professing indifference as to whether they were elected or not, and in refusing to woo the favour of electors, reforming candidates sought to rouse in them a more sober recognition that it was their duty,

1. A. Stephens, op. cit. 11.34 et seq. Prepared to pay the legal costs of the election, Horne Tooke was not prepared to pay the excessive and as subsequently proved often unwarranted 'official' charges made by the High Bailiff. His attitude is significant as marking the beginning of an attack on excessive election costs, taken up by the Westminster Committee later and discussed below infra. Stephens says his ordinary expenses were only £25 but Horne Tooke himself (cf. letter by 'Veritas', op. cit.) presumably including the official charges, the costs of two court actions, and his petition that he had had to pay "between £3-4000"

2. For Thelwall's part in the election cf. Life of Thelwall p. 73. For Horne Tooke's refusal to canvass cf. letter by 'Veritas', op. cit.
as well as their interest, to seek representation, and not the duty of candidates to seek election. ¹

In view of Horne Tooke's platform and his lack of organised support, in view too of the weight of conservative interests in Westminster, the combined efforts of the Whig Club and Treasury on behalf of Fox and Hood, jointly, it is surprising, not so much that Horne Tooke should have suffered defeat, but that his poll should have been as high as it was. Further, whereas the total polls of Fox (3516) and Hood (3217) represented large numbers of shared votes, Horne Tooke's total of 1679 was composed principally of single votes.²

There can, indeed, be little doubt that Horne Tooke's stand and the support he received were significant in a number of ways.

Francis Place, writing long after, when his political influence in Westminster had become considerable,

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1. It is not implied that no reforming candidates or their supporters treated in Westminster thereafter, but there can be no doubt that feeling against it was henceforth to be greatly increased among Reformers of the 'lower orders'.

but, from personal experience as a witness, testified to the very important part it played in bringing home to electors the importance of the franchise. He argued, doubtless reading back his own later experience, that had a few respectable electors been willing to come into the open and manage the election for Tooke, his poll would have been very much higher.¹

John Thelwall, likewise writing much later, also attributed great importance to Horne Tooke's stand:

"...although the numbers polled for Tooke ... were not great (for Westminster has not even yet"...(1818)..."so far got rid of its veneration for rank and family as to suffer itself to be led by talent and integrity alone, without these fortuitous considerations) yet the effort was not thrown away. The electioneering spirit (whose very effervescence is necessary to the preservation of our liberties) the habit of exercising the popular franchise, of thinking and feeling that such a franchise is of some importance, the recurrence of that necessary stimulus to canvass and scrutinize the character and tendencies of men and measure was preserved, till a candidate could be found upon whom.... the confidence and suffrage of the electors could be concentrated."²

Thelwall later goes on to refer, specifically, to the action of the electors in 1807 in returning Sir Francis Burdett.

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¹ Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27849 ff. 146-7
² Champion Dec. 6th 1818 (Thelwall had then just bought and begun to edit this weekly, cf. infra IV. p.516. n 3)
There is, in fact, common agreement amongst all those later associated in the direction of the radical movement of the early nineteenth century, that it was the Westminster election of 1790, and the lead given by Horne Tooke, which first brought about the political awakening of the lesser elements in Westminster society, and recognition that aristocratic politicians and parties were concerned only with their interests, which paved the way, in due course, for the formation of the Westminster Committee.  

But, further, it is clear that it became common among Reformers of the early nineteenth century to view the election in an altogether wider perspective. When they looked back upon the demonstration of independent spirit in 1790, they saw it not only as the first clear sign of a general awakening of the lower ranks of society, but the prime and original impulse, which led to the rise of a new 'party', a 'party' of 'the people', a 'party' which, despite repression, was to survive and grow in the decades which followed. More particularly, those who, in 1807 and afterwards, formed the 'Westminster Committee' and who

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1. cf. eg. ibid; Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27849 f. 163; *Life of Thelwall* p. 75
sought to revive and sustain a national demand for reform, regarded themselves as, in a sense, members of a 'party' owing its 'foundation' much earlier in 1790, in large measure to the efforts of Horne Tooke. I

Such a view is not without significance. In part it is understandable enough. Many of the Westminster Reformers of the early nineteenth century first developed an active interest in politics and began their political association at a time when the new lower class reform movement, generally ascribed to the influence of Tom Paine, had come under the leadership of Horne Tooke. Horne Tooke was long to remain the dominant figure in metropolitan reforming politics. But it would bear out the view that, even before Paine's writings came to exercise their great influence, large numbers of men inspired by Horne Tooke, had adopted, or were inclining

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I. cf. e.g. Authentic Narrative of the Westminster Election of 1812 pp. 46 et seq. which consists of Francis Place's Report on the Westminster Committee's work on behalf of the electors of Westminster. The Authentic Narrative was drawn up principally by Place. cf. B.M. Add MS 27837 ff. 162, 166. Letters of J.C. Hobhouse to Place 10, 7, 1819; and Place to Hobhouse 7, 8, 1819.

2. e.g. by G.S. Veitch op. cit.; G.M. Trevelyan, Lord Grey of the Reform Bill; S. Maccoby op. cit.
towards, his 'anti-aristocratic' attitude, and were looking to him for leadership - that Paine's powerful 'Rights of Man' served rather to emphasise, to explain, and to give much wider currency to views upon the 'self interested' nature of aristocratic politics, already gaining ground.

There can, in any event, be little doubt that Horne Tooke acquired considerable prominence in the election of June, and the fact that he continued to keep himself and the issues he raised very much in the public eye during the months which followed must, in large measure, be held to account for his subsequent adoption as the leader and advisor of the new reform movement among the 'lower orders' shortly to make its appearance.²

In spite of his personal efforts to discourage the familiar election tumult - an example which may account for a similar professed concern for propriety on the part of the other candidates - there had been the usual scenes of riot and tumult, and one man had been killed.²

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In his post election address Horne Tooke had closed with the words:-

"Gentlemen, I do not consider what has been passing before us as any real election..... As things are at present managed, it is impossible that the real electors of Westminster should enjoy even that pitiful share of the representation which is nominally left them." 1

Further, he had made it clear that he would take up the cause of electors and protest against the return on the grounds of the corruption and violence encouraged by his opponents. 2

If his attempt to secure the prosecution of those who had incited the rioting failed, his petition prepared for presentation when the new parliament met, represented an altogether more formidable effort. 3 In it he argued that there were 17,291 householders rated in the Parish Books of Westminster, without proper representation; that in 1784-88-90..."notoriously deliberate outrage, and purposely armed violence was used"...and at each, murder was committed. No punishment of the guilty, nor redress for the victims, had followed, nor were there any effective

1. Times, July 5th, 1790; A. Stephens, op. cit. 11,91.
2. ibid.
means of securing justice. In 1784, Wray's scrutiny had cost him more than the acknowledged 'market price' of a seat, and had gone on for ten months without effective result. In 1784 Hood's petition, which, after months of wrangling, he had been persuaded to withdraw because of the imminence of a new general election, had nonetheless cost him £14,000. As things were, electors had not the slightest chance of expressing their genuine opinion, and no chance whatever of securing redress for the outrages they suffered. He urged the Commons, therefore, to consider new measures to safeguard the rights of electors.

Presented on December 9th, 1790, and received only after strong protest at its tone, it was not until February 9th, 1791 that it was further considered. In due course a decision was reached that it should be rejected as 'frivolous and vexatious'. Under a recent ruling of 1789, this meant that Horne Tooke became liable, upon a Speaker's warrant and without benefit of appeal to a jury, for the whole expense of the petition, including the

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expenses of those petitioned against. Horne Tooke was thus martyred on the elector's behalf and his refusal to pay them was almost certainly calculated deliberately to draw attention to the 'arbitrary' behaviour of the Commons.1 In the following year, and at a time when popular 'lower class' hostility for the ministry was much stronger, the issue was to be raised again.

Horne Tooke's attack upon aristocratic influence in government generally and in elections particularly, was to mark the beginning of a new phase in the attack on governmental and electoral corruption.2 More immediately, it should be borne in mind that it must have been a familiar topic at the very time when the tremendous controversy, first excited by the appearance of Burke's 'Reflections on the French Revolution', first brought home to the average Englishman the idea that the Revolution had profound lessons for him. Recognition that a strong independent temper among Westminster's lower middle and artisan population, hostile to the

aristocratic monopoly of power, already existed in 1790, long before the 'implications' of the Revolution had fully sunk home, must make the rapidity and extent of conservative and democratic reactions in the metropolis thereafter easier to understand. That it may have played a part in influencing the tone of Paine's famous reply to Burke, is a possibility by no means to be ignored.

As is well known, it was in November 1790 that Burke, roused by Price's sermon and by the addresses of the Revolution and Constitutional Societies to the French Assembly, and alarmed by the menacing aspect of developments in France, decided to publish his 'Reflections', not without an eye to influencing the new parliament. In view of the reaction it inspired amongst Reformers and its effect in heightening their distrust for aristocracy thereafter, it is desirable to digress for a moment to consider it.

Presented in the form of an examination of events in France during the past year, in the light of Burke's views

on the nature of society and government, it was designed to caution Englishmen generally against the dangers inherent in all theories of popular rights and in any violent breach with the past, and as a warning to Reformers in particular. Stressing the importance of 'prejudice' in mankind - in ironic antithesis to Reformers' insistence upon the importance of reason - and the prescriptive title which the existing institutions derived from it, he condemned the French Revolutionary impulse, and the whole idea of precipitate change, based on the theoretical demands of reason.

There was, he urged, a natural 'prejudice' in mankind in favour of the existing order. There was, more particularly, a religious 'prejudice' - a conviction that the universe and society, as it existed, was approved by a God, who aimed at the happiness of man. There was, too, an aristocratic prejudice, reflecting the natural constitution of society.

Societies were composed, not of a mass of equal individuals, living and thinking only for and by the present, as popular theorists argued, but of men of greatly differing qualities, station and wealth, valuing and preserving their 'inheritance' from the past and keen to transmit their legacy to the future. A 'prejudice' in favour
of a natural and familiar inequality in society was inherent in all men.

Communities were like families or corporations, held together by love and loyalty to what was familiar; by the need, which every man felt, to be part of something larger and more enduring than himself; and by a sense of membership and duty - that, whatever one's station in life, one was obligated to perform the duties and share the burden of that station. It was natural that "the wiser, the more expert, the more opulent (should) conduct and, by conducting, enlighten and protect the weaker, the less knowing, the less provided with the goods of fortune." ¹

A 'prejudice' in favour of hereditary distinctions and privileges, as preserving continuity and stability, was a natural reflection of the normal order of society, and it was natural that men should have greater trust in hereditary rulers, because their origins were familiar. Distinction of rank, long sanctified by custom, no longer

¹. "An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs" Works (World.Classics Edition 1907) V.100. These words were of course written after the 'Reflections' had excited great controversy.
excited pride in the superior, or envy in the inferior.

It was 'prejudice' which gave a prescriptive title to existing institutions - to private property, law and government, which was their safeguard. Change, he argued, must come in evolutionary fashion, in the light of experience. Praising the excellence of English institutions, and the English constitution in particular, with an almost mystical reverence, he stressed that their great merit lay in their evolutionary nature, and in their accordance with the natural order of society.

Their very complexity, and the complexity of the English constitution, safeguarded the nation against impulsive action. Old institutions worked well, because they had behind them familiarity, experience and respect. No new invention could work until it had accumulated similar sentiments in its favour. The action of the French Revolutionaries was, therefore, both mad and tragic.

It can in no way be surprising that conservative elements everywhere, and particularly among the upper classes, should readily adopt Burke's views. Equally, it cannot be surprising that it should immediately rouse intense disapproval among those very differently inspired by the Revolution, but hitherto quiet on the subject;
amongst those, in particular, who had long ago come to distrust Burke and the Whig party, and amongst those, newly politically conscious, who were increasingly dissatisfied with the conduct of government and the condition of society. Convinced Reformers, and even members of the 'left wing' of Burke's own party, regarded his views as both specious and delusive, and the former were stung by his contemptuous treatment of them. Immediately, it provoked numerous replies, seeking to counteract what was regarded as its 'dangerous' influence, and to re-interpret the Revolution in a different light - of which those of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mackintosh and, above all, Tom Paine, were the most important.¹

Though their appeal was different - Mary Wollstonecraft wrote to excite the compassion of all classes, Mackintosh

¹ There were in all thirty-eight replies. Those referred to are, Mary Wollstonecraft, Vindication of the Rights of Man; James Mackintosh Vindiciae Gallicae; Tom Paine Rights of Man pt. 1 (March 1791) and pt. 11 (Feb. 1792). Other important replies were Dr. Priestly, Letters to Burke; Mrs. C. Macaulay, Observations on the Reflections of Burke. On the attitude of those who wrote against Burke cf. J. Halévy op. cit. pp. 181 et seq.
to appeal to the reason of the enlightened public, and Paine to excite the common man - yet, there was fundamental agreement in the approach of all three. All of them saw in Burke's defence of the complexity and the anomalies of the existing order and his condemnation of the Revolutionary impulse, a conscious or sub-conscious desire to justify abuses, and to maintain the ascendancy of the ruling caste. In either case, they regarded as highly dangerous the way it was calculated to preserve an impression that government was a mysterious and subtle affair, which could only be understood by the 'initiated', or the existing holders of political power, whose interest lay in maintaining things as they were. In reply, therefore, they were concerned to assert as against the complexity, the essential simplicity of matters of government; as against prejudice, the supremacy of reason, and the popular right to demand reforms according to its light.

Political and social anomalies they argued, defended as the product of the wisdom of the ages, became the cloak for all manner of abuses, which would inevitably be perpetuated and extended so long as the existing order was viewed with superstitious reverence and all popular
protests against it decried. Government was for the living. It was absurd to imagine that its principles and practices must be either complex or fixed for all time. They were essentially simple, and each generation, not only could, but should, make its own changes according to reason. The Revolutionary action in France, they re-interpreted as reflecting the awakening of reason in the public mind, and as having been ultimately necessary to sweep away the abuses which continued tranquility must otherwise have encouraged.

If the replies of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mackintosh caused a considerable stir, that of Paine, with its greater force, directness, and more ruthless extremity attitude, was sensational. Because of its profoundly influential effect on the thinking of large numbers of the 'lower orders', and, in particular, upon many who later came together to form the Westminster Committee, it is necessary to consider Paine’s

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1. For Paine’s influence on Francis Place and his friends cf. Place Papers B.M. Add.MSS, 35143 ff.90-93, 27808 ff.59-60 cf. also G. Wallas Life of Francis Place p.28. G.M. Trevelyan, Lord Grey of the Reform Bill pp.37, et seq. G.S. Veitch op.cit. p.192 supra infra p.17 n.2. His influence on Place is, of course, apparent throughout Place’s writings.
views on government, as expressed in the 'Rights of Man', more fully.  

Politics, he urged, was not the affair of the initiated few, but of the common man. Government was derived from them, must be carried on for their benefit, and could be altered in form by them, at will. The existing governments of Europe had been founded upon conquest, and it was in the interests of the existing monarchies and aristocracies which had inherited a political power based on force, to maintain that government was a 'mystery' in which the people had no right to share. War resulted, in part, from the continued need of such governments to justify their existence, in part, from their need to maintain that government was expensive, in order to justify the high taxation which was shared among the ruling castes. The existence of all manner of anomalies, obscure practices and privileges testified to the means by which these castes had, over the centuries, withdrawn power more closely into their hands, and the profusion of sinecure places, and unnecessary offices, reflected their desire to preserve the

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1. I have used the 1921 issue of Paine's Works, reprinting Mrs. Bonner's edition.
means of maintaining friends and dependents at the public expense. Social distinctions were maintained by them solely to preserve the idea of their superiority. 1

Paine spoke of government generally. But he made clear his contempt for the existing system of government in England, and his view that the only efficient and cheap form of government, which would improve the conditions of 'the people' was of the 'representative' or, as he termed it, 'republican' type, which would allow power to be retained in their hands. 2

1. Rights of Man. 28, 33.
2. Rights of Man. pt. 1.71, et seq. Democratic Reformers were not blessed with foreknowledge of the 'party system', or modern constitutional Monarchy, but they wanted to bring about a state of affairs where the executive's duty would be to put the nation's will into effect. In their eyes 'representative government' was 'republican government'. They meant, using the term 'republic' in the sense of the 'commonwealth', simply government by and in the interests of the whole nation. Their desire for a 'republican' form of government thus did not mean necessarily they were aiming to secure the abolition of the Monarchy and the House of Lords. True, Paine himself, Francis Place, and many of his friends, would have preferred and elective President and some form of elective second chamber, but the fact that most of them came to be prepared to accept the continued existence of the Monarchy and the Lords did not prevent them believing they were working to secure a 'republican' form of government. Government might still be substantially 'republican' in their eyes when with an hereditary Monarchy instead of an elective President. As Paine himself said (Rights of Man 11.92) "What is called a republic is not any particular form of government"; cf. also Place Papers B.M. Add MS. 35, 150 ff. 270-271. Francis Place to Col. Jones 20th July, 1837. Place wrote, 'The best state of government..." which is people governing themselves at the least expense, which you may
Praise of the excellence of the mixed government of England, was part of the fraud and delusion practiced by the existing holders of political power, to keep 'the people' satisfied with their lot. In fact, the government owed its forms to the efforts of those, who, in various times past, and as the then leaders of the community, had sought to abate the tyranny of government, but only in their own interests. As monarchy had been forced to share its power with an aristocracy (in a House of Lords) so the aristocracy, in turn, had been forced to share their power with other wealthy and powerful members of the community (in a House of Commons). Precisely because the elective principle, however limited in its operation, had opened a narrow door to talent and had offered a slight chance that reason might make itself felt, it had become necessary, not only to bind members of the Commons by various corrupt means, but to corrupt electors and to restrict, in all manner of ways, their free exercise of the franchise. In turn, precisely because members of the Commons enjoyed, or enjoyed the prospect of, favours and privileges denied to others, they had every interest in

* (cont.) call 'republicanism'...
maintaining things as they were.¹

There was, in fact, no check on the executive. Executive and legislature inevitably worked together, since a majority in the latter had an interest in doing as the former bade, and hence supported it. When money was asked for, it was willingly voted collectively, by men who would receive it back as individuals. When efforts were made to fix responsibility for an action of government, the Crown, as head of the executive, could always shelter behind the cabinet, and the cabinet in turn, behind a corrupt majority in the Commons, held to represent the nation. Government was always, in fact, jury and judge in its own cause.²

Power, in fact, was essentially in the hands of an hereditary aristocracy. But, in the first place, the hereditary principle was itself tyrannical, since it denied any right on the part of the governed to choose their governors, or to hold them accountable. Government by an aristocracy, was, at best, government by will, and,

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¹ Rights of Man, pt. 1pp. 71-3.
² ibid. pp. 32 et seq.
as such, corrupted human reason. In the second, to suppose there could be hereditary legislators, was as absurd as to suppose there could be hereditary 'wise men'. In fact the narrow society in which the aristocracy were confined, and their close inter-marriage, positively encouraged the deterioration of their species, in mind and body. Further, the circumstances of their birth and the whole of their training inevitably gave them an unwarranted feeling of superiority, calculated to prevent them ever acquiring a proper sense of justice. 1

As for monarchy, it was preserved by the aristocracy, partly to justify the maintenance of a court, which provided numbers of lucrative household offices, partly to justify high taxation as necessary for its upkeep. A state church was upheld by the aristocrats, not only to provide posts for dependents, but to ensure that dominion over the minds of the people was maintained. 2

As things were, the common man was debased in order that the status of the privileged should be magnified, and taxed, in order that that status should be maintained.

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1. Rights of Man 1.35 et seq.
2. Ibid, 1.38
It was in the interests of the aristocracy to maintain all manner of 'prejudices', political and religious, which went to uphold the status quo. The mass disorders of 1780 on the Catholic issue, though 'the people' had been blamed, had been a result of the very 'prejudices' inculcated in them by the aristocracy. The brutality ascribed to 'the people' was a natural consequence of the brutal example of the aristocracy. The harsh and bestial punishments they devised to cow the 'people' not only corrupted and degraded them, but encouraged them to inflict terror on others.¹

Controversy, roused first by Burke, was now enormously intensified and extended. Upper class feeling, already alarmed, was outraged by Paine. Other elements among all classes were horrified by his lack of reverence for the monarchy, peerage and church, and, among the humblest and most ignorant section of the population, his arguments were to rouse violent and irrational passions against all those who could be suspected of disloyalty, or of harbouring pro-French feelings.

But there can be no doubt too, that among large

¹ ibid. 1.21
numbers of the middle and lower middle classes, in the metropolis and in the midland and northern towns, among the restless and discontented, Paine's views, later expanded in the 'Rights of Man' (pt.11), roused great excitement and enthusiasm, encouraging in some a closer, in others an altogether new, interest in politics. Though comparatively few came to accept all of Paine's extreme ideas, or to believe that the establishment of a 'republican' form of government of a kind which entailed abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords, was either practical or desirable, yet there can be no doubt of its tremendous effect on the 'lower orders' as a solvent of traditionally held beliefs. If desire to counteract the influence of Burke, by issuing a measured reply to his 'Reflections', had already encouraged moderate Reformers to stir new life into the Constitutional Information Society, the obvious success of Paine's work was to make it impossible in a short while for them to resist the capture of the society by those - Horne Tooke among them - who could demonstrate Paine's tremendous effectiveness.

1. cf. e.g. S. Maccoby, op.cit. pp. 49 et seq.
and were anxious to concentrate effort on the dissemination of his views. With the aid of the Society the 'Rights of Man' came to achieve a tremendous circulation.

Paine's success was due, it would seem, to the way in which the 'Rights of Man' reflected, gave form to and focussed the dissatisfaction with aristocratic government, growing up among the lesser ranks of society in the last two decades. Himself of humble origin, Paine it appears, drew largely on what he knew to be the feeling of the 'common man' in an effort to harness and focus discontent. There is much in both parts of the 'Rights of Man' which throws light on the temper of the 'lower orders'.

Emerging clearly on the social side, is the evidence of growing dislike for the brutalities, violence and harsh punishments of the age; of an increasing sense of self respect, encouraging men to dissociate themselves from the 'mob' and increasing their aversion to being treated as part of it. With regard to religion, there appears

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1. H. Butterfield "Charles James Fox and the Whig Opposition in 1792" C.H.J. ix.3.p.300. I have found this article very illuminating on the position of the Friends of the People.
the sense of neglect of those, who felt outcasts from the established church; the dislike of dissenters for its power; the dislike of others for the wealth and worldliness of its hierarchy. Politically, there is evidence of discontent and resentment at the continuing and unequal burden of taxation, in war and peace; of growing dislike for electoral corruption, and bewilderment and distrust of the conduct of aristocratic politicians.

Paine's function was to 'explain' the 'sources' of the dissatisfaction increasingly felt by many. Of particular importance is his account of the 'state of parties' and of the popular reaction to the Fox/North coalition, and to the government of Pitt thereafter. Between the beginning of George III's reign and the close of the American War, he argued, the nation had come to be divided into two parties, and people had imagined they were contending for or against the prerogative of the Crown. But when, in 1784, the leading champions of the two causes had united, it had excited first, their amazement, then, their disgust, as they realized that they had been duped by the efforts of two contending factions to secure power. The 'popularity' of Pitt and the Court

1. Rights of Man 1, 64 et seq.
had arisen less from the love of either, than from a resentment which led people to unite in determination to punish the factions who had been seeking their own ends. Thereafter the nation continued to give Pitt credit, despite a proposal for reform which '... in its operation would have amounted to a public justification of corruption...'

'...not out of regard to himself, but because it had resolved to do it out of resentment for another.'(Fox).

If this view of the reaction to the coalition scarcely represents the analysis of an historian, it is nonetheless evident that it reflected the feeling of a majority of Reformers - whilst, at the same time, it explained to others what had hitherto bewildered them.

Paine sought to show elsewhere that there was no difference between the 'parties' with regard to their attitude towards 'the people'. One preferred to shelter under the Crown and to uphold its prerogatives for its own use, the other to curtail its prerogatives and to assume power more directly themselves. But neither had any real liking for monarchy, and both would readily unite either for mutual advantage, or to preserve the ascendancy of

1. *ibid.* p. 65.
their class against 'the people'.

In 1783, the nation had supported Pitt's contention on the regency question, largely from suspicion that it was Fox's aim to gain party advantage by securing that full power be granted to the Prince of Wales as heir to the throne. But people had failed to perceive that Pitt, in upholding the rights of parliament, had, in reality, upheld the rights of an hereditary aristocracy, and had himself sought to gain, not only party advantage, but control over large sums of public money, which must otherwise have been beyond the control of parliament. "In a few words the question on the Regency was a question of a million a year, which is appropriated to the executive department; and Mr. Pitt could not possess himself of any management of this sum without setting up the supremacy of parliament." 2

Such 'explanation' as this was readily accepted by large numbers of men both in the metropolis and in the provinces and was, thereafter, put forward by a new generation of Reformers to account for the popular reaction against all parliamentary parties and the formation

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1. Ibid. 1: 32-42
2. Ibid. 1: 65-66
of a new party of 'the people'.

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Following on the recent examples of the aristocratic 'conspiracy' against the people in Westminster, the attitude of Horne Tooke, and the failure of his efforts to secure justice for 'the people' from parliament, the 'Rights of Man' must have made very persuasive reading indeed, and it was clearly one of the prime sources of inspiration leading to the first efforts among the 'lower orders' to form their own political organisation.

In spite of mounting conservative hostility, much was done by Reformers in 1791 to keep the issues raised by Paine alive. If the Constitutional Information Society, still under moderate leadership, decided to cancel a planned Revolution anniversary celebration in July, yet a large meeting was held at the Crown and Anchor Tavern instead, where conspicuous efforts were made to demonstrate good order and sobriety. In August, at a Thatched House Tavern meeting, Horne Tooke and others with whom Paine had come to associate, approved, and subscribed to publish, an

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2. G.S. Veitch, pp.177-8.
address from Paine which demanded reform and attributed the
aristocracy's dislike of the Revolution to its fear that it
would mean they would have to lower taxes. Issued
with Horne Tooke's signature, it was, apparently, for some
time attributed to him, and it must have served to keep
him in the limelight. The Wall meanwhile continued to
organise political debates.

By the Autumn of 1791, large numbers of small
shopkeepers, lesser professional men and skilled artisans
among others, in the metropolis, in the provincial towns
and in Scotland too, had been encouraged to reflect, and
probably, as in the well-known case of Thomas Hardy, the
shoemaker of Piccadilly, to read and re-read older
reforming tracts. In London and Westminster many informal
discussions seem to have been held, and it was in such
discussion that Hardy and others first considered the means
of rousing and educating 'the people' and of securing
representation for them.

1. Rights of Man II, Appendix p.151
2. P.A. Brown, The Impact of the French Revolution on
   English History, p.83
3. On the origins of the Corresponding Society cf. Place
   Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27808; 27811, 27812, 27813, 27814,
   and H. Butterfield op. cit. p.292; G.S. Veitch op. cit.
   pp.191 et seq. P.A. Brown, op. cit. p.55; Thomas Hardy
   Memoirs of, by himself, p.98.
The London Corresponding Society, which was founded as a result in January 1792, was not, as long supposed, the first of the new 'lower class' reforming societies which now began to appear,¹ but, in view of its central location and the density of the metropolitan population, it may fairly be regarded as having become the most influential. It need not be surprising that Hardy, in launching the Society, should seek the advice of Horne Tooke who, it seems, he had met through Tooke's assistance to a friend.² Its oft-quoted aims were to encourage members from classes of society hitherto politically voiceless to express themselves, and to collect the sense of their grievances and their opinions on reform. To this end, subscriptions were to be kept extremely low, at a penny a week; and though prospective members had to affirm a belief in the need for parliamentary reform, and to be elected by ballot, yet the arrangements for the control of the society were essentially designed to put democratic principles into practice.³

The society was to be composed of divisions. When

¹ H. Butterfield, ibid.
² A. Stephens, op. cit. 11.150
³ cf. e.g. P. A. Brown, op. cit. pp. 55 et seq.
the total membership of a division reached a chosen figure, additional members were to form a new division. Each division was to send a delegate to a central committee, but it was itself to be consulted on, and to retain a final authority over, matters of policy affecting it, and it could withdraw its delegates at will. Correspondence was to be entered into with similar societies elsewhere, with the aim of framing a national policy.1

Distrust of aristocratic parties, it is clear, had determined men to found an altogether new party of the people. The Sheffield society had specifically avowed this to be so, and went out of its way to proclaim its independence from both ministerial and opposition parties ("names of which we are tired, having so often been deceived by both"). From the start, its leaders were suspicious of aristocratic influence, and keen to preserve their control over the movement.2

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1. ibid. p.56
2. S. Maccoby, op. cit. p.52, quoting from a letter of the Sheffield Society of 14th March, 1792, to the Constitutional Information Society, as reproduced in App.C. to the Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy appointed by the House of Commons (1794). The letter refers to the early history of the Society which was founded in December 1791, and to resolutions passed by it, acknowledging the inspiration of Paine.
Influenced though they were by Paine, however, there is no evidence that their aims embraced his extreme recommendations. Practical considerations and the attitude of their supporters dictated they make a constitutional approach. Their concern was and remained to secure parliamentary reform, and they had no favour for revolution. What is significant, however, is the appearance not only of an independent demand for reform among the lower strata of society, but of a belief among them that it would never be secured save by a united effort of 'the people' themselves. Of equal significance, is the appearance of men capable of leading and organising 'the people' from the ranks of the lower middle classes.

It is commonly, and almost certainly rightly, supposed, that the skill of the organisers of the Corresponding Society owed much to the experience gained in Trade or Benefit Societies, and that the character of its members reflected the training in self government these societies

1. The 'constitutional' nature of the aims of the Reformers during this period has, of course, long ago been demonstrated by G.S.Veitch, op.cit. passim.
2. P.A.Brown, op.cit. p.70 et seq.
had provided. The attitude of the Society in favour of the maintenance of strict order in its meetings and procedure reflects, too, the attitude of men who had already improved their status and acquired a sense of responsibility, and it is, of course, known that it was influenced and indeed principally composed of, the more substantial of the shop-keeping and lesser professional elements.

In turn, the Society was to provide the opportunity for numbers of men to gain experience in the handling of political matters, and for still more to acquire experience of democratic government. It was, further, to exercise a considerable influence by stimulating interest in political matters and by seeking to improve the conduct, not only of its members, but of metropolitan 'lower orders' generally. Its strength and influence in Westminster particularly, where the largest and most substantial lower middle class body in the metropolis was centred, was considerable, and it is clear that the London Corresponding Society was the chief political training ground for the majority of those who later came to form the 'Westminster Committee'.

1. P.A. Brown, op. cit. p. 73
3. cf. infra pp. 19, n. 2.
Initially, the growth of the Corresponding Society and other similar societies elsewhere was impeded by the considerable conservative hostility they met. Membership of the Corresponding Society grew steadily, but slowly, and its early meetings were liable to disruption by overzealous magistrates. As Thelwall found when seeking meeting places for his debating society, landlords were unwilling for their premises to be used for 'suspect' political meetings.¹

The publication and dissemination by the Constitutional Information Society - now dominated by Horne Tooke - of Paine's 'Rights of Man', Part II, in February 1792, however, was shortly to encourage the more rapid expansion of the new societies, and to lead to the formation of many other societies in London and provinces. As has been pointed out, Paine's entirely novel proposals for state social welfare - for child allowances and old age pensions for example - for cutting the costs of government generally and for a progressive income tax, were singularly

¹ P.A. Brown, op. cit. p. 83
attractive to large numbers of people.\footnote{1} In London, developing political interest was evidenced by the appearance of new booksellers, seeking to cater for the demands of a new class of customer, for political pamphlets, and other political literature.\footnote{2} In April, the London Corresponding Society, though adopting a cautious tone, issued its first public address.\footnote{3}

By the spring of 1792, not only were numbers of new and rapidly expanding lower class reform societies in existence, but their activities and effort were coming to be coordinated. Horne Tooke's advice was, it is evident, sought with increasing frequency by the often humble organizers of these societies. The house he purchased in Wimbledon in this year, rapidly became the chief centre, or headquarters, for Reformers of varying shades and classes.\footnote{4} It was he who

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1. S. MacCoby, op. cit. p. 53, who also quotes resolutions passed by the Manchester Constitutional Society, March 13th, 1792 (as printed in App. C. Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy appointed by the House of Commons 1794) which praise Paine's proposals for preventing wars, extending trade, popular education etc., etc.
2. P. A. Brown, op. cit. p. 71
3. ibid. p. 57
contrived to put the organizers of new societies in touch with each other, and with the London Corresponding Society, and he who often induced them to adopt the constitutional model of the Sheffield and London Societies.¹

An altogether new kind of national party was coming into being, apparently with Horne Tooke as its coordinator, but led very largely by men of the 'lower orders' in London and Westminster.

As Professor Butterfield has pointed out, it was precisely at the time when this new party was forming, that a number of the more 'radical' members of the Whig party, among them men "young", "tempestuous", and not yet "incorporated into the aristocratic tradition" decided the time had come for an altogether firmer stand to be made against Pitt's ministry. Their leader at this time was Sir Phillip Francis, and included in the group were Grey, Lambton, Tierney, Lauderdale and Sheridan.²

The issue of corruption in Westminster elections, still live through the efforts of Horne Tooke, had recently been

¹. ibid.
². ibid. p.302.
raised again by the success of a legal action against George Rose, Pitt's Secretary of the Treasury, for corruption in the election of 1738. When their demand for a parliamentary enquiry into the practices of the ministerial party during this election was refused, they decided to increase pressure upon the ministry by holding a public meeting in Westminster designed to carry the matter to the country. On the 20th March, 1792, therefore, a meeting of Westminster electors was held at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, at which a number of 'left wing' Whigs were present, to consider the propriety of impeaching Rose.

Francis, in particular, made a fiery speech, railing against the excessive and growing power of the ministry. He complained of the oppressiveness of high taxation, and condemned the corrupt influence which ministers were able to exercise through increasing numbers of revenue officers. In vain did a few places strive to retain their independence. Soon all independent men would be worn out by their efforts to resist corruption, unless

1. ibid. p.303; T.H.B. Oldfield, Representative History... etc. 11.254 et seq.
2. ibid.
they united to make a determined and united stand against it. He could not believe, however, if places elsewhere knew of the late practices in Westminster, they would not take action. He urged, therefore, that Westminster electors should not only make them known, but should explain how an enquiry into them was prevented. A reform of the representation was the only effective remedy, and to secure it, associations should be formed throughout the country to correspond and to petition unitedly, to instruct their representatives and to force them to demand redress. He finished by admitting he had earlier been wrong to vote against reform.¹

The meeting broke up without an association being formed but the proposal caused a considerable stir, and was promptly taken up in the press. Shortly after, at a dinner meeting on April 11th, a number of the Whig 'left wing' formed a society, to be known as the 'Friends of the People', which would be pledged to work for parliamentary reform and would correspond and unite with other societies working for the same object.²

¹ For the meeting, and Francis' speech, cf. T.H.B. Oldfield, op.cit. 11.254 et seq.
² H. Butterfield, op.cit. p.303
Their action, as has often been pointed out, produced two main reactions. On the one hand it led many of the leaders of the new lower class societies, and many others of humble status, to believe that a section of the aristocracy was prepared to sacrifice its own interests in order to aid 'the people'. This belief not only increased their enthusiasm for reform, but led to the formation of new lower class societies, which, adopting the style 'Friends of the People', modelled their organization on the Corresponding Society. On the other, it caused considerable alarm to conservatives everywhere, and great irritation among the moderate and right wing members of their own party, who were not only concerned about their own intentions - the very word 'association' recalled their fears of 1780 - but ready to blame them for the stirring among 'the people' which was now coming to be increasingly evident. Fox, himself, disclaiming any share in the formation of the society, was acutely embarrassed by the

\[1\] ibid. p.306; G.M. Trevelyan, op. cit. pp.45-6 (quoting Hardy, Place Papers E.M. Add MS. 27814 ff.32-4); cf. also, G.S. Veitch, op. cit. p.215; Annual Register, 1792, Chronicle p.16, shows George Puller, who was later a 'member' of the 'Westminster Committee' and a friend of Place, to be Chairman of the London Constitutional Whigs and Friends of the People.'
action of its founders. Anxious to preserve the unity of his party, he refused at first to come out for or against them. 1

It has been made clear that, up to March 1792, there is no sign that ministers or opposition leaders had any proper awareness of what was happening in the country; that, at the time the new society was projected, its movers had no proper idea themselves of the extent and character of the new reform movement, nor indeed that there was any reform movement at all. When, therefore, the launching of the 'Friends of the People' was greeted with enthusiastic approval by groups of men in places all over the country, it was easy for many to believe the actions of its founders had been responsible for starting the new agitation. In the circumstances the readiness with which they were blamed by conservative elements becomes very easy to understand. 2 Censured by their friends, worried by the discovery that the society itself contained men holding views far more

2. ibid. pp. 303-6.
extreme than their own, and alarmed by the tone of letters they received from many Reformers and societies in the capital and in the country, many moderate members resigned at once. Others regretted their haste in committing themselves.¹

The aim of the founders of the society had been to appeal to respectable elements. Parliamentary reform they had viewed as necessary to reduce royal and ministerial power, not as a first step towards democracy. 'The people' still needed, and would continue to need, the guidance of their 'natural' leaders. Thus an early address had emphasized that extreme measures, such as had been carried through in France, were neither necessary nor in contemplation; that, at the same time, a moderate measure of reform was desirable, not only in itself, but as a timely safeguard against revolution in the future.²

But when it seemed to many that the 'Friends of the People' were themselves directly engaged in encouraging a revolutionary movement, the position of those of them

¹  ibid. p.304.
²  G.S.Veitch op.cit. p.198.
who held to their purpose, was to become ever more embarrassingly difficult. Whatever motives had led them to take up the matter of parliamentary reform, they were to find that, once they had done so, and thereby made it an unavoidable issue in parliament, it was a matter far from easy for them to drop. Their continued advocacy of reform thereafter, long tended to mask their very real misgivings from the conservative and reforming public and to mislead both into believing their enthusiasm was far greater than it was.

At the same time it is clear that the distaste they were to show for lower class Reformers and their aims, their anxiety to dissociate themselves from the views of Paine and their readiness to urge Reformers to moderate their demands, were, in due course, to inspire among large numbers of the 'lower orders' a distrust for themselves and for the Whig party, far greater than that which they would have inspired had they never moved for reform at all.

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1. On the question of their motives cf. H. Butterfield, op. cit p. 307. It was suggested by some that it was a move to strengthen their position in their party; by others that it was a move to annoy Pitt. It need not be doubted, however, that within the limits they set themselves, the belief of the majority in parliamentary reform was sincere enough.
Even as the new Society was formed, there were, it is true, those among the older popular leaders who still dominated the Constitutional Information Society, who viewed the intentions of its founders with suspicion. The Constitutional Society as such, and Cartwright independently, both sought to obtain from them a clearer declaration of their intentions - partly, it seems, with the aim of ensuring they did not delude 'the people' into serving the interests of 'faction', partly with the aim of persuading them to commit themselves to a radical programme. Wyvill, taking up anew the middle position he had first assumed in 1780, and showing disapproval of the views of Paine, made clear he believed the Whigs must defer to the wishes of county associations. 

1. Life of Cartwright, 11, App. VIII p.348; for Cartwright's letter of March 1792 to the then new 'Friends of the People' Society. He congratulated its founders on their actions, but trusted they meant to pursue reforms sincerely. ".. It will be the first time", he wrote, "that the nation hath not found itself in an error.." in placing confidence in a party. cf. also H. Butterfield, op. cit. p.308 for Horne Tooke's similar views.

2. G.S. Veitch, op. cit. p.202; H. Butterfield, op. cit. p.306, and p.307 note 52. In April, the Constitutional Information Society wrote asking the 'Friends of the People' whether it was possible for any M.P. to be a 'Friend of the People'. 
It was some time, however, before distrust for them became general among the newer popular leaders too, and even longer before it became widespread among the rank and file of their supporters. It was longer still, before Reformers once more broke with them altogether. For even though Reformers might distrust them, they found it no less tactically advisable to continue to support them, and might still hope it would be possible to 'push' them further than they meant to to. But, in proportion as Whig efforts to secure reform and to defend Reformers slackened in the face of nationwide alarm at their activities, as it became clearer after the turn of the century they had no intention of re-opening the question, so the uncertain feelings towards them of large numbers of ordinary men, who had once believed them sincerely converted to their cause, were to give way to feelings of aversion for all party men, far stronger than those first encouraged by Horne Tooke and Paine.¹

The mutual distrust which was to develop between the

¹ Place Papers B.M. Add.MSS. 27,850, f.40 and 35,154 f.27 pays 'testimony' to the value of the work and publications of the 'Friends of the People' in helping to rouse the 'real' people, and in encouraging their contempt for the Whig party subsequently.
'left wing' Whig group and the Reformers of the new lower class movement in the nineties and in the early years of the new century, more than anything accounts for the bitterness which was to be the dominant feature of the Whig party and the Westminster Reformers. On the one hand the Whigs were to blame the 'wild' behaviour of the Reformers for bringing repression. On the other the Reformers were to blame the self-interest of the Whigs for their failure to continue their efforts to rouse the country to resist it. It is of first importance that the hostility, which came into the open in 1806-7 and developed in the years following, between the Whig party - then led by former members of the 'Friends of the People' - and the 'Westminster Committee' - led by men who had earlier been prominent members of the Corresponding or other lower class reform societies - should be seen as a continuation and intensification of an hostility which had developed before the turn of the century. It was an hostility often the more bitter because personal—the mutual recrimination of men who had come to know one another personally, or to know a great deal about each other, in the nineties.

At this point, however, many Reformers undoubtedly
took heart from the attitude of the 'Friends of the People', and though not without misgivings, Grey kept his earlier promise to raise the matter of reform in parliament. On April 30th, 1792, he gave notice of his intention to bring forward a motion on the subject. His speech suggested his chief concern was to clarify the position of the 'Friends of the People' - in answer to those who blamed them for having roused the lower orders, and for keeping them in expectant excitement by failing to make a clear pronouncement on the subject of reform. 1

Grey made it clear that he and his friends had no favour for 'Paineite' views, but he urged, in view of the critical times, that all grounds for complaint should be removed by a timely reform of the representation. Pitt's reply, reflecting the feeling of the majority of members, attacked the 'Friends of the People' for having stirred up trouble and for associating with men who would destroy the constitution. Though Fox, motivated principally by his desire to prevent the Whig party from splitting, supported Grey, and Erskine also defended the 'Friends of the People',

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the unpopularity of the 'left wing' was marked.¹

It may have been by chance that Grey raised the matter of reform on the same day that Horne Tooke was called to defend himself in court for having refused to pay the expenses of his petition, arising from the 1790 election. But it happened that at the very moment the Commons were demonstrating their hostility towards reform and the Whigs were being made to look and feel uncomfortable, Horne Tooke's prestige was being further increased.

Probably by private arrangement Fox had sued Tooke for the expenses he (Fox) had incurred through Tooke's election petition of 1791. Fox's feelings on the subject of jury trial had recently been much in evidence and it would seem, especially in view of the comparatively small sum involved (£98.12/-d.), that he did so solely in order that the matter should be brought before a jury.² Whatever the case, Tooke was given a splendid opportunity

¹ Ibid. — Chronicle, 1791.
² A. Stephens, op. cit., 11.101, quotes Tooke as saying, in the course of his speech in court, that Fox's motive in bringing the action was neither personal nor mercenary, but armed to bring to issue a question of national right; Fox, of course, had long championed place of Juries in libel actions.
to declaim against aristocratic behaviour and electoral corruption, and the arbitrary behaviour of the Commons.

Conducting his own defence, he thanked Fox for the opportunity he now had of bringing to light an infringement of constitutional liberty. He then proceeded to argue that not only had two rival factions joined together to deprive Westminster electors of their rights, not only had they been the cause of every species of infamy and corruption - lavishing £200,000 upon worthless people in 1784 and 1788 - but that now they had joined together in the Commons to make a ruling which prevented honest electors securing any redress.

If the jury decided against him - and he had to pay costs as well as the amount of Fox's claim against him - his stock among lower class Reformers soared. Place wrote later:

"The trial of the cause produced a great sensation not only in Westminster but all over the country, and had another election occurred previous to the alarm which ministers soon after excited, the probability is Mr. Tooke would have been elected to parliament free from all expense to him, as Sir Francis Burdett afterwards, in 1807, was elected." 1

1. A. Stephens, op. cit. II. 104.
2. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 27,849, f.163.
Tooke's trial was followed by the Constitutional Society's spirited defence of 'Paineite' reforming views against the attack launched on them in parliament, which made Horne Tooke's leadership of the popular movement even clearer. The next election in Westminster was, however, to take place some time later and under very different circumstances.

Alarmed by France's declaration of war on the Empire, by the appearance and actions of the 'Friends of the People', by the correspondence of Reformers with the Jacobins in France and by the evidence of growing popular unrest, the ministry determined upon action designed to counter the activities of radical agitators. It was to prove the first step in a policy of repression, which, supported by a majority in the ration, was ultimately to crush the popular movement.

On the 21st May, 1792, a proclamation against seditious publications was issued urging magistrates to be on their guard against those who were distributing writings of a kind which would lead to the destruction of the constitution.

1. G.S. Veitch, op. cit. p.201.
It was, it seems, aimed principally at a new cheap edition of the 'Rights of Man' which it was known the Constitutional Information Society was preparing to issue.¹ Disliking its vagueness and regarding it as calculated to incite public spying and tale bearing, members of the Whigs were particularly indignant at the way it was contrived to throw suspicion of harbouring treasonable designs upon them too. Consequently they strongly attacked the ministry for deliberately and unnecessarily alarming the nation. The proper course, if it had reason to object to Pain's writings, was, they argued, to prosecute him. Grey believed, as doubtless did many others, that the proclamation was designed not only to strengthen the hand of the ministry but indirectly to increase the divisions appearing in the Whig party.²

So far Reformers had given close support to the 'left wing' Whig group. But now the 'Friends of the People' took heed of the ministerial warning, moderated their actions, and urged Reformers to drop their correspondence

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¹ S. Maccolly, *op. cit.* p. 55
with France, the popular leaders showed their dissatisfaction. The popular movement, in fact, went forward unchecked, and continued to expand throughout the year.\(^1\) By June, Paine's cheap edition had, despite the proclamation, begun a vast circulation, and when the Constitutional Society heard of the ministry's decision to prosecute him, they set to, to publicise his cause, by raising funds for his defence and by publishing his defiant letters to Dundas, Pitt's Home Secretary.\(^2\) It is evident that wilder spirits, some of them among the leaders of the Corresponding Society, were already gaining an influence in the Constitutional Society as well.\(^3\)

In the mid-summer of 1792, the country did, for a while, come to appear quieter. Though dinners to celebrate the anniversary of the Revolution were again held, they were not the great meetings of the previous year. Despite the horror which swept England when the French monarchy fell, despite the evidence that Reformers were still sending addresses to the French revolutionaries, yet the Austro-

\(^1\) Shattock, op. cit. p. 57.
\(^2\) ibid.
\(^3\) F. A. Brown, op. cit. p. 100
Prussian invasion of France which followed, and the absence of major popular demonstrations in England, encouraged a degree of optimism among conservatives, that the tide was turning in their favour.

But such optimism was short lived. The establishment of a Republic in France was followed by the massacres of September. The Republican military successes thereafter, and the great enthusiasm roused by those events among Reformers in England, more than revived conservative fears. It is clear the temporary quietness of Reformers is to be accounted for by their absorption in developments abroad, professing to see in the military success of the French only the triumph of 'liberty' over despotism, they ignored the massacres and praised the Republican leaders. New provincial reforming societies now urged the London Corresponding Society to adopt a more radical programme. Older societies took a more aggressive tone, and some of the London Corresponding Society's leaders proposed to Horne Tooke that the assent of reforming societies all over Britain

1 e.g. The new Stockport Society. S. Maccoby, op. cit. p. 58.
be sought for a united demonstration to assure the French republican leaders of their support and to frustrate any attempt by the ministry to declare war on France.\(^1\) Whatever Horne Tooke's personal reaction to this proposal - and it is likely he was becoming not a little alarmed himself at this stage - it seems to have led the Constitutional Society to send two members to Paris with an adulatory address to the Convention.\(^2\)

Increasingly alarmed by the behaviour of Reformers on the one hand, and by the growing military menace of France on the other, conservatives everywhere came to be convinced of the necessity of taking strong action to meet the dangers which threatened the country. In November, large numbers of men came together to form 'popular' Loyalist Associations - for 'preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers' - with the aim of combating the influence of the reform societies. The King's speech, at the opening of the new session, condemning the behaviour of the Republicans in France and of the Reformers in England equally, foreshadowed

\(^1\) S. Maccoby, *op. cit.* p.58; H. Butterfield, *op. cit.* p.316
\(^2\) S. Maccoby, *op. cit.* p.59; P.A. Brown, *op. cit.* pp.100-101
internal repressive measures and war.

Convinced that the course ministers were pursuing would be fatal to the liberties of the country and must be firmly resisted, Fox had, by this time, made up his mind that he must come out openly on the side of the liberal wing of his party. Launching a powerful attack on the King's speech - he held that its suggestion that insurrection at home was imminent was..."an intolerable calumny on the people of England..." - his championship greatly heartened the 'Friends of the People' and Reformers as well.

Fox's attitude towards the Revolution had all along been governed by his overriding sense of the menace of monarchical despotism. Disliking the excesses of the Republicans, he seems nonetheless to have been glad of the example their overthrow of the French Monarchy afforded to England. It is clear he regarded the real danger to England as lying not in the growing reform movement - though he viewed Reformers as misguided - but in the constant increase in ministerial power. The ministry, he believed, was deliberately exciting alarm in order to
strengthen its hand.\textsuperscript{1}

If, thereafter, he still made every effort to preserve the unity of the party, yet, as the country moved towards war, the conservative section was further encouraged to draw closer to Pitt and Fox found himself drawn even closer to the 'Friends of the People'. His accession not only encouraged their determination to press forward their plans for a parliamentary reform motion early in 1793, but indirectly encouraged and stimulated the efforts of many Reformers in the belief that Fox and the 'left wing' Whigs, had been, or might yet be, fully converted to their cause. Once again, and for the time being, the 'Friends of the People' and Reformers came to co-operate closely. It is clear that the stance Fox now adopted and the passionate speeches in defence of liberty he now made, lessened distrust for him among Reformers generally and won him many new admirers. It must be

\textsuperscript{101}. On Fox's attitude and his efforts to hold the Whig party together at this time cf. H. Butterfield, op.cit., passim. Already, in November, 1792, he had decided he must side with the 'Friends of the People', but this must have been the first occasion when his decision became known to the public. On his attitude towards parliamentary reform, cf. in partz., H. Butterfield, op.cit. p.297.
equally clear why their feeling of disillusion with him, when, after the turn of the century, he appeared again to have turned his back on them, was so great.

Immediately, however, despite the mounting pressure upon them, despite the danger of prosecution, greatly increased after the condemnation of Paine by a special Jury in December, Reformers were encouraged by the attitude of Fox, and the 'Friends of the People' to defy Pitt. It was the apparent sympathy of Whigs and Reformers for the French, and the contact established in January, 1793, between the Constitutional Information Society and members of the National Convention which, perhaps more than anything, served to convince a majority that the ministerial warnings of a French intention to encourage a rising in England, were justified.¹ In February, therefore, the French declaration of war brought solid support behind Pitt's counter declaration.

If it is scarcely surprising that the efforts made by Whigs and Reformers to avert war helped to persuade the majority of men that war was necessary, it can be no

¹ S. Maccoly, op. cit. pp. 61-2
more surprising that their behaviour, thereafter, should served only to increase their conviction that its continuance was justified. The persistance with which Reformers demanded peace and reform only frightened the nation, and the appearance of two 'Reports' on the state of the representation published by the 'Friends of the People', intended to prepare the public mind for Grey's promised reform motion, still further increased its uneasiness. Conservative elements, uncertain what to make of this fresh evidence that men of substance were willing to lead 'the people', were apprehensive at their intentions.

The Reports, one for England and another for Scotland, excited considerable attention. The anomalies and corrupt practices they revealed - their 'demonstration' further, that a handful of Peers (71) and Commoners (91) together returned 390 members to parliament - carried the weight of men of substance and experience, and could not, therefore, be entirely ignored.¹

Reformers were delighted with them, and the information

¹ S. MacCoby, op. cit. p.67-8.; Similar 'information' had long ago been given by John Almon's 'Register Extraordinary of early 1768. cf. S. MacCoby, English Radicalism, 1762-85 p.84
they contained was frequently quoted by them thereafter in order to focus attention on the 'borough faction'. Though it is true there was, at this time, talk by a few of the wilder spirits of the uselessness of petitioning and of the need to summon a 'Convention', yet it is clear that the great majority of Reformers decided to concentrate upon securing petitions which would be presented on or near the day on which Grey would make his motion - fixed, in due course, for May 6th, - and to accept the lead of the Whigs.1

Presented early in May by 'Foxite' Whigs, many of the Reformers' petitions were roughly handled. Some were rejected outright for their disrespectful tone. Others were received unwillingly. The Whigs defended them, but they took care to make clear they had no favour for extreme proposals, and Fox, when presenting a Corresponding Society petition speaking for London and Westminster, specifically declared he did not agree with the sentiments

1 S. Maccoby, English Radicalism 1785-1832, p.68.; G.S. Veitch, op.cit. pp.282-3 who shows the Whigs made clear they were wholly against a 'Convention'. After the Whigs turned their backs on parliamentary reform in the early nineteenth century, Reformers were delighted to quote these reports against the Whigs as evidence of their apostacy.
of those who demanded universal suffrage. ¹

Grey opened the debate of May 6th, when the largest number of petitions were presented, and himself presented a petition from the 'Friends of the People'. He urged the petitions be referred to a committee. Once again it was Pitt who expressed the feelings of a majority. Whatever the merits of reform, he argued, it was now in the hands of men who would subvert the constitution. If the Whigs did not seek universal suffrage, there were many who did. The behaviour of Reformers was to be condemned, but so, too, was the behaviour of those Whigs who encouraged them. Grey's motion was heavily defeated. ²

The outright rejection of reform by the Commons undoubtedly disheartened the 'Friends of the People'. The slackening of their zeal thereafter, once again served to divide them from the popular leaders who, for their part, were spurred to make fresh efforts to rouse 'the people'. Reformers of the Corresponding Society, indeed, might well be optimistic about the future as the membership

¹ S. Maccolby, op.cit. p.68; G.S. Veitch, op.cit pp.277-87
of the society went on increasing, and their leadership of the reforming societies in the country came to be more clearly established. Others who had already held that petitioning was useless - that is was necessary to summon a national 'Convention, so that 'the people' could decide for themselves what measures of reform were necessary, and how best to secure them - now found their case strengthened.

It was doubtless, in part, the harsh sentences imposed in the summer of 1793 upon the Scottish Reformers who had been concerned in the Edinburgh Convention of December 1792, and the knowledge they were awaiting transportation, which encouraged the Scottish reform societies to arrange yet a third Edinburgh Convention in the Autumn of 1793 and to invite delegates from all over Britain. Though it was to prove predominantly a Scottish body, yet the Corresponding Society held its final open air meeting for the purpose of electing delegates, and a number of English reforming leaders, claiming to represent various of the 'popular' societies, also attended.

2. P. A. Brown, op. cit. p. 103.
The popular reform movement was, however, no longer to be allowed to go from strength to strength unchecked. The fresh alarm occasioned by the appearance of a body modelling its procedure on the National Convention of France determined the ministry to act, and the English delegates were promptly arrested. Though their trials and the harshness of their sentences roused further strong protest in and out of parliament, and plans to summon yet another convention were discussed in the winter of 1793-4, yet the temper of the nation was such that many of the more moderate reformers now began to withdraw from active campaigning.¹

Whether another convention would have been summoned cannot be known. Certainly it was seriously considered by representatives of the leading reform societies. The Corresponding Society, which had been busy raising funds to pay the expenses of its delegates and afterwards to pay for their legal defence, sent a deputation to the Constitutional Society to propose arrangements be made to

¹ P.A. Brown, op. cit. pp.105-6
do so. A joint committee of the two societies set up to consider the proposal seems to have pronounced in its favour. But though individuals might believe in defiance, neither society seems to have agreed on action. Nor, though Hardy sounded provincial societies by letter, does it seem he received any strong favourable response from them.¹

At the same time, it cannot be denied that, in the spring of 1794, ministers might well feel they had every reason to be apprehensive. The appearance of the joint committee; the holding of a giant open air meeting by the Corresponding Society, where Thelwall made a particularly inflammatory attack on the tyranny of the government, and it was resolved to distribute 200,000 copies of the proceedings; the holding of a dinner meeting organised by the Constitutional Society and attended by many members of the Corresponding Society, - all served to convince ministers, who received the most alarming reports from informers, that a treasonable and revolutionary conspiracy was afoot.² Their reaction was to seek to crush it, and the popular movement as a whole, by making an example of

a number of the better known Reformers. In May 1794 a number of the leading Reformers were arrested and charged with treason. Among them were Horne Tooke, Thomas Hardy, John Richter and John Thelwall, all of whom, it is important to note, were later in one way or another to be associated with the 'Westminster Committee'.

Developments thereafter set a pattern to become all too familiar in later years. A ministerial campaign to portray matters in their darkest colours was followed by the appointment of Secret Committees in both Houses of Parliament to investigate and report on the conspiracy, and the suspension of the Habeas Corpus. Despite the protest of Fox and his followers, that ministers were once again deliberately exciting alarm to strengthen their hand, the last was quickly sanctioned. Indeed, it was at this point that Portland, leader of the conservative Whigs, gave in to the pressure of his followers and decided the moment had come to give full support to Pitt. The long threatened breach in the Whig party had now become final. Fox and his group now stood isolated.

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1. For the names of those arrested cf. Annual Register 1794
In appearance the ministry was now in an unassailable position. Conversely the position of Reformers now seemed hopeless. But even before the subsequently famous state trials, the readiness of the newly constructed ministry to act too hastily on the flimsiest of evidence weakened its credit. Further, though many were frightened away from the popular societies, the violent tone set by ministers encouraged others of stancher calibre to join them in order to stand by their persecuted leaders. Among those who joined the Corresponding Society at this time was Francis Place.¹

After their failure to secure Hardy's conviction, ministers would have been tactically wiser to have reduced or withdrawn the charges against the others. In fact, by proceeding twice more—against Horne Tooke and Thelwall—in both cases failing to secure conviction, their overall case and credit was weakened still further. Horne Tooke, in particular, embarrassed the ministry by forcing

¹ S. Maccoby, op. cit. p. 54. For the decision of Francis Place and others to join the Corresponding Society cf. G. Wallas, Life of Francis Place. p. 21, quoting Add. MS. 27,803 f. 3.
Pitt himself to admit he had formerly worked with a reform 'convention' in 1782. The ministry had overplayed its hand and the acquittal of the prisoners, acting as a tonic to the Reformers and Whigs equally, temporarily revived the strength of the opposition in and out of parliament. Gaps in the Corresponding Society's ranks were now rapidly filled and many more men now joined for the first time.\(^1\)

Contemporarily, disasters abroad were increasing the demand for peace, and when, in the new parliamentary session, it appeared that, despite past failures, the ministry was determined to continue the war indefinitely, the Foxite Whigs found their hand strengthened by the support of a number of independent members, and some even of Pitt's own supporters. Their opposition to the continued suspension of the Habeas Corpus and to any increase in taxation to support the war, considerably embarrassed the ministry in parliament, whilst popular restiveness and demonstrations in favour of peace and reform outside parliament added to its difficulties. Further military

\(^1\) For the rapid increase in the membership of the Corresponding Society after the State trials, cf. *ibid.* p. 24. The Whigs had feared for the consequences to themselves had the state prosecutions been successful, cf. G.M. Trevelyan, *op. cit.* p. 83.
failures, the tenseness of the situation in Ireland, and growing food shortage, increased its difficulties in the spring and summer of 1795.¹

The ministry's eagerness to stamp out the popular reforming societies, however, was in no way abated. Moreover, though no convictions had been secured, the state trials had had the effect of discouraging moderate men from making further efforts to rouse the country for reform. The Constitutional Society and the 'Friends of the People' became inactive. Though the Whigs were not unwilling to look to the support of popular demonstrations in favour of peace, the initiative in popular agitation was more and more left to the Corresponding Society. ²

As is well known, it was at this time that the Corresponding Society under the guidance of men such as Place, came to devote greater attention to 'educating' its members by holding discussion groups and by encouraging 'book subscriptions'. Place, acutely aware how greatly he had himself benefitted from reading and reflection, and

¹ S. MacColl, op. cit. pp. 87-90.
² P. A. Brown, op. cit. p. 150; G. S. Veitch, op. cit. p. 324; Life of Thelwall, p. 345; G. M. Trevelyan, op. cit. p. 94.
in any case convinced all attempts to 'overawe' the ministry at this time must fail, was convinced also that the Society should now concentrate on teaching 'the people' the principles of democratic government. Had the Society, in fact, confined itself to this sort of activity it might well have survived. But it did not do so, and the attitude and behaviour of those who wished to continue an active agitation in the country as well, was to lead directly, though not immediately, to its suppression. In June 1795 and at a time when food scarcity and high prices were already causing disorders in the capital, the Corresponding Society staged a giant meeting in Copenhagen Fields. Reiterating its determination to continue to work to secure universal suffrage, it secured approval for an Address to the King, urging him to dismiss his ministers and put his trust in 'the people'.

During the summer it continued to correspond with reforming societies in the provinces and, in the autumn, it

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2. ibid.; P. A. Brown, op. cit. p. 151.
made preparations to stage yet another giant meeting. Continuing food scarcity and hunger rioting, the prospect of a bleaker year to come, and military failures abroad, had, in fact, by this time led ministers to consider the possibilities of peace. Whether the Corresponding Society leaders knew this or not, it is clear they decided that ministers should be made fully aware of 'the people's' sentiments on the subject. In consequence the meeting was arranged just before the new parliamentary session was due to begin on October 29th.\(^1\)

On October 26th, therefore, thousands of people assembled to hear Gale Jones, Thelwall and John Binns address them, and to approve an Address to the nation and a Remonstrance to the King, at his neglect of their previous address in June. These, it was agreed, should be published and circulated all over the country, \(\text{whilst}\) deputies should be sent to the provinces to rouse 'the people'.\(^2\)

If the comparative novelty of so large a meeting of the 'common people' taking place without any disorder attracted notice, it was the audacity of its organizers

\(^1\) ibid., pp.92-3.
\(^2\) S.Maccoly, op.cit. p.93.
which impressed a majority in the country more. Their intention to send deputies into the country was particularly alarming to conservatives, and it was all too easily believed that the 'mob' disorders and hunger rioting, which broke out on the day of the opening of parliament and led to attacks upon ministers' and the King's carriages, were inspired by the Society. It was this, most immediately, which convinced ministers that further repressive measures were necessary.¹ The menacing aspect of the 'Two acts' they proposed, however, - the one designed to extend the law of treason, the other to place the calling of popular meetings under the severest restraints - not only roused considerable opposition among 'respectable' elements in the country, but had the effect of bringing temporary but close co-operation between Whigs and Reformers once more.

There seems, indeed, to have been some discussion between the two groups with a view to working out a plan of campaign, possibly involving a national association. Some of the Whigs are reputed to have said that "to resist

¹. ibid. pp. 94–5. cf. CobbeIt's Political Register March 14th, and May 16th, 1807, which show that P.T. Lemaitre, Corresponding Society member and Horne Tooke supporter in 1796 - and later a prominent member of the 'Westminster Committee' - was arrested and imprisoned at this time; cf. also Place Papers B.M. Add MS. 27,808, f.119.
the bills they must join with the people". Thelwall, who always seems to have been prepared to make a bigger effort than most to win the Whigs over to 'the people's' cause, has been given the chief credit for bringing them to do so. But it must have been obvious to both that co-operation was desirable and the Whigs were doubtless encouraged to act far more because they recognised the anti-ministerial feeling roused amongst substantial elements, than because they had developed any greater understanding of, or trust for, the Reformers. Thus, though there were those, Cartwright still conspicuous among them, who remained unhappy about supporting the Whigs unless they pledged themselves publicly to seek a measure of reform, there followed the now unfamiliar sight of Whigs organising County meetings, of Whigs and Reformers standing together on the same public platform, and of Corresponding Society meetings drawing considerable 'respectable' attention.

In November, the first of two meetings organised by the Corresponding Society saw Whig nobles together with

1. Life of Thelwall p.399.
2. ibid. For his attitude towards the Whigs and evidence of his continued efforts to secure their co-operation cf. his 'Champion' weekly, Dec. 6th, 1818, and following numbers.
3. Life of Cartwright 1.270
Thelwall and other radicals supporting the presentation of three petitions to King, Lords, and Commons, and Reformers publicly thanking the Whigs for the lead they had given the country. A similar meeting was organised by the Society in December, and both meetings received favourable comment by the Whig 'New Annual Register' for their orderliness and for the 'strong', 'firm', 'loyal', and 'respectful' tone of the language displayed.\footnote{P.A. Brown, op. cit. p.152; S. Maccoby, op. cit. p.96; cf. also Annual Register for 1796 for 'The History of the Two Acts' and New Annual Register, Principal Occurrences p.65 cf.; also An Account of the Meeting of the People in a field near Copenhagen House November 12th 1795 etc.; and A Palace Yard Meeting of the Inhabitants of Westminster, November 26th, 1795 attended by Fox, Grey, Bedford, Hood and Sheridan.}

But the opposition's campaign was doomed to failure and the passing of the acts strengthened the ministry, just as it further weakened the opposition, both in and out of parliament. For the time being Whigs and Reformers remained on good terms and jointly criticised Pitt's delay in opening, and sincerity in making, peace feelers. But despite the fact that the European situation showed no signs of improvement, the clear evidence that it was the French who were responsible for their failure served to rally even stronger feeling behind Pitt. By February 1796, popular opposition seemed to have been crushed, and Cartwright was
urging Fox that the only hope for the country, now that it was silenced, lay in Whig action in parliament.¹

The London Corresponding Society now rapidly declined, and its decline must have been typical of other societies. Its opportunities for agitation were curtailed, and membership rapidly dwindled. Many were frightened by the knowledge that spies and informers had begun to attend meetings, lest their membership of the society lead to their prosecution. Others, now that political excitement had begun to die down, simply returned to their jobs.²

Efforts were made to reorganise the constitution of the society with the aim of keeping its meetings and other activities within the law. Regulations were passed to prevent the admission of undesirable characters and to enforce strict order. But much of the earlier democratic character of the society disappeared. Members were prevented from feeling they shared in its management and interest continued to decline, despite deputations from the central committee to encourage the rank and file in the

¹ Life of Cartwright 1.231
'divisions'. The society, hard pressed for money, ran into debt.

Believing that the personal appearance of leaders of the society in the provinces would stir up waning enthusiasm, the plan of sending deputies on missionary tours was pressed forward. It was hoped to persuade other societies also to amend their constitutions and to act in strict accordance with the law. But, as is well known, it led only to the arrest, trial and imprisonment of two of the deputies - Gale Jones and Binns - and to a further increase in the Society's debt.

Internal wrangles as to policy - Place for example remained keen to concentrate upon educative work, whilst others still favoured the continuance of an active agitation - were to break the Society and to lead to the resignations of most of its more moderate leaders, long before it was finally suppressed.

But if the ordinary tradesman was becoming less ready to risk his livelihood by active membership of the Corresponding Society, there was still at this time in the metropolis a substantial public ready to support the 'independent' cause in an election. Once again, though the elections which followed the dissolution of June 1796
seem elsewhere to have passed off quietly enough, Westminster was the scene of a popular contest between a ministerialist, Sir Alan Gardiner, Fox, and the now even more notorious Horne Tooke, who again emerged into the open.1

Horne Tooke, who once more emphasized that he stood independent of party connection, and who denounced the 'borough faction' as being responsible for the nation's ills was, on this occasion, prepared to show his approval of Fox's behaviour over the last few years - in so far as he had acted, not as a party man, but for 'the people'. Fox, who likewise insisted on his independence, and who stressed the dangers which arose from the ever increasing influence of the Crown, was also prepared to show his preference for Tooke. Both strongly urged the need to end the war.2

In his address to the electors, Tooke made capital out of the treason trials of 1794, in which he had so

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1. According to Mrs. Thelwall, Life of Thelwall p. 345, and others, Horne Tooke had become more moderate and timid after the State Trials. But whilst he may well have counselled caution to hotheads there can be no doubt of his courage in coming forward and the spirit he showed during the Westminster election at this time.

2. A. Stephens, Memoirs of J. Horne Tooke II. 165 et seq. who recounts the election; cf. also Westminster Election 1796, Speeches out of Parliament addressed to the Electors of the City of Westminster...etc.
prominently figured...

"It is only at times like the present when attempts are flagitiously made to murder innocent men that the progress of a candidate can possibly be from the Hustings to Newgate and from Newgate back to the Hustings"......

"you must be well aware that if I had never known, or knowing, had not loved, the free constitution of my country, I should not have been voted a traitor by the usurping proprietors of boroughs, who, under an insidious pretence of attachment - not to Kingship which we acknowledge, but to Monarchy, which we abhor - are endeavouring to undermine the lawful government of King, Lords and Commons and to substitute a tyranny of their own under...... a temporary elective dictator (Pitt) dependent only upon their own corrupt and prostituted votes."1

He claimed that he stood again, solely to give electors the opportunity of demonstrating an important lesson to Kings - that they could trust their people..."by proving to them they could safely discard all faction and partiality and corruption and bribery ... from the scheme and system of their government..."

On the Hustings he made great play with arguments, later familiar in the hands of all independent candidates - e.g. that to elect the ministerial and opposition candidates would be like returning two horses who pulled

1. ibid.
in opposite directions; or, that the voters for the ministerial candidates were disciplined 'troops' as opposed to his own 'volunteers'.

His attitude to Gardiner reflects the growing awareness of the habit of setting up a popular 'hero' whose candidature might be expected to flatter electors and to win votes, and the dislike of the contemptuous attitude towards the electorate which inspired it. It was, he emphasised, principles and ability which counted. Gardiner was an honest and gallant man, but he knew as much about the rigging of a constitution as he, Horne Tooke, knew about the rigging of a ship.

Despite the fact that on this occasion he had a committee organizing the election for him, composed largely of members of the Corresponding Society—among them men later to become prominent members of the 'Westminster Committee'—he was again last on the poll. But his total had increased considerably from 1679 to 2819.

1. ibid.
2. ibid.
3. Place Papers/Add. Ms. 27837 f.68, for a newspaper cutting which shows Samuel Brooks, George Puller, and William Sturch—all later 'members' of the 'Westminster Committee'—assisting Tooke, cf. infra, p.149 n.3. Wilkes voted for Horne Tooke on the first day of the poll, cf. A. Stephens op. cit. II, 229.
Though it is probable this total included many of the second votes of supporters of Fox, it is much more likely that Fox, who headed the poll with 5160, gained a far larger number of Tooke's supporters, on the one hand, and of Gardiner's supporters on the other. It was, in fact, the way in which Whig candidates in Westminster always tended to benefit at the expense of both ministerial and radical candidates - for to both 'extreme parties' they represented the lesser evil - that determined Reformers later to run two candidates on their own. On an electoral level, it was to heighten their dislike of the Whigs and it helps to explain their readiness to claim that the Whigs were seeking to delude 'the people' by hollow promises, whilst drawing support all the while from the Court.

Horne Tooke's second stand was of great importance in giving numbers of reforming electors hope and encouragement for the future. But, not surprisingly, it made no impression on the attitude of ministers, whose parliamentary strength was little affected by the general election. Nor did it encourage a revival of the 'popular' agitation in the country.

It is true that in the autumn of 1796 and the spring of
1797, the ministry did come to face difficulties and anxieties of the most serious kind which served to hearten the Whig opposition. Further French military successes, the ever mounting costs of the war, and the interference with trade, were all factors tending to encourage dissatisfaction with Pitt's rule. The uncertain currency position, resulting from the drain of gold to Europe, the naval mutiny of 1797 which threatened to spread through the fleet, and the continued threat of invasion, either directly or through a 'mutinous' Ireland, were all of them embarrassments which provided the opposition with considerable opportunities. The nation's financial situation, in particular, brought strong criticism from all over the country. Yet in the last resort, a recognition that Bonaparte's appetite was insatiable and that a negotiated peace whilst France remained unchecked was impossible, kept the great majority in the country behind Pitt. Mistrustful of the 'defeatist' and often mischievous Foxite Whigs, the majority were no less prepared to be thoroughly alarmed at any move made by the Reformers. By June 1797, settlement of the naval mutiny, an improved military situation, and new prospects of peace, brought ministers a temporary relief.
Their repeated failure to rouse support in the country once again took all spirit from the Whigs. In May 1797 when the situation was still critical, they girded themselves for what was to prove a final effort to rouse the country in favour of parliamentary reform, by pressing the issue in parliament. 1 Grey's scheme for householder suffrage, based on the 'scot and lot' franchise, and an extensive redistribution of seats, was considerably more advanced than any subsequent Whig scheme, and it would undoubtedly have satisfied the bulk of London's and Westminster's lower middle class Reformers. As it has been pointed out, however, it is likely to have been rather a "flag or battle than a practical proposal". 2

Doomed from the start, despite strong Whig support, it was defeated by 256 votes to 91. It was not only the time that was not right, but the plan itself. Whilst Fox, almost certainly thinking of his own constituency, argued the 'scot and lot' franchise would give the largest possible number of independent voters, Pitt, in reply, and

1. G.S.Veitch, op. cit. p.331-2; G.M.Trevelyan, op. cit. p.95
again almost certainly thinking of Westminster, argued that experience had shown it to be the worst mode of elective franchise, the most corrupt and the most violent.¹

Thereafter, repeating the gesture of despair and disgust they had made during the American War, the Whigs ceased to attend parliament. Individuals, such as Sheridan, might continue their attendance; others, including Fox himself, would appear on especially important occasions. But, as a party, their secession lasted close on three years.²

The Whig secession undoubtedly strengthened Pitt's hand greatly. The ministry was now left virtually unchecked in its efforts to suppress the popular societies completely, and it was able to deal with Reformers and Irish rebels much as it wished.

Suspicion regarding the activities of the Corresponding Society - of its influence among naval mutineers, of its association with Irish societies and of its intentions if invasion came - had indeed greatly increased during 1797. Considerable sums of money were

¹ ibid.
² G. M. Trevelyan, op. cit. p.98.
spent securing reports from spies and informers, which suggested an alarming state of affairs.¹

In fact, during 1797, the Corresponding Society was already in the final processes of dissolution. Consciousness of the danger from spies, dislike for the wild schemes which 'extremists' were prepared to entertain, and distrust for certain sinister individuals who sought to gain an influence over the society, had already, by the end of the year, brought a majority, even the tougher and keener among the surviving members, to resign.

On the one hand it is clear the Irish rebel leaders sought to secure the support of members of the Society for the formation of a revolutionary Society of 'United Englishmen', who would join with the 'United Irishmen' and similar societies, in organising rebellion. On the other, though the figures are more shadowy, it is evident that there were men too who sought to persuade members, or former members, to secure arms. Some members were urged to do so in order that they would be able to help

¹. G. S. Veitch, op. cit. p.335
maintain order in the capital if the militia were called to repel invasion. Other members, perhaps because they appeared more bitter at their political treatment, were taken into confidence and told that with arms, they could add to the confusion when invasion came. But, whether such men were 'genuine' revolutionaries, whether they were men interested in profiting personally if confusion arose, or whether they were spies, ready to encourage plotting and arming in order to have a better story to tell ministers, their appearance drove the ordinary members of the Society away. ¹

In the spring of 1797, it is likely that the Society helped in the organisation of the Westminster meeting which condemned the ministry for squandering the nation's wealth in a ruinous war and, in June, it was certainly responsible for a Westminster meeting called to vote a petition and Remonstrance to the King, which was broken up by magistrates. In the Autumn of 1797 it remained in contact with other societies elsewhere, and it may have

assisted in the staging of numerous meetings in London and Westminster in December, held to protest at the revised schedule of assessed taxes.\(^1\) Its days, however, were now numbered.

Little enough success had attended the efforts of the Irish and other revolutionaries to secure support in England, and, indeed, those who plotted and hoped for revolution appear but a handful, strongly opposed by all moderate men who knew them. But the ministry, alarmed by renewed dangers of invasion in the spring of 1798 and by reports which suggested that the English reform societies and the Irish rebels were in close touch with each other and with the French, felt justified in taking swift and decisive action.\(^2\)

On March 1st, a number of men associated with the 'United Irishmen' were arrested, and in April, first, the handful of the 'United Englishmen' and then the remaining Corresponding Society leaders were also arrested. It appears, in the case of the latter, that the ministry had been particularly alarmed by a proposal that members of the society should be advised to join their local volunteer

\(^1\) Place Papers B. M. Add. MS. 27837 f. 79. for newspaper cuttings of these.
\(^2\) G. S. Veitch, op. cit. p. 338.
units to assist in repelling invasion, which was, it seems, made in good faith. Some twenty eight men were sent to prison and kept there without trial for three years.¹ A further suspension of Habeas Corpus and new stringent restrictions upon the press, were followed, in 1799, by new measures to replace the expiring 'two acts' of 1795. Designed to suppress seditious societies and meetings altogether, they were to hamper all efforts to form popular national 'parties' for years to come.²

By 1799, indeed if not before, 'repression', it has been rightly said, was complete. But is was not legislation alone which had killed the popular societies; popular interest in reform had declined too. Nor were there, at this time, any obvious means of reviving it. Yet though they recognised the hopelessness of attempting to continue active agitation for the time being, the Reformers' spirit was far from being crushed. On the contrary, numbers of the hardier and more determined amongst them

¹ G. Wallas, op. cit. pp. 27-8
had become more than ever convinced of the need for reform, had become steeled in their determination to secure it by the treatment they had received. Many of them remained in contact, ready for any opportunity to revive the cause. Nor were they without hope for the future.

In the first place, though many Reformers had regarded the Whigs secession as a dereliction of duty, yet they might still view the attitude adopted by the Foxites thereafter – expressed in Whig club and dinner meetings, occasionally in parliament and in the Whig press – with some satisfaction.

It is clear that the readiness of the Whigs from 1797 - 1800 to affect a tone of despair, to damn ministerial policy as wholly despotic, to praise the 'Sovereignty of the People' and to urge that peace be made with France, continued to encourage many in the country to regard them as traitors. Ministers, it seems, would have been glad to suppress the Whig Club along with the 'popular societies', had it been feasible to do so.¹

But if the inflammatory attitude of the Whigs earned for them the strong distrust of conservative elements, it encouraged Reformers to retain hopes of their actions in the future. Even some of those whose distrust for the Whigs was deep-rooted might find reason to hope that awareness of the strength of their rivals/ was at last beginning to force the Whigs to realise they must look to the support of 'the people'. Others might believe the Whigs were already sincerely convinced they must come to 'the people's' aid.

It was to be of considerable importance to the future relationship of Whigs and Reformers - and in particular to the Reformer's view of the Whigs in the early nineteenth century - that the often rash actions and attitude displayed by the Whigs at this time commonly led to their being lumped together with Reformers in common condemnation by the ministerial press; that the Whigs should have stood up in violent protest sometimes in, but more often outside, parliament against the ministry's repressive legislation; that — above all — they should have committed themselves publicly, on more than one occasion, to seeking the redress of the wrongs of 'the people' and to securing
parliamentary reform. 1

In the second place, though his entry into parliament for a seat under the patronage of the Duke of Newcastle in 1796 had attracted no public attention, Reformers had come to have a new champion in parliament in Sir Francis Burdett. In the absence of the Whigs he rapidly acquired an exceptional prominence. 2 By birth a member of an old and wealthy landed family, he was, by marriage, connected with the wealthy Coutts family of bankers. Twenty years old in 1790, Burdett had early been fired with enthusiasm for 'liberty' by the French Revolution and by admiration for Fox. In the early nineties he had become convinced of the necessity for parliamentary reform, had developed a strong sympathy for the

1 (1) For common condemnation of Whigs and Reformers cf. e.g. Anti-Jacobin Review October 1798, referring to a dinner meeting at which Fox and many of his friends were present, in Westminster. (extract quoted in S. MacCoby op.cit. pp. 127-8).

(2) For Whig protests in parliament cf. e.g. Fox and his friends' attacks on ministers' proposals for a revised schedule of Assessed Taxes of December 1797 - January 1798 in the Annual Register, 1798, History; Place Papers, Add. MS. 27837 f. 79. has newspaper cuttings referring to meetings of inhabitants of Westminster led by Reformers co-operating with Fox.

(3) For Fox's and the Whigs' protests against despotism and their 'pledges' to secure parliamentary reform, cf. e.g. Annual Register, 1798, History p. 193, for a speech by Fox, and Annual Register, 1798, Chronicle for a dinner meeting of 2,000 including all the leading Whigs, held in Westminster to celebrate Fox's birthday, where many 'pledges' and many 'inflammatory' speeches were made. Reformers never forgot the Whig speeches and pledges of this time. cf. infra p. 123, and Ch. XIII. p. 37, Ch. xiv. p. 113-117.

2 M.W. Patterson, Sir Francis Burdett and his Times, I, Ch. III passim.
Irish Catholics, and had strongly opposed the war.  

In 1796, residence in Wimbledon brought him into closer contact with Horne Tooke and he was introduced into Horne Tooke's wide circle of liberal and reforming friends and acquaintances which included men from many different walks of life. His reforming views were, thenceforth, strengthened.

Horne Tooke, though now really retired from active political life, exercised a considerable influence upon the early years of Burdett's political career. Temperamentally, the romantic and young Burdett, connected socially with the circle of romantic poets, had little in common with the dry materialistic and much older Horne Tooke. Politically, however, Burdett was substantially in agreement with Tooke, who came to confirm and harden his views.

Neither believed in the extreme democratic or republican theories of men such as Paine, though there was much in Paine's attitude with which they might sympathise. Both were staunch believers in the existence of the old and traditional English constitution of King, Lords and Commons. In their view its proper balance had been perverted and must be restored. They believed, as indeed all 'independent' Reformers believed, that

1. ibid.
2. ibid. ch. VI, passim.
it was not, as the Whigs argued, excessive Crown influence which was to be held responsible for contemporary ills, but the excessive influence of the aristocracy upon the Commons, which allowed a minority to dominate the King as well as 'the people'. Parliamentary reform, therefore, was in their eyes, necessary to restore the influence of 'the people' and to free the Crown to fulfil its proper constitutional role. The question, however, must be taken up independently by 'the people' themselves. Tories and Whigs, who were simply two factions of a self-interested aristocracy, would never voluntarily relinquish their own power.

It is likely to have been Tooke, whose dislike of the Whigs remained intense, who did most to influence him against them at this time. Of the two parties, he had long regarded the Whigs as, in a sense, the more dangerous, because they were out of office and, therefore, more likely to seek the aid of 'the people'. The traditional associations of their name, and the appearance of their actions and professions, might all too easily bring 'the people' to trust in them blindly, only to find too late they had only been helping to restore the fortunes of a faction.

Burdett early made many friends among the Whigs and generally co-operated with them when they did appear in

1. ibid., pp. 118-9
2. ibid.; A. Stephens, op. cit., 11, 152 et seq.
parliament. He may have been inclined to hope that distrust for them was unfounded; that they were sincerely prepared to campaign for parliamentary reform. It was soon clear, however, that he was far more radical than they, and his firebrand tactics and association with lower class Reformers inspired numbers of the Whigs with considerable distrust for him. In June 1799 he was 'blackballed' for admission to the Whig club, and his adoption of a number of 'independent' causes at this time was clearly the result of his membership of the circle of Reformers, gathered around Tooke.¹

In Parliament, between 1797-99, he joined with the Whigs in calling for parliamentary reform, in attacking excessive taxation and defending the liberty of the press.² But he also defended the Irish rebels and protested against their arrest and treatment, sympathised with the naval mutineers and, above all, took up the cases of those Irishmen and Englishmen imprisoned in 1798 without trial. It was his attack on the condition of the Cold Bath Fields prison and his protests against the suffering of Despard and other prisoners within it, which spread his fame most rapidly.³

¹ M.W. Patterson, op.cit. 1.96
² ibid., ch. 111, passim.
³ ibid. and ch. IV. passim. Within a few years (1804) it was felt worthwhile to publish a popular 'Memoir' of Sir Francis Burdett, by Thomas Tegg.
In 1799 that fame was only beginning, but it is clear that already many humble Reformers had begun to believe that at long last they had found the parliamentary spokesman and leader they needed.

Reformers maintained a loose but important contact with each other, in various ways.

There were, as already mentioned, meetings at Horne Tooke's Wimbledon home. Large numbers of Reformers of all classes and persuasions attended his famous Sunday Dinners and it is evident that many political matters were arranged amongst Reformers at his house, and with his advice.¹

The rich Colonel Bosville, friend of Tooke and former member of the Constitutional Information Society, also held regular dinners, and his house, like Tooke's, was also a popular rendezvous.² In the same way too, Francis Place's shop even before he set up in Charing Cross, was already a meeting place for Reformers who, like Bosville, and the Irishman, Despard, came to discuss matters with each other and with him.³ Again Reformers, too far apart to meet, corresponded with each other.

¹ ibid., ch. VI. passim; A. Stephens, op. cit. 11.276 et seq.
² M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 1.112-3
³ G. Wallas, op. cit. p.33.
If the meetings of the Corresponding Society as such had ceased, the friendship of erstwhile members had not. Place principally, it seems, was responsible for organizing the collection of subscriptions to assist the families of the imprisoned Reformers in 1799.\(^1\) In November 1799 a number of Reformers met to celebrate the anniversary of Hardy's acquittal.\(^2\) Again, many Reformers must have continued their political discussions in the trade and benefit societies, which, despite the new Combination laws, continued to flourish.

It is evident that if the lower class movement for Reform had been driven underground, and the rank and file of the regular societies had, for the time being, lost their earlier enthusiasm, yet the inspiration, which first brought large numbers of them to political consciousness, did not die. Not only did there remain a cadre of men, many of them still ranked among the 'lower orders', capable of reforming and leading the movement when opportunity offered, but there was, among the 'lower orders' generally, a new political awareness which could never be stamped out. A new 'public' had appeared, prepared to think and act independently - a

\(^1\) G. Wallas, op. cit. p. 28
\(^2\) S. Maccoby, op. cit. p. 748, quoting Second Report of the Committee (of Secrecy) 1801 to the House of Commons. (1801)
'public' keen to secure its own representatives in parliament. After 1790 the strength of the 'independent' vote in Westminster, where almost alone this 'public' had an opportunity for a full expression of its feelings, was a factor which could never be ignored.

Those who remained actively concerned with politics were little more than a handful. But they were those whose spirit had been toughened rather than chastened by adversity. In Burdett, they had a parliamentary spokesman, prepared to take up their cause; in Place, though for the time being he concentrated on his business, a man whose organising ability was to prove the most important asset of all; in Cartwright, a man indefatigable in his efforts to resurrect the popular movement.

In 1799, and in the six years which followed, their opportunities for reviving a popular demand for reform were to be limited. Further, though they might still summon London Common Hall and County meetings, and persuade them to protest at the conduct of government, though they might still contest elections in the capital - yet their efforts appeared to attract no more than the transitory interest of the 'public'.

But their persistence was not to go unrewarded. For these were years when, beneath the surface, a new upsurge
of popular feeling was in gestation. In 1806-7, a new popular movement was to be born out of the feelings of the ordinary electors - the 'lower orders' - of Westminster itself.
Chapter IV

The Reformers Regain Strength, 1800-06.

By 1800, popular interest in reform had reached its lowest ebb. The progress of the war, the calamitous food situation and the prospects of peace, seemed completely to have absorbed the public mind. The tonic of Nelson's victory at Aboukir and the loss of Bonaparte's army in Egypt had been followed by the failures of the second coalition and a more sober recognition of the tremendous military vitality of France. A renewed sense of gloom settled on the nation, heightened by the scarcity of food, which was leading to severe hardship and unrest amongst the poor. In these circumstances, the rise to power of Bonaparte was seized upon, and almost welcomed by many, as improving the prospect of peace. For it was on peace, above all, that interest centred in 1800 and 1801.

Nor, between 1801-5, is there much evidence that interest in reform was reviving. Enthusiasm for the brief peace between 1801-2 changed to patriotic recognition that a renewal of the war was inevitable. Thereafter, first the dangers of invasion and then the course of the war itself, dominated the public mind.

In these circumstances, there was little chance of resurrecting the popular movement, though as it has been
suggested, numbers of convinced Reformers remained ready to work to revive it. It became, however, increasingly clear that they would have to work alone. After 1800, Whig interest in, and enthusiasm for, reform came to diminish in proportion as the prospect of office loomed nearer, and interest in the question appeared to have died in the country. Though many Whigs, including Fox, continued to profess their belief in its desirability, none of them cared to raise the matter publicly after 1802. Thus, though many Reformers continued for some time to maintain an expectant, if decreasing, hope that the Whigs would still seek, when opportunity offered, to redeem their promises of the later nineties, they were to be driven increasingly to rely on their own resources.

It was the growing prospect of peace, and the dire shortage of food, which encouraged Reformers to organise popular demonstrations in 1800. In February, for example, Waithman persuaded a large majority in a London Common Hall to petition the Commons for peace.¹ In October, another

¹ S. MacCoby, op. cit. p.139. Robert Waithman was a London linen-draper and one of the leading London Reformers, later to work closely with the 'Westminster Committee' cf. D.N.B., and infra. II. p.211.
Common Hall Meeting urged the recall of parliament and it was followed by a Middlesex meeting which ascribed the disastrous food shortage to the war, and demanded peace be made. But these meetings roused little enough excitement, and though handbills calling upon 'the people' to meet together and to petition for cheaper food were distributed throughout the autumn, in an effort to focus their discontent, magistrates easily dispersed the comparatively small crowds who gathered.²

As the military situation worsened during the winter months, the 'public' continued to appear apathetic. Not until Pitt, unable to secure the King's consent to Catholic emancipation and convinced that peace must be made, resigned in February 1801, were there signs of a revival of popular interest in national affairs.

The change of ministry and the prospect of peace, however, brought relaxation in domestic tension and some of the Reformers, on hearing rumours of Pitt's resignation early in February, were once again encouraged to take steps to organise popular meetings with the aim of steering attention towards parliamentary reform. Thomas Hardy, for example, optimistic about the prospects of staging a London Common Hall meeting on the subject, wrote to Cartwright for advice.

1. S. Maccolly, op.cit. p.143,n.3
2. ibid. p.142. The ministry suspected the hand of ex-members of the Corresponding Society.
Cartwright, anxious as ever to promote meetings everywhere, and keen the metropolis should give a lead, sent Hardy in reply a string of resolutions he was preparing for a meeting elsewhere and outlined his views on what should be done. Public sympathy, he wrote, must be excited and united. To this end, the resolutions of public meetings must be published and circulated, and correspondence entered into with other towns to animate the people. Further..." we should exert ourselves in procuring proper members to present our petitions to the house, and to bring the subjects into discussion.."2

Thus, in the early months of the Addington ministry, Cartwright wrote asking numerous Reformers all over the country to assist in publicising the cause. But he received few encouraging replies. Wyvill, to whom he addressed a public letter urging him to take the lead in forming a 'Society for promulgating parliamentary reform', did, indeed, consider the matter, and he also seems to have tried to arrange a county meeting in Yorkshire. But Wyvill's friends showed little interest in reform and were scared at the very

1. Life of Cartwright 1.296. Cartwright to Hardy 5.2.01.
2. Ibid.
mention of universal suffrage.1

In truth the great majority in the country - the great majority of the metropolitan 'lower orders' too - were at this time far more interested in the prospects of peace than in reform. Even the release of the Corresponding Society's leaders and other Irish and English political prisoners early in March seems to have attracted little public notice, despite the sympathy roused for them by Burdett earlier.2 Nonetheless, the final signing of the peace treaty and the imminence of a general election came to give a number of Reformers fresh hope that the 'public' might still be roused to support their cause and arrangements were made to set up reforming candidates in both the Westminster and Middlesex elections.

It appears that Horne Tooke would again have stood for Westminster had he not, by a recent ruling of the Commons, been incapacitated from being elected. Tooke, though his precise motives are unknown, had secured a seat in the Commons, for, of all places, Old Sarum in 1801.3 He was, however, still in Holy Orders, and the house after discussion, had ruled

1. ibid. 1.295-298. (Cartwright's published letter to Wyvill, 1.296; Wyvill to Cartwright 28.4.01; Stanhope to Cartwright, February 1801. Wyvill to Cartwright 29.5.01).
2. S. Maccoby op. cit. p.146, n.3.
3. A. Stephens op. cit. 11.236; Stephens quotes Tooke’s apologetic letter to the Westminster electors.
that no man in Holy Orders was capable of election, though
he would be allowed to retain his seat until the existing
parliament was dissolved.¹ In his place, however, a certain
John Graham, an auctioneer, was brought forward to oppose the
other two candidates of 1796, Gardner and Fox.² At the same
time Burdett, whose contract with the Duke of Newcastle for
Boroughbridge had expired, agreed to stand for Middlesex.
Both Graham and Burdett emphasized they stood as Reformers.³

In a published reply to a published invitation to stand -
the invitation had praised his public spirited protests against
the /deplorable conditions of Cold Bath Fields prison - Burdett
said he had, for some time, given up all thought of a seat in
parliament. If the nation were to show itself satisfied with
the existing system of government, and the disastrous state of
affairs brought about by the late ministers, then he was "not
fit for the society of such a nation" and would withdraw from
public life. Though disgusted, however, he would not despair.
The country might still be saved.....

"... but by one means only - by a fair representation
of the people in parliament .... If upon this principle
the county of Middlesex shall be pleased to entrust to
my hands a portion of their small and inadequate share

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¹ On the Commons ruling cf. M.A. Thomson, A Constitutional
History of England (1642-1801) pp. 326-7 n. 5
² Times, July 7th, 1802.
³ M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 1.132; Times, July 7th, 1802.
of the representation, I will cheerfully, and zealously, devote myself, my life, and my fortune, to their service..."1

Thus in the summer of 1802 the metropolis was promised the considerable excitement of two popular contests.

The Westminster election began first on July 6th, and it soon became clear that the readiness of Gardner's supporters to split their votes with Fox would be as much to Graham's disadvantage as it had been to the disadvantage of Horne Tooke in 1796. Though he insisted on his independence, he made clear his preference for Fox, and it is probable Fox gained many of his second votes too. Since he paraded his refusal to solicit votes, made no effort to treat electors, and does not seem to have had any properly organized committee working on his behalf, Graham was at a further disadvantage.2

Graham, indeed, very early expressed his willingness to have the poll closed if other candidates would jointly agree. But though Fox was ready to do so, Gardner, probably still hoping to head Fox on the poll, at first refused.3 As a result, in the nine days the poll was kept open, Graham's promise to obey electors in all they should ask of him,

1. *Times*, June 28th, 1802. M.W. Patterson, op. cit. pp. 132-134
2. Information on the Westminster election is taken from *Times*, July 6th, - 16th, 1802; and from Considerations on the late elections for Westminster and Middlesex, with some facts relating to the House of Correction in Cold Bath Fields - an anti-Burdett and Graham pamphlet.
3. *Times*, July 8th. 1802
and his pledge to seek parliamentary reform, brought him 1693 votes, against Fox's 2671, and Gardiner's 2341.¹

Graham was not a strong candidate, and his later support for the Whigs in Westminster makes it possible that his final decision to retire, at a time when his poll was actually gaining on his rivals, was a result of his Whig sympathies. Possibly it was the result of an agreement that Fox should be 'allowed' a personal victory in Westminster, in return for his - Fox's - support for Burdett, in Middlesex. But the support Graham received indicates that independent feeling in Westminster, far from being dead, had in fact remained remarkably steady. By the time the Middlesex election began in July 13th, therefore, popular excitement in the capital was considerable.

Already, on July 8th, Burdett had crossed swords with Mainwaring, the ministerial candidate, who was Chairman of the Middlesex Magisterial bench, over the running of the Cold Bath Fields prison and strong feelings had been roused.² On the first day of the poll, Burdett made clear he opposed Mainwaring.

¹ Times, 16th July, 1802.
² M.W. Patterson, op.cit. p.135; For information on the Middlesex election cf. Times July 14th - July 21st 1802; Considerations on the late elections for Westminster and Middlesex etc: M.W. Patterson, op.cit. ch.VII.; H. Tephson, op.cit. p.306-8.
not only as a supporter of Pitt, but as the man responsible for the atrocious treatment of the state prisoners. Thereafter the chief contest was between these two. The success of Byng, the 'official' Whig candidate was never in doubt.¹

On the one hand, Burdett was attacked as a 'Jacobin' and references were made to the treasonable aims of his associates and supporters, and to his friendship with the 'revolutionary' Despard and the Irish rebel Arthur O'Connor. On the other, Mainwaring was represented as a petty but vicious tyrant, backed by the corrupt influence of the ministry.² Burdett had the support of middle and lower middle Reformers. But he also had the backing of a section of the Whigs. Though a number of the Foxite party distrusted him, Fox himself, and many of his closer followers, actively assisted Burdett as well as Byng. They subscribed to the costs of his election and appeared at the various dinners organised to publicise his cause. For his part, Burdett who was personally friendly with many of them, accepted their support.³ Nonetheless, it is indicative of the Reformer's distrust for the Whigs that suspicion they would claim Burdett as a member of their party, or claim his success as

¹ H.W. Patterson, op.cit. 11.136.
² ibid., 1.137.; A. Stephens, op.cit, 11.305 et seq.
³ H.W. Patterson, op.cit. 11.137.
their own, brought Horne Tooke to the Hustings to ensure his independence was maintained in the public eye.¹

The influence of the Whigs and the attitude of Burdett himself, however, are likely to have had a considerable effect on the character of his campaign. Whatever the share of Reformers in the management of his election, the influence of those known to be in favour of encouraging purity of conduct was certainly insufficient to prevent the employment of all manner of unscrupulous devices, including the manufacture of artificial votes, to secure his return. Burdett himself seems, at this point of his career, to have been as ready as any other aristocratic candidate of the day to lavish money on the election and to provide the favours, the treating and the processions which the metropolitan crowds still demanded.²

The uproar during the election momentarily attracted a nation-wide attention. The 'lower orders' were clearly on the side of Burdett and the less ruly elements among them attacked Mainwaring and his supporters savagely. Only at the last moment, however, did Burdett obtain the lead over Mainwaring and secure second place on the poll.³

¹ A. Stephens, op. cit. 11, 305 et seq.
² M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 11, Ch. VII. passim.
³ ibid. 11, 137-8
Mainwaring promptly made clear he would petition against Burdett's return on the grounds of corruption, and the partiality of the returning officers. His decision was strongly supported by conservatives, including Pitt himself. But it was to take over a year before Mainwaring and his supporters could assemble their evidence and present their petition, and meanwhile Burdett took his seat in the new parliament as one of the representatives of Middlesex.¹

If many of the Reformers were displeased with the electoral conduct of the Whigs, yet the evidence of their continuing support for reform - Grey in his own election had spoken of it as "indispensible" - and the fact that Burdett and the Foxites were again associated in common condemnation by ministerial pamphleteers, may have provided some compensation. In any case, they must have been gratified at the excitement the elections in the capital had caused.²

But once more, and before any attempt could be made to capitalise Burdett's success properly, their cause was struck a new blow - the arrest of the recently released Colonel Despard and a number of his fellow conspirators, whilst

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¹ G.M. Trevelyan, op. cit. p.121, for Grey's pronouncement. It does not, however, seem Fox was so forthcoming.
plotting to assassinate the King.\textsuperscript{1} Whatever their private feelings as to his guilt, Reformers made every effort to defend him and the other prisoners, and to represent them as victims of ministerial oppression.

From a letter of one of Horne Tooke's 'entourage' at that time, there emerges a picture of 'party headquarters', (so Reformers must commonly have described Horne Tooke's house in Wimbledon), with Tooke himself appearing as the 'High priest', suggesting, advising, and helping to further any scheme which might embarrass the ministry whilst keeping a highly suspicious eye on the Whigs. A number of ad hoc committees for various purposes attended by former leaders of the Corresponding Society appear co-ordinated by Horne Tooke's 'lieutenants', or closer friends.\textsuperscript{2}

It is evident that the matter of Despard's defence was at once taken up by this group and discussed in detail. A committee and a sub-committee on which Thomas Hardy and Lemaitre were prominent, arranged the collection of subscriptions from sympathisers, sent emissaries into the

\textsuperscript{1} S. Maccoby, op. cit. p.156; M.W. Patterson, op. cit. ll. \textsuperscript{160} et seq.

\textsuperscript{2} Letter of J. Notary, Feb. 7th, 1803, quoted at length in M.W. Patterson, op. cit., ll.\textsuperscript{165} et seq. The letter is to one of the 'Horne Tooke circle' and refers principally but not solely to the Despard affair. It mentions a substantial number of Reformers who were still active.
country to seek support and donations, and issued money for legal expenses, for the well-being of the prisoners and their families, and for other connected matters.¹

Their efforts to present Despard as a victim of ministerial tyranny were, however, unsuccessful. Virtually no sympathy could be roused for him in the country; most of the money collected by the committee came from 'the circle of Wimbledon'; and, long before his trial, it was recognised there was little hope of saving him unless the witnesses against him could be discredited.² Burdett was to find his former association with Despard a great source of embarrassment.

The Despard conspiracy undoubtedly served to renew and strengthen the nation's fears of the Reformers. In January 1803 and almost certainly after prior discussion at Wimbledon, J.C. Jennyns set himself up with the support of Cartwright in a Gatton bye-election with the aim of drawing attention to the anomalous franchise.³ But his action attracted little or no attention and the atmosphere was such that as Despard's trial came nearer some even among Horne Tooke's own friends

¹ ibid.
² ibid.
³ Morning Chronicle, Jan. 26th, 1803. Jennyns was another friend of Horne Tooke, later to associate with the 'Westminster Committee'. His action on this occasion was supported by Cartwright and Horne Tooke's lawyer friend, H. Clifford.
became distinctly wary of associating with any of the lower class Reformers lest they too were suspected of conspiracy. The conviction and execution of Despard and six of his followers brought no new alarmist action on the part of the Addington ministry and Reformers were left unmolested. But it killed any chance there had been of reviving a reform agitation, and thereafter the interest of 'the public' centred more and more on the actions and attitude of Bonaparte, which, it increasingly seemed, must make a renewal of the war inevitable.

Whigs and Reformers remained for a while uncertain and divided in their attitude on this issue. Bonaparte might be viewed as the heir of the Revolution, personifying the abolition of privilege and the social advances it had brought about; or, in the light of his coup d'État, and the destruction of the French Republic, he might be regarded as its 'destroyer' - an aggressive tyrant who must be firmly opposed.

A small minority, Burdett prominent among them, seems to have held to the former view for some time, and to have regarded the idea of war against him as little short of criminal. Some, like Fox, remained uncertain about his

1. Letter of J. Notary, supra p. 121 n. 2.
character and aims, prepared to agree that if his intentions were as aggressive as they were made out to be, then he must certainly be resisted, but unconvinced that the Addington ministry had not mishandled negotiations with him. The majority, however, regarding Bonaparte with great disfavour, came sorrowfully to accept that a renewal of the war against France could not be avoided.

By May, Britain was again at war, this time, however, with the great body of the nation substantially at one on its necessity.

For the rest of 1803 the Reformers made little effort to attract public attention, though a dinner was held at the 'Crown and Anchor' Tavern in July to celebrate the anniversary of Burdett's election. 1 Whatever their feelings on the necessity of the war, or on how far ministers were to blame for it, most of them accepted the fact that they were fighting for the existence of the country. The dangers of invasion doubtless inclined them against demonstrations, which would encourage suspicion of their intentions and the majority of those who did not approve of the war seem to have felt it better to remain quiet.

1. M. W. Patterson, op. cit., p.169.
Burdett himself, however, though less active in parliament than in the past, adopted an attitude in the few speeches he did make during the year which helps to account for the strong distrust he continued to inspire among the majority in the country.¹

On July 18th, in parliament, he said that "...the only way to give spirit and energy to the people and to make the country worth defending was to repeal every act since the accession of his Majesty."² Later, in the same month, at the 'Crown and Anchor' dinner, he attacked money jobbers and all who made profit from the war - a refrain to be taken up by Reformers with increasing vigour in the next few years - and urged that if men were to be expected to fight for their country it was right that reforms should be carried to satisfy their just claims first. In unguarded language he said:

"I have no hesitation in declaring that, in the present situation in the country, viewing the conduct of ministers in the light I do, I think it impossible for an honest man to come forward in their defence or to be justified in lending an assisting arm in defence of their country"³

Burdett's speech was meant as a gesture of disgust designed to draw attention to the need for reform. His

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¹ M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 1.169, suggests Burdett's 'quietness' at this time was perhaps due to the insecurity of his Middlesex seat.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid. 1.170
intention was to impress on the nation's leaders that the best way to mobilise the patriotic spirit of the nation was to give men the feeling they had a greater stake in their country. But it cannot be surprising he, and Reformers generally, should be regarded with great disfavour and suspicion at a time when the response to the ministry's call for volunteers to repel invasion had been overwhelming.

It is not without significance that two of the matters on which he sought to focus attention in 1803 - repressive ministerial policy in Ireland following the July rising of 1802, and the self-interest of stock jobbers and Pitt's funding system - were also taken up in the 'Political Register' of William Cobbett, who was later to play so important a part in reviving the popular movement. Whether or not there was any contact between Cobbett and Reformers at this time, whether or not his readiness to print an attack on Irish repression and his attitude towards stock jobbers and the funding system, first gave them a lead, must be uncertain. Whatever the case, agreement upon a growing number of issues helped to draw Cobbett close to the Reformers in the course of the next few years.1

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Cobbett's powerful attacks on the French Revolution, which he had made whilst in America, had commended him to Pitt in the nineties. In 1800 he had returned to London, and had accepted the patronage of Windham and the Grenvilles. Writing in their support, he had 'followed' them into opposition, when they had refused to support the Addington ministry and had strongly upheld their opposition to the Peace of Amiens. Like them he had welcomed the renewal of the war.

Though continuing to support his patrons, who remained in opposition, he had, however, come to take an independent line on the system of public finance which he had grown to view with extreme distrust. He had, in particular, begun to attack the whole of Pitt's funding policy and to condemn all those who, by lending money to the government, profitted at the expense of the public purse. He had, further, come to draw attention to the evil inflationary effects of the issue of paper money.

By no means yet a 'radical' in his political outlook, the growing co-operation between the 'Grenville' and 'Foxite' groups - encouraged by the former's failure to come to

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2. *ibid.* pp.85-8
agreement with Pitt, and the latter's growing recognition of the need for the strong prosecution of the war - drew Cobbett closer to the Whigs and helped to strengthen his growing distrust of Pitt. After Pitt's return to office in May, 1804, and the refusal of Grenville to take office without Fox, co-operation between the two opposition groups became even closer, and Cobbett, too, was drawn still nearer to the Whigs.1

In turn, Cobbett's greater sympathy for the 'Foxite' Whigs was to bring him nearer to the Reformers. In 1802 he had, as a 'Grenvillite', tiraded against Burdett in the Middlesex election, accusing him of traitorous designs.2 By the summer of 1804, perhaps somewhat embittered by his recent prosecution for having printed a series of articles written by an Irish 'patriot' judge - Robert Johnson - Cobbett was to be prepared to give him a barely qualified support in his second Middlesex contest, stressing that circumstances had changed, and Burdett was no longer to be distrusted.3 Cobbett's growing sympathy for the Reformers was to be of great importance to the development of his own

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1. ibid. p.90
2. ibid. p.90; M.W.Patterson, op. cit. pp.189-90, quoting from Cobbett's own account in the 'Register'.
political attitude and was to be of profound importance too to the revival of the reforming cause.

It was in July 1804 that the Commons committee, investigating Mainwaring's petition against Burdett, finally made its report. Burdett was unseated on the grounds of the partiality of the Middlesex Sheriffs towards him. But Mainwaring himself was declared incapable of serving since his agents had been guilty of treating. The election was, therefore, declared void and a new election ordered. 1 Once more presented with a chance of publicising their cause, Reformers readily seized their opportunity. Burdett agreed to stand for re-election, and Mainwaring's son came forward to oppose him in his father's stead.

The Middlesex election of 1804 followed a pattern similar to that of 1802. The principal arrangements for Burdett were made, it seems, by the 'Horne Tooke coterie' of middle and lower middle class Reformers, and once again, numbers of the 'Foxite' Whigs lent him their active support. 2 Outwardly still on good terms, Whigs and Reformers had in reality moved further apart. It is evident that the latter

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1. M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 1. pp.146-7
2. For the Middlesex election of 1804, cf. M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 1.147-151. A Letter to the Freeholders of Middlesex by an Attentive Observer! (anti-Burdett); A Full Report of the Speeches of Sir Francis Burdett at the late election (pro-Burdett).
strongly disliked the former's association with the 'Grenvilles', and were inclined to regard it as a sign they were preparing again to sacrifice everything for the sake of office.¹ On the other hand the Whigs had become even more wary of associating with lower class Reformers, or 'Correspondists', as they appear to have been commonly called.² Thus, in the course of an election speech, Burdett praised Whig principles and acknowledged that, though he was no party man, he had commonly supported the Whigs in parliament. But, he added, significantly:

"... If the Whig interest desert its principles, or if the Tory interest abandon its errors, you will find me supporting the Tories."³

During the election, Burdett was attacked with an even greater vigour after the Deszpard affair and the language he had used at the 'Crown and Anchor' dinner of the previous July, as the friend of revolutionaries and traitors, and as a man who was himself aiming at dictatorship. Once again, bribery and treating were much in evidence, and hired 'mobs' helped to bring the capital into a state of uproar.

Burdett, it is clear, whatever his professions, still made no private objection to 'corruption' and the hiring of

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¹ cf. Letter of Sir F. Burdett to Thomas Coutts 6.3.1804, printed in M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 1.154, in which Burdett expressed his disapproval.
² cf. Letter of 'Notary' to one of the Horne Tooke circle 18.7.1804, printed, ibid. 1.149
³ M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 1.148
mobs on his behalf. A good deal was undertaken in his interest which it was presumably hoped would not be fastened upon him, or his election manager, by friends of Burdett and Tooke who clearly had few scruples, as appears in a letter by one of them:

"Mr. Knight of Grosvenor Square is the agent for triumphal decorations, State Coach, Horse, trappings etc. Others are to hire coaches, some to bribe and treat, while our hero and his avowed agent are to be as pure and unspotted as Caesar's wife. "

"Hobbs Scott is commissioned to get horses to stir up the Spittal Field men on Monday and I have been repeatedly exhorted to raise as many as possible. Bully Robinson is returned from Aylesbury and entered our service."

This sort of thing, long normal enough in all popular elections, was not to go unnoticed by the new generation of Reformers who were themselves of the despised 'lower orders', and who bitterly resented the way 'the people' were artificially excited and degraded in popular elections.

The contest was extremely close. When the poll was closed it was found a number of votes remained unexamined, and it was decided that they might be admitted later if found good. In due course, however, it transpired that in these circumstances Burdett would have a majority of one, whereupon Mainwaring immediately protested against these being admitted. After consulting counsel, the Sheriffs, already waiting

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1. Letter of 'Notary' to one of Horne Tooke's circle 18.7.1804 printed ibid. 1.149
'punishment' for their alleged partiality towards Burdett in 1802, decided the voters should not be admitted, and Mainwaring junior was, therefore, declared elected.¹

The extent of the excitement roused by the election and the action of the Sheriffs - Pitt watched for the result closely - seems to have been such as to encourage a number of Burdett supporters to agree, at the suggestion of Cartwright, to form a kind of popular constituency association, the 'Middlesex Freeholders Club'.² It appears that many people had been disgusted at the amount of money lavished on the election, at the scenes of debauchery and the corruption which followed. Though the majority of Reformers must have been only too conscious that blame lay equally on both sides, it was obviously politic to attribute responsibility to those in power, who had wished to prevent Burdett's return.

At a meeting held to consider what action should be taken on behalf of Burdett, Cartwright made a speech in which he dwelt upon the duties of electors, and the need to maintain the freedom of election. He condemned the corruption of Burdett's opponents and the action of the Sheriffs. Afterwards, the club was launched with Cartwright as chairman.

¹. M. W. Patterson, op. cit., 1.150.
². For an account of the formation of the Middlesex Freeholders Club cf. Cobbett's Political Register October 25th, 1806.
Designed to attract 'respectable' elements, there was to be an entrance fee of a guinea and an annual subscription of half a guinea. ¹

The aims of the club were professedly to safeguard the rights of Middlesex Freeholders and to ensure that in the future the 'independent interest' in the county was properly mobilised and able to exclude the influence of the nobility. It was hoped that similar clubs would be formed elsewhere.²

Its appearance and the conception behind it, it is clear, owed much to the older conception of an extra parliamentary 'association', though it is significant that it should now begin to be envisaged in a constitutional form as a series of constituency 'associations'. More immediately, however, the club was concerned with taking up Burdett's cause in the name of the electors, and in so doing, to publicise the cause of reform.

Its efforts, however, were to be rewarded with only very limited success.³ Not until January 1805 did Reformers succeed in getting a petition presented against Mainwaring's return. In March, it is true, fortune seemed to have favoured

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¹ Place Papers, B.M. AddMS. 27,838 f. 68. A newspaper cutting shows that W. Adams, S. Brooks, H. Clifford and J.C. Jennyns who were all later members of the 'Westminster Committee', were members of this club.
² cf. infra. M. pp.59 et seq.
³ M. W. Patterson, op.cit., 1.151.
them, when the Commons, having reviewed the action of the Sheriffs, declared Burdett should have been returned. But Mainwaring counter-petitioned against Burdett on the grounds of his responsibility for bribery, corruption and 'impersonation' and Burdett, probably tired of the wrangling as well as its expense, seems to have refused to bother to take further action. Though the Freemen's Club still tried to make a fight out of it, the new Commons' committee, appointed to consider Mainwaring's petition, was only to reach its decision - in favour of Mainwaring - just before parliament was dissolved in 1806.

Thus Burdett, to the disappointment of many Reformers, remained out of parliament during the latter half of 1804 and 1805, and was not to be persuaded to seek election again until the autumn of 1806. Meanwhile, interest in reform, roused only momentarily by the election, once again disappeared. Bonaparte's peace overtures, the formation and the failures of the third coalition, the raising of recruits for the armed services, the Catholic question - all excited greater attention. Yet, even at this time, new opportunities for embarrassing the ministry and of rousing popular dissatisfaction with the conduct and efficiency of government were opening, the one depending upon popular dissatisfaction at high wartime taxation and readiness to be suspicious of the handling of the money raised; the other, upon the popular sympathy, which, in the latter years of the eighteenth century, had appeared for those
in India who suffered 'oppression' at English hands.

The first was to arise out of the report of a Committee of Naval inquiry appointed under Addington, which appeared in April 1805 and implicated Pitt's close political friend Henry Dundas, now Lord Melville, in malpractices involving private speculation with public money, whilst he had been Treasurer of the Navy. Melville had long galled the Whigs in parliament by his frequent and often insolent references to their factious opposition to the ministry, and it was not to be expected they would miss the opportunity to display the manner in which the country had been served and to embarrass Pitt. Reformers who remembered him vividly as Pitt's Home Secretary earlier, responsible for enforcing ministerial repressive measures, and subsequently as his Secretary for War, responsible for the prosecution of a war they had detested, were more than ready to see him 'pilloried'.

Thus whilst the more radical of the Foxites, prominent among them Whitbread, sought to secure his impeachment, Reformers outside parliament tried to arrange public meetings during the parliamentary recess which would condemn Melville and governmental corruption generally. But though the interest of

the 'public' in the matter was undoubtedly roused, it soon became evident there was no immediate chance of persuading that 'public' that the Melville revelations made parliamentary reform necessary. Whig leaders were discouraging about county meetings and though Cartwright seems to have succeeded in getting meetings in Middlesex, there was apparently little readiness to promote them elsewhere. The Melville affair, however, was to be raised again later.¹

The second opportunity for encouraging dissatisfaction with governmental conduct was to arise from the appearance on the political scene of one James Paull, personally determined to secure the impeachment of the Marquis of Wellesley, for his administration in India.²

The Wellesley regime in India had already become highly suspect in certain quarters by the turn of the century. Directors blamed Wellesley's policy of conquest for increasing their financial embarrassments. Others, among the public, doubted whether it was necessary or justifiable. The appearance of Paull was to crystallize ill-feeling and to encourage the launching of an attack on it.³

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2. For James Paull cf. H.E.A. Cotton, Story of James Paull and D.N.B.
The son of a Perth tailor, Paull had gone to India, become a prominent and wealthy Lucknowe merchant, and been involved in a violent dispute with Wellesley. Some time before 1804 he had returned to England, and had been taken up by the Prince of Wales' friends and had, apparently, with the Prince's knowledge, set off back to India with the aim of collecting evidence, which would enable him to substantiate charges against Wellesley. In 1804, he again returned to England, apparently still wealthy, ready to continue his feud.

Among the opposition, there were many who at first welcomed this fresh chance of creating a scandal which would embarrass the ministry. The more 'radical' of the Whig party apparently professed their eagerness to support him and Fox, it seems, approved their course, though he would not agree to make an attack on Wellesley a party matter. The Prince of Wales was enthusiastic - Sheridan and Sir Phillip Francis, apparently so, too. If the 'Temples' and the 'Grenvilles' were wary of Paull in view of their connections with the Wellesley family, certain it is that Windham first introduced Paull to Cobbett, and asked him to take up the matter in the
In June 1605 Paull purchased a seat in parliament for Newtown, Isle of Wight. In the same month, he joined with those who were seeking Melville's impeachment, and then moved for papers, which would substantiate the charges he was preparing against Wellesley.

But, thereafter, his progress was to be extremely slow. Paull not only lacked political weight and parliamentary experience; he had not, it seems, the requisite ability which might have helped him in their default. Further, it appears, the longer men associated with him, the more their distrust of him was encouraged. Aristocratic parliamentarians came to view him as totally lacking in the qualities of a gentleman and became disinclined to have anything to do with him. It seems that they and others too, became aware of his hasty temper and came to believe Paull too much motivated

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1. cf. Letter of Paull to Lord Folkestone in Cobbett's 'Register' Oct. 25th, 1806; also G.D.H. Cole, op.cit. pp.122-3. For the reception of Paull and his activities at this time cf. A History of the Westminster and Middlesex Elections (of 1806) which contains a variety of information in letters and speeches pro and anti-Paull. A letter to Fox, by a 'Lover of Consistency' (1806) pro-Paull, and A Letter to Earl Mara by 'Theophrastus Junior' (1806) anti-Paull, both referring to his charges against Wellesley; A Refutation of the Calumnies of John Horne Tooke (by Paull himself) 1807.

by spite or personal ambition. East India Company directors came to be inclined to doubt the sufficiency of evidence against Wellesley, and hence less ready to press the charges.¹

For the moment, however, the difficulty of securing evidence on Indian affairs and, still more, the greater need to pay attention to other matters, provided sufficient reason for delay. Many of the Whigs, as well as the Prince of Wales, doubtless feeling he might still be useful, continued to express their readiness to support him. Though nothing further came of Paull's efforts in 1805 it was to be of no small importance that Paull himself, and others interested in his 'patriotic' work, should have continued for some time to believe the Whigs would assist him.

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By the close of 1805 there can be little doubt that most of the independent Reformers in the metropolis had already given up hope that the Whigs would make any further move for parliamentary reform and were prepared to be cynical about them. To Reformers it might well seem that Whig interest in reform had declined in proportion as the prospect of office had loomed nearer.

As already indicated, they had viewed their association

¹ ibid.
with the 'Grenvilles', whom they so greatly disliked for the support they had given Pitt, as evidence of Whig preparedness to sacrifice their principles for office.¹ For despite the King's known objections to Fox, it had already become a possibility, even before the fall of the Addington ministry, that they might be called to join, or form, a ministry and that possibility had remained thereafter. During this time, they had become more cautious and even more ready to damp Reformers' hopes whenever there had seemed an opportunity of reviving an agitation for reform in the country.

First, there had been a chance early in 1804 that, with a return of the King's mental illness, the Prince of Wales would become Regent and that he would call on Fox to form a new administration.² In view of his agreement of January to 'co-operate' with the Grenvilles, Fox must have invited them to join him. Then, when this prospect had faded, there remained the possibility that Pitt, despite his personal feelings, would persuade the King to accept Fox, if only to secure the support of the 'Grenvilles' who would not enter office without him. In the first instance he had failed and had done without their support.³ But the weakness of

¹ supra. p.131 n.4
² S.Maccoby, op.cit. p.172
³ ibid. p.174
the ministerial position, especially after the secession of 'Addingtonians', its lack of military success and its declining prestige, made it increasingly necessary he should try again.

In September 1805 he had tried and failed once more. The 'Foxites' had remained with the 'Grenvilles' out of office. The lack of military success and its declining prestige, made it increasingly necessary he should try again. In September 1805 he had tried and failed once more. The 'Foxites' had remained with the 'Grenvilles' out of office. It had been made clear to Reformers, however, when they had prepared to organise a series of public meetings, designed to reassure the Whigs that they would have popular backing if they pursued a bold course, that Fox and his friends would regard any agitation for parliamentary reform, at so delicate a moment, with disfavour. But though independent Reformers, Place among them, now completely distrusted the Whigs and cared little whether or not they secured office, others, indeed at this point growing numbers of people in the country, were coming to view the prospect of a Whig ministry with increasing favour.

It is clear that many old supporters of Fox in the eighties and nineties, still optimistically believed he and his followers would redeem their pledges with regard to parliamentary reform. Others still looked to them to take

1. ibid. p.192
2. Life of Cartwright 1.326, for numerous discouraging letters of reply from various Whig leaders, including Fox, to whom he had written.
up other projects—among them Catholic emancipation, the improvement of Irish government, and economical and administrative reform—all of which they had so long and so strongly demanded. But numerically most important of all, large numbers of people in the country, staggered after Nelson's victory at Trafalgar by the utter collapse of the third coalition, had now come, or were coming, to believe the time had arrived for a complete change in the character of administration—that it was necessary the 'talents' of the opposition be employed in office.

Popular expectancy of and approval for the Fox/Grenville ministry, which succeeded to power on the death of Pitt in January 1806, was, therefore, in the first instance, considerable. At the same time the circumstances in which the Whigs came to office, and their attitude thereafter, was immediately to earn them the open enmity of Reformers, whilst their subsequent failure to satisfy popular expectation of the made it possible for the to revive the popular movement for parliamentary reform.

Much has been written, and reasonably so, in defence of the coalition ministry, the action of the Whigs in joining
it, and the actions of the ministry thereafter. The Fox/Grenville coalition or the 'Ministry of All the Talents' was not, as the Fox/North coalition earlier, constitutionally objectionable to the majority of contemporaries. It was no sudden action designed to 'force' the King's hand. Both groups had long been drawn closer by a common agreement on the need for the efficient prosecution of the war and the need to oppose Pitt's policies, whilst differences remaining between them were left open questions. It was not unreasonable that Fox and the Whigs, genuinely believing they could do good by coming to office, should be unwilling to see a ministry formed of men they wholly disapproved, through their refusal to join with the 'Grenvilles'. The 'Grenvilles', in any case, possessed considerable administrative talent and co-operation with them might well seem highly desirable in the interests of reuniting the Whig party.

Even whilst Pitt lived it had been commonly felt the ministry ought to be strengthened by bringing in Fox and

Grenville. Now, after his death, they might well seem the only personalities capable of forming an efficient administration. The King, unable to find anyone else able and prepared to form a ministry, and recognising when he sent for Grenville he must accept Fox too, must have been aware, not only of the value of, but of the strong desire for, a coalition, or national, administration at this point. In view of the difficulties with which it had to contend and its short tenure of office, can the ministry's limited success be surprising?

In the first place, ministers never fully gained the confidence of the King, and suffered from the opposition of strong interests built up by Pitt in parliament, the government offices, and in the East India Company and other business and financial concerns, during the past twenty-two years. From the moment they took office they were subjected to a strong parliamentary attack, led by the insolent Canning, whilst the death of Fox undoubtedly weakened them severely.

In the second place, with the best will in the world, the pressing needs of the moment - on the one hand to pursue the possibilities of peace and on the other to attend to urgent military matters after moves for peace had failed - must have been likely to lead any ministry to postpone the introduction of any novel or controversial measures, which required time for contemplation. But, in any case, it could rightly be argued
that neither catholic emancipation nor parliamentary reform stood the slightest chance of success at this point.

Again, though the ministry's financial proposals were not at all successful it was scarcely to be expected they would be able to reduce taxation immediately, whilst the increase they were forced to ask for followed from commitments made in the days of Pitt. As for administrative reform, though a start was indeed made, ministers could hardly have undertaken sweeping administrative reforms of the kind Reformers sought, without seriously embarrassing their own parliamentary position. The embarrassments ministers suffered over the Melville prosecution, over the matter of pressing charges against Wellesley and over the 'Delicate Investigation' into the affairs of the Prince of Wales' wife are all understandable enough.

Yet, when all this has been said in defence of the coalition,

1. On the 'Delicate Investigation' or inquiry into the behaviour of Princess Caroline, and the embarrassment suffered by the 'Talents' in having to carry it out, cf. A. Aspinall, Lord Brougham, and the Whig party pp.100-101; H. Martineau, A History of the Thirty Years Peace I.Bk.11, p.331; and infra. III.p.216-7. On the 'scandal' of Melville's acquittal, cf. H. Martineau, History of England, being an Introduction to the History of the Peace, Bk.1, p.213. Impeached and tried by the Lords he was found not guilty by majority vote in circumstances which left a good deal of dissatisfaction with the verdict. The Whigs showed themselves anxious to make an end of the charges against Wellesley, though Paull continued to seek to press them until 1808.
the fact remains that Reformers genuinely regarded it with a
disfavour as great as they had shown to the Fox/North coalition
of 1783. The 'Grenvilles' they had already long detested, but
in the Whig action in joining with them in office, and in their
failure to take up parliamentary reform, and to pursue
administrative corruption wholeheartedly, they saw only the final
act of a 'betrayal' long impending - a 'betrayal' for which the
Whigs were to be attacked without respite for the next twelve
years, and which Reformers never forgot. They saw it simply
as a coalition of two factions interested in power and the
spoils of office. The Whigs they regarded as having sacrificed
their principles to the Grenvilles. Far from feeling the Whigs
were right to try to do whatever good they could, however
little that might be, it is clear they felt that, in view of
their former professions and opposition to the 'Grenvilles',
they should have refused office. 1 Nowhere were these

1. Reformers believed that the Whigs should have taken
advantage of their position to insist, as a condition of
taking office, they should be allowed to fulfil their
'pledges'. If, however, their position was not strong
enough to allow them to secure office on these terms,
then, had they been 'honest men', believing parliamentary
reform was as necessary as they had earlier made out,
they should have refused office and continued to 'educate'
the people in the need for reform until such time as
popular support for them became such that their assumption
of office with 'carte blanche' to carry reform became
irresistible. cf. A Defence of the People in reply to
Lord Erskine's Two Defences of the Whigs (1819)
(J.C. Hobhouse) infra, and Place Papers B.M. Add, MS.
35, 154 for an unpublished reply to Erskine by Place,
written 1819.
feelings to become more acute than in Westminster, for so long Fox's own constituency and the scene of his most radical speeches.

Again, though the majority undoubtedly viewed the coalition at first with favour, the fact also remains that it did fail to satisfy and keep the support of the country. Many found their optimistic hopes dashed from the outset. Fox's unwillingness to press the matter of Catholic emancipation angered many Irish catholics and their English sympathisers. Men who had looked for a reduction, or at least the prospect of a reduction, in taxation were positively antagonised when, in the first few months of its life, it appeared the new ministry must, of necessity, increase it. Still less did men like the increased allowances granted to the Royal family. Those who looked to the routing out of administrative corruption, inefficiency, and oppression, lost confidence when they observed the ministry's attitude to Melville and Wellesley and watched Grenville and others coming to enjoy the fruits of numerous offices and sinecures. Those who had sincerely believed they would take up parliamentary reform now turned against them. The abolition of the slave trade was, beyond doubt, a worthy object, but unfortunately not such as to fire the interest of the man in the street. By the time of Fox's death there was already a considerable and growing dissatisfaction with the Whigs in the nation at large.
It was then, in these circumstances, that Reformers came to seek to rouse opinion against the ministry and against the Whigs in particular, by 'displaying' them in their 'true' colours. Whether driven by genuine personal anger or by opportunist desire to rouse 'the people' - by showing them all parties were equally self-interested and that they must learn to help themselves - the success, which attended their efforts, encouraged them to make yet another attempt to revive the popular movement and led directly to the formation of the Westminster Committee'.

Cartwright, it appears, was one of the first to 'discover' what he clearly must have expected, that the Whigs were prepared to discourage any suggestion that an attempt should be made to rouse the country to demand reform. His efforts to secure their co-operation in the holding of public meetings met with chilling response. Nonetheless, he succeeded in arranging a public meeting in Middlesex for the

1. Place referred to the considerable growth of a politically conscious and self-reliant 'public' between 1793-1806. Place Papers BM. Add MS 27850 ff. 40-1 (cf. infra p. 194 n. 1). He went on to say that as a consequence 'the people' could not be so easily 'blinded and cajoled as formerly...'. (Which teaching had been good, but that teaching had not so much been intended for 'the people's' improvement as to excite them to oppose the Tory ministers)... The conduct of the Whigs in taking office and the manner in which they... behaved whilst in office tended greatly to induce numbers of persons to distrust both parties to an extent they never before were distrusted... This it was which laid the foundation of the successful resistance to both parties in Westminster".
purpose of congratulating the King on his change of ministers, at which he contrived to read the Whigs a lesson on what 'the people' expected of them.¹

Francis Place, at the same time, made a similar 'discovery'. Already distrustful of the Whigs and convinced they would do nothing about parliamentary reform, he was anxious to prove to the Whig supporters amongst his friends that their confidence was misplaced. He suggested to Wishart and others amongst them, that they should take advantage of a Westminster meeting - summoned, partly for the purpose of congratulating the King on his change of ministers, and partly to arrange for Fox's re-election as an office-holder - to include a resolution that the electors "relied on the many promises made on the subject and that they trusted the great and important object would continue to receive the support of Mr. Fox and his friends".² But Fox, when consulted, showed himself very much averse to its inclusion and suggested a separate meeting on the subject might be called later. No meeting was called, and Fox was returned unopposed and unpledged on the matter.

If others, such as Burdett, were disposed to be more

¹ Life of Cartwright, 1.336 et seq. In June 1806 Cartwright withdrew his name from the Whig Club.

² Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,850 ff. 6-10. Place refers to the disillusionment of his friends.
patient and to give the Whigs a fair chance, it was not long before they, also, lost all faith that the Whigs contemplated any major reforms. Burdett soon recognised they had no intention of taking up the Catholic cause on behalf of the Irish. Paull found the majority had no intention of backing his crusade against Wellesley's oppression in India, and that he was being pressed to drop his charges. Cobbett, who had confidently believed and predicted in the 'Register' that his friends would sweep away administrative and financial abuses, soon found they intended to carry on the existing system substantially as they found it. Neither of the latter were as yet close associates of the Reformers. But both were now to break with former friends and to join with the Reforming 'party'.

Within weeks, Cobbett having broken with the ministers over the rejection of his proposals for abolishing corruption in the army and securing a more efficient service, opened an attack upon them in the 'Register'. More than any other person Cobbett was to mould and focus opinion among the

1. M.W. Patterson, op.cit. pp.174 et seq.
2. Letter of James Paull to Lord Folkestone, Cobbet's 'Register' Oct. 25th 1806; Letter from Mr. Paull to Samuel Whitbread (1808).
4. ibid. p.112. Cobbett's proposals were based on Cartwright's England's Aegis, which first appeared in 1804. Cf. Life of Cartwright 1.319.
metropolitan lower classes against the ministry, and it is clear why Reformers should have welcomed him into their circle.

By March, he was attacking Indian administration in support of Paull, who had determined to press forward his charges against Wellesley with the assistance of a few of the more radical Whigs, who still promised him their support. In May, after Cobbett had established contact with the metropolitan Reformers, he addressed a 'Letter to the Electors of Westminster', inspired by Melville's trial, violently attacking corruption, the wastage of public money and pensioners and sinecurists, in an effort to rouse them to active protest.¹

Conversation and contact with Reformers helped to convince Cobbett of the need for parliamentary reform. In March, he was still against it. Thereafter, he began to waver, more and more inclined to believe there neither would, nor could, be any change in the governmental system unless 'the people' came to be properly represented in parliament. By June, and as a result of his experience in a Honiton bye-election, his conversion was all but complete.²

2. For Cobbett's concern with the Honiton bye-election cf. G.D.H.Cole, op.cit. pp.113-116, cf. also Cobbett's 'Political Register' May 24th, June 7th, June 14th June 28th, 1806.
In May, he had, in the course of his campaign against corruption, decided to stir opposition in Honiton to the unopposed re-election of one of its members, Cavendish Bradshaw, who had just received a lucrative sinecure. Bradshaw's co-member had already become prominent in attacking public money scandals. In a letter in the 'Register', 'To the Electors of Honiton', Cobbett sought to stir, not only their anger, but popular anger generally against sinecurists and others who fastened on 'the people's' money.

Failing to find a candidate to oppose Bradshaw - though Burdett himself apparently considered standing - Cobbett offered himself. He declared he would never touch a farthing of public money, and would not spend a farthing to secure his election, in his conviction that the practice of lavish expenditure, of bribery and treating, was, by demoralising and debauching electors, primarily responsible for present evils. He made, however, no mention of parliamentary reform.

Cobbett, escorted by Bosville and other Reformers, went to Honiton. But the unexpected appearance at the last moment of the naval officer Lord Cochrane, who was prepared to stand for election on Cobbett's principles, led to his withdrawal. He stayed, however, to support Cochrane, who, largely because

I. T. Paul, A Refutation of the Calumnies of John Horne Tooke, p. 94, claims Burdett considered standing

standing
of his refusal to bribe electors, was easily defeated. 1

The Honiton election has a two-fold importance. First, it was to lead to the introduction of Cochrane, later to become one of the spokesmen of the 'Westminster Committee', to the Reforming party. Second, the corrupt methods pursued by Cochran's opponent and his supporters more than anything served to convince Cobbett of the need for parliamentary reform and to make him one of its most powerful advocates.

More immediately, it seems to have encouraged him to concentrate his attention even more closely upon the vast electorate of Westminster. In June, after exposing the malpractices of the Honiton election, he offered to stand himself at the next Westminster election if no one else who would refuse to accept any public money should come forward. 2

By the summer of 1806, the influence of Cobbett's 'Register' had indeed become considerable, and Reformers were delighted with his efforts. 3

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2. Cobbett's Political Register, June 28th, 1806.
3. cf. Letter of Sir Francis Burdett to Rev. R. N. French 18.8.06., (quoted by M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 1:173-4) regretting his "Cobbetts" had not been sent and promising to remember them in future; Place Papers B.M. Add MS. 27,850 f. 22., where Place refers to the 'high repute' of Cobbett's Register at this time.
On the one hand he continued to attack administrative corruption. He took up the case of Cochrane Johnston, uncle of Lord Cochrane, who was, allegedly, being persecuted by the army authorities; and he devoted much space to Paull's efforts to secure the impeachment of Wellesley, to the obstruction he met, and to the lack of Whig support for him.¹

In July, a move had been arranged among Wellesley's friends to force Paull's hand and to get his charges dismissed. On July 4th, Lord Temple in the Commons pressed for a decision upon them.² But it was tactically mishandled. Misunderstandings amongst Wellesley's friends allowed those—among them Romilly—who were uneasy and unwilling to see the charges swept aside, to offer strong objections to their dismissal.³ As matters worked out, not only were Temple's proposals rejected, but Reformers were able to make great play about 'sinister' efforts to frustrate Paull.

On the other hand, and more directly with the intention of rousing the metropolitan 'lower orders', Cobbett began a series of 'Letters to the Electors of Westminster' in the 'Register' to 'educate' them how to act in the event of a general election. In these 'Letters' he came out

1. cf. e.g. Cobbett's Political Register July 5th, 1806.
2. Hist. MSS. Commission 14th Rept. Vol. 8. (Dropmore Papers) Temple to Wellesley 5.7.06, shows what was intended and how matters were mishandled.
3. Sir S. Romilly, Memoirs of 11.159
wholeheartedly in favour of parliamentary reform.¹

Cobbett's aim was directly to attack the conscience of electors, and indirectly the conscience of the country. He was concerned to make the lesser men of Westminster recognise their strength if they chose to act independently. Westminster electors, he asserted, unlike those in places elsewhere, were free. They at least could show the way to others. It was too much to hope that all would act without hope of personal gain, or without fear, but surely a majority would realise their own interests and show their real feelings. They must recognise, and show they recognised, that there was no difference between parties, between Pittites, Grenvilles and Foxites, who were all equally ready, once in place, to act as their predecessors acted. They would defend or attack corruption according to whether they were in or out of office. But they were all equally concerned with securing their share of the spoils to be derived from the public. 'The people' must show they wanted parliamentary reform and a complete change of system.²

By August, it is clear that a considerable feeling of discontent had been roused in the metropolis, whilst

¹ They began in the Register of Aug. 9th, 1806.
² Cobbett's Political Register Sept. 13th, 1806.
dissatisfaction, if less apparent, was appearing in the country as well. The new ministry's actions had roused no enthusiasm. Its proposals for increased taxation had roused positive antagonism. Radical attacks on the ministry and, above all, the writings of Cobbett, had helped to rouse a genuine distrust for all party politicians. and, as it will appear, a readiness to show it. Cobbett's 'Registers' were eagerly awaited by many, both in the capital and in many parts of the country. Amongst Place's tradesmen friends, much interest was roused in what he had to say on passing subjects, and doubtless there was a good deal of political discussion and talk about taking independent action.

But, if popular feeling was already rising against the ministry for its conduct of national affairs, it was Fox's death and the ill feeling roused by ministerial arrangements for the consequent bye-election in Westminster, which precipitated action among metropolitan Reformers. Unprepared for action, they were unable to prevent the unopposed return of the 'Grenvillite' candidate, Lord Percy. But the circumstances were such as to encourage a belief

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1. S. Maccoby, op.cit. p.196
that it had been the deliberate aim of the ministry to prevent 'the people' making their voice heard, by contriving that a contest should be prevented. The opportunity was seized. Crystallized and fostered by Cobbett, with the aim of stirring popular anger, this belief became a 'legend' in Westminster politics. More immediately, it is to be seen as another important development in the sequence of events which led to the formation of the 'Westminster Committee'.

So far as Reformers were able to see matters, it might indeed look as if arrangements had been carefully made to trick electors. Shortly after Fox's death, it seemed likely three candidates would appear. First in the field was Lord Percy; then Dennis O'Brien, a well known, but far from trusted or liked, former supporter of Fox, offered himself; at the same time it was noised abroad that Sheridan would stand.¹

Popular feeling seems to have discounted O'Brien, but at first to have been uncertain as to the other candidates. Place refers to the shock occasioned by the death of Fox, and to the readiness of many to overlook party political differences, and to lament the passing of a great man.²

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1. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,850. ff.17-20; For many newspaper cuttings on this election cf. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,838, ff.79-104 passim.
2. ibid. 27,850, f.21.
There seems to have been an unwillingness to take action which would be 'disrespectful' at this time, and Place found no response, at this stage, to his suggestion that action should be taken to secure the return of an independent and public spirited man.¹

Sheridan was by no means popular with the average Westminster elector, or with the Reformers. Many Westminster tradesmen, it seems, were all too conscious of the money he owed them, and few of the more respectable approved his dissolute life. Reformers distrusted his sincerity, and Cobbett, in particular, had already crossed swords with him in 1804. At the same time he had long associated himself with reforming politics in Westminster and had, at least for a time, taken up Paull's cause in parliament. Again, his apparent willingness to stand against Percy must have seemed to confirm his independent political position on the fringe of the Whig party with which it was known he had been out of favour.²

Whatever their feelings, metropolitan Reformers seem to

1. ibid.
2. G.M. Trevelyan op. cit. p.126 quotes an extract from Sheridan's 1802 Whig Club banquet speech condemning the 'Friends of the People's' desertion of the popular cause, which gave great offence to the Whigs. Sheridan was, of course, now really one of the Prince of Wales' party. For his earlier brush with Cobbett, cf. G.D.N. Cole, op. cit. p.126, n.1.
have been prepared, in the first instance, and in the absence of an independent candidate, to join with local Whigs in supporting Sheridan. A public meeting was summoned for September 18th, to adopt him as candidate. Duly held, with Sheridan present, many of those in attendance were astonished to hear a speech from one of the 'local Whig' leaders, Wishart, to the effect that Sheridan's conscience would not, after all, let him leave his constituents in Stafford. Sheridan himself, coming forward to confirm this, added that, in view of Fox's death and imminent funeral, he thought it best to avoid the tumult of a contested election. He then recommended support for Percy.

Immediately there were signs of anger in the meeting. Gibbons, who declared he had attended only on the assumption the meeting was to support Sheridan, seems to have spoken for many. Though Sheridan denied, when charged, that there was any ulterior motive behind his withdrawal, numbers remained suspicious and displeased. Whilst some continued to urge him to stand, others suggested the setting up of a committee with a view to finding a fresh independent candidate. Few favoured Percy, when it came to vote, and according to Place...

"such was the disgust felt by those present, that

2. For an account of this meeting, cf. ibid.
the Whigs were compelled to bow to the suggestions of forming a committee to find someone else..."

But, he added, they contrived to nominate each other for membership of it. There can be no doubt, especially when Sheridan's withdrawal was accompanied by the withdrawal of O'Brien, that many electors felt that they had been duped - that the whole matter had been deliberately arranged with the aim of discouraging the setting up of an independent candidate until it had become too late to do so, and of preventing a contest.

In fact Sheridan's withdrawal had a very different explanation. Long ambitious to represent Westminster in parliament, an ambition known to most of his Whig friends, he had come to suppose, even before Fox's death, when arrangements for the disposal of his seat were discussed, that no obstacle would be put in his way if he decided to offer himself in Fox's place. As a result, he had made no effort to press his claims at this point, and Lord Grenville and others who were, in fact, inclined against Sheridan seem to have believed he had no intention of standing. Consequently

2. ibid. 27850 ff.17-18. Place believed Curran was 'bought off' by the Duke of Northumberland; M.W.Patterson, op.cit.; C.D.M. Cole, op.cit.; G.Wallas, op.cit., all accept the Reformers' version of this affair.
the decision was taken to support Percy, and Percy's candidature announced, without Sheridan's knowledge.1 Sheridan's withdrawal was the result of an angry feeling of humiliation at being publicly 'refused' the support of the ministry.2

But whilst Reformers are unlikely to have known the truth at this stage - if indeed they ever knew it - it may well be doubted whether the knowledge would have brought them to change the course they now came to pursue. Immediately after the meeting they set about finding a new independent candidate. On September 20th, Cobbett's 'Register' took up the quest, exhorting electors to make an independent choice, and on the 22nd a letter from Paull appeared in the press, urging that since Percy was a nominee of the 'Grenvilles' and could not, therefore, be supported, and since Sheridan had disappointed them, an approach should be made to Burdett.3 If Burdett refused, then Curran, an Irish judge and reforming associate of the Horne Tooke circle, should be approached. Burdett, he pointed out, was out of parliament and the next general election was not due for two

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2. ibid. cf. Letter of Sheridan to a friend 14.9.06.
years. The country should secure his services now and he could return to his faithful Middlesex supporters, whenever parliament was dissolved.

In their turn the Whigs publicly urged electors to accept Percy. On the 22nd, the Burgess Court and many of the parish vestries pronounced in his favour and on the 23rd a special meeting of the Whig Club did likewise. About the same time, at a meeting at the Rainbow Coffee House, the committee appointed to seek a fresh candidate reported that it had had no success and recommended support be given to Percy.¹

On the 26th September, however, another elector's meeting, was summoned by Reformers, was held. Gibbons, who had contrived to get the committee appointed at the meeting of the 18th, represented its efforts as deliberately halfhearted. It appears it had asked Sheridan to reconsider his decision, had applied to Whitbread, who refused, and had looked for Burdett, only to find he was 'out of town'. Paull, who was present, condemned the methods being used to secure Percy's return as trickery and the tactics of the committee as

¹. Ibid. 22nd, 24th Sept., 1806.
². Ibid. 27th Sept., 1806; from which the following account is taken.
obstructionist, and urged that a new approach be made to Burdett, and, if necessary, to Curran. Mr. Madocks (junior), son of W. A. Madocks, M.P. for Boston, and associate of Cartwright, said he had already told the committee he would stand, but no notice had been taken of his offer. However, if no one else appeared, he was still willing to do so. Someone having raised Cobbett's name, Peter Finnerty said Cobbett did not mean to stand.

Finally, it was resolved to make approaches to Burdett and Curran and to hold another meeting later to consider their replies. Paull, it appears, was deputed to wait on Burdett. On the 22nd, Cobbett's 'Register' was full of the 'Whig' attempt to foist Percy on the electors. It was, he urged, nonsense to talk of not disturbing the peace on Fox's death. If electors did not wake up now it would be too late! But nothing was to come of the Reformers efforts to secure a candidate of their own. Burdett was indeed contacted, and though he may at first have agreed to stand, he later refused. Curran also refused.

Burdett probably had other reasons for refusal but in

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1. M.W. Patterson, op. cit. l.177; James Paull, Refutation of the Calumnies of John Horne Tooke, p.16, says Burdett at first agreed, but that Tooke dissuaded him.
a public reply he excused himself as being bound to Middlesex. He added that he would never have presumed to be a candidate there, but that he was persuaded the country stood more in need of integrity than talents.¹

On October 2nd, a final meeting of the independent Reformers was held to review the situation.² Burdett and Curran were no longer possible candidates. Madocks (senior) as chairman, announced his son had now decided not to stand, since he could have no chance against the corruption which had all but overwhelmed Fox. Hewlins again proposed Cobbett, but was again told by Finnerty that Cobbett did not seriously intend to stand. Finnerty indeed condemned Reformer's efforts to find a new candidate, as intended to cause a bustle and confusion for the benefit of rogues and pickpockets. Paul also refused to stand.

Thus Reformers' hopes of making a fight of the election came to nought. On October 4th, Cobbett continued his exposure of the 'Whig' plot and scathingly condemned the supineness of the electors. "The attempts", he wrote, "which are now making to destroy the last remains of the real freedom of elections, have attracted the attention of every

¹ M.W. Patterson, ibid.
² Morning Chronicle Oct. 3rd, 1806, from which the following account is taken.
man but have wakened the indignation of few", and he illustrated his case further, by instancing the way in which ministerial influence had been directed against one of the members for Hampshire who had voted against the ministry in a previous election there. It proved to be a final effort to secure an independent candidate and it failed. Cobbett himself, who probably never had meant his own offer earlier in the year seriously, did not come forward. On October 6th, after Whitbread had proposed, and Elliot, a brewer, had seconded him, Percy was declared elected.

Failure, however, was to lead to later success. There is no doubt that the whole affair, especially after Cobbett's 'explanation', caused very considerable ill-feeling among the rank and file of Westminster electors - a feeling that they had been tricked and thwarted. Further, the sight of the 'mob' scrambling for free beer, bread and cheese before, in traditional fashion, the Hustings were torn to pieces, served to add insult to injury by illustrating the contempt in which electors were apparently held. Cobbett, in the 'Register', made much of that point, emphasising how electors had been treated like children and made to look like fools, and Place later wrote "Almost everyone I know was much offended by the proceedings and all who were concerned in them".

1. Cobbett's Political Register Oct. 4th, 1806
2. Morning Chronicle 7th Oct., 1806
3. Place Papers E.M. Add, MS. 27850 ff. 18-22
Directly it led men to consider how they could avoid being made to look like fools again, and how they could be sure of having an independent man ready for the next occasion. Place himself suggested opening a subscription and persevering until someone could be returned independently. "My mind", he later wrote "was made up to watch circumstances, to take advantage of them and never desist until Westminster, by returning one member in the way proposed, had shown its power and importance, driven away the factions and made the way clear to return both its members by the sole exertions of the electors".¹

How far Place would later have found others ready to support him in 1807 had not circumstances been such that the issues were kept very much alive, must be open to conjecture. But within a matter of weeks after Percy's return - weeks in which Cobbett continued to tell electors how they had been fooled, and to urge them to waken up² - the ministry decided it would take advantage of the more promising foreign situation to dissolve parliament in order to strengthen its hand. The general election of October 1806 was to provide, fortuituously enough, just the occasion independent Reformers

¹. ibid. f. 20
². Cobbett's Political Register, Oct. 13th, Oct. 25th, 1806
in the metropolis were looking for. It was to finalise the breach between Whigs and Reformers and to lead to the beginning of a concentrated attack by the latter on all parties.

It cannot be surprising that the metropolitan Reformers, feeling as they did, and well aware that the ministry hoped to increase its parliamentary support, should regard it as necessary to make a particularly determined effort to prevent 'the people' being 'deluded' again. In view of the recent 'evidence' of the ministry's attitude towards 'the people' in Westminster, it was obviously of particular importance they should be afforded every opportunity of making 'their' voice heard. Honest independent candidates had, therefore, to be found for Westminster and Middlesex equally. However, they were made, it is clear plans were concerted to make a considerable demonstration in the metropolis, with the aim of revealing the 'self-interested' nature of the coalition and of showing up the Whigs as apostates.

Election arrangements, it is evident, were still handled by the group of upper middle and middle class Reformers of the Horne Took circle, rather than by the lower middle class ex-members of the popular societies. But numbers of the latter came to lend their active assistance and to gain further valuable experience in the conduct of 'popular' elections.
Candidates were, on this occasion, not hard to find. Burdett, especially after his recent pronouncement, was already bound to stand in Middlesex. In Westminster, Paull, making known his willingness to stand, was taken up immediately.¹

Paull was now completely embittered by the lack of support, indeed obstruction, he had met with at the hands of his former 'friends' in his campaign against Wellesley. Discovering earlier promises to find him a seat in the event of a dissolution were now disregarded, he had become quite ready to join with the Reformers.² At the time of Percy's recent election his actions suggest that he still had slight hopes of keeping Whig favour - or, at any rate, that he had not wished to make the first move in breaking from them completely. Now, his hopes of a close borough having gone, he had nothing to lose and perhaps much to gain by standing for a constituency where the temper of 'the people' promised a fair chance of success. An enigmatic figure, it may be he hoped that, by securing Burdett's support and/or popular approval, he could, like Wilkes earlier, restore his rapidly dwindling 'fortune'.³

¹ Cartwright was suggested as a candidate too. Place Papers B.M. Add.MS. 27837 f.109.
³ On Paull's financial difficulties cf. infra. II. pp.16-17.
Whatever his motives, and he was, it seems, already distrusted by some of them, Reformers decided to take him up. Recently he had become an intimate of the Horne Tooke coterie. Approving of his parliamentary conduct, aware that Cobbett, in lauding his 'patriotic' efforts and in describing the way in which he was let down, had encouraged public sympathy for him — they seemed to have viewed him as the best possible candidate. Burdett and Cartwright, who was once again preparing to offer himself at Boston, were both ready to introduce him to the public.¹

Though personal considerations may not have been absent — for Paull's wealth was diminishing and Burdett can have had no wish to squander yet another fortune on what might prove a vain effort — the decision that they would not only stand against electoral corruption but would proclaim their refusal to spend a penny of their own to secure election, was, tactically, a move well calculated to harness the growing dislike of the debauchery and violence encouraged by the candidates of the aristocratic parties, to which Cobbett had

¹ James Paull, *Refutation of the Calumnies of John Horne Tooke*, pp. 65-66, recounts how he was taken up by Burdett, Cartwright and others at this time. Place claims he admired his courage in pursuing his charges against Wellesley, especially after the Whigs had 'deserted' him, but that he did not approve of Paull's character, cf. B.M. Add. MS 27850 f.23.
recently drawn so much attention. Again, it would appeal to the consciences of those who had learned from Cobbett it was their duty to seek candidates to represent them, not the duty of candidates to seek seats.

Further, their 'chosen' platform - against excessive taxation and the wastage of public money on sinecurists and placemen - was clearly designed not only to touch the public on a tender point, but to hammer home the wider constitutional issue; that, so long as the executive was in a position to 'corrupt' a majority in parliament, and so long as parliament remained dominated by the aristocratic factions, the liberties of 'the people' would remain endangered. No great emphasis was laid upon parliamentary reform - probably because it was recognised they stood to gain greater support by playing it down - but the inference was clear for those who chose to draw it.

Above all, however, it was the Whigs who were to be exposed. On October 27th, both Paull and Burdett issued their election addresses. ¹

Paull made great play with the frustration of his efforts in parliament by the Whigs, and even urged that one

¹ For the addresses, speeches, meetings, etc. in connection with the Westminster and Middlesex elections of November 1806 cf. A History of the Westminster and Middlesex Elections (1806)
of the reasons for the dissolution was the desire of the ministry to thwart his efforts. He claimed he had undertaken to expose Wellesley solely in the interests of the public and urged that, if he were left out of parliament, the charges would be dropped. He offered himself for Westminster to afford electors a chance to express their feelings and because only in a popular constituency was there a chance he might be elected despite the influence of the factions against him.¹

It was Burdett, however, who more clearly expressed the 'party' line in a slashing attack on the coalition. In words reminiscent of Horne Tooke he wrote:—

"Whenever the contending parties and factions in a state unite, the history of the world bears evidence that it is never in favour, but always at the expense of the 'people;' whose renewed and augmented pillage pays the scandalous price of the reconciliation. Under these circumstances you are called prematurely and suddenly to a fresh election of your representatives, if they can be called such. A double imposture is attempted to be passed on you. The watchword of one party is 'the best of Kings.' The watchword of the other is 'the best of Patriots.' But neither of these parties will choose to descend to particulars and inform you what the 'best of Kings' and the 'best of Patriots' have already done or will hereafter do for you. What they have done for themselves we know and feel. What further they will do for us, we can only conjecture..."²

¹ ibid. p.5
² M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 1.182; Times Oct. 28th, 1806
Whatever the reason for the sudden dissolution, he was persuaded that 'vexatious and galling' as present burdens were, they would be far worse at the end of the coming parliament, unless the public awoke.

Declaring himself independent and refusing to countenance the aid of any of the parties in or out of power, he pledged himself to defend the interests of 'the people' if elected. But his return was entirely a matter for 'the people' themselves to decide, if they agreed with his views and wished him to serve them. He would not, he said, "distribute nor consent to the distribution of even a single cockade" but would he "furnish nor consent to the furnishing of a single carriage".

A few days after, as other prospective candidates were appearing - Byng and Mellish for Middlesex, Sheridan again and Admiral Hood for Westminster - election meetings were held on the 28th and 30th October to adopt Burdett for the county, and Paull for Westminster. 1

The former meeting, organised by Reformers for Paull, had Burdett in the chair. Burdett introduced Paull and strongly recommended his adoption in view of his patriotic actions in the last parliament and his desertion by those who had promised to aid him. He warned against Gardner or Hood,

1. A History of the Westminster and Middlesex Elections (1806) pp. 7 et seq.; and p. 307, from which the following accounts are taken.
whichever should stand, as naval officers with little political knowledge, and likely to be called away on duty. Sheridan, he declared, was most unsuitable for Westminster as an officeholder. Placemen must be removed from the Commons. How could the Commons act as a control on the executive, if its members were in the pay of the executive? The clause in the Act of Settlement demanding the removal of placemen must be re-enacted. Paull, for his part, expressed his entire sympathy with Burdett's principles and pledged his support to Burdett in parliament if elected. Resolutions were then passed adopting Paull and attacking placemen in the Commons, pointing out that the chief object of those "... who were loudest in their profession of devotion to the King..." was to render him as well as the people slaves of faction," and proclaiming that since the only security for the property and liberties of 'the people' was to be represented by men of their own free choice, it was the duty of all men in the city of Westminster to vote independently and exhibit their good sense to the rest of the Kingdom, as an example.

The latter meeting, in favour of Burdett himself, was called by the Middlesex Freeholder's Club. Its organiser adopted an identical tone. Burdett's attitude and principles were praised and approved, and it was formally agreed to ask him to stand. A public subscription was launched to defray
election costs. Publicly, a stand was taken on the grounds of electoral purity.

It seems that, up to this point, a number of the Whigs had been preparing to support Burdett, and Reformers still held the door open to them. Byng was praised and hope expressed that he would join with them. But it must have been recognised there was no real chance of his doing so. The reaction of the Whigs - many of them personal friends of Burdett - to his attack on them in his address, and in his speech on the 29th October, was one of intense anger.¹ They were particularly galled by his slighting reference to Fox as 'the best of Patriots' and his apparent ingratitude for the help he had received from the Whigs in the past. But they were also keen to counteract the influence of Burdett's constitutional views.

On 31st October, Perry, editor of the 'Chronicle' and a Whig spokesman, launched a strong attack on Burdett, condemning his proposals for the removal of placemen from the Commons and urging that, since Burdett must realise it would make government in its existing form impossible, he must be deliberately aiming at subverting the constitution and

¹ M.W. Patterson, op.cit. 1.134
inflaming 'the people'. Other Whigs followed suit. Byng publicly refused to associate his election campaign with Burdett, and Whitbread, roundly condemning Burdett's attitude and principles, especially his views on placemen, refused further Whig aid. It was made clear that in Middlesex the Whigs would support Mellish the 'Grenvillite' candidate. If the more radical of the Whigs were personally hurt, the moderates and conservatives among the Whigs and 'Grenvilles' were positively horrified by his attitude. Long before polling commenced, they and the Reformers were embroiled in a bitter press warfare. The Grenvilles were 'tyrants', the Whigs were 'apostates' and the Reformers a 'dangerous and 'self-interested' faction', 'tools' of the schemer Horne Tooke, and the ambitious Burdett.

It was the Westminster election which commenced first. The Middlesex election began a week later. Whigs and Reformers, however, regarded the two elections as one campaign, and in both cases the main contest was between these two groups. Hence prominent Reformers and Whigs joined actively in both contests in support of their respective candidates. From November 3rd, when the Westminster election began, until November 26th, when the Middlesex election ended, the metropolis

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1. Morning Chronicle 31st Oct. 1806. Perry had just received a minor office from the new ministers, and was greatly taunted by Reformers.
3. ibid.
was kept in a state of tremendous excitement,

In Westminster, Paul was opposed by Sheridan and Hood, also a 'Grenvillite' candidate. The main ministerial effort was directed towards blackening his character, and every effort was made to dig up anything which might be made to look unsavoury about his past. He was represented as an ungrateful adventurer, who had been enabled to return to Lucknow in 1802 only through Wellesley's favour; had, thereafter, thanked him and praised him, but had repaid the favour by turning on him. Other attacks accused him of revisiting India later, and whilst pretending gratitude and friendship for Wellesley, of deliberately collecting evidence against him. He was held out as a 'nabob', buying his way into parliament with money ill-gotten in India by bribing and corrupting electors, despite his public refusal to spend money on the election. His social origins, as the son of a tailor, and his present role, as Burdett's 'hired' man, were also frequently used lines of attack.1

The attempt to portray Wellesley as unfairly accused by an unsavoury adventurer - likely to have been inspired by Wellesley's own friends among ministers - can have done little good to the Whig cause and must have been embarrassing for

1. ibid. pp. 29 et seq.
numbers of Whigs, Sheridan included, who had supported Paull in parliament. Paull's publication of letters revealed his attitude to Wellesley whilst in India, led to the dropping of the subject. Again, in view of the strong anti-aristocratic feeling long growing in Westminster, attempts to decry Paull on the grounds of his social origins, though doubtless designed to appeal to the well-to-do, can only have increased popular irritation with the ministry. Sheridan's own origin was equally 'suspect', and Cobbett, in his reply, was able to make great play with his having been the "son of a play actor", of the "class denominated by the common law as vagabonds". As for Paull being supported by Burdett, it must have been a positive recommendation to those discontented with the ministry and distrustful of the Whigs. Whig attempts to prove Cobbett had, before the election, sought a coalition with Sheridan - made to counter reforming attacks on Sheridan's coalition with Hood - recoiled, when it was proved that Cobbett had only asked the Whigs to agree to avoid all action likely to encourage disorder and violence.

If many of the ministerial attacks upon Reformers missed their mark, the Reformers attacks and counter attacks upon

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1. Cobbett's Political Register Nov. 22nd, 1806.
the Whigs would seem to have been more effective. At best Sheridan was not really popular in Westminster, but after the part he was held to have played in duping electors in the recent bye-election in Westminster, he had become extremely unpopular among the 'rank and file'. Further, he was now open to attack as a placeman, whose liking for office had led him to desert his principles, as he had deserted Paull. Peter Moore, one of the 'left wing' Whigs and a candidate for Coventry, speaking in defence of Sheridan and attacking Burdett's attitude to placemen, asked, perhaps somewhat rashly, for what the electors had long been labouring, if not to return men such as Fox and the Whigs to office. A reply, published in Cobbett's 'Register', was immediate and effective. 1 Attacking Sheridan as a typical example of Whig apostacy it proceeded:

"The nation had been willing to suppose that the support of Mr. Fox was an independent struggle to give effect to declared principles, that their purpose was not narrowed to the mere question of how the treasury bench should be occupied; but was directed generally to practical adoption of his national sentiments whoever might be in power. If his possession of office would accomplish that purpose, then this certainly would have been included in their design, but always, beyond doubt as a means not an end,"

Sheridan and the Whigs were for some time embarrassed by circumstances which, in origin, had nothing to do with the

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1. Cobbett's Political Register, Nov. 8th, 1806
Reformers' onslaught on them. Sheridan, hurt by Grenville's opposition to his candidature in September, had determined with or without their approval to offer himself again.¹

In turn, the Duke of Northumberland had been so offended by Sheridan's reappearance that he had withdrawn his son and set him up for Northumberland, hitherto Grey's seat, instead.² Thereafter the Whigs, compelled to support Sheridan against their real wishes, had done so with ill grace. Recognising Sheridan's weakness as a candidate, they had sought to arrange a joint campaign on behalf of Hood and Sheridan together. But neither Hood nor Sheridan nor their close supporters were, until some time after the election began, willing to co-operate, and only Paull's success and Sheridan's desperate position on the poll had made agreement on a 'coalition' possible.³

Reformers were delighted to make use of the story when they got hold of it, and made much of Northumberland's objection to Sheridan. Further, they were able to illustrate 'typical'

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¹ T. Moore, op. cit. pp. 617 et seq.
Whig behaviour by showing how ready Sheridan was to sacrifice his 'independence' and seek the support of his enemies by coalescing as soon as his prospects of success were dimmed.

It was not without truth. For some time Paull headed the poll, with Sheridan trailing a bad third. Even when the election was more than half over, and Hood had taken the lead, Paull still had a lead of 200 votes over Sheridan, who remained at the bottom. There is no doubt that many of the Whigs, as well as Grenville himself, viewed the outcome with small optimism, and believed Paull would succeed.¹

Meanwhile, on 10th November and whilst Paull seemed likely to succeed in Westminster, the Middlesex poll opened. The Whigs now joined in attacking Burdett much as he had been attacked in 1802 and 1804 as an associate of revolutionaries, out to ferment revolution himself.²

It was his attack on placemen that came in for most criticism. Government, it was argued again and again, could not work without the support of the Commons, and that support could not be obtained unless ministers were members of the House and able to influence it. If placemen were excluded, the Commons must either dominate or be dominated by the

¹ / ¹Ibid. Earl Fitzwilliam to Grenville Nov. 6th, 1806, and Grenville to Buckingham Nov. 7th 1806, which express alarm at Paull's success.
² / A History of the Westminster and Middlesex Elections (1806), pp. 307 et seq.
executive. Power would be unchecked. Burdett must be seeking to emulate Cromwell. He was an enemy of the King and the Constitution.

Burdett, defending himself, made clear he did not object to Ministers who represented 'the people' sitting in parliament. He objected to the swarms of placemen, court pensioners and sinecurists, who held seats and whose interests dictated they support the executive. In words reminiscent of Paine, he adopted a formula Bentham was later to follow:

"What man on earth ever yet contended that it was fit the same Attorney should manage a cause for two contending parties. The representatives of the people are the Attorneys of the people and cannot also be the attorneys of the Executive. That a man should act as a control on his own conduct is absurd." 1

As for his being an enemy to King and Constitution, he said:

"One of my strong objections to the present parties has been that the prerogatives of the Crown are as much usurped upon the one hand as the rights of the People on the other. I am not for a King of 'shreds and patches' - I am not for a man of straw - I am not for a Name... but for the efficient magistrate, for the Constitutional King of England, - the abuse of his prerogatives by ministers being checked, controlled and guarded against by a fair representation of people in parliament. What I want to obtain for the people is not a sword, but a shield against official abuse." 2

1. ibid.; cf. Bentham's Catechism of Parliamentary Reform Introduction. Works III. 494
The ministers, Whitbread had said, had not had time to formulate their projected schemes of reform. It was not because they had not been given time, however, but because they had been too busy with their own party interests. It was said that, if he (Burdett) had been a minister, he too must have kept taxation high. But a large part of the taxation raised was used for the payment of pensions and sinecures and for corrupting the Commons, and was quite unnecessary. Grenville and his connections, indeed, presented a splendid target for Reformers, in view of the number of places and sinecures they held, and the amount of public money they drew, and Burdett singled them out for attack.¹

Despite their efforts, both reforming candidates were to fail. Paull indeed was beaten only at the very last moment, and only then after despairing and far from scrupulous efforts had been made jointly, by Hood's and Sheridan's supporters, to find sufficient additional votes to place Sheridan second on the poll. As on previous and subsequent occasions, reforming candidates, particularly Paull in Westminster, suffered heavily from coalitions against them, which combined the full weight of conservative interests. There were, however,

¹ ibid.
other reasons for their failure. Whilst the Reforming election committees had lacked efficient management by men with election experience, and had been inefficiently run, the Whig and 'Tory' committees appear to have been much more highly organised.¹

In the early stages of the Westminster contest, the support for Paull, which appeared likely to overwhelm his rivals, had been largely spontaneous - more than anything the result of Cobbett's powerful pen. At the same time the Whig and 'Tory' campaign had been disorganized. Afterwards, at the very time when Paull's poll began to slacken, and his opponents efforts were stepped up, there had been no efficient committee to whip up electors in his support, or to prevent his rival's committees polling whom they pleased. Both Place and Lemaitre had offered advice to Paull's supporters but Paull and others had been unwilling to accept advice. In the case of Lemaitre, Paull seems to have been scared of countenancing a man who had notoriously figured in the 1794 State Trials.²

¹ I use the term Tory because it was so used by Reformers. It would be more correct to use the term 'Grenvillite'.
² Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,850 f.27; cf. also, Cobbett's Political Register May 16th 1807, for a letter of Lemaitre referring to Paull's refusal to accept his assistance.
On the other hand, his opponents had, as Place said, men on their side who understood the "minutiae of Westminster elections", and who were "skilled in the usual rascalities", including the manufacture of artificial votes and the hiring of bludgeon men to hamper elector's progress to the poll. Further, in the agents who looked after their property, the nobility had, so to speak, a permanent election staff, who would direct tenants how they should vote. Again, too, the select vestries exerted strong influence, as 'conservative' electoral committees.

In short, conservatives were better mobilised, whilst many a humble elector, who regarded elections as a time for excitement or gain and who cared little for the issues, must have been carried along by the better showmanship of the Reformer's opponents—by the sight of Hood's sailors, the chairmen of other candidates, the flag and banner waving processions—and have been won over by generous treating.

But failure in the poll could not mask the tremendous and quite unprecedented success Reformers had enjoyed through

1. Place Papers B.M.Add.MS. 27850. f. 25.
2. cf. Hist. MSS. Commission 14th Rept. Vol. VIII C. & D. Series 30. Lord Auckland to Grenville Nov. 2nd, 1806. "It is very material that the tradesmen of all persons who deal much with London tradesmen should have circular intimation. I have made a list of above thirty who have long been employed by this family, and have sent round to them without reserve or scruple, and it would be of consequence if this were done by many".
their own efforts and the discomfiture of the Whigs. Paull's poll particularly was striking. Hood had received 5478; Sheridan 4758 votes. Thus, even with 'Tory' influence assisting them, the Whigs had only succeeded in giving him a majority of 277. But even more significant, in a total poll of 9891 electors, Paull had received the support of nearly one half of those who had voted - and nearly one third of those had voted only for Paull. Paull had over 3/5ths of the single votes cast - 3077; Hood only 1033 and Sheridan still less - only 955. He had, as Reformers were not slow to point out, obtained a greater suffrage than any previous candidate. Only the coalition had prevented Paull being elected and the significance of this fact was not lost on Reformers. His success was the more striking because it had been so very largely the result of the spontaneous support of individual electors.

There can be no doubt that Reformers had drawn for their success on a considerable feeling of distrust or dissatisfaction with the ministry, which had arisen not only in the metropolis, among the lower middle classes, but in the country elsewhere and among men of various differing walks of life. A feeling of having been 'let down' by the Whigs had created a temper, which had encouraged individual Reformers to make direct efforts to arouse support in their
own home counties.

Cobbett had done his best to stir up trouble for the ministerial candidates in Hampshire, and apparently found two candidates there, willing to adopt the Reformer's principles, with regard to their conduct, whom he strongly supported. Cartwright, probably as a result of his association with Madocks, had stood for Boston in Lincolnshire, in his company. Henry Hunt, not yet intimate with Reformers, but known to some of Horne Tooke's friends, had heckled Tory and Whig candidates in Wiltshire.

Lord Cochrane had stood again for Honiton, and, on this occasion, had been elected. Though his success must in part have been due to the false impression he had deliberately created, that he would pay well for votes, it may well be, in view of the amount of attention Cobbett had directed on the borough earlier in the year, that he enjoyed considerable 'genuine' support as well.

But it was in the metropolis, where the main efforts of Reformers had been concentrated, that popular dissatisfaction had been most marked, and it had been Whig candidates who had

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1. Cobbett's *Political Register* Nov. 8th, 1806.
2. *Life of Cartwright*, p. 343
suffered most. In Middlesex, Byng's poll had been greatly reduced, and he took only second place. In Southwark, though it is not clear that Reformers participated in any way in the election, Tierney was thrown out. In Westminster, above all, Sheridan's narrow and, indeed, questionable success, and the solid vote in favour of Paull, was an humiliation for the Whigs.

The delight of the Reformers was intense. The Whig faction had been 'unmasked', had shown itself by its election behaviour, to be no different from the Tories, had been humbled. Significantly in Westminster, Hood and Sheridan had refused to be chaired, whilst Paull and Burdett were chaired everywhere after the election was over.

Immediately, success was to be followed up and capitalized, in a further attempt to rouse the country. The metropolitan election had been fully reported in all the papers and had attracted very considerable attention everywhere. Now, the 'honest' behaviour of the Reformers and their achievement, despite the corruption of their opponents, was to be publicised as widely as possible - the attitude of the 'Friends of the People' displayed!

At the close of the Westminster poll, November 19th, a dinner was held at the 'Crown and Anchor' for Paull's supporters, where a number of resolutions were passed
affirming that they had held to their intentions expressed before the election began and..."had scrupulously abstained from every attempt at undue influence, making their appeal to the good sense, the integrity and public spirit of the electors!

despite the fact that every species of corruption and pressure had been used against them. Paull, who had vainly tried to persuade the High Bailiff to grant a scrutiny at the close of the election, intimated he intended to petition against the return on behalf of the electors, and asked that a subscription be set on foot. ¹

On 20th, Paull issued his post election address emphasising that his success was the success of the electors, that their achievement was in the face of the most infamous opposition, and a few days later, on the 24th, a second meeting was held to promote a petition. ² Publicising the failure of the High Bailiff to grant a scrutiny and the essential need to secure justice, it was resolved to proceed with the petition..."especially because the contest is not merely between Mr. Paull and the other candidates, but is one which involves the dearest interests of the electors of Westminster as well as the whole elective body of Kingdom".

¹. A History of the Westminster and Middlesex Elections (1806) pp. 221 et seq.; Cobbett's Political Register Nov. 29th, 1806.
². ibid.
Public subscriptions were called for and a committee named to receive them. The issue was to be carried to the country.

At the same time Cobbett trumpeted the Reformer's success. "No other influence other than that which was visible to the world, did any of us use"...Though he might have "commanded" many to vote for Paull in Westminster and for the independent candidates in Hampshire, he had not done so. "We found all the free voice of the people for us".¹

Whilst Sheridan had hired ruffians, Paull had hired no-one. Cobbett had heard it said of Paull's supporters, "none might ever be admitted to a gentleman's company"

But what, he asked, of the 'scum' - the 'placemen', 'pensioners' and 'dependent clergy', who voted for Sheridan?² He saw clearly the value of the publicity, which the elections had given to the Reformer's cause, and knew how to make the most of it.

"Those who see in an election, no other object than that of seating a member in the House of Commons will, of course, see no good has been done by the dissolution in giving rise to the contests in Middlesex and Westminster. But will such persons, however they may dispute the good, pretend to believe that the sixteen speeches of Sir Francis Burdett, promulgated as they have been through every public print in the whole Kingdom, together with his several addresses,

1. Cobbett's _Political Register_ Nov. 29th, 1806
2. Cobbett's _Political Register_ Nov. 29th, 1806
particularly his last, will they pretend that all these have produced no effect. Will they pretend all the resolutions, all the numerous publications relative to the Westminster election have had no effect on the people? Can any man who saw Westminster at the time: who knows anything of Westminster, and who considers the force which in due time their excellent example must have on the rest of the Kingdom, can any man say that the Westminster contest has had no effect. Look at the Whigs who so long deluded the people with the sound of patriotism and disinterestedness; look at them (for they dare not look at you) and then say whether the elections in Middlesex and Westminster have had no effect.¹

To hold out and publicise the result of action taken in an election in Westminster as showing the sense of 'the people' was an old practice. But the attitude of 'the people' in Westminster had significantly become, and was to become still more, increasingly worthy of notice, as reflecting not simply the feeling of 'the people' of Westminster itself, but of large sections of the population who had little or no chance of independent expression in elections elsewhere. It was to be of particular importance to the revival of the popular movement in the country that Westminster itself was to become the centre of a strong popular movement amongst its own inhabitants.

The importance of the Reformers' stand in Westminster

¹ ibid. Dec. 20th, 1806.
and Middlesex, however, lies not only in the publicity their cause received in the country at the expense of the Whigs, nor in the open hostility which thereafter persisted between the two 'parties'. More fundamentally, though doubtless deriving impetus from temporary circumstances — from a feeling of dissatisfaction with the overall conduct of affairs at a time of stress, and from genuine dislike of continuing high taxation — it marked a growth in the feeling of dislike for 'corruption' and of distrust for aristocratic rule. The extent to which the lower middle professional and tradesmen classes of Westminster had withdrawn their support from their traditional aristocratic leaders was considerable. Cobbett above all, but other writers and pamphleteers as well, had reflected as well as intensified this feeling, and it had been most strongly expressed in Westminster, not only because the Whig connection with Westminster had been particularly strong but also because the lower middle classes there had had an exceptional chance of expressing their feelings.

It becomes clearer that the character of popular elections was changing. Reforming candidates, generally, if not always, from the upper classes themselves, had normally formed their election committees from among their own friends and supporters. Technically at least, they were the committees of candidates, not of electors. Further, whatever their
professions, they had relied to a very large extent upon whipping up support artificially, by pleasing the 'mob'. How far they adopted the methods of their opponents, which they publicly condemned, probably varied considerably and would depend on such factors as the amount of genuine support they could rouse, their own feelings, the attitudes of their agents and their purses. Many might deplore the necessity of pursuing unsavoury means to win favour artificially. Few were unwilling to bow to it. Horne Tooke's supporters in 1796 had found it worthwhile offering a 'public breakfast' at least. A majority of Burdett's supporters in 1802 and 1804, when popular excitement was at a low ebb, had clearly no other thought, but that it was necessary to secure support by bribery and treating and by generally pleasing the electorate in the way customarily expected. Even Paull had been willing, it seems, despite all his professions and the claims made on his behalf, to bribe and treat and to seek to win artificial support by any means available. What is significant is that not only did numbers of men on his committee oppose the idea, but there really was, for much of the time, no need for him to secure artificial support.

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 27850 f. 25.
It is precisely for this reason that the Westminster election was, and indeed is, particularly important in revealing the extent to which genuine popular interest among the lower classes could be roused, and to which men had come to be prepared to express their feelings independently. Ever since Horne Tooke's stand in 1790 it had become evident a new 'public' was coming into existence. Now in 1806, though the 'mob' was still much in evidence, this 'public' had shown how greatly its strength had grown.¹

But, further, along with the growth of a politically minded public, the number of local men - amateur politicians -

1. Looking back from the year 1826, and browsing over old newspapers, Place himself found it remarkable how recent was the development of the interest shown by the press in 'the people', but how rapidly it had grown since the nineties as the 'public' came to assert itself. cf. Place Papers B.M. Add.MS 35146 f.14. (Place's MSS Diary). He wrote also, 27850 f.40, "Pitt had nothing like the same mass of intelligence in 1793 to contend with that the coalition had to contend with in 1806. The numbers of persons who were qualified to judge, and the number who presumed to judge the conduct of the administration in 1806 had been greatly increased; men had been awakened to a sense of their own importance in society and had begun to rely upon their own judgment to an extent never before known..."
who were prepared to take an active part in political affairs and in the conduct of elections, had been growing too. They were ordinary men, tradesmen, solicitors and the like, who detested the way in which political affairs and elections were conducted by the aristocracy and who had become ready to act, not from hope of gain, but according to political conviction.

The numbers of such men prepared to take an active interest in politics at any given time varied greatly depending, in part, on their need to attend to their private concerns, in part, on how greatly their own, and the interest of the public generally, was stimulated. But, it becomes evident that growing numbers of them, commonly former members of the Corresponding Society, had for some time been taking matters over and considering taking the conduct of popular political affairs entirely into their own hands. Many of them had actively assisted either Paull's or Burdett's elections, or both, as members of their committees.¹

Apart from the broad division between Whigs and Reformers, a new secondary division was more clearly emerging, a division between upper middle and middle class Reformers of the old generation, and the lower middle class Reformers of the new

¹ cf. infra. II. p. 29.
generation. It was not, and never would be, a rigid division. Reformers of all shades and classes still associated with each other, or divided from each other, as much for personal reasons as any other. Lower middle class Reformers still welcomed the advice and help of the older school, much as Hardy and the Corresponding Society had looked to Tooke. But it is, nonetheless, evident that as groups - Reformers of the Horne Tooke circle, and Reformers of the lower middle classes, looked on each other with increasing disfavour. The former were becoming to regard the latter with disdain, as if they had no right to interfere in the direction of matters not properly in their province. The latter, conversely, were coming to regard the former as too moderate or insincere, coming to be convinced that the cause of 'the people' could never flourish unless 'the people' themselves took matters into their own hands. It is clear they, not only distrusted the electoral practices still encouraged by older Reformers, but disapproved their sheer inefficiency in mobilising popular support.

Reflection upon success achieved against what had long been considered insuperable barriers against free expression - the power and influence of the nobility in Westminster served to release large numbers of humble Westminster electors from psychological thraldom, gave them greater self-confidence and removed their fears of oppression. Still more important, as Place pointed out, it induced many others to brave the
risks they were likely to run by active interference in politics. If so much could be achieved with so little efficient organisation, what might not be achieved through a more systematic and carefully planned campaign?

It was this feeling, combined with a recognition of the example which popular success in Westminster could afford the country, which encouraged Westminster electors to take action in order to take independent political action a few months later; and it was their effort, more than any other factor, which served to revive and sustain a popular movement both in Westminster and the country.

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But for the moment, however, at the close of 1806 nothing was fixed or arranged. It is apparent Reformers were, not without reason, more optimistic of the future. Cartwright and Cobbett in the 'Register' continued to make the most of the issues raised in the election and to pour scorn on the Whigs. And whilst numbers of men in the metropolis remained in association actively assisting Paull to promote his petition

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2. Cobbett's Political Register Nov. 22nd, 29th (including letters of Cartwright to Whitbread), Dec. 6th, 13th, 28th, 1806; Jan 3rd, 10th, 17th, 1807, and following numbers.
and hoping to publicise the popular cause through him, others continued to discuss the possibilities of future action. But there is no real evidence to suggest any clear campaign was planned to follow up their electoral success and, as events were to show, much depended on fortuitous circumstances.
Looking back to 1807, to the time when the 'Talents' ministry fell, it is possible to see that parties were to reach an ultimate point in their tendency towards disintegration. That tendency had become more apparent with the fall of Pitt in 1801. The substantial agreement of the bulk of the nation – first on the need for peace and then in favour of the renewal and wholehearted prosecution of the war – had brought confusion among politicians and political groupings. Once it was accepted that Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform were beyond the range of practical politics there was, once more, little to divide politicians save matters of administrative, strategic and military efficiency connected with the prosecution of the war. Thereafter, the personalities of Pitt and Fox – whose force of personality and rivalry, had, perhaps more than any other single factor, served earlier to encourage a division in national feeling and to solidify politicians into two main groups – remained almost alone to focus and divide political loyalties. But even whilst they lived, former Pittites had fallen away on personal and political grounds, and Foxites had become more restive. Their deaths, within a few months, greatly accelerated the tendency of both parties to break up altogether. The Pitt party, indeed, seemed shattered into fragments. The Foxite Whigs, though contriving to retain an outward unity, suffered severely from internal dissensions, and, at times, appeared as much divided into separate groups as the Pittites.

Once again, parliament was composed of a large body of unattached politicians and a number of small groups – groups led by men who at one time or another, and on various grounds, had supported Pitt or Fox, and who now tended, sometimes for personal

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sometimes for political reasons, to go their own way. If after 1801, the confusion of parties had made it inevitable the crown should play a strong part in determining the composition of ministries, the importance of its role in this respect between 1807–12 became even greater. In their actions to form, or to attempt to strengthen a ministry, both George III and the Regent afterwards enjoyed the considerable freedom which derived from the existence of a permanent Court party and the readiness of the majority of independent members to support any set of ministers, who enjoyed, or looked like enjoying the Royal favour. Ministers, for their part, well recognised the value, indeed the indispensibility, of royal support. Only the division of the Commons into two – the majority supporting, the minority opposing the ministry – only the continuing habit of referring to the whole of the former as Tories, and the whole of the latter by the name retained by the majority among them, as Whigs, preserves the illusion of a two-party system.

There were also, however, other reasons why the parliamentary scene should again come to appear atomized at this time. It was not only that for the time being the substantial unity of the nation in favour of the prosecution of the war overrode lesser differences, not only that the two greatest political rivals of the day had quitted the scene. As it has been pointed out above, aristocratic influence and Crown patronage had long been diminishing as forces capable of holding men together for governmental purposes, in the face of a growing spirit of independence, and a developing 'public opinion' to which politicians might react differently. Parties had come to be without adequate means of restraining the individualistic tendencies of their members.  

2. supra, note 1. W.R. Brock's most illuminating "Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism", chs. 111, 1V.
To-day it is possible to know that the existing parties were to survive, despite their great difficulties, until such time as they found new means of organisation, and new bases of support in the country.

On the one hand it is apparent that among the great majority of landowning and middle class elements, loyalty to the Crown – to a George III, who came to symbolise die-hard resistance to the menace of France – and loyalty to a constitution, which it appeared essential to maintain in the interests of order, were factors providing considerable reserves of strength on which a Tory party could draw. National opinion, so far as it continued to be represented by the independent country gentry, remained, though ill disciplined, strongly conservative. Further, though patronage might play a diminishing part in holding men together in support of the Crown, its value to those, in whose power it was to bestow it, was still considerable. Tory ministers not only remained in control of administrative patronage. They derived, too, such benefit as could be derived during wartime from being able to offer war contracts, or the control of a local patronage in their home areas, greatly extended by the creation of numbers of additional minor official posts. After 1807, the tendency of the Tory party was to re-unite.

On the other, though its members long remained dis-united, it would seem that the influence of the great Revolution families and large landowners, remained sufficient to prevent the Whig party disintegrating, until it was able to draw fresh strength from new sources in the nation at large. Up to 1812, and indeed after, opposition politicians might reasonably continue to hope for office through the Prince of Wales, or his heir. Many, doubtless sincerely, believed that by holding together they could form an administration better for the nation. But it is clear too, that the failures of
the Whigs to secure allies among the established groups in Parliament, and their often desperate position, did force numbers of them to seek additional support in the country among 'new' middle class elements dissatisfied with the character of Tory ministers, yet still alarmed by the attitude of Reformers. Significantly, because they were out of office, and because of the strength of conservative and radical opinion against them, it was among the Whigs that recognition of the growing importance of 'public opinion', and the need to mould and harness it, appears most clearly.

But in 1807, and for many years thereafter, it might well seem to contemporaries as if one set of ministers would differ little from another - that parliamentary struggles whatever the professions of politicians, represented little more than the contests of self-interested groups for the spoils of office.

As Miss Martineau, writing of 1807, observed -

"The men who had, at first, stood as symbols of principles had become as symbols are apt to do, idols. The idols were broken and men must find out afresh what their principles were and choose fresh exponents of them. It did not appear that there were any men before the eyes of the nation qualified to become such exponents at present. It seemed that new parties must be formed on grounds to be newly explored and ascertained."

The middle classes, landowning, commercial, industrial afforded "... a basis of materials for a great popular party..."

The question was -

"whether it was sufficiently aware of the dignity of and soundness of, its permanent interests to assert itself in opposition to the self will of royalty and of an aristocracy"... "always most powerful in a period of war".

In the long run, the great majority of those middle classes were to remain in support of the historic parties, or independently in support of King and constitution. Absorbed in the war and believing patriotism and the maintenance of social stability

1. H. Martineau, op. cit. Bk. 1, 222
2. ibid
demanded the upholding of the existing political system, by far the greater number, particularly the more substantial among them, had, in the main, no inclination to seek to take the initiative from the governing classes. The extent of their political interest, and the active part numbers of them did play in elections, and in politics, generally, is, and was, therefore, less obvious.

But already in 1806, a section among them, so far as the temper in Westminster is evidence, had begun to show unrest and dissatisfaction with both parties, and between 1807–12, there were times, indeed, when distrust of the nation's traditional political leaders and of the efficiency of government as a whole was sufficiently widespread for it to appear almost as if a new national party was forming among them, a party led by a group of Westminster tradesmen indiscriminately known as "Burdettites" or "Reformists".

It is clear that those who were dissatisfied with the working of government, who believed major reforms were necessary and who lacked faith in their traditional leaders, had not only a far greater incentive to take the initiative, and to act and speak for themselves, but forming as they did in most, if not all, areas, a minority, a much greater need to organise themselves efficiently.

Precisely because the majority among the middle classes remained conservative and, comparatively speaking, politically quiescent, the appearance of a reforming element among them was the less easily seen by contemporaries, in its true light, as a symptom of widespread changes taking place in society at large. The existence of Reformers, their actions and their attitude were, therefore, the more easily misunderstood. Because the appearance of such people on the political stage was still, and long remained, novel; because their methods were not always "gentlemanly," and they were commonly condemned, even by members of their own class; because their aims, particularly their constitutional aims, might readily be misinterpreted, it was especially during war when passions were easily roused - perhaps too easy for the majority to condemn them out of hand as revolutionaries.
CHAPTER V

The Foundation of the Westminster Committee.

1. Enthusiasm for Independent Action Maintained

At the close of 1806 it is evident that, scattered here and there in their shops and offices in Westminster, there were numbers of men, who at one time or another during the last sixteen years, had actively assisted the reforming cause, and who would again be prepared to give their services to that cause, if encouraged to do so. But, elated though such men were by Paull's success in the recent election, they had not yet been drawn together in the form of a party, nor was there in existence any agency capable of co-ordinating and directing their enthusiasm.

Some, indeed, as has been noticed, had remained loosely associated ever since the days of the nineties, and those who actively assisted in elections and other reforming matters under the direction of members of the Horne Tooke coterie, were clearly well known to each other. Others who had retired from active intervention in political affairs had, nonetheless, maintained social contact with each other and with their more active friends. But, though their interest was stimulated to a point where, it seems, many might easily have been persuaded to come out of retirement, there was no political reform club to bring them together and to give them a lead.

At the close of Paull's election, Paull's committee had indeed sought to identify itself as a "committee of the electors", by making arrangements to launch and handle matters relating to the petition in favour of Paull, in the electors' name. But, far from attracting the assistance of others and becoming the nucleus of something more permanent, it very soon disintegrated. Paull's determination to keep matters in his own hands was to lead to the rapid falling away of those who had at first agreed to help him.1

1. cf. infra, pp. 15-17
Thus, though Place and a few of his closest friends, particularly those of them who had been active on Paull's and Burdett's election committees, are known to have been no less keen to make firm preparation for electors themselves to secure the return of an independent candidate, at the first opportunity — though doubtless other plans to follow up Paull's success were discussed — yet no definite arrangements to pursue any course of action were fixed upon at this time. Despite the considerable enthusiasm for the reforming cause which existed in Westminster, it may well have seemed to many that there was little immediate chance of, or need to prepare for, a new election.

What might have happened, had there been no election in Westminster for some years, can only be a matter for conjecture. It may be felt that, in any case, numbers of Westminster electors would soon have come together to give an independent lead to their fellows. In fact, however, within a few months, there was another dissolution of parliament, providing a totally unexpected opportunity for those who sought to return an independent candidate to parliament entirely by their own efforts, to achieve as much and more than they can have dared to hope. In February 1807, the Whigs became convinced that a limited measure of Catholic relief, to facilitate the recruitment of Irish Catholics, was necessary for the efficient prosecution of the war. In March, after incurring the King's wholehearted opposition, they found themselves dismissed. The Portland ministry which followed, decided to dissolve parliament as soon as it felt secure enough to do so, in April, and a general election was arranged for May. ¹

For a number of reasons popular excitement far from diminishing, had by that time increased.

In the first place Cobbett, continuing his "Letters to the Electors of Westminster" dwelled on the lessons of the elections of 1806, the failures of the "Talents" and Whig apostacy, and on Sheridan's and the Whigs' electoral behaviour. ²

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1. cf. infra. pp. 8-10, where this is more fully discussed.
In particular, he hammered home the cause of electoral self-help. Who were the Sheridans, of all people, to argue the superiority of their caste? But it was not only the Sheridans, but sundry fine lords, too, who imagined they had a superiority which gave them a right to rule the people:

"Notwithstanding all my feeling on the side of birth and rank, he believed them existed." against the exercise of the undoubted rights of the people, a combination avowedly founded upon the arrogant and unjust allegations that, on account of our low birth we were unworthy of public influence or trust...”

Cobbett made his meaning clear. His own class, 'the people', were just as capable of sharing the direction of government,

"... and gentlemen, though they (the aristocracy) happen to be upheld by a state of things calculated to favour them, I hope there are none among us so base as to believe that they are our superiors"

All they sought was to stifle 'the people'.

In the second place, the political and constitutional issues, brought about by the change of ministry, led to a violent press altercation between the Whigs and the new ministers. Condemning each other as factions seeking office, Whigs and Tories succeeded in increasing the contempt in which all parliamentary parties had come to be held by large numbers of Westminster electors, and by many elsewhere.

Though the deteriorating military situation had provided severe problems for the Grenville ministry, yet the domestic programme it outlined early in 1807, particularly a plan of finance which seemed to promise no large increases in taxation, might have won it greater favour had it survived. But, in March 1807, such support as it had, was clearly quite inadequate to uphold it against the opposition of the Crown to its Catholic plans.

1. Cobbett's Political Register, Feb. 7th, 1807.
2. ibid.
Believing they had George III's permission to go ahead, ministers were encouraged to introduce a bill on the subject, only to find the King suddenly refusing them permission to proceed. It seems there was a misunderstanding as to the King's prior approval of their intentions, and it may have been that he did not, at first, appreciate the full implication of their proposals. Whatever the case, his opposition to them led ministers to refuse to bring in any Catholic bill at all, doubtless expecting all Catholics to support their actions. At the same time, they reserved the right to offer the King such advice as his and the country's service might require, and made clear they must defend their proposals in parliament. George III, aware ministers felt themselves free to re-open the Catholic question whenever they wished, countered by demanding a pledge they would not do so while he lived. On their refusal to accept it, they were dismissed, and Portland and other former ministers took their place.

According to modern views, Grenville and the Whigs had, constitutionally, a genuine grievance and a strong case for attacking the new ministry. And, indeed, they made the most of it by posing as martyrs to the royal will. Arguing, as Burke would have done, they insisted on the dual role of cabinet ministers — as Kings servants, and as Commons' representatives. As the former, they agreed the King had an undoubted right to dismiss them. As the latter, however, so long as the sense of Commons was in their favour, he must accept them. Further, they argued with much force against the demand for a pledge, as being inconsistent with ministerial responsibility.

The new ministers they condemned on two counts, first, as "secret advisors", as men out solely for their own ends, in fact responsible for their dismissal; and second, according to the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, as men, in any case, technically

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1. Though in the event mistakenly. Even among Irish Catholics it roused little enthusiasm, M. Roberts, op. cit. p. 32.
responsible, by the fact of their having accepted office without stipulations regarding the pledge, for the course of events which had led to their doing so. As for the dissolution of parliament, the King had no right to order it. An appeal was to be made to the treasury against the sense of 'the people' expressed in parliament.

Unfortunately for the Whigs, their arguments found little favour among contemporaries. On the contrary, to the great majority, already dissatisfied with the Whigs and mistrustful of their intentions, it appeared simply that they had been seeking to pass a measure of which they, and the King, strongly disapproved, and were now, as in 1783–4, advancing constitutional doctrines which were positively dangerous. It is clear there was a firm belief that the King's conscience and his wishes deserved respect. As for his right to dissolve parliament, the Whig case against it was greatly weakened when, after a momentary hesitation, a majority of independent members swung over in support of the new ministers.

Thus it was that most men were prepared to agree with Tory counter arguments, that the Whigs were factiously seeking to coerce the King, that they were solely concerned with holding on to, or with re-securing, office, and that their doctrines would overturn the balance of the constitution and lead to the establishment of a parliamentary despotism.

Cobbett, delighted to see the Whigs out of office, was equally delighted to attack their constitutional claims, and he it was who expressed Reformers' views most clearly. On the one hand, and wholly agreeing with the Tories on constitutional doctrine, he attacked

1. R. Pares, op.cit. p. 139
2. The sequence of events and Whig arguments are presented in successive issued of Cobbett's Political Register in March and April 1807. The interpretation of the 'facts' is, of course, Cobbett's own. cf. also, for the Whig case, M. Roberts, op.cit. pp. 30 et seq., S. Maccoby, op.cit. pp. 216–18.
3. After a move by the Whigs to bring their 'case' to issue. On 9th April a resolution, that it was contrary to the first duties of ministers to restrain themselves by a pledge from offering such advice as circumstances might render necessary, put forward by Brand, was rejected, cf. H. Martineau, op.cit. pp 246–7.
everything in the Whig arguments which defended cabinet and parliamentary government. On the other, he was delighted to agree with the Whigs, that the Tories were equally concerned with office and place, and were, even now, out to feather their nests by an appeal to the Treasury. The abuse which both parties hurled at each other served only to increase disgust for all parliamentary factions amongst the lower middle classes of Westminster, and Cobbett, and doubtless all Reformers, were in high glee.

There was, however, a third reason why enthusiasm in favour of independent action was maintained. Paull's name, and the persistence with which he pushed a second petition when the first was delayed, were a constant reminder to the electors of the way in which they had been treated with contempt. On the one side, Cobbett proclaimed the identification of Paull's cause with that of the electors. On the other, the attitude shown in parliament to the petitions, and the persistent condemnation of Paull and his associates in the conservative press, sharpened their anger.

On the 20th December, 1806, the original petition against Sheridan, decided upon at the meeting of 27th November, was presented to the Commons by Lord Folkestone not, as earlier planned, on behalf of the electors, but on behalf of Paull himself. On the 24th, Folkestone moved its consideration be postponed until 24th February, 1807, to allow for the assembly of evidence. But on February 20th, Sheridan himself succeeded in getting a further postponement until 14th April, on the ground that his legal representative would be away on circuit.

1. e.g. Cobbett's Political Register, April 18th, 1807.
This, immediately, roused Cobbett's wrath. Postponement for this reason, he argued, had been refused on other occasions. The real reason the postponement had been granted was because it was intended that parliament should be prorogued in May, and there would thus be no time, until the next session, to consider the petition. In fact, it is not unlikely that Sheridan had heard that Paull was in great financial difficulties, which made it more than likely, if investigation of the petition could be delayed long enough, that Paull must give up.

Paull, however, had certainly given no-one the impression he intended to give up. On the contrary, angered at the delay, and claiming that he had long possessed evidence that Sheridan had attempted to tamper with his witnesses, he promptly produced a further petition, charging Sheridan with having done so. Further, he made efforts to secure petitions from the Westminster parishes, protesting at the delay, and eventually wrote one himself in the name of St. Martin's.

These petitions were presented on the 26th and 27th February, by Lord Folkestone, and Biddulph, respectively. The petition alleging Sheridan’s interference with witnesses, was considered on March 5th and on March 18th.

It is difficult to resolve how far Paull’s charges were justified. A good deal of the evidence produced does indeed seem to show Sheridan had made efforts to keep some of Paull’s witnesses quiet. But they were, beyond doubt, of very doubtful reputation. Drake, Paull’s chief ‘hope’, who came into the limelight because he was convicted of perjury and sent to Newgate, was the husband of a natural daughter of Sheridan. He was apparently disappointed at being unsuitably rewarded for services to Sheridan in the election.

1. Cobbett's Political Register, Feb. 28th, 1807.
2. ibid, and cf. infra, pp. 16-17.
3. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, ff. 4,8-9; and for letters of Paull to Place and Adams, February 1807, ff. 69-72.
4. Place Papers, ibid. 
5. ibid.
6. Cobbett's Political Register, March 7th, 14th, 28th, 1807. Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, March 5th, March 18th.
Drake's conviction was seized upon to weaken Paull's case and probably did so. But, not without justice, Cobbett argued that it was scarcely possible to obtain direct evidence in cases of corruption unless men who had participated in the affair were drawn in as witnesses. Cobbett's retort to those who attempted to make out Paull's associates were contemptible, was that Drake had, in fact, offered himself to Paull, and that he was, as one of Sheridan's relatives, one of the very tribe Sheridan held up as natural rules of 'the people':

It matters less, perhaps, whether proceedings in the House were fair, than whether they appeared fair to those watching outside. Though their evidence was expunged later, witnesses, called on behalf of Sheridan, were allowed to dwell on the 'purity' of Sheridan's election conduct, while Paull's attorney was checked if Paull's witnesses touched upon the election at all. Again, Sheridan, as a member of the House, could speak in his own defence. Paull could not reply if he were attacked. On one occasion, indeed, sitting in the gallery, his temper got the better of him and he was unable to contain himself. He rose and spoke in his defence, and was promptly admonished by the Speaker.

To a House long tired of Paull's efforts to secure the impeachment of Wellesley, a doubtful case provided the excuse for its dismissal. On the 18th March, and by a method perhaps too readily used in the Commons when it was desired to clear away distasteful business, the 'trial' was ended. A resolution was put to the House that the allegations contained in Paull's petition were false and scandalous, and it was carried with only Folkestone dissenting.

1. Cobbett's Political Register, March 7th, 1807.
2. ibid, March 14th, 1807.
3. Cobbett's Political Register, March 28th, 1807.
Cobbett was thus able to make great play about a prejudiced House, about the impossibility of securing justice from it, and about the unfairness of Paull's treatment. In view of Paull's unpopularity in the Commons, and his condemnation in the conservative press, it was easy enough for many among the lower classes to accept that view. But it seems that, if Paull had a good case, it was hopelessly spoiled by the character of his witnesses.

But, though too little came to light to make a clear verdict possible, the use of a resolution of the House to resolve a matter of justice was not calculated to reduce popular dissatisfaction. Consequently, worthy or not, Paull became one of the long list of martyrs—though true, a very minor one—who were victims of oppression, and the fate of the petition must have reminded many of the fate of Horne Tooke's petition earlier.

In fact, though he continued to make arrangements to press the first petition, it becomes clear at this time, that Paull had little or no crusading spirit in him, and was desperately concerned to turn enthusiasm for reform to his own advantage. It was, however, out of his efforts to persuade Reformers to help him forward this petition, and afterwards to assist his election in Westminster, that the 'Westminster Committee' emerged.
11. The Committee comes together

Paull's election committee, which had stayed in existence after the election of November 1806 to manage the subscription and the preparation of evidence for his first petition, had gradually dwindled away and ceased to be active. The subscription had failed and Paull was soon not only without friends to assist him with the petition but without money even for his own needs.

To understand how this state of affairs came about, it is necessary to draw heavily on Place's narrative of the events which led up to the election of 1807. Though Place's story is likely to be coloured against Paull, since it was written after Paull had attacked and slandered him publicly, yet the evidence provided by newspaper cuttings, letters, etc., in his guard books, at least support the facts of his story.¹

Place had made no contact with Paull during his election. He had, however, offered his committee advice on how to prevent fictitious votes being polled for his opponents and had attended the 'celebration' dinner at its close.² Shortly afterwards Paull came to see him and, thanking him for his advice, assured him the money raised by public subscription would be well spent on the cause.³

In January, however, he had come again, complaining that his committee was inactive, and had asked for Place's assistance in preparing matters for the petition. Place, claiming that he did so on public grounds, and that he never approved Paull's character, agreed to do so. At this time he had no idea why Paull's committee had failed him.⁴

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¹ Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838 ff 1-17. For miscellaneous newspaper cuttings, pamphlets, resolutions, letters etc. cf. 27,838, passim. For Place's Ms. comments on Paull's later pamphlets and publications in his own defence, cf. 27,838 ff. 200-201. For a further narrative by Place, covering the same ground but giving additional information, cf. B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850 ff. 28-68. cf. also J. Horne Tooke, Letters to the Editor of the Times, May 1807; J. Horne Tooke, A Warning to the Electors of Westminster.
² For Paull's version of events cf. in particular, J. Paull, A Refutation of the Columns of J. Horne Tooke, Times, May 6th, May 8th.
1807, for a letter written by Paull (May 5th). Morning Post, May 30th, 1807, for a letter written by Paull in the name of J. Belford (27,838, ff. 200-201)

2. Place Papers, Add. Ms. 27,850, ff. 27-29.
3. ibid.
4. ibid.
He found, on looking into matters, that nothing whatever had been done to prepare a case against Sheridan on the grounds of corruption nor to investigate the legality of Sheridan's poll. Though he, himself, began a rough comparison of the rate and poll books, and found that Sheridan had, in fact, polled many fictitious votes, he recognised that a thorough check would involve a door to door enquiry and the hiring of many helpers. Since no money was available and no one appeared willing to stand the cost, Place urged Paull to give up the idea of a petition altogether.  

Paull refused to do so, however, and urged Place to take whatever evidence he had secured to Burdett, and to ask for his financial help. Place, who always hated "begging" of this nature, would not go.  

Thereafter Paull sought help elsewhere. Precisely how Paull did succeed in presenting either the first or the second petition is not clear, for it appears, though neither Place nor the general public knew it, that Paull was already completely ruined, and had had almost no active assistance. This, Place discovered much later, when he attended, on invitation from Paull, a meeting of his "committee", summoned on the 6th April. It consisted of two members only - George Puller and Dr. Maclean. Both were known to Place only by reputation. To these two Paull proposed a public meeting be called, in a new effort to raise funds for the original petition, which was shortly to come before the Commons, and resolutions were adopted for insertion in the press.  

Place, as an onlooker, was astonished, but he was to be even more astonished, when the meeting was over, to discover that not even Puller nor Maclean had any faith left in Paull. He learned that whatever money had come in, including £1000 Burdett had earlier donated towards his 1806 election expenses, had gone straight to Paull's attorneys, upon whom he relied for his daily bread; that other sums which had come to Puller as treasurer, including some Place himself had collected, had been "squandered" by Gibbons, another  

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838 ff 2–3; 27,850 ff.29–30.  
2. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850 f. 30.  
3. ibid. f.31.
member of Paull's committee. The committee had ceased to be active because it was helpless. Paull had assumed control of such money as there was, as well the complete direction of affairs, and the petition had, therefore, been presented in his name. It became clear that Paull was more and more suspected by those who knew him, of seeking, like Wilkes, to turn popular support to his own pecuniary advantage.

Such evidence as exists, indeed, confirms that, at this time, Paull was making frantic endeavours to raise money and assistance. But, though Burdett and Cobbett supported him publicly, they had both refused to encourage or assist him, urging him that, in view of his financial difficulties, he could not possibly succeed.

Thus it is clear that, immediately prior to the dissolution of parliament in 1807, there was in Westminster still no organised group of electors, nor any agreed plan of action among them. Paull's committee had clearly dissolved, and such support as he did receive seems to have been given him solely on the conviction it would not be in the public interest to drop him completely. Few men seem to have trusted or approved him.

Had the various small groups, who had publicly supported him - the friends of Horne Toole and Burdett, of Cobbett, and of Place - had any close communication with each other at this time, much confusion thereafter might have been prevented. As things were when the intention to dissolve parliament became known, though none of these groups really trusted him, they all decided independently that Paull should again be put forward as the reforming candidate, largely, it seems, because they did not know each other's attitude and no-one knew enough about Paull to make it impossible he should be supported. His reputation with electors generally was high. He seemed to offer the best chance of success to the reforming cause. In fact, only Place himself, and perhaps one or two others, did not want to run Paull.

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1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, ff. 31-32, 27,838, ff. 5-6; M.W. Patterson, op.cit. 1.195. The public subscription had raised some £200. The petitions were costing Paull some £70 per day.
2. ibid. 27,838, ff. 69-72, for letters of Paull, to Place and Adams, written in February 1807; M.W. Patterson, op.cit., f. 195 for Paull's cont
pleas to Burdett to lend him money, having ... "in vain applied to Jew and Gentile"... He also asked Burdett to ask Colonel Bosville to assist him; cf. also J. Paull, A Refutation of the Calumnies of J. Horne Tooke, pp. 53-78. Paull admitted his resources were exhausted after the 1806 election, p. 73.

3. M.W. Patterson, op. cit., 1.195. Cobbett's Political Register, March 28th, 1807. J. Paull, op. cit. pp. 72-78. Paull's case was that though he had, indeed, made every effort to secure assistance at this time, he had done so entirely with the aim of furthering the interests of electors. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f.10. 27,850, f.31.

4. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f.31. 27,838 f.10.

5. ibid. 27,850, f.41
Thus it was sometime before it was generally recognised among Reformers that Paull could not be supported. Meanwhile, his actions were to come dangerously near to wrecking the hopes of the few enthusiastic and opportunist electors, who were keen to take advantage of circumstances to run an independent candidate, or candidates, of their own.

On Sunday, 26th April – the day before the dissolution was formally announced - Place and a few of his friends met to discuss whether they should take any action at all and, if so, what form it should take.\(^1\) Though Place and Adams objected, it seems to have been agreed that an effort should be made to carry Paull, but there was a further argument as to whether or not they should attempt to carry Burdett also. Place was clearly in favour of Burdett, and, in the end, it was agreed to carry both, if Burdett would agree to stand.\(^2\) It had long been a common wish among Reformers in Westminster that Burdett should be their representative and Paull had that day gone to find out his attitude.\(^3\) General agreement was reached that the election should be conducted as cheaply as possible because they "objected to a man spending his fortune on an election". But they had at this time no hope that "the electors would subscribe as much money as would pay the (whole) expenses of an election".\(^4\)

United in aim - to demonstrate the power of independent opinion in Westminster, and to secure the return of a man or men who would express their views in parliament - Place and his friends were, in the week that followed, pitifully unable to make any formal arrangements for conducting the election. Individuals among them and others who joined them had some experience of electoral committee work, and most of them had strong ideas on how matters should be conducted. But until the question of candidature was settled, it was impossible to proceed.

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1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 31.
2. ibid.\(^2\)
3. ibid. ff. 41-42.
4. ibid. f. 41, 27,838 f. 12. Place makes clear that, until later, the best they hoped for was to be able to conduct the election as cheaply as possible; that they had not yet entertained the idea of returning a man free of expense to himself.
It had been resolved to meet again on the next day (Monday 27th) and to "act as circumstances should make it expedient". By that time Paull had told Place that Burdett was doubtful about going back into parliament and that Horne Took was against his doing so, but that, if enough pledged support for him was forthcoming in the form of collected signatures, Burdett would stand. On this assumption, therefore, it was decided to proceed with the collection of signatures and to hold another meeting next day, at which men would be asked if they would serve on a committee to be formed publicly at a dinner Paull was arranging for May 1st. This, Paull assured them, Burdett had agreed to attend for the purpose of their joint nomination.

At this point, Place wrote "Business was assuming a regular form and all seemed clear before us". There would be a volunteer staff to conduct the election and they would hope for as large a subscription as possible. But by the evening they were all coming to resent Paull's officiousness. Paull came to announce Burdett had said he was anxious to stand and willing to help in any way, and acted as if Place and the others were already his committee, prepared to do as he bade. To this they particularly objected, for in the first place they were as yet no committee at all, and the second they regarded themselves not as Paull's committee but as a committee representative of the electors.

Already irritated, and not a little suspicious of what he said about Burdett, they became the more so on Tuesday, when Paull, who had inserted notices in the press advertising a dinner in his favour on May 1st, with Burdett in the chair, now told them Burdett had refused to stand, but "must be made to". In fact, though Burdett had seen Paull on Sunday and Monday and had promised he would nominate him for election, he had not only consented to attend any dinner in favour of Paull, but had, on Monday, made it quite clear that he would not stand himself. He had, apparently, just seen Walter Fawkes' "Address to the

1. ibid. f. 42.
2. _ibid._ 27,838, f. 10. 3. _ibid._ 27,850, f. 43; 27,838, f. 10.
3a Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 43,
4. _ibid._
5. _ibid._ f. 45,
freeholders of Yorkshire in which he had refused to stand for re-election on the grounds that an honest man could achieve nothing in parliament, and had expressed wholehearted agreement with his sentiments. 1

Place and his associates, who knew nothing save the fact that Burdett had apparently suddenly changed his mind, suggested Paull had better withdraw himself, since it was unlikely a subscription for him alone would raise enough money to be of any use. But Paull, though, at first, inclined to postpone the dinner, for the reason that Cobbett, who was out of town, could not be present, was in no way put out. He assured the others that money would be forthcoming by private donation. 2 Later the same day he said that Burdett had again agreed to stand! 3

Suspicion of Paull, increasing all the time, reached a climax on Wednesday when a newspaper advertisement, inserted by Burdett, publicly announced to the electors of Middlesex that would not stand for election. In it he said –

"... Lord Melville with his associates under the pretence of loyalty, and the leaders of the Whigs under the pretence of the Constitution, and the leaders of the Catholics under the pretence of religion, are all evidently struggling for the common spoil".

The "wholesome Power of the Crown," the "fair liberty of the subject" and the "real interest of any religion" were all sacrificed to one common object – plunder. He refused to add to the delusion that he could do any good by entering parliament until corruption should have exhausted the means of corruption. 4

Precisely what Burdett's attitude towards re-entering parliament was at this time must be uncertain. Certainly he had on several occasions in the last few years professed unwillingness to have anything more to do with politics. It may be that his refusal to stand for Westminster reflected a distrust for Paull. More likely it reflected

1. J. Paull, op.cit., p.102
2. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850 f 45. Paull claimed a Sir—Grant had offered £5000, and that others, too, had offered to help him.
3. ibid.
unwillingness to squander further large sums of money on top of the fortune he had already spent contesting elections in Middlesex.¹

At this point Place and his friends decided, in spite of Paull's warning that he would see no-one, Place and Adams succeeded in obtaining an audience at Wimbledon. There, they heard from him that he had at no time consented to stand, had only promised to nominate Paul, and was very angry at the dinner advertisements. He certainly would not attend the dinner. Paull had that day sent him advance copies of two further advertisements that were to be inserted in the press— the first again announcing the dinner for May 1st, with Burdett in the chair, and the second asking electors not to engage their votes since (it was implied) Burdett would agree to stand. As a result he had written a sharp letter to Paull protesting at the use of his name, especially in view of what Paull had well known to be his sentiments.²

His tone, if correctly imparted, would certainly bear out that he was genuinely unwilling to go into parliament, and he even urged Place and Adams to take up Lord Cochrane instead.³ Cochrane had recently called on Burdett to ask him whether he meant to stand, and was clearly thinking of doing so himself.⁴

When asked by Place, however, "whether if elected, he would accept the seat and attend his duty in parliament," Burdett, according to Place, answered—

"... Certainly that is the right way. Electors ought to seek candidates, not candidates solicit electors. If I should be returned for Westminster, Middlesex or any other place I must and certainly shall obey the call, and I will do the duty of a faithful steward, but I shall not spend a guinea, nor do anything whatever to contribute to such election".

1. Burdett's position is discussed by M.W. Patterson, op.cit., ch.x.
2. The interview is recounted by Place, B.M. Add. Mss. 27,850 ff. 46; 27,838 ff. 11-12. Burdett's letter to Paull (April 29th) is quoted by M.W. Patterson, op.cit. 1.197-8.
3. ibid.
5. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Mss. 27,850 ff. 46-47; 27,838 ff. 11-12.
Burdett's attitude was not novel. It had long before been adopted by Reformers - notably by Horne Tooke and Cartwright. But it was to provide the fundamental basis on which the Westminster Committee was later to take its stand - as a committee of Westminster electors seeking representation, who were prepared to pay for the privilege. At this time, however, says Place, "no notion was entertained by anyone of returning a member free from expense; that was a proposition of mine, first suggested as above related" (by Burdett in the interview),"and subsequently made under very different circumstances". It must, however, have been from this time forward that the idea that any committee formed must act wholly as a committee of the electors who should be made to feel that the election was entirely their affair, - gained strength.

But it was from this time too, that the troubles of the enthusiasts really began. In spite of the fact that it now seemed certain Paull was seeking to push Burdett into standing solely so that he would benefit from Burdett's name and purse, a meeting, to which Place and Adams reported, decided they could not abandon him. Despite every effort by Place to get the others to drop him as a deceiver unworthy of support, it was argued that he was committed to the electors, that no others would help him now, and that he must be supported at least until the time of the dinner, when he would have a chance of gathering fresh supporters. If they abandoned him before then, it would not only put them in a bad light, but it "might take from the electors the only chance they seemed to have of any chance at all". If Paull persisted with his dinner, and the electors were informed about Burdett, perhaps they would be encouraged to appoint a committee and to collect money to carry Burdett as well as Paull. Against his better judgement, Place allowed himself to be

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838 f. 12.
2. This meeting is described by Place, 27,838 ff 12-13; 27,850, ff. 46-49.
persuaded, on the agreed basis that they acted only in an advisory capacity, and resolutions, in very general terms, were sent to Paull for use at the dinner, to the effect that both he and Burdett ought to be elected.¹

But upon the following morning, Thursday, having "slept upon" matters, and possibly after seeing Paull's new advertisements in the papers, in which it was again said that Burdett would take the chair at the dinner, and it was implied Burdett would stand, the rest of the group, too, began to feel that to let Paull proceed unchecked might well prove disastrous to their hopes. As a result, a hasty note was sent him, cancelling the resolutions of the previous night and advising him to postpone the dinner.²

Paull, however, was adamant in his refusal to do so, and not, it would seem, the least abashed in consequence of Place's and Adams' interview with Burdett. He had, by now, received resolutions he had induced Cobbett to draw up, proposing his and Burdett's joint nomination, which supposed some third person would be in the chair, and though every effort was made to get him to alter his arrangements, he was determined to proceed with the dinner and get himself and Burdett jointly nominated.³

Place and his friends, now wholly disapproving his intention, to make himself and Burdett joint candidates, vainly argued with him. He was warned that in any case they would not assist him beyond the day of the dinner; that unless matters were properly arranged in advance he would neither satisfactorily explain the absence of Burdett, nor be likely to form a committee. For proper arrangements to be made, time was necessary. If he would agree to postpone the dinner and make it a preliminary to a public meeting, they would help to arrange matters so far. Some respectable elector would

¹ The Ms. Resolutions are to be found in the Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,837 f. 93.
² Place Papers, B.M. Add Ms. 27,850 f. 50; for Paull's advert cf. Times, April 30th, 1807;
³ Cobbett was out of town at Botley, and was not properly aware of what was going on. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, ff. 15-15; cf. also, 27,838 f. 108, letter of Cobbett to Adams, 3rd May, which urged that Paull should be supported with Burdett in the public interest.
propose him at the dinner and Burdett's statement could be announced for consideration later at the meeting. If the electors knew Burdett's refusal to aid himself or to spend any of his own money, they might take him up and Paull along with him. If he was successful in forming a committee for himself, or jointly with Burdett, they would hand over all the books and papers of the previous election, period.  

But Paull obstinately refused to agree. He would not postpone the dinner, though he said he would insert a new notice in the press to the effect that he himself would take the chair. He was confident he could handle matters and would, if necessary, move Cobbett's resolutions himself. Despite Place's and others' refusal to serve on any committee for him, he noted down their names.

Thus, less than a week before the election was due to begin, the little band of Reformers found themselves largely at the mercy of Paull's headstrong determination. For the sake of appearances they did not feel free to abandon him, since they could make no reason public for doing so, which would not harm their cause. They were ready to give him, if he would co-operate, the best chance, as they saw it, of being taken up by electors. In the event, even against their judgement, they did continue to help him up to, and including, the day of the dinner, amending Cobbett's resolutions for him and preparing his election books.

At the same time, it is apparent that, though ready to see Paull had a fair chance, they were anxious to turn their attention to securing Burdett's return if possible. They objected to Paull's intention to try to get himself and Burdett jointly nominated, not simply because they objected to Paull, not only because they were scared it would end in fiasco and make it impossible for them to take up Burdett thereafter, but because, if Paull were successful, it

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838 ff. 14–16; 27,850 ff. 50–53.
2. ibid.
would be likely to involve Burdett (or them) in the expenses of his (Burdett’s) being a candidate, which they were planning to avoid.

Nothing brings out the opportunist nature of the enterprise which ultimately led to Burdett’s triumphant return, more than the story of this week. Right up to the day after the dinner the little group of electors who were to bring it about, had no certainty they would be able to undertake the return of anyone. On the morning of May 1st, the day of the dinner, Place pointed out to Paul1, that, though what he (Paul1) might propose in the evening might be adopted, matters would end there, unless arrangements for a public meeting to follow it up were made. If the electors chose to take him up, well and good. If not, no dinner would alter matters. Once again he had to insist, firmly, that neither he nor his friends, whom Paul1 was seeking to propose as committee members, would serve him.  

Had Paul1 succeeded in getting together some form of committee at the dinner, it is likely Place and his friends would have given up. But, as matters worked out, the dinner, about which they had had so much worry, was to lead to the end of their frustration, and events played into their hands. In the middle of the dinner, Jones Burdett came, bearing two letters from his brother, Sir Francis, — the one, a duplicate of his earlier letter to Paul1, the other, to the electors. Paul1 tried to get Place to get Adams and Puller to stop him reading them, but when Paul1 refused to give up the idea of proposing Burdett, the letters were read. In the second letter, to theelectors denied he had ever intended being a candidate, and protested strongly at the use of his name.

Paul1, however, brazened matters out, assuring his audience it was a personal misunderstanding; that Burdett had promised to nominate him for election and he had understood he meant at the dinner;

1. cf. infra., pp. 31–2, and ch. vii.
2. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, ff. 15–16.
Ulcers, further, Burdett had assured him, when he had seen him the previous Sunday, that he would sit if elected. He then proceeded to put the resolutions framed for their joint nomination, which were carried. ¹ When he asked Place to get them inserted in the press, however, Place told him he must rely on those he had named as a committee. Place, further, demanded an explanation to be made to himself and his friends in the morning. No committee was formed for Paul and, though outwardly calm, it is clear he recognised utter defeat. ²

The following morning, Saturday, Paul did not appear, and those who had gathered to meet him finally decided to give him up completely. Place, seeing there was still a chance to retrieve the situation, sent Adams to tell Burdett that Paul's duplicity had induced them to withdraw their support from him, and that they would do their best to prevent his name being linked with Paul thereafter. Adams was also asked to warn Burdett to withdraw his nomination, "lest he might be drawn in for the expenses of the election". It was Adams who brought back the news that, the previous night, Paul had rushed off to Wimbledon and challenged Burdett to a duel and that both he and Burdett were seriously wounded. ³ Far from being the blow to the little group, it has been represented, it was to make their success possible. ⁴ Not only were they to be freed from Paul, but public sympathy swung rapidly in Burdett's favour. For the first time they were able to proceed on a clear course.

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 17.
2. ibid.
3. ibid. ff. 17-18
4. e.g. by Graham Wallas, op. cit. p. 45.
It is not easy to pass judgement on the Paull/Burdett affair, the more especially since, whatever Paull's intentions may have been, Burdett - and even Place felt this - put himself in the wrong by sending his brother to the dinner, and Horne Tooke afterwards filled two pamphlets with falsehoods about Paull in his best 'anti-Wilkes' manner. Paull could indeed claim a good deal of public support from Burdett during the preceding year, and it seems both had been friendly enough with him, at least for some time. It seems, however, that Paull went on trading on Burdett's friendship for him long after it had ceased to exist; that the more closely Burdett had got to know Paull, the less he had wanted to do with him; that he had not, like Place and his friends, brought himself to break with Paull as long as he felt he could avoid it, lest it damage Paull in the eyes of the public when he could still be useful to the cause of reform.

There can be no doubt he sought to secure election with Burdett, either to share his popularity, his purse, or a subscription which Burdett's name would foster. Nor can there be any doubt he would have been better acting more circumspectly - especially in view of the repeated warnings he received.

Paull's contribution towards the revival of the reforming cause was not without importance, but it may seem, in retrospect, that his greatest service was to 'remove' himself from the scene at this time.

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838 f.18; the pamphlets referred to are (i) Horne Tooke's Letter to the Editor of the Times, and a Warning to Electors, both staunchly pro-Burdett and anti-Paull. Horne Tooke attempted to explain away, or ignore, his and Burdett's earlier readiness to assist and be friendly with Paull, cf. ibid 27,850 f. 107. Place says he and his friends knew there were many falsehoods or perversions in Tooke's pamphlets.

2. The quarrel between Burdett and Paull is also discussed by M.W. Patterson, op.cit. 1, ch. X., passim.
True, even now, he made great efforts to explain his actions and to retain the support of Place and his friends. But they were without avail. However "ill judged" Burdett's actions had been, Paull's behaviour was felt to be inexcusable. Sending the various election books and papers they had been preparing back to his house, they refused to have any more to do with him. Though a few men, notably Gibbons, who still clung to Paull, sought to hacken their characters for having deserted him, though Paull still persisted with his candidature, Place and his friends now agreed to concentrate on securing the election of Burdett alone.

At last, Place's long cherished hopes of securing an "honest" man to represent 'the people' in Westminster, through the independent exertions of the electors themselves, seemed nearer realisation. As he later wrote: "I had... on several occasions said, that, in spite of all obstacles, if a man of popular manners and good character and a known parliamentary reformer would come forward and stand on his merits, I had no doubt that he might be returned in defiance of the two rascally factions."

Paull's contest, in 1806, had demonstrated the power of those factions was not all it had long been believed...

"... All that remained to be done was to convince the electors, that generally they were under no control, that the power was in their hands... Independently of the return of Sir Francis Burdett, I thought it would be a demonstration of the power and independence of the people which could scarcely fail to produce good effects everywhere."

2. ibid. (Gibbons had earlier been much blamed by Paull for mishandling his affairs, and squandering his money, cf. eg. 27,838, f. 5. It is not clear what his profession or position was). Cobbett, when he heard of the duel, publicly 'regretted' the quarrel, but trimmed his sails to catch the prevailing winds in favour of Burdett thereafter, cf. Political Register, May 9th, 1807. He did at first make efforts to persuade Place and his friends to continue with Paull, cf. His letter to Adams, 3rd May, 1807. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 108.
3. ibid. f. 18.
4. ibid.
First, however, it was necessary to secure the adoption of Burdett. Preparations were hastily made; some of the group volunteered their services immediately, and summonses were sent out "for a meeting of some thirty persons, who had been active either in the late Westminster election for Mr. Paull or the Middlesex election for Sir Francis." On Saturday evening there assembled in the Ship Tavern, Charing Cross, twenty persons. As Place says "... not one public man, all obscure individuals of no political importance or influence whatever".

It was again resolved to take up Burdett and "to carry on the election as long as we would and to give it up if it failed". £34 was collected among themselves. A public meeting was arranged at the "Crown and Anchor" tavern with Dr. Maclean in the chair, for the following Monday, to place the committee on a proper footing with the electors.

1. ibid.
2. ibid. They were: William Adams, a Currier; George Puller (occupation unknown); Paul Thomas Lemaitre (occupation unknown); James Powell (associate of the legal firm of Messrs. Williams & Brooks, Lincolns Inn, who were managing Paull's affairs); J. Grant, a Mercer; N. (?) Ridley, a Bootmaker; ? Rumball, a Broker's man (?); James Fisher, a Tailor; T. Murphy, a Wine Merchant; William Rogers, a Shoemaker; S. Miller (occupation unknown); Edward Langley, a Coachmaker; Wright, Cobbett's agent; I.L. Percy, Clerk, to be frequently employed as a Secretary by the Westminster Reformers; J. Harris, Salesman; J.P. Harris, "Berkshire gentleman"; J. Pook; ? Hutchinson; T. Murphy; Dr. Maclean; (occupations all unknown) and Place himself. To these names may be added:

Paul Richter, (brother of 'idealistic philosopher Jean Paul Richter); Samuel Brooks, a Glass Merchant; Mr. Friend (occupation unknown); J.C. Jennyns, Barrister; Francis Glossop, a Tallow Chandler, and William Sturch, an old Constitutional Information Society member, who joined them a few days later.

Of these W. Adams, G. Puller, P.T. Lemaitre, J. Richter, S. Brooks, J. Powell, Ridley and Place himself were all definitely former numbers of the London Corresponding Society. Puller had been Chairman of the "London Constitutional Whigs and Friends of the People", as well (Annual Register 1792, Chronicle, p.16) Lemaitre had been under ministerial suspicion for complicity in the 1795 "Pop-gun" plot, (Cobbett's Political Register, March 14th). All of these, together with Rogers, Sturch, Murphy and Jennyns, had actively supported Horne Tooke and Burdett in Westminster and Middlesex. Adams, Brooks and Jennyns at least were members of the
Middlesex Freeholders Club (27,838, f 68). These men, with the exception of Jennyns who quarrelled with the others, were long the hard core of the "Westminster Committee". Samuel Brooks was for seventeen years the Treasurer of the "Committee", and often Chairman of various ad hoc committees formed by the Westminster Reformers.

3. ibid.
But though it was recognised it would give valuable publicity to their cause, it was expected some of Paull’s supporters would seek to break up the meeting, and precautions were taken to secure an extra room, into which those in favour of Burdett might withdraw if there were trouble. Further, two papers containing the same resolutions in favour of electing Burdett were prepared – the one headed – "At a meeting of Electors of Westminster", the other – "At a meeting of Electors of Westminster, friends of Sir Francis Burdett". If it proved impossible to make use of the former – that is, to receive the mandate of the public meeting – there would be no other opportunity of obtaining sanction for their actions. Full sanction in the name of the electors might not be obtained, but even more important, it must not be denied. If necessary they must act as "friends of Burdett".

Expectation of trouble was justified. Gibbons employed "brokers’ men" to shout down speakers in favour of Burdett. Adams did indeed succeed in explaining why Paull had been dropped, but did not add that Burdett had promised to sit. Afterwards the pro-Burdett group retired, set Samuel Brooks in the chair, that no-one afterwards could confuse the meetings, and Place and some fifty-four others, argued out the details of conducting the election. A committee was appointed, volunteers were called for and it was announced no man’s name need be mentioned if he desired it should not be. Finally resolutions were passed, which were promptly handed to the press, to the effect that:–

"It would be to the immortal honour of the City of Westminster and afford a great and glorious example to the electors of the United Kingdom, that they should return Sir Francis Burdett to parliament, free from every sacrifice and expense to himself upon independent principles, consonant to the genuine spirit of the Constitution of England, which declares elections shall be free and without corruption."

Subscriptions were opened. At this point funds were £84.

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 69.
2. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 18; 27,850, f. 69.
The following days were spent in furious preparation. Arrangements were made, according to the scheme of Place, that Burdett should be elected wholly without his participation or expense. Burdett was neither to be treated nor regarded as a candidate seeking election. Electors were to seek a representative in the supposedly proper and ancient way, because they desired representation. No form of communication was to be held directly or indirectly with Burdett. Electors were to be urged to act for themselves and in their own interests.¹

But it was not solely to accord with their constitutional theories, nor solely to impress upon electors the true nature of their duty which led to the adoption of this approach. An additional and vital reason was the chance of forcing an issue on the matter of the official expenses of an election. This idea may have developed after Burdett had told his interviewers he would not be a 'candidate', although it is apparent the idea had been germinating among Reformers for some time.²

Since it is intended to deal separately with question of electoral expenses — which, by way of official charges, chiefly concerned the High Bailiff's bill for the erection of the Hustings and for his staff of clerks and inspectors etc — only brief mention of the matter need be made here. The Reformers were determined they would not pay for the charges of the election, not only because they felt them to be excessive, but because they believed it was quite unauthorised they should be charged to a candidate of his supporters. Place, and doubtless others, considered them the liability of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

¹. ibid. Cobbett's Political Register, May 23rd, 30th, 1807.
². cf. supra p.2/-2 and infra p. 19.
But whether a candidate was liable to pay election charges or not, yet, if Burdett were not a 'candidate', he could scarcely be made liable to pay them. It would be singularly unjust if any two people could nominate someone from mischief or spite, and thereby, make that person liable. Equally, a few electors exercising their 'rights', quite independent of encouragement by the man they sought to elect (i.e. an electoral committee) could scarcely be expected to pay them.¹

The novelty of this approach and the many difficulties into which the High Bailiff, the Reformers, and later, the Courts and parliament were led, are immediately of less importance than the additional emphasis it put upon the separation of candidate and electoral committee. The fact that Burdett, extremely ill at this time, was almost certainly unaware of his nomination, made this line of action very plausible.² The High Bailiff was warned, before the election, that Burdett was not a 'candidate', that he, therefore, pay nothing, and that though the 'Committee' did not believe there were any, legal expenses only would be met. At first the High Bailiff refused to take Burdett's poll. When he found that, by an Act of Parliament, he was bound to, he gave in.³

Thus, various motives combined in the minds of 'Committee' members to encourage them to cast the election in practice, as well as in theory, as the affair of the electors, and, for what seems to be the first time, candidate and committee were separated. The long customary practice, as noticed earlier, had been that a candidate formed his own committee, or his friends formed a committee for him in his name. This had made him, in the last resort, responsible for the conduct, expense and tactics of the election.

¹. cf. infra, pp. 98 et seq.
². Burdett, according to Ms. W. Patterson, op. cit. 1.206, knew nothing of what was going on, until May 15th.
³. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 74,86; 27838, ff. 19-20.
The attitude of the 'Committee', significantly reflecting the new feeling among electors towards elections, was also to lead to what must have been the first practical attempt by an election committee to rouse the electorate by appealing only to its conscience. To this, members of the 'Committee' were driven both by the stance they adopted and by their determination to make an end of all the degrading practices they had witnessed in the previous twenty or thirty years. If they could not prevent their opponents bribing and treating and making use of illegal votes, they could, by example, prove its inability to meet the challenge of a freely encouraged people. If it is possible to argue they could scarcely have afforded any other course, it is never possible to doubt the sincerity of the leaders of the 'Committee' -

"Our desire", wrote Place, "was to make a public, and at the same time to put an end to all the disgraceful practices which had prevailed". ..."we were resolved to make an end if possible to all tumult and violence, to all carousing, to bribery and perjury, and we never deviated from our purpose".

Every advertisement, poster, handbill, issued, or speech delivered in their cause, emphasised and re-emphasised that electors must do their duty, and must expect no thanks nor reward for doing it. Place well knew that, apart from large numbers of electors who habitually acted from compulsion, and those who were bribed, many acted as if in "thraldom" to a power unseen and were scared to act on their initiative, unless given a strong lead and set a proper example.

But the novelty of the 'Committee's' approach was by no means confined only to the attitude it showed towards the electors. No less important was the tremendous efficiency which came to characterise its working - an efficiency infused largely by the enthusiasm of its members and by the organising ability and business-like methods of such

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 18 ... "The "man of the people" (Fox), wrote Place "always appeared as willing to , debase and demoralise the people as anyone else".
men as Place, Brooks and Lemaître. A new class of men was undertaking the management of an election wholly by themselves. They could not, and would not, fight with the methods of their opponents, which had long been sufficient to bring success; but they could ensure by careful arrangement, that no elector, who could be persuaded to support their cause, was neglected, that no false votes were registered against them, and that no money was squandered.

Place and Lemaître were well aware how many votes had been lost for Paull, and how many had been wrongfully allowed against him. They knew too, that there had been no procedure laid down, no plans that had made any systematic action on his behalf, possible. But beyond Paull's election was a long tradition of laxity and carelessness in electoral committee work.

Though it was customary for a candidate to form his own committee, a paid agent or agents would, as has been indicated earlier, normally attend to the day to day business arrangements - the hiring of staff, the insertion of advertisements and, indeed, the general management of affairs. Lawyers would handle the legal side and settle bills on behalf of their clients. But, assuming the agent to be honest, it did not follow he cared particularly about his employer's success; nor was he likely to have any real or co-ordinating influence upon the aristocratic friends of the candidate - who would often join in an election solely for the 'fun'. Further, any and every expense was likely to be incurred, on the assumption that, in the last resort, bills would be met by the candidate or his friends, not on the basis of what funds were available. Local parish committees it seems, commonly formed themselves independently, and their efforts would often be inadequately

1. ibid. 27, 850, ff. 25, 27.
co-ordinated. But they, too, employed staff, and they, as well as canvassers of both central and Parish Committees, would send their bills for "treating", into the candidate or his agents for payment.¹

The general laxity of a system which allowed money to be lavished not only upon electors but upon feasts and dinners for "the friends of the candidate" was condemned by the Westminster Reformers, not only for its wastefulness and bad moral effect, but for its sheer inefficiency.

It encouraged, on the one hand, the "manufacture", on the other, the wastage of votes. Whilst the majority of committee men, and others supporting a candidate, sought to profit in some way from the election, a committee could not conduct its affairs on efficient lines. Further, if the electors were to be made to feel the cause was their own, they had not only to be reached in every possible way, but given proof that their affairs were being handled openly, honestly and capably. It is impossible to ignore the missionary-like determination with which the Westminster Reformers sought to do away with all the old bad practices in elections and the scrupulousness of their business conduct. The sincerity of their desire to improve election morality, and the high standard of conduct they set for themselves by way of an example, helps to explain their harsh and intolerant attitude towards the political behaviour of others.²

¹ ibid. 27,850, f.73. cf. also, Bundles of election papers relating to elections 1806, 1807, 1818 and 1819, once among records of the Westminster Parishes of St. Margarets and St. John, now in possession of the Westminster Public Library, Archives Department, — in particular bills charged to Admiral Hood's committee for the election of November 1806.

² As evidence of this, I can only refer to the intensely bitter tone adopted by Place and others, e.g. John Thelwall in the Champion, December 1818 — February 1819, whenever they wrote of the typical election morality of the period, and of election morality in Westminster particularly.
There is no record of Place's 'plan' for the election. Place, himself, found twenty years later, when compiling the history of Westminster elections, that most of the documentary evidence had been lost. But from his recollections, by reference to the several later plans he made, and with a knowledge of the existing well-defined procedure which all elections until 1832 maintained, the arrangements the Committee made, on Place's advice, are clear enough. The election of 1807 was the occasion for testing his faith in what efficient organisation could accomplish. Arrangements were made at short notice and must, in many ways, have been makeshift.

At the meeting of Monday, May 4th, a General Committee had been constituted. This was responsible for appointing all sub-committees, and had, in fact, proceeded to appoint a Managing Committee and Committees for Printing, Canvassing and Finance. The Britannia Coffee House had been secured, as cheaply as possible, as a Committee headquarters. At the head of the Managing Committee, effectively in charge of the conduct of the election, was Place. He had a separate room, above the main committee rooms, and no-one, save the two other Managing Committee members, had access to it except on business.

1. He had drawn up a "plan" and shown it to his friends on Sunday, May 3rd. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 68. cf. Place's subsequent "plans" for conducting popular elections, infra. 2. An Exposition of the Circumstances which gave rise to the Election of Sir Francis Burdett, etc.
3. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, ff. 18-20
4. ibid. f. 20.
The large number of books, essential to the conduct of an election were printed and in other ways carefully prepared. These were designed to contain, or to record, up-to-date and accurate information about who had been, and who still were to be, canvassed, who had voted and in what interest, and indeed information of every possible kind that would make action both swift and sure. Such books were kept posted, and supplied to the various officials and canvassers, to whom the information they contained was essential.

Information of this nature had long been recognised as necessary to the conduct of a fifteen day poll, and the keeping of such books was not new. But the emphasis Place laid upon the meticulous care with which they were kept up to date, and the rules and regulations which were drawn up to cover the action of those responsible for handling them, suggests an entirely novel thoroughness.

It was not only that it was necessary to make sure that all electors had been contacted. If, for example, it appeared from the state of the poll, that the arrival at the Hustings of a body of electors in one interest would encourage the supporters of that interest, and discourage those of an opponent, the arrangements for assembling such a body could not be made without detailed information. In any case, canvassing without material inducements had to be on a thorough basis.

To ensure the efficient running of the 'Committee', to ensure neither money nor time was wasted, nor information allowed to leak out, a strict procedure was followed. Minutes of all transactions were kept by a Secretary and "nothing incurring expense could be ordered unless by a sub-committee appointed for the purpose, or by the Treasurer on leave given by the General Committee. And no order could be given at all but upon a printed check. Every such order contained quantities and prices or named services to be performed". Similar

1. ibid.
2. ibid.
rules were laid down to cover action in other matters.

Officials were, according to Place's intentions, as far as possible, volunteers. It was found necessary to have a paid secretary, and to hire check book clerks (for the Hustings), as well as two Committee room constables. Inspectors, however, were volunteers and so too, were the Committee's legal advisors. In every sphere, the enthusiasm of well directed volunteers seems to have made for efficiency, and in every case, save that of the Hustings Inspectors, greater effectiveness. Volunteer Inspectors, who were not rate collectors, found it too difficult to contend with the rate collectors paid by other candidates to bring their books to the Hustings. If a man in an opponent's interest tendered a vote, and the volunteer Inspector knew, or had every reason to believe he was not qualified, he could not question the authority of the rate collector. The experience of the Committee in 1807 taught them the need to prepare their own 'electoral register' by copying the rate books before an election, in order to have evidence with which they might confront the High Bailiff over a matter of disputed votes. The power of rate collectors in an election will be examined in the light of the controversy that arose in 1819, but though its extent may well have been less than commonly claimed, it can be in no way surprising that after 1832, when Poor Overseers and Collectors were together responsible for the compilation of electoral lists, their influence should be the subject of frequent attack.

Apart from the inadequacy of their Inspectors, the organisation of the independent Committee was deficient in one other respect.

1. ibid. 27,850, f.73.
2. ibid.
3. cf. infra. iii. app. 24-30.
4. cf. infra. x. app. iv. ch. xiii.
Probably owing to lack of time, no Parish Committees seem to have 
been organised from the centre on this occasion — though local 
committees may well have formed in the Parishes independently.¹

From the first, inherent in the scheme of organisation, was the 
assumption that everything ultimately depended upon a public 
subscription.² The idea that an election could be conducted on such 
a basis had not been enthusiastically received by many of Place's 
friends. It had certainly never been done before, and all recent 
attempts to raise a public subscription for Paull's petitions had failed. 
But with the same thoroughness and energy which characterised the 
whole enterprise, renewed efforts to raise money were made. Success 
bred success. In spite of early doubts and difficulties, Place and 
Brooks chiefly, were not only to succeed in raising sufficient money 
to cover the costs of the election and attendant matters, but were 
thereafter to contrive that every demonstration staged, and election 
organised by the same group in the years that followed — including 
legal cases and the publication of pamphlets — was also paid for by 
public subscription.³ It is testimony not only to their zeal and to 
their efficient handling of the money collected, but to the enthusiasm 
they roused. Public subscriptions served not only to publicise the

1. cf. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 118. 
2. ibid, f. 18. 
27,838, f. 42; cf. also, ibid. 35,154, ff. 49-56, for an unpublished 
Ms. pamphlet "Place, listing the various elections, 
demonstrations etc. which the Westminster Reformers staged between 
1807-1819 by public subscription; The Authentic Narrative of the 
Westminster Election of 1819, compiled by Place, which includes a 
Report to the Electors in 1819, (infra. p. 33) giving a similar 
list; Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,843, f. 377. Place to 
J.C. Hobhouse, February 17th, 1827 — "It is now within two months 
of twenty years, since the electors of Westminster took their 
political affairs into their own hands, and when I have paid £96 
to — ?, as I shall on this day, there will remain not a shilling 
unpaid on account of any political matter whatever".
cause but to spread the idea among 'the people', that the cause was their own.

In the last analysis, it was sheer hard work which brought success. Place says "The accounts were made up every night and the balance declared to the General Committee. Polling commenced at 9 a.m. each day and continued until 3 p.m. Speech making occupied an hour and a half." Until 1820, Burdett never appeared on the Hustings in his own interest and, in consequence, it was necessary to choose a spokesman from the Committee. In 1807, "Mr. J. Clayton Jennyns became our orator on the Hustings. He always came to the committee rooms before going to the Hustings to learn the particulars it was necessary for him to know." Whilst speech-making was in progress, "Mr. Brooks and I dined in my room, and made up our books; neither of us ever went to the Hustings." Before the General Committee meeting at 6 p.m., all the books were made up, and a bulletin of the day's progress distributed all over Westminster. Then, "such matters as were required to be discussed were discussed, orders were issued; everything so far as possible was arranged for the next day." By 11 o'clock Place returned home. At 7 a.m. he was again at the committee room "where I always found Mr. Brooks, and the business of the day was again commenced."

The little group of reforming electors had inevitably to take into account the existing pattern of official election procedure. They had also to contend with the venality and ignorance still prevalent among the electoral body. But they were to infuse an entirely new spirit into election conduct - a spirit which was to be felt far beyond the limits of Westminster. Further, the experience they gained in handling a large public and in conducting a publicity campaign, was to be turned to good advantage in the years which followed. Immediately, the fact that the direction of affairs was centred in the men most interested in the success of their cause, must be regarded as the prime

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 20.
2. ibid.
3. ibid.
4. ibid.
5. ibid.
reason for the extent of the success, which they and Burdett came to enjoy. That success, which more than justified Place's views on what might be achieved by a few men of energy and spirit, engendered a new confidence in other Reformers in many places elsewhere. It must seem all the more amazing, when it is considered that on polling day, their funds were virtually exhausted, and they were scorned on all sides.  

1. On Monday, May 4th, Horne Tooke had donated £100, ibid. f. 18. But most of the funds collected had been used on immediate expenses in the following week, ibid. f. 20.
CHAPTER VI

The Triumph of the Reformers.

1. The Westminster Election of 1807

In the country at large, so far as popular feeling played any part in the outcome of the general election, it must seem that the strength of anti-Catholic feeling told strongly in favour of the Ministry. The main battle cry of the Tories was "No Popery". The majority of the Whigs, though they defended their Catholic proposals, inveighed against the influence of the Crown. Among the latter, Whitbread, more closely in touch with "the people" and more keenly alive to the need to retain popular support, and to a lesser extent Grey, both sought in their election speeches to emphasise the 'programme' the Whigs had been undertaking before they had been dismissed. But though the Whigs were by no means routed, any feeling they did rouse in their support, was not such as to upset ministerial electoral arrangements, nor to counteract the widespread feeling of distrust for the Whigs as a party.

Cobbett, Place and the Reformers generally, were delighted to find the "No Popery" cry little regarded in Westminster. As they saw matters, the retention by politicians of the Pittite, Foxite, Tory or Whig labels served only to delude "the people" that there was a real distinction between them. They detested the way in which, far from making their principles clear or appealing to the reason of the people by seeking support for a definite 'programme', parties apparently preferred to inflame their passions by meaningless cries of "Church and King", "the Constitution is in danger", "the influence of the Crown is excessive" and, of course, "No Popery".

2. Cobbett's Political Register, May 30th, 1807.
At the outset of the Westminster election, the surprising feature was a most unusual lack of excitement. Party war-fare, at first, seemed confined to the press. It was not certain, until close to the first day of the poll, whether Hood would stand again. Sheridan did not finally decide he would stand again until after the poll had begun. Cobbett's "Register," and to a lesser degree, Henry White's "Independent Whig" almost alone attempted to counteract the "Post's" and "Chronicle's" denunciation of the reforming Committee as a little band of revolutionary agitators. Place and his associates were sneered at as "a parcel of people who were nobody; common tailors and barbers and snobs. Who were they to presume to carry Westminster?" But they had resolved, however, neither to make any reply, nor to attack any other candidate, unless in defence of their action in dropping Paull, so as to avoid giving encouragement to tumult or violence, and to stand entirely on the merits of their case. They, at least, would seek to win support for their principles and a definite reform programme.

On May 7th, Burdett was nominated in his absence by Glossop and Adams. Lord Cochrane and Colonel Elliott introduced themselves to electors, Sheridan and Paull were also nominated without appearing.

Paull was as little able to attend as Burdett. He had resigned his pretensions as a candidate in a letter which damned the "Westminster Committee" for dropping him, and blamed it for causing all the trouble between himself and Burdett. Gibbons, however, announced he had been persuaded against his will to stand, and he (Gibbons) tried to convince the electors that the cause of Burdett and Paull had been wrongfully separated. It seems to have been a despairing, and, certainly a vain, effort to share Burdett's popularity.

1. cf. Advert for him, Times, April 28th, 1807.
3. White had an "ex officio information" for libel hanging over him at this time, cf. Romilly's Memoirs, 11.188.
5. ibid.
7. ibid.
Sheridan came forward late, as he afterwards explained, for three reasons. He could not have stood a contest of the purse, if Hood had stood (he implied he would have had Treasury support); he had not wished to oppose Lord Percy if he had stood; he did not wish it to be thought he had taken advantage of Burdett's and Paull's helplessness. It seems likely that, once again, Sheridan's persistent desire to represent Westminster had caused trouble in opposition circles and had led to an open breach between the Duke of Northumberland and the Whigs. The Duke sent his son Lord Percy to oppose Grey in Northumberland county. It is little likely that Sheridan received any encouragement, financial or otherwise, from the Whigs, and this is likely to have discouraged his candidature until—as it might well appear—he had a considerable chance of success. Whether lack of money encouraged his hesitancy or not, it is certain he did not pay any of the official election charges, and it may have been his refusal to do so which led to a mix up on the Hustings and an altercation between his agent and the High Bailiff. Both he and Paull were a day late in commencing their poll.

Of Elliott, little need be said. He was a brewer and a Colonel in the local militia who based his claim to favour on his independence and his well known public spirit. He admitted, however, he had supported the last three administrations, because he believed every ministry appointed by His Majesty should have a fair trial. He was, it seems, one of the many 'independents' who habitually supported the ministry of the day.

1. cf. Times, May 9th, 13th, 14th, 1807.  
2. G.M. Trevelyan, op. cit. p 160; Fraser Rae, Life of Sheridan, p. 258  
3. For his dispute with the High Bailiff, cf. Times, May 8th, 1807. The Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed to enquire... into the Office of the High Bailiff of Westminster (1810-11), a copy of which is in Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,840, f. 197, shows Sheridan never paid the Hustings charges.  
But men who committed themselves to nothing, who went into the Commons as indifferent time-servers, who were lax in attendance and without initiative, attracted Reformers as little as avowed party men. There were, further, particularly strong popular objections to Elliott, who had been chairman of Hood and Sheridan's joint committee in November. The coalition and its methods had received every kind of condemnation by Cobbett, and his candidature was little likely to find favour with the reforming "independents". He spoke little, and was, on all sides, assailed as the Court or Tory candidate. He was also attacked in a manner, doubtless reflecting strong local feeling, as a brewer, who forced his beer on the public through "tied" houses.

Cochrane is of much greater interest because his association with the "Westminster Committee" began as a result of his candidature. His connection with Reformers has already been noticed, though, so far, he had not himself come to advocate parliamentary reform. Sickened with Honiton and the "incessant cry of his constituents" for places and favours, he had determined to become a candidate for Westminster "with the object of adding an important constituency to" (his) "own representations, on naval and other abuses, whenever opportunity occurred". Whether the idea of standing for Westminster was put to him by friends of Horne Tooke is not known, though it is likely he was encouraged to do so by Burdett.

Cochrane was rash and impetuous, and his seamanlike language and fiery attitude on the hustings was apt to shock even those used to contemporary verbal license. He had not yet, however, suffered the blows which were to turn him into the embittered enemy of the Commons and to encourage him to adopt an extreme radical attitude. At this time he

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1. He had also proposed Percy in October 1806, cf. supra, p. 166. Place believed he had ministerial support, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f 79
2. by Sheridan, Times, May 20th, 1807.
3. Autobiography of a Seaman, 1.215
4. cf. supra, p. 27.
desired the "restoration of the constitution" and declared himself, though not a Reformer, "a friend to every species of Reform". But he specified no reform in particular.¹

It was all too easy, however, for many to believe he only wanted a seat so that he could carry on his personal naval quarrels in parliament. To others his very position as a naval officer, and the aristocratic composition of his committee, gave colour to the claim that he was a 'ministerial' candidate.² The claim was almost certainly untrue, and he emphasised his independence throughout, pledging himself to attack abuses wherever he found them and particularly the corruption he claimed was ruining the Navy in the hour of its need. But the 'Westminster Committee' simply did not trust him. He might be sent away on duty; he was, in a sense, a placeman; naval officers had often been set up in the past to "delude" people who would vote for a name. Consequently he received no 'official' support from them, and when, near the end of the election, it was certain Burdett must be elected, even Jennyns took up the cry against him.³

In the main, however, it is clear from press reports that Jennyns did not deviate from the Reformers' original intentions - not to attack other candidates but to exhort the electors to vote for Burdett and the cause of reform, in their own interest. It was Jennyns who put forward their 'programme' - re-enactment of the cancelled clause of the Act of Settlement against placemen; abolition of the Septennial Act; disfranchisement of rotten boroughs - which was Burdett's 'programme' in 1806.

For the first three days, relatively few electors came to the poll. The atmosphere of calm after the excitement of the last few months was surprising, and apathy was the last reaction expected by the Reformers. Perhaps there had been too many elections recently.

2. He was particularly strongly attacked by Gibbons, speaking on behalf of Paull, cf. e.g. Times, May 13th, 15th, 18th, 1807.
3. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 21; Times, May 19th.
Perhaps Court supporters found little to inspire them in Elliott. Sheridan had been far from popular in the last election, and Cochrane was, relatively, an unknown quantity. Those who could be expected to vote in the reforming interest were possibly shaken and uncertain after the duel between Paull and Burdett — uncertain as to whether it was wise to follow the lead of the tradesman committee. Little enough lead had been given them by the Hustings speakers, who, excepting Gibbons who spoke for Paull, had so far remained courteous to each other.

It was, however, most disheartening to the independent Committee to find Burdett had polled only 78 votes on the first day, inclusive of all the votes of active committee men and their helpers. It meant only twenty or thirty other electors had polled for him. On the third day, the poll for all candidates was still remarkably low. Cochrane had 476; Elliott 407 and Burdett 309 — many of the votes for each candidate being split. Sheridan and Paull, late in starting, had 84 and 45 respectively. Worse for the Reformers, press condemnation turned to open ridicule, and made the position of those who were endangering their businesses by appearing in public, even more difficult.

For the reforming Committee it was a time for decision. On Thursday night, May 7th, the day before the poll began, it had been agreed to carry on until Saturday, and Brooks himself offered to bear the expense of Monday's poll, if expected subscriptions had not, by then, become sufficient to continue. On Saturday, more money came in than was expected. Place weighed up the situation. Cochrane's naval reputation and early canvassing had done comparatively little for him. Elliott had not gained by the support of the closed aristocratic vestries. The Whig press had not helped Sheridan. The poll showed

1. ibid. ff. 20-21; Times, May 8th, 9th, 11th, 1807.
2. Place Papers, ibid.
3. ibid. and 27,850, f. 77. Place says many of his friends who could stand calumnies better than laughter, were disheartened.
4. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 77.
it must be a contest between Burdett and one of the two leaders. Therefore the Reformers should give a positive demonstration, which might tip the scales in his favour.¹

So they hired ponies and bugle boys, and "sent them about the streets to animate the people and to distribute handbills". On Sunday they spent all day canvassing and Place himself joined in. "We divided ourselves into parties", he says, "and visited as far as possible every man who had ever taken a leading part in the Middlesex elections for Sir Francis, and urged them to collect friends for Monday morning. The result, when we met in the evening, was conspicuous. Confidence was restored." Arrangements were made for parties to assemble at various meeting places. Adams would lead one party past each of these places and the others assembled would fall in behind and march as a body to the Hustings.² These were, of course, time honoured tactics, but remarkably effective, if as was here the case, the parties consisted of genuine and respectable electors.

On Monday, Cowlam sold, instead of gave, favours to the gathering electors, and polling for Burdett received a tremendous fillip from the large body of some two hundred and fifty electors who approached the Hustings to vote for him, which made it seem as if "half-Westminster" was in his favour. He was not only at once placed at the head of the poll, but was never afterwards in danger of losing his position.³

The apathy had been more apparent than real and ... "money was now subscribed in abundance". The 'Committee's' work of getting electors to the poll was made very much easier and Burdett was given a daily increasing lead.⁴ Their success led their opponents in turn to increase their efforts, and the whole election scene livened up. Candidates and their supporters became embroiled one with another and press attacks on the 'Westminster Committee' redoubled.

¹. ibid. f. 79.
². Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 20.
³. ibid. (Cowlam was a Draper, cf. 27,838, f. 118)
⁴. ibid.
Sheridan who had earlier supported Cochrane, agreeing with his argument that a naval officer should be allowed to represent the navy in parliament, now condemned the immoderation of a number of charges he had made against Lord St. Vincent and the Channel fleet. Cochrane countered by attacking him for his behaviour at the last election, and went on to condemn the "Talents" administration and the whole Whig party. At the same time he became embroiled with Gibbons speaking for Paull, who sought to prove he was a ministerial candidate.

Both Sheridan and Gibbons, however, implied they approved of Burdett — though they took care not to commit themselves to his "programme" — and clearly hoped to secure his second votes. In fact all candidates except Elliott, universally regarded as a ministerial man, were to obtain more votes shared with Burdett, than they shared with each other, or received singly. Sheridan's total poll was inflated by many "false" votes. But even the "false" votes he registered were, it seems, largely shared with Burdett, and when Sheridan himself, his son Tom, and Brand came to the Reformers' committee rooms to seek an official coalition, it delighted Place to be able to quote the rules of the committee which "did not permit the consideration of any such idea".

When it became obvious to all that Burdett must top the poll, Elliott dropped out with a total poll of 2137. He was a poor third, and Sheridan an even poorer fourth. Since Sheridan had not the slightest chance of outpolling Cochrane he "begged hard to be allowed to make asrespectable a show as he could". Cochrane took his inspectors away, and, Place says, "Sheridan polled whom he pleased, and the same man over and over again as many times as he liked". It shortly transpired that what Sheridan really sought was to outpoll Elliott so that he might petition against Cochrane.

1. cf. eg. Times, May 18th, 1807.
2. ibid.
5. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 21.
6. ibid.
How great was the success of his scheme may be gauged from the fact that his highest poll on any previous day had been 228—yet on the eve of the close of the poll he received 470 votes and on the last day 758. Cochrane must have realized his danger for he insisted on having the "additional oaths" administered to electors which slowed polling down. Even so, Sheridan succeeded in passing Elliott's figure by 508 and, shortly after, his committee made arrangements to petition against Cochrane.

The final state of the poll showed Burdett had 5134 votes, of which 3351 were plumpers, Cochrane had 3708 and Sheridan 2654. Burdett's success was tremendous—his poll greater even than Paull's in 1806.

As striking as Burdett's success was the complete absence of the usual scenes and tumult during and after the election. For this freedom from tumult the reforming Committee claimed the credit thereafter, and no doubt their attitude and example did militate against trouble of this nature. Cochrane's keenness to secure Burdett's second votes certainly encouraged him to adopt the same attitude towards disorder as the 'Westminster Committee.' It is, however, likely, since Elliott seems to have had little, if any, official backing, and Sheridan appears to have had none, that lack of funds, which prevented the customary hiring of mobs and the lavish treating and feasting, was perhaps more than anything responsible for the comparatively peaceful election.

In 1806 neither Elliott nor Sheridan had been averse to treating or hiring mobs. Nor would other candidates in later elections show scruples which prevented them from doing so, despite the 'Westminster

2. Times, May 27th, 1807.
The absence of large scale treating and other forms of corruption was not in any way abolished by the Reformers as they liked to claim, and as the first contested election in Westminster was to show.1

Whatever the reasons, the fortunate chance which made for the unparalleled phenomenon of a peaceful contested election in Westminster was a great slice of luck for the Westminster Reformers. It enabled them — and Bentham afterwards — to hold up their action in 1807, not only as an example of the strength of 'the people', but of the peaceful consequence which would follow, when they came to run their own affairs.2 At the same time it was very much to their credit that they made and continued thereafter to make a firm stand against corruption and disorder in elections. Never before had such an example been so determinedly set, and it was not to pass unnoticed.

To the organisation of the 'Committee' we may attribute the extent of Burdett's success. His poll was nearly 1000 more than Paull's, in the previous election, and his success was made relatively and absolutely greater, by the fact that he received as many single votes as all the other candidates put together. But it remains obvious that no committee could have made Burdett's success so great had there not been a great deal of enthusiasm for him and his cause. The fact that Whig and Tory parties seem to have expended less effort than usual to secure the election, may have helped Burdett's poll, but it can scarcely be held to account for the truly overwhelming expression of 'free' opinion in his favour. How then is it to be explained?

1. cf. infra 237 (election of 1818).
2. Cobbett's Political Register, May 30th, 1807; Bentham's Catechism of Parliamentary Reform (Introduction), Works 111, 472. cf. also, Bentham Mss., University College, London, BM 132, containing Mss. for a pamphlet or pamphlets he was preparing on behalf of the Westminster Reformers against the Whigs in 1819, in the form of a series of Letters to Lord Erskine, passim.
In the first place Burdett's precarious health, after he had been wounded in the duel, probably won him a good deal of sympathy. He was popular, and opinion turned very decisively against Paull—partly as a result of Horne Tooke's scurrilous pamphlets which he issued to defend Burdett and to attack Paull. A series of letters from Paull and his supporters in the press, attacking Burdett and his Committee, which were firmly answered in a pamphlet written by Place, also probably worked in Burdett's favour.

Secondly, Burdett's opponents were not strong. Sheridan was positively unpopular as a result of the last two elections and the treatment of Paull's petition against him, and he shared in the general unpopularity of the Whigs. Defending his party, he was driven to defend the 'Talents' administration, and his declaration that he approved of Burdett and still believed in the necessity of parliamentary reform must have been regarded as hollow. He did little good to his cause when asked to pledge himself not to accept office, remarking, in jocular fashion, that while lucrative offices were going he considered himself at least as entitled to one as George Rose. It was with small avail that he insisted he had maintained his 'principles', and had even lost money as Treasurer of the Navy, when, at the same time, he admitted he already sat for the Borough of Ilchester, and, if he were elected for Westminster, would hand over his other seat to his son. These were not the principles to appeal to the majority of Westminster electors in their present mood, and his humiliating defeat cannot be surprising.

Elliott appeared a 'time server'; Paull had simply no committee; Cochrane alone had been a serious rival. He drew support from

2. Times, May 10th, 1807; Fraaser Rae, Life of Sheridan, p. 258
conservative and reforming interests, but was really too violent for the former, and not trusted enough by the latter.

The main reason for Burdett's success, it may be suggested, lies deeper. The view which he and Cobbett had adopted — that it was no use looking to the parties to bring any improvement, that party politicians were no more than the struggles of politicians to secure office — seems to have touched a responsive note in the minds of considerable numbers of people, dissatisfied with the conduct of government, prepared to be cynical after the 'failure' of the Whigs, and ready to view the recent ministerial changes with considerable disgust.

The parliamentary scene; the disintegration of the Pittite party and the ill-united state of the Whig party; the scant difference between politicians on principle; the existence of a 'spoils system', and the charges politicians had recently levelled at each other — all gave such views considerable plausibility. Discontent with high taxation, and doubts as to the efficiency of the conduct of the war, were fostering an altogether new and more bitter attitude towards corruption, were increasing distrust for the competence of the Commons and its leaders, and were now more and more inclining men to believe the situation called for remedies altogether beyond a change of ministers. In 1809 this distrust was to lead to a temper even more markedly hostile to the parliamentary parties.

But whatever the reason for it, there can be no doubt it was a triumph for the independent Committee of a magnitude which Place and his fellows can scarcely have foreseen. Westminster had triumphed over the 'factions'. Now it was to attempt to encourage the country to do the same.

1. H. Martineau, op.cit. Book 11, p. 254 — "The Whig party, in their grief at the extinction of their last hope of popular benefit from Whig rule, used language of such violence as commonly belongs only to faction; and they were considered factious accordingly. The people were sick of factions, and they turned to men who professed to be of no party, but presented themselves as chivalrous champions of popular rights, waging war for the people against all the world". cf. also Annual Register, 1807, History, pp. 235-6. "Lord Cochrane became popular by disclaiming all attachment to parties and factions".
11. The Aftermath

Immediately, the triumph was to be capitalised in every possible way, by press advertisement and public celebration. A meeting of the 'Committee', held at the close of the poll with Brooks in the chair, sanctioned advertisements recounting the steps it had taken to secure Burdett's promise to sit if elected, and the methods used to secure his return, "The result", it was agreed, "is all the more gratifying when it is considered how attached were the Westminster electors to names ... instead of principles". Resolutions were passed to the effect that the danger from a corrupt House of Commons was second only to the danger from abroad, and that "as far as rested with us we have taken care to prevent the existence of such a House of Commons, and we trust our example will, when occasion arises, have due weight with electors in general ... and that our constitution will be restored".¹

The resolutions were published, and later read at a celebration dinner on May 23rd, Jones Burdett deputised for his brother, and delivered his post-election address for him.² Handbills, drawn up by Cobbett, and amended by Place and Richter, were distributed to all who had voted for Burdett and published in both London and provincial papers.³ Burdett's address was widely publicised, and the advertisement and bills emphasized and re-emphasized the superiority of his poll and the quiet and constitutional way matters had been handled.

¹ An Exposition of the Circumstances which gave rise to the Election of Sir Francis Burdett, Bart...etc.
² Cobbett's Political Register, May 30th, 1807; Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 20. (500 attended), Independent Whig, May 24th, 1807.
³ Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 20. 10,000 were printed.
Burdett's address, published on May 25th, took the form of an even more stronger attack on parties and corruption. Violently he condemned a system which allowed the wholesale plunder of the people so long as it was "within the regiment"...

"For me for feeling something like despair of any good to the country, whilst I see the regular expenses of corruption greatly exceed all the expenses necessary for any war which we can be justified in pursuing; whilst I see attempts to delude the public mind by comparatively petty and insignificant enquiries into what is termed peculation; whilst those enquirers themselves think it not dishonourable to seize greedily every opportunity of enriching themselves out of the public spoil, by any other means, not termed by them, peculation.

Such wretched notions of public honour and honesty can afford no signal benefit to the public, nor can give us any suitable redress. They appear to me to resemble the notion of chastity entertained by the prostitute - who boldly challenged anyone to say that she never went out of the regiment.

To them all within the regiment, all within the RED book is honourable or virtuous" .... (they insulted 'the people' by claiming the Red book gave them a title to take all they could take from the people until they had taken everything).

"Such is my conception of the different corrupt ministers we have seen, and their corrupt adherents. And unless the public, with a united voice shall loudly pronounce the abolition of the whole of the present system of corruption, I must still continue to despair for my country.

You, Gentlemen, by this unparalleled election, have loudly pronounced your sentiments. May your voice be echoed throughout the land.

In the meantime, though an individual is nothing in the scale, I will carry with me your sentiments into the House of Commons. And I assure you no rational endeavours of mine shall be omitted to restore to my countrymen the undisturbed enjoyment of the fair fruits of their industry; to tear out the leaves of the scandalous Red Book and to bring back men's minds to the almost forgotten notions of private property which ought no longer to be transfixed from the legitimate possessors by the corrupt votes of venal and mercenary combinations."

1. Cobbett's Political Register, May 30th, 1807.
It was decided to hold a triumphal procession as soon as Burdett should be well enough, followed by a further celebration dinner, which would bring further publicity. Place himself always disapproved of pandering to the popular taste for "these frivolities". But the months of preparation, and the knowledge it was due to take place, undoubtedly helped to keep Burdett and the Reformers very much in the public eye.

It was frankly disbelieved by all, except those actively associated with the 'Committee', that the election had cost as little as £780. Still less was it believed that a voluntary subscription had more than covered the costs. But there can be no real doubt that it did. The reality of a few tradesmen returning Burdett in opposition to the conservative and aristocratic parties was simply not accepted - though it is proof enough, as it was to Place, that it had always been possible. Whatever the strength of the Court and the aristocracy in Westminster, it had never been, nor ever could be practicable to 'control' between ten and seventeen thousand electors.

But Place often heard it suggested that it had cost Burdett £1000 per day, and this was generally believed by people who knew, often to their own cost, how expensive elections to Westminster had been. He heard, too, that Lady Holland had said she "knew the election had cost Sir Francis Burdett upwards of £20,000". Despite a court action, intended in part to prove the 'Committee's' claim to the country at large; despite intermittently published accounts, it never was then, or at any subsequent time, believed. Long afterwards, a man like Creevy - who it might be supposed was sufficiently intimate with Burdett's circle to know differently - is to be found believing Westminster elections cost Burdett thousands of pounds.

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 20.
2. cf. Brooks', Ms. Accounts, Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 42; and supra. p. 34. The balance sheet for the election was also printed in "An Exposition of the Circumstances which gave rise to the elections of Sir Francis Burdett, Bart... etc.
3. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 85.
It is not a little amusing, therefore, to read a newspaper advertisement of the 'Committee' in January 1808, just before Burdett took his seat. It took the form of a letter to Burdett, which after reiterating the determination he should not pay anything for his election, continued, "when the fees and gratuities were paid at the House of Commons, by a deputation from the Committee... the clerk objected to receiving the 2/- for your affidavit, till you attended to take your seat; and it being the particular wish of the Committee that the whole of the expenses should be defrayed by them, I herewith enclose that sum. Signed, Samuel Brooks".  

The campaign launched by the group of Westminster electors in favour of purity of election was not without echo in contemporary elections elsewhere. Henry Thornton, one of the 'Saints' standing again in neighbouring Southwark, whose outlook was inevitably coloured against the grosser evils of bribery and corruption, again, as in 1806, protested strongly against it in Southwark. Southwark, also a scot and lot borough of smaller size than Westminster, was soon to have its own body of men anxious to imitate the success of the Westminster group.  

Cartwright again offered himself to Boston on the conditions he had insisted on since the 70s, but though he had Cobbett behind him, he had as little success as in the previous year.  

William Roscoe, in Liverpool, published a letter in which he refused to stand again, owing to the disgraceful disorders of election in his own town. Like Fawkes, mentioned above, he took the line that an 'honest man' could achieve nothing in the Commons whilst it remained in its existing corrupt state. Roscoe and Fawkes had been

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 20.  
2. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 128. (newspaper cutting of May 10th, or 11th, 1807.)  
3. infra. pp272; cf. also, An Account of the Proceedings of the Electors of Southwark (1809)  
4. Life of Cartwright, 1.349, 353.  
elected in 1806, and had supported the "Talents" in their drive against the Slave Trade. Their attitude had not passed unnoticed by the Westminster and Middlesex Reformers, and though neither would again consent to re-enter parliament, efforts were to be made by the Westminster Reformers to persuade both of them to stand for Westminster on subsequent occasions.¹

Most clearly the result of the influence of the Westminster group, was the action of Henry Hunt, now entering the "vortex of politics" more decisively than hitherto, who called a meeting at Bristol which passed and publicised resolutions congratulating the "Westminster Committee" on their great example.² Hunt, so he claims, was promptly invited to London to meet the Westminster "heroes", and to attend the great celebration dinner planned for the evening of the day of Burdett's triumphal procession.³

Among others who noticed the action of the Westminster group at this time, was Brougham, whose press campaign on behalf of the Whigs, chiefly directed against the Tory "base courtiers" was also directed against the Reformers too.⁴ In 1812, less happy about his

¹. cf. infra, III. pp. 8 and seq.
². Henry Hunt, Memoirs, 1.255.
³. ibid., 270 et seq. Hunt points out that Cochrane was not toasted because he was not trusted by the Westminster Reformers. He... "had not yet been kicked by Government action into being a thorough patriot." It is not without importance to note that many of the contacts he made in London at this time through Henry Clifford, the lawyer, whom he already knew, became, for one reason or another, the inveterate enemies of the Westminster Committee. It was from them, and Clifford himself, who was soon to be on very bad terms with the Westminster Reformers (cf. infra, pp. 157), that he must have acquired much of his information about them, which appears so maliciously distorted in his Memoirs, written of course after he had himself broken with them.
future with the Whig party, he was to advocate the methods used by the "Westminster Committee" in an article in the 'Edinburgh Review,' and to seek election for Westminster himself.¹ But, by 1812, many people had been impressed by their success, and a good deal more of the country was behind them.

Meanwhile plans for the procession continued; it was deferred at least once owing to Burdett's health, and the date later fixed was still tentative. There is evidence of the select vestries interfering with arrangements whenever they could.² Finally, however, on June 29th, the long train with banners and trumpets and Burdett in a triumphal car, attired in the blue which was meant to symbolise the "true" or "real" Whig principles, wound its way through Westminster. At the ensuing dinner, Burdett, speaking with difficulty, referred to the recent elections. If it had been an appeal to "the people" in November, then "the people" must have been deliberately trying to beggar themselves. A new set of ministers had likewise appealed to the people, but "they both of them laugh at the people; they despise the people, and those who have robbed us the most, have justly the most contempt for us."³

It was precisely this attitude towards "parties", which had played such a large part in Burdett's success, which had inevitably led, to the heaviest censure from the Tory and Whig press. To exemplify the reaction of the ministry, one may reasonably draw upon the "Morning Post's" views, as representative of conservative feeling.

¹ cf. infra. [M. pp. 65-7.
² Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 223.
³ Pilot, June 30th. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 220.
The "Post" pursued a remarkably consistent and abusive line towards the Westminster group and Burdett, and it may be wondered whether much of the same type it used in its condemnation of them in 1807, was not left set up from one year to another!

On May 27th, for example, it charged Burdett with every species of cowardice and treason in face of the enemy - with saying the constitution was not worth defending - and followed it up with reviving all the old charges against him, of his plotting and associating with O'Connor and Despard. He was, it was claimed, deliberately seeking to overthrow all ordered government. The "Post" had heard it was intended to chair him to the opening of parliament, but parliament had rejected men for less and "they would know if he was a fit and proper person to occupy a seat!" As for the means used to return him, all manner of corrupt practices were ascribed to the Reformers, and there was much talk of money and a hired rabble. In this and in later issues, it was held that many Westminster electors regretted having voted for him, and it was stated that only unwillingness to give names prevented them proving their assertions. The "Post" could not give full lists of names of all those who voted for him, "but the few whose names and occupations we have it in our power to give, will be fully sufficient to ascertain and to characterise the description of persons in which his partisans should be classed".

The outraged "Post" clearly regarded it as positively insulting that such men as Place and his associates should dare to enter the electoral field. Long before this, lowly people had come to assist in elections, but not until 1807 had they come to take matters into their own hands. Elections had for so long been the preserve of the upper classes that the shock, on top of the war and treason to boot, was almost too much for the "Post".

1. Morning Post, May 27th, 1807.
2. Ibid.
Unfortunately for the 'Post' and its sympathisers, although there were few places under the ancient electoral regime, where the example of Westminster's little election committee could be imitated with much hope of success, more and more people, among the middle and lower middle classes, scattered here and there in the country, were to be encouraged to band together in the hope of doing so. If the limitation or absence of the franchise, the ignorance and venality of a majority of electors, a determination to follow the lead of some local magnate, or an overriding concern with local matters combined to make direct action in most areas impracticable or impossible — and Reformers were soon driven to consider other schemes to secure the return of men who would express their views to parliament — there were many other ways in which they could make their political voice heard.

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Cochrane, writing his autobiography long afterwards, asserted that the Westminster election of 1807 was "remarkable" as being the first time when genuine "public opinion" firmly opposed "party faction", and that "it was at this very Westminster election that the patriotism of the Westminster electors made itself felt throughout the length and breadth of the land, and laid the foundations of that reform which has been obtained by the present generation".1 Allowing for his personal interest and bias, it is still possible to agree with his retrospective view.

But it should be left to Cobbett, whose advocacy of the cause had more than anything prepared the ground for the success of Place and his associates, to answer the critics of Burdett and the 'Committee.' He, for the time being, was its spokesman. He considered the 'Post's' and the Whig 'Chronicle's' verdicts, and in the 'Register' made his reply.2

The people who had returned Burdett a rabble? But surely the King had recurred to the sense of his people. Was it an offence not to be deluded by the "No Popery" cry? Where had been the trouble and

1. Autobiography of a Seaman, 1. 219-221
2. Cobbett's Political Register, May 30th, 1807.
disorders which the 'Chronicle' had said the agitators sought? All had been peaceful. "Was there ever known popular proceedings so marked by tranquility; not a single act of violence had they committed or attempted to commit". The only agitation had been his own 'Letters to the Electors'.

The 'Post's' charges were obviously designed to delude those living far from London, for no one at hand could be so deceived. The only people who would regard Burdett's post-election Address as revolutionary were those who had most to lose, if the present system of corruption were altered. "Go and hear the thousands and hundreds of thousands in the manufactories, in the shops, in the workshops, upon the river and in the gardens. Go and hear those whose labour and ingenuity and whose industry are taxed to support the clamorous"... (governing classes). Such people would show whether or not they approved of Burdett's speech. "It is against the factions which each in its turn has ruled by the means of a Parliament, both King and people in the manner that we have seen, that Sir Francis Burdett is at war, not against the establishment of Royalty much less against the person of the King to whom he has never attempted to impute any degree of blame". If the factions wished to silence him they had only to redress the grievances of which he complained. "Look at the slugs writhe". They had over and over charged each other with seeking to gain office in order to win control of the public purse - with seeking in fact, exactly what Burdett had charged both of them of seeking. Over and over again they said that both recent dissolutions were to effect what he (Burdett) said they both wished to effect. Burdett's election was an "act wholly that of the people originating in the suggestion of a few sensible men in Westminster of fair reputation who took the lead and were followed by the rest of the electors".

To these people Cobbett now appealed "that henceforth you may reject with equal scorn, the appellation of Foxite, of Pittite, of Whig or of Tory, that you may in the exercise of your elective rights be influenced by principles and not by names; and that your conduct, by becoming an example to electors in general, or a timely indication to
the elected, may lead to constitutional reform of the gross abuses that exist, and thereby produce the restoration of our liberties and ensure the safety of the throne".
III. The Nature and Aims of the 'Committee'

When it is considered how insecure were the foundations on which their enterprise was based, it need not be surprising that success encouraged members of the group to consider further action. The 'Committee', it has often been said, decided to continue its existence. 1 But, though, using the term 'Committee' loosely, that statement is broadly true, there is need for its more careful refinement. In particular, it is necessary to make clear what the 'Westminster Committee' was, and in what form its existence was continued.

It is true the name 'Westminster Committee' came to be commonly applied to the group of men in Westminster, who managed the elections on behalf of Burdett and other reform candidates between 1807 and 1832, and, indeed, even after 1832. But agreeing that a defineable group maintained a continuous existence, that group was not to be solely concerned with elections as might be inferred from the mention made of it by modern writers. 2 Further, at no time did its members ever style themselves the 'Westminster Committee' and never did it have any permanent form as a committee at all.

The 'Westminster Committee' of the early nineteenth century was, at bottom, never more than a small group of energetic and enterprising electors, prepared to volunteer their services, often at considerable sacrifice to themselves, in the reforming cause. Sometimes they would give up the whole of their time to politics; sometimes they would give their services part time; but almost always they had businesses or jobs which demanded a great deal of their attention. As at the election of 1807, they might form themselves into an ad hoc committee to conduct an election, or, they would, from time to time, form from among their numbers, other special committees to arrange various other matters.

1. e.g. by G. Wallas, op. cit. p. 47, and by the majority of writers who having had occasion to refer to the Westminster Reformers, and the election of 1807, have followed his lead.
2. e.g. by S. Maccoby, op. cit. p. 291, n 2.
But these committees, even whilst they were in being, had no more than the approval of a public meeting in the reforming interest - if indeed they had that - and they certainly had no legal existence. Nor did they have permanence. It was in their very nature that when the matter for which they had been formed had been concluded they dissolved and their members would return again to their normal business of earning a living. There remained no permanent "general committee" nor indeed a permanent body of any kind to conduct or direct "party" business. The name "Westminster Committee" was, it will be seen, largely thrust upon this group, and insofar as it was adopted and perpetuated, suggests a more permanent form and a more formal existence than it ever possessed.

It is obvious therefore, that the "Westminster Committee" of the early nineteenth century differed in almost every respect from its earlier namesake formed in 1780 - save that both bodies were concerned with the promotion of parliamentary and electoral reform.

The latter was a formally constituted body with established rules for admission and procedure, and at least, for long periods, held regular meetings. It had, in a sense, the former never had, a "permanent" existence, albeit over a much shorter period. The "Committee" of the early nineteenth century, however, though it had a much longer existence, was entirely an informal group. Except when individual "members" of this group agreed to sit upon a committee specially appointed to handle some particular matter, no rules were made and no records were kept, and, naturally enough, such rules and minutes as were made and kept, refer only to the conduct and work of that particular committee. In the second place, and comparing them solely as groups no matter how constituted, it is evident they differed greatly in composition, and that their differences in this respect were, in part, the reflection of very different political circumstances.

The Committee of 1780 came into being on a rising tide of enthusiasm for public economy, at a time when widespread respectable feeling was already growing against the continuance of the American War.
Its heterogeneous composition - parliamentary Whigs, well-to-do country gentlemen, middle class radicals - reflected the desire of the various substantial groups in whose hands the reform movement then was, to dominate a body whose central position provided it with considerable opportunities, both for influencing the movement as a whole and for bringing pressure to bear on parliament. It was only in small degree an emanation from 'the people' of Westminster - indeed 'the people' of Westminster had then scarcely existed politically. Rather was it a kind of central club for Reformers of varying opinions from all over the country.

The 'Committee' of the early nineteenth century, on the other hand, was formed when popular interest in reform in the country at large, 'respectable' or otherwise, was at a low ebb. Though many in the nation were restless and dissatisfied, it was only in the metropolis, and in Westminster particularly, that interest in economic and parliamentary reform had become considerable.

It was then - unlike the Committee of the eightees - a group coming together as a result of strong feeling originating in Westminster, with at first little support beyond the capital, and was itself concerned to awaken feeling in the country at large. It was, further, not a body composed of miscellaneous elements from all over the country to whom Westminster was a stage, but a homogeneous group of men, springing themselves from 'the people' of Westminster. Its composition, in fact, reflected the interest in reform of an entirely different class of people.

It is, of course, apparent that one reason for the adoption of the style "Westminster Committee" to refer to this group is because it was its appearance in the form of an election committee, and its stand in favour of purity of election conduct, which attracted the greatest attention. But the frequency with which its adherents appeared as members of other committees, specially set up to attend to all manner of other matters might well be misleading. It is clear that contemporaries used the style "Westminster Committee" knowing it to be no more than an informal group. But for a number of reasons
it would be quite possible for others in a later age, cursorily surveying Westminster politics, to imagine it had a more formal organisation, and a more permanent kind of existence than in fact was the case.

First the business affairs of an election would frequently run on into the years succeeding. So long as matters connected with it remained outstanding, the committee formed to conduct the election would retain its authority to deal with it, and would remain in existence.¹ In practice this might mean only a small number of its 'members' — and almost always Adams, Brooks and Place — would remain active and on call if a meeting were necessary, but minutes would be kept of what passed, and notices and accounts would be issued to the public in the name of the "committee of the Westminster Electors conducting the Election for ..... etc" signed by men, whose names were to become familiarly associated in the public eye with membership of a committee.²

Secondly, whenever there arose a matter of sufficient importance to encourage the staging of a demonstration, whenever a petition to the King or to either, or both, Houses of Parliament, was considered, whenever a special reform meeting or dinner was deemed worth holding, it was, on the majority of such occasions, 'members' of this group who appeared most prominent in arranging matters. Their names would appear in adverts announcing the event, as men ready to receive public subscription, or, in press accounts of the affair afterwards. Generally the organisers would style themselves a 'Committee of

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¹ cf. eg. infra. p. 102; also Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f346, for a Report of the Committee, who had conducted Burdett's 1807 election, to the 1809 Annual Dinner (subsequently published), giving an account of the matters arising from the election which the Committee had dealt with, and a financial statement giving details of amounts raised by subscription and disbursements therefrom; also ibid. 27,840, f221, for a similar published statement referring to the election of 1812.

² cf. eg. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,839, ff 186v-7 for a published financial statement up to 1812.
Westminster Electors. Further, from time to time, composite account sheets would be published bearing Samuel Brooks' signature, showing the amount raised by public subscription and the amount spent on various reforming demonstrations, as if one committee had handled the lot. Samuel Brooks was Treasurer for all public subscriptions raised by Reformers in Westminster.

Third, apart from special dinners which might be arranged, an annual dinner was held on May 23rd every year between 1807 and 1832 to celebrate Burdett's first return for Westminster and the methods used to secure it. Designed for publicity purposes and to concentrate the interest of those working for parliamentary reform, it would be, in fact, organised, as other affairs were organised, by a committee specially set up for the occasion. But since this committee would generally include men well known as members of past election committees for Burdett, or of committees staging Westminster demonstrations, it would be easy to assume it was the same committee. Again, since a report in the form of a speech by a prominent of the group, would be made on the work of the 'Committee which had conducted the last election' or the 'Committee which had undertaken (some other business) on behalf of the electors', it would not be surprising if a person looking back and not concerned with the finer points or subtleties of the organisation imagined there was a permanently active 'Committee' in existence.

1. cf. e.g. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,839, f. 186, for a published financial statement up to 1810.
2. cf. e.g. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 346, (for 1809 dinner), 27, 839, f. 130 (for 1810 dinner)
In fact, whatever the impression created, there is no doubt reforming politics in Westminster were, and continued to be, conducted entirely informally and in the manner of other reforming groups in time past. Matters would be discussed in any of the houses or shops of leading Reformers, though it is evident Place's library, above his premises in Charing Cross, became the chief meeting place of the Westminster group. Those who took the lead or were otherwise active on one occasion, might not be available, perhaps because of some business or other commitment, to take any part in the next. Anyone might take the initiative, and support - if active helpers were necessary - would have to be canvassed for, when, and as, it was required. It can be said only that Place and/or one of his close associates generally took the initiative. They did not always do so. Sometimes the suggestion for a particular course of action would come from a well known reforming figure, who had centred his activities in Westminster - such as, for example, Cartwright. According to their inclination the leaders of this group would lend their support, encourage others to do likewise, or do nothing. But the 'rank and file' would be free to assist or not as they chose.

Only at times when public hostility for some governmental or parliamentary action was considerable, or when it seemed public attention could easily be excited, would meetings be held on anything like a regularly planned basis. At other times, a few might be writing letters to, or articles for, the press; some might be dealing with financial or legal matters, which had arisen out of past demonstrations; and the majority would be quietly tending their businesses, or in other ways earning their livings.

1. Place's Charing Cross Library, as a political "gossiping shop", frequented, as he himself said, much in the manner of "a common coffee-house room", is described by Graham Wallas, op. cit. ch. VII, cf. also Art. "Characters for Charity's Sake, No. 4." 'Francis Place of Westminster, Esq.', European Magazine New Series 11, No. 7. March 1826; A.F. Murison, "Francis Place". Statesman, August 1881. Already a meeting place for 'left wing' politicians at this point, it was, of course, to become of much greater importance as Place became better known. Samuel Brooks' house was another well known meeting place of the Westminster Reformers.
There were no permanent funds. Where feasible, public subscriptions would be launched to raise money. Advertisements would be put in the London and provincial press. Letters would be written to known reforming sympathisers. Money, however, would be asked for, for a specified purpose, and though, on occasion, some would be left over, and might, it seems, be put, with the permission of the donors, to other purposes, a good deal of the money to finance reforming projects came out of the pockets of those directly concerned with them.

It was only over the course of time, because the same few men generally did come forward, and others came to expect they would, that the name "Westminster Committee" came to acquire a certain prominence. In the early years after 1807, during a period when Reformers of all shades worked together and rivalry was mainly on personal grounds, there was, in fact, little to distinguish the Westminster group, save its personnel. Place and the other leaders, among them Richter, Lemaitre, Adams and Brooks, were almost all former Corresponding Society members, and their closest supporters, though it is impossible to trace their past activities, were all drawn from the same tradesmen and lesser professional classes who had formed the backbone of the Corresponding Society. Publicly, however, there was little obvious distinction between them and other Reformers on policy, and nothing to indicate clearly that they represented a distinct interest.

2. cf. eg. Letter of Place to W. Bookersteth, March 1st, 1820. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,843, f. 51; also Place to G. Puller, May 22nd, 1822., ibid. ff. 349, which show Place and Brooks had spent a good deal of their own money. Graham Wallas, op. cit., p. 186, draws attention to the way money was commonly raised by Place for printing various tracts etc. A notice was put in his Library to the effect that it was considered advisable to print such and such, and friends who called, contributed or not, as they chose.
3. Partly for this reason, partly because the term has not always seemed appropriate when discussing the "Westminster Committee" as a political party, or its relations with other Reformers, I have commonly used the terms "Westminster Reformers" or "Westminster group".
The maintenance of a consistent political approach as circumstances changed, however, was to divide them more clearly from 'Whiggish' Reformers and the majority of the more 'gentlemanly' independents on the one hand, and from Reformers like Cobbett, Hunt and Cartwright on the other, who came to be concerned with rousing the poorer artisans of the capital, and the factory working classes of the North. They became more clearly, especially after their leaders began their association with Bentham, the 'representatives' of the new elements among the middle classes in the country at large.

Attacked at all times by Tories and Whigs, who either damned them as revolutionaries or treated them with contempt; attacked increasingly, after 1816, by other Reformers, as a middle class faction who would betray the people, it was in these circumstances that another form of attack on them came to be intensified.

Though the members of this group had no formal title to act for electors - not even for the reforming section among them - yet it is clear their actions received widespread approval. Place and his associates came to have a considerable influence among electors. Other Reformers seeking support for schemes of their own would normally find it advisable to consult them first.

But their influence depended entirely on their initiative, on the merits of their arguments and on their own personal example. There was nothing whatever exclusive about it, nothing to prevent others coming forward and seeking support in the same way as they had done. In fact, precisely because Westminster was an exceptional area - because many Reformers who had taken a leading part in the reforming politics of the last three decades lived there, and because Reformers from elsewhere were attracted to it by the prospects of staging a demonstration which would attract the notice of the country - it was frequently that others did so. If, with few exceptions, they had little success, it was less because they might not have received the support of the 'Westminster Committee', less because they might even have been opposed by it, than because they simply did not succeed in winning the support of the electors.
The fact remains that because they had no formal title to act for electors, the Westminster Reformers were the more easily the subject of attack. In an age which paid great homage to the ideal that individuals should be free to decide matters for themselves, it was - despite the fact that few, if any, politicians seriously believed a body of individuals electors could or should be left entirely free and uninfluenced - usual to speak as if nothing must be allowed to interfere with this freedom. In these circumstances it was easy for anyone personally or politically jealous of "its" influence to charge the "Westminster Committee" with being a self imposed "junto" - a self-interested body of men seeking to delude the electors. The Westminster Reformers were personally self interested - being hired and paid by Burdett and able to profit from public subscription; or they were politically self interested - concerned only with the interests of their "class".

This kind of charge was first levelled at them by Paull and his few supporters after his quarrel with Place and his friends in 1807. From 1807 onwards any individual or group disgruntled with them and anxious to draw support away from them took up the cry. In 1817-18 wide currency was given to such charges by Cobbett and Hunt on the one side, and the Whigs on the other. The attitude the Westminster group had taken up in favour of freedom and purity of election was, it was said, a mere pretence to delude electors. The name "Westminster Committee" was applied in a manner intended to convey and encourage contempt of a "pitiful" group of tradesmen who thought they could control Westminster! They, the arch opponents of the "sinister" influence of political parties, were condemned as a "sinister" group themselves.

The charge that they were self-interested represented both personal and political spite. Personally, it is evident they stood to

1. cf. Times, May 6th, 1807, for Letter of Paull; also A Refutation of the Calumnies of John Horne Tooke, pp. 151, 176 and Appendix.
2. cf. infra, p. 23.
3. cf. infra, p. 23.
gain, and gained, nothing. Jurdett certainly paid them nothing personally for conducting his elections, and their subscription accounts were open to public investigation. On the contrary they stood only to lose. They spent a good deal of their own money helping to finance various schemes, and indirectly, loss of custom through inattention to their business, or because customers would no longer deal with notorious Reformers, cost them more. Politically, their attitude was no more 'self-interested' than the aristocratic belief that the aristocracy were the natural leaders of society. They believed, equally sincerely, that the ascendancy of the middle classes was essential for the well-being of the country as a whole.

Technically they were "self-imposed". But the fact that demonstrations and elections in the reforming cause were regularly handled by the same few individuals need suggest only - as was the case - that their organising ability was recognised, and others among the many with like opinions, were less ready or less able to take the lead. In fact they handled constituency matters with much more care for the feelings of electors than any modern local party association, which has no greater 'mandate' for its existence, is likely to show.

At elections, and indeed on many other occasions, the practice of the leaders of the group was - after conferring among themselves, and perhaps appointing provisionally, a small committee to handle preliminary arrangements - to call a public meeting to secure approval of the course they proposed, and the setting up of a formal committee.

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 249.
2. On this point, cf. eg. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,849, ff. 146 - 8. ibid. 27,837, f. 181, Place to J.C. Hobhouse, August 24th, 1819. House of Commons Papers, Report from the Select Committee ... on Election Polls for Cities and Boroughs (1827), before which Place gave evidence.
3. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 35,154, ff. 144, 147-8. Place to Chapman, 9th September, 1836, and Place to Falconer, 22nd Sept. 1836, in which he discusses arrangements for an expected general election and described the Westminster Reformers' "old mode" of procedure.
representative of their supporters amongst the electorate. If only reforming sympathisers would attend the meeting, it was, nonetheless, open to all; and if prior arrangements generally allowed them to get their proposals and the committee men they wanted, approved, it was, as was to be shown time and time again, quite possible for their proposals to be opposed by others. Nothing, in any case, prevented others from seeking public support in the same way.

But though the attacks made on the 'Westminster Committee' - that it had a sinister influence, that it interfered with the freedom of the electors - have an obvious explanation in the desire of others to draw support away from the leaders, they had, too, a deeper basis. Underlying them is the distrust of its part in stage managing demonstrations and organising electors, the feelings inspired by two diametrically opposed contemporary views; the one 'aristocratic' - holding that aristocratic influence among electors should be sufficient to ensure their support, without any permanent agency to marshal them; the other 'radical' - believing that if electors were literally 'free', they would naturally support the course dictated by reason. Both equally reflected distrust of any agency which sought to 'manage' them.

In the eighteenth century, and so long as aristocratic leadership remained unchallenged, aristocratic influence directly and indirectly had indeed been sufficient to co-ordinate and harness the separate individual interests of electors for political purposes. But that leadership was ceasing to pass unchallenged and as a co-ordinating factor, aristocratic influence was breaking down. In Westminster particularly, electors had long been growing more independent, more self-assertive and more keen to share in political decisions. At the same time they had been appearing ever more as a mere body of individuals.

It is apparent that unless some new integrating force came to draw them together and to co-ordinate their energies, they must have

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1. cf. in partic. infra, for the trouble they met when preparing for the election of 1818.
remained powerless. But though a particular programme or policy, put forward or judged on its merits, might serve to create a bond of union among electors who approved of it, it would not of itself, and as pure radical theory supposed, make them into a political force. They must be organised as a party. Men who would take the lead, who would make the arrangements to harness the approval won, and who would persuade electors to come to the poll, were essential to make the will of electors effective.

Thus the aristocratic and radical attitudes towards the "Westminster Committee" are significant. The former indicates the extent to which aristocratic influence is still regarded as the natural means of securing the support of the electors; the latter, the extent to which the democratic need for organisation has yet to be understood. The "Westminster Committee" appears as a forerunner of modern constituency associations, a body experimenting with modern democratic methods of managing the electorate, but a body whose existence is neither understood nor approved.

As a "constituency association", however, it was all but unique. On the one hand, emerging at a time when parliamentary parties had, as yet, no need to seek the support of a large national electorate, it was a "constituency association" unco-ordinated with any political party, really seeking to "form" a new "party" of its own.

On the other it is clear it had a looseness of organisation and structure which made it quite unlike any modern local party organisation, with its permanent paid agent and staff, its funds and fixed headquarters. Further, it is clear that Place and his political friends would not have believed they themselves constituted a_party_ still less that they were seeking to _form_ a _party_ in Westminster or the country at large, and that their own outlook was entirely in accord with the views of other radicals. As practical business men, desiring efficiency in political conduct in others, it is evident that what management they did undertake, they undertook with care and thoroughness. But their _management_ never took the form of a positive effort to build up and hold together a closely knit political party.

1. i.e. a _party_ of the kind which the term _party_ connote to contemporaries.
They *managed* only in the sense that they were willing to take the lead in organising matters for specific reasons and on specific occasions. They regarded themselves only as "people’s men", coming forward to give the people a lead, and winning support, on each occasion, solely on the merits of their arguments.

Precisely why they never came to adopt a more formal organisation it is impossible to say. There was the example of previous reform societies before them, and it was certainly suggested from time to time that they should form an electors’ association.¹ It seems, however, that apart from the possibility that local difficulties and the dangers of bringing repression acted as a deterrent, neither they, nor the electors at large, had any real favour for the idea.

According to their principles any club they might form must have a democratic constitution. Experience had shown, however, that unless popular excitement were sustained at a high level, no democratic political club which depended on men with their daily bread to earn would be likely to flourish, that it would not only be likely to involve a few men in the considerable work of keeping it alive, but might, owing to the apathy of its members at a crucial moment, prevent effective action.² The informal method of forming ad hoc committees to handle particular matters seems to have been best suited to men who had, at most, a limited time to spare, and who did not want to risk action being hampered by cumbersome formal machinery, or an unwieldy official body.

What was the relationship of the "Westminster Committee" and Burdett? One view was that the former was composed of Burdett’s hired "tools". Another was the opposite – that Burdett was the dupe of a dangerous group of men, who sought to make use of him as a figurehead. Both are gross perversions. The former reflects the disbelief that a small group of tradesmen/electors could achieve so much unaided; the latter the sheer dislike and distrust of their influence.

¹. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,809, f. 6, and cf. infra. pp.54 et seq.
². cf. infra. pp.58 et seq.
Of course Burdett did owe much to their support; of course they did expect to make use of Burdett's talents in their cause - as a leader "the people" would follow.¹ But how far were they able to control him as their representative in the Commons? How far did they have to bow to him?

It was a fact that Burdett enjoyed great popular prestige. But a good deal of that prestige depended on his retaining his Westminster seat. His Westminster seat, in turn, depended on his retaining the favour of his election organisers and the Westminster electors, whom they represented.

On the face of things it might seem there was a nice balance between them, and indeed political action was usually undertaken jointly. But the balance, in fact, was always tilted in favour of Burdett. If he proved by no means the "man of iron" the Westminster group had hoped to secure as a leader, he was, for a very long time, by far the greatest champion of Reformers in parliament. Even when his popularity in the country as a whole lessened, he retained great favour among the "rank and file" of Westminster electors, and the "Westminster Committee" never found anyone who could have taken his place.

Thus, though the Westminster group would generally secure his co-operation, they were never in a position to ensure that it would be forthcoming, or that he would carry out their wishes. His popular prestige gave him considerable independence - indeed it was precisely because of his prestige, largely acquired in defending the Reformers, that they had chosen him. Thus it was never considered practicable to demand public pledges of him, and if he refused at any time to play the part they wanted him to play, they had to defer to him. Not

¹. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 200. Place refers to his motives in seeking to secure Burdett's return in 1807... "I was... desirous that there should be one man, at the least, who would speak for and to the people".
infrequently they found themselves bound to defend publicly, actions of Burdett, which they personally disapproved.¹

But if they were in no position to control Burdett, neither was Burdett in any position to control them. For elections and other demonstrations they handled the technical arrangements entirely as they chose. Further, both as individuals and as a group, they could, and did, take action which sometimes proved very embarrassing for Burdett. Again, there were many matters which they could follow up either by themselves, or with the aid of another member or members of parliament.

By and large Burdett and the Westminster group did co-operate. The real driving force came from the latter, and though Burdett retained his independence he was, it must seem, often persuaded to take action he would not have taken, or to go further than he would have done, if left to himself. Contact between them, however, was always extremely loose. The Westminster Reformers had no regular meetings with Burdett and indeed comparatively few meetings with him at all. Any species of joint action, which involved close personal co-operation was extremely difficult to arrange and might well prove unsuccessful.

It is clear that socially and temperamentally Burdett had little in common with the Westminster men. His *world* and the *world* of the tradesmen of Westminster, were still vastly different. Even with the best will towards each other, his close association with the men of the *Westminster Committee*, at a time when so much importance was attached to social rank, would have been surprising. In fact, confidence and trust between them was at all times very far from complete.²

However radical his politics, Burdett remained first and foremost a *gentleman* of aristocratic disposition. In many ways he was

1. cf. e.g. infra. IV, pp. 14/-
2. cf. e.g. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MSS. 27,838, ff. 17-18; 27,850, f. 214, 236 ff. 27,837, f. 185, and infra, pp. 101 et seq.
the typical 'amateur' in politics, entering parliament partly from a sense of duty, partly it would seem, for the sheer excitement. Prepared to go a long way with the Westminster group, his attitude towards the leaders was always tempered with deep reserve – partly no doubt, from a sense of social 'dignity', but still more because he was, himself, half inclined to distrust their methods and intentions. A 'romantic', there was much he would have preserved in the aristocratic world that was passing away.

On the other hand the Westminster group was composed of men who were neither 'gentlemen' nor 'romantics', but who were, in the main, hard headed business and professional men, rationalist and materialistic in outlook. To them politics was a matter of unremitting hard work for 'professionals'. Outwardly deferential towards Burdett, they disliked his hauteur and were to find him, according to their political standards, too often indolent, inefficient and half-hearted.

Burdett and they, it is clear, met little save on political occasions. Constantly urged by his friends to have as little to do with them as possible, Burdett never came to mix freely with them. Nor did the Westminster men make much effort to seek him out personally. Place, writing in 1820, was able to say he had seen him privately less than ten times in his life, and then only when it had been unavoidable. Letters and brief notes kept them in touch – and

1. cf. e.g. ibid. 27,850, f 88.
2. cf. e.g. infra. p. 99.
3. cf. e.g. infra. pp. 701 et seq. Place wrote of Burdett, Add. Ms. 27,850, f 88. "... though always gentlemanly (he) was very stately, spoke little to anyone who waited on him, and invariably either negatived or damped the propositions of those who conversed with him".
4. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 87.
5. ibid. 27,843, f. 308. Letter of Place to Wright, Dec. 8th, 1820. Place, of course, had been on particularly bad terms with Burdett after Burdett had accused him of being a "spy" in 1810 (cf. infra) and did not speak to him between 1810 and 1819.
mutual acquaintances, closer to Burdett, yet ready to mix with the Westminster tradesmen, would carry verbal messages. But, if Burdett were out of town, it would be difficult, at times, to arrange matters at all.

Publicly, however, they remained 'at one', at all times advocating a common programme. For better or worse, Burdett was more than any other person 'their' representative and spokesman in the Commons. Since Burdett's actions in the House and their actions outside were generally mutually supporting, Burdett must inevitably figure prominently in any account of the activities of the 'Westminster Committee'.

In 1807 the little group of Reformers in Westminster undoubtedly had high hopes of the future. It cannot, however, be said that, as a group, they had, or indeed ever had, any specific long term plans of action. At the same time their broad aims and policy appear clearly enough. Heirs of the Corresponding Society, politically nurtured on the works of Paine, they were convinced democrats. Believing government could never be efficient or enlightened until the affairs of 'the people' came to be in their own hands, their main aims may be said to be - to destroy corrupting influence in all its forms, and aristocratic influence in particular; to convince 'the people' they had the power to act for themselves; to educate them to do so; and to rouse them to demand parliamentary reform.

Their policy came to embrace two methods. On the one hand, and in the manner of all Reformers, they were concerned to attack and draw attention to the abuses and to the inefficiency, which, in their view, the existing and aristocratic system encouraged, and to the unwillingness, indeed inability, of the Commons as then constituted, to remedy matters. On the other, they were concerned to show, by

1. and, at least so far as Place was concerned, Godwin, through his "Inquiry Concerning Political Justice" etc. G. Wallas, op. cit. p 29
practical demonstration in Westminster, that "the people" were not only able to manage matters for themselves, but to manage them much better than the aristocracy.

It was their attention to the latter method which was novel. Others before them had been prepared to write about the good effects which would follow, when "the people" came to act for themselves and aristocratic influence was removed. They were concerned to demonstrate it in practice. Almost as if taking Paine's contentions one by one, they set out to prove the power of "the people" when they chose to exert themselves; the efficiency with which "they" could handle matters; the good order which resulted when "they" were properly led and encouraged to feel they shared in the conduct of their own affairs.

But though they recognised the attention which centred on Westminster, and though they sought the maximum publicity for the actions of "the people", theirs was no mere political technique. Their dislike of what they felt to be the social, administrative and political evils of life in Westminster, was as sincere as their belief that aristocratic influence and inefficiency was responsible for them, and as sincere as their determination to set a high moral standard of conduct and a high standard of efficiency themselves.

The aims of the "Committee", as its members conceived them in 1807, appear in a pamphlet issued under the title, "An Exposition of the Circumstances which gave rise to the Election of Sir Francis Burdett, Bart... and of the principles which governed the Committee who conducted that election". The pamphlet was drafted by Cobbett and edited by Place.¹

¹. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 20.
What had led them to take action? They had been concerned to do what they had conceived to be their duty, and to set an example. "The growth of corruption had convinced everyone of the mischief to the state"... but it seemed, such was the power of the system, no remedy existed. To whom could 'the people' apply? One faction was as bad as the other. The very source of corruption lay in their interest in securing, and holding on to, power. Pitt had betrayed the people after he came to power in 1784. The Whigs, despite their opposition to the Pitt/Melville faction, had not "escaped the stain" of their coalition at the end of the American War, when they had secured their share of the public plunder. Then, whilst the memory of their former apostacy was still fresh, they had coalesced again, joining with "those of princely fortune" who had long "robbed" 'the people' and had again shared the public spoils.

In these circumstances, when all public men seemed alike, the fear had been that 'the people' would think the problem irremediable; the idea of reform would be given up; the spirit of Englishmen would die.

"Such were the views of those who had most reason to think of the subject, the middle classes". To prevent these mischiefs "some friends of the ancient constitution" had decided to endeavour to rouse the spirit of the people in Westminster and "afford to its inhabitants an opportunity to prove there still existed a public in the country".

There follows an account of how a few "public spirited" men decided to return two men - Burdett and Paull - to parliament, who seemed to them, "best calculated to restore the purity of the constitution, and by so doing to stimulate and encourage others to follow their example"; of how Paull was dropped, and Burdett returned. They had acted entirely on the principles of "purity". They had not sought to decry other candidates, had used no artificial methods of winning support - but had simply urged 'the people' to return an independent man who would do his duty, in their own interests. The election had been paid for entirely by public subscription.
Their object in publishing the pamphlet was to "explain to the electors (everywhere) the principles upon which the election was conducted", to "convince them that if there are not more honest men in the House it is largely their own fault"... "to animate them to exertion when the opportunity again offers, and thus by sending honest, independent and determined men to represent them, quietly and peaceably to procure that reform, which can alone restore the nation to that state of happiness and consequence to which it is entitled". They had done what they could; it was up to others to help themselves in the same way.

In their opinion ... "If the repealed clauses of the Act of Settlement were re-enacted, and the Commons purged of all pensioners and placemen"... and if the Commons were made truly representative of 'the people', then the resources of the nation could be properly mobilised to provide an insuperable barrier to continental despotism.

Their aims, then, were to set an example and to give a lead to the country as a whole, just as, in the first instance, their aims had been to set an example and give a lead to the people of Westminster. There is no suggestion nor intention that a 'party' should be formed. They were, it is evident, seeking to act entirely on what they conceived to be the principles of good government, and their attitude serves to throw light on the aims which underlay their proposals for constitutional reform.

Governing their attack and motivating their actions was their hatred of 'corrupting' influence of all kinds, and their disgust at the effects of 'corruption'. To them a 'corrupting' influence was any influence which depended for its existence other than on its appeal to, and which was exerted so as to impede the exercise of, human reason. The 'natural' or paternal influence of the aristocracy was, as they saw it, as much a 'corrupting' influence as an influence depending on bribery, force or fraud. It stultified the minds of those upon whom it was exercised and degraded their personalities.
As they saw matters "corruption"—the "corrupting" influence of the aristocracy in particular—had long been, and was still, stifling the mass of "the people." To those of the governing classes who opposed all schemes of reform on the grounds that no scheme to prevent corruption would be of the slightest avail until the character of "the people" altered, they would have answered that, if "the people" were corrupt, it was because of the example set by, and the "corrupting" influence upon them of, those who had long claimed to be their natural leaders—that it was their character which must be changed.

In their eyes, so long as large numbers of "the people" had no real chance of making their voices heard in elections at all; so long as electors could be "commanded" by a landlord to act as he bade; so long as they could be bribed, debauched and brutalised—"the people" would count for nothing. As things were, any candidate or candidates for election might, by "corruption", secure a majority of votes artificially.

In the same way, as long as it was in the power of those who controlled the executive to dispose of large numbers of offices, and so long as members of the Commons, particularly, could accept them, the Commons itself, as a body representing the people, would count for nothing. Any set of ministers might secure the favour of a majority in the House.

1. This attitude is of course inherent in all radical writings of this time. For an illustration of this attitude expressed in other terms, cf. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,549, f.52, in which Place reflects on the state of politics in the late eighteenth century. It was known, he wrote, that the few honest men who occasionally appeared in the House could achieve little... "That this was the case was well known to many reflecting men, but unfortunately, those who reflect the most... are seldom very active in public matters, and are indeed the least likely to interfere in politics so as to produce the effect which, by a different line of conduct, they could not fail to produce"... "Now and then honest men do come forward and never fail to produce a great effect, but they seldom continue their efforts)... "adverse circumstances discourage them having to act with a people comparatively ignorant, and being particularly annoyed with the rude prospects of such people, their hopes give way, disappointment follows, they become disheartened, and one by one withdraw themselves from public business, and the country once again sinks into a state of apathy. This state is too often accelerated by the apostacy of those preeminently public men on whom they, the people, had fixed their hopes. The people are always in such
circumstances blamed, but the blame lies principally on" ... (such men for not)... "adapting their proceedings and circumstances and persevering to obtain their object in spite of" ... every annoyance. If such men were to persist, they could not fail to produce the most "salutary changes, and in time, to form such a public as no government would dare abuse.

Had such men existed at the close of the American War, Place wrote, thinking of the Whigs, there would have been such a public now. He wrote in the 1820s. (The underlining is my own.)
Thus, like other Reformers, they came to advocate various measures designed to prevent, or diminish the opportunities for corruption in elections, and to amend the franchise so that the body of "the people" might express themselves more freely. But these, in themselves, were not enough. The "right" kind of candidates must come forward for election. Those elected must not be able to betray "the people" subsequently. The executive must be prevented from exercising a 'corrupting' influence upon the legislature. The patronage at its disposal must be reduced. Placemen must be removed from (or be allowed no vote in)\(^1\) the Commons. Elections must be more frequent.

It becomes, indeed, significantly clear, that the Westminster Reformers saw themselves standing in the same relation to "the people" as they believed ministers should stand in relation to "the people" and to "the people's" representatives in the Commons. Their influence depended, as they believed the influence of ministers should indeed must—depend, if the Commons were reconstituted so as to represent the body of the people and they were prevented from offering rewards to those who would support them—viz. entirely on their ability to propose measures which would be supported solely on their merits.\(^2\)

If, they assumed, the "corrupting" influence of the executive upon the country were diminished—if its ability to grant favours to members of the Commons were minimised—parties in their existing form must disappear. If members of the Commons had no prospect of favours, but rather the prospect of a continued close scrutiny of their actions

1. This was Bentham's suggestion of "Catechism of Parliamentary Reform" (Introduction) Works 111, 490. It was taken up by the Westminster Reformers after 1817.

2. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 35,148, f. 5. Place to J.C. Hobhouse, 19th December 1827. "The days when any old cry by 'leaders' such as "Wilkes and liberty"—"The cause, the cause", (by men such as Fox) —are past. We have as clever men to-day as ever Pitt, Fox, Burke, Sheridan, were, but they must proclaim their intention to follow a specific course of action. In the past "the cause, the cause" was followed blindly, and without understanding. Now the march of intellect... means that the people are not to be ignored. Since no great man bothers to explain his measures to the people, there are no great men to-day to lead the government and the people, for no man who does not prove to the people he has a programme to benefit them... will become a "man of the people"... "it is only by the test of utility that a man will become of consequence".
and of having to appear frequently for re-election, then only public spirited men would stand for election at all. If electors were free to vote as they wished, only the best of them would be elected. Once in the Commons and independent of the executive, they would, with the approval of the people, choose ministers according to their ability (i.e. the Crown must accept their choice), and judge their measures on their merits.

It is, in fact, quite evident the Westminster Reformers no more saw the need for formed parties in parliament and the country for governmental purposes, than they saw the need to take positive action towards building, binding and disciplining a party themselves. If, they believed, the people were freed and encouraged to obey the dictates of reason, ministers of ability would naturally be chosen. Ministers who proposed good measures would have no need of artificial aids to bind men together in their support. They would naturally receive the support of a majority - a majority whose bond of unity would be common agreement on principle.

Their proposals, particularly that for 'separating' executive and legislature, were immediately and strongly condemned by Tory and Whig spokesmen. It was not simply because, as was promptly pointed out, the measures proposed - a reform in the representation and the removal of placemen and pensioners from the Commons - would not of themselves achieve the Reformers' object. Rather was it the Reformers' object itself which came under fire.

As it has already been indicated above, it has long been the fashion to emphasize, that if carried out, their proposal to remove placemen from the Commons would have prevented ministers defending or

1. cf. e.g. Edinburgh Review, Vol. X, July 1807. Art. "Cobbett's Register". Quarterly Magazine, Vol. 1, No. 11, May 1809, p. 429. The "Edinburgh" pointed out that, even if excluded from parliament, placemen would still exist and the offices of state would still be competed for. Since the Commons would still be able to "dictate" what appointments were made, men would still form parties to secure or retain office. The only difference would be that ... "the fight would then be carried on by underlings whom the ministers left behind when they successively left for office".
winning support for their policy in that House, and would have destroyed the party system. It has been the fashion to assume that if they were not deliberately hoping to create a revolutionary situation, then they must have been unable to see clearly the effect their proposals must have. But it is now clear, and must be accepted, that they did 'see' the effect the implementation of their proposals would produce, did hope the 'party system', as it then existed, would be destroyed, yet were not hoping to create a 'revolutionary situation' in the sense implied. The criticism levelled at them by contemporary Whigs was very different and more directly to the point.

More ready to compromise with actual circumstances, Whig spokesmen were concerned to emphasise not that their proposals would destroy what is now understood by the party system, but that they would make executive government impossible. Unless, they pointed out, ministers had the means of influencing the Commons, unless they had the means of bringing influence to bear on elections, unless they had the means of binding men together by the bestowal of patronage — no ministry could survive. The executive must, therefore, possess an influence capable of holding men together in its support. At the same time (of course) a party, (the Whig party) was essential to see that this necessary influence of the executive did not exceed due bounds, and the 'natural' influence of the (Whig) aristocracy was essential to hold it together.

Whig arguments were doubtless valid. But it must now be self-evident why Reformers utterly rejected them. For the very reason that

they agreed with the Whigs that 'influence' was necessary to hold parties together, they wished to see parties destroyed. Whig and Tory arguments, that executive government would be impossible without 'corruption', they were no more prepared to accept than would an Englishman to-day, if they were put forward by a contemporary statesman. For the very reason that they agreed with them, that the existing system of government could not work without 'corruption', they wished to see the system changed.

The constitutional proposals of the Westminster and other Reformers, it may well be agreed, would not all have produced the effects they were designed to achieve. It may certainly be agreed that they were not all immediately practicable. But their real mistake, it may seem, lies not so much in what they were attempting to achieve, as in their readiness to place too great a faith in the power of human reason to achieve it. They were too ready to assume that if men were entirely 'free' to exercise their reason, and were encouraged to do so, they, or at least for the time being, the majority, would naturally agree as to the best course to be followed.

For as it has been attempted to show, it was the 'nature' of the influence exercised, and the 'nature' of existing parties that they attacked. They had no objection to ministers obtaining influence according to their talents or the strength of their appeal to the reason of members of parliament and 'the people'. Even after their proposals should have been given effect, they clearly expected 'parties' would form in parliament and in the country. These, however, would be in their

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1. It is evident, particularly so in the Introduction to Bentham's "Catechism" (Works, Vol.111, pp. 435 et seq) that, in the last analysis, their dislike of the Whig party was based far less upon dislike of its existence as a party than on the fact that it did not act as they believed a party should act - which was substantially as a modern party does act! The Introduction to the 'Catechism' is, in
(footnote continued)
many ways, a thorough-going criticism of the working of the governmental system and of parties with which, to-day, it must be impossible not to sympathise.
view, not factions of the self-interested, which would exist only until such time as the latter merged with the former and brought unanimity to the country. However 'idealists' their views, it may nonetheless to-day be regarded as of the first importance that they were kept before the country at this time.

As it has also been suggested above - the fact that Reformers generally spoke of 'restoring' or 'restoring the balance of', the constitution can no longer be considered as surprising, or in itself, a reason for ridiculing them. It is clear they were no more than conforming their arguments to a conventional pattern dictated by the ideals of the age - that to speak of 'restoring the balance of the constitution', was commonplace. But whilst some Reformers including Burdett genuinely believed in, and believed they were working to restore, 'a balance of powers', the Westminster group were, it is clear, never among them. From the start they were democrats and, at heart, republicans. They believed in 'democratic ascendency' long before Bentham joined with them and wrote openly in its favour.

They had ....

2. In the Introduction to the "Catechism" (Works, Vol. 111. p. 450)
no real belief in the value of the Monarchy or of the House of Lords. Further, they were rationalists with no romantic illusions about a primitive Anglo-Saxon democracy.

Why then, first, did the Westminster Reformers too, speak of the 'balance of the Constitution' and complain that it had been, or was being, overturned? Why second, did they, too, claim to be defending the prerogatives of the Crown and profess their acceptance of the House of Lords? Why third, did they too speak of 'restoring' the constitution?

With regard to the first point, the answer seems, in part, that, for some time, they found it politic to frame their arguments in a conventional manner more likely to attract independent or moderate reforming support, and, in part, that the course of argument was dictated by the Whigs. The Whigs, accusing them of seeking to destroy the 'balance of the constitution' and defending 'corruption' as necessary to maintain it, positively invited Reformers to reply that it was not they but the Whigs and Tories who were overturning the balance, by corrupting the Commons. After Bentham's famous "Catechism", which appeared in 1817 as a 'Manifesto' of the Westminster Reformers, had made a direct plea for 'democratic ascendancy', they ceased thereafter to claim they were seeking to redress the 'balance of the constitution'. But the plea for 'democratic ascendancy' did not appear subsequently in their other publications, and it must have been tactically inadvisable to lay too much stress upon it.

It mattered to them little, however, whether they argued for 'democratic ascendancy' or not. In their eyes it was most of all important to secure a 'separation' of powers, since they believed 'democratic ascendancy' would inevitably follow. If other Reformers, equally anxious to secure a 'separation' of powers, believed it necessary to redress the 'balance of the constitution', it cost nothing to humour them!
With regard to the second point, it is clear that it was again largely a matter of political expediency. The advocacy of republicanism, particularly during the Napoleonic War period, would have done their cause more harm than good. On the other hand, their claim to stand as allies and defenders of the Crown against those who would usurp its prerogatives and trample on 'the people', served to emphasise their loyalty. Since, however, they believed that if their reform proposals were carried out, the Crown would be bound to bow to the will of the Commons, it is quite clear their readiness to uphold the Crown in no way reflected any abatement in the desire for democratic ascendancy. Though they might have preferred an elected magistrate in the King's place, yet, comparatively speaking, the matter was of secondary importance, and as a matter of practical politics they were content to accept the Monarchy, and the House of Lords as well.

Why thirdly, did they, too, speak of 'restoring' the constitution? It is certainly true that they believed their proposals for reform justified on the grounds of expediency alone - whether those proposals reflected past constitutional practice or not. Bentham's arguments for reform, later put forward on the basis of utility, they regarded as conclusive in themselves.

There were, it seems, two main reasons why they continued to urge their reforms as necessary to 'restore' the constitution. In the first place, however satisfied they may have been that their reform proposals were justifiable in themselves, there can be no doubt that the majority including Bentham himself, believed it could be shown that they did reflect historical practice, and that the constitution had in fact been perverted by the successive encroachments of Monarchy and Aristocracy. Historically, it is clear that they and Bentham did believe

1. The Westminster Reformers, and Burdett particularly, commonly urged that one of the consequences, and advantages, to be derived from reform, and the 'inevitable' destruction of (existing) parties, would be that the King would again be 'freed' to exercise his prerogatives. But it must be clear that their meaning was that he would be 'freed' to exercise them on behalf of, and according to the will of the nation as a whole (or in practice, according to the will of a majority). M. Roberts, op.cit. p. 233, discussing this point, is
(footnote continued)
uncertain ... "How far Burdett adopted this line in order to
enlist the loyal masses on the side of Reform, and how far he was
sincere in his belief that the Reform he contemplated would benefit
the Crown." In implying the former reason was the more likely, he
would appear to miss its true significance.
as other Reformers, that in 1688 the aristocracy had substituted their own corrupt power for that of the Stuarts and so prevented a proper 'restoration of the constitution'.

In the second, they recognised that many might be persuaded to accept proposals for reform if it could be shown that, as well as being justified on the basis of expediency, they were also drawn from past usage. As Bentham later wrote -

"... however in the eye of superior reason the argument grounded in utility may be more substantially probative yet, constituted as human nature is - at any rate, at the stage beyond which the public mind is not yet advanced in this country - the argument from usage affords a promise of being more efficiently persuasive".

In due course, Bentham was to become the 'party' philosopher of the Westminster Reformers. Bentham helped to make their aims clearer to all, and his reasoning gave their case greater force, and greater publicity. But already, long before he took up their cause, their broad aims were decided, and their case presented.

Chapter VII

The Years of Consolidation, 1808-12

1. Election Expenses

The Westminster Reformers were to make considerable and persistent efforts to abolish corruption, violence, tumult and indeed, all the features they regarded as evil in Westminster. It was not only that they themselves detested the disorders which accompanied elections. Anxious to secure a shortening of the duration of parliaments, they were well aware of the arguments used by politicians against more frequent elections - that they would serve only to intensify corruption, that they would make politics so ruinously expensive, that candidates would cease to come forward. They had, therefore, an additional incentive to seek the "purification" of elections, and in the years after 1807 they were to play no small part in stirring a new and stronger feeling against electoral corruption.

The long term course the Westminster Reformers pursued was to press for radical improvements in the method of taking the poll, which would serve not only to prevent or reduce the opportunities for corruption, but would reduce election costs to a minimum. Their more immediate course was, whilst accepting the existing method of conducting the poll, to set an example against corruption themselves, and to keep their own expenses as low as possible.

There is no doubt that one prime reason for the Westminster Reformers concern to secure the reduction of election expenses, and to set an example against extravagance themselves, was their intense dislike of the vicious and corrupting effects which a lavish outpouring of money on elections produced. But it was not the only reason.

1. cf. e.g. Burdett's Plan of Reform (1809), a pamphlet based on his proposals made in parliament, published by the Westminster group; also, evidence given by Place before the Parliamentary Select Committee ..., on Election Polls (1827) given in its Report.
Believing it was not the duty of candidates to seek electors, but, conversely, the duty of electors to seek candidates, they strongly disapproved the very idea of men coming forward at elections, prepared to spend their own money to obtain a seat in parliament. It suggested they regarded it as an advantage to be sought after, and the heavy expenditure necessary to secure it, as a worthwhile outlay to be offset by the ‘profits’ of a political career. A candidate, they believed, should be regarded as a man prepared to undertake a burden out of a sense of duty, and, in such circumstances, election expenses should fall not upon the candidate, but upon those whose interests representation was intended to safeguard. If, however, electors were to have the freedom to select whom they liked, the costs of election had to be such as they could reasonably meet themselves.¹

Expenses in a Westminster election were inevitably high in view of the way in which the poll was conducted, and the length of time it was kept open. They were, however, made much higher by the widespread belief, amongst electors and inhabitants generally, that the period of an election was a time for material gain, and by the readiness of candidates to accept traditional calls on their purses. They may be divided into three categories.

In the first place, there were the day to day costs of advertisements before, after and during an election; the expenses of hiring committee rooms, clerks, poll inspectors, lawyers and the canvassers for both central and parish committees, necessary for the conduct of a campaign extending over weeks; and the expenses of having the special election books printed. Since everyone concerned expected to make as much money as possible out of candidates, these expenses might

¹. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 268. Place wrote ... "I was resolved from the first moment I interfered to reduce the expense of Westminster elections to the smallest possible sum, knowing full well that in a contest of the purse, the electors would stand no chance of returning whom they wished".
be extremely high. Innkeepers expected to charge extra at election time for the hire of their rooms. Attorneys might have to be paid ten to twenty guineas a day. Poll inspectors were customarily paid five guineas a day; committee clerks and even messengers two guineas a day; poll clerks one guinea a day. Many printers, too, put up their charges at election time and advertisements had apparently cost as much as a hundred pounds a day.¹

In the second place, there were the 'traditional' costs of bribing and treating electors, of hiring gangs of ruffians to block access to the poll or otherwise to obstruct opponents' supporters, of hiring bands and staging processions to enliven electors, and of arranging to have candidates chaired to and from the Hustings. There were, too, the expenses of providing carriages to bring electors to the Hustings, of giving favours, and of 'wining and dining' a candidate's 'friends', i.e. his active helpers.

In the third place, there were the 'official' charges made by the High Bailiff and the High Constable respectively. The High Bailiff's charges were for the erection of the Hustings, and the payment of the High Bailiff's staff. The High Constable's charges were for his own services and the services of additional men whom he would engage as constables to help to preserve order during the election. But both the High Bailiff and the High Constable, the former particularly, were concerned with making the most of the situation, financially. It was not only that they charged far more than was justified for the services rendered, but their bills would include as items, the food and drink they and their assistants consumed, and the costs of the carriages

they had hired for their comfort. Divided equally among candidates, 'official' charges varied according to the length of the poll and the number of candidates.

The Westminster Reformers - as others before and after - were equally interested in securing the reduction of all three kinds of expenses.

Day to day election costs they could cut down by making use of volunteer staff whenever possible, by reducing the long traditionally accepted rates of pay for hired helpers, and by keeping strict accounts. The costs of advertisements and of printing the special poll books, however, provided them with a considerable problem, and they had to rely largely on finding printers, sympathetic to their cause and on the willingness of the editors of reforming newspapers and journals to take their adverts, cheaply or often for nothing.

The 'traditional' expenses of bribery, treating, and hiring gangs of ruffians did not arise for the Westminster Reformers. Ostentatiously they simply refused to do any of these things. Though many of them disapproved of the distribution of 'favourites' at all, as encouraging battles between the supporters of rival candidates, they had been prepared to sell them in 1807 as a concession to popular demand. They had been prepared, too, to provide a limited number of carriages to bring the aged and infirm to the Hustings. They were not, however, prepared to provide free meals and drinks for their active committee helpers, and in 1818 considerable ill feeling was caused over the meals Committee men had seen fit to charge to expenses. The costs of celebration dinners were always covered by the sale of admission tickets.

1. ibid. 27,850, f. 86. Place says it was customary for the Hustings to be charged at four times the rate a respectable builder would have charged. For an original High Bailiff's Bill sent to Sir Samuel Hood for the November 1806 Westminster election, cf. Bundle of election papers etc. concerning Parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, in the possession of the Westminster Archives Department. The total bill was for £1465.0.0. Hood was asked to pay £488.6.8.

2. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,838, f. 19. Referring to advertising in 1807, Place wrote, "We totally changed the mode of printing."
We had very few posting bills, which are very expensive, no more advertisements than were absolutely necessary, but we printed daily at the close of the poll a very large number of small bills on coarse paper and trusted to the activity of volunteers to distribute them"... "not a single morning paper§ could be said to be with us" ... "not one for the people.

3. ibid. 27, 850, f. 80.
But though there was much that Reformers might do themselves to cut down expenditure, they had still to face the 'official' charges of the High Bailiff and the High Constable. To these charges they objected, not only because they fell upon candidates, but because they considered them to be both unwarranted and grossly unfair.

Neither the High Bailiff's nor the High Constable's charges were authorised by statute. They were paid only as a result of the agreement of candidates to do so. In the case of the High Constable's bill, Reformers objected to the very idea that anything should be paid specially for the maintenance of order. Still more did they object to the fact that candidates agreed to accept the Constable's charges, not because they supposed order would or could be maintained, but because it was traditional to do so, and because they recognised that otherwise constables would be likely to obstruct their supporters' access to the Hustings.¹

It was, however, against what they regarded as the unjustifiable charges made by the High Bailiff that they first decided to make a stand, by refusing to pay his bill, and by deliberately provoking a court action against themselves. Though they were never to achieve their aims in full, their persistent efforts to secure the regularisation of 'official' election charges, which led to three court actions, two Commons' Committees of Enquiry, an Act of Parliament (applying to Westminster only) in 1811, and an Act of Parliament in 1827 (applying to boroughs all over the country) - did help to reduce the 'official' charges candidates were bound to pay.

If their ultimate aim was to see official charges for elections reduced and removed from candidates altogether - believing they should fall on the electoral body as a whole - their immediate aim was to prove that as matters stood, no law authorised the High Bailiff to

¹ ibid. f. 81.
charge anybody anything and that, whoever might be responsible for the charges of conducting the poll, they should not be the responsibility of a man whom the electors were seeking to make their representative, or of the handful of electors who were conducting the election for him.

It was by no means a new view in 1807 to regard the High Bailiff's bill as unjustified. As noticed previously, Horne Tooke had refused to pay it in 1790. He had based his refusal on the legal liability of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster to pay for the staging of elections. Paull, advised by Tooke, had also refused to pay in 1806, and Sheridan certainly did not pay in 1807. Tooke and Paull had eventually paid at least a part of their bills and the matter had never been taken to court. The Westminster group were thus following a course suggested at least seventeen years earlier, the possibilities of which must have been familiar talk amongst metropolitan Reformers. They were, however, to pursue matters with an uncompromising persistence and thoroughness which distinguishes them from the older generation of Reformers or their more "gentlemanly" reforming associates.

In the eyes of a majority of contemporaries, though a candidate's wealth may not have been proof he would, if elected, remain independent, it was at least proof he was a man of substance, and not merely an adventurer. It was even considered desirable that candidates should be forced to show evidence of their ability to be liberal in meeting the demands made upon their purses, desirable that expenses should fall upon them as a means of preventing any and every common man seeking election.

1. supra, p. 17, cf. Letter of Horne Tooke to Paull, quoted in "Reply" by "Veritas" to Horne Tooke's Letter to the Editor of the Times, May 5th, 1807. Tooke was then giving Paull friendly advice on his 1806 election. The Dean and Chapter ... "have great emoluments and the holding of the election is one of their privileges and the burden which goes with the privilege rests on them. Their interest will not be with you, and I would not pay them for their malevolence".

2. ibid, cf. also, Correspondence between Mr. Paull and the Deputy High Bailiff of Westminster, 1806.

3. supra, p. 44.
Gentlemanly Reformers had long been ready to put forward and advocate schemes to reduce the corruption and expense of election. But ready though they were to make strong token protests, their interest, it must seem, was rather in seeing that election charges did not reach excessive proportions. They did not really want to see removed all the tests by which a candidate had to prove himself a gentleman and did not themselves, as candidates, wish to refuse all gentlemanly obligations. Horne Tooke quite frankly did not want to make elections cheap ... "lest every blackguard put himself up for parliament" ... and Burdett clearly felt like him.¹

Thus it was Place and his close associates, who were to be the prime movers in the attack upon the High Bailiff's Bill. Burdett, who has been given the credit of having made the first stand against unauthorised election charges was, in fact, largely pushed into doing so, and his co-operation, discouraged by his friends of the Horne Tooke circle, was so half-hearted that it almost wrecked their schemes completely.²

It has been said that the Westminster Reformers believed official election expenses to be the responsibility of the Dean and Chapter as, at least nominally, the chief local authority for the City and Borough of Westminster. The Reformers case, upon which Place did a considerable amount of research, was as follows:— The Dean and Chapter were the Lords of the Manor of Westminster. As such it was really they who were bound to execute the King's writ ordering an election, and it was their bailiff who had to stage the election for them. The bailiff's office had formerly, like the office

¹ Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 105, cf. also ff. 87-88.
² Burdett was given the credit for making this first major stand against unauthorised election charges by E.A. and A.G. Porritt, Unreformed House of Commons, 1.191 et seq.
of Sheriff, been compulsive for one year with a penalty for refusal to serve. In comparatively recent times, however, the office had been found to be lucrative, particularly at election times, and the office had been sold by the Dean and Chapter for life to the highest bidder, on payment of a lump sum. The bailiff had then come to be styled the "High" Bailiff and the office was regularly subject to purchase.¹

It is certainly a fact that Arthur Morris, who became High Bailiff in 1806 paid £4000 for his office and he certainly expected to turn it to profit from the various fees etc. he received.² The Reformers argued that not only was his office illegally held, but that the large rents and emoluments received by the Dean and Chapter implied they had only been granted in return for duties - one of which was to stage elections - and that they must fulfil their obligations.

But whether or not the office of the "High" Bailiff was illegally held, whether or not the Dean and Chapter were liable for the official election expenses, it remained a fact that the Bailiff was legally bound to stage elections and was not authorised by statute to make any charges for the arrangements he made. The liability of candidates to pay him anything depended solely upon an express agreement having been made by them or their agents to do so.

It is evident that the Dean and Chapter were far from fondly regarded by the Westminster Reformers and that they strongly disapproved the idea of the High Bailiff purchasing his office as a profitable investment. Underlying their aim of resisting the Bailiff's charges was the desire to make his position untenable and to force him to seek to have his position regularised, which they hoped would in turn

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,841, f.10. Letter of Place to unknown M.P., February 8th, 1818, urging, inter alia, a further enquiry into the position of the Dean and Chapter; ibid. 27,842, f. 271, for a newspaper article by Place in January 1819, stating the whole "case" against the High Bailiff and the Dean & Chapter, and again urging an enquiry into their position.
Room, written after he had 'surrendered' his manorial rights and emoluments, and was seeking compensation from the Treasury ... "I beg now to remind the Chapter that I have given up to them that for which I paid £4000".
lead to a full scale enquiry, not only into his office but into the whole position of the Dean and Chapter in Westminster.

In their approach, however, their concern was not so much to show that a candidate could not be liable for the costs of staging elections save by agreement, but that a man who was not a "candidate" i.e. a man who did not in any way seek his own election - could not possibly be liable.

Their ground was well chosen. Almost certainly they recognised that once it was noticed that candidates in Boroughs were not liable as in counties for a share of the official costs of election, they would promptly be made so. They aimed, therefore, to present a case against the High Bailiff which could make not only his, but the position of all returning officers "impossible" as the law then stood. They aimed to establish the principle, that if a small number of electors, acting on behalf of "the people" and assisting them to exercise their constitutional rights should seek to promote the election of a man approved by "the people", and if that man should do no more than agree to attend to his duties if elected - then it was as unjust those few electors alone should have to pay the election charges simply because they had come forward, as it was unjust that such a man should have to pay them because he had shown public spirit.

Even more fundamental, underlying this aim, however, was their desire to secure publicity for that principle and for their belief that elections were the time when electors should seek representatives. They wanted to prove that they themselves had really acted as they claimed to have acted, believing if it were properly brought home to electors elsewhere that they did not have to rely on finding wealthy candidates, or did not.

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 86.
have to rely on finding wealthy candidates or did not themselves have to face high election expenses on their behalf, then other groups of men would be encouraged to follow their example. If others copied their methods and there were no "candidates", returning officers would, therefore, be unable to fasten the costs of election upon them, and would find their positions untenable and be forced to ask that liability for expenses be fixed elsewhere. In this way they, and Place in particular, hoped to bring the whole nature of elections under review.

Before the election they had duly warned the High Bailiff in every way that Burdett was not a "candidate", that they were in no sense his agents that neither he nor they would be responsible for any part of his bill. Despite these warnings, however, the High Bailiff in due course sent his bill to Brooks after the election in the normal way. Brooks, repeating their earlier warnings, told him he did not believe he had any claim upon them, but that he could take proceedings if he liked. Expecting, as Place says "that the High Bailiff would endeavour to recover his demands from somebody" ... they had ... "therefore agreed to meet occasionally at the call of Mr. Brooks until all matters relating to the election were finally closed".

They found, however, that it was extremely difficult to secure the co-operation of Burdett in planning a defence against the expected action. His aloofness made him awkward to deal with, and he was inclined to dampen their schemes. When, in due course, he received notice that Morris was bringing an action against him, he did not even bother to inform the Committee and, according to Place ... "would have paid the sum demanded, but that he did not like to put himself in direct opposition to his constituents. 

1. ibid. f. 104  
2. ibid. f. 86  
3. ibid.  
4. ibid.  
5. ibid. f. 87  
6. ibid. f. 88  
7. ibid.
It became clear, however, he would pay no heed to the Committee's recommendations as to the line of defence to be used. He made his own arrangements in discussion with his friends of the Horne Tooke circle, and employed one of them, the attorney Clifford, to take charge of his defence. Though Clifford had none of the evidence necessary to refute the High Bailiff's claims in his possession, he refused to come to the Committee to secure it, or to discuss the matter. Though prepared to make a stand against excessive official charges, it is clear that Burdett himself was far from keen to avoid all the traditional obligations of a gentleman, and still less keen to see those, who stood for election, freed from official charges altogether.

Thus, when the case was brought before Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough, on February 22nd, 1808, in the King's Bench, Burdett's defending Counsel never troubled to argue that Burdett was not a 'candidate'. He argued only that a candidate could not be liable for a share of the official expenses of an election, save where a statute or express agreement to pay them made him so; that, as no statute existed, and no agreement had been made, Burdett could not be liable.

Prosecuting Counsel agreed there was no statute authorising the High Bailiff to make charges, but argued there was implied agreement on Burdett's part to pay a share of the expenses, in that he had taken his seat. Payment must, therefore, be made on the basis of its being a long standing custom for candidates to share expenses.

Ellenborough summing up, agreed that though the High Bailiff was bound to stage elections, he was not authorised to charge anything for doing so; that a candidate's liability to pay a share of the costs depended entirely on his agreeing to do so. He did not see Burdett

1. ibid.
2. ibid.
3. For an account of the Court case, cf. Morris to Burdett (pamphlet published by the Westminster group in 1811), and, Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, ff. 89-91.
could possibly be liable for the expenses of conducting the poll, which the High Bailiff was bound to take, and he, therefore, refused to allow all those items on the bill relating to the payment of staff, coach hire, stationery and the damage done to St. Paul's Church.

But there remained the question whether Burdett was liable to share the costs of the Hustings, which might be considered as being for candidates' convenience. Though it had not been raised by Counsel, he, himself, raised the matter of whether Burdett was technically to be regarded as a 'candidate' and implied that, if he were not, he could not be so liable. He directed, however, that Burdett should be considered a candidate for having taken his seat and, as such, must be considered liable, if he, or agents acting on his behalf, had agreed to share the costs.

As he saw matters, the acceptance of tickets of admission to the Hustings by members of the Committee implied agreement to share the costs. The question, therefore, was one of agency. If these members acted as Burdett's agents, then he must be held liable; if not, then they themselves might be held liable.

In his charge to the jury Ellenborough meant to leave this point to its decision. In fact, he misdirected it by stating, though unintentionally, and it seems not consciously, that the members of the Committee were to be considered his agents. Since no-one protested, the jury was thus bound to find Burdett liable, and he was called upon to pay £117.8.2. instead of the original demand of £325.15.0. When a report of the trial was presented to him for signature, Ellenborough regarding the 'misdirection' as an error on the reporter's part, altered it. Thus it appeared publicly that he had left the question of agency to the jury to decide.

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 91. The Westminster group had a shorthand writer of their own in Court. It was he who took note of the 'misdirection', but Ellenborough altered it when the case was over.
The fact that the High Bailiff had been warned against making unauthorised or extravagant charges, and that his bill had been greatly reduced, though doubtless a step in the right direction, mattered little to Place and his friends, who felt all the intense irritation of men forced to stand helplessly and watch their schemes ruined, and a perfect case deliberately mishandled. No effort had been made to present their case properly. None of their carefully assembled evidence, to prove that they had warned the High Bailiff specifically that they would not accept liability for any part of his expenses; that Burdett did not seek election; that they were not his agents, but ordinary electors doing their duty - was brought before the court. Burdett's Counsel, further, had carefully avoided raising any question, which might have suggested the High Bailiff's office was 'illegally' held, or led to an inquiry into the responsibility of the Dean and Chapter. Their case had been thrown away, the principle they were seeking to establish and publicise, ignored.  

Place's bitterness was such that he believed Burdett, Horne, Tooke and Clifford had together deliberately cooked up a defence ... the intent to lose the action, yer say they had defended the right of 'with the people'. As he saw matters the interests of the electors had been totally ignored, and he was all for publishing a pamphlet immediately, restating the 'Committee's' case and revealing how Burdett and his friends had ignored its advice. Though others of the 'Committee' sensibly enough urged him to refrain, their own anger was scarcely less, and their feeling communicated itself to the Horne Tooke circle.

1. Ibid. ff. 91-2.
2. Ibid. f. 88.
3. Ibid. ff. 91-2.
When it became clear they had no intention of letting matters lie, Clifford apparently tried to mislead them by telling them a "bill of exceptions" had been tendered - that a point of law had been reserved and would be argued as a special case. Place who knew this to be untrue, that the verdict was final and that the only hope of re-opening the case lay in securing a new trial, very nearly refused to have anything more to do with it at this point. He agreed to continue to take charge of matters only if Mr. West, an attorney friend of his, should be employed to take up the case. Though West proved that Clifford had only been trying to fob them off, it was some time before his associates believed it and recognised they must work for a new trial. Even then many were undecided how far to press matters, and, as a result, Clifford was further encouraged to try to hamper their efforts. After Burdett had come to realise the extent their dissatisfaction he, at first, agreed to let the 'Committee' handle matters entirely. But he seems to have believed Clifford's story that a "bill of exceptions" had been filed, and when an affidavit from him was sought in connection with a new trial he not only proved most unwilling to give one, but showed he did not approve of the moves being made for the new trial at all. He became difficult to contact, and the 'Committee' had to negotiate with his lawyers instead. Only after long negotiations between West for the "Committee" and Garrow and Clifford or Burdett, only after tempers had been severely tried, did the 'Committee' get an acknowledgement from Garrow that a new trial was their only hope of raising the matter again, that Clifford had done nothing since the first trial, and that if their evidence had been produced then, they must have won their case.

1. ibid.
2. ibid. f. 93.
3. ibid. Place, Richter and Brooks went to see him.
4. ibid. cf. Letter of Burdett to Place, May 3rd, 1808, which shows his unwillingness to head the advice of the "Committee".
5. ibid. f. 101.
But the difficulties of securing a new trial were now considerable. It would be far from easy to claim there had been a great deal of evidence which had not been submitted, and it would be impossible to claim that Ellenborough had misdirected the Jury on the point of agency, because the report of the trial would be produced as evidence that he had not done so.¹

Thus it was only after a great deal of pressure had been brought to bear on Clifford, that he did agree to argue a motion for a new trial, which was eventually fixed to come before Ellenborough on May 6th.² Place and his associates had, by this time, made affidavits proving they had warned the High Bailiff before the election they would pay nothing, and that he had allowed them on the Hustings, knowing this, and proving too, that Burdett had not been a "candidate." These, they expected him to make use of.³ Clifford, however, believing the 'Committee' as a whole were ill-united, and by no means as eager as Place to follow things up again, chose to go his own way.⁴

He did not attempt to raise Ellenborough's misdirection on the point of whether or not the 'Committee' had been Burdett's agents. He asked for a new trial on the grounds that he had misdirected the jury as to the liability of anyone but the High Bailiff himself to pay the costs of staging an election as matters stood. It was, he argued, totally unfair that a candidate in a borough who had to accept whatever arrangements were made for the poll, should be forced to pay for them. He pointed out that the expenses of candidates in County elections had been charged to them because the office of Sheriff was compulsive, and it was not, therefore, fair that Sheriffs as returning officers should be made to pay them. In Westminster, however, it was open to the High

1. ibid. f. 102.
2. ibid.
3. ibid. f. 93
4. cf. pamphlet account of the action Morris v Burdett, and Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, ff. 102-4.
Bailiff to resign at any time he chose.

He did not attempt to mention he had further evidence which would throw new light on the case, which would prove Burdett was not a candidate and that the 'Committee' were not his agents. Place wrote that he feared that if he mentioned he had evidence which should have been presented before, his fellow professionals would laugh at him and that he was ... "just earning his fee and laughing up his sleeve at his client".

In the circumstances, Ellenborough easily demolished his argument and refused a new trial. Burdett, he agreed, could not be, and had not been forced to pay anything. It had been held by a jury that he had technically 'agreed' to pay his share of the charges, because men who had been held to have acted as his agents had agreed to do so on his behalf.

Place had not been optimistic as to the prospects of securing a new trial, but he had expected Clifford to show that he had new evidence, which, even had Ellenborough refused to accept it as grounds for a new trial, would have excited the curiosity of the press. It was, he wrote ... "in Clifford's power to undo much of the harm he had occasioned in the trial". If he had played his cards properly he might, Place believed, have got the judge to read the affidavits. The newspapers would have wanted to know what they contained and would have given them a publicity which ... "would have proved the election had been carried on as it really was carried on and we should have produced all the effect our circumstances permitted". This, at least, would have been compensation for the loss of the action and for the calumnies, which had been heaped on them and on Burdett, regarding the methods used to secure Burdett's return. But ... "Tooke, Clifford and Burdett cared not a fig for all this" ... though ... "they cared much lest the people of Westminster became of too much importance".

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, ff. 102-5.
Nor were Burdett's subsequent actions calculated to inspire greater satisfaction.

On May 11th, Burdett raised the matter in the Commons as a breach of the privileges of the House. How could he, he argued, be made to pay the expenses of election when he did not know he had been nominated, and, when once elected, the writ ordering him to take his seat had made his taking it compulsory? How then could "taking his seat" be made the argument upon which his character as a 'candidate' was established, and expenses charged? Was he to comply with the demand that would be made upon him in consequence of the decision of a Court below? He asked for the advice of the House in order that, by submitting to its decision, its privileges should not suffer any breach in his person.

Perceval, Chancellor of the Exchequer, replied that if the Baronet thought his case mishandled, then he should apply for a new trial. It was not for the Commons to review the decision of the Courts below. As he understood the matter, however, it was not as a 'candidate' Burdett had been made liable to expenses, but through an agreement made by his agents. The Speaker pointed out that, though the matter might involve the privileges of the House, yet the House could not be concerned until he was actually asked for the money.

It was then, on May 25th, after he had received a demand from the Court, that Burdett raised the matter again. He asked, simply, could a man, elected without his knowledge and compelled to take his seat, be forced to pay the expenses of election. Perceval answered that if that were his case, and if, as he understood the Baronet claimed,
the judge had wrongly directed the jury as to his status, a proper course was to apply for a "writ of error" and for a new trial. Since Burdett's Counsel had already done so and it had been refused, the House could do nothing.\(^1\) It was also pointed out that, as matters stood, he had not been forced to pay the charges and that his expenses had only been a matter of private contract, which could have no relation to the election, and therefore could not be made a question of privilege. Despite Burdett's plea that he had the shorthand notes of a writer employed to report the trial, which showed the judge had misdirected the jury on the point of agency, it is clear that members of the House preferred to let matters rest.\(^2\)

Burdett must have known that since he was being asked to pay a share of the High Bailiff's bill only on the basis of a private agreement, it could not possibly be a matter for the Commons; that the proper place to have established he was not a candidate, and that the "Committee" were not his agents, was in court, in February. It must have been singularly galling to those who were only too conscious how the court action and the motion for a new trial had been mishandled, to be reminded of what ought to have been done by Perceval!

Though Cobbett devoted considerable space in three issues of the *Register* to the Court action, to Burdett's speeches in parliament and to the principles on which the "Committee" had conducted the election, there was little to console Place and those who agreed with him.\(^3\) Not for the first time, and there were to be many subsequent occasions, Place threatened to leave politics alone altogether in his anger with the Tooke/Burdett circle... "I was", he wrote, "exceedingly disgusted with Sir Francis Burdett and I told the Committee so".\(^4\) Though other matters were to draw his interest towards the

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1. ibid.
2. ibid.
4. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 106.
close of 1808, he never forgave Clifford, and Clifford, for his part, seized every opportunity thereafter, to slander Place and his associates.

Even in their hopes of provoking an inquiry into the High Bailiff's office the Westminster Reformers were to be disappointed.

Though the outcome of the legal action had been unsatisfactory, yet the High Bailiff's position had become exceedingly difficult, and he had not been slow in seeking the assistance of members of parliament who would take up his case. Having lost money in 1806 and 1807, and fearing lest he lose more, he petitioned parliament, partly to draw attention to his position, partly to ask for compensation for his losses.

It was not, however, until 1811 that the matter was taken up in the Commons, when a new bill was projected to safeguard his interests in the future. To Place it seemed a golden opportunity. Finding Burdett still unwilling to press for an inquiry into the Bailiff's office, he approached a number of other M.Ps. asking them to do so. Eventually, in May, Lushington moved for a Select Committee to enquire into the nature of the office of High Bailiff. Burdett, impelled to act, gave his motion a none too enthusiastic support. The motion was carried, and Burdett's name was set down as one of the committee.

The 'Westminster Committee' promptly sent a deputation to Burdett, who now promised he would attend all sittings and elicit all the information they wanted about the Bailiff and the Dean and Chapter. To publicise the matter, a pamphlet Place had prepared long ago, was now published to explain the Reformers' case. But, in fact, Burdett never attended the Select Committee at all and, to the Reformers' intense irritation, the report it issued contained... "no more than the Dean and Chapter wanted known". There was no enquiry into the methods of the High Bailiff's appointment; no one queried the traditional destruction of the Hustings after elections; no effort was made to show how the High Bailiff normally expected to profit from them.

of Commons, Report of the Committee appointed to enquire into the office of the High Bailiff of Westminster etc. (1810-11).
After setting the amount of the High Bailiff's losses in 1806-7 against his emoluments, and declaring only custom had made him liable for expenses hitherto (unless direct or indirect agreement by the candidate to meet them could be proved) it recommended that, since the Hustings and a staff were necessary to ensure the election were conducted peaceably and efficiently, candidates should be made legally liable for a share of their costs in the future. It recommended too, that, since the High Bailiff had hitherto taken it upon himself to provide them, he deserved compensation.

Though the report contained an admission that the placing of election costs upon candidates in Boroughs might be controversial, and perhaps not the best solution - for this reason it was recommended that candidates be made liable to bear them for two years only in the first instance; though too, it contained the suggestion that official expenses might be made a charge on the local rates - it was held there had been insufficient time to examine these matters adequately.

Once again, though other opportunities were to occur, the chance of securing a full scale enquiry into the affairs of the Dean and Chapter, as well as the chance of getting the question of election expenses properly thrashed out, both disappeared. In view of the imminent possibility of a general election, an act was hurried through parliament, making expenses the liability of candidates. Apparently not conceiving there would be any difficulty on the technical point of whether a man was, or was not, a candidate, it was based on the findings in the Court action of February 1808. In effect, if a candidate or any two electors acting on his behalf, demanded a poll, he was liable to share the costs of the Hustings and of employing a specified number of official staff. As Place said, if anything, the Westminster Reformers had lost, rather than gained, ground since now a number of charges were made legal, where before they had had no legal backing.

1. This was probably a suggestion put forward by Place, cf. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,842, f. 271, for a newspaper cutting of an article calling for a further enquiry into the office of High Bailiff and into the position of the Dean and Chapter. He believed that was the ultimate solution, but was determined there should be a proper enquiry into the local administration of Westminster first.

2. cf. 51. C. ML c. 126.
The view that a candidate was to be considered responsible for the action of his agents was the view taken subsequently on every matter which arose as a result of the "separation" of candidates and committees. The question here, was, how far did the independent action of a committee involve a candidate in expense? Later, especially after 1832, when election committees and clubs appeared in constituencies all over the country, and corruption became more systematic, the question arose in another form — viz. in how far did the action of election committees — later, local party associations — make a candidate liable to the penalties for corruption? In both cases it was upon the candidate that the bulk of the responsibility was set.

But what the Hustings Act of 1811 did not do, partly perhaps because the matter had not been officially raised, partly perhaps because of unwillingness to tackle an awkward problem, partly perhaps because of the difficulties of wording the act — was to provide for the case of an "involuntary candidate," i.e. a man who was technically not a "candidate" at all.¹ It was this omission, which, it will be seen later, allowed the Westminster Reformers to secure their principle in another court action in 1813 following on the election of 1812.²

In fact, until 1828, the problem of how to word an act so that no two people could nominate a third out of spite and thereby make him liable to share the official expenses of an election was not resolved. In that year, however, a decision was made and an act passed to apply to all borough elections.³ A man proposed for a seat, if he knew about it, would be liable. If he did not know about it, those who proposed him would be liable. But it was to be no final solution to the problem.

¹. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850, f. 267. Place, quoting Brougham, refers to the difficulties of wording the act.
². cf. infra. III. Ch. viii. 
³. 9. iv. c. 59
The support which Cobbett and the Westminster Reformers had roused in favour of Burdett in 1807, was an indication of the extent to which disapproval of the conduct of government and distrust of the hereditary ruling caste had spread among men of the "new" middle classes. In the next five years, dissatisfaction and dislike of corruption was to spread even more widely among them, was to become even more deeply felt and still more forcefully expressed.

In 1807 and for a long time thereafter, radical feeling among these classes was to be most clearly and strongly demonstrated in Westminster. Partly, it has been suggested, this was because an exceptionally large middle class element had formed among the population of Westminster earlier than in places elsewhere. Still more was it because men of these classes in Westminster were not only more deeply hostile towards aristocratic rule, but politically more advanced, more ready and more able to express their opinions.

But though the Westminster Reformers were to draw their strongest support from the metropolitan area, their attitude and their actions came to win them considerable sympathetic approval from men in provincial areas. It is true that economic and social processes were swelling the ranks of the
middle classes more slowly elsewhere, that the full social effects of the Industrial Revolution had yet to be felt and that, in most towns, the 'new' middle classes were in a minority. At the same time, though as yet less inclined, and often less able, to express their feelings openly, increasing numbers of men elsewhere shared, or were coming to share, the radical sentiments of the middle classes in Westminster. In the years 1809-10, particularly, distrust of the leading opposition groups in parliament, as well as of the ministry—a distrust which the Westminster and other radical reformers did all in their power to encourage—brought them extensive support not only from men of standing similar to that of the Westminster tradesmen, but from many others of greater substance. The Westminster Reformers were to lead a reviving reform movement, and, at times, it seemed to contemporaries almost as if they and their supporters, the 'Burdettites' or the 'Reformists' were coming to form a new political party.  

1. The term 'Burdettite' came to be in common usage after, if not before 1807. 'Reformists' seems to have been put into use by the Reformers themselves in 1809-10 to emphasise they were not simply personal followers of Burdett. cf. e.g. The Reformists Answer to the Article entitled "The State of Parties" in the last "Edinburgh Review" 1810. (John Leigh Hunt).
there was to be no feature of their policy more strongly marked than their attack upon the very existence of parties.

Partly, as it has been pointed out by Halévy, this is to be accounted for by their having come to accept the doctrinaire views of democratic theorists. As he has said, there is nothing more unintelligible to the doctrinaire - to the man who believes only one conception of truth possible - than the argument that it is good that differences of opinion should permanently subsist. There was nothing more foreign to the spirit of contemporary democratic philosophy - the spirit of individual self-reliance and withdrawal from all traditional or group prejudices - than the spirit of party, which demanded the individual must conform his belief to the prejudices of a group. Believing that if individuals were entirely free to act according to the dictates of their own reason, they would, as enlightenment spread, naturally agree on the best course to be followed, they wholly opposed the existence of formed parties as encouraging artificial prejudices, as interfering with the freedom of the individual to make up his own mind, and as hindering the spread of reason. A party, further, could not by its very definition represent the interests of the whole body of the people.

1. E. Halévy. op. cit. p. 146.
But, as it has been contended earlier, it is legitimate to suggest that it was far less that theoretical doctrines had originated their dislike of parties, than that dislike of parties had given rise to the doctrines and encouraged their acceptance of them. It is evident that the majority of Reformers, who were certainly not 'philosophers' had, in their own eyes, grounds altogether more solid for disapproving of parties; that their attack upon them was motivated principally by their dislike of the nature and conduct of political parties as they then were.

Their view of parties - that they were simply factions of the aristocracy, at all times equally concerned with preserving the aristocratic monopoly of power and divided only by the struggle to secure the spoils of office - can scarcely be the view of historians. Yet, as it has been attempted to show, there was much in the contemporary political system, much in the role of parties in that system, much in their appearance and in the attitude of party politicians towards them, which must have served to encourage it. I.

Between 1807-12 particularly, at a time when the major interest of the nation was above all in the efficient prosecution of the war, when parties themselves were divided, or seemingly coming to be divided, into smaller and smaller

groups, dissatisfaction and impatience with petty jobbery and inefficiency, and dislike of what must often have appeared as the factional struggles of various small groups to secure office, tended to revive and increase a still widespread and inherent distrust for parties. It becomes evident that the Reformers' attack on them was by no means motivated solely by their theoretical democratic beliefs; that though, indeed, their principles encouraged a dislike for parties on fundamental grounds, it was far more directly inspired by their bitter distrust of the contemporary Tory and Whig parties. It also becomes evident that radical criticism of parties - of their narrow oligarchical basis, of their lack of unity on principle, of their readiness to make use of patronage to bind their members and supporters together, and of the indolent, 'amateur-like', and often factious approach of those members and supporters - is not only a valuable commentary on their state in the early nineteenth century, but a reflection of strong contemporary feeling towards them.

It was, more particularly, the character, attitude, and behaviour of the Whig party, which had encouraged, and continued to encourage, the Reformers' distrust for all parties. Their dislike for the Whigs, growing in the 1770s and intensified by their coalition with North in 1784, had been heightened still further by their coalition with Grenville in 1806, which many had regarded as an even greater
'betrayal'. It was upon the Whig party that the Westminster and other Reformers concentrated their attack.

As Professor Roberts has shown, there was indeed little about the Whig party after 1807 to inspire confidence.\textsuperscript{1} Ill-united and ineffective in opposition, the Whigs continued to be distrusted by the majority in the country; by conservatives, for their favour to Catholic emancipation, for their attitude towards the war, and for showing too great an interest in reform; by radicals, for showing too great an interest in office and too little interest in reform; and by both, for their often factious behaviour and purely destructive criticism.

Apart from the dozen or so Grenvilles, the main Whig body of some hundred and fifty 'Foxites' under Grey, had come to be divided into a conservative, moderate and radical wings.\textsuperscript{1} At times able to make a strong showing in Parliament, there were few occasions when the reaction of the party as a whole to a given situation could be calculated in advance, few matters, other than Catholic Emancipation, on which the whole party was agreed, and fewer still on which it

\textsuperscript{1} M. Roberts, \textit{The Whig Party, 1807-12.} passim.
\textsuperscript{2} For Whig numbers, cf. \textit{ibid.} P.333, n.2.
showed any consistency of approach. Members, inadequately led and disciplined in the Commons, might act in small groups, or might go their own way as individuals, often without the knowledge and approval, often in defiance, of the party's leaders. According to the influence of individuals, according to the prospects of office or the strength of public opinion, the party, as Roberts has said, might drift to 'right' or 'left'.

It is clear the attitude of those members who favoured peace, of those who favoured Napoleon, of those who favoured and those who opposed reform, did not reflect the attitude of the party on whole; that the factious behaviour and destructive criticism of individuals did not mean there were none in the party, of greater responsibility. At the same time, it cannot be surprising that - quite apart from the unpopularity of its members' interest in Catholic emancipation - its lack of unity and the actions of individual Whigs, came to earn the strongest disapproval in the country for the party as a whole.

1. For the leadership and discipline of the party in the Commons, cf. M. Roberts, op. cit. pp. 4 - 5 and Ch. 1V. Grey's removal to the Lords in 1807 added to its difficulties.

2. Thus Reformers argued with literal truth that it was impossible to place any faith in parties because it was impossible to know what a party even proposed to do, let alone would do. It was possible only to place trust in individuals. On this point, cf. infra, pp. 57-8, and Ch. XIII. ii. passim.
But though the Whigs had no clear programme, and though contemporaries distrusted their intentions and their efficiency, yet their political position and attitude emerges clearly enough.¹ As a body they were still the party of the greater landed magnates. Genuinely believing in the virtues of enlightened aristocratic paternalism, they were no less concerned to uphold the influence of aristocracy as a balancing force between monarchy and democracy. Long worried by what they regarded as the growing influence of the Crown — both King and ministry — on one side, and the growing influence of radical Reformers on the other, they were to become, after 1807, even more alarmed and apprehensive, even more concerned to defend the aristocratic position against attack from both sides.

Their attitude is certainly understandable. Their experience in losing office in 1807 must have done much to renew and encourage their belief that the power of the Crown was still a dangerous force in the state, and their subsequent failures to secure office, or even to increase their support in parliament or the country, must have strengthened their belief that the power of ministerial influence was excessive.²

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² M. Roberts, op. cit., p. 220.
At the same time, the constant attacks on them, and on the Tories, by Reformers, undoubtedly increased their belief that the latter were dangerous revolutionaries. ¹

But it is evident that their attitude reflected too, an ever growing personal sense of insecurity; a dislike of the way in which their influence was being undermined by men deriving their wealth and influence from new sources, and of the way in which their own source of power — property — was being threatened by high taxation.² Their belief that the influence of the Crown was increasing through its ability to award war time offices and contracts to Court and ministerial supporters, reflected an increasing dislike of the numbers of professional administrators and commercial men, who bought or otherwise secured a seat in parliament and tended to support the Court or Tory parties, and a growing sense of the diminishing importance of their own patronage in the country. Their distrust for the influence of Reformers reflected their growing uneasiness at the restlessness among the "lower orders", among the "propertyless" classes, who had for so long accepted aristocratic leadership.³

¹ ibid. PP.236-7, and many Edinburgh Review articles referring to the political situation — e.g. Vol. XV Dec. 1809. Art. "State of Parties".
² ibid.
³ ibid.
Thus, the Whigs were still 'at war' on two fronts. Against the Crown they were to revive the cry of 'economic' reform. 1 Against Reformers they came to lay renewed emphasis upon the theory that the balance of the Constitution was to be preserved only by the maintenance of monarchic and aristocratic, as well as democratic, influence in the Commons. 2 Whig interest in the pursuit of 'economic' reform - the abolition of numbers of sinecures, pensions and reversions, reflected the fact that an attack on administrative corruption enabled them to take up a strong constitutional position, to make a concession to popular feeling, and to pursue a policy in Whig interests. 3

Even for 'economic' reform, however, enthusiasm was limited. Recognising the need for executive influence as a disciplinary force in the Commons the majority recognised too, that the extent to which 'economic' reform could be pressed was limited. 4

It was not only that the number of sinecure and pension holders had already been greatly reduced, leaving little scope for further reductions in their numbers. Any ministry in power for any length of time, they believed, must naturally acquire an 'excessive' influence, and any ministry during war must inevitably enjoy an extended influence through the increased number of offices and contracts at its disposal. In these circumstances, the only effective safeguard against the dangers of increasing Crown influence, must be the vigilance of the public (guided by the Whigs) and more frequent changes of ministry, (which would bring the Whigs to office).  

The limited interest of the majority of Whigs in 'economic' reform is not, therefore, surprising; still less surprising is their diminished interest in parliamentary reform. Much as they disliked the influence of the nouveau riche, of nabobs and stockjobbers and other 'adventurers', they feared the rise of the 'propertyless masses' far more. Believing the real cure for all the ills of the state lay in the restoration of the natural influence of the aristocracy, they believed that that influence was to be restored, not by

1. ibid. and Vol. XVI, Art. "Rose on the Influence of the Crown." A comparison with Tory views as expressed in Ranby's An Inquiry into the Supposed Increase of the Influence of the Crown, makes clear that the point at issue between Whigs and Tories was not the necessity of Crown patronage to create party attachments but simply whether it was excessive (Whig view) or inadequate (Tory view).
parliamentary reform—though minor measures might be undertaken to obviate the worst abuses and to satisfy those whose social influence was increasing — but by resistance to the excessive and unnatural influence of the Crown and to the absurd and extravagant demands of Reformers. The Reformers, indeed, they came to regard as a menace greater even than the menace of the Crown. If the spread of their influence were not checked, they would certainly bring about revolution. More immediately, so long as their behaviour served to frighten people and to drive them into the arms of the Tories, the nation would be prevented from seeing that the more imminent 'danger' lay in being 'enslaved' by them. So long as their attitude continued to inspire the fear that any liberal move would be the first step towards anarchy, it would be prevented from placing its trust in the Whigs.

The Whig pose, as a liberal and enlightened aristocracy benevolently seeking to protect the people against the consequences of their own errors, was, it is obvious, little calculated to assuage the hostility of those who were seeking to prove 'the people' could govern themselves, and to whom aristocratic government

1. For discussion of the Whig views on parliamentary reform at this time, cf. M. Roberts, op. cit. PP. 235-6 and 236-302, passim.

was itself a grievance. As Professor Roberts has said......
"The mistake that the Whigs made was not so much to have opposed the influence of the Crown..." (though it would have diminished of itself)......"as to have opposed to it the influence of landed property!" ¹. It was impossible to tell 'the people', as Thomas Grenville remarked, "that the influence of what they call corruption is, for practical purposes, too small rather than too great!" ². Returning the 'compliment' paid them by the Whigs, the Reformers regarded them as 'enemies' whose influence was to be feared even more than that of the Tories.

In part, their attack on them, it may be admitted, was undertaken for ideological reasons. The Whigs were the chief defenders of the complex mixed system of government to which Reformers were wholly opposed. The arguments of Burke and others who followed him, they regarded, as much as Paine and other democrats earlier, as a specious attempt to preserve the aristocratic ascendancy. Again the Whigs

². ibid. quoting from Dropmore papers, Hist. MSS. Commission Vol. IX. 296.
were the chief defenders of parties and of party government, to which Reformers were equally opposed. 1

But it was not simply because they were the chief theorists of aristocratic government that the Reformers attacked the Whigs far more forcefully and persistently than the Tories. There were more immediate tactical reasons arising from the fact that the Whigs were out of office.

In the first place, they recognised the Whigs would necessarily seek to increase their support both inside and outside parliament, and believed that, unless 'the people' were warned against placing any trust in them, the Whigs would inevitably 'betray' them again. The responsibility of the Tories, or the 'ins', for unpopular actions would be, or could be made, obvious to 'the people'. But the Whigs, who were the 'outs', might easily succeed in 'deluding' them for their own factional purposes. It was the more necessary, therefore, to ensure at all times that 'the people' were not so 'deluded', by displaying the Whigs (their very name was itself, delusive) in their true colours. 2.

1. cf. e.g. Cobbett's Political Register Sept. 30th, Oct. 7th, 14th, Nov. 4th, 1809, for letters and articles attacking the Whig position as set forth in the "Edinburgh".

2. cf. e.g. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 35, 154. (Place's unpublished MS., reply to Lord Erskine (1819) passim.
In the second place, they recognised that however strong popular disapproval of the conduct of government might become, yet, reform, as opposed to revolution — for which the Westminster Reformers had as little desire as the Whigs — could not be won without parliamentary allies. Burdett and the handful of ‘independents’ in parliament who commonly supported him, might create much valuable publicity for their cause, but they needed closer support. Further, it was obvious they could secure no measures of reform unless they could win over a majority in parliament. The Westminster Reformers were to encourage every effort to secure the return of other independent Reformers to parliament, but it must, very early, have been apparent to them that their chances of securing parliamentary allies that way were extremely limited.

1. Among those M.P.s who commonly supported Burdett at this time were: William Adams, C.H. Hutchinson; George Knapp; C. Shaw Lefevre; Peter Moore; Henry Thorton; Col. Wardle; C.C. Western; H. Tracey; Sir Thos. Turton; J. Wharton; W.A. Maddocks; Lord Cochrane; General Campbell; Wm. Maxwell; cf. W. Harris A History of the Radical Party in Parliament P. 95. They cannot however, all be regarded as "pure" Burdettites, cf. M. Roberts, op. cit. P. 254.

2. cf. infra pp. 236-7; and III. Ch. viii. pp. 7-8, and iv.
Allies had to be sought principally among the 'independents' and party men returned by other interests.

It is clear that, in these circumstances, they believed their best chance of securing allies lay in winning over members of the Whig party - particularly the former 'Friends of the People' - and individuals from among the independent supporters of the Whigs in opposition. Their attack on the Whigs thus appears, in part, as a deliberate policy aimed at drawing over individuals and ultimately the whole Whig party to the 'popular' cause, by convincing them of the dangers of resisting 'the people's' demand for reform. ¹

Constantly attacking their behaviour - their factiousness or their inactivity - the Reformers sought not only to bring them, as well as the Tory or ministerial party, into contempt, but to make them feel they were coming to be held in contempt. By seizing every opportunity to point out their weakness as against the Tories on the one hand, and their unpopularity with 'the people' on the other; by repeatedly implying that

¹. This is obvious enough in the Reformers' political writings generally, but for convenience cf. e.g. the Introduction to Bentham's "Catechism of Parliamentary Reform" Works III. 405.
unless the Whigs came to adopt a popular policy, they must inevitably share a common destruction with the Tories when eventually "the people" came to take matters into their own hands, they sought to make them recognize that their position between Tories and Reformers was untenable. ¹

It is evident that Reformers had come to be convinced that, unless the Whigs were made to feel their position was hopeless, unless they saw themselves despised by Tories and people equally, unless they were driven by fear of revolution as an alternative - the Whigs would never make any move which would lead to a sacrifice of their own aristocratic power. ² In the circumstances they were to be delighted that the Whigs failed to secure office - believing the longer they were kept out, the greater would become their recognition of the 'dangers' of ignoring the popular will - and delighted to seize every opportunity of increasing their discomfiture. If the Whigs could be driven to take up parliamentary reform so much the better. They would then cease to be 'party men' and become 'people's men.' If they continued to hold back then they must continue to lose credit with 'the people' who would come to see all the more quickly and clearly that they must act for themselves. ³ Over the

¹ Ibid.
² Ibid.
course of time, they believed, they stood to gain whatever course the Whigs chose. Whatever they did, the Whig party, in its existing form, must ultimately disintegrate or be destroyed. In the meantime a constant and critical attack upon the Whigs, indicating their weakness and lack of unity on principle, and emphasizing that, though there were some good men among their members, it was impossible to trust them as a party, would not only prevent them deluding 'the people', but might be expected to draw over individuals, who could then be turned into honest 'people's men'.

As a minority party aiming to secure parliamentary reform in the existing circumstances, their policy was shrewdly enough calculated. Reformers were by no means wrong to assume that numbers of Whigs could be driven to consider the means of satisfying 'the people', if their fears were successfully roused and played upon. Indeed, even in 1807, though there is no sign that the Whigs as a party were disposed to take the lesson of Burdett's return to heart, yet there were a number of individual Whigs, who showed they were alive to the dangers of allowing the Whig party as well as the ministry to be drawn into contempt, aware of the need

1. ibid.
to take active steps to counter Reformers' doctrines and to secure the restoration of confidence in the nation's leaders. ¹

If it was the Reformers' aim to generate 'heat' in the nation, believing reform could never be won save 'at heat' - if it was the Reformers' aim to widen the gulf between Commons and 'people', it was their aim to keep the nation calm, and to close this gulf.

There were those, perhaps motivated by desire to secure party advantage, perhaps by the instinct of self preservation, who became, though not immediately, ready to support various moderate proposals for parliamentary as well as economic reform, as a means of strengthening their hand against the Crown and of quietening popular agitation. There were too, those who came to believe genuinely that a limited measure of parliamentary reform was necessary to calm 'the people', and to convince them that affairs were being properly conducted. Among this group of 'moderates' there was, however, little faith that parliamentary reform would produce any improvement in the character of government. ²

It would not, for example,

¹ cf., in particular, Edinburgh Review, Vol. X. Art. Cobbett's Register. After attacking the Reformers, the Reviewer (Jeffrey) urged politicians to recognize that a real spirit of discontent existed, and that public men must make a greater effort to win the confidence of the nation. The article was inspired by Brougham. A. Aspinall, Lord Brougham and the Whig Party. P. 19.; cf. also, M. Roberts, op. cit. Ch. III passim.

² M. Roberts, op. cit. PP. 277–8, who suggests Lord Holland as typical of them.
produce a better parliament, nor would it lighten the burden of taxation. It would, however, serve to restore confidence in the existing Commons, and, in so far as they supported it, in the Whig party too.

On the other hand, and more important, was a small number of individuals, or rather individualists, forming a 'left wing' group. Standing apart from the main aristocratic body of the Whig party, and including such men as Lord Folkestone, Creevy, Brand, and most prominent of all, Whitbread, its "members" were greatly embarrassed by what they felt to be the half-heartedness of the 'conservative' and 'moderate' Whigs, who seemed to pin their hopes of office upon chance, a Tory mistake, or the cultivation of the heir apparent. They were, by virtue of their closer contact with 'the people', more acutely aware of the dangers of allowing the Whig party to be drawn into contempt and of the need for a sincere effort to win back popular support. As Professor Roberts has pointed out, they alone showed that they realised the party must be revitalised and brought more into line with changing circumstances. Recognizing that

1. ibid. PP. 205-7 Chs. III, IV. passim.
2. ibid. PP. 515, 279 et seq.
aristocratic connection was no longer, in itself, a satisfactory basis for political association, they believed it must be rebuilt on the more solid basis of agreement on principle to pursue a definite policy in the popular interest. 1

But if the Whig party were to be re-vitalized it had to be 'radicalised'. For them the pursuit of economic, and later parliamentary reform too, meant not so much the securing of a few concessions which would quieten 'the people' and leave the Whig position intact, but a genuine effort to lead popular opinion in the country. 2 Influenced by, or in touch with, the most progressive minds of the age, their interest in pursuing all manner of administrative and social reforms was perfectly sincere. Believing the 'dead wood' of the Grenville connection must be cut away altogether, believing the party must be re-educated and persuaded to pursue a programme of popular reforms, they were prepared to join with, and even to lead, the Reformers in a wholehearted attack on corruption and oppression in their campaign to spread 'enlightenment'. 3

But if they believed in a re-vitalized Whiggism and in

1. ibid. P. 332.
2. ibid. PP. 205-6, 258.
3. ibid. and P. 190.
a re-vitalized Whig party, they nonetheless believed, too, in both Whiggism and parties. Though believing danger still existed in Royal and Tory influence, they, even more than their conservative colleagues, were sensitive to the 'dangers' of unchecked radical influence. If it was necessary to 'educate' the Whig party in parliament, and necessary to uphold its existence (and the existence of parties generally) in order to strengthen its hand against Crown influence, it was even more necessary to do so to counter the attacks of Reformers.

Genuinely believing in the value of the influence of the 'natural' leaders of society upon government, in the interests of preserving a constitutional balance, they were no less concerned than other Whigs to defend the necessity of aristocratic influence upon parties, and the necessity of executive influence in the form of patronage. Despite their belief in the importance of agreement on principle, they, no more than Reformers, could see parties as great popular parties held together by agreement on principle alone. In the last resort, they still believed parties must largely depend for their existence, and government for its efficiency,

1. ibid. PP. 248, 284.

on the influence which they regarded as 'natural' and Reformers regarded as 'corrupt'. Moderate parliamentary reform would be a benefit. Radical reform would, they thought, be a disaster. ¹

In these circumstances, though they and the Reformers would co-operate in attacking corruption and in pressing for particular social, legal and political reforms, though individuals among them, and individual Reformers too, would, on occasion, make overtures for a definite alliance, there could be no real union between them. ² They did not trust Reformers and Reformers did not trust them. The 'left wing' Whigs may have recognised the validity of much of the Reformers' criticism of the working of government and of parties, and the deep-rooted discontent which underlay it. They may have been more aware of the need to revitalise the Whig party so that it should win support on its merits, more aware of the need to win over the Reformers and their sympathizers by showing a greater readiness to pursue a measure of parliamentary reform. But they could not draw the

² cf. infra. IV. pp. 8 et seq.
rest of the party with them, and they would not sacrifice their belief in Whiggism. 1

Of all the Whigs, indeed, Reformers were apt to regard them, politically speaking, with the greatest distrust. At best, they were as bad as all Whigs. So long as they clung to a party, whose actions were indeterminate, whose reforming zeal seemed to rise or fall according to the prospects of office or according to the extent of popular pressure upon it, and whose members commonly attacked Reformers as revolutionaries, then Reformers could not believe in their sincerity. Indeed it was unfortunate that the behaviour of individuals among them, when office did loom closer, positively encouraged a belief in their insincerity. 2

At worst, however, their influence was far more dangerous than that of other Whigs since they were more anxious, and more likely, to catch the ear of 'the people'. Their efforts to win popular support for economic reform, or for a programme of moderate parliamentary reform, were, especially when accompanied by elaborate justifications for parties and


2. Particularly the behaviour of Whitbread himself. cf. ibid PP. 5, 291, 324.
for the Whig party in particular, regarded by Reformers as dangerous and delusive. Moderate parliamentary reform would not destroy aristocratic influence on government. On the contrary, it would leave the Whig position substantially unimpaired, would even strengthen the Whigs as against the Crown, and make it more difficult for 'the people' to secure a 'real' reform thereafter.

The Reformers were never to win over the Whigs completely. Yet, their constant pressure upon the Whig party was, over the course of time, to be of prime educative importance to its development. If it was Tory pressure upon them which kept the Whigs fully alive to the needs of executive government, it was radical pressure, which brought home to them gradually an awareness that the party must be brought into closer relation with 'public opinion.' Again, if both Tory and radical pressure brought an increasing recognition of the need to tighten party discipline, it was radical pressure which, more than anything, brought recognition, that that discipline must be based above all upon agreement on principle programme.

Not until after the Reform Bill of 1832 did the factors which were to lead parties towards their modern character and form really become pronounced. Meanwhile the clash between

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1. cf. e.g. Major Cartwright's *The Comparison in which Mock Reform Half Reform and Constitutional Reform are considered...* (1810); and W. Roscoe. *Letter (reply) to J. Merritt*, 1811.
Whigs and Reformers is to be seen as one of the most important factors leading to the rise of a more modern conception of 'party'. The former, seeing parties were necessary to government and defending them, but failing to see how they could ever be 'popular', were primarily concerned with increasing the efficiency of the Whig party in parliament.

The latter, refusing to accept that parties were necessary to government, and seeing no more clearly than the Whigs that parties could ever be popular, were primarily concerned with rousing 'the people' outside parliament and with laying the foundations of modern 'party' in the country. Each in their own way, unconsciously and in antagonism, were moving towards, and helping to shape, a single conclusion. ¹

From the meeting of the new parliament, in June 1807, until its prorogation in August, Tories and Whigs continued their furious party battle. The Whigs, still indignant at their loss of office, and bitter at the dissolution, strongly attacked ministerial proposals to alter arrangements they - the Whigs - had already made with regard to Finance and

¹ M. Roberts, op. cit. passim, rightly regards the 'left wing' Whigs as the chief 'educators' of the party. It should be remembered, however, that in no small measure, their outlook was a response to the challenge of Reformers; their effort to re-vitalize their party an effort to meet Reformers' criticism of them. This is particularly obvious in the case of Brougham, whose criticism of the Whig party is entirely in line with the criticism of Bentham. cf. infra IV, pp. 151-2, 163, 310.
Recruitment. The 'left wing' group, particularly, were vehement in their denunciation of Perceval's intention of re-fashioning the Finance Committee appointed in February, by replacing some of its members with ministerial supporters.¹ Whig ministers had originally accepted the proposal for a committee to investigate public expenditure on sinecures and reversions, more as a gesture to satisfy public opinion and their own more advanced supporters, than from any conviction that great savings of public money could be made, or corruption prevented.² Now they were out of office, however, many moderate men were disposed to support the Whig 'left wing' in attacking ministerial corruption and in accusing ministers of seeking to prevent the revelation of much jobbery, which was on the point of being exposed.

If Whig attacks on Tory 'corruption' often appeared factious in the extreme, Tory replies and counter attacks often appeared no less irresponsible. Scorn was thrown upon Whig foreign and military policy and Perceval and Canning particularly went out of their way to show, in petty fashion, that the Whig patronage record made them 'guilty' of the very

¹. S. Maccoby, op. cit., PP.226-7; M. Roberts, op.cit.P.185. The Finance Committee had been appointed as a result of a motion by R.M. Biddulph on 10th Feb. 1807, and, as Roberts points out, it was from this committee that nearly all the proposals for 'economic' reform in the next five years emerged.
corruption they now condemned.¹

Reformers were thoroughly delighted at the way Whigs and Tories continued to abuse each other, since it helped their campaign to show 'the people' there was really no difference between them, and that the country's affairs would be in ruins unless a drastic change in the governmental system were made.² With little faith that the Finance Committee would ever press its enquiries thoroughly and no belief that such reforms as might result from its findings would be adequate, they were disposed to ridicule the 'haggling' which went over the redistribution of seats upon it.³

Some of the Whigs, 'moderates' as well as 'left wing', did indeed show themselves anxious to allay popular suspicion and to reduce the clamour of Reformers. Thus, in June 1807, it was proposed a seat be found for Burdett on the Committee, and even Grey, though making clear no one had less favour for Burdett and his 'party' than himself, supported the proposal. Though it was not pressed to a division, and Burdett, in any

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1. S. Maccoby, op.cit., P. 228.
2. Cobbett's Political Register, XX. 394-5. Cobbett asserted the Whigs had as much and more to lose by the abolition of sinecures than the Tories, but as Roberts, op.cit., P.189, points out, was probably thinking of the 'Grenvilles.'
3. Cobbett's Political Register, July 18th, 1807.
case still too ill to attend the House, did not secure a seat, it seems a considerable number of Whigs would have voted in his favour. 1. Again, when Cochrane, possibly speaking in Burdett's stead, proposed in July that a new Committee to enquire into all sinecures and places held by M.P.s and their relatives be appointed, some sixty opposition members were prepared to support it, as against Perceval's ultimately successful counter proposal, that the matter be left to the existing Finance Committee. 2. Reformers, nonetheless, were still able to make great play with the 'obvious' desire of the majority of M.P.s to 'prevent' any proper enquiry into abuses. If some Whigs were enthusiastic for an enquiry, some were only lukewarm and the majority were hostile. 3.

Towards the end of the session, however, it was foreign affairs, rather than domestic corruption, upon which controversy centred. The Treaty of Tilsit, between the Czar and Bonaparte, once again seemed to bring England into deadly peril and to renew the prospect of invasion. Tories might blame Whigs for

1. M. Roberts op. cit., P. 186, says it was believed between 50 or 60 would have voted for the proposal. S. Maccoby op. cit., P. 230 for Grey, still Lord Howick, supporting the proposal... "though no man was more the subject of that person's (Burdett's) attack, and that of the party, if such they could be called, who acted with him"....

2. Thomas, 10th Earl of Dundonald, Autobiography of a Seaman 1. 222 et seq. Cochrane expressed the hope that a third party would arise, aloof from the selfish motives both parties displayed. cf. also, M. Roberts, op. cit., P. 186.

3. Cobbett's Political Register, July 18th, 1807 and ibid.
having given insufficient aid to Russia when in power, and Cobbett might blame them for having placed any faith at all in a continental despot. But recrimination, justified or not, could in no way lessen the immediate dangers, and ministerial action seemed in no wise to improve matters. In September, the British seizure of the Danish Fleet, and in November, the Orders in Council, issued in reply to Napoleon's Berlin Decrees, appeared to many only to have weakened Britain's military and diplomatic position in Europe still further. Once more the nation became seriously alarmed.

In the circumstances, though less in evidence in the latter part of 1807, popular distrust of those responsible for the conduct of the nation's affairs continued to increase. The intensification of the efforts of 'left wing' Whigs and of a number of 'independents' to secure measures of 'economic' reform in the session of 1808, not only reflected the genuine belief of numbers of M.P.s in their desirability, but the growing popular suspicion of corruption which they were eager to reduce. 2

1. ibid., Aug. 8th, 1807.
2. S. Maccoby, op. cit., p. 236; M. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 186, 190, 193
Despite a spirited opposition, the Whigs as a party, however, gained little or nothing in popular favour. Many might agree with Whig criticism of ministerial foreign policy, but they had no great fancy to place its control in Whig hands especially when numbers of the Whig left wing, above all Whitbread, were strong pacifists. Again, the thwarting of Banke's efforts to secure the passing of a bill to prevent the granting of offices in reversion, the frustration of a final effort to secure the impeachment of Wellesley, and the 'obstruction' believed to have been offered by members of the Finance Committee to even the most moderate proposals for reducing the number of sinecures, might all rouse considerable resentment. But though many might approve the attitude of the 'left wing' Whigs, they had no reason to believe that, as a party, the Whigs had any greater interest in reform than the Tories. Reformers, indeed, who strongly distrusted even the

1. After Grey went to the Lords, the Whigs had great difficulty finding a suitable leader in the Commons, M. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 503 et seq.


3. S. Maccoby, op. cit., pp. 236-7. Lord Folkstone, Creevy, Romilly and a few other Whigs and independents, seem to have continued to aid Paull against Wellesley. In 1808 Paull published A Letter from Mr. Paull to Samuel Whitbread in which he reviewed the history of his efforts to date and called for support. Sir Thomas Turton, member for Southwark, moved his impeachment again but it was finally rejected. Paull himself finally committed suicide later in the year. cf. also. Romilly Memoirs 11, 242, 256.
'left wing' Whigs, believed their concentration on 'economic' reform was positively dangerous, in that, by directing popular attention towards minor reforms of little value in themselves, they diverted it from the only real remedy for the nation's ills - parliamentary reform.

Thus, when Burdett finally took his seat in February 1808 and at once resumed his independent attack on abuses of all kinds, he continued to gain in 'popular' favour. Refusing to listen to Cartwright's entreaties that he introduce a bill for parliamentary reform, immediately, he preferred, for the time being, to join in the attack on corruption. At the same time, he took care to point out, at every opportunity, that nothing short of parliamentary reform would remove the evils of which he complained, and seized every chance of belittling the 'petty' reforms attempted by the Whigs.

In February, he drew attention to the large sums of money accumulated from the capture of enemy ships and seized as Droits of Admiralty, which, he claimed, gave additional power and influence to the Crown, and, in particular, to a recent large grant of £20,000 from these moneys to the Duke of York, the Army Commander-in-Chief. It is clear that

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 27,850 f.108; Life of Cartwright 1.355-6; M.W. Patterson op.cit.,1.220 et seq.
suspicion and dislike of the activities of the Royal Dukes, already evident in 1806, when Cobbett had implied they were little better than parasites, was still strong, and that they formed a popular target for Reformers. Burdett did not succeed in raising a storm over the question of the Droits, however, since the ministry, though somewhat unwillingly, agreed to disclose how they were disposed.

In the same month, Burdett renewed his attack on abuses in the running of the Cold Bath Fields prison, after Sheridan had presented a petition re-opening the matter. In March, he denounced a special grant of public money to Lord Lake, and protested against officers in the army being dismissed without Court martial. In April, he spoke in favour of the bill to abolish reversions, which had been rejected by the Lords. In May, as has been noticed, he vainly tried to get the Commons to make the successful Court action against him for recovery of 'his' share of the election expenses a case of breach of privilege.

1. Cobbett's Political Register, July 12th, 19th, Sept. 6th 1806, and infra PP. 149 et seq.; 211 et seq.
3. ibid.
Outside parliament, and at the first anniversary dinner to celebrate his election, Burdett, addressing his constituents, spoke of the trifling attempts to secure reform which had amused 'the people' only to lead them away from the one real reform which would gain for them all the petty objects then in view. He spoke, too, of the commissions to investigate public expenditure, which, producing no worth while results, only themselves added to the public's burden. Once again he re-iterated that the best way of preparing to meet the menace of France was to rally patriotic spirit by granting that reform which would give all men the feeling they had a stake in the country.

In June he made a strong attack on military flogging, singling out the regiment commanded by the Duke of Cumberland for the strongest censure. Strong backing from Cobbett's 'Register', which had closely supported him throughout the session, did not succeed in making the matter a major issue, but once again, popular ill-feeling was directed against a Royal Duke.

2. M.W. Patterson, op.cit.,1221; S. Maccoby, op.cit., P.236.
3. cf. Cobbett's Political Register, June 30th, 1808. For other backing Burdett received from Cobbett, cf. Register, May 21st, 28th, June 4th, 1808.
So far, by the end of the session, Reformers had had nothing really firm, on which they could bite hard. At the same time, through Burdett inside the House, and Cobbett outside, a steady criticism of all public men and their measures had been kept up, and parliamentary reform had been kept well within view. It becomes clearer, in the light of events of 1809-10, that the constant attacks on corruption by Reformers in 1807-8 not only reflected, and, in turn, increased popular distrust for the working of government, but brought growing numbers of members of parliament to fear the consequences if every popular demand for reform, however trifling, were thwarted, denied investigation or otherwise impeded. ¹

In the summer of 1808, public attention was again to be directed abroad by the news of the Spanish uprising against Napoleon. Greeted with great enthusiasm, there was almost unanimous agreement on the desirability of sending a force to the Peninsula to aid the rebels, and, for some months, domestic political controversy all but disappeared. But when the early success of British arms against the French in Portugal — where the first British contingent had been diverted — was followed by the

Convention of Cintra and the escape of the French army in Portugal, the disappointing and unexpected anti-climax roused great popular indignation and led to an immediate renewal of bitter party controversy.¹ News of the Convention, which brought strong popular protest meetings and a demand for a parliamentary enquiry from the City of London, was followed by news of the disasters of the campaign in Spain itself, which brought further popular meetings protesting at the conduct of the war.²

It was, thus, certain that when the session of 1809 opened, feeling would run high and ministers would be hard pressed to defend their military policy. Few, however, can have expected they would have to face the additional embarrassment of defending the Commander-in-Chief himself against serious charges of corruption, nor that popular irritation with the conduct of government would show itself to be so intense.

On the second day of the session - "it pleased Providence to raise up a Wardle".³ Colonel Wardle, a

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¹ S. Maccoby, op.cit., pp. 237-41. cf. also, Cobbett's Political Register, Nov. 5th, 1807.
² Cobbett's Political Register, Nov. 5th 1807.
³ Major Cartwright's Reasons for Reformation p. 3.
hitherto comparatively little known independent, distrusted by the Whigs, brought charges, supported by Burdett, against the Duke of York, alleging he had connived at the receipt of money by his mistress, Mrs. Clarke, for her supposed influence in the procuring of commissions and the hastening of promotions. The details of this 'cause célèbre' are well known and need not be repeated. It may be certain that the charges were brought at this time to capitalize upon the strong existing hostility for those who had 'mismanaged' the peninsula campaign, though how much the Westminster Reformers knew of Wardle's intentions before the beginning of the session, is uncertain. As far back as August, Cobbett had voiced dissatisfaction with the Duke of York and had urged that no royal or aristocratic commander was fitted to lead the forces in the peninsula. In October, a pamphlet had been published by a Major Hogan, complaining of corruption in the promotion of military officers and alleging that money paid to the Duke's mistress secured the Duke's influence, and White's 'Independent Whig'

1. cf. e.g. M.W. Patterson, op. cit., 1, 222-229.; H. Martineau, op. cit., Bk. II, 325 et seq.
2. Cobbett's Political Register Aug. 16th, 1808.
had taken it up in a leading article.\textsuperscript{1} Cobbett too, though urging the need of proof before any charges could be pressed, also publicised the matter in the autumn.

Once the charges had been made public, a spontaneous outburst of popular anger followed, at once condemning the Duke, and in proportion as it seemed likely the charges against him might be rejected, condemning the Commons for allowing him to 'escape.' Despite his acquittal by resolutions of the House, 'public opinion' triumphed to the extent that he was forced to resign. Further, whilst popular feeling still ran high against him, Reformers in the House, hot on the trail of corruption, and anxious to widen the breach opening between the Commons and 'the people,' brought further charges of ministerial malpractice. First an attempt was made, on April 25th, to censure Castlereagh, who was implicated in the sale of an East India Company Writership, as part of an involved negotiation designed to lead to the purchase of a seat.\textsuperscript{2} Then, shortly after, on May 5th, Castlereagh again, and Perceval with him, were

\textsuperscript{1} Independent Whig, October 30th, 1808.; Major Hogan's Appeal to the Public and a Farewell Address to the Army.

\textsuperscript{2} H. Martineau, op. cit., Bk. II. PP. 329-30. The charge against Castlereagh was brought by Lord Folkestone.
jointly charged with the sale of another seat and with bringing pressure to bear upon its occupant, when he had voted against the ministry over the Duke of York affair.  

In the former matter, Castlereagh, admitting the facts and acknowledging the 'offence', pleaded harmlessness of intention, and the fact that, in any case, the negotiation had been broken off. The motion to censure him failed.  

The latter charges were refused a hearing. In both cases it is clear, the majority of the Commons—Whigs as well as Tories and Independents—in sympathy with the political conventions of the day and seeing nothing dishonourable in the ministers' actions—regarded such attacks as spiteful and 'ungentlemanly'.

Whether or not the Duke of York, Castlereagh and Perceval should have been censured, it is evident that the charges themselves, and the attitude of the Commons towards them, presented the Westminster Reformers with opportunities for kindling and fanning the flames of public irritation against corruption, such as they were delighted to seize. In their eyes corruption had been proved, and the majority in the Commons were simply anxious to hush things up. The

1. ibid. P.330. The charges against Castlereagh and Perceval were brought by W.A. Madocks.  
arguments put forward in defence of Castlereagh and Perceval - that the acts complained of were common enough, and that it was not 'gentlemanly' to seek to victimise them - were not such as to appeal to Reformers. On the contrary, it seemed to suggest a sweeping reform was all the more necessary.

The part of the Westminster Reformers in developing opinion outside the Commons is referred to below. 1 A substantial number of public meetings vigorously protested against governmental corruption, and a real, if transitory, demand for parliamentary reform appeared in many parts of the country. 2 Even respectable elements, already possessing the franchise, showed considerable anger. The Duke's acquittal and the dropping of the charges against Castlereagh and Perceval, suggested M.P.s did not reflect the opinions of even that small section of the population, who returned them. Once again questions of the responsibility of M.P.s to their constituents and of the adequacy of the franchise came into open debate.

As tension mounted in the early months of 1809, the

1. infra pp. 222 et seq.

2. ibid. cf. Cobbett's Political Register April 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th, May 6th, 13th, 20th 1809, for the agitation raised over the Duke.
leaders of the Whig party earned considerable disfavour by their refusal to take up the popular cry against corruption, or to make party capital out of the affair of the Duke. Grey, detesting the policy and methods of Burdett and the Westminster Reformers, and equating them with the 'wild men' - the violent revolutionaries, whom he had disavowed as a 'Friend of the People' - openly attacked them. Grenville, even more hostile towards the Reformers, rightly counted on Grey to discourage impetuous action on the part of the Whig rank and file. In recent months, Whig criticism of the peninsula campaign and of military strategy generally, had done nothing to enhance their prestige in the eyes of the public. The attitude of Grenville and Grey and the way in which many of the Whigs openly sided with the ministry, now brought them still lower in popular estimation.

True, by no means all the Whigs opposed the Reformers. On the contrary, Whitbread and the 'left wing' group not only recognised clearly the extent to which the Commons was coming to be held in contempt, but recognised too that

3. ibid. PP. 243-4.
the attitude of the conservative Whigs was playing into the Reformers' hands, and encouraging that contempt. This recognition, spreading among the moderate Whigs, was to infuse some real energy into their demand for economic reform, and not a few of them came to be prepared, for one reason or another, to follow Whitbread's lead, and to attack the Duke, Castlereagh and Perceval vigorously.

But, whereas Whitbread and his closest supporters, anxious to win back popular support and now keen to make parliamentary as well as economic reform a Whig policy, had come to be prepared to associate openly with Reformers and to seek their co-operation, the majority of the party remained more cautious. Whitbread's actions and behaviour were apt to alarm them almost as much as the attitude of the Reformers. Anxious to see the prestige of the Whigs and the Commons restored, they were prepared to go part of the way with the 'left wing' group; but there was no general nor deep felt belief among them, that major reforms were necessary. For them the important thing was that

1. ibid. PP.205-6.

2. ibid.; cf. also, Romilly Memoirs II.286. Referring to the dismissal of Madock's charges, Romilly wrote, that it would do more to dispose men in favour of parliamentary reform than all the speeches in its favour.
'the people' should be satisfied that their affairs were being properly conducted. To that end, they were prepared to support the popular demand for enquiries into the conduct of ministers and to allow that concessions might, and indeed should, be made to reassure them. But they regarded it neither expedient nor 'gentlemanly' to pursue the extravagant charges and demands of Reformers, and they were genuinely outraged when, upon the failure of the Madock's charges, Burdett said... "Buonoparte has a strong ally in this House." 1

Thus it was without Grey's sanction, and certainly without the approval of the majority of his party, that, on March 29th, Whitbread attended a public meeting in Westminster, held to protest at the Duke's acquittal, in the company of the 'Burdettites.' 2 Local Whig and reforming politicians warmed up the audience for both Whitbread and Burdett. Burdett, who spoke first, took a familiar line condemning the servility of the House towards ministers, the insincerity

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1. M. Roberts, op. cit., P. 207; M.W. Patterson, op. cit., p. 232. His angry remark caused an uproar. Burdett urged that if the House did not take action it would lead to a conviction in the country that corruption was so common that it had ceased to be regarded an offence by the House.

of the Whigs, and the futility of the minor reforms they proposed.

"I do believe," he said, "that the House of Commons is the only spot in the world where the people of England are spoken of with contempt!"

He hoped the nation had ceased to look for any advantage from any change of administration..."We must look no more to parties and be assured that we can never expect any measure useful to the country until the people of England have their proper share in the constitution!"

Far from softening his tone towards the Whigs in view of Whitbread's presence, he attacked the party strongly for failing to give 'the people' a strong lead. 1

Whitbread, however, was more conciliatory. He did not attack the Reformers, and, in agreeing with Burdett on the need for parliamentary reform and in urging 'the people' to continue to show their demand for it, clearly sought their co-operation and support. True, he made clear he believed in Whiggism. True he defended the 'Talents' Ministry and Whig behaviour thereafter. But he went on to demonstrate his remarkably progressive political outlook.

1. ibid.
If reform were to be carried, he said...."the sentiments of the people, if just, would be supported by majorities in the House of Commons....I say majorities for in what numerous assembly of men shall we find or can we expect unanimity? It is right that there should be defenders as well as accusers, that both sides of every question should be canvassed. The Crown must have servants and the people must be served. I wish to see such a state of administration of government in the kingdom that we may have men in power who, although they are called servants of the Crown, may at the same time feel they are servants of the people."... ..........(who)...."may not desire to be in place to-morrow because they are not so to-day"... (who)...."would begin and terminate their career on such principles as that they may never deviate from the dictates of true honesty! I.

But Whitbread's gesture towards them, brought no response from the Westminster Reformers. Believing that any proposals for reform made by the Whigs would be framed solely in the interests of Whiggism, they had, at best, no faith in Whig reform schemes, even such as might be brought forward by Whitbread and his friends. Moreover, they particularly distrusted Whitbread on both political and personal grounds. His attitude towards Burdett and the Reformers in 1807 was certainly not forgotten, and he could easily be regarded as the 'typical' 'factious' Whig wooing

1. ibid.

2. The Whig Club had pronounced in favour of parliamentary reform in the 'principles of 1793'.cf. Chronicle May 3rd, 1809;cf. also Perry's moderate proposals in the Chronicle 17th May, 1809. On June 27th, 1809, Cartwright wrote to Northmore (Life of Cartwright I.389 et seq.) warning him to beware "of our pretended friends and worst enemies.."."'Even if we could, by unanimity carry half-measures, it would only be to dupe the public into a deceitful security, while corruption would still have the means left of undermining and destroying us!"
'the people' again, because the ministry appeared to be tottering and the Whigs needed their assistance to re-secure office. On the other hand, he was known to be personally disgruntled at his recent failure to secure the leadership of his party in the Commons when Grey had gone to the Lords, and his interest in seeking popular support could as easily be regarded as wholly selfish.¹

But, even had Reformers been convinced of Whitbread's sincerity, even had they believed he and his followers would agree to a worth while measure of reform, it is unlikely they would have joined with them at this time. It was obvious enough to them that Whitbread could not have begun to carry more than a small minority of his party with him, obvious that few Whigs would support any species of parliamentary reform at all. ² If, however, they led the way by co-operating with Whitbread, 'the people' might again be misled into believing they could place their trust in the Whig party. At a time when 'the people' were increasingly coming to look to them for leadership, it

¹. M.Roberts, op.cit., PP.239, 305 et seq. Roberts makes clear that Whitbread's sense of grievance over this and other matters led him to follow an independent course at this time. cf. also P.286 which suggests his condescension towards the 'Burdettites', and his 'self-interest'.

². ibid. PP.243, 249.
would be surprising if they had shown a willingness to compromise.

Though Whitbread and a number of his friends again publicly professed their zeal for reform at the London Livery Dinner of 21st April, this further gesture was not, so far as it is known, accompanied by any more formal efforts to secure the Reformers' co-operation. 1. The Reformers for their part remained inflexible. If the behaviour of the Whig party served to strengthen their conviction as to the correctness of the course they were following, Grey's pronouncement on the subject of reform, on the very same day, came to confirm it. Stung by the Westminster Reformers' attacks on him and his party, Grey, speaking in the Lords, re-affirmed his belief in temperate parliamentary reform in principle, but made quite clear he regarded the schemes and the behaviour of those who attacked all public men with utter contempt. 2. After that, if not before, it was quite clear any hope that the Reformers might again be persuaded to co-operate with the Whigs would be vain.

1. *Morning Chronicle*, 23rd April, 1809.

On May 1st, at a dinner first conceived by Cartwright in 1808 and arranged for him by Place and Brooks with the aim of drawing together all reforming sympathisers, the Whigs, with few exceptions were conspicuously absent. Byng, Brand and Smith of the 'left wing' Whig group, and Madocks, Burdett, Cochrane and Wardle of the Reformers, represented the parliamentarians. The bulk of the diners were, however, extra-parliamentary Reformers, among them men from many parts of the country and a delegation from the City of London.

The meeting was far from peaceful and the anti-Whig feeling, led by Burdett, ran high. Almost alone, Smith, a sincere enough Whig Reformer, chose to speak up for his party. Defending the attitude of Grey, he recalled his experience as a former member of the Constitutional Information Society and of the 'Friends of the People!' He had learned that parliamentary reform could not be pressed upon the nation too quickly, that there was, despite appearances, much apathy and much honest conviction against it. Smith's view, reflecting a realistic appreciation of the difficulties of carrying a measure of reform, evoked little or no sympathetic response. On the contrary, when

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MSS.27,850 f.109; and 27,838 f. 343, for a newspaper cutting from which the following account is taken. The proceedings (held at the Crown and Anchor) were also published as a pamphlet; also, cf. infra pp. 221, 227-8.
he had finished speaking, Robert Waithman, leader of the London Reformers, sprang to attack the Whigs and Grey exclaiming.....

"however (their) great leaders...may, at times, have spoken on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, they only supported that measure inasmuch as it was an annoyance to the existing Administration".......

Grey's statement, of 21st April, he regarded as typical of Whig feelings on the subject. Reform, according to the Whigs, it seemed, must come about without any active effort to secure it.

It is evident Waithman voiced the sentiments of the great majority of Reformers and that growing numbers of the Whigs had, by this time, come to feel increasingly uneasy. Grey himself showed he was greatly hurt by the attitude of Reformers, but determined to stand firm despite their clamour. He wrote, referring to his declaration of April 21st....

..."I was quite as much at war with the patriots of this class in 1792 as I am now... I professed the same attachment to the cause of moderate and constitutional reform which I had always manifested; and censured only the fashionable cant...that there is no difference in public men and no advantage to be expected from any change of ministers." I

1. The Life and Times of Henry, Lord Brougham (by himself) 1.485.
He and the majority of conservatives and moderate Whigs failed to appreciate—or if they did appreciate, wholly disapproved—the changing character of the reform movement. To them, the Reformers' persistent attack upon the character of government, was nothing but blackguardism. The successive attacks upon Melville, Wellesley, the Royal Dukes and particularly the Duke of York, were simply not 'gentlemanly'. But the reform movement was, with increasing rapidity, ceasing to be a 'gentlemanly' movement. Though there were many 'gentlemen' Reformers still to be found, its impetus was coming to be derived increasingly from the feelings of men whose code was the code of business men, whose interest was in efficiency, and to whom 'corruption' was 'corruption', no matter whether the practice was common, and no matter who was responsible for it.

On the other hand, recognition of these feelings and a good deal of sympathy with them, had led Whitbread and others of the Whig 'left wing' to go a long way along the same road as the Reformers and it was Lord Folkestone who, at this time, brought forth the charges against Castlereagh.

2. Place Papers B.M. Add MS. 27850 f. 151. Place wrote... "The conduct of the Duke of York was so nefarious that it could not have occurred in any country in which the people had any real share in government."
It was recognition of, if not sympathy with, them, that now brought many moderate Whigs and "independents" in the House too, to believe concessions must be made to restore popular confidence in the Commons.\footnote{M. Roberts, op.cit., P.207.} Already, and in consequence of the ill-feeling roused against the Duke of York, ministers themselves had felt constrained to propose a bill to prevent the sale and brokerage of offices.\footnote{H. Martineau, op.cit., Bk.II, 329. Before the bill was passed, the enquiry into the management of Indian patronage had brought to light the evidence which led to the further charges against Castlereagh. Burdett referring to the measure at the meeting of 1st May (\textit{supra}, p.61) called it a "sham and idle measure! What use could it be, he asked, when at the very same time ministers engaged in defending Castlereagh?\footnote{M. Roberts, op.cit., P. 209 et seq.} On May 4th, Curwen, a moderate Whig, went a step further. Making clear he believed a more general measure necessary, but that he was no less anxious to achieve the practical, he produced a bill designed to purify elections, and to prevent the sale of parliamentary seats.\footnote{Ministers, though emphasising that they doubted his proposals could be made effective, nonetheless showed willingness to entertain them. To the Reformers, however, Curwen's bill appeared, from the start, worse than useless. It was not simply that they viewed it as a totally inadequate measure of reform. They, and in the course of time many others too, believed it}
would simply give a monopoly of influence in elections to the Treasury. Individuals might find the purchase of seats or open bribery more difficult, but the ministry in power would still possess adequate means of rewarding supporters by the distribution of patronage after elections were over. In the circumstances, they affected to regard it with cynical amusement and looked upon its passing in June, in a very emasculated form, as a mockery.¹

At the second annual dinner, on May 23rd, Burdett reviewed the parliamentary proceedings of the past month and praised Wardle and those who had brought to light the practices of Castlereagh and Perceval.² He went on to lament the strength of ministerial corruption, the difficulty which honest men met when they tried to make their voices heard, and the supineness of the Whigs. Further, he defended his and the Reformers' 'non-party' stance. The Whigs, he said, went out of their way to make it appear difficult to carry reforms because they were against them.

¹. ibid cf. also, Cobbett's Political Register June 3rd, 10th. Edinburgh Review XVII. Art. on Curwen's Bill. It is, of course, well known that, despite the gloomy forecasts of Reformers and numbers of Whigs, Curwen's Bill had considerable success in preventing the sale and purchase of seats. cf. Roberts op. cit., P.215; also W. B. Brock, Lord Liverpool and Liberal Toryism, P.89.

². For a report of the dinner cf. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,858 f. 343.
The so-called 'Friends of the People' were really their enemies. It was part of their trickery to make out the Reformers sought Utopia.

In the past, numbers of those who now clung closely to the Whigs and who now attacked the Reformers, had been proud to assert their independence and to work for the very objects the Reformers now sought. Now, as 'party men,' they had deserted 'the people.' He and his friends who were present were not 'party men.' In words which suggest he was already directly or indirectly in contact with Bentham, he went on....

"...and my honourable friends here...never did belong to any party... because our party is the public; nay, we for that reason wish to be considered as no party, because a part must be less than the whole and because we belong to the whole of the people and not to part of them; also because any party, as belonging to something less than the whole, must have some views against the general interest of the public and may be disposed to use the pretence of the public for the private views of part of it!"

He went on to urge that the date when Madock's charges against Castlereagh and Perceval were refused a hearing - May 11th - should be remembered as the day when the Commons

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1. He specified, for example, Tierney, who had recently rounded on Burdett in the Commons.

no longer troubled to claim it represented 'the people'! Its members, in rejecting the charges on the grounds of the prevalence of the practices complained of, had, in effect, avowed they were an assembly......

"of some representing the Treasury; some the Admiralty; of some....(who had obtained seats)... 'by their own money; and a few by representing popular places!"

The debates on Curwen's Bill had openly confirmed, as Horne Tooke had long ago said, that "seats were as notoriously bought and sold in the assembly as standings were sold for cattle at a fair!"

In the early summer of 1809, aware of the dissatisfaction with the Whigs and conscious of the growing strength of their own support, Reformers decided that the moment had come to give the public a new lead on the subject of parliamentary reform. The public must not be misled into thinking Curwen's proposals adequate. At the same time it was desirable to refute Tory and Whig criticisms that their schemes were "visionary", and to allay suspicion of their intentions. As a result, and at short notice, Burdett, Wardle, Madocks, Clifford and Cartwright held a meeting to argue out the heads of reform proposals, which Burdett undertook to bring before the Commons. Cobbett sent a letter stating his views.1

The proposals, which Burdett only just succeeded in making before the end of the session, and which were afterwards publicised widely, may be regarded as the climax of the Reformers' efforts to capitalise on the strong popular discontent roused in 1809. They were designed, as Burdett said, to secure a proper representation of the people in parliament and... "to reunite the King and the people by the constitutional bond of allegiance on the one hand, and protection on the other". More specifically, they were for taxpayer suffrage; equal, single member constituencies; single day elections (the poll to be taken in parishes) and a shortening of the duration of parliaments.

It is noteworthy that, on this occasion, he made no proposal for the removal of placemen from the Commons. Though not unlike Grey's proposals of 1797, they were, and were obviously recognised to be — far too radical to win support from the Whigs at this time. But Reformers were more

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1. They were made on June 15th. For their publicity, cf. Burdett's Plan of Reform (published by the "Westminster Committee"), and Cobbett's Political Register June 17th 24th 1809. Reformers made much play with the technical difficulties allegedly put in Burdett's way to prevent him bringing the proposals at all.

2. According to Cartwright, op. cit, he had succeeded in persuading the meeting held to draw up the proposals to agree to Annual parliaments, when all the others who attended had at first argued for "Triennials!"

3. Though Whitbread, who in 1806-7 had argued so strongly against Burdett's proposal to remove placemen, was now prepared to entertain a move to reduce their numbers. cf. M. Roberts op. cit., P.217, for a speech by Whitbread on June 2nd.
concerned to demonstrate how much more 'honest' they were than the Whigs, than to secure Whig support. If the Whigs did not now support them, it would simply make their apostacy the more obvious.  

He brought them forward, he said, because Curwen's proposals had become utterly valueless, save as a means of increasing the influence of the Treasury, and because he was anxious to refute the charges that he and his associates sought to subvert the constitution, or that they advocated mere abstract theory. Particularly, he was anxious to refute the doctrines that had come to light during the debates on Curwen's proposals that...

......"without the auxiliary of corruption in the House, the constitution would be insecure and government could not be carried on"....

that excellence attached to the very forms of the Constitution.

In familiar fashion and with great vigour Burdett went on to attack the "boroughmongers." 'The people' had been warned against throwing themselves into the arms of one

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1. At the same time, it may well be that the proposal for improving the method of taking the poll, and the avoidance of a specific call for annual parliaments were designed to please the Whigs; cf. *Edinburgh Review*, XIV, Art. on Burdett's Plan of Reform.
power to avoid another, but...

..."to that warning I cannot lend an ear, having no
dread of the prerogative of the Crown which I know
forms part of the law of the land, and is material
and necessary to maintain the Constitution. My only
apprehension is from the usurpation of the legitimate
prerogative by the Boroughmonger faction and its
consequent use by the agents of that faction untruly
styling themselves ministers of the King, Servants of
the Crown, through the medium of this House, having
falsely denominated itself the Representatives of the
people"....

'The people' had been artfully led since the time of the
Revolution to ascribe all evils to the Royal prerogative
and had willingly acquiesced in its powers being curtailed.
The mistake was now proving fatal. The 'boroughmongers'
had been able to increase, and were still increasing, their
power in its stead.

Finally, he held out the improvements he believed the
carrying out of his proposals would effect. Corruption
of many kinds would diminish; elections would be free,
simpler, and more orderly, and...

"the people would have a choice without a contest
instead of a contest without a contest without a choice"

Madocks, seconding the proposals, seems to have aimed
at calming conservative fears. He emphasized that Burdett
and himself both believed property alone gave a legitimate
title to representation, and it was precisely because, at
the present, the influence of property owners was not
properly represented, that the proposals were made.¹

Perceval answered, affirming his belief that the people, save for "certain descriptions" of persons with whom Burdett was wont to associate....

"were more united against reform than almost upon any other question"

Adopting a long familiar argument used against Reformers, he asked whether Burdett, in his desire to 'restore the Constitution', meant to abolish all the conventions and usages which, over the course of time, had alone made its smooth working possible. If he meant that no action should be taken unless sanctioned by statute he would, to begin with, find no law which gave the Commons any right of originating or controlling taxation.²

With realistic scepticism he denied that popular elections - such as in Burdett's own constituency of Westminster - would be any quieter or less corrupt, if Burdett's proposals were adopted. There would still be canvassing, and all the temptation towards bribery and corruption would be present as before. Cynically, he observed that the only remedy was "to alter the frame of the human mind."³

¹ Burdett's Plan of Reform.
² ibid.
³ ibid.
The House chose to agree with Perceval's arguments and the proposals were defeated by 74 to 15. The Whigs' dislike of, and distrust for, Burdett and his supporters, probably accounts for the poor support they received— for many might otherwise, it seems, have been prepared to make what need have amounted to no more than a gesture, that they believed some reforming measure was necessary.

Whatever the case, the solid vote against the Reformers in parliament should not be taken as evidence of the strength of the ministry. On the contrary, it was only with great difficulty that it had survived so long. On several occasions it had been forced, or at least had found it advisable, to bend before the storm raised about it, and the improvement of the military situation alone seems to have extended its life. When the military position again deteriorated rapidly in July the ministry could stand no longer. The quarrel between Castlereagh and Canning was part symptom, part cause of its breaking up, and in September—the old and feeble Portland resigning—negotiations designed to bring about its reconstruction were set afoot.

For a moment, Whig hopes of office ran high, and Reformers felt it necessary to warn "the people" against placing any trust in them. Cobbett, in particular, reminded his readers of their "betrayal" of "the people" in 1806-7, and asserted they were far more hated by "the people" of England than the other faction. If they were ever to be trusted again, they must prove they had learned their lesson.

But though it was an occasion of national emergency, neither Grey nor Grenville, when invited, would agree to join with the existing ministers. Partly because they were still sore at the attitude of George III in 1807 and were unwilling to bend on the Catholic issue, partly because they were inclined to believe the overtures to them insincere, and were in any case anxious to avoid another coalition, partly because of the very difficulties of the situation - the Whigs elected to remain in opposition.

Their apparent indifference to the welfare of their country at a time of crisis, and the uncertain and often languid nature of their opposition, enabled Reformers to criticize them strongly for their selfishness. The new ministry, eventually formed by Perceval, appeared so weak, that, when news of the Walcheren disaster and Wellington's

1. Cobbett's Political Register, Sept. 30th, 1809.
final retreat from Spain was received, it seemed impossible it could long survive. The Whigs, it appeared, were unconcernedly sitting back, waiting for it to fall, believing they could then force the King to accept them on their own terms. Cobbett frankly told them they had not the slightest chance of securing popular support, and even Jeffrey, in the 'Edinburgh Review', launched a vigorous attack on them for their supineness. If, he wrote, the Whigs did not set aside their aristocratic prejudices and prepare to co-operate with "the more respectable and sane of the democrats;" if they did not set to work to gratify the popular clamour for retrenchment and reform, there would be rebellion as well as invasion. The Whigs were powerless between the Court and the 'Burdettites'; and would remain so until they were crushed, unless they joined with the popular party!

Thus, at the close of 1809, Reformers might well look with no small satisfaction on the considerable success their attack on parties and their efforts to increase popular

distrust of the Commons had enjoyed. Their repeated and gloomy forecasts of ultimate national disaster unless there were a complete change of system, might well seem likely to be realised. One ministry had fallen and the new ministry showed few signs of being stronger or more successful. The Whigs, divided and unpopular — wholly satisfactory from the Reformers' point of view — were shaken and worried by the weakness of their position. If a majority, in parliament and outside, scared by the behaviour of the Reformers, stayed cautiously in support of the Crown and the ministry, yet growing numbers of men in the country, many of them suffering from the effects of trade dislocation, all of them resentful of the pressure of high taxation and increasingly dissatisfied with the poor return shown for their financial sacrifice, were coming to be more and more suspicious of, and ready to condemn, corruption, more and more ready to look to the leadership of the 'Burdettite' or Reforming 'party' centred in Westminster.

More and more it seemed likely that the Whigs would be driven to take a more popular line, or face ruin. It was all very well to blame Crown influence and ministerial

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1. As F. O. Darvall points out, *Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Regency England*, P.18, it was the effects of the Continental System, the loss of the American market (in retaliation for the Orders in Council) and above all the glutting of the S. American market which brought widespread distress in 1810.
mismanagement for the ills of the country and to hold the radical agitation responsible for strengthening the ministers' hands. But the Whigs were being forced to realise that waiting patiently, in the hope that the 'good sense' and moderation of the nation would return, would get them nowhere, and might prove disastrous. Increasing numbers of them were coming to feel that, unless they girded themselves for action, unless they gave the country a clear and positive lead, unless they won back national support, by showing they were anxious to make concessions to the popular demand, Jeffrey's forecast would come true.

But if 1809 had proved a year in which Reformers had enjoyed considerable success, the first half of 1810, when anxiety over the military position and anger at the actions of the Commons had increased still further, was to see them achieving a success far greater. At the very moment when popular irritation with the conduct of government was reaching new heights, the Commons decided, not without considerable goading, on a course of action which was to lead to the political martyrdom of Burdett.

The story of how Burdett came to be condemned to the Tower by order of the Commons, and of how, upon his refusal to acknowledge its right to imprison him, he was finally seized and conveyed there by force, need not be repeated
here in detail. 1 The actions of the Commons excited great political controversy, brought about a tremendous popular outcry, and reduced the ministry's prestige to its lowest ebb. The part Burdett and the Westminster Reformers played in the affair, and their part in whipping up and staging the agitation in the metropolis and the country, is discussed more fully below. 2

It is perhaps not a little surprising, in view of the obvious evidence of popular ill feeling towards the House in 1809, and the conviction, growing among members, that something must be done to win back public confidence, that the Commons should have been so ready to support Charles Yorke's motion for the exclusion of newspaper reporters from the House during the enquiry into the Walcheren disaster, and so ready to pounce on Gale Jones for encouraging criticism of their action. There is no doubt the Commons were both irritable and apprehensive after the trying days of 1809, and members seem to have determined the time had come to make a firm stand against those who persistently sought to encourage contempt of the House. At the same time, in view of the fact that its competence

1. cf. M.W. Patterson, op. cit. l. Ch. XII.
2. cf. infra pp. 236 et seq.
was already suspect in many quarters, it would seem to have been tactically unwise to have encouraged further suspicion that there was something to hide, and to have supported what was made to appear the vindictive desire of Yorke to secure Jones' imprisonment.\(^1\)

Having decided to make an example of Jones, however, it may well be agreed that it was most unlikely that the Commons would overlook Burdett's defiant, inflammatory and widely publicised assertion that no privilege of the House could possibly give it a right to arrogate to itself the power of King, Lords and Commons together, and his denial of the Commons' legal right to imprison Jones. Ministerial determination to go through with the business and to make an example of Burdett as well, was supported by the majority - including a majority of the Whigs - who firmly believed Burdett richly merited punishment. It can only be remarked that had the Commons foreseen what trouble they might have brought upon themselves when condemning Jones to Newgate, or the storm they were to raise when they sought to imprison Burdett, it must have been likely that they would have acted much more hesitantly.\(^2\)

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1. S. Maccoby, *op. cit.*, P. 260, suggests the Commons' resentment against Jones was the greater because, so to speak, he earned his bread and butter by agitation.

2. cf. *infra* pp. 239-42.
Piccadilly house, and strongly resisting arrest, became the focus of national attention and the symbol of resistance to the oppression of a "tyrannical" Commons. His final seizure might well seem proof of what he and others had often said before, that "of all forms of tyranny, a legislative tyranny exercised under the form of a free government, is the most tremendous and fatal!"

The Whigs, as Roberts points out, were once again placed in a dilemma over the action to be taken against Burdett. Were they to uphold the sovereignty of parliament or of the people? Was it just to use the privileges the Commons had secured to protect them from the Crown "against" "the people"? Creevy, it is true, publicly denounced such an idea, but the great majority finally decided the privileges of House must be upheld. Grey, Grenville and the conservative Whigs, quite openly took the ministerial side and strongly attacked the Reformers. Whatever their personal feelings towards Burdett, Whigs more than ready to moderate and "left wing" Whigs equally, seem to have believed it was necessary to uphold

Commons privileges until such time as they should be
"inherited" by 'the people'. Even those, like Romilly, who
were acutely sensitive to the dangers of defying popular
feeling and who sought to dissuade the Commons from
imprisoning Burdett, were disposed to agree that it had the
right to commit for a breach of its privileges.1

In the circumstances, it cannot be surprising that
democratic Reformers who supported Burdett's view and who
saw the matter as clear cut, should show their dislike and
distrust of the Whigs even more strongly. The failure of
the Whigs to carry their motion censuring the ministry for
its handling of the Walcheren expedition, despite the
strength of their case, was far more a measure of their
failure to win public confidence, than an indication of
the strength of the ministry.2 Reformers, delighted at
the force it gave to their arguments, were only too ready
to seize the opportunity to show their scorn for them and to
point out, once more, that they could never again expect to
be strong unless they undertook to press for a 'real' reform.

Whitbread and his followers, anxious the House should

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1. Romilly Memoirs II. 311 et. seq. Romilly denied the Commons
had cognizance of Burdett's 'offence', since it was, he held, an
animadversion on past proceedings. He did not
deny the right of the
Commons to imprison for a
breach of its privileges
altogether.

not sink more deeply in the mire of popular disfavour, did indeed make a great effort to dissuade it from over hasty action against Burdett. Further, they pleaded hard that the Reformers' petitions, protesting at its actions, should be received when, because of their violence, the House was in favour of their rejection. Whitbread even presented one himself from Cartwright.

But their efforts were scarcely enough to offset the hostility shown by the majority of the Whigs for Burdett and the Reformers, and certainly not enough to save their party from sharing in the Reformers' wholehearted condemnation of the Commons. The Reformers were delighted to embarrass the Whigs and to remind them - and the public - of their professions as 'Friends of the People' in the nineties.

The Westminster Reformers attack on parties and on party government thus came to be intensified. At a Westminster public meeting on February 9th, summoned before the Commons had moved against Jones, Sturch, who spoke first, made clear the Reformers' views.

Urging 'the people' to demand a full and complete reform of the representation in the Commons, he asserted

1. ibid PP. 267-269.
2. c./ Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27, 839 ff. 2-3. for newspaper cuttings.
that nothing less than a complete change of system would be of the slightest avail. Since the disastrous days of the American War there had been various changes of ministry, but no change from Tories to Whigs, or from Whigs to Tories, had brought, or could bring, any improvement. Reflecting and illuminating strong contemporary distrust for constitutional developments, as yet far from universally accepted, he deplored the way in which the term "government" was coming to be used in application to the ministry. Government surely was vested in King, Lords and Commons together? Instead, it had apparently become vested in nine or ten gentlemen who possessed seats in the Cabinet. A man who attacked the ministry was now held to be attacking the "government" and was called a "leveller" and an enemy of the Constitution.

The Reformers' attitude is clear enough. If to ministers and to party men, who realised the need for party support if government were to be carried on, the existing means of holding a party together were ceasing to be adequate, yet to large numbers of others, especially among men outside parliament, it appeared as if ministerial power had become, and still remained, far too strong. To Reformers, Cabinet and party government, as its working
appeared to them, was arbitrary government - government by, and in the interests of, a faction, government without checks or safeguards.

Governmental action rested on the support of a majority in the Commons. Ministers who were servants of the Crown should be responsible to it. But it was, apparently, the Cabinet that had become all powerful, and the party which supported it was a servile body held together by corruption. It was, it seemed, the function and interest of this ministerial "party" to support the faction and its leaders in office, whether individuals approved their actions or not, in return for rewards and favours. It was, it seemed, conversely, the function and interest of the Cabinet to maintain a majority in its favour by corruption. But if a ministry could secure the support of a majority _by corruption_ - and without it, whenever the interests of the governing class as a whole were affected - where then was the liberty of the subject? Where was the famous constitution of checks and balances which politicians constantly praised?

In the circumstances, the Reformers' views of the Commons' action in imprisoning Jones and later Burdett, is easily understandable. The Commons, they believed, in claiming to be judge of its own privileges, was acting
arbitrarily, according to the will of a ministry supported by a servile majority. If, as Burdett said, when condemning its action against Jones, it was to decide on its own powers, if it could imprison at will, why should it stop short at imprisonment? Privilege was assuming the character of prerogative, and was equally to be resisted.

Thus, to Reformers, to call the ministry the 'government' was to accept what, in their eyes, it had wrongfully become. The word 'government', Sturch said, implied ministers were their masters. It was a conception of them which Reformers wholly rejected, and which they were determined should be rejected by others.

Denounced by the ministerial press and treated with disdain by the Whigs, the Reformers continued to defend their non-party attitude. Jones Burdett, deputising for his imprisoned brother at the Westminster Reformers third anniversary dinner, on May 23rd, referred to the attacks upon them.

"Much had been said of the subject of 'party' and 'no party' and the being of the latter description was charged against them as a crime. This appeared to him a charge the most novel, whimsical and extraordinary. They were of no party; they wished to see no party distinctions. They only wished to see all honest men together acting in the public interest."

1. M.W. Patterson, op. cit., 1. 246.
It was not true they boasted of any superior virtues. Their one boast was that of feeling an interest in their country. If 'the people' looked upon the Commons with contempt, it was the result of its own actions.  

The contempt of Reformers for the Commons and for the Whig party in particular, especially when echoed strongly in the country was not, however, to be without effect. More than ever acutely conscious of the difficulties and dangers of their position, more than ever conscious of their weakness in parliament and in the country, the Whigs were preparing to make a fresh and more determined effort to win back popular favour. As on other occasions, it was the 'left wing' of the party whose greater sensitiveness to 'public opinion' had led them to oppose the action of the Commons against Burdett, who led the way.

1. ibid.

2. In addition to White's 'Independent Whig' and Cobbett's Register, the Westminster Reformers came, in 1809-1810, to enjoy the unreserved support of a number of other papers and periodicals, among them The Statesman, and The Alfred, later Alfred and Westminster Gazette (which may well have been financed by the Westminster Reformers cf. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS., 27,839 ff. 56, 106). John Hunt's 'Reflector' and the more important Examiner edited by his brother were very much on their side. So too was the British Press and the Morning Star. The Times and even the Chronicle were also to be found backing Burdett from time to time. For selections from these papers cf. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,839 passim.
On May 21st, whilst Burdett was still in the Tower, Brand introduced the first Whig plan of parliamentary reform since 1797. His proposals were moderate, and were presented as practical and expedient. They were clearly designed to conciliate both conservative and democratic elements and to attract the maximum support from both. Insisting on property as the basis of representation, he nonetheless proposed to disfranchise rotten and pocket boroughs. Again, though he would admit no legal right to compensation, yet it would be expedient to allow it, in view of the ultimate saving to the country. Parliaments, he suggested, should be triennial. The franchise should be extended to copyholders in the country and taxpayers in the town. Equal electoral districts he rejected, but he proposed that constituencies should be divided into polling districts.

If, to conservative Whigs, the proposals were still too radical, they provided for the moderate majority a plan to which they might well give their support. It was not so much that they had become convinced of the efficacy of parliamentary reform as a remedy for corruption: rather did


2. ibid.
it seem to them a matter of expediency. It would show the public that the Whigs were fully alive to the dangers and evils of corruption, but were in no sense revolutionaries. Again the proposals, once put forward, would help to reveal the extent of genuine public feeling in favour of a moderate and practical measure. If the proposals were approved in the country, the party would gain popular support. If they were rejected, it followed that the more radical schemes of the 'Burdettites' would be rejected too. In these circumstances, it would be safe to drop what might otherwise prove a tiresome business, secure in the knowledge they had done their duty. Whatever the reasoning, whatever their motives, a very large body of the Whigs voted for the proposals. One hundred and fifteen votes in all were secured in their favour.¹

The Whig action won them little favour among Reformers. In parliament Wardle, among others, had emphasised that he much preferred Burdett's plan and that he was prepared to vote for Brand's proposals principally because he wished to bring the whole matter before a committee. Outside,

¹ M. Roberts, op. cit. PP. 273–279, analyses Whig feelings and attitudes towards Brand's motion.
Cartwright was to make clear, in a widely publicised pamphlet, the Reformers' view, that the 'moderate reform' the Whigs now advocated was a 'delusion'.

Recognising well enough the Whigs had no belief in democracy, they believed their proposals totally inadequate and calculated to leave the existing system of 'corruption' intact.

Twenty years hence, Reformers were prepared to accept Whig proposals for reform as an instalment. But, in 1810, there was less trust in Whig sincerity, less belief that their proposals had any chance of being carried, and less readiness to compromise. There was still, at this time, a strong, if more immature, belief that a far more radical measure could, and would, yet be carried 'at heat'. Reform had not been taken up by the Whigs as a party matter and it must have been well known that the majority of those who had voted for it felt like Holland - simply that it was a means of restoring the prestige of the Commons.

Thus the introduction of a 'delusive' half measure of reform by a rank and file member of the Whig party, whose

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2. Though Cartwright admitted the country was not yet ready for the "true reform" necessary; Comparison PP. 92 et seq.

leaders showed no enthusiasm for reform at all, and its support by men whose sincerity was suspect, in no way inclined Reformers to relax their attack on the Whigs. On the contrary, in the summer of 1810 it might well seem as if the Reformers' policy was, at last, beginning to pay dividends, and that it should be pressed harder. If the Whigs could be made to feel they had made no impression, perhaps they would be forced to go further. If they refused to do so, contempt for them would increase, and the embarrassment of the 'left wing' might be such as to drive them to join the Reformers.

Thus, at the Anniversary Dinner of 23rd May, two days after the introduction of Brand's motion, hostility for the Whigs remained strongly in evidence. Coke, one of the few Whigs present, apparently felt bound, after what Jones Burdett had said against parties, to assert that he was a "party man" of the "old party" which brought about the Revolution. Promptly hissed, despite his avowal that he was prepared to support Burdett's plan, he felt it necessary to add that though he was a "party man", he was "only attached to party upon a unity of principle."  

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add MS. 27,839 f. 30.  
2. Ibid.
Nor was Grey's speech and declaration on the subject of parliamentary reform, of June 13th, likely to encourage trust for the Whigs. On the contrary, the party leaders' pronouncement must have strengthened their conviction that they were entirely right to decry Whig efforts as a 'sham!

The path Reformers were treading, Grey said, was fraught with danger, and it demanded the utmost vigilance to prevent it from leading to a fatal termination. He affirmed that when "the people of England" took up the question of reform "seriously and affectionately," there would then be a fair prospect of carrying it. Meanwhile, he doubted whether there was a very general disposition in its favour, and asserted "no impediment" was "calculated to have a more hostile influence than the attempt to force a reform by public clamour." As Trevelyan has remarked, alarm and disgust at the Reformers agitation in 1810 had brought his enthusiasm for parliamentary reform to its "low-water mark."

At the grand Dinner held on July 31st, to celebrate Burdett's liberation from the Tower, Burdett himself, after

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condemning the behaviour of ministers and praising the exertions of 'the people', which he believed had advanced the cause of reform greatly in the last few months, devoted the main part of his address to denouncing Grey and the Whig party. His speech may be taken to sum up the Reformers' views of the actions of the Commons and the behaviour of the Whigs.

It was, he said, imputed to them as a fault, even by individuals of great respectability, that they were not of any party, and some had even gone so far as to assert they were always endeavouring to calumniate every public character. But was it calumny to speak the truth of public men? Those who made such assertions must point out to them the public characters so calumniated. He did not mean to condemn all parties - for parties might be useful to the country. He believed, further, there were honourable men in the country who, adhering to party through a false notion of honour, were hampered in its trammels. Such men could not be trusted. When he spoke of parties he meant those who...
"forgetting the original designs and intentions for which they were formed, quarrelled only for the power in the possession of others"....

He spoke...

"against those who only wanted others out, that they might have their places, who, attached to particular sets of men, aimed at their own emolument without consulting the good of the people. It was against a party all compromise and no principle that he directed his observations, a party which led the high road to destruction and misery of any people or country in existence"....

He referred to the recent speech by the leader of the "Bifrons" or two-faced party (Grey) who, it seemed, had said a great deal about mischievous and misguided men. But where were they? Surely not amongst his associates or the electors of Westminster? Grey had upheld the privileges of parliament, defended the Commons against attacks upon it and asserted that supreme power must reside somewhere. But the contrivance of all their political institutions was that supreme power should be lodged nowhere. Their government was a government of checks and controls, the breach of which, by the usurpation of assumed power, had led to the present state of confusion for which 'the people's enemies' sought to blame 'the people' themselves. The great truth, as evidenced in the Bill of Rights, was that the final supreme power in all governments was 'the people.' The Crown
was the only branch of the Constitution to which supreme power was entrusted, and even it could not exercise it as the Commons had exercised it recently.

Their representatives in parliament had failed them. They were there to check the Crown - but were, in fact, packed in against Crown and 'people.' One party wished to uphold the power of the King as that which was to be dreaded by 'the people.' But "the people" were not to be gulled. They knew they had nothing to fear from the King and that it was their duty to raise him above faction. Ponsonby had said recently that Kings could not love parliaments because they were a check to their authority. But, though it could be shown that parliaments had often overridden the laws of the country, when had they ever acted as a check upon tyranny - save where the interests of their members were affected? The truth, however, was that parliaments, as well as King and 'people', were controlled by a boroughmongering faction.

Grey implied that age had changed his views. It was scarcely a justification for his attitude. It did not follow that as a man grew older he grew wiser. He had

1. Ponsonby had grudgingly been accepted as Whig leader in the Commons. cf. M. Roberts, op.cit., PP.303 et seq.
charged them with putting forth extravagant theories and had expressed willingness, on behalf of the Whigs, to adopt a practical measure when it was demanded by 'the people.' With regard to their 'theories,' Reformers' demands were based upon the statute book. As for the Whig promise to pursue reform when it was taken up by the people...

... "they could all remember when Lord Grey and his party came into office, and how well they had redeemed their pledge made out of office to the deluded public. They did not think it worth their while to touch the subject of reform on which they had so many years decanted. What was the reason urged in defence of that neglect, that abandonment of principle? Why truly that the people did not ask for it"....

Apart from the fact that it was dishonest not to do what was right whether asked to do it or not...

... "How were they to act. If they were quiet, it was inferred reform was not sought; and if they demanded reform they were told it ought to be resisted"....

In the summer of 1810, the Reformers still took a high tone. But as the year wore on, it became clearer that whilst they continued to enjoy considerable support, the great waves of popular irritation with the Commons, upon which they had been riding in 1809 and the earlier months of 1810, were beginning to subside. Excitement over the Walcheren and Burdett affairs was declining. The
economic position, at least temporarily, was improving. After the parliamentary recess public interest came to be more greatly diffused, and Reformers no longer had the same opportunity for criticising the Commons' activities. In any case, many were tiring of the state of uproar which Reformers had helped to create, and now that their anger was cooling, were coming to prefer more moderate counsel. Scandals and imprisonment were helping to lessen the Reformers' credit and the fiasco which followed when Burdett, on leaving the Tower, ignored the giant procession staged to conduct him through London in triumph, had angered many even among his own close supporters.1

As the Kent petition of October showed, however, many 'respectable' elements were still seriously alarmed at the overall financial and military situation. Still prepared to support a campaign for 'economic' reform, many had, by this time, come to show, too, considerable interest in securing a moderate measure of parliamentary reform such as a substantial number of the Whigs had been prepared to

1 S. Maccoby, op. cit., PP.264-5; N. Roberts op. cit., PP.264-5; cf. also, the Hertfordshire petition in the Morning Chronicle, 18th Feb., 1811. The procession fiasco is referred to more fully below, infra pp.158-262. Wardle had been losing credit for some time after Mrs. Clarke turned against him (cf. S. Maccoby, op. cit., PP.247-8). Cobbett was imprisoned for libel, after negotiations with the ministry which had suggested he had been willing to give up the "Register" to avoid imprisonment. Cobbett's attitude is discussed by G.D.H. Cole, op. cit., PP.156-7, and cf. infra.111 pp.77-9.
Further a renewal of the King's illness at the end of the same month and the fresh prospect of a Regency, made it seem, for a while, virtually certain that the Whigs would shortly be called to office.

In these changed circumstances, many of the leading Reformers seem to have become more ready to favour dropping the attack on the whole Whig body, and to concentrate rather upon winning over those of the Whig 'left wing' who had, at least, begun to show they recognised the popular demand for reform could not forever be resisted. Already a policy of union between Reformers and 'left wing' Whigs had been advocated in the early months of 1810, by Leigh Hunt, who was anxious to heal the rift between Whig and independent Reformers and to unite their adherents in the country.


2. Leigh Hunt, The Reformists Answer to the Article entitled "The State of Parties" in the last "Edinburgh Review" (1810). The "Edinburgh" referred to was the issue of Dec. 1809/Jan. 1810 and the article Jeffrey's. Hunt ridiculed the typical "Edinburgh" picture of a "small but respectable band" of Whigs alone retaining their dignity in a country divided between Courtiers and Reformers. What right had they to pose as the keepers of the nation's freedom? "The people must be the keepers of their own freedom. Nobody else will keep it for them!" (P. 27.) As things were, they were not fit to become ministers and would never gain the support of the country until they took up reform sincerely - which they had never yet done. He believed that men such as Whitbread, Curwen, Coke, Granville, Sharpe, Romilly and Wilberforce should join with Burdett and Cartwright in seeking to rally the country. Cf. M. Roberts, op. cit., PP. 282-3. On Leigh Hunt's support for the Westminster Reformers cf. supra, p. 185, and infra, p. 232; III, p. 77; IV, p. 289; et passim.
Then, it had little appeal for either side. At that point Whig detestation of the Reformers' behaviour had been at its strongest. Reformers, riding high, had been further embittered by the Whigs' attitude towards Burdett's imprisonment. Cartwright, in his writings, had tried to persuade the 'left wing' and 'moderate' Whigs to see the error of their ways. Burdett, in his liberation dinner speech, had encouraged the Whig Reformers to join them and become 'honest' men. But the Reformers' intention had been rather to show them the hopelessness of their position if they did not join with them, and no formal approaches were made.

Now, however, when their own position was less favourable and Whig prospects were improving, when Reformers were more disposed to realise - as Cartwright had admitted - that the country was not to be taken by storm at once, it might well seem tactically advisable to make more diplomatic efforts to secure their co-operation. There was no obvious readiness to compromise. Their own position was still strong. It would perhaps be wiser, however, to cease attacking the Whigs and to come to some arrangement with them instead. Now that they had been shown the feelings
of 'the people', the Whigs, it might be supposed, would be more willing to co-operate. They must surely know by this time that if they came to office they could not dare to neglect reform again. But it would be well for them to know what measure of reform 'the people' would support. Further they should have no excuse that they were given no chance to act before their efforts were decried.1

Whether or not these truly represented the sentiments of Reformers it is impossible to say. The fact remains, however, that in the closing months of the year the attack on the Whigs was abandoned, and Reformers campaigned vigorously alongside them in opposing the restrictions which it was proposed to impose on the Prince of Wales as Regent. Further, when flattering the Prince, and urging him, when he assumed office, to dismiss his ministers and to give his support to the cause of parliamentary reform, they can have expected nothing else than that the Whigs would take their places.2

Having committed themselves so far in showing favour

1. Life of Cartwright 11.5-6. Cartwright to Wyvill. April 18th, 1811. Every effort, Cartwright said, was to be made to reason with the Whigs. Reformers and Whigs must yield to each other.

Having committed themselves so far in showing favour to the Regent and in presenting him as friend of 'the people' and parliamentary reform, they were almost as disconcerted as the Whigs themselves when they found that he was not, at least for the time being, going to change his father's ministers, still less take the lead or use his influence in favour of parliamentary reform. But though Whig hopes of office immediately were dashed, their prospects of coming to power in the ensuing months still seemed bright and, for the time being, both Whigs and Reformers were disposed to tread warily where the Regent was concerned. Further, directing their attack on parties towards the ministerial boroughmongers, Reformers continued to avoid strong criticism of the Whigs. 

Whatever hopes the Reformers had of drawing the Whigs more closely to them, however, were to prove vain. By the

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1. For the ministerial negotiations of Jan.-Feb. 1811, cf. M. Roberts op.cit., PP.359 et seq.; R. Fulford. George the Fourth. PP.107 et seq.; S. Maccoby, op.cit., P.269 points out that the Prince appeared to give a gesture of encouragement to Reformers by ordering the insertion of the Second London Address in the Gazette, but was probably seeking only to demonstrate his power to his ministers.


3. For further discussion of this point, cf. infra pp.266-71
spring of 1811, it became clear that even the 'left wing' Whigs had lost interest in the prospect of an alliance with Reformers.

It was in March 1811, after popular excitement roused during the Regency controversy had greatly declined, that the possibilities of an alliance were first seriously and formally discussed. In 1809 the Reformers had rejected Whitbread's 'wooing', out of hand. Now advances were to be made by Reformers. Brand and a number of others of the Whig 'left wing' were invited to meet a number of leading Reformers on March 30th, with the aim of evolving a common policy. But little enough came of the meeting. Vague resolutions in favour of reform were passed and agreement was reached that "Reform of the Commons was equally necessary to the independence of the Crown and the liberties of the people." It was further agreed that a general meeting should be held to discuss the subject further, to which both sides would bring their friends.

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1. Cartwright. Six Letters to the Marquis of Tavistock.; Life of Cartwright, 11. 1., Cartwright to Brand, 2nd March. Cartwright urged Brand to join with Burdett and Coke in organizing a dinner meeting. It is clear Cartwright was the moving spirit behind the overtures to the Whigs, cf. infra. pp. 266-271.

April 6th, they met again, it was found that whereas the Reformers had produced thirty 'friends', Brand, who had found most of his parliamentary friends strongly disapproving his association with the 'Burdettites', could only produce three. Disappointed and, probably, as Roberts says, chagrined, Brand withdrew. Though Reformers were to continue their efforts to win over the 'left wing' Whigs for some time thereafter, they were to be of no avail. The failure of the meeting of April 6th was to prove decisive.

The attitude of the Whigs towards Reformers' overtures is not difficult to understand. Nothing whatever had happened to increase their liking or trust for the Reforming party. Now that office appeared so nearly within their grasp, the majority were once again disposed to act with extreme caution. On the one hand, it must seem they were anxious not to lose the support of respectable elements, who had begun to show some enthusiasm for Whig reform proposals, and unwilling to give cause for the Reforming party to start a clamour against them. In these circumstances, they were ready to give assurance that they still believed in reform. On the other, they were most unwilling to associate closely with Reformers and still more unwilling to commit

1. Cartwright, Six Letters to the Marquis of Tavistock.
themselves to any particular scheme lest they found themselves bound to follow a course of action they might easily regret. Had Whitbread given an energetic lead, had he sincerely desired to come to terms with Reformers at this time, he might have been more successful than Brand in persuading 'left wing' members of his party of the value of co-operating with them. It seems, however, that his own personal hopes of office were, for the moment, sufficient to curb even his reforming zeal.

Thus it was, that leaders of the Reformers were left almost by themselves to pursue their preparations for yet another dinner meeting, designed to draw reforming sympathisers of all shades together. When this dinner, arranged for June 10th, was first projected, it was still hoped to secure Whig co-operation. It was hoped, further, that a plan, agreed upon by a joint committee of Reformers and Whigs, would be ready for presentation to it. Reformers were still careful to refer to the Whigs with

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2. Life of Cartwright, 11.1-10, for letters of Cartwright to various people seeking their support. Over 300 M.P.s were invited.
3. Cartwright. Six Letters to the Marquis of Tavistock - cf. also Life of Cartwright 11.5-6. Cartwright to Wyvill 18th April 1813, "Every effort has been made to give the Whigs the chance to take the lead... every concession short of an extinguisher!"
moderation and tact. Burdett, in his speech at the fourth anniversary dinner on May 23rd, put forward a further "peace feeler", and continued to hold the door open to them. He expressed...

..."a strong hope from the present disposition of public men that the voice of moderate and rational reformers (and no others did he seek) would meet with powerful support!"

Again, though he made clear he had no love for parties, yet he "respected many individuals belonging to them!" At about the same time, William Roscoe, in Liverpool, argued the Reformers case in a series of letters to Brougham, in which he urged the Whigs to join with the Reformers with considerable moderation and persuasiveness. But long before the day of the meeting it had become clear all efforts had failed. There was no joint plan to be put forward. As it was known in advance it would be, the meeting

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1. Place Papers. B.M. Add. MS. 27,839. f.188; Alfred. May 24th, 1811. In words which again suggest the influence of Bentham at this time, he defined the "corrupt" as "those who possessed an interest separate from that of the great body of the people. If he was correct...it would follow that the great body of the people could never be corrupt as they must seek their own interest".

proved almost entirely 'Burdettite' in composition.\(^1\)

No longer patient, Burdett spoke out bitterly against the Whigs. He had, he said, read that morning in a celebrated morning paper which was supposed to speak the sentiments of the party who called themselves Whigs—though it was absurd to call them Whigs at all—that false and insidious charges had been thrown out against some of the most disinterested members of the 'Friends of the People'; to the effect that they had deserted their former principles. But the public would be perfectly satisfied, however, if they made clear that they did, indeed, hold fast to those principles. Perry, editor of the paper in question—the 'Chronicle'—and one of the few Whig sympathisers present, was clearly being called upon to speak for his party.

Rising to the challenge, Perry defended himself and the Whigs from the charge they had deserted their principles of 1793. The circumstances had changed. Though there were one or two minor and safe reforms which were desirable, the real danger to the constitution was from the increasing power of the Crown. He believed, unlike others present, in 'party'. Only 'party'—a "firm united and honourable constitutional party"—could resist it. He made clear his

\(^1\) Place Papers B.M. Add MS. 27839 ff.193. Statesman, June 11th, from which the following account is taken.
view that such a party could only be formed if all men were to unite under the Whig banner.

After that, it cannot be surprising that Reformers made no further efforts to mollify the Whigs. Perry's speech not only admitted that Whig enthusiasm for parliamentary reform was far less than earlier, but, of more immediate importance, he made clear to all that it had decreased greatly since 1809-10. Speaker after speaker thereafter vied with his predecessor in damming the Whigs.

The meeting of June 10th led to an open clash between Whigs and Reformers and made the renewal of the breach between them public. But it had been re-opening long before. Whitbread's preoccupation at the time with the prospect of office, and Brand's inability to persuade his parliamentary friends of the real value of coming to terms with Reformers, may be regretted. But it is clear that the fundamental reason for the failure of the negotiations lay in the renewed timidity of the Whigs for parliamentary reform at this time, and - it must be said - their short sightedness. Unable to get the co-operation of their party, members of the Whig 'left wing' were not prepared to break with it and join the Reformers.  

Once again, therefore, an opportunity through which 'party' - the Whig 'party' - might have been 'popularised', in the sense of being brought into closer contact with 'the people', was lost. The unwillingness of the 'left wing' Whigs to co-operate with them came only to heighten the Reformers' distrust for the party as a whole.

It is true that certain of the Reformers, most obviously Cartwright, did still persist in their efforts to draw the 'left wing' Whigs into closer association with them. It appears that even after their disappointment over the June 10th meeting, some at least did continue to hope that a common plan of reform might be agreed, and that Brand and Burdett might reconcile their differences. The one concrete result of that meeting had been the foundation of a new society of 'Friends/Parliamentary Reform' aimed at uniting Reformers all over the country. Dominantly 'Burdettite' in sentiment and containing many Westminster tradesmen, it was not, however, such a body as Whig parliamentarians and moderate men in the country could be persuaded to join. Thus, when it became clear that though Brand had failed to win

over his friends to the idea of co-operating with Reformers, he and members of the 'left wing' were still disposed to work for the cause of reform. Cartwright appears to have sought to attract them by the foundation of yet another new club which would be limited to 'respectable' elements. The 'Friends of Parliamentary Reform' became the much more democratically constituted Union Society, whilst its more substantial members joined Cartwright in founding the Hampden Club in 1812, which did succeed in attracting the membership — at least nominally — of a number of Whig Reformers. 1

But 1811-12 saw the spreading of economic unrest among the lower classes as a result of trade dislocation and the 'Luddite' riots, arising out of discontent, which some of the Reformers sought to 'direct' into profitable political channels. Cartwright, first through the Union Society and later through Hampden Clubs of a nature very different to the original of 1811, sought to rouse and harness the demand for parliamentary reform among the workers of the Midlands and the North. Cobbett likewise redirected his attention away

1. cf. Appendix to Vol. II. Life of Cartwright, for lists of the founder members of the new Union Society and Hampden Club. Many well known 'members' of the 'Westminster Committee' are to be found among the list of members of the Union Society, whilst Burdett and his more substantial followers joined the Hampden Club. On these clubs, however, cf. infra pp. 286-7; iii. pp. 61-71; cf. also, Life of Cartwright II.11.
from Westminster, towards the industrial areas. 1

Worried at the disorders which accompanied the stirring up of the 'lower orders' in the country at large, Burdett and the Westminster Reformers tended, though not obviously, to hold back from encouraging a 'working class' agitation. More and more inclining to view Cobbett, and to a lesser degree Cartwright, much as they were themselves viewed by the Whigs - as men who would only delude 'the people' into doing themselves harm, they were inclined to draw away from others who pressed forward seeking to rouse a new and wider popular agitation. 2 But the Whigs, who had only recently begun to wonder whether perhaps sections of the middle classes might be admitted to share in government, (and were far from convinced that they should), who, further, were frankly horrified by the appearance of the spectre of lower class revolution, drew back even further. When, in 1809-10, it had seemed that strong sections of the middle classes had come to favour reform, the Whigs had been disposed to consider it. Now, when the middle classes were losing their zeal rapidly the Whigs were only too ready to sound the retreat. 3

1. cf. infra pp. 278-9, where these developments are more fully discussed.
2. cf. infra pp. 280-1, and iii. Ch. ix.
Thus, when, in May 1812, Brand introduced what were to prove almost the last proposals for reform brought before parliament before the movement among the labouring classes in the country got under way, he met with a much cooler reception from his own party than in 1810. Anxious to reassure moderate and conservative opinion, Brand made it clear he was not in favour of democracy. His intention, he emphasized, was to restore the 'legitimate' influence of property owners, by destroying the 'borough faction'. The fact that 182 persons returned 326 members was, in his opinion, "more a matter of curiosity than anything else." His proposals - inter alia, that the vote be given to copyholders and the right of nomination abolished - though far from adequate to satisfy radical Reformers, were more advanced than those he had made earlier in 1810. They received, however, much less support.\textsuperscript{1} Whigs there were - like Brand - who were not yet frightened by developments in the country. Lord Tavistock for example, the young member of the Russell family who was greatly cultivated by Cartwright at this time, was himself preparing to sponsor a bill to reduce the expenses of County elections.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{ibid.} PP.294–5.
\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Edinburgh Review, XX.} (July 1812) Art.VIII, by Brougham. It was in 1812 that Cartwright published his Six Letters to Tavistock. Tavistock had just given notice of his intention at this time. \textit{Parliamentary Debates} XXIII.89.
But with unrest in the country on the one hand and the renewed prospect of office on the other, the majority were becoming extremely cautious. In the circumstances it is far more surprising that as many as eighty Whigs should vote for the motion than that, for five years thereafter, no Whig should make a serious parliamentary move for reform at all. Even allowing for the distraction of other matters it is clear that internal enthusiasm for reform among the majority of Whigs was non-existent, and Brand himself apparently ceased to try to raise any.

It is difficult, therefore, to escape the conclusion that, at the end of the five years following 1807, during which Burdett and the Westminster Reformers had come to lead a reviving movement for reform, there had been little enough to suggest the Whigs would ever move seriously for a measure which would admit the claims of "the people." Only a minority were sincere believers in its efficacy and even they, along with the rest of their party, thoroughly distrusted Reformers.

From their point of view, Reformers rightly and with reason, equally thoroughly distrusted Whigs. Divided from

1. The motion was defeated by 215-88. Parlt. Debates XXIII. 161.
them by a belief in doctrines which were fundamentally opposed to the Whig creed — nowhere better illuminated than in the pamphlet argument between Roscoe and Brougham at this time — their distrust for them, between 1807-12, was increased by the uncertainty and apparent selfishness of Whig behaviour. It is reasonable to sympathise with the views of the moderate Whig Reformers. It is reasonable to argue that if the more moderate views of Whitbread or Brand had prevailed, if the Whig party had become "radicalised" or popularised by association with the Reformers at this time, then much of the disastrous misunderstanding which developed between governors and governed after 1812 and still more after 1815 would have been prevented.

But if the demands of the Westminster Reformers were considerably in excess of what was practicable or acceptable at this time, it has to be remembered first, that Reformers, as Burdett pointed out, had to ask for far more than they expected to get; and second, that, since even the moderate

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1. W. Roscoe. Letter to H. Brougham (in reply to a letter from Brougham in 1810), written 19th May, published 1811. W. Roscoe. Letter (answer) to J. Merritt, 1812, who had argued against Roscoe's "Burdettite" views, and who was probably Brougham himself. Brougham's views, quite clear in Roscoe's letters, are repeated in Edinburgh Review XX. July 1812 — where Brougham reviews the whole "Roscoe-Merritt" controversy.

proposals put forward at this time appeared to have not the slightest chance of acceptance, it is hardly to be expected that Reformers should have reduced their demands in order to press for measures they genuinely believed were inadequate. However persistent their refusal to compromise appears, it is more than likely they would have been prepared, as in 1830, to support a moderate plan on the assumption that, as an instalment, it was a step in the right direction - if it had ever seemed that such a plan would be taken up, by the Whig party and the country as a whole. Even as it was, it was the Reformers who made the greater effort to secure an alliance, and they made it at the time when the Whigs, having begun to win support for a reform programme in the country, might most easily have consolidated their lead. There seems to be no reason to suppose that, in this instance, Reformers' overtures were not genuine - that they were made knowing they would be rejected with the aim of revealing Whig 'insincerity' to 'the people! The Reformers' attitude, their demands, their behaviour, their attack on the working of government and on the Whig party then, must be seen in their context.

Accepting, however, that no union between Whigs and Reformers at this time was really possible, it is still
pertinent to argue one further point. If Whitbread had not relaxed his efforts, and if he and/or Brand had succeeded in winning over their party to a programme of moderate reform, it is legitimate to suggest that, even had the Westminster or other Reformers continued to oppose them, yet the Whigs could nonetheless have "by-passed" them and appealed to the country direct. If the Whigs had made a united stand in favour of reform, if they had been genuinely 'radicalised' or had drawn closer to 'the people', it is reasonable to assume that the distrust for parties, so long prolonged by their oligarchical nature and by idealogical factors, would have disappeared much earlier; that, in fact, the Westminster Reformers would have lost influence and the cry against 'party' would have been dropped.

As things were, in the period between 1809-11, the Whigs failed to take their courage into both hands and the Reformers' attack on parties, reinforced by the more logical and potent arguments which were to be supplied by Bentham, was to continue for more than a decade.

Reform was now shut out of Parliament until 1817. There were still Whigs who were worried at the dilatory attitude of their party and who still believed in its necessity. There were still Reformers prepared to try to win them, or
at least individuals among them, over to their side. If Whitbread and Brand now left the centre of the stage, the young Brougham might, it could seem in 1812, prove a man more worth cultivating than either.¹

¹. cf. infra III, pp. 34, 35 et seq., 83-86
III. Extra-Parliamentary Activities of the 'Committee', 1807-12

A. The Years 1808-9.

In examining the relationship of the Whigs and independent Reformers during the period 1807-12, attention has been directed principally towards the parliamentary sphere or what may be called the 'high' political scene. The principal part of the work of the 'Westminster Committee' was, however, concerned with the extra-parliamentary business of staging popular demonstration meetings etc., in the metropolis, and with rousing and co-ordinating popular feeling in the country. Relying largely on chance circumstances to increase the volume of support for their demands for reform, they did not scruple to enlarge any breach which might have opened between Commons and people. At the same time they were ever ready to seek to open a breach between them, where none existed. In order to view their activities and their working as a group more closely - to go, so to speak, beneath the surface of the scene visible to the public - it is desirable to treat the work in the extra-parliamentary sphere in these years separately.

Until May 1808 the 'Westminster Committee' was, it has been indicated, occupied with the matter of the High
Bailiff's election bill. 1. When that matter was, albeit unsatisfactorily, settled for the time being, there was little which compelled the active attention of members. Three of them, Place, Puller and Miller, who had been sued as representatives of the 'Committee' by a certain Mr. Smith for non-payment of bills incurred during the election of 1807 had to face trial, but the bench proved the whole case against them was a fraud. 2. For the most part, however, members could attend entirely to their own businesses and Place was able to put his intention, of retiring from public affairs altogether, into effect. 3.

Though it was not long before his nettled feelings were soothed enough for him to take up active political work again, Place refused to take any part in the preparations for the dinner to celebrate the first anniversary of Burdett's return, and it was Richter who drew up and read the report at the dinner. 4. The campaign on Burdett's behalf and the subsequent clash with the High Bailiff was surveyed, and it was announced,

1. Supra PP. 102-11.
4. Ibid.
among other things, that those who had conducted Burdett's election had a plan which it was hoped would, in future, prevent large numbers of people voting without a qualification. From this and other speeches which supported that of Burdett, it is obvious that the Westminster Reformers were optimistic about the future, and anxious to strike another blow for their cause. 

In July, when popular feeling in favour of sending effective aid to the Spanish rebels in the peninsula was running high, a few of them formed themselves into a committee and passed resolutions calling for the holding of a Palace Yard meeting which would let ministers know 'the people's' sentiments. Adams and Brooks contacted Burdett to inform him of their intentions and attended to the necessary business of securing a requisition demanding the meeting, for presentation to the High Bailiff. A similar Middlesex county meeting was planned, the chief mover being Cartwright, and both meetings, held in August, led to petitions being presented to parliament.

2. *ibid.* 27,838 f. 325. The pre-meeting was on July 25th.
But despite popular irritation at the Convention of Cintra and at what was looked upon as the mishandling of the Peninsula campaign, there was little enough opportunity in 1808 for Reformers to develop a popular agitation. It was a year in which contacts, established in years gone by, when the reform movement had been stronger, were renewed, when Reformers discussed the prospects of future moves, and considered schemes for spreading the movement in the country.

Place soon found he could not stay wholly inactive. He had, he says, "originated a plan to collect money" (to meet political expenses) and he..."now worked hard to procure it with considerable success!" More, however, he was very loath to undertake. Numbers of his friends, it seems, were in favour of organising meetings and dinners with the aim of reuniting old reforming sympathizers and of gathering new converts together, and they called on Place to assist them. He refused all requests of this nature save one, however, which was pressed upon him by Cartwright.

Place had known Cartwright earlier but only came into

1. Place Papers B.M. Add. MSS. 27,850 f. 108; also 27,853 f. 242, for a letter to Place from an old reforming contact, discussing how far reform should be pressed at this time; also Life of Cartwright 1.355-388.

2. Place Papers. B.M. Add. Ms. 27,850 f. 106
3. ibid. f. 108.
regular contact with him again at this time. For many years Cartwright, who centred his activities in the metropolis, and who became a Westminster householder in 1811, was to campaign alongside the Westminster Reformers. There can be no doubt that it was his persistence which was behind many - possibly even the majority - of the Reformers' demonstrations in the metropolis between 1807-12, and members of the Westminster group are frequently to be found assisting him with his schemes.

But though, for some time, he and the Westminster Reformers worked in close co-operation, yet at no time can he ever be considered one of the 'Westminster Committee.' As the years went by, their relationship came to be increasingly strained by political and personal disagreement, and co-operation came to be replaced by strong mutual antipathy. For this there were several reasons. Cartwright's romantic constitutional views and confirmed monarchist leanings won little sympathy among the Westminster group, for although, as has been indicated, they were disposed to uphold monarchy

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1. For Cartwright's becoming a Westminster householder, cf. his own announcement at the public meeting of March 1811, *ibid* 27,839—f. 185.
2. *ibid* 27,850. f. 109, and *infra* passim.
3. cf. *infra* III. Ch. IX. 1.
and to call for a 'restoration' of the constitution, their outlook was predominantly materialist and they had no love for monarchy per se. Nor did they wholly approve his persistent efforts to win the Whigs over to the Reformers' side on the one hand, and to rouse the 'masses' on the other. The former, it seems, were often considered by many influential Westminster Reformers a waste of time. The latter conflicted with their belief in the need for middle class leadership and might well be dangerous to the interests of 'the people' themselves. But, these factors aside, it seems above all that Cartwright, whose honesty and sincerity nobody questioned, was simply not made to work with other men. Though his ideas were often impracticable, he held to them with great tenacity, despite every warning that they could not be carried through. If they were rejected he was greatly offended and himself refused to co-operate further. In the circumstances the Westminster Reformers found him very difficult to deal with, and when, resenting his treatment at their hands, he contrived to draw a small coterie of his own about him, he came to cause them a great deal of trouble.

2. cf. infra pp. 277 et seq.; III. Ch. ix. 1.
3. Place Papers B.M. Add. MSS. 27850 f.108; 27,809 ff. 8-9; and cf. infra (Ch. ix.); (Ch. xii.; Ch. xii. l. This is Place's view, but Cartwright's niece seems to confirm it. cf. Life of Cartwright 1.356.
Nonetheless, wherever Reforming sentiment was strongest, wherever it seemed to him his presence would encourage the cause, there Cartwright was to be found. Until 1810 he and the 'Westminster Committee' worked with a fair degree of harmony. Thereafter, relations deteriorated — still more rapidly after 1815 — but there was no complete break until 1818.

In the latter months of 1808 Cartwright was busy scheming to assemble a meeting of Reformers from all over Britain, and it was to assist in the arrangements for this, that he approached Place. He had produced an enormous plan for parliamentary reform, which covered six quires of foolscap and had sent it to Durdett hoping he would launch it in parliament. This plan he proposed to read to the meeting.¹

He could not, according to Place, be brought to see that so enormous a plan could never be read to any meeting, nor to agree that, after so many years in which active Reformers of the nineties had gone into 'retirement', it would be well nigh impossible to assemble it at all at this time.²

Nonetheless, after the idea had been discussed, he seems to have agreed that a grand dinner should be organised in its

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2. ibid. f.109. In view of the discouraging replies Cartwright received to letters he wrote at this time to his friends, urging them to come forward and lead the country to demand reform, Place's attitude is not surprising. Life of Cartwright. 1.355-382.
instead. He and Brooks would arrange for the list of stewards to be advertised with the places at which they resided, or represented in parliament, after their names, and Place agreed to make arrangements for the dinner itself on some date early in 1809. In this way, it was hoped to create the impression of widespread interest in reform, whilst, at the same time, stirring a greater interest in the matter in the country at large.1

As matters worked out the enormous quantity of correspondence which the organisers entered into, helped greatly in renewing old and making new contacts in the country. Further, long before the arrangements were completed, dissatisfaction with the handling of the Peninsula campaign and the Duke of York scandal, greatly helped their efforts by rousing a much more considerable and widespread interest in reform. In these circumstances the dinner, when it was held, really did bring together many prominent Reformers in the country, and became of greater importance.2

As already indicated, how much Burdett and the Westminster Reformers knew of Colonel Wardle's intention to bring charges of military corruption against the Duke of York it is impossible to tell. The public had been aware of the

allegations against the Duke and the influence of his mistress for some time, and it scarcely conceivable they had not discussed the matter. Cobbett, it has been noticed, had pressed for an enquiry, and it must seem improbable he and other reformers had not discussed the matter with Wardle. It does not seem, however, that Burdett, who seconded Wardle's proposal for a Committee of Enquiry, had any interest in the matter other than in seizing the opportunity to embarrass the ministry. There certainly is no evidence to show the "Westminster Committee" was concerned in planning to rouse a popular agitation to support Wardle, in advance.

On the other hand, it is certain Place and his associates had a great deal to do with keeping Wardle up to the mark after the business had started, and with turning him into a popular figurehead. Concerned to secure maximum publicity for their cause, they were delighted to represent Wardle as the courageous champion of 'the people's' interests, fearlessly demanding an enquiry into the affairs of one of the highest in the land, defeated only by the very strength of the corrupt interests he opposed.

Wardle, it appears, frequently came to Place to discuss matters while the matter was debated in parliament. He

1. cf. M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 1. PP. 223 et seq., discusses Burdett's share in pressing the charges.
2. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27850 ff. 113 et seq.
was, according to Place, "weak" and "timid" and "at times, and particularly towards the close of the affair, extremely agitated, generally about some matter of no real importance'.

Place tried to keep up his spirits by showing him that the weaknesses in his own case, which he saw from his own close knowledge of it, would not be apparent to others, but he came to believe that Wardle...

..."was the last man to have undertaken such an attack if he had contemplated the result." Nonetheless, Wardle, swept along on the crest of the great wave of popular irritation and elected to the Whig club by those of the Whigs who had joined in the clamour against the Duke, became, for a time, one of the chief figureheads of the Westminster Reformers.

The Westminster public meeting which they arranged on 29th March, to protest at the Duke of York's acquittal and to vote thanks to Wardle was not the first to be held in the country, but it was certainly one of the most important and was clearly designed to give 'the people' everywhere a lead.

1. ibid. f. 113.
2. ibid.
3. For his election to the Whig Club cf. Morning Chronicle 12th April, 1809.
Resolutions were passed condemning the behaviour of the Commons, and Burdett and Whitbread, as noticed above, both urged the country to continue to show its feelings on the matter and to demand reform.\(^1\)

The proceedings published in the press were also promptly printed in pamphlet form and circulated all over the country.\(^2\) Altogether between eighty and ninety meetings, condemning the Commons actions, were held in many parts of the country and many of them passed resolutions demanding parliamentary reform.\(^3\) The Westminster group were not directly responsible for their staging, but its leaders carefully took note of the names of all those who officiated at them with a view to contacting them in due course.\(^4\)

It is interesting to see how public meetings in Westminster were arranged by Reformers, for there were to be a large number of them in the next twelve years.

First, one or two of the leading spirits would get together and discuss the possibilities of holding a meeting. If Place himself had taken the initiative he...

"met at first a small number of persons and conversed with them on the subject of the meeting."\(^5\)

\(^1\) supra pp.156-8.
\(^2\) Proceedings of the Electors of Westminster, on Wednesday 29th March 1809... in Westminster Hall.
\(^3\) Life of Cartwright.1.391. Cartwright to Northmore,June 27th,1809.
\(^4\) Place Papers B.M. Add.Ms. 27,850. f.114.
\(^5\) ibid. f.215.
He, he says, generally took notes, and then he and Richter would meet and together would...

..."finally draw up the necessary matter for the previous meeting." 

The "previous meeting" was assembled by a circular letter to the leading men of each of the seven (electoral) parish divisions, asking them to bring as many friends as possible. The "previous meeting" was held partly to obtain the concurrence of as wide a circle of men as possible on the course proposed - for it was their policy...

...."to make matters so far as possible the deliberate acts of electors. themselves"...

partly to raise money by subscription for...

...."all meetings were held solely at the expense of electors."

The course of action once agreed, it was necessary to secure a requisition, a notice signed by a body of householders demanding a time and place for a meeting be set, for presentation to the High Bailiff. It was desirable that as many signatures as possible should be secured as quickly as possible, and until the Westminster Reformers got the use of what must have been one of the earliest lithographic presses,

1. ibid. cf. 374.

2. ibid.
copies of the Requisition notice had to be made out by hand for circulation. Place "generally" would dictate the notice to the others present, who would each make a copy. These were then rapidly taken round Westminster, signed, and delivered to the High Bailiff, when details of the meeting would be discussed and settled. Generally, though not always, Arthur Morris proved co-operative, and the Reformers had their way. 1

The dinner which Cartwright and Place had been so long arranging and which was finally held on May 1st, proved to be of considerable value in bringing together Reformers of various kinds from various places, many of them old campaigners. 1200 attended, and clearly associating themselves with the 'Burdettites' for what seems to have been the first time, was a strong contingent of City of London Reformers, led by Waithman. 2 Eight days earlier at a Livery Dinner, attended by the London Reformers, a number of 'left wing' Whigs, including Whitbread, had been guests of honour. 3 But it is clear that Whig behaviour had been little to their liking, and after Waithman's attack on Grey and the 'Friends of the People' they took as


2. ibid. 27,338 f 343. For lists of names and the places they were held to represent cf. Place Papers B.M. Add MS. 27,338 f. 343.

3. Morning Chronicle, 23rd April, 1809.
strong a line against the Whigs as the Westminster Reformers. Thereafter, for a number of years, London and Westminster Reformers co-operated closely in their activities.

The dinner is also noteworthy as the first occasion when Lord Cochrane publicly associated with the Westminster Reformers. Cochrane, it seems, had been sent away on naval duty soon after his return for Westminster, partly to prevent his making a nuisance of himself in parliament, and had only recently returned. Though to some of the Westminster men, particularly to Place, Cochrane would never appear as a suitable representative for Westminster, yet the strong radical tone he now began to adopt and his readiness to support Burdett, served to overcome some of their earlier suspicions of him.

In view of the growing support they were receiving, it is not surprising that the annual dinner report, read to the electors on May 23rd, should dwell upon the success that had been achieved so far and should refer with optimism to the future. As it was observed, "A disposition to follow that example"...(the example of independence set by electors in returning Burdett)..."has been manifested in many parts of the country and in some cases you have been awarded public thanks."

2. cf. infra [Ch. VIII.; Ch. IX.] for further discussion of the Westminster Reformers objections to Cochrane.
The guests of honour at the dinner included Wardle, and Madocks, who had recently brought his charges against Perceval and Castlereagh, and who was still, at this time, very much a 'Burdettite'.

In the early months and summer of 1809, it was the writings of Cobbett and other radical journalists which excited the greatest conservative disfavour. It was they, most obviously who led the 'wicked' clamour against corruption and who denounced those who grew fat at the public expense. The Westminster Reformers' part in keeping up the agitation, however, was, though less conspicuous, no less important.

On the one hand it was they who were chiefly responsible for staging or helping to stage most of the meetings and demonstrations in the metropolis. On the other, it was they who did so much to maintain Wardle as a popular hero in the public eye, when the breath of scandal over his relationship with Mrs. Clarke threatened to discredit him.

In the autumn of 1809, when popular irritation over corruption and the trafficking in parliamentary seats revealed during the recent parliamentary session, still ran high.

1. Place Papers. B.M. Add. Ms. 27,833 f.343.
2. S. Maccoby, op.cit., pp.243-246, draws attention to the Edinburgh Annual Registers' view of the 'popular leaders at this time as a distinct political party. Though not so described by name it is clear the Review is referring to the Westminster Reformers.
Wardle still enjoyed great popular favour. If the Reformers were to drop him when his motives were questioned, their own cause was certain to suffer. If, however, he could be represented as a victim of a conspiracy to discredit him, not only might his popularity be kept up, but a further illustration of the need for reform provided.

It was in these circumstances then, that Place, knowing it would please Wardle, suggested that a public subscription be raised for him. He believed £1000 could be raised; Brooks, however, held £4000 could be brought in and succeeded in convincing Place and a mutual friend Mallett, that, by the method he proposed, it would be worth trying to realise that sum.

As has been noticed, the names of all those who had in any way taken a prominent part in the public meetings in the various places in the country earlier in the year, had been noted down. Brooks had this list of their addresses posted carefully in an alphabetical book, and he proposed to apply to all of them to promote a subscription. A meeting, summoned at the Crown and Anchor on December 13th, decided to proceed

1. Ibid
3. Ibid.
with the idea and a committee was formed, which, upon his own insistnce, left the real work to Brooks. The committee, Place says, remained in existence only to examine the accounts.

Brooks, Place observed, "pushed the subscription to a greater extent than any committee would have done!" He..."never had so much money in his hands as was paid in", (to the fund for Wardle) "but he feared it might be said he had made use of the money if he waited until he had as much as was paid in!" He persisted with his efforts until the whole £4000 was paid by instalments to Wardle, and that over and above £689:7/- which had been paid out in advertising and in printing subscription lists in both London and provincial papers, which were both long and genuine. By 1810, Wardle's credit with respectable elements may have dwindled, but though replaced by Burdett as the popular hero of the hour, it is clear that 'the people' still regarded him as the victim of a 'conspiracy'.

It was not, however, the Commons' attitude to the Duke of York nor the revelations of political 'corruption' which swelled the ranks of Reformers in 1809. The persistent attacks on public figures and the whole system of government in the reforming press, had led the ministry to strike back hard at its critics, by filing ex officio informations against

41. ibid.
42. ibid. f. 115.
a number of journalists including Cobbett, Henry White and Leigh Hunt. Reformers immediately drew together in common desire to defend the liberty of the press.¹

Ministerial action brought the Hunts, at this time, behind the 'Burdettites', and their "Examiner" became a pillar of strength to the Westminster Reformers. Even more important it brought the hitherto little known Bentham, who lived in Westminster, to declare himself a parliamentary reformer.²

Long growing and increasingly bitter feeling at the treatment his reforming projects had received at the hands of the King and the governing classes, Bentham had, by 1809, become convinced that it was the self-interest and indifference of the aristocracy at large which had thwarted him, that democratic parliamentary reform alone could break down the barriers which opposed 'the people's' interest. Political reform must precede other reforms.³

Distrust of the legal principles behind the ministerial attack on the press as well as dislike of its moral aspect, drove him — probably with the encouragement of his new friend,

¹. For the ministry's action against Cobbett, for an article on military flogging, cf. G.D.H. Cole op.cit., PP. 150 et seq; for its action against Henry White, cf. Independent Whig 1st Nov. 1811; for its action against the Hunts, cf. G.D.H. Cole op.cit., PP. 150, 154. John Hunt was the proprietor, his brother, Leigh, the editor of the Examiner. All of these men supported Burdett and the Westminster Reformers.

². For Bentham's move towards the Westminster Reformers, cf. E. Halévy The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism PP. 251-264

James Mill - to write his 'Elements of the Art of Packing' in the early months of 1809. So strong was his criticism of existing libel law and the system by which special juries were chosen, that he was advised not to publish it at this time. A number of copies were, however, circulated to leading figures likely to sympathise - including Burdett, and later in the year he began his 'Catechism of Parliamentary Reform' which was ready for publication in 1810. From this time forward, interest in parliamentary reform and in other reforming projects, stimulated by the reform movement about them, drew Bentham and James Mill gradually closer to the Westminster Reformers, who were already prepared to receive their doctrines.

It does not seem that he met Burdett in 1809, though they were in contact shortly after. His personal friendship with Place did not begin until 1811-12 after James Mill had got to know Place, through their interest in the Lancastrian School scheme. Not until 1817 did the Westminster Reformers publicly press their case for parliamentary reform on the basis

1. ibid. P.256; A. Bain. Life of James Mill PP.72,98. Bentham's Plan of Parliamentary Reform, (ultimately published in 1817 as A Plan of Parliamentary Reform in the form of a Catechism), was, of course, written in this year and privately circulated. As is well known it was offered to Cobbett for publication. cf. Works X,459, but Cobbett refused it. It may, however, be virtually certain that Burdett was one of those to whom it was shown. Bentham deliberately brought it into line with Burdett's 1809 proposals. cf. Works III,458.

2. A. Bain, op. cit. PP.102 et.seq.

of utility, in circumstances which are referred to below.  

All the while, however, Bentham's influence among them, and Reformers of other shades, was to grow, whilst the power of his reasoning was greatly to strengthen their cause. Long before 1817, interest in pressing reforms in the legal, educational, social and economic spheres, and enthusiasm for his philosophy had won him a strong following of Westminster and Whig individualist Reformers, and his ideas are evident in many of the schemes projected and pursued by them, and others.  

Common friendship and respect for Bentham, and, through him, their friendship and acquaintanceship with each other, was to prove of the first importance. Despite fundamental divergence in ideology; despite party rivalry; despite disagreement over parliamentary reform, Whigs and Radicals were brought in close personal contact and were often to become close personal friends. Parliamentary reform aside, they could and did co-operate on many other matters. If there was to be no union between Whigs and Reformers, if the breach between them remained wide, it may be suggested that it was, more than anything, the contact established between 'left wing   

1. cf. infra. [pp. 153 et seq.]
Whigs and Westminster Reformers in this manner, which kept it from growing wider.

In the autumn of 1809 the occurrence of the famous 'C.P.' riots in London, over the increased admission charges to the rebuilt Drury Lane theatre, brought furious ministerial press charges against the 'revolutionaries' who were fermenting trouble. In fact it seems that Place and others of his friends, including Miller and Powell, were, though on the 'popular' side, principally concerned to see the difference between management and public settled as soon as possible, in the interests of order. 1. The abuse the Westminster Reformers received can, however, have affected them little. At the close of 1809 their stock was not only high but gaining.

1 cf. G. Wallas, op.cit., P.43; H. Martineau, op.cit., Bk.II. PP.339 et seq. H. Hunt Memoirs II.335 et seq. Hunt writing in 1820 blamed the Westminster Reformers for deliberately exciting disorder as did the Tories at the time. Clifford the barrister, whose opinions he frequently quoted, who was also involved in the fracas, and who was at loggerheads with the Westminster Reformers, was one of his chief sources of information.
"The open avowal of the sale of seats; the failure of the Walcheren expedition; the state of Europe and the state of the country, all contributed to produce excitement. The nation may be said to have looked with anxiety to the meeting of Parliament?.... 1.

So wrote Place when he came to recount the events of 1810. It was the popular unrest he referred to which led the 'Westminster Committee' to arrange a Palace Yard meeting of the electors for February 9th. 2.

The meeting, at which approval was sought for petitions for parliamentary reform for presentation to both King and Commons, saw Sturch, Puller, Wishart and other prominent local politicians speaking in company with Burdett and Wardle. Sturch referred to the efforts to secure reform of his old friend Jebb, thirty years ago to the month, in nearby Westminster Hall; to the behaviour of both parties and to their efforts to resist the growing demand for reform at the present time. It was, he said, stated in reply to Reformers demands, that all the reform that was necessary was already within the power of the people to bring about - that they had

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 27,850, 151.

2. Ibid. f.152; Add. 27,839 ff.2-5. for newspaper cuttings from which the following is taken. The proceedings of the Electors at this meeting, were published as a pamphlet.
only to imitate 'the people' of Westminster. But it was as hopeless to expect electors to show their patriotism, as to suggest the prisoners of Newgate should take an airing! The petition to the Commons, re-iterating Grey's proposals of 1793 and lamenting nothing had been done about them, was then approved, and immediately afterwards presented to the Commons.

The quotation of Grey's statistics showing the 'boroughmongers' stranglehold on the representation, was an obvious way of embarrassing the Whigs and of publicising their 'apostacy'. They had been quoted long before, and would be quoted long after, for the same reasons. A particular reason for their frequent appearance in Reformers' petitions in 1810, however, was that Place and Richter were responsible for drawing up nearly all the resolutions and petitions for the numerous public meetings in the Metropolis. Place was one of the strongest believers in the policy of hitting the Whigs as hard as possible, and his influence among Reformers was obviously considerable at this time. Originally, it seems, Cartwright had drawn up the resolutions for the February meeting, but they were, according to Place...

1. ibid 27, 850 ff. 152, 219, 222.
2. ibid. f. 152.
The sequence of events which was to lead to Gale Jones' imprisonment and to Burdett's martyrdom at the hands of the Commons had already begun. Finnerty, one of Cobbett's friends, spoke up at the meeting, condemning Windham's denunciation of the behaviour of the Press, which he had made after Yorke's motion to exclude strangers. 1. London was already placarded with Gale Jones' debate advertisements which were so to rouse the wrath of the Commons. 2. On 19th February, the day advertised for the debate, Dean, the printer of the placards was sent for by the House on a motion of Yorke. 3. The next day, having offered to prove Gale Jones was their author, he was committed to the custody of the Serjeant, and Jones, in turn, was ordered to appear before the House. 4.

Jones was the former member of the Corresponding Society, who had been one of the leaders of the opposition to the repressive bills of 1795 and who had been arrested subsequently, in 1796, when sent as a deputy of the Corresponding Society to Birmingham. 5. After a period when nothing is known of him, he had reappeared in 1807, when he had attacked Tierney and

1 ibid. 27, 839 ff. 2-3.
2 cf. M.W. Patterson op. cit., I. 842. where the placard is reproduced.
3 ibid. P. 243.
4 H. Martineau, op. cit., Bk. II. 357.
5 cf. supra. View of his dependence on running debates for his living, his strenuous opposition to the 'Pitt and Grenville' Acts is understandable.
behind him the Whigs, for apostacy, in a series of public letters.\(^1\) Now, apparently very poor, he was attempting to make a living by running a debating society. But debating societies had lost favour, and he and his friends, who hired a hall once a week and charged 1/- admission, would, as often as not, find themselves quite alone.\(^2\).

He will be referred to again later when, in 1817-18, and as the ally of Henry Hunt, he had become a bitter opponent of Burdett and the Westminster Reformers.\(^3\). At this time, however, he was still on friendly terms with these men he had known since the nineties, and the Westminster Reformers were still in a position to try to persuade him to follow a course of action which would turn the Commons' action against him to his—and their—advantage. If it cannot be shown that they persuaded Burdett afterwards to 'martyr' himself—and it is highly probable they did—there is no doubt they regarded the Commons' attitude towards Jones as playing into their hands, and that, on Place's initiative, they first tried to secure a 'martyr' in Jones!

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2. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 27,850 f.156.
3. *infra* IX, 192, 198, 228.
"As soon as Dean was committed" (20th) ... noted Place...

"...I wrote a note to Jones, and requested him to call upon me, and another to Sir Francis Burdett, telling him what I had done and likewise what I proposed doing with Jones"... "...On Jones' arrival...

"...I warned (him) 'he would certainly be sent to Newgate - and if he agreed - it would be much better he should be forcibly seized and sent, than that he should go voluntarily'.

Apparently he did agree with Place, and asked what he had in mind. Place told him to ...

"...disregard any summons and refuse to obey any warrant; to tell the messengers he would do no one thing towards complying with the arbitrary demand of the House, and that if they resolved to have him at the house they must carry him there, place him at the bar and take him away again."

He was to demand...

"...on what authority they seized him, and to deny the right of the house to seize him." 2

It was in Place's eyes, a splendid opportunity for making trouble for the Commons, and for 'displaying' it at its tyrannical worst. Well knowing how poor Jones was, he promised, persuasively, that he would...

"... instantly promote a subscription for him, which I doubted not would produce more than £1000!"

He even offered to guarantee £300 if subscriptions did not come in as fast as Jones wanted money. If he would but agree, Place urged, his reputation would be increased, influential.

1. ibid. f.158.

2. ibid.
persons would cheer him, and the cause would greatly benefit. 1

Place, indeed, could scarcely have shown himself more
eager for a tussle with the Commons. He wrote to his friends
at once, explaining matters, sought to arrange a meeting for
the same evening, and told them to prepare and make arrange-
ments to publish, resolutions for a subscription. Their
co-operation secured, things seemed likely to go as Place
planned. 2

Then came disaster. Jones became too "scared" to play
his part. The next day, 21st February, he threw himself
upon the mercy of the House, and quite oblivious to what
might have ensued, Yorke and Windham led the way in securing
his committal to Newgate. 3

Thus all the Reformers' hopes of securing a 'martyr'
seemed dashed. It was no longer possible to appeal to
'the people' to protect him, and scarcely possible to hope a
subscription launched on his behalf would be successful.
Jones, in Newgate, could no longer be used to entice the
Commons to hang themselves. Some effort was indeed made to

1. ibid. and f.159.
2. ibid. f.160.
encourage protest at the Commons' action. The subscription was still launched. But protest was slight and the subscription, despite an unexpected move by Jones later, was a failure, raising only some £170. The Westminster Reformers must have been bitterly disappointed.  

Burdett had not been in the House on the day that Jones was committed, owing to illness, and it was three weeks later before he was able to return and to protest at its action. His concern was not so much to defend Jones as to uphold the principles which Jones had lost the opportunity of stating. Whether he had been persuaded to take the matter up, or was acting on his own initiative, is not known.

His questioning of the legality of the Commons actions greatly irritated members, and it was in vain that Sheridan, and a few of the 'left wing' Whigs, foreseeing trouble, urged Jones' unconditional discharge now that he had been punished. The majority agreed that the privileges of the House had been rightly upheld, but insisted, if Jones' release were to be considered, that he must petition it.  

By this time, however, Jones, settled in Newgate, was in

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MSS. 27,850 f. 160; 27,839 f. 65. Place did his best to dissuade him from humbling himself.
2. M.W. Patterson, op.cit., I.245. ibid f 161.
3. His speech is summarised in M.W. Patterson, op.cit., I.245.
no mood to plead for his release.\footnote{Place Papers, B.M. Add MS. 27850 f. 162. Place wrote that he was so poor, he was "almost afraid of being released."} Realising he could now be no worse off, and watching his subscription hang fire, he had come to regret his earlier refusal to make a stand. He now not only refused to petition, but published his refusal to do so on the ground that it would be to admit — which he did not admit — that the Commons actions had been legal.\footnote{Ibid. 27,839 f. 9. Statesman 14th March 1810.}

Cobbett, who had already strongly questioned the legality of their actions against Jones, now promptly published a letter — "Sir Francis Burdett to his constituents, denying the Power of the House of Commons to imprison the people of England". Either Burdett or Cobbett, or both together, had added an introduction to the speech Burdett had made in parliament, and had considerably elaborated it.\footnote{Cobbett's Political Register, March 24th, 1810. It was reprinted from Cobbett in other papers e.g. Statesman March 26th.}

The circulation of Cobbett's Register was considerable — "Everyone who desired political information read Cobbett, everybody talked of Cobbett's Register"\footnote{Place Papers, B.M. Add MS. 27,850 f. 163.} wrote Place — and the ministry felt unable to ignore the challenge. Perceval and the Speaker, therefore, first decided to move against Burdett and Cobbett together.\footnote{M.W. Patterson, op. cit., 1.247.}
In the event, however, Cobbett, still awaiting trial for an alleged libel, was ignored and it was against Burdett alone that action was taken.¹ Through the agency of a hitherto little heard ministerialist, Lethbridge, Burdett's "Letter to his Constituents" was brought to the notice of the House on March 26th. Lethbridge, charging him with authorship, condemned Burdett's general behaviour and said, inter alia, "that his hair sometimes stood on end to hear the Baronet talk!"

It was typical of the scorn cast upon him by Reformers that Leigh Hunt suggested he wear a wig or have his head shaved, because there would be no chance of silencing Burdett!²

Lethbridge moved that Burdett's action in allowing his "Letter" to be published was a breach of privilege. It was not, however, until April 5th, that the matter was voted upon, and not until the night of 5th/6th May that he was condemned to the Tower.³

Vast numbers of people had collected near the Commons during that night to hear its decision. Adams and Powell, who had stayed in the House itself all night, quickly came to Place with the news. Immediately, he says, he drew up a

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¹ Cobbett was eventually brought up for trial on June 15th, 1810. G.D.H. Cole op.cit., p.155; and infra 92.77-7.
² M.W. Patterson, op.cit., 1.249-8. Place Papers, B.M. Add MS*, 27,850 f.164, for Place's own priceless comments on Lethbridge.
³ M.W. Patterson, op.cit., 1.249.
requisition notice for a public meeting. Copies were made in the usual fashion and by eight o'clock in the morning they were circulating in Westminster. Placards were put up to advertise the proposed meeting to discuss the actions of the House. By nine o'clock Place went off to Wimbledon to find Burdett.1.

What passed between them is unlikely to be known. By mid-day the Speaker's messenger succeeded in contacting Burdett at his London House and there he agreed to receive the warrant for his arrest on the morrow noon.2. But this he may well have done in order to gain time, so that he could make preparations to resist it, and by eight o'clock in the evening he had written to the Speaker refusing to submit to the 'illegal' warrant.3. On Friday evening the Westminster Reformers held a meeting at the Crown and Anchor to decide upon the course of action to be adopted, and Wardle waited at Place's home so as to hear the outcome and to tell Burdett immediately. There, it may well have been that plans to aid him in his resistance and to defend him were discussed.4.

1. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS 27,850 f.181 et seq.
2. M.W. Patterson, op.cit. 1,255.
3. ibid PP.256-7.
4. Place Papers, B.M. Add MS .27,850 f.186.
By Saturday morning 2000 signatures had been collected. Thus, as Place noted, in twenty four hours more people than had ever before voted in an election in so short a time had shown their anger at the action of the House. He believed, if there had been time, more could have been collected than had ever before voted at any election. The High Bailiff appointed 17th April for the meeting.

Meanwhile the crowds in Westminster continued to swell in size. Place, when he later described the developments of 1810, was at great pains to show that they were orderly; that men of all ranks were among them; that even where the crowds were densest - near Burdett's Piccadilly home - people were still about their ordinary daily business. Nonetheless, at the request of local magistrates, the ministry despatched troops to ensure the 'maintenance of order.'

During Friday night, it is true, windows of a number of ministers' town houses had been broken in the way they had always been likely to be broken in the eighteenth century, whenever the metropolitan 'mob' was stirred to riot. But the crowds who gathered now were no 'mob.' Though doubtless containing mischievous elements, it is evident they were

1. ibid. f.187.
2. ibid. ff.185 et seq.
3. M.W. Patterson, op.cit. 1.259.
primarily composed of ordinary men, and it is not unlikely, as Place maintains, that the aggressive appearance and behaviour of the troops did aggravate their feelings. The great assembly of people, as Roberts points out, was a foretaste of what was to happen in the years to come, when economic hardship of increasing severity was felt by the masses.

The Westminster Reformers were by this time actively engaged in making arrangements to prevent Burdett being seized. Strongly advocated by Horne Tooke and Cartwright, it was agreed that Burdett, in time-honoured 'Wilkite' fashion, would call upon the Sheriffs of Middlesex to summon the 'posse comitatus' to come to his aid. Since, on the one hand, the ministers themselves, after consultation with the Attorney General, were doubtful as to the legality of the warrant and had delayed making an effort to seize Burdett.

..."it seemed"...wrote Place..."very desirable to prevent his capture until after the House of Commons had again met, which it was due to do on Monday afternoon"... as an embarrassment to the ministry.

1. Place Papers B.M. Add.MS. 27,850 ff.196 et seq.
5. M.W. Patterson, op.cit., 1.360 and ibid.
6. Place Papers, B.M. Add.MS.. 27,850 f.196.
On the other, if the Sheriffs of Middlesex, together with a large body of specially enrolled householder/constables were to answer Burdett's call for assistance, they would be able to demand the withdrawal of the soldiers on the grounds that they were now perfectly able to keep order without them.

..."It would" Place argued long after..."have been a demonstration....in as much as it might have seemed to show that on other past occasions no soldiers had been necessary, as well as that, in future occasions, they might be dispensed with! 1

One of the two Sheriffs of Middlesex, Alderman Wood, was a Reformer, and, after some persuasion, it seems, he accepted their plans and agreed to play the part for which he had been chosen. At first, however, he would only agree to act with such constables as had already been enrolled, and when the magistrates, seeking to obstruct the Reformers, refused to allow him to use more than a few of those, he could do little. It was evident that, unless more strenuous efforts were made, the military could not be called upon to withdraw, there could be no demonstration of 'the people's' ability to maintain good order themselves, and no way of preventing Burdett's seizure.

In these circumstances, Wood seems to have given way to the Reformers' pressure and agreed to embody as many special

1. ibid.
2. ibid. ff. 189, 195.
constables as he could. The 'Westminster Committee' which now sat permanently at the Crown and Anchor promised to arrange to assemble a large body (several hundreds of volunteer householders) to assist him...

..."I, and my coadjutators"...wrote Place..."were occupied nearly all day long...making and receiving various communications for calling them out"

The volunteers were to meet on Monday at 9 a.m. at the Gloucester Coffee House. Bill Boards were to be carried announcing that the civil power, under the orders of the Sheriff, would keep the peace, and calling upon 'the people' to co-operate. The troops were to be asked to withdraw, and if their commanding officer refused, he was to be arrested or served with notice that legal proceedings would be taken against him.

Meanwhile the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, the Attorney General and the Speaker were trying to decide whether to use force in the execution of the Speaker's warrant.

Crowds had been gathering round Burdett's house in Piccadilly and troops had been called on by the magistrates to disperse

1. ibid. f. 196.
2. ibid. ff. 196 et seq.
them. Despite warnings by Wood, that if they harmed anyone he would indict the person or persons responsible, they had several times charged the crowds. On Sunday evening some effort was made to erect a barricade against them, and after they had been provoked to charge, bricks were hurled at them.

It was becoming evident - as the event proved - that the ministry would use force to seize Burdett, and it was in these circumstances that what has been called a 'council of War' was summoned in Burdett's house. According to Place, he was summoned by Jones Burdett and Jennyns to consult with Sir Francis in his house and made his way there through a cellar passage connecting a house belonging to the Coutts' family with that belonging to Burdett. Burdett is said to have been discussing matters with Roger O'Connor, and Lord Cochrane is held to have suggested using gunpowder to bring down the front wall of the house on the attackers when they came to seize Burdett. Though Henry Hunt's version differs a little in other respects, he also refers to Cochrane's scheme.

Though Cochrane's impetuous nature makes it possible to

1. ibid. 1.268; Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. A.194.
2. M.W. Patterson, op.cit. 1.268.
3. So called by G. Wallas, op.cit., p.51; cf. also, on this, M.W. Patterson, op.cit., 1.269.
credit that he did suggest it, it is scarcely possible to believe that it was seriously contemplated. Burdett and his friends were never revolutionaries. But if it was discussed it was certainly rejected. It has been pointed out, by Wallas and others, that Place claimed it was he who drew the attention of the others to the consequences - that they must be prepared to follow it up by levying civil war - and that it was he who persuaded them that it would be futile to expect a revolt to succeed. It is likely, however, that Place, when recording the events of these times many years later, was principally concerned to make his own attitude clear. Though he may well have spoken as he said, his statement - that his words produced..."instant conviction of the folly of attempting any (such) thing"...need only suggest that general agreement against the course already prevailed. It was, in any event,

1. G. Wallas, Life of Francis Place P. 51; and by, e.g. M.W. Patterson, op.cit., I. 269.
2. Place Papers, B.M. Add MS. 27,850 f. 200. Claiming Burdett did entertain Cochrane's plan, Place went on to write, 27,850 ff. 201-2, that he himself did not disapprove Burdett's notions in principle, but that his attitude was determined by the fact that a successful resistance, in the fashion suggested, would have been hopeless. Had there been any organization in existence capable of guaranteeing order, he wrote, many men and many of the soldiers too might have revolted. Early success might have led nearly all the troops in London to revolt too. But there was no such organization. How far what he wrote represented the bravado which might well have come 16 years after the event (he wrote in 1826) it is impossible to say - but it must surely be seen rather as further evidence of Place's persistent and over-riding desire to avoid anarchy than as evidence that he was of the stuff of which revolutionaries are made.
agreed to await the arrival of Sheriff Wood and the large body of householder/constables, whom Place was recruiting on the morrow, in the expectation that, when their ability to maintain order was clearly demonstrated, they would be able to secure the withdrawal of the troops.¹

Place went home confidently believing that arrangements for the morning were satisfactory. But, at nine o'clock, Wood did not appear to meet the assembled householders, and when he did come later, it was to tell Place that Burdett had been seized. Though Place does not show he appreciated it, it is clear the difficulties of Wood's position and the legal uncertainties of the matter had led him to 'trim' between both sides. He had gone part of the way with the Westminster Reformers - he had made clear he believed the warrant gave no right to use force and had protested against the military.² At the same time, he had contrived to give the Home Secretary, the Prime Minister and the Speaker reason to believe he would assist rather than resist them, and on Sunday had told the Serjeant of the House that, though he would not aid the execution of the warrant if it meant using force, he would aid

¹ ibid. f.201.
² supra. p.249.
him in all other respects.¹

There was nothing for it but to press forward plans for the pre-arranged electors meeting. Jones Burdett brought a note from his brother - now 'comfortably' in the Tower - asking Place and Adams to visit him and to discuss matters.²

Place was pleased at the confidence Burdett showed in him, but always acutely 'class conscious,' and remembering how Wardle had avoided him after he had made embarrassing confessions of weakness, looked back with bitterness on his brief personal association with Burdett...

"..."As always"...he remarked..."when such confidence is reposed by a man in a superior station in a man of inferior station in life, it cannot last long."³

Place had, shortly after, very good reason to feel bitter.⁴ But whatever Burdett afterwards felt or said about Place, it was certainly not the result of lone brooding in prison as Wallas suggests.⁵ He had several visitors a day each day of his imprisonment.⁶

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¹ M.W. Patterson, op. cit., 1.265; letter from Perceval to Speaker, April 8th, 1810, and P.367.
² Place Papers B.M., Add MS., 27,850 f.214.
³ ibid.
⁴ infra pp. 258-9.
⁵ G. Wallas, op. cit., P.55.
⁶ Home Office Papers (hereafter H.O.) 42/107 contains complete lists of Burdett's visitors to the Tower in two files showing he had, including his family, up to twelve a day. He would have had more peace to brood at home! Visitors included Cobbett, Wright, Creevy, Madocks, Curran, Clifford, Lord Erskine, Thos. Hardy, Cochrane, Place, Adams, Cartwright, H. Hunt, Jennyns - as well as Wood, Wardle and O'Connor.
Meanwhile, whilst Burdett started legal proceedings against the Speaker, the Serjeant of the House, and Lord Moira, which would bring the Commons’ actions before the Courts— a move which further provoked the wrath of many members of the Commons—the Reformers launched a series of protest meetings. On April 15th, the previous meeting to decide the subject matter of the petitions and speeches at the public meeting was held. Frend, Mallet, Cobbett, Sturch, Jenyns, Brooks, Adams, Miller, Place and Richter were among those present.

On the 17th the meeting was held—the largest ever in Westminster. Strong protests at Burdett’s imprisonment and repeated denunciations of the Commons’ use of its privileges against ‘the people’ were combined with thunderous demands for parliamentary reform. But particular care was taken to exhort ‘the people’ to good order. Cochrane harangued the crowds, and immediately presented a petition to the Commons just before the House recessed on the 18th. Even some of those who had opposed the Commons’ action against Burdett thought it too offensive, but Perceval, probably recognising its rejection would play into the Reformers’ hands, persuaded the House to accept it.

1. M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 1.277.
2. Place Papers, B.M. Add MS, 27,350 f.214.
3. ibid. 27,639 ff. 49-52, for newspaper cuttings.
4. M.W. Patterson, op. cit., 1.283.
Place was probably very disappointed that it was not rejected. He wrote...

"It was not so much cared what the House did with the petition. Care was taken to see no unparliamentary phrases were used but otherwise it was made as offensive as possible....What was most wanted was a wrangle in the House!"

It was useless to petition it...

"No petition was ever properly entertained as it should have been...but the House was the best vehicle through which the people could be addressed, and a wrangle in the House when reported in the newspapers was sure to fix the attention of the people on the proceedings." 1

As Romilly realised....it was certainly not the last affront which,"in consequence of the contest in which ministers' (had) rashly plunged the House, they would have to receive or record against themselves." 2

It was Place and Richter again who drew up the petition approved by the Middlesex meeting of May 1st, the day after the House reassembled, and this time their work was considered offensive enough to merit rejection. 3 A little later, on May 4th, a petition voted by a London Livery meeting, organised by Waithman and his following, met a similar fate. 4

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1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Mss. 27,850 f.218.
2. Romilly Memoirs 11.321. The 'Westminster Committee' published the proceedings of the April meeting, and an account of the reception of their petition. Place Papers, B.M. Add. Mss. 35,154 f.54.
4. ibid. f. 227.
As a result, the Reformers staged further meetings to present petitions of protest. Angered by the loyalist counter meetings, which assured the Constitution and the Ministry that the petitions were the work of faction and did not represent the true sentiments of 'the people', many in London attended ward meetings and called for the presentation of a second petition, reiterating the sentiments of the first, and protesting at its treatment. In Middlesex too, at a meeting held to discuss the position, it was decided to send a further petition of protest. 1.

On May 31st, the Livery of London voted a Remonstrance which was received. 2. The second Middlesex petition, again drawn up by Place and Richter, was, however, again rejected. Only the nearness of the end of the session prevented the Reformers completing arrangements for the presentation of yet a third Middlesex petition. 3.

It was perhaps as well for the ministry that it had not been decided to expel Burdett from the House, for it had been determined to return him again at once, exactly as Wilkes had

1. ibid. 27,839 ff. 105, 107, 131, 143.
2. ibid. 27,850. f. 227.
3. ibid. Place says the House was prorogued on 21st June to prevent further agitation.
been returned. If he had been opposed, as Wilkes was opposed by Luttrell, the Westminster men planned to nominate a third candidate to ensure the popular vote would not be considered "wasted" as it had been argued when Luttrell was declared elected, despite Wilke's majority. 1

As things were, the meetings and petitions, the addresses of sympathy and congratulation to Burdett from meetings all over the country, had been embarrassing enough to the ministry, and had excited great attention. 2 Meanwhile, arrangements were being made for a grand procession to meet Burdett on his liberation at the end of the session, and to conduct him through the streets in triumph. 3 Place, whose instincts were always against such display, appears to have been led by his inability to tolerate inefficiency into agreeing to supervise the preparations! Consequently, a special committee with Powell as secretary was set up, and Place set methodically to work. 4

1. ibid.,ff.210-11; Ministers recognized this cf. Lord Colchester, Diary 11.258. "Expulsion, as it must lead to an election in Westminster, is not to be thought of!"
2. As M.W. Patterson, op.cit.,1.279, points out, there were so many that Jones Burdett grew tired of answering them. For a large selection in the form of newspaper cuttings etc. cf. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 27,859 passim Place wrote..."Sir Francis Burdett was then at the zenith of his popularity and few men were ever so popular as he then was" (27,850 f 227.)
3. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 27,850 ff 230 et seq.
4. ibid. Cartwright, Place wrote, was particularly keen on the procession.
Burdett was immediately notified of the intention of the Reformers. From the start it appears he was not keen on it. Nonetheless, he agreed it should be held, expressed himself willing to take his place in it, and asked to be kept informed frequently as to the preparations made. Even on the night before he was due to be released, he gave Miller, who was with him at 10 p.m. not the slightest indication that he did not intend to join the procession.¹

Why then did he, on his release on June 1st, avoid the procession and cross the Thames by water, in a way that made him and his supporters appear ridiculous? Place himself believed it was because Wardle and O'Conner had convinced Burdett he was a ministerial agent and that he (Place) was arranging to have Burdett shot as he rode in the procession.²

It seems highly likely Burdett did distrust Place. Whether or not he ever believed Place responsible for the failure of the civil authorities to prevent his arrest - and Place certainly believed he did³ - they were, as Place says, on good terms after Burdett was lodged in the Tower.⁴

¹ ibid.
³ Place Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 27823, ff 102-5.
⁴ supra. P. 153
was, however, another reason for Burdett's subsequent distrust for him. Earlier in the month a number of Reformers had been anxious to raise a great new popular outcry against the unpopular Duke of Cumberland, who was believed to have murdered his valet, Sellis. Place, who had been called upon to serve as Chairman of the Coroner's jury, and had found no evidence of murder, returned a verdict of *felo de se*, which he sincerely believed in. So infuriated were some of the Reformers, however, that they seem to have believed that much evidence had been withheld deliberately, and that Place was a traitor in the pay of the ministry. A number of people, including Burdett, appear to have countenanced this accusation against him, and Place, deeply hurt, left politics entirely alone for the next few years. 1. But this theory, though it cannot be entirely dismissed, seems far fetched and less satisfactory than Burdett's own explanation - that he was persuaded to leave the Tower privately, in order to avoid giving encouragement to demonstrations, which might lead to bloodshed - an explanation, which is supported by other evidence.

1. The story is given by G. Wallas, op. cit., P. 54. H. Hunt, *Memoirs* 11. 424 wrote of the incident "It is said that since that period Mr. Place has been a very rich man, but that before he was a poor, very poor democrat". Col. Wardle, who had been hoping to work up a case against the Duke, cf. S. Maccoby, op. cit., pp. 247-8, was certainly one of those traditionally held to have turned Burdett against Place.

It is clear from Home Office papers, and in no way surprising, in view of the scenes before Burdett’s seizure and the protests thereafter, that the government was expecting trouble. There is, further, a letter from Harriott, ‘father’ of the Thames police, offering to conduct Burdett across the river as soon as he was released; and Moira, Governor of the Tower and a personal friend of Burdett, made precise arrangements to be notified, the instant the House rose at the end of the session. A message was to be taken to the Ordnance Office and a signal was to be made to him at once. It seems highly probable that the suggestion he leave the Tower by water was made officially by the Home Office and transmitted to Burdett possibly through Moira.

Though doubtless those arranging the procession would have been irritated — and they were in the event extremely angry — he could, it would seem, have made his intentions public before the event without any real loss of popular prestige. As things were, his supporters had assembled, and in view of popular excitement, his non-appearance after the

1. H.O. 42.107.
2. H.O. 42.107. Harriott to Ryder June 1st, 1810. cf. also Anonymous letter to Ryder, June 8th, 1810, making the suggestion that Burdett be liberated a few days before the end of the session to avoid trouble. The writer was probably an Informer.
3. ibid. Moira to Ryder, 21st June, 1810.
The procession had reached the gates of the Tower, came as a tremendous anti-climax.1 Unless he was forced to go across the Thames at the last moment, and there is no evidence of this whatever, Burdett himself must bear a large share of the responsibility for a temporary decline in popular favour, of the Westminster Reformers.

Whatever the reason for Burdett's failure to appear, trouble nearly broke out. Stunned silence greeted the announcement of his departure. Adams and Miller hastily suggested to the crowds that he had been forced to go away by water, which had the effect, Place says, of calming those nearest the procession "from whom excess might be feared!" Faced with the task of dissolving the crowds as quietly as possible, it was decided to continue the procession with an empty carriage. Thus, with Sheriff Wood at the head, Adams and Cartwright behind, and Jones in a hackney coach, it wound through the streets until it eventually broke up.2

After interviewing Burdett, the 'Committee' issued handbills giving Burdett's statement as to why he had left the Tower by water, and explaining their ignorance of his intentions. The tone of the bills reflected their irritation that Burdett had given them, as organisers, no notice, and

1. Place Papers B.M. Add.MS. 27,850 f. 236.
2. Ibid.
they denied any trouble would have arisen. At the interview Burdett had told Nicholson and Powell, who urged that every precaution had been taken that...

...."it was necessary there should be an expression of public sentiment; that was now complete and his presence could not have added thereto" 1.

Place wrote:

...."he fell on that day from his height of popularity"... "and never has been relied on to any considerable extent since that day" 2.

As the chief organiser of the procession, he was the person most acutely conscious of its failure. Further embittered by the calumnies about his being a ministerial agent, he was quite naturally enraged. In the course of time, when he was able to view matters more calmly, he was prepared to support Burdett publicly. Later still, he was again to become on speaking and visiting terms with him. Meanwhile he had lost all faith in him and would have nothing to do with him. 3.

Others personally involved were prepared to be more tolerant. In time, it must have been recognised, the public would forget the incident, and at a meeting of the 'Committee'

1. ibid.
2. ibid.
3. In May 1819, cf. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MS. 27,850 f. 146. Place was then much more pleased with Burdett's political conduct. cf. supra, pp. 21, 108.
the majority were against Place's proposal that they should not countenance him further. In the circumstances Place agreed to co-operate with his friends only over the matter of raising money, and for no other purpose. Burdett's conduct, however, had made it very difficult to secure subscriptions "and it was two years before the arrears then due were collected and paid." But, in any event, the popular excitement of the two previous years must have died down. It was impossible to maintain it for long at fever pitch, and in 1811 other matters came to absorb public attention.

1. ibid.
C. From the Close of 1810 until the General Election of November 1812.

I. In two ways Place's temporary retirement from active political work among the Reformers in 1810 makes it less easy to describe and discuss the position and activities of the Westminster group during this period.¹ In the first place, it would seem that without Place's personality to bind them together, without the influence of his restless and energetic driving force upon them, members of the 'Committee' undertook less as an independent group, and came rather, as individuals, or in small groups, to assist in the projects of others. Often, therefore, there is little which makes it possible to distinguish them clearly as a 'party' from the whole body of Reformers in the metropolis.

In the second place, there is no first hand information about the group available and no information at all save what may be deduced from newspapers/evidence of its position later, in the autumn of 1812. Place continued to keep newspaper cuttings of the reforming activities which interested him at the time, but, when writing of the events of this period later in life, was not disposed to describe or discuss matters, in which he, personally, played no part. Much, therefore, must be surmised.

¹. It was at this time that Place devoted more of his attention to the Lancastrian School Scheme. G. Wallas, op.cit. P.94.
It is clear that leading members of the group remained politically active and in contact with each other. Familiar names such as Adams, Brooks, Sturch are regularly to be found among those helping to organise a public meeting or launch a public subscription for some 'martyr' to political oppression. The annual dinners celebrating Burdett's return were held regularly and, from the speeches of the familiar Westminster figures present - as well as from the event itself - it is evident that it was intended by the organisers that at the next general election, the country should again be shown how 'the people' of Westminster could return their own representative. Again it was the Westminster group who were concerned with pressing the enquiry into the High Bailiff's office in 1811.

But it was Cartwright rather than the Westminster group who enjoyed the greater prominence in this period. More often than not the chief speaker at public meetings in Westminster, it would seem that it was principally on his initiative that they were organised. The resolutions and petitions presented to them for approval not only bear the stamp of Cartwright's hand, but their tone accords entirely with what are known

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1. Place Papers B.M. Add. Ms. 27,839 f. 150. British Press May 24th, 1810 for 1810 dinner; ibid. f. 188. Alfred May 24th, 1811, for 1811 dinner.
2. supra p. 111.
to have been his political sentiments at the time.

For this, several reasons may be suggested. It was, as already indicated, in 1811, that Cartwright became a householder in Westminster. Better able to play a prominent part in Westminster local politics, he had, at least technically, a better right to press for the summoning of public meetings and a better right to address them.\(^1\) Again, it seems that after Place withdrew, no-one else was as ready to be as firm as he in dealing with Cartwright. Burdett, for whatever reasons, seems to have spoken rather less out of parliament in this period, and it may be that Cartwright's 'claim' to be the chief speaker at public meetings in his absence was irresistible.

There are, however, two more important reasons. First, Cartwright had become the persistent advocate of a 'union' with the 'left wing' Whigs at a time when, as indicated above, such a policy might well seem worth pursuing.\(^2\) Place, it may be felt, would almost certainly have opposed strongly any move which might suggest to the Whigs, or to the public generally, that the Reformers were now willing to compromise.\(^3\)

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1. supra p. 219
2. supra. p. 186 et seq.
3. At least he did so on all occasions for which there is evidence of his attitude cf. infra. \(IV. pp. 174 et seq., pp. 262 et seq., V. pp. 194 et seq.\)
But it may well have been that, in the absence of Place's counsel, others of the Westminster group were disposed to feel the policy of 'union' was worth trying.

Second, Cartwright was at this time equally the most determined and enthusiastic advocate of the idea of founding new reforming clubs and societies which would not only unite Reformers in the country but provide them with leaders. Once again it is evident that Place had little time for such schemes, though others of the Westminster group seem to have been disposed to give at least nominal support at this stage. In no way did they become part of Cartwright's own small coterie, which now began to form about him. Indeed, they were shortly to draw away from him on both personal and political grounds. For the moment, however, they seem to have been ready to accept his leadership.

The Westminster meeting of March 11th, 1811, held to address the newly appointed Regent and to urge him to change his ministers, in conjunction with similar London Livery meetings, was then, though organised by the Westminster group very much 'Cartwright's' meeting. Aligning himself with the Whigs he condemned ministers' 'gross violation' of the

3. ibid. 27,839 f. 185. Cartwright was the principal Speaker and the Resolutions were his.
constitution, in governing the country, as it were, through a Convention parliament of their own, and in limiting the Regent's powers. The Regent and 'the people' suffered under the same despotic hand. So gracious a Prince must surely see that it was in his own, as well as 'the people's', interest to dismiss his ministers and take the lead in promoting parliamentary reform.

Peter Walker, who later appears prominently in Westminster reforming circles as a supporter of Cartwright, reminded the audience that an election might well not be near, and that 'the people' everywhere must do their best to follow the example of Westminster in 1807 and show their disapproval of their self-imposed and incompetent rulers. The electors of Westminster, inspired by Burdett's conduct, would again lead other cities and towns to cry out against the high taxation and oppression upon which ministers thrived.\(1\)

The Reformers' hopes of the Prince Regent came to nothing. It was, however, as already indicated, some months before it became clear that he had no immediate intention of bringing the Whigs to office, and when he re-appointed the Duke of York Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Reformers had so far committed themselves in his favour that they could not start an agitation against the appointment, nor at once change their

\(1\) ibid.
policy towards him.* There were, however, even afterwards, indications that the Regent would yet prove himself the enemy of corruption, and there was still reason to suppose he would bring the Whigs to office later. In the circumstances, subsequent meetings continued to address the Regent in similar vein.

At the Westminster group’s Annual dinner, on May 23rd, there were many references to the important reform dinner shortly to be held with the aim of bringing together ‘left wing’ Whigs and Reformers from all over the country.* It was, once again, Cartwright who was the chief moving force behind the arrangements for it, his aim being, as he said... ... "not merely to waken public opinion in the metropolis, but in the nation at large." 31.

Though popular interest in reform had very far from disappeared, there was, by the spring of 1811, no countrywide agitation for it. The debates over the Regency and Whig prospects of office had absorbed public attention. Now that the Regent was installed and it appeared the Whigs must wait longer for office, it seems that, in reaction to the tension of the past months, that the public was only too glad to relax and to welcome an improvement in the war news. Cartwright’s

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1. S. Maccoby, op. cit., p.270.
2. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MS.: 27,839 f. 188.
3. Life of Cartwright II. 5.6. Cartwright to Wyvill. 18th April, 1811.
aim, it would appear, was to take advantage of a moment when the quieter state of the country had lessened the alarm of respectable elements, to persuade men of substance to come forward and give the country a fresh lead by holding meetings in their own local areas.

Originally it had been planned to hold the Dinner in the Guildhall on May 29th. Before this, however, it became clear that other arrangements would have to be made, since the reforming section of the London Livery could not secure permission from the Council to use the Hall. Loyalist and reforming sections of the Livery were still in the midst of disputes brought about by the latter’s petition deprecating the Commons’ action against Burdett, and the former’s public condemnation of it. On May 31st, at a special Guildhall meeting, Waithman argued in vain the importance of bringing Reformers together and of providing a central place for their assembly. It was thus not until June 10th, and then only after it had been postponed twice, that the dinner was held in the Freemason’s Hall.

1. ibid. Cartwright to Brand. 2nd March, 1811.
2. Place Papers B.M. Add. Ms. 27,859 f. 191.
3. ibid. f. 105.; also Alfred, June 7th, 1810.
4. ibid. f. 191.
As indicated above, the dinner made clear to all what the majority of Reformers, must already have known, that the Whigs were not disposed to join with them. It was, however, though not as large as had been hoped, and almost wholly 'Burdettite' in composition, a solid and respectable enough meeting, and it did attract men from many parts of the country. 1. The Westminster Reformers, who had helped Cartwright with its organisation, attended in large numbers, and even Place's name appeared as a steward. 2. Again, though it did not win Whig favour, the foundation of the Society of Friends to Parliamentary Reform, as a direct result of the dinner, was of no small importance. 3. The first Reform Society to be founded since the older societies had been crushed, it seemed to indicate that fear of reform was gradually disappearing. Supported at least nominally by substantial country Reformers, as well as by Westminster and London Reformers, it helped, as Roberts points out, to carry the process of spreading the Reform movement a stage further, so that it was no longer solely the affair of the metropolis. 4.

1. Ibid. f. 193. Statesman June 11th; Life of Cartwright II.10.

2. Though he may not have attended or even consented to be a steward, Cartwright, it appears, commonly thought fit to make use of his acquaintances names for his own purposes. cf. Place Papers B.M. Add, MS. 27809 ff. 8-9. For list of Stewards cf. Life of Cartwright II. Appendix.

3. Life of Cartwright II.11.

Three other matters, with which the Westminster Reformers were actively concerned in 1811, may be mentioned. The first has already been referred to above. The opportunity of promoting a parliamentary enquiry into the High Bailiff's office again brought Place into the open, and it was he who pressed his friends and Burdett to publicise the matter with the results already noted. 1.

The second was the attempt to 'nurse' a Southwark seat for Jones Burdett, in the expectation a general election could not be far distant. It was clearly planned that an effort should be made to return him in exactly the same way his brother had been returned in Westminster. A meeting of his friends was called in September. 2 Jones Burdett had not yet consented to stand. In due course, however, as his brother had done, he refused to be a 'candidate' arguing he could do no good by becoming a member of so corrupt an assembly as the existing Commons. He would, however, do his duty if elected. As a result, a committee of electors was formed and books were opened to collect signatures of those who favoured electing him. 3 At the same time, proclaiming the intention of following the example of Westminster, the Committee issued

1. supra pp. 111-113.
2. Alfred Sept. 10th 1811.
3. Alfred Sept. 26th.
resolutions repeating, in almost identical phraseology, the Westminster Committee's resolution of 1807 —

"that it would be to the immortal honour of Southwark and a glorious example to the electors of the United Kingdom if he should be returned free from every sacrifice and expense according to the genuine spirit of the Constitution." 1

It was claimed, in November, that 1653 people had assured their votes for him — but as events were to prove, the weight of other interests proved too strong for the Reformers. 2

The third was a campaign to defend the liberty of the press and to publicise the oppressive methods by which the ministry silenced its critics — in this case 'members of their own party'. In June, 1810, Cobbett had finally been tried, convicted of sedition and sent to Newgate where he was to remain until 1812. 3

Contemporarily, ministers were preparing to move again against John and Leigh Hunt and Henry White. In parliament, the 'Burdettites' and numbers of the 'left wing' Whigs joined in denouncing ministerial actions, and in particular the practice whereby an ex officio information for libel could be filed and the threat of prosecution kept hanging over a journalist's head in order to silence him. On March 28th, Burdett vigorously supported a

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1. ibid.

2. ibid. Nov. 7th; and infra. III. p. 170.

3. G.D.H. Cole, op. cit., PP. 146-159. By payment he obtained fair comfort. His friends and political associates including Burdett, Cartwright and H. Hunt visited him and he was able to continue publishing the Register. cf. ibid. PP. 160-167.
motion by Lord Folkestone for an enquiry into the matter. Burdett's speech was printed by the Westminster Reformers and sold in thousands. But their efforts did not prevent the prosecution of the Hunts and White. Brougham, indeed, succeeded in securing a verdict of 'not guilty' for the Hunts, and thereby established his name at the Bar. White, however, was convicted and sentenced to Newgate. Immediately the Westminster Reformers called a meeting at the Crown and Anchor with the aim of promoting a subscription for him, at which Burdett strongly attacked the ministry. A free press, he said, might not in itself be sufficient to prevent abuses in government but...

"A nation...can never be utterly ruined so long as it contains one honest man who dares to speak and publish the truth!"

Up to 1812, the Westminster group and other prominent Reformers had been substantially in agreement with each other. No fundamental political difference between them had appeared and such differences as existed were mainly personal. During 1812 and afterwards, however, they were gradually to separate from other Reformers and to appear more clearly as a distinct

1. M.W. Patterson, p.313.
group whose divergence from other reforming groups was on political grounds. Though there was to be no public breach between the Westminster and other Reformers until 1817, it is clear that it was their differing reaction to the stirring among the industrial workers of the Midlands and the North, first apparent in 1811, which began the parting of the ways.

During 1811 the condition of workers in the manufacturing areas had greatly deteriorated. Rising prices - the result of war expenditure and bad harvests - the progress of the 'Industrial Revolution' and the sudden dislocation of an extensive foreign trade, all combined to make their position - and England's position - very serious at the close of 1811 and in early 1812.¹

For some time the war and rising prices had encouraged the expansion of trade and industry. Even then, however, the cost of living and the introduction of new methods and machinery had led to considerable unrest, and when the loss of the South American market, in 1810, was followed by the Non-intercourse Act of February 1811 and the complete closing of the North American market, the consequent distress, which existing relief machinery could not deal with, led to

¹ F.C. Darvall, Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Regency England Ch.1. passim; and PP.309 et seq. Darvall believes that the state of the country and the inadequacy of troops available made early 1812 the time when French invasion, revolution, or both, had the greatest chance of success.
open rioting. In March 1811, and intermittently in various areas until the beginning of 1813, gangs of men, often hungry and desperate, blindly attacked whatever seemed to be the immediate source of their ills. Very soon they were commonly known as 'Luddites!'

"Luddism" - its causes, course and effects and the prevailing contemporary attitude towards it - has already been exhaustively analysed.¹ Symptomatic of the vast and rapid social and economic changes which were presenting problems that contemporaries could neither understand nor deal with properly, the reaction of the majority was simply to call for its suppression - if necessary by force. Prepared to believe that a revolutionary conspiracy was being plotted, and believing, in any case, in the light of Adam Smith's views, that economic ills must be left to cure themselves naturally - that legislation could not help but might worsen the situation - the main concern of ministers was to restore and to maintain order.² The various repressive measures they came to set in motion, and which received the support of a majority - though not all - the Whigs, were, therefore, intended to strengthen the existing machinery of order.³

1. by F.O. Darvall, op.cit.,
2. F.O. Darvall, op.cit., PP. 332 et seq; W.R. Brock op.cit. Ch. IV.
All Reformers were naturally enough united in condemning and resisting ministerial 'repressive' legislation. They were, however, far from agreeing that advantage should be taken of the distress and discontent of the poorer classes, in order to persuade them to agitate for parliamentary reform.

Cartwright made up his mind almost at once. In the autumn of 1811, he toured the distressed areas of the Midlands and seems to have been strengthened in his conviction that nothing but parliamentary reform could lead to an improvement in their lot and that nothing but a union of men of all classes would secure it. But - as he emphasized when he wrote to Lord Holland - the country needed leaders. It becomes clear, therefore, why, immediately thereafter, he renewed his efforts to draw together respectable elements amongst Whig and Reformers, and why he set about establishing new Reform clubs which were at once intended to provide a staff of leaders and to spread and harness the demand for parliamentary reform among 'the people' at large.

Cartwright had long ago made clear his belief that all classes must be brought to unite in demanding parliamentary reform. He had, even in the 1780s, sought to rouse interest

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1. Life of Cartwright II. 17 et seq.
among the industrial as well as the middle and upper classes.\footnote{1}
Thus he greatly objected to being accused of spreading dissatisfaction among the lower classes only.\footnote{2} At the same time, though he continued throughout his life to seek the co-operation of respectable elements, there can be little doubt that it was among the lower classes in the provinces that his influence came to be strongest. From 1811, Cartwright, by letter and through 'missionary' tours, was in contact with them, seeking to rouse and educate them to demand parliamentary reform.

Cobbett likewise made up his mind quickly. Believing that positive action to remedy the causes of distress should be taken by the state, he believed equally that no such action would be taken without parliamentary reform. Viewing the misery of the lower classes, he became more than ever convinced the war had been undertaken solely to preserve the ascendancy of the ruling caste, with the aim of crushing liberty abroad and at home. The Reformers were blamed for causing riots, but the riots were the result of misery brought about by war, a war which at the very outset Reformers had opposed. Now, when 'the people' protested at their sufferings, they were repressed.\footnote{3}

\footnote{1. Life of Cartwright 1.153 et seq. and supra, Intro. p.181}
\footnote{2. ibid. 11. 45, 95.}
Like Cartwright, though much more ready than Cartwright to pin his faith on the lower classes alone, he came to direct his attention towards 'educating' them to demand parliamentary reform.

But whilst Cartwright, Cobbett and, as is well known, Henry Hunt, among others, increasingly directed their attention towards the humbler classes, others strongly disliked the idea of encouraging an agitation among them. Many respectable well-to-do Reformers of the older school, who had reappeared to take an active part in politics when, in 1809-10, the reform movement was clearly a middle class movement, were to draw back into retirement rather than appear to give encouragement to it. With no belief in the fitness of the poor and illiterate to take part in matters of government at the best of times, they came to view the efforts to lead them to demand parliamentary reform as positively dangerous. 1

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1. e.g. Wyvill himself. cf. Life of Cartwright 11.95.
2. cf. e.g. Walter Honeywood Yate. Political and Historical Arguments for Reform (1812). He made clear when he spoke of 'the people', he did not mean the 'illiterate rabble'. M. Roberts op.cit. pp.299-300, regards Yates as the typical "precursor" of the "prosperous, violent, middle class radical" so common in the mid-nineteenth century. Like Bentham he sought "democratic ascendancy" for substantial elements among the new middle classes. Though, as Roberts indicates, his views do reflect the political theory of the 'Burdettites' at this time, yet, more narrowly, they reflect the views of Burdett himself and many of his well-to-do followers, rather than the Westminster Reformers whose economic and social position encouraged in them a greater compassion for the labouring classes.
The Westminster Reformers, however, were to take up a stance between the two. As men, who were themselves in close touch with the common people, who were often themselves of humble origin, and who were well aware of the effects of poverty and hardship, they had sympathy and fellow feeling for the poor sufferers from economic depression, which was increased when they viewed the attitude of the 'governing classes' towards them, and the apparent determination to repress their outcries. Believing parliamentary reform alone could bring about a change in the attitude of government towards them, they were in no way to modify their demand or their agitation for it.

At the same time, precisely because many of them were, like Place, self-made men, or men, only too well aware of the struggle they or their parents had had to raise their status, they were acutely and self-consciously 'middle class' in their outlook, half despising the manners and behaviour of the 'common people'. Education was the only real way to effect an improvement in their lot. It is clear that they believed the middle classes were the natural leaders of the country, and that the lower classes must be led and educated by them, before they would be fitted to participate in government.

Thus, whilst they believed parliamentary reform would bring about a change in the attitude of government towards them, would lead to their being educated instead of repressed – they
were, at the same time, to be wholly against what they came to regard as a reckless stirring up of the 'masses' which, they believed, could only bring harm to 'the people' and to the country as a whole. The wildness of Cobbett, the demagoguery of Henry Hunt and, to a lesser degree, the popular clubs of Cartwright, they greatly disapproved.

There were, however, other factors which prevented the Westminster group joining with other Reforming leaders in the 'country' agitation, which was to have its beginnings in 1812. In the first place, it is clear considerable personal dislike of Cobbett and Hunt developed and relations with Cartwright became, particularly over the question of his becoming a candidate for Westminster, extremely strained. 1 In the second place, after 1812, when Place came into personal contact with him, Bentham's influence became much stronger. More than any other single factor, 'utilitarian', political, educational and economic views came to divide the Westminster Reformers from those who sought to rouse the 'masses', confirming and hardening their inherent middle class outlook. Acceptance of laissez-faire economics and Malthus' population theory, came to strengthen their conviction that nothing could be done to improve the lot of the people save by enlightening them.

1. cf. infra, III, Ch. x iii.
through education, as much as Ricardo's theory of rent came to confirm their view that the landed classes were parasites.

It must not for a moment be supposed that the divergence between Reformers became apparent at once, or that that divergence brought any immediate end to their co-operation. On the contrary, for a number of years the public can scarcely have been conscious of any political difference between them. Not until after the end of the war in 1815 did the agitation for reform among the poorer classes, encouraged by Cobbett, Hunt and Cartwright, get properly under way. Though it is evident that numbers of working men in the provinces had, even in 1812, begun thinking seriously of parliamentary reform, though they were being encouraged to do so, yet the disturbances at this time were primarily the product of economic discontent only, and interest in parliamentary reform died away as conditions improved. Attention was half diverted to the war; the direction of the extreme Reformers' policy was less obvious than later, their efforts to rouse 'the people', less pronounced.

On the other hand, Benthamite views were, as yet, inadequately formulated and absorbed. The Westminster group

1. cf. Petition to the Commons from Bolton 1812. Parlt. Debates. XXII. 29-30; Trial of the Thirty Eight Men... (The thirty-eight men were Manchester working men arrested in 1812 and accused of administering unlawful oaths).
were not yet so conscious of the 'foolishness' and danger of agitating the people as they were to become, were more ready to hold the aristocracy responsible for their suffering, and consequently more ready to see them encouraged to protest. Nor were they, as yet, so clearly seen by other Reformers, nor the public, as believers in, and advocates of, the economic doctrines they came to detest. ¹

In the circumstances, all Reformers continued to look to Burdett as their leader, and Burdett himself, though with no fellow feeling for the working classes whatever, and even less faith than the Westminster group in their fitness to share in government, continued to denounce the 'system' as responsible for 'the people's' hardships. Not until 1816, and under different circumstances, did it become clear that Burdett had little liking for the stirring among the 'masses' his own action had helped to encourage. Meanwhile, neither he nor his Westminster supporters gave any public sign that they were not at one with Cobbett and Cartwright in seeking to encourage the agitation in the country.

Thus, at the opening of the session, in January 1812, Burdett managed to forestall the member, who was to move the

¹ Place acknowledged that even in 1817 he still believed the aristocracy directly responsible for the miseries of the people - that it was only afterwards he came to accept Malthusian views completely and to believe the fundamental cause was the too rapid growth in population cf. Place Papers B.M. Add, MS. 27,809 f. 52.
official Address of thanks for the speech from the throne, and, holding the floor, moved an Address of his own. Painting the grimmest of pictures and listing the burdens and oppressions suffered by 'the people', he traced their origin to the despotic interests of those who had usurped power. Their detestation of liberty had led them to undertake the present disastrous war which was ruining the country, and to maintain a parliamentary tyranny. The reform of parliament, he urged the Regent, was the only remedy. He was supported by a speech from Cochrane in similar vein. 15.

Their sweeping indictment of the system of government, horrifying to conservatives, produced a sensation. Apart from the reports in the press, their speeches were reprinted in full in Cobbett's 'Register', and the Westminster Reformers, who had them published as a pamphlet, were able to distribute 30,000 copies all over the country. 25.

Again, whilst Burdett allowed himself to be persuaded by Cartwright to become chairman of the Hampden Club, and numbers of solid and respectable Reformers became members, many of the Westminster group became founder members of the very democratically constituted Union Society. The annual

2. ibid: Cobbett's Political Register Jan. 11th, 1812. 15 editions were printed.
celebration dinner in May, saw Reformers of all shades, among them Henry Hunt, Cartwright, Walter Fawkes, the Hon. D. Kinnaird, Sir Charles Wolseley in company, and apparently in complete accord, with Burdett and the Westminster Reformers. In July, when Cobbett was released from prison, it was the Westminster group who organised a dinner, attended by Cartwright and Burdett, to celebrate the event. At the end of the session, in the same month, Burdett moved an Address to the Regent similar to that which he had made at the beginning. In August, the Westminster Reformers helped Cartwright stage yet another public meeting in Westminster, at which he took the opportunity of publicising the Hampden Club and the Union Society.

It cannot be surprising, therefore, that many humble and provincial men should look upon and speak of Burdett and his supporters in London as their leaders. It was not only that Cartwright drew their attention to the clubs he had founded, of which Burdett and prominent Westminster Reformers were members. There was, too, the evidence of their actions and behaviour and of their association with Cartwright, Cobbett

41. Kinnaird, who was put forward by the Westminster Reformers in the election of 1818 - cf. infra V. ch. XII. was one of Burdett's personal friends.
42. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS., 27,839 ff. 225.
43. M.W. Patterson, op.cit. 1619.
44. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS., 27,839 ff. 228, for newspaper cuttings.
45. J.L. and B. Hammond The Skilled Labourer PP. 278-30 - draws attention to the fact that spies reported that working men in Lancashire were speaking of Cochrane, Burdett and Whitbread as "revolutionary" leaders; cf. also F.O. Darvall op.cit. p. 279. makes clear such reports from informers to the Home Office were continued over years. cf. infra V. ch. X. II.
and Hunt in the press.

For the same reasons it cannot be surprising that ministers, faced with serious disorders in 1811-12 and receiving reports from Home Office agents and informers suggesting a general revolutionary rising was being planned, should regard all Reformers with equal and increased suspicion. Appearing in company with each other, there was nothing to suggest they were not all entirely with Cobbett and solidly behind Cartwright. The activities of Burdett and the Westminster Reformers must have appeared equally calculated to encourage disaffection among the 'lower orders.' Perceval's retort to Burdett, when the latter tiraded in the Commons in May 1812 against the use of the military to crush 'the people'-that 'the people' for whom he claimed to speak were "rioters and incendiaries"—and his belief, clearly implied, that Burdett was largely responsible for stirring them up for his own purposes as in 1810, reflected not only ministerial opinion, but conservative opinion generally.¹

No evidence of their concern with any revolutionary conspiracy came to light then or later. Nor, indeed, was there any revolutionary conspiracy among the 'Luddites' at all, though the Report of the Parliamentary Committee of Secrecy

appointed to investigate the evidence ministers laid before Parliament, was as 'alarmist' as they wished. Their grievances were chiefly economic and of a local nature. In different areas, gangs of men with particular grievances and local objectives might cause much damage to property. There was no central body uniting them. Only the minority had as yet developed any real political interest, and their interest, it is clear, was solely in parliamentary reform.

Nonetheless, though the state of panic among the governing classes was never so great as it became in 1816–17, there was sufficient evidence, even apart from any manufactured by spies, to mislead and alarm contemporaries. The behaviour of leading Reformers, the evidence of their contact with men in provincial centres, the appearance of shadowy figures moving among the distressed workers seeking to direct their agitation into political channels, the way in which those interested in parliamentary reform were coming to look upon Burdett and his associates in the metropolis as leaders—all help to explain why, despite the lack of conclusive proof, it could easily be imagined that a conspiracy was being


hatched from headquarters in London. Even if they had no revolutionary designs, Reformers in the metropolis were still a menace in the way they incited disaffection. But whatever contemporaries thought, it is easy to see why the ministry found strong conservative approval for the special security measures it proposed and the other actions it took to crush rioters. In the same way it is easy to see why the ministerial press should attack all Reformers equally, with a renewed ferocity.1

But, though contemporaries may not have discriminated, nor been able to discriminate, between Reformers at this time, it is nonetheless important to notice that it was now that the Westminster group and those who sought to encourage a reform agitation among the lower classes in the provinces, began to draw apart — now that the middle class leanings of the former were to become more pronounced — now that their middle class connections began to be strengthened.

Though it may not have been recognised for some time, it is clear that Burdett was never more than a figurehead for the Hampden Club, and equally clear that the members of the Westminster group who joined the Union Club were never

1. As S. Maccoby, op. cit., p. 289, points out, however, ministerial measures were not as harsh as it had been feared they would be.
more than nominal members. Some of them, indeed, may not have known at first that their names were put forward. Further, whatever value Burdett and others may have set on these clubs at the outset, as a means of drawing all shades of Reformers together, their continued existence and the founding of clubs bearing their name in the provinces was the work of Cartwright alone. It is significant that Burdett, when opposing security legislation of this time, spoke of the 'ignorance' of the common people and showed no real sympathy for the miseries of the 'Luddites' at all.

Again, though less obvious than their continued association with Cartwright and Cobbett, the fact that they were also associating at this time with respectable middle class Reformers and were also drawing closer to Bentham and his middle class coterie of Whig and independent Reformers, is of far greater importance.

The presence of Walter Fawkes at the Anniversary Dinner in May can have attracted little attention. Yet it may be certain he was being considered as a prospective second candidate for Westminster at the time. The favour of many

1. cf. infra. pp. 69-71; p. 50 et seq. where this is more fully discussed
2. cf. supra. n. 2.
3. cf. infra. Ch. X. 11.
5. cf. infra. pp. 8. et seq.
of the Westminster Reformers for Roscoe of Liverpool can have been no more apparent. Yet, he, too, it must seem, was under consideration as an alternative candidate to Fawkes by the middle of the year. 1. In both cases it was an indication of the Westminster group's strong middle class leanings towards solid personal respectability in their leaders.

The Westminster Reformers' growing connection with Bentham and his friends is even less likely to have been noticed by the public. Yet it may well be considered significant that it was at this time, when the poorer classes were breaking into disorder, that Place began to devote increased attention to the Lancastrian School scheme in company with other 'Benthamites', with the aim of hastening the spread of education among the poor. 2.

It was at this time too, that Place's interest in police reform in the problem of preventing crimes and disorders became fully developed. 3.

1. Cf. infra. pp. 8 et seq.
2. G. Wallas, op. cit., p. 94 et seq.
3. In 1812, a Parliamentary Committee to enquire into the Night Watch and Police of the metropolis was appointed. Burdett was made a member. Place's interest in the maintenance of order was whetted in 1810 and he must have followed the proceedings of this Committee closely, if indeed he was not concerned with bringing evidence before it, in the same way as he brought evidence before the Committee to investigate the Police of the Metropolis of 1815-16 cf. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,826 f.192. It was about this time that he met Henry Grey Bennet (27,850 f. 264) and it is clear they co-operated closely on the subject of Police Reform with Bentham.
These, and other signs, indicating the middle class outlook of the Westminster Reformers, were neither many nor obvious. But Cobbett was well enough aware of their significance, and of the Westminster group's attitude towards the common people. Both Cobbett and Hunt knew further that the Westminster group disapproved of them personally, as well as politically, and Cartwright too knew by this time that, whatever appearances suggested, they had little or no respect for him.

For the moment, however, further discussion of the division appearing among Reformers may be deferred, and some assessment of the achievement and position of the Westminster group by 1812, attempted.

They had, in 1807, played a vital part in reviving the parliamentary reform movement in the metropolis by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the unique popular franchise in Westminster. Sometimes openly, sometimes behind the scenes, they had thereafter been concerned with the staging of almost all the public meetings, dinners etc., in Westminster, and with arrangements for other similar functions in other parts of the metropolis. They had played an important part in publicising the cause of parliamentary reform, by speeches, by press adverts, by printing and
circulating handbills and pamphlets, by entering into correspondence with other areas and by promoting subscriptions for the victims of 'oppression.' Almost alone at the beginning, they had, by 1809-10, not only won the support of a considerable section in the City of London but of sections of the middle classes in many scattered provincial towns. It was largely through their efforts to widen the breach which had opened between the Commons and the country in 1809, that popular distrust for the conduct of government became so great.

The chief feature of their policy was their attack on all parties and party men. Had either Tories or Whigs showed greater competence, or had the Whigs showed less distrust of 'the people', that attack, almost certainly, must have been dropped. As things had worked out, however, the behaviour and attitude of the parties had not only intensified their own fundamental distrust of them, but had, by 1810, served to spread that distrust in the country at large. In that year the Westminster Reformers and Burdett had reached a new high water mark in popular favour.

By 1811, however, popular anger with the Commons was beginning to cool and the widespread reform agitation of 1810 to die down. Attention was diverted by the Regency question and after this was settled, a natural reaction to the tension
of the past two years set in. For a moment, however, it had seemed that interest in moderate parliamentary reform was gaining ground and that the Whigs were coming to be prepared to make a serious move to secure it. In these circumstances, Reformers had made overtures to the Whigs in the hope that the Whigs were at last coming to recognise the need to join with Reformers in pursuing a joint programme. When these failed, Reformers were once more driven to act independently. But by this time, when the middle classes were coming to be alarmed at the 'Luddite' outbreaks, they had little chance of re-starting a popular agitation and had, perforce, to be content with keeping their flag flying. Place's temporary retirement left the 'Westminster Committee', for the time being, without strong leadership, and its outlines as a separate group seem less distinct. In 1811 and in early 1812, Cartwright became the prime moving spirit among metropolitan Reformers.

Yet, at this very time, there were factors which were to lead to the clear reappearance of the 'Westminster Committee' as a distinct middle class group. The first was the closer association of its leading members with Bentham and his friends which developed at this time, and which tended to draw them apart from other Reformers. The second was their reaction to the beginnings of the demand for parliamentary reform among the labouring classes in the country. Respectable
middle class interest in reform dwindled and the Whigs - all save a few - were glad to drop the matter completely. Cobbett and others, on the other hand were even now preparing to press forward to rouse the labouring classes and to encourage their agitation for parliamentary reform.

The Westminster Reformers adopted an intermediate position. Though they did not choose to oppose Cartwright's plans for clubs of provincial workers, nor to break with Cobbett, though they continued to work actively for parliamentary reform, yet their attitude towards a 'working class' agitation was to make clearer their essentially middle class outlook. Parliamentary reform became, in their eyes, even more necessary, if revolution were to be averted, but it seemed all the more necessary to encourage the middle classes to take the lead in bringing it about. The Westminster Reformers became the middle party standing between the Whigs and extreme Reformers just as the Whigs stood between themselves and the Tories.

The third factor was the general election of 1812. The assassination of Perceval in May caused no great political repercussions and was treated as what it was - the act of a madman. 1:

Once again the prospect of office loomed before the Whigs; once again it faded. After prolonged negotiations in May and June, Lord Liverpool formed a new Tory ministry, which was, by the end of the session, reasonably secure.¹ The improvement in the war situation during the summer seems to have been the chief factor encouraging the new ministry to dissolve parliament. The election which followed not only brought the Westminster Reformers together, but brought them clearly and prominently before the public as a distinct group.

¹ There had also been a chance the Whigs would be invited to office when the restrictions originally imposed on the Regent expired in February 1812. For the negotiations with the Whigs then, and in May and June, cf. M. Roberts, op. cit., PP. 371 et seq. Cobbett, as in 1809, vigorously warned 'the people' against the Whigs in February, and went on attacking them in March and April, cf., in particular, Political Register. Feb. 22nd, 29th, March 28th, 1812.
SECTION III


The years 1812 - 15 saw the effective ending of
the 'old world' reform movement, and the beginning of a new
movement, which, in various forms, continued on to the middle
and later nineteenth century - a movement, the source of which
lay in the growing social and economic discontent and the
political awakening of the provincial lower classes. The
same years saw the real beginnings of a new division in the
Reforming 'party', between those who claimed to speak for the
'new' middle classes, and those who came to pose as the 'voice'
of the 'common people' in the country at large.
Chapter VIII.

The 'Westminster Committee' and the Election of 1812

1. Preparations and Indecision

For some time the weakness of the Perceval ministry, and the continuing likelihood that the Whigs might be called to office, had made it possible there might be a general election at any time. Throughout 1811 there had been frequent reference in the speeches of Reformers to the prospect of a dissolution, and it is clear they had looked forward to the next general election with an, at first, justifiable, optimism. But, by the time parliament was dissolved, after Liverpool's ministry had succeeded to power, circumstances had greatly changed, and the high hopes Reformers had entertained, that it would be possible to draw upon the fund of support they had built up in 1809-10, were to be proved vain. The improving war situation and, still more, the 'Luddite' outrages, had had a distinctly sobering effect upon those sections of the community who had earlier become so ready to demand reform. Despite the efforts of Reformers, enthusiasm for parliamentary reform had come to be, and was to remain for the time being, at a low ebb.

A more general view of the Reformers' election campaign may

*See Place Papers B.M. Add Ms. 27,839, ff. 185,188 for MS. of the Westminster Meeting of March 1811, and the Annual Dinner of May; also J. Wright's meetings at Manchester and Sheffield.
for the moment, be deferred. If the Reformers' success in the country as a whole was limited, it was some compensation to them that the Westminster group, at least, were able to repeat and apparently enlarge upon their success in 1807. Their unopposed return of two candidates has, indeed, suggested their strength in Westminster was beyond challenge.

In fact, however, whatever appearances may suggest, they were, through indecision and lack of preparation, very far from being beyond challenge. Though it is reasonable to believe that in any circumstances they would have succeeded in securing Burdett’s re-election, they were, in fact, extremely lucky to secure the return of a second candidate as well, without a contest, which would almost certainly have revealed they were by no means as well organised, as it might then, and now, seem.

There can be no doubt that Reformers of all shades, whatever the differences appearing between them, regarded it as of first importance that the Westminster electors should be persuaded to show the same independence as in 1807, as an example to the country. On the face of things, it may, therefore, appear surprising that those most directly interested in

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1. e.g. to S. MacCabby, op. cit., p. 291
ensuring that Westminster was represented by staunch Reformers, should have made no proper election arrangements beforehand.

But it must be remembered that the Westminster Reformers had no formal organisation and no formally acknowledged leaders - that the problems which beset parliamentary party leaders at this time were slight in comparison with the problems which met those who voluntarily came forward to lead the Reformers in Westminster. They had no means of securing their cooperation, save by convincing them of the value of a proposed course of action, and by demonstrating their capacity for leadership. Even were they to secure prior agreement to arrangements for the future, yet they were busy men themselves, uncertain whether, when the time came, they would be available to take the lead in pursuing them. Nor could they ever be certain that the most valuable of their supporters would be available to assist.

The state of the 'Westminster Committee', revealed at the time it became known a dissolution was impending, was, in fact, typical of its general state. Whatever the hopes and plans of individuals, and groups of friends, nothing had been formally settled. The few who were prepared to undertake the management of the election had no guarantees of assistance, and were uncertain whether they should work for the return of Burdett
alone, or whether they should attempt to carry two candidates. There was, in fact, no little confusion, and indecision led to difficulties which might have been avoided.

Had Place been actively associated with the Reformers in 1812, matters might have been taken in hand, and a course of action decided upon more quickly. But, in the autumn of 1812, Place, deeply offended, was still extremely unwilling to take any active part in politics. Angered by Burdett's behaviour in 1810, embittered by the readiness of some of his own friends to countenance the accusations against him, he had been further irritated by the half-hearted reaction which had met his efforts to rouse others to pursue the matter of election expenses in 1811.

He had, therefore, refused all invitations to cooperate in any political schemes suggested to him and, stimulated by his new acquaintance with Bentham, continued to devote a large part of his spare energies to the Lancastrian School scheme.

As on other occasions, however, Place's sense of private injury was to be overcome by his real and genuine desire to promote the cause of reform. Resolute as he was, from time to time, in refusing to have anything to do with politics, he was also far too intolerant of what he regarded as the stupidity of others to remain in the background for long. When it began to

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1. Place Papers. B.N. Add. MSS. 27,840, f. 2 (Place's MS. notes on the election.) 21,850 f. 255; 27,823. ff. 18, 20; G. Waller, op. cit. p95.
seem to him likely that the effort which had gone into their success in 1807 and subsequently, would be wasted through indecision and inefficient preparation, the organiser in Place rebelled, and he could no longer resist the temptation to intervene. He wrote ....

"I knew that many electors would be willing to assist when necessary, at an election. I knew how much they were in want of men qualified to conduct a contested election, and I knew they had no regular plan of proceeding, and that without a plan efficient and economical - since there are few men who would devote their time and talents to the business - they might be beaten ....while to me it appeared as certain as any matter, not actually accomplished, could be, that two men might be returned at very moderate expense".

If anything were to be done, Place recognised it must be done promptly. Though he would not yet come into the open, he came to give advice from the sanctuary of his house.

There was, it appears, unanimous agreement that Burdett must be returned as one candidate. No Reformer felt otherwise. As Place said .. "notwithstanding his conduct (i.e., over the procession) he was still popular"... "It would have been absurd in any man to have opposed him". There was, however, considerable indecision as to whether an attempt should be made to return another candidate as well, and, if so, who the second man should be.
Few of the Westminster Reformers were satisfied with Cochrane. Since 1811 he had, it is true, come to cooperate more closely with them. He had supported Burdett in parliament and had frequently appeared at dinners and public meetings, which they organised. Place was disposed to acknowledge his usefulness. At the same time, there seems to have been a general feeling among the Westminster group, that he was unsuitable as a representative for Westminster. In their view, he was lax at his parliamentary duties, and, in any case, still likely to be called away at any time on naval duty. It might even be that he would be sent to sea solely so that he could not make trouble in the Commons. Further, the sincerity of his belief in parliamentary reform was still, at this stage, suspect. Though he had shown himself ready to join with Reformers in attacking the last two ministries, he had still to commit himself clearly on the subject.

In the circumstances, the Westminster Reformers had, for some time, been considering the possibilities of replacing him with a representative more to their taste.

But they were forever to be faced with the fact that suitable candidates were hard to find. A man of 'rank and talent' they regarded as essential. The Westminster electorate, they

1. ibid, 27,840. f. 2; Roscoe Papers. Liverpool Record Office, Public Library. 2517. J. McCreery to Wm. Stanley Roscoe. Sept. 24th 1812. Apparently Cochrane's ill-health was another reason why the Westminster group were doubtful about him.

2. ef. 27,789 ff. 319-20. and infra, p. 53.
believed, would not vote for anyone else. But whilst there were many sincere Reformers of both respectability and ability, whose views accorded with Burdett's and their own, those who would accept the responsibility of becoming one of their leaders, who would be prepared to make public speeches on the hustings at elections or meetings, and who would be ready to seize each and every opportunity to rouse and sway public opinion, were conspicuously rare. Still rarer were the men who would, or could, act with the efficiency they demanded. Burdett was the best leader they could find, but, there is no doubt that the majority of the Westminster group found him too 'aristocratic' and too indolent, to be wholly satisfactory. Indeed, at this very time, many were looking not simply for a man who would represent their views more satisfactorily and efficiently than Cochrane, but a man who could be relied on to keep Burdett up to the mark as well. 1.

There were, at this point, three possible partners for Burdett, if Cochrane were to be rejected - Cartwright, Walter Fawkes and William Roscoe. All of them were men of substance, and sincere Reformers. In the eyes of the majority of the Westminster group, however, only the last two, Fawkes and Roscoe, deserved serious

1. ibid 27,850. f. 255.
consideration. Cartwright they regarded now, as later, as a
man not only likely to bring ridicule to the cause, but likely,
through his efforts to rouse the lower classes, to cause more
harm than good. Further, they did not believe the electorate
would vote for him. But Cartwright's keenness to secure
election, which was to cause the Westminster group so much
trouble later, was already obvious, and a small minority were
prepared to press his candidature. Further, there were still
some who believed support should be given to Cochrane, and
others who believed it would be unwise to attempt the return
of anyone save Burdett. Continuing indecision, up to the middle
of September, prevented any 'official' approach being made to
either Fawkes or Roscoe.

On the 17th September, Place wrote a letter to Brooks,
repeating his refusal to act in public, but sending him some
hints for a plan for conducting the election. On the same day,
or early in the next, a small informal meeting was held at
Brooks' house to discuss matters, but still no decision upon a

1. cf. infra Ch. x, IV. Ch. XIII. 13. also Place Papers B.M. Add. MS., 27,809. f. 13.
Peter Walker wrote asking him whether he would stand. He agreed immediately.
3. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS., 27840. f. 2.
course of action was reached. On the 19th, Richter, who had attended the meeting, wrote to Place enclosing a string of questions, which reflect so much the problems in the minds of those interested, that Place's letter in reply is given 'in extenso'. Richter acknowledged he had seen Place's letter refusing to assist them actively, but had no doubt he would "privately advise". His confidence was justified, and Place wrote back on 21st, repeating Richter's questions first:

"Q. Is it or isn't it the duty of the Westminster Committee to their own principles to nominate both members?

A. This question is carelessly worded. Who or what is the Westminster Committee? What do you here intend by principles? The persons who interfere to manage the next election ought to undertake the return of two members free from expense to them and without personal trouble, because they have the power and can procure the means. They can interfere in no other way honestly.

Q. Is that to be attempted at the risk of a second member?

A. Certainly if there be risk.

Q. Ought that member to be Lord Cochrane considering his health and profession?

A. I think not, unless he gives up his profession, which no one has a right to ask of him, but he may be asked what he intends doing . . . and if his answer be unsatisfactory, he should be informed that those who manage . . . cannot support him.

1. ibid and f. 11.

2. ibid f. 2 and f. 18. J. Richter to Place, 19th Sept., 1812.
Q. If it should appear that a contest could be avoided altogether by nominating the two old members, is it advisable?

A. Yes. It would be an absolute demonstration of the power of opinions: it would leave those who manage at liberty to apply their funds to the making of that power universally known; it would be manifested, too, in many places before the elections were begun.

Q. Would not the example and honour of Westminster and its importance and notoriety be sacrificed in that case?

A. Answered above.

Q. Should not a more certain and efficient member than Lord Cochrane be sought?

A. Yes. — but not if a contest can certainly be avoided.

Q. Would not Roscoe or Fawkes be preferable, and the former of the two?

A. Certainly.

Q. Is it possible that either of them would succeed?

A. Very possible, even probable, but by no means certain with Lord Cochrane for an opponent; quite certain without his opposition.

Q. Would defeat in either case hazard Burdett's seat?

A. No. I consider his being seated inevitable, whether any of them who took the lead in 1807 act or not on this occasion.

Q. ... be in any way dangerous?

A. A defeat in any way would be injurious; it would expose the people of Westminster naked; their strength consists in being well covered.

Q. Ought the nominees and in particular Burdett, to appear de dei in deum on the Hustings?

A. Yes. Burdett certainly, and still more particularly Roscoe or Fawkes. Burdett has said he will not be a candidate; he may even be disclaimed; but he may be invited by a public
meeting to come to the Hustings to tell his former constituents how he has conducted himself since he has been their former representative. Roscoe and Fawkes can have no scruples to prevent their attendance if publicly requested. 1

Place never had any illusions as to the character of 'the people' whose cause he and the Westminster Reformers upheld. He had sympathy for the hardships of the poor and ill-educated, but he did not, for a moment, suppose they were fitted to govern themselves, or that they would have made any political move by this time, had it not been that he and others had come forward to lead them. He made clear, therefore, that when he referred to 'the people' he meant those who took the lead in their interest. But it is evident that his experiences had left him with few illusions about them either.

"Your questions", he went on, "have so often occupied my thoughts that I find no difficulty in answering them. The answers, however, must be considered as implying a conduct in those who may manage an election, which omits no matter of detail in the previous arrangements .... More depends on those points than those less conversant with the management of bodies of men than myself, can well appreciate. You know my opinion of the persons with whom you must act, if you go into the business, and you are not ignorant that I consider the electors themselves as very little worthy, without any sound, political knowledge. Those, your immediate associates, have, no doubt, the best intentions, and are, in their political views and actions, independent and honourable. But they will do nothing where there is no noise, which they mistake at times for the 'voice of the people'. Neither do they understand how the mischief is either produced or prevented by the thousand little things, which happen continually. My attempts to learn the political and ecclesiastical history of Westminster have proved both, and no one would in any way assist when even the High Bailiff's bill in parliament brought the conception home to them; the same lethargic ignorance made them refuse to interfere.

1. ibid f. 18.
Satisfied as I am with general reasonings and particular observations, you will not expect me to do more than attend as well as I am able to such friendly enquiries as you have in this instance made.

On the 22nd, a second meeting was called at Brook's house. Again no decision was reached. Brooks and Richter believed, with Place, that two men could, and should be, returned, but could not secure approval for an official approach to either Roscoe or Fawkes. Some still pressed for Cochrane. Puller and Sturch argued that they should concentrate on securing Burdett's re-election alone. But no one could be found to guarantee any part of the expenses (as Brooks had one in 1807), and it was, therefore, decided to summon a hundred men from the Westminster parishes to a meeting at the Crown and Anchor on Monday, 28th September, to sound their opinion.

On 23rd, Richter passed on the news to Place, who, it appears from jottings on his memorandum pad, was greatly irritated at his friends' irresolution. He saw that if the announcement of the dissolution were to come at that moment there would not only be no hope of securing the return of a second candidate,

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1. *ibid*
2. *ibid* f.2
3. *ibid* No mention is made of Cartwright's name having been put forward, but it is evident he and his friends were working against Cochrane cf. *ibid* f.47
but every chance that their indecision would encourage others to stand. The Tories and/or the Whigs might decide to try to 'recapture' Westminster. Individuals might come forward independently. There might now be a contest when it could so easily have been avoided.

Though neither of the parliamentary parties seemed anxious for a popular contest with the 'Burdettites', it very soon appeared, however, that Place's sense of the 'dangers' was by no means misplaced. Later on the very same day one of their own 'friends' - one of the Horne Tooke circle - J.C. Jennyns, who had deputised for Burdett on the Hustings in 1807, called to see Place, announced his intentions of standing, and sought his backing. Even if the only good he could do was by speaking fifteen days on the Hustings, he urged, his efforts would still be worth while.

"Jennyns", noted Place, who refused to encourage him, "had quarrelled with Burdett because he (Sir Francis) would not be quietly defrauded by him and John Frost of a sum of money". But the precise reason for his decision to stand is not clear, unless perhaps it was that he hoped to promote a subscription for himself. He was, it appears, badly in debt. Whatever the case, his appearance on the scene finally brought home to those who were preparing for the election, the risks they

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
they were running, and it was finally agreed that approaches should be made to both Roscoe and Fewkes, to find out definitely whether they would accept nomination.

The Westminster group had been favourably impressed by both these men ever since 1807. Fewkes, who held views well known to accord with those of Burdett, had taken an active part in the various reforming activities of the last year and a half, and was a prominent member of the Hampden Club. Roscoe's 'Letters' to Brougham and Merritt, appearing in 1811-12 and upholding the Westminster Reformers' views on the necessity of radical parliamentary reform, were, perhaps, the best and most weighty refutation of the Whig case for moderate reform, as expressed in the 'Edinburgh', to date.

The application to Fewkes is not traceable. The approach to Roscoe in Liverpool, however, was made both directly and through his son. A letter containing a strong plea that he would accept nomination was dispatched to Roscoe on the 24th September by J. McCreery, a Liverpool man, now successfully established in the capital, and a staunch 'member' of the Westminster group. At the same time he wrote to Roscoe's son, William Stanley Roscoe urging him to come forward.

The need for a decision became even more urgent when, on the same day, Lord Cochrane called to see Brooks to discuss the prospect of his election, and rumours became current that Lord Barrymore was to stand as a ministerialist. 1 Brooks gave Cochrane no promise of support and indeed discouraged him, but the Reformers' course was, as yet, far from clear.

The next day, 25th September, Jennyns again called to see Place, and made clear he was going ahead with his candidature. 2 He told Place the electors would pay the expenses of his election. After waiting another day to see what action would be taken by his friends, Place's impatience again got the better of him. He wrote to Richter on the 27th:

"I have decided to note down what those who must act, must, as politicians, do, to preserve the real or supposed importance of Westminster, and then to ask you whether, as honest men, they can act as politicians.

1. Jennyns says, 'You shall not walk over the course, he can find persons to guarantee his expenses. Your address" (to be issued after Monday's meeting)" on Tuesday will probably set that at rest.

2. Tavistock will not be a candidate, nor do I expect any Whig will, unless your meeting tomorrow, by expressing your weakness, induce someone to start; you are weak or powerful as you manage with more or less skill - or cunning rather."

1. ibid. 2517.
2. Place Papers, B. M. Add. MS. 27,840 f. 2.
3. ibid. f. 19
3. Cochrane will be a candidate and the chances are there will be no opposition.

4. To carry the election, and thereby maintain your own importance, you must on Monday resolve to elect Burdett and Cochrane free from expense.

5. You must immediately apply to Lord Cochrane's relations and friends and, with all resolution, in your hands, demand their subscriptions; nor must you desist until you have applied to every person you can think of as likely to contribute.

6. Burdett and Cochrane must, neither of them, appear on the Hustings for the following reasons ".... (Here Place describes the operation of the 1811 Westminster Hustings Act - and how to circumvent it by preventing either Burdett or Cochrane becoming candidates within the meaning of the act.)"

"You may not think this action is worth taking, but is not this (submission to the Act) "as corrupt as the buying of the electors, or seats, or any other foul act whatever. .... If you have the courage to do these things, some of the contempt you deserve for allowing the High Bailiff's Bill to pass would be withdrawn.... All this you may do as politicians but can you do anything as honest men? You do not prefer Cochrane, yet, without adopting him, you lose your importance daily. Notwithstanding you do not prefer him you must affect to do so, or not only lose your importance, but you will get no money from his friends. Then to make your example conspicuous you must lie through thick and thin in your publications and ascribe to yourselves, to the electors and to Burdett and Cochrane, motives and conduct like unto anything but the truth. All this and much more you cannot avoid if you once enter upon the business."

Place's cynical advice, reflecting his mood at the time, was, nonetheless acute enough, if the Westminster Reformers were indeed to demonstrate the power of 'the people' again. But it was not immediately acted upon, and the meeting of the 28th,

1. cf. infra pp. 33 et seq.
attended by some seventy-two persons, brought forth no alternative solution to the Westminster Reformers' problems. Roscoe had replied, declining to stand on the grounds that he did not believe he could do any good in the House, and it had become impossible to put his name forward. Fawkes' decision, however, was not yet known, and he was, therefore, proposed. Cochrane's name was also brought up, and a letter received from him was read to the meeting.

In his letter, Cochrane gave a summary account of his conduct and intentions, and explained, in answer to criticism, that only ill-health had prevented his greater attention to his parliamentary duties. He recounted his efforts to abolish sinecure posts and indeed all those means through which... "the power of rewarding those who are base enough to support men in office regardless of their measures"... was maintained. His aim, he claimed, was to "relieve the Crown from the thraldom in which it is held". He pointed out that one man could achieve little in view of the power of the parties, but pledged himself to do his duty if elected.

1. Place Papers, B.M. Add. MSS 27,840 f. 2., 27850. f. 261.
But Cochrane’s letter did little or nothing to sway sentiment in his favour. Argument thereafter was principally between those who favoured supporting Burdett alone, and those who wished to see Fawkes elected with him. Finally, by a majority of seven, it was decided to try to carry Burdett and Fawkes together, even though Fawkes might still refuse to stand. A "Committee" was set up to arrange the preliminaries for their joint election, consisting, in the main, of those who had taken the lead in 1807. Cochrane, hearing the decision of the meeting, thereupon decided to go ahead on his own and, on the following day, a press advert. appeared, announcing his candidature.

On 28th September - the day the dissolution was formally announced - Brooks and Richter called to ask Place's advice on conducting Fawkes' election. They found him far from pleased at the course which was being followed. He advised them, however, to go to Burdett to find out what he intended to say in his Address to the Electors, and thence to Cobbett to get him to introduce Fawkes to the Westminster public.

On the 30th, Cochrane himself called to see Place to ask for

1. ibid
2. ibid, Morning Chronicle, 29th Sept., 1812.
his support. Place told him frankly the popular objections to him, and refused to assist him. Cochrane retorted that he would make account of himself to any public meeting, and promptly sent a second letter to the 'Committee' which was received and considered the same day.

Cochrane wrote that he had thought his record was evidence enough of his attitude, but, as it now seemed a more definite statement was required, he would pledge himself to call for parliamentary reform and the abolition of sinecures. He would also pursue the cause of Catholic Emancipation to which he had recently been converted. He concluded by stressing, as he had done in 1807, his belief that it was of prime importance that naval officers should be in parliament to safeguard the efficiency of the Navy.

In other circumstances, Cochrane's gesture would doubtless have been dismissed. But it had just become known Fawkes would not accept election, and the 'Committee' was thus faced with a difficult decision. In the end, however, they were forced to face the fact the interests of their cause gave them no real choice but to support Cochrane. Brooks and Richter came round to that view first, and they carried the others with them.

1. Ibid and f. 7.
2. Ibid f. 7. Cf. also Life of Cartwright, II. 23. Cartwright to Lord Fingal - shows Cartwright was anxious to press the claims of the Irish Catholics in return for Irish Catholic support for parliamentary reform - which however, was not forthcoming.
Cobbett was duly notified that it was proposed to set up Burdett and Cochrane jointly.

But, as in 1807, with only a week to go before the date fixed for the election to begin, nothing was settled. The Westminster group had, as yet, made no arrangements to conduct the election, and had, so far, no money with which to pay its expenses. It seems that it was expected the public would subscribe funds after Burdett and Cochrane had been formally put forward, and a general meeting to consider nominations was arranged for October 5th. Until then it was felt little could be done, and, in consequence, matters were allowed to drift whilst Jennyns, encouraged by their inactivity, continued to make his own preparations to stand.

Once again Place brusquely tendered his advice. On October 1st, he wrote to Brooks:—

"I do not feel anxiety for the rebuff of the election, I care nothing for what is called the honour of Westminster, because I know it has no real substantial honour, but I feel much anxiety for those honest hearted men, bound to dabble in the mud of politics, and I shall be considerably relieved from the anxiety I feel on their account if I see them pursuing their object in the prompt straightforward way which appears to me calculated to remove their own anxieties, abridge their labour, and to save time and purses"....

He urged them not to be cautious, but to get Lord Cochrane

1. *ibid.* f. 2
2. *ibid.* f. 7 *Statesmen, Oct.* 2nd, 1812.
nominated and supported jointly with Burdett "by a few of you" as soon as possible, to "extinguish" Jennyns and to prevent a ministerial candidate being set up. Their present inactivity, he told them, positively invited trouble. They should immediately contact Cochrane and advise him to issue no Address until after the meeting on the 5th October. They should accept no money from him, but should ask the names of his friends who would assist until the subscription was launched. The general meeting should be summoned expressly for the purpose of approving Burdett's and Cochrane's nominations. If it were called as an open meeting, the proposal of someone else would only cause confusion. If they would only arrange things properly in advance, however, everything might still be all right. "Promptness", he urged, "is of main consequence, and were I in the thing I should prefer it to £500 in cash". This time, it seems, his advice was followed.

On the evening of October 2nd, Jennyns again called on Place seeking his aid. This Place once again refused, telling him that ... "I will never consent that any man manages for me in public matters who does not manage his domestic affairs with prudence".

Jennyns retorted that £300 would pay all his debts and a heated argument followed. Jennyns eventually went away angrily arguing that ....
... "Upon our principles riches would be the only recommendation to preferment" 1.

Almost immediately thereafter Jennyns launched a bitter attack on the 'Westminster Committee'. Smarting as a result of his interview with Place and jealous that Cochrane was now to be supported along with Burdett, Jennyns published an Address to the Electors which appeared in the press on the very day of the general meeting—October 5th. He followed the same course that Peull and his friends had taken earlier, and which he, Cobbett, and Henry Hunt would pursue later. He attacked a 'self-imposed' junta who presumed to dictate to electors whom they should choose as their representatives, and whose sole interest lay in finding a wealthy candidate who could afford to keep their pockets well lined. Electors, he urged, should wake up before it was too late and choose an honest independent man, *viz:* - J.C. Jennyns! 2 To make quite sure electors realised the dangers in which they stood he had handbills of his Address printed and distributed to them as they went into the general meeting.

Fortunately for the supporters of Burdett and Cochrane, their candidates was approved. A proposal put forward by

1. ibid. f. 2
2. ibid. f. 45
3. ibid. for Jennyn's Address and Place's comments thereon.
Cartwright and his supporters, that if Cochrane were sent away on naval duty he should be called on to resign, led to some wrangling but fortunately to nothing more. A General Committee, some eighty members strong, was formed, and those who had conducted the election in 1807 were called upon to act as a Managing Committee.

Thereafter, as the minute book shows, regular Committee meetings were held to arrange the business of the election. Committee rooms were obtained, volunteer helpers were called for, canvassing arrangements were made and a public subscription was, at last, launched.

But it was very soon evident no opposition was forthcoming. Burdett issued his election Address on what were now clearly pre-arranged lines.

In the same vein as in 1807 he attacked "our usurping oligarchy", and, professing he saw no use in his going into parliament, declined to be a 'candidate'. Pointedly, he made

1. Ibid. f. 9. The Chairmen believed this motion was just carried, cf. Cartwright's MS. notes, ibid. f. 47
2. Ibid. f. 9. Their names - Adams, Sturch, G. Puller, Samuel and Henry Brooks, G. Harris, G. Richter, H. Campbell, Spratley, Doyle, Lookee, cf. also ibid. f. 120.
3. Ibid. ff. 9 et seq. for meetings from 6th Oct. Advertisements were inserted in a large number of newspapers and a vast quantity of handbills were printed cf. Meeting of 7th.
4. Ibid. f. 115.
reference to the recent Hustings Bill and to Lord Ellenborough's summing up in 1808 trial. His Lordship had said "the burthen and the benefit ought to go together, and as I had a benefit .... by taking the seat, the expenses ought to fall on me". The taking the seat was compulsory under the King's writ.

The benefit he failed to see.

The 'Westminster Committee's' careful action to avoid the Hustings expenses, and its negotiations with the Deputy High Bailiff, need not be detailed here. It is clear that Place's suggestions were followed carefully. It was imperative there should be no legal contact between Burdett, Cochrane and the Committee, and all matters were conducted with that end in view.

On election day, Jennyns, finally facing the now inevitable election of Burdett and Cochrane, issued a second handbill, in which he withdrew his candidature and made an even more vicious attack on the 'Westminster Committee'. Addressing the electors he accused three or four self-appointed persons of undertaking the exclusive nomination of representatives for Westminster.

"It is time you should enquire into the pretentions of the persons who have erected themselves into your permanent committee".

1. cf. inf. pp. 33 et seq.
2. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,840. f. 73.
He exposed their indecision and lack of desire to support Cochrane, and asserted they had only done so to prevent his (Jennyns') election. He further accused them of driving Paull to suicide.

Jennyns' 'exposure' was joyfully seized upon by the Tory press, and there was much talk of the disgrace into which Westminster had fallen. But as Place commented ....

"As for three or four persons presuming to style themselves Westminster Committee - Sad nonsense! How could anyone be excluded when everyone could nominate anyone, and anyone could nominate himself".

In truth, the indecision of the Reformers had left matters all too open, and it must seem that it was extremely lucky for them that they were not opposed. Similar indecisive action was to raise even greater difficulties in 1814, and what undoubtedly were greater difficulties still in 1818.

Burdett and Cochrane were elected on the 8th October by acclamation, after Sturch had dwelled long on the rights of electors and on the corrupt state of the last House of Commons. The 'Morning Post', as usual, was ready to show its contempt for the proceedings....

... "The business as usual was settled by the shouts of a mob, seventh eights of which were no more entitled to act as

1. ibid.
2. cf. infra, Ch. x. ii., and Ch. xii.
electors, then to sit in parliament. Neither the Hon. Baronet nor the noble Lord thought it worth while to attend on this occasion, and perhaps it ought to be taken as proof of something like sense, that they disdained to appear before the filthy rabble, who while raving about their rights having been invaded by those who ought to be considered their servants, were assuming a power they had no right to exercise, and marking their reverence for purity of election, by taking upon themselves to return members to parliament, where they had no pretensions to vote.... Indeed into such disgrace has the City of Westminster now sunk when candidates can be found to become willing instruments in the hands of a few obscure individuals, and theatrical rioters, that no gentleman of character could on this occasion be prevailed upon to offer himself"....

The 'Publican' seemed to regret the "sportless" and "languid nature of the scene, and the degeneracy of Westminster into a rotten borough under the self-styled 'Westminster Committee'. A letter to the 'Morning Post' of the 12th condemned the 'Westminster Committee' even more strongly. Their inflammatory declarations had driven all sound men away, and they had substituted the "clamour of a popular unenfranchised assembly" for the "Constitutional and long established form of exercising the sacred right of election". Attacking the Reformers' conception of an M.P's responsibility to his constituents, the writer is struck with the horror of the idea that "Legislators...

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1. Place Papers B. M. Add. MS. 27,840. f. 75 (Morning Post Oct. 9th, 1812).
2. Ibid (The Publican Oct 9th, 1812).
principles of government. It is well to remember, when viewing the extravagant language of Burdett and other Reformers, that their opponents were often as 'inflammatory' as they.

It hardly need be added that the reforming press, dwelling on the Reformers' triumph, made the most of the very quietness of the election. The 'Sunday Review' commented...

... "To improve the morals of the people is the natural consequence of the actions of the friends of Parliamentary Reform... To degrade and brutify mankind is the natural consequence of the selfish contests of parties, whose only object is the possession of power and emolument." 2.

1. Ibid. (Morning Post Oct. 12th 1812).
2. Ibid. (Sunday Review Oct. 11th 1812).
II. — The Conduct of a Popular Election.

Though there was no contest in Westminster in 1812, and therefore no occasion to test Place's 'plan' for conducting a popular election, it is still of interest notice it. Though jotted down only roughly in the forms of hints, yet it is clear enough that Place's ideas had developed in the light of his experiences in the 1807 election. His 1812 'plan' may be seen as the forerunner of his very elaborate and detailed 'plan' drawn up in 1816-19. It is also of interest for another reason. Place was beginning to be looked upon as something of an authority on the management of popular elections, and from time to time received requests for advice from men in towns elsewhere.

Place envisaged meticulous care in preparations, the careful sub-division of the electoral area, and the responsibility of each sub-area for the preparation of an electoral register and for the most careful canvassing. In Westminster, the obvious sub-area was the parish, but parishes were, if necessary, to be sub-divided into districts. The name and occupation of every elector was to be obtained from the poll books of the previous

1. The 1812 'plan' is to be found in Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,840 f. 11. The 1819 'plan', very much more detailed, in Add. MS. 27,842 ff. 9. et seq. cf. infra. I pp. 11 et seq.

2. cf. eg. Place Papers B.M Add. MS. 27,840 ff. 2,53
election, from the parish rate books, and from inspection and inquiry in the streets upon the eve of a new election. Names of electors were to be printed in book form, to provide complete lists for canvassing purposes, for the use of Hustings inspectors, and for other checking arrangements. Each sub-area committee was to be provided with the relevant section of the complete lists. The General Committee, which was to appoint and supervise all sub-committees, was to have certain paid staff-clerks and a secretary—who would be on duty permanently, keeping records, and sorting, sifting, and noting all information. Lists of polled and unpolled, canvassed and uncanvassed electors, were to be posted.

All staff were to be strictly vetted for their honesty and efficiency. In view of the danger that once a man's radical sympathies became known he might lose custom, or perhaps be ejected from his home, great care was to be taken that canvassers were of the 'right' type and that canvassing lists did not reach the 'wrong' hands.

In sending these hints to Brooks, Place clearly expected he and his friends would take a good deal for granted. Had there been a contest they would doubtless have acted upon them, but,
as things turned out, the 'Westminster Committee' had need to do little more than collect subscriptions, insert advertisements and arrange for the use of the Hustings. A start was made, however, on the compilation of an electoral register.

In lighter vein were Place's hints sent to a Mr. Grant of Coventry. He was advised to make no debts, to contract for everything in the most economic manner and to pay for everything as the work was done. The working committee was to be as numerous as possible, the managers as few. Orders (i.e. for materials) to be given by one person. (Place here emphasised the importance of careful accounting). There was to be no eating or drinking on the strength of money subscribed, since, once started, there would be no limit to it, and it prevented work. If a good subscription were raised at once, it would invigorate the cause and there would be plenty of volunteer service by those who could not contribute money. For the rest, Place's advice follows the lines of the plan described above, and he concluded by urging the staff...

"should be well grounded in the principles on which the election proceeds, and have the cause at heart, that nothing may be

1. *ibid* f. 9. (Minute Book Meeting 6th Oct.)
2. *ibid* f. 53.
written or done that is not conformable thereto. But no electioneering agent to hold that office on any account whatever, nor anyone of that sort to be appointed if you value economy, principles and success".
III. Election Expenses Again.

From the moment the Westminster Hustings Act had been passed in 1811, Place had remained anxious to seize the first opportunity of reopening the question of official election charges. He still hoped that an investigation into the nature of the civil government by the Dean and Chapter might be undertaken, and that, amongst other things, their liability for election expenses proved.

Having studied the new Act and obtained legal advice on it, he found that the only fundamental change in the situation was that a candidate was now expressly liable to pay the charges which the High Bailiff was authorised to make, whether he or his agents made agreement to pay them or not. The High Bailiff was still legally bound to conduct the election and now legally bound, too, to erect Hustings and provide staff. But he was not, as Sheriffs in County elections, authorised to demand a guarantee of expenses, nor to secure the agreement of candidates, before doing so. If, therefore, a committee sought to elect a man, who himself professed not to seek election; if there was no traceable connection between it and this man; if no one agreed to pay the High Bailiff’s bill, he must still bear the costs. Thus it was hoped, and not without good reason,

that the High Bailiff could yet be made to feel that, as the law stood, his position was impossible, and that he could again be driven to approach parliament for a remedy.

The election of 1812 provided Place with an opportunity of reopening the matter of election charges, and, on this occasion, the Westminster Reformers were disposed to follow his advice carefully. Refusing to pay the High Bailiff's bill, they again forced him to take legal action against them. Finding that the Act of 1811 still left him in certain circumstances liable to pay the costs of an election which he could not refuse to stage, the High Bailiff was, in fact, driven to appeal to parliament once again.

The two court actions brought by Morris against Burdett and Cochrane, after the election, are important, not only because they form part of the story of the Reformers' campaign against high official election expenses, but because they show Henry Brougham, who had for some time been drawing closer to the Westminster group, acting as the defending counsel on their behalf.

Place's letter of 27th September, written in reply to the request for his advice on election preparations, brought up

1. On the relations of Brougham and the Westminster Reformers at this time cf. infra, p. 83, n. 3.
the matter of Hustings charges. Burdett and Cochrane, he advised, must either appear on the Hustings or give anyone the chance of regarding them as candidates. He defied anyone to refuse members of the 'Committee' admission to the Hustings, provided the legal position, and their reasons for refusing to pay any of his charges, were made clear to the Bailiff. If they thought it advisable not to go on the Hustings, they would speak from the Committee Rooms. If they really wanted to make the Act ridiculous, they could nominate five or six others and, on a poll being demanded, could arrange for some electors to give their second votes to them... "No court", he added, "would I think, say such persons were liable".

As it happened the High Bailiff was out of town at the time, and all negotiations were made with his deputy, Mr. Tooke. The Deputy High Bailiff made clear he intended to go ahead with preparations for erecting the Hustings and obtaining staff, and he tried to get a deposit from the 'Westminster Committee' on the basis of an estimated cost of £700. The 'Committee', refusing to make any payment at all, made notes of all matters which might serve as evidence in a subsequent court action.

2. More precisely the estimated cost was £686, 16, 0. cf. ibid. f.88 For negotiations with the Deputy Bailiff cf. Minute Book ibid. f.9.
On Tooke's own suggestion, however, it was agreed a joint effort should be made to preserve the Hustings, so that by taking them to pieces and selling the wood, their cost would be reduced. As Richter pointed out, it was ironic that Tooke should now suggest this, for when the Reformers had themselves urged it in 1807, Morris and the Magistrates had preferred that the 'mob' should have their accustomed fun and be allowed to pull them to pieces and destroy them. Thus, for the first time in living memory, the election was not attended by this degrading scene.

In calling for subscriptions, in handbills and in speeches, the Reformers made great play with the injustice of their being called on to pay some £800 even if there were no contest and no vote taken. If electors had to face the payment of an amount like that before they could choose their representatives, their 'freedom of election' was a mockery.

On November 4th, the 'Committee' rejected the High Constable's bill for some £55 on the grounds that his assistance to 'preserve

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2. Ibid Minute Book, P. 17, Meeting, Oct. 7th, 1812. The figure £800 included estimated charges by the High Constables.
the peace of the election', had not been necessary. On the 6th, they rejected the High Bailiff's bill for £550. The amount of the bill was lower than the original estimate, partly because the Hustings had been re-sold, and partly because certain expenses for the hiring of clerks and other officials had not been incurred. The bill did, however, include an item of £24 for the High Bailiff's journey to London from Norfolk which he had made to be present on the election day! On 30th November, the 'Committee' authorised Mr. Pike to retain Brougham to act for them if legal proceedings were started against them, and Burdett and Cochrane were asked to allow the 'Committee' to handle matters completely.

Tooke, the Deputy Bailiff, consulting his lawyer, was advised to bring separate actions against Burdett and Cochrane. If liability were found to be 'joint', there would be time enough to bring a second action. If it were found to be 'single', judgement for half of the expenses against one, would make the

1. Ibid. Minute Book, Meeting, 4th Nov., 1812.
2. Ibid. Meeting, 6th Nov., 1812.
3. Some £120 was obtained from their re-sale.
5. Ibid. Meeting Nov. 30th 1812.
remainder recoverable from the other without a further action.

In consequence, the High Bailiff first brought an action against Cochrane. Like Burdett in 1808, however, he did not bother to notify nor consult with the 'Committee'. As a result, judgement was given against him by default. Once more it seemed Place's efforts to bring the matter into the open were to fail, and he was greatly irritated. It had been decided, however, that liability was single and it still remained to be settled how much Cochrane should be called upon to pay. This, it was fixed, should be argued in the Sheriff's court on February 23rd, 1813. The delay gave the Reformers time to arrange for Brougham to represent him, and, though the case was already lost, another chance to make their point.

The High Bailiff's Counsel and the Deputy Bailiff, giving evidence, held that the High Bailiff's office was not lucrative and that it was clearly not intended that he should pay election expenses. In view of the imminence of an election, which might have been contested, the High Bailiff had simply made the

1. P.P. House of Commons. Report of the Select Committee to whom the petition of Arthur Morris, Esq., Bailiff of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster was referred etc. (1813-14) Evidence of Deputy Bailiff.
2. ef. Place Papers B.M. Add. MsL 27,840 ff. 154 for an account of the trial; and f. 184 for Place's comments.
3. ibid. f. 111.
4. For MS. notes on the case, ef. ibid. f. 154.
customary preparations via his deputy. He had made no greater charge than usual.

Brougham, speaking for the Reformers, began by acknowledging that Cochrane must now be deemed liable for some part of the costs, since he had technically admitted liability by not coming forward to defend the original action. But he went on to raise the whole issue of whether he should have been liable, since he had not been a 'candidate', and concluded by attacking the High Bailiff in an attempt to reduce the amount of his Bill. Quoting Ellenborough's judgement in 1808 - that a candidate was not liable to any expenses, save by express agreement or where authorised by statute - he pointed out that a great many of the items on the Bill were for arrangements the High Bailiff had made solely in preparation for a contested election, which had not materialised. He had made them to fulfil his legal obligation to make a return, not because he had been authorised to do so by statute, nor because a poll had been demanded, nor by agreement. This was doubtless a burden, but the risk of bearing it was one which the Bailiff had undertaken when he had purchased his office. In any case

1. After Cochrane had independently announced his candidature in the Morning Chronicle of 29th Sept., 1812, the claim that he was not a 'candidate' must have been shaky.
the charges were grossly unfair. Cochrane was finally assessed at £225 and £34 costs, but payment for Hustings staff was disallowed.

The Westminster Reformers had, therefore, achieved something. Once again the High Bailiff had been warned against making unauthorised charges. Once again his position was made exceedingly difficult. Their full triumph, however, was to be delayed until 10th July, 1813, when the High Bailiff's second action against Burdett was brought in the King's bench before Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough. This time their case was properly presented, and their defence entirely successful.

Once again Brougham acted as Counsel for the 'Westminster Committee'.

Ironically enough, the Attorney General prosecuting, was the very man, who had undertaken Burdett's defence in 1808. He urged that since he had been unable to persuade the Jury there were proper grounds for defence then, he was quite sure there were none now. Brougham, in his turn, simply asked for the case to be non-suited, since there was no evidence that

1. Ibid
2. The 'Westminster Committee' 1812 election accounts, Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27840 ff. 221., shows the Reformers paid this for Cochrane.
Burdett had been a 'candidate', either from his own, or the 'Committee's' actions. The Attorney General did his best in reply, by arguing that acceptance of the seat implied candidature that the Committee's actions implied agency, that Ellenborough's decision in 1808 had settled the matter. The prosecution's case thus depended entirely on the proposition that Burdett's taking of a seat made him legally a candidate, and, as such, liable to election expenses. This proposition Ellenborough now felt bound to reject, and he non-suited the High Bailiff.

It was a great moment for Place and the Reformers, who now hopefully looked forward to the parliamentary enquiry they were sure must follow. Morris once more petitioned the Commons, and once more a Committee was appointed to investigate the matter. But once more too, Place and his friends were to be disappointed. No investigation was made into the office of the High Bailiff, and no enquiry was made into the responsibilities of the Dean and Chapter.

For the time being, no attempt was made to adjust the law. The Committee's report pointed out the iniquities of the High Bailiff's position, his financial losses, and the fact

1. P.P. House of Commons. Report of the Select Committee to whom the petition of Arthur Morris, Esq. Bailiff of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster was referred, etc. (1813-14)
that, as the law stood, he was bound to incur them. It recommended he be recompensed – but offered no suggestion for amending the law. The act of 1811, which had been due to expire on the 1st August 1813, and which had then been hastily renewed for five years, remained in force for want of any clear solution to the problem.

Election charges continued high in Westminster, and there were many subsequent wrangles. They are referred to again below. In future, however, the High Bailiff was even more wary of raising costly Hustings and of making unauthorised charges.

In 1817, when Cobbett, in open opposition to the Westminster group, was using his 'Register' to denounce them to the labouring classes as a middle class faction, he referred to their position in 1812. They had managed the election for Burdett in 1807 and, in raising subscriptions for the purpose, had got into correspondence with almost every town in the Kingdom. They had, in consequence, obtained a great reputation for public spirit and political knowledge, and in 1812 had received enquiries from Reformers all over the country who were anxious they should recommend suitable candidates to them. But, Cobbett went on, they had used their influence to discourage the aspirations of Reformers in the country and to stifle 'the people'.

Cobbett's assertions, very far from dispassionate and distorting the facts, must be evaluated with a knowledge of his own political viewpoint. But they were not entirely without foundation. Though the evidence which remains is not great, it is true enough that the Westminster group were asked for advice, and were asked to suggest candidates for constituencies.

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in the provinces. It is evident, too, that they did favour men of middle class respectability, and did show their dis-favour for those inclined to seek lower class support. Their influence on the Reforming 'party' is, indeed, likely to have been considerable. Centrally placed, and in touch with all the leading Reformers, the majority of whom were frequently in the capital, they were undoubtedly well informed as to the intentions of individuals among them to stand for election in provincial constituencies. Linked by correspondence with groups of Reformers in these constituencies, they were well able to advise them and to seek to influence their actions. They were, it is clear, keen to secure concerted action by Reformers everywhere.

The situation in 1812 was, in fact, similar to that which, at a later and more crucial moment for the Reformers, encouraged the Westminster group to found the abortive 'Parliamentary Candidates' Society' in 1831, as a kind of central office which

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1. cf. Leigh Hunt's **Editorial** in the *Examiner* Oct. 25th, 1812, where he expressed his satisfaction at the evidence that the old system of local influence was breaking down, and electors were seeking men of merit and public spirit to represent them. He specified Brougham who stood for Liverpool, and Romilly for Bristol, but may well have had the approaches made to the Westminster group, *infra* pp.14-17, in mind.
would supply suitable reforming candidates to constituencies. As Place then said, in the prospectus launching the Society, it was partly in consequence of the many requests for candidates, which those who managed Westminster elections had received, that it had been set up.

In 1812, there is nothing to suggest anything like a central office was ever contemplated by the Westminster group. There is, in fact, little enough to show the extent and nature of the correspondence they did carry on. In many cases it seems enquiries were received, and letters written, by individuals. If an enquiry warranted consultation with friends, the reply would be, in a sense, 'official'. More often, it seems, correspondence and advice was 'unofficial'. Whatever the case, the bulk of it is, regrettably enough, not traceable.

But though much must be left to the imagination, it is not

1. Place Papers B. M. Add MS 27,789 ff. 319. 20.
2. The Place Papers contain only letters dealing with transactions of this nature with which Place was concerned and there are not very many. It must be likely that the papers of many of Place's tradesmen friends perished with them, if indeed they ever saved them as Place did. At a later stage, it would seem Joseph Hume came to play a leading part in finding suitable candidates for constituencies who applied to the Westminster group, cf. ibid; also, letter from J. S. Buckingham to J. Bentham, 23rd. March, 1824, in possession of Dr Stark, Edinburgh University.
unimportant that such evidence as does exist of the influence of the Westminster group among provincial Reformers, and of their direct interest in provincial elections, should be noticed. It is indicative not only of their desire to draw together a 'party' in the country, but of what Cobbett rightly recognized to be their essentially 'middle class' outlook.

It is, for example, apparent, from a few papers in Place's guard books, that efforts were made by 'members' of the group to find a reforming candidate for Coventry. As it has already been seen, Place had also been asked to advise how the Reformers there should set about conducting the election.

According to Cobbett, however, when the application for a candidate from Coventry was received, the 'Westminster Committee' did their best to prevent the recommendation of a 'real' Reformer. Burdett, he claimed, refused to recommend Cartwright, Cartwright's friend, Peter Walker, or Henry Hunt. Instead, an attempt was made to persuade the Coventry Reformers to accept a former Guards Officer, and an intimate of the Horne 2. Tooke circle, Colonel Mayne.


2. Cobbett's *Political Register*, Dec. 20th, 1817. Cobbett, then in America, was hoping the Coventry Electors could be persuaded to take up a 'real' Reformer, viz. himself.
That Burdett and the Westminster Reformers refused to recommend Cartwright, Walker or Hunt is likely enough. That they sought to foist Mayne on the Coventry men or to exclude others is much less likely. It is quite certain they looked for other candidates, and it must be almost equally certain that their main concern was to find a reformer who, in their eyes, had greater respectability than any of the three mentioned. Thus, for example, Edward Wakefield – associate of Place and Mill in the Lancastrian School Scheme – wrote suggesting a certain Mr. Sharpe. Richter contacted him, but Sharpe refused to stand. He had, he said, already received applications to stand for Evesham and Yarmouth, but feared the expenses of a popular contest and believed the next parliament would be short. Wakefield's letter makes it apparent that he himself had been asked to stand, though it is not stated that this was for Coventry. Other men, however, were approached and asked to stand for Coventry, but none could be persuaded to do so.

2. ibid., ff. 111, 113.
3. ibid.
4. ibid. A letter from the Hon. D. Kinnaird to Richter suggests it is possible he was invited to be a candidate for some constituency.
Reformers at Evesham also approached the Westminster group asking them to suggest a candidate. They wanted an opposition to Manning, one of the sitting members. Whether or not Sharpe's name had been put forward by them, it is evident that efforts were made to meet the request.

Wolseley, not yet obviously, as he later became, one of the leaders of the 'working class' agitation, had, earlier in the year, received the 'official' approval of the Westminster group when he had been proposed for Staffordshire. Place had written an address to the Freeholders in his favour, after receiving a request from Clifford that he should do so. In Berkshire, William Hallett, who was certainly a correspondent of the Westminster Reformers, and in Leicester, William Roscoe Junior almost certainly received their 'official' approval. Montague Burgoyne, who stood for Essex, where it is probable he was the chief moving spirit behind the Essex Freeholders' Club, was another of the more substantial 'Burdettites', whom the

1. Ibid.
2. Sir Charles Wolseley, Ibid f. 2.
3. William Hallett was a Berkshire Magistrate, described to Place later, by a mutual friend, as a "disciple of your own school". In 1812 he professed to stand on the same principles as the Westminster group, cf. Place Papers B.M., 27, 341, f. 47. For his and Roscoe Junior's stand at Leicester, cf. H. S. Smith Register of Contested Elections.
1. Westminster group favoured. At Norfolk, Coke of Holkam made clear he was in entire agreement with Burdett at this time. At Exeter an effort was made to set up Northmore, Cartwright's friend, as a candidate. This, however, is likely to have been more directly the result of Cartwright's own personal encouragement. In Nottingham, Lord Rancliffe, standing on Burdett's principles, was set up and elected by a group imitating the methods of the Westminster Reformers.

How far the Westminster Reformers themselves favoured Brougham, standing at Liverpool is uncertain. It is, however, certain that he was supported by a group of 'Burdettites', among the leaders of whom was Roscoe, partly, it seems, out of gratitude for his work in getting the Orders in Council rescinded.

1. Place Papers B. M. Add. MS#. 27,840 f. 256. Burgoyne, more narrowly one of Cartwright's friends, was supported by yet another - Northmore.
2. Times Oct. 29th 1812.
4. Ibid. f. 293.
5. Liverpool Mercury Dec. 18th, 1818. Chairman's Speech to 6th Anniversary Dinner of the Liverpool Concentric Society, founded in consequence of Brougham's defeat, cf. also, Life of Cartwright 11.41
Further, Burdett himself, speaking at a dinner held on 14th December to celebrate his and Cochrane's return, expressed his great regret that 'corruption' had prevented Brougham's return.

Even more uncertain is the extent to which the Westminster group favoured Romilly standing at Bristol. Place had not been pleased with the opposition he made to Burdett's imprisonment in 1810, and politically, he always distrusted Romilly as a Whig. Others, however, had been less critical, and it may well be that a number of the Westminster Reformers favoured him. He had been invited to Burdett's Liberation dinner, and in 1811, Cartwright, acting in the name of the Middlesex Freeholders Club, had sought to secure him as the prospective Reformers' candidate for Middlesex.

Whatever the case, the Bristol election was certainly in Cobbett's mind when he accused them of seeking to stifle the efforts of those who had 'the people's' cause at heart. It was at the close of 1811 that Romilly had accepted an invitation to stand there at the next election. In January, 1

1. cf. infra, p. 97.
2. Romilly's Memoirs 11, 346, 422. He had also been asked to act as Burdett's counsel in his action against the Speaker in 1810 (11, 326).
Henry Hunt, who had cultivated the Reformers in Bristol since 1807, had also advertised himself as a candidate, and had stated he would stand on Burdett’s principles. It is apparent that Romilly’s acceptance of candidature had spurred Hunt to action and that he did not regard Romilly as a ‘real’ Reformer. Cobbett had started praising Hunt in the ‘Register’ and attacking Romilly as a Whig.

In May, Hunt had been a guest at the Westminster Reformers’ annual dinner, but though they remained apparently well disposed to him, appearances were deceptive. As far back as 1808, they had come to disapprove of him strongly on personal grounds, and though they had publicly toasted him, they had not become friendly with him, nor corresponded with him. Adams alone seems to have called upon him once when journeying to Bristol. Some of the Westminster Reformers seem to have expressed their disapproval of Hunt to Cobbett, and it may well have been, as

1. Romilly Memoirs. Ill. 3. 28
2. ibid.
4. ibid.
Hunt claims, that Adams did seek to persuade Cobbett to support Romilly in the Bristol bye-election of July 1812. Hunt certainly nursed a strong grievance that he received no support from the Westminster Reformers either in July or when he stood again, in October 1812.

It is difficult to discuss the part played by the Westminster group in elections in the country at large, with any precision. It can, however, be shown that they were actively concerned in promoting the elections of Jones Burdett in Southwark, and of Waithman and Wood, in London.

Apart from advice and assistance, the Westminster group subscribed funds towards the cost of Jones Burdett's election, which was conducted on the principles they had laid down. Sir Francis, naturally enough, supported his brother actively. On a request from Wood and Waithman's election committees, they helped to canvas and bring to the poll the outvoters of the City.

Whether or not it should be said with Cobbett, that the

2. Place Papers, B. M. Add. MS 27, 840. f. 1. 'Westminster Committee's' Minute Book 1812 election, 8th Oct.; also f. 136., for newspaper cutting of Sir Francis Burdett's Address to the Electors of Southwark.
Westminster Reformers exerted their influence against all 'real' Reformers, viz: men who wished to rouse the labouring classes, it may be agreed that they did favour candidates of some substance. If, indeed, they did 'discourage' reforming groups in the country, by advising them that no suitable candidate could be found, it is more than likely to have been because they had genuine difficulties in finding candidates. The disturbed state of the provinces which greatly reduced middle class zeal for reform, also reduced the number of men willing to stand for election as Reformers. As one Reforming newspaper editor summed matters up:—

"In casting our eyes over the proceedings of the different countries of the Empire the prospect is no less gloomy and unfavourable. The solitary triumph of Westminster is considerably dampened by the pusillanimous conduct of the electors in general, and by the birth of public spirited men to encourage them into action"......

On the other hand, the Freemen of Exeter would not even guarantee Northmore a free election, and Romilly's poll in Bristol was extremely low... "While on the other hand, elsewhere, we find electors at a loss for candidates to relieve them from the bondage they have endured.

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1. ibid. f.134. Unidentified Newspaper Cutting.
The Westminster Reformers were not only interested in finding and/or supporting candidates for other constituencies. Their desire to secure 'concerted action' - to see the efforts of Reformers in all parts of the country coordinated - is revealed even more clearly by the launching of a scheme, designed to encourage others to copy their example, and by the interest some of them displayed in encouraging the foundation of a model constituency association in Westminster, which, it was hoped, would be instituted in places all over the country.

The action and the success of the Westminster group in 1807 had clearly encouraged many to speculate, in the five years which followed, on the possibility that their technique might be adopted by electors elsewhere. If Place and his friends were concerned to work out detailed technical improvements which would increase efficiency in election management, they were equally interested in publicising the principles and the main outlines of the plan on which the Westminster Reformers had acted. Other politicians, too, were ready to advocate that electors should form their own committees, choose their representatives, and undertake their elections themselves.

Some, it is obvious, found reference to the Westminster Reformers example a useful means of combatting arguments for
parliamentary reform. Conservatives, somewhat cynically, pointed out that electors everywhere were perfectly free to copy it if they chose. Others, more aware of the delusiveness of the conservative argument, and the difficulties facing electors in the majority of places, were, nonetheless, genuinely interested in publicising the Westminster group's methods as a means by which improvements could be effected under the existing parliamentary franchise.

Thus, before the general election of 1812, the Westminster example of 1807 was widely canvassed, not only in the Reforming press but in other liberal periodicals as well. In particular, and most notably, perhaps, it was strongly advocated by Brougham in the July number of the 'Edinburgh Review.' In his article (the authorship was, of course, unknown to the general public) he made clear he had no liking for radical parliamentary reform, and that he believed it more immediately necessary to secure measures which would reduce bribery and corruption, and the expense of elections. There was, however, he admitted, much in the action of the 'Westminster Committee'

in 1807, which might be commended and copied. In particular, he suggested that electors everywhere should set up committees of their own which would be entrusted with subscription funds. This, in his view, would serve two main ends. First, the impersonal handling of public funds by a committee would lead to expenses being cut to a minimum. A committee acting for the public could refuse to incur all manner of extravagant expense, which a candidate could not avoid without being considered 'ungentlemanly'. Second, if the fund were kept open after the election and electors and non-electors alike were encouraged to subscribe, it would help to discourage ministerial opposition in future elections, and help to propagate the spirit of, and desire for, reform.

Advocating subscriptions and/or voluntary help according to means, his suggestion, that money not needed in one place might be switched to another in the event of a contest, implied that electors' committees must, in some way, be federated for the period immediately preceding and immediately after an election. Several reforming papers extracted the plan from the 'Review' article, and encouraged its adoption.

1. e.g. *Sunday Review* Sept. 27th, 1812; *Examiner* Oct. 4th, 1812.
Though it does seem that some efforts were made to act upon it in provincial constituencies, there is, however, nothing to suggest that it roused any great enthusiasm.

Brougham's proposals did not envisage the setting up of 'constituency associations', or any kind of federal association, on a permanent basis. The committees he projected were, it seems, expected to dissolve themselves after the election as the 'Westminster Committee' did, though presumably individuals like Brooks were to be left in charge of the subscription funds. Keen though Reformers were that 'the people's' cause, and their own hand, should be strengthened, the majority were not, it seems, disposed to encourage the formation of permanent electors' clubs at this time. It is likely that they would have been delighted and more than satisfied if this scheme had been widely taken up in the country, and it seems more than probable that Brougham, who was even at this time seeking to win the approval of the Westminster group, had been approached to advertise it.

It is, however, clear that some Reformers, at least, did believe

1. e.g. by electors in Coventry, supra p. 46; Nottingham, supra, p. 42; Essex supra p. 48; Berkshire supra p. 43; Bristol supra p. 50; It was acted upon in Southwark cf. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,340 ff. 256-7

2. cf. infra p. 63, n. 3.
it was desirable to go a stage further and encourage the
setting up of formally instituted elector's clubs - or
'constituency associations' of a permanent kind, which should
be linked and centrally controlled. It is, therefore, possible
that Brougham's article was intended to prepare the public
mind for such a scheme which was being drawn up at this time
in Westminster.

The scheme itself was not new. Cartwright and others had
shown the way by founding the Middlesex Freeholder's club in
1804. The precedent, however, could not have been encouraging.
The Middlesex Club itself was, as already noticed, still
nominally in existence in 1811, but apart from Hunt's Bristol
Freeholder's Club, an Essex Freeholder's Club, and possibly
a club in Kent, there is little evidence it had, or had ever
had, had many off-shoots. But whether or not similar Clubs
had been founded elsewhere, those whose existence is known,
seem to have depended almost entirely on the energies of a
very few men to keep them alive. Gusts of enthusiasm for reform

might swell their membership, but, in between, when excitement waned, they had languished.

These clubs themselves may have been of little importance. But their projection in 1804, and now again in 1812, is, as already suggested, important as an illustration of the way in which the extra-parliamentary organisation of 'the people' was being considered, and of the way in which the conception of an 'association', as put forward in the 1770s, was being constitutionalised, and applied to the electoral sphere.

The scheme for 'temporary' electors associations, put forward in the 'Edinburgh', is important for the same reason. That such ideas should have been canvassed at this time, is a significant reflection not only of the new conception of government held by Reformers, as the affair of 'the people', and their interest in mobilising the electorate, but of the growing desire among others, that electors' wishes should be more closely heeded, and that election morality should be improved. Radical Reformers, believing government should depend solely on the vote of a majority of members of the Commons, which in turn should depend

1. For the existence of the Essex Freeholders Club and for evidence of a possible Kent Freeholders Club, cf. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS 27, 340 f. 256. Certainly the Middlesex Club appears to have depended almost entirely on the energies of its founder, Cartwright.

on the will of the electorate who returned them, were seeking the means whereby that will could be made clear and effective. Moderate Reformers, such as Brougham, though they wholly dis-trusted the idea of direct democracy, were, nonetheless, interested in encouraging an improvement in election conduct, and in seeing 'the people' obtain, though certainly not a dominant, at least a larger, voice in matters of government.

It need not be surprising, however, that, at this time, schemes for setting up electors' associations with the aim of harnessing popular feeling for governmental purposes came to little. It was not only that 'popular' constituencies were few. 'Popular' interest was still too local; 'the people', too little interested in matters of central government, for such associations to flourish. It would have been, save at times of exceptional excitement, impossible to have collected a truly 'national' opinion through them, even supposing they had been founded. Parliamentary parties had as yet no need to encourage, or provide for, permanent local party agencies. Contemporary feeling, easily roused against anything which might, or might be held to, interfere with the 'freedom of election', remained ready to
condemn them. It is clear that the majority in the country would as yet scarcely have understood, let alone have sympathised with, the idea, that the electorate, still less 'the people', should have any direct influence on government. The appearance of local constituency associations at a later date, in fact, reflected conditions, a degree of popular interest in politics, and an acceptance and understanding of the needs of democratic parliamentary government, which did not then exist.

Thus the scheme, backed by some of the Westminster Reformers, to found a model constituency association in Westminster, to encourage other places to copy it and to link the local associations together under central direction, would, even when reforming enthusiasm ran high, have had little or no chance of more than partial and temporary success. In 1812, when that enthusiasm was slight, it was, as the event proved, doomed from the outset.

The plan for the Westminster Club, drawn up by Place, shows that the Club was envisaged as a means of embodying the will of 'the people' of Westminster, and as a model of democracy on

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1. Place, writing in December 1829, spoke of having been asked by many people to draw up this plan for a Westminster Club at the close of 1814 (27809 ff. 6). But it is clear from the evidence of newspaper cuttings in his guard book (27,840 ff. 142,253) and from Cobbett's Political Register Oct 31st, 1812, that Place made a slip in noting the year.
a local scale. It provided for parish committees to be elected annually by all who would pay 6d a week for membership. The parish committees, in turn, would elect a general committee, and this committee would elect managing officials to control expenditure, summon public meetings and arrange elections. Each and every committee's work was to be closely subjected to public scrutiny, and the conduct of business was likewise to be subject to public control. Monthly parish meetings were to be held.

From the moment he started to prepare the plan, Place, so he claims, had been persuaded of the "inutility" of the attempt to launch such a club. He was convinced "no such society could hold together for any considerable period even if the best and most disinterested men took the lead in it". It may be that he was thinking of the contemporary decline in enthusiasm for reform, and of the fact that few Hampden Club members attended its meetings. More likely, however, he had in mind that the success of the scheme would depend on there being a

1. cf. newspaper cutting of plan by 'F. Place', in Place Papers B. M. Add. MS#. 27,840 f. 253. It is not clear how far the Club was intended to effect local improvements as well.

2. Place Papers B. M. Add. MS#. 27809. f. 6.
strong and persistent popular interest in politics, such as he knew did not yet exist. He, of all men, knew that the strength of the Reformers in Westminster depended on the initiative and energy of the few, that if the Club were founded it would almost certainly have to depend for its continued existence on this same few. Moreover, whilst their actions would be unnecessarily hampered, their formal title to act for electors would become even more suspect, and they would be even more likely to incur the charge of seeking to exercise a 'sinister' influence.

Whether or not these thoughts were in his mind, whether or not he undertook to prepare the scheme only because he was persistently pressed to do so, and because he feared if he did not, some one else might produce a worse plan, he was certainly not surprised when, despite considerable publicity, the scheme came to nothing. Many of the Westminster Reformers were against it, partly it seems because it would have taken too much of their time, partly because they did not want to encourage the charge of being a 'junto', partly because they genuinely disliked a

1. cf. supra p. 12 and R.P. Report from the Select Committee, on Election Polls for Cities and Boroughs, 1827. Evidence of Place

2. cf. Examiner Nov. 8th, 1812.
scheme which would lead to a permanent influence being exerted on electors. In any event, it was rejected at a Westminster meeting held to consider its launching, and Cobbett alone seems to have pursued the matter, attempting to secure its adoption in Hampshire, his own home district.

The scheme of 1812, therefore, is of little more than academic interest. It is clear that the formal organisation and direct democratic control of elections it projected foreshadowed the Birmingham caucus closely—far more closely in fact, than the 'Westminster Committee' itself ever did—and almost certainly it was these features which led a majority of Reformers to reject it.

Yet it is an indication of contemporary distrust for the Westminster Reformers' election activities that the 'Westminster Committee' was to be attacked and condemned far more strongly than the Birmingham caucus, and that the very word 'caucus' was applied first to them as an epithet of abuse.

If indeed they did drop the scheme, lest they further encourage the charge of interfering with the freedom of electors,

1. ibid f. 142, for letter of Sturch to the press, Nov. 10th, 1812, denying he would take the chair at the projected Dinner to launch the Club, and asserting he had always been against such a Club; cf. also Cobbett's Political Register, Oct. 31st, 1812 for Cobbett's attempts to introduce the Club in Hampshire. It was not, he said, his own scheme, but "suggested by other gentlemen who are desirous I should communicate it to the Freeholders and inhabitants of the county in general." Place wrote (27, 305) that "those who projected it found it likely to cause more trouble than they were disposed to take.

2. cf. infra. \( \text{pp. 37-39} \)
it was ironic that their action should later be held to prove the very charge they were keen to avoid. Cobbett, who would have been the foremost in damning the Westminster Club if it had come to run by the 'Westminster Reformers', accused them, in due course, of deliberately pushing it out of sight because, as a self-imposed 'junto', they could naturally not permit anything so democratic.

Chapter IX.

Divisions among the Reformers (November 1812 until Waterloo)

The Politics of the Reformers; November 1812 - July 1814.

The general election may have strengthened the Liverpool ministry. It certainly did not strengthen the hand of the Westminster Reformers. On the contrary, it ushered in a period, extending until the spring of 1814, when, at long last, it became clear the war must end victoriously, in which little or no enthusiasm for reform could be roused anywhere in the country. The 'Luddite' riots had alarmed the upper and middle classes. Other matters diverted public attention. Many Reformers, finding the country apprehensive or apathetic if the matter were raised, became less active. Others came to take part in the agitation against the treatment of the Prince Regent's wife in 1813.

The most important developments of this period in the history of the Reforming 'party', are those which were going on beneath the surface. After the election of 1812, the Westminster Reformers were to draw further apart from Cartwright, Cobbett and Hunt. Between 1812-14 they were to draw closer to Bentham and his coterie, and closer too to the 'left wing' Whigs. If the division among Reformers, revealed

1. cf. Life of Cartwright, 11.45.
in the Westminster bye-election of 1814, is to be explained, if the attitude of Reformers towards each other, and towards the 'left wing' Whigs, then, and in the immediate post-war years, is to be understood, it is necessary to consider these developments more closely at this point.

The election of 1812 itself had, beyond doubt, led to increased friction between the Westminster group and Cartwright, Cobbett, and Hunt. The former did not approve the latter's interest in fishing in the troubled waters of the distressed areas. The latter believed the former were self-interestedly dampening the enthusiasm of the 'working classes', by refusing to encourage them to demand reform. The Westminster Reformers' refusal to countenance Hunt's election had antagonised not only Hunt himself, but Cobbett too, who supported his 'patriotic' stand in Bristol as strongly as he had supported the action of the Westminster group in 1807. Cartwright was hurt by the way the Westminster group had shown no interest in securing his advice on the Westminster election, by his complete rejection as a candidate, and by the lack of support they gave his

1. H. Hunt. Memoirs 11. 279, 523, 111, 36; cf. also, Cobbett's Political Register July 14th, 11th, Aug. 15th, 1812, for the 'puffs' he gave Hunt.
Hampden and Union Clubs. Thereafter, friction tended to increase and the breach became wider.

Cartwright re-embarked on his 'missionary' tours early in 1813 despite the efforts of many to dissuade him. Some, according to his biographer, "thought the country in a state of too much excitation, others prophesied disappointment from the effects of apathy and indifference, while many urged he would subject himself to ridicule and contempt." Cartwright's aim was to encourage the humble people in the provinces to petition for reform. He had found... "among the middle and working classes a very general sense of misery and wrong and a very general disposition to petition for a reform of that house, the corruption of which was generally supposed to be the cause; but (they were) diffident of their knowledge and of the best mode of applying for redress" .... The deference shown to him convinced him that an even greater deference would be accorded to other men of higher rank than himself, if they would but follow his example and come forward as leaders.

1. Life of Cartwright 11.75 et seq, 86, 105; cf. also, Cartwright's appeal for support at the 1812 Westminster election Celebration Dinner, 14th Dec., 1812. Place Papers, E. M. Add. MS. 27,840, f. 146. It is evident from the continuing decline of the Hampden Club that it made no impact on the Westminster group. Cartwright, of course, had roused a great deal of conservative suspicion by his tour in the summer of 1812. Cf. Life of Cartwright 11.34, Cartwright to Mr. Knight, August 8th, 1812; Cartwright to his wife, Sept. 1st 1812.

2. Life of Cartwright 11.45 et seq.
Few, however, had Cartwright's trust in the common people. It seems the majority of men, including the majority of Reformers, though recognising the sincerity of his views, and the honesty of his intentions, believed it more likely he would only succeed in encouraging disorder and disaffection among them. The Hampden and Union Clubs in London, never in a very flourishing state, were already declining—the latter, which had many of the Westminster group among its members, even more rapidly than the former. The Westminster group were no more disposed to encourage Cartwright's schemes than were the men of 'rank and talent', whom he constantly urged to come forward.

Thus Cartwright went forward alone. Moving among the provincial 'working classes', he showed them how to petition, collected many petitions from them himself, and urged them to form Hampden and Union Clubs of their own. To encourage them, it seems he told them that a body of men in London — members of the London Hampden and Union Clubs — were working for their cause and would be ready to lead them. At the same time he struggled to bring these clubs to life, and strove to persuade the middle classes to support them.

1. cf. e.g. toasts to Hampden Club by a Manchester Reform meeting organised by Cartwright early in Sept. 1812. Life of Cartwright 11. 40. Morning Chronicle Sept. 8th, 1812; cf. also, Meeting at Sheffield, organised by Cartwright. Place Papers R. M. Add. MS. 27, 339 f. 214, and Manchester Meeting of May 1812, at which it was proposed correspondence should be opened with the metropolis and other populous towns to promote reform. 27,339 f. 215.
Cobbett and Hunt would doubtless have held that the Westminster group's indifference to Cartwright's schemes showed their 'hatred' of 'the people'. That many of them did fear that Cartwright would encourage further disorders in the provinces and do harm to their cause, cannot be doubted. But it was the man himself, almost as much as his schemes, which prevented them cooperating with him. The majority seem to have shared Place's half-amused, half-contemptuous, attitude for Cartwright's incurable belief that victory was just round the corner, and found him impossible to work with. According to Place, admittedly an adversely prejudiced witness, Cartwright "had but little regard for any political person and his intimacy with some persons went no further than as it seemed likely to promote his political purposes". When he had projected the Hampden Club... "the old gentleman always succeeded in persuading himself that a radical parliamentary reform was at hand; he could name the very few months within which it was sure to take place, and any doubt was sure to produce in him the utmost contempt for the understanding of him who doubted"... He was certain that such a cooperation as this club would produce, with the use in his hands of the money which the subscription of its members would procure, must, within a year, accomplish his wishes. In this persuasion he was perfectly sincere, and, as he conceived, fully justified, in proposing and adopting any management which might enable him to do such signal service to his country.

1. Place Papers B. M. Add. MS. 27509. f. 5.
2. ibid. f. 8
Had the Westminster Reformers found him a man with whom it was easier to deal, it is not inconceivable they would have used their influence to turn the Hampden and Union Clubs into agencies for educating the 'common people.' It is significant that Place was immediately ready to approve a scheme of Cartwright's for making a political lecture tour in 1815, and to assist him in his preparations. But whatever their reasons, the fact that the Westminster Reformers did not support his clubs greatly increased Cartwright's growing sense of irritation with them.

There was, however, another matter which led to increased friction between Cartwright and the Westminster group. Cartwright's heart was still set on becoming one of Westminster's representatives. The Westminster group, recognising Cartwright's advocacy of universal suffrage was not popular in Westminster, and coming to be even more convinced, as time went by, that electors would not vote for him, consistently discouraged

1. *ibid.* f. 10. It is, however, likely, that, recalling the alarm and repression occasioned by the appearance of the popular Societies in the nineties, in the form of an 'Association', the Westminster Reformers were never in favour of Cartwright's attempt to found an association of clubs among the provincial labouring classes.

his ambition. In consequence, Cartwright, nursing his other grievances against them, became more and more ready to believe it was only their personal influence against him which prevented his being taken up by the electors, more and more suspicious that they were intriguing against him, and more and more ready to seek support elsewhere.

The Westminster group's relations with Cobbett and Hunt were also to become increasingly strained at this time. Though there is no evidence to show Hunt was yet moving among the provincial workers, though Cobbett's 'Register', in 1813, was principally devoted to the agitation against the treatment accorded to the Regent's wife, it was clearly during this period that their interest in rousing a 'working class' agitation for reform was developing, and it must have become increasingly evident to those who had dealings with them. It was after Cobbett's vigorous support for Hunt in the Bristol elections that these two drew closer together.

1. cf. infra pp. 88-9, 118 et seq.; 163 et seq.; and e.g. Cartwright's 'Addresses' to the Electors of Westminster Feb. 4th and April 6th, 1819.; cf. also A. Bain, Life of James Mill p. 123. Prospect that Cochrane's father would die that Cochrane would go to the Lords, which opened at the close of 1812, inevitably increased friction on the election issue.
The Westminster group, it seems, had never approved of Hunt. In 1808, Cobbett, who then knew little of Hunt personally, had written to Wright, his agent, warning him against Hunt as a man of untrustworthy character whose personal life was scandalous. Wright, one of the original 'members' of the Westminster group, had brought it to Brooks. The letter was kept, to be unearthed ten years later. But the Westminster group would hardly have set much store by it had they found for themselves they could approve of him.

By 1812, however, they had learned to distrust Hunt thoroughly. It may have been that there were disputes between them and Hunt before 1812, though there is no evidence to show this was the case. The leaders of the Westminster group, indeed, seem to have had little or no personal contact with him. But it is a fact, already indicated above, that Hunt's introduction to Westminster Reforming politics was by a man - Clifford - with whom the Westminster group were never on good terms, and that Hunt thereafter became friendly with men who, for one reason or another, were, or became, the opponents of the

1. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,843 f. 308, Place to Wright Dec. 8th, Dec. 1820. The circumstances in which it was brought to light are referred to below, infra IV. pp. 280 et seq. Hunt to take lead against the Westminster group.

2. ibid. Place may not have met him personally until 1816 cf. G. Waller, op. cit. P116.
the Westminster group. It is highly probable that, conscious of the friends he was making, and perhaps finding he was retailing malicious gossip against them, they had very early come to regard him as among those likely to cause them trouble, and had deliberately refused to associate with him save in public.

Hunt's career as a demagogue had not yet begun. The Westminster Reformer, therefore, cannot yet, as they later did, have feared lest his inflammatory speeches to the 'common people' would encourage mass disorders. At the same time it must seem likely that they already regarded him - as they certainly did later - as vain and shallow, a man more interested in personal acclaim than in working steadily to enlighten 'the people'. Whether or not they did so in 1812, they were soon to recognise and wholly to distrust Cobbett's influence upon him. Believing Cobbett was making use of him, they came to regard him with increasing contempt.

The Westminster group's disapproval of Cobbett came to be

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1. H. Hunt Memoirs 1.501. Cowlam who worked with the Westminster Group in 1827 (27,838 f. 20) was another..."too honest and sincere a lover of freedom to remain a dupe of this gang"... who became a friend of Hunt. [bid.] 8 11.225-7.

altogether stronger than their disapproval of Cartwright and Hunt — almost certainly because they appreciated his much greater force of character, and the power of his pen. Writing after Burdett and the 'Westminster Committee' had been one of the chief subjects of Cobbett's abuse for years, and referring more specifically to Cobbett's part in the post war reform agitation which began in 1815, Place admitted him to be in some ways a "useful" leader, who had "inculcated some useful knowledge". But he made clear his detestation of the way Cobbett appealed too readily to the "prejudices and passions of the people" and believed his aim was "to create such a feeling of insubordination"... (among the 'common people')... "as would overpower government". He was, wrote Place... "too ignorant to see the common people must ever be imbecile... When not supported by others who have money and influence."  

These opinions, which came to be shared by the majority of the Westminster Reformers, express their middle class outlook clearly. Almost certainly they had been forming ever since Cobbett first began his association with them. Though the Westminster Reformers had not yet the same reason to distrust  

1 ibid.
him as later, yet they were already coming to regard him as completely self interested and capable of proving highly dangerous.

Their view of Cobbett may not be justifiable, Cobbett may have been a man of far greater talents, integrity and public spirit than they would have allowed. But, bearing in mind their belief in the importance of encouraging the spread of reason, their attitude towards him and towards Hunt, is, at least, understandable. If Place himself, the very embodiment of the spirit of hard-headed rationalism, had remained on good terms with Cobbett, the passionate romantic individualist, it would have been something of a miracle. Always intolerant of those who disagreed with him, Place's strongest antipathy was reserved for those whom he believed were deliberately hindering the spread of reason for their own ends. It cannot, therefore, be surprising that he and his friends should come to regard Hunt and still more Cobbett with extreme disapproval, and it must be evident why Place used such terms as "unprincipled" and "self interested" in referring to them.
Cobbett made up his mind as he went along. Prepared to change it according to circumstances, he was one of the last men to refrain from giving his opinions even when he was alone in holding them. For the most part, between 1807-11, his political opinions - on the need for parliamentary reform and on the measure of reform necessary - seem to have been influenced by Cartwright, Burdett and the Westminster group. In any event he conformed his views to theirs. But even in this period it is apparent that many of his opinions on other matters, social and economic, reflected the very prejudices of the common man which Place and others believed must be eradicated. Aware of the influence of the 'Register' and of the value of its support, they must early have become acutely conscious of, and greatly irritated by, Cobbett's readiness and ability to encourage what they believed were false notions and prejudices.

How far the Westminster group had come to distrust him before 1810, is not known. It was, however, Cobbett's behaviour

2. ibid. pp Ch.X. His views on education alone, must have been enough to anger Place and his friends considerably. He was totally against any system of regimented education, such as the Lancastrian scheme.
during and after his trial for sedition in that year, which first brought about a breach between them, though it may have been the occasion rather than the cause. Place who helped him to prepare his defence, which he had determined to make himself, found him vain and egotistical. His speech in Court, widely felt to have been poor, Place regarded as mere bluster which served only to make him, and Reformers' generally, look ridiculous. After the trial the contrast between the man himself, and the strong, courageous champion of 'the people' behind the pages of the 'Register', must have seemed even greater, when it became known he had negotiated with the ministry and had been prepared to end the 'Register' if the penalties imposed on him should be withheld.

Place may have been prejudiced against him. As G.O.H. Cole has shown, there is much to be said for Cobbett and his actions at that time. It remains a fact that Place broke with him at the close of the trial, and many others are likely to have believed with Leigh Hunt, that Cobbett had shown himself ready

1. G. Wallas, op. cit. p. 117 n. 1. quotes Place's version of the trial and his own reaction to Cobbett's behaviour. He saw Cobbett a few days after the trial, but never spoke to him after that. Cobbett himself (Political Register, Jan. 3rd 1818) claims to have had a brush with the Westminster group over Burdett's letter to the Speaker in 1810.
to betray 'the people's' cause to save his own skin.  

If this is the case, it must explain why, especially when Cobbett began to address himself directly to the lower classes, the Westminster group came thereafter to regard him with an increasing suspicion. Distrust for the man, must inevitably have increased their distrust for his writings considerably, and they must have viewed many of his strongest declamations in the 'Register' as pure bombast. It seems they came to regard Cobbett's opportunism, his talent for turning any passing event to account by using it to support whatever arguments or case he was presenting at the time, as evidence that he was completely lacking in principles.  

Reviewing Cobbett's career in this mood, it could easily appear that his sole concern was for power - that he had adopted the cause of 'the people' of Westminster, as he now turned to the provincial workers, solely out of self interest. Coming to recognise the influence he was gaining over Hunt, they came to despise him for what appeared

2. Certainly Place did. Place Papers B.M. Add, MS, 27,809 f. 17.
to be his readiness to push Hunt into pursuing courses he did not care to pursue in the open himself.

That Cobbett and Hunt should come to feel an equally strong dislike and distrust for the Westminster Reformers must be as easily understandable. Totally different in character and temperament from the leaders of Westminster group, they must have come to disapprove of them for personal reasons precisely the converse of those which led Place to disapprove of them. How far Hunt's antipathy for them developed by itself, how far the influence the others, above all Cobbett, turned him against them must remain a matter for conjecture. Cobbett it is evident, was always suspicious of the new 'enlightenment' and its advocates. If he did not disapprove of Place in 1807, it is likely he viewed his friendship with Mill, and the growing influence of Bentham's views upon him, with considerable distaste.

Personal factors undoubtedly sharpened their hostility for the Westminster group. But it was their new and developing interest in rousing the lower classes which brought that hostility into the open. Finding the Westminster leaders


unwilling to cooperate with them, finding them totally against any attempt to take advantage of the distress among the provincial workers, they must have become acutely conscious of the distrust the Westminster group felt for them, and more acutely aware of their strong 'middle class' outlook. Jealous of their influence, they were coming to look on their every move with suspicion and were coming to regard them as an entirely self-interested faction. Reviewing their past activities in a new light, they came to believe they had all along been solely concerned with promoting the interests of their 'class'.

If the Westminster Reformers were drawing apart from Hunt and Cobbett, they were, at the same time, drawing closer to Bentham and to a number of the 'left wing' Whigs. This development, which both reflected and strengthened their middle class views on social, economic, and political matters, must have increased their disliking for Cobbett and Hunt. There can be no doubt whatever, that it greatly increased Cobbett's and Hunt's dislike for them.

1. cf. e.g. Henry Hunt's Memoirs, passim
It was between 1811-14 that Place came into contact personally, or by correspondence, with most of the social reformers and economists of the day. It was during the same period that the Westminster Reformers began to identify themselves more clearly with those whose 'Matthasian' social and economic views were to exercise so great an influence among the 'new' middle classes, and to inspire so great a distrust among the 'working classes', of the nineteenth century. Place himself, joining the committee of the new British and Foreign school Society in 1813, (the title given to reformed Royal Lancastrian Association) became even more deeply immersed in schemes of popular education. As Halévy points out, his proposal for the setting up of a Lancastrian system of secondary schools, which would educate the 'new' middle classes in modern subjects - a proposal taken up by Bentham - reflects the interest

1. G. Wallas, *op. cit.*, p. 158, e.g. Ensor, Hodgskin; Wakefield; Owen; probably through James Mill - Ricardo; Godwin (whom he met in 1810, *ibid.* p. 59) and J. B. Say.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 95, 159. Place was also instrumental in getting the last clauses of the Statute of Apprentices repealed.
of Place's own class in providing a suitable education for their sons.

It may have been Brougham's enthusiastic and energetic support for the 'Chrestomathic' scheme, as it came to be called, which finally decided the Westminster group to take him up as a second candidate. Certainly it brought him into closer association with Place, and Place, who was at this stage considerably impressed by him, is likely to have been in his favour. It is likely, however, that Brougham had already been unofficially 'adopted' by a number of the leaders of the group even before the end of 1812, when the prospect of a bye-election seems first to have appeared.

Whatever the case, it may be certain that Brougham's activities at this time were directed with an eye toward keeping the favour of the Westminster group, and pleasing

1. E. Hélévy, op. cit. p. 286, J. Richter, as well as Place, were members of the West London Lancastrian Association Committee cf. G. Wallas, op. cit. p. 56.

2. G. Wallas, op. cit. p. 56. Place/to Wakefield, Feb. 20th 1814, comments very favourably on Brougham.

3. Brougham's sense of grievance at his treatment by the Whig leaders in 1812, and at their disinclination to find another seat for him after his Liverpool defeat, is well known cf. A. Aspinall op. cit pp. 29, 31. Even before the general election, however, it would seem he had considered such an eventuality. Certainly he was preparing to seek fresh sources of support over/..
in the nation. Thus he had drawn up a 'popular' programme, including schemes for education and tithe reform, and was planning to campaign for the abolition of the income tax, the Liberty of the Press, and against the American War. He had also written the article in the July 'Edinburgh' praising the Westminster Reformers' election methods, cf. supra p.55, and, in August, had defended the '38' Manchester Reformers by arrangement with Cartwright (Life of Cartwright 11.34 et seq). In these circumstances the Westminster group seem to have become interested in him as a candidate at least as early as September, 1812. (cf. Cobbett's Political Register, December 12th, 1818) though Reformers at Worcester had asked him to stand in 1811. (cf. A. Aspinall op. cit. p. 27). Leigh Hunt told him all his friends in London were anxious that he should contest the City in 1812, and in October he confessed he would like to become radical member for Westminster (A. Aspinall, op. cit. p. 31). In Westminster he defended the Editor of the 'Statesmen' who was a supporter of the Westminster group, in his trial for sedition. In December he defended the Hunts a second time, this time unsuccessfully, (A. Aspinall, op. cit. p. 36). It was in these circumstances that he was greatly praised by Burdett at the 1812 celebration dinner in December cf. infra, p.9. But it seems to have been the prospect which opened up at the same time that Cochrane would go to the Lords which first made Brougham's election a serious possibility.
prospective constituents. In turn the interest of the Westminster group in securing Brougham's election was an important factor in the processes which were drawing them and Brougham's 'left wing' Whig friends closer together. Another may have been their common interest in making capital out of the Regents' strained relations with his wife. Fundamentally, however, it is clear their improved relations stemmed from closer personal acquaintance, and a better recognition of their common interest in promoting a number of social, economic and political reforms according to principles on which both sides were coming to agree. It is impossible to trace with any certainty the contacts made directly or indirectly through Bentham. It is impossible to say with any precision how important was his influence, and how far common acceptance of his views assisted the process. But it cannot be doubted that the influence of Bentham, or more exactly 'Benthamism', was a major factor in drawing the 'left

wing' Whigs and the Westminster group closer at this time.

To Cobbett and Hunt, however, the closer association of the Westminster group's leaders with 'Benthamites' and Whigs, appeared simply as further evidence that they were prepared - were even now preparing - to sacrifice 'the people'. On the one hand they were showing their interest in the launching of a new scheme to provide national primary and secondary education under the control of men who were among the chief exponents of Malthusian doctrines. To Cobbett who detested the very idea of a national system of education for the regimentation he feared it would bring, and who detested the views of Malthus far more, there could have been no clearer sign of their 'hatred' of 'the people'. On the other hand, they were taking up Brougham as a prospective candidate for Westminster, and were coming to be better disposed towards his Whig friends.

1. It was at this time that Burdett and Bentham drew closer. Bentham, Works X. 460). Brougham also now became an intimate of Bentham, A. Bain, op cit. 120. The connections now being established between the leaders of the Westminster group, Bentham and his friends, and members of the 'left wing' Whig group depended on common interest in such subjects as:- popular education; prison and legal reform; police reform; the liberty of the Press; Admiralty Droits (the abuse of) Military flogging, etc.

Cobbett and Hunt could hardly have disapproved of anyone more than Brougham, one of the most influential of the 'Edinburgh' Reviewers, and one of the most prominent of those who had constantly displayed their contempt for all Reformers. As events were to prove, neither at this, nor at any other time, had the Westminster group any thought of sacrificing their political beliefs and compromising with Whiggism. They would only accept Brougham if he, in turn, accepted their views and came to them as an 'honest' 'people's man'. To Cobbett and Hunt, however, their actions signified one thing only - their self-interested readiness to hand Westminster over to the Whigs, and to join with them against 'the people'. Consequently they determined to oppose his candidature.

By 1813, if not before, it is apparent there were really three groups of Reformers in Westminster. There was the Westminster group itself, led or influenced by Place, and/or his close friends, still, by far, the largest. There was a small group, led by Cartwright and Cleary, Secretary of the Hampden and Union Clubs, whose relations with the Westminster group were coming

1. His 'Edinburgh' Articles were very soon to be brought forward against him by Cartwright. cf. infra, p. 120.
to be strained. There was also a still smaller group, looking to Cobbett and Hunt for leadership, whose relations with the Westminster group were coming to be even more strained. It is further apparent that the two latter groups were coming to be increasingly disposed to cooperate.

The reasons why Cobbett and Hunt should have come together as a political team at this time may seem obvious. The reasons why they and Cartwright should have come to cooperate, despite their obvious and considerable difference of temperament and character, may require some further explanation.

Cobbett and Hunt were, of course, coming to be substantially in political agreement with Cartwright on the measure of parliamentary reform necessary. Cartwright, though prepared to back more moderate extensions of the franchise as far back as the 1770's, believed the vote should be given to every adult male. Cobbett and Hunt were rapidly coming to that view, if indeed they had not already reached it. Further, they were all

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1. Thomas Cleary, who will be referred to from time to time below, was Cartwright's general Assistant, though he was paid by Cartwright from Hampden and Union Club funds cf. Place Papers B. M. Add. MS. 27843 cf. 308., Place to J. Wright, Dec. 8th, 1820. He hoped to be an Attorney cf. his Letter to Cartwright (a pamphlet) June 1819.
interested in taking action to rouse and harness the political energy of the lower classes.

There were, however, other and more pressing considerations compelling them to join forces at this time. It is improbable Cartwright had any liking for either Cobbett or Hunt personally. At the same time, feeling himself frustrated and neglected by the Westminster group and anxious to find support elsewhere, he must have been fully aware of the value of their backing. But more than anything it was the Westminster group's 'choice' of Brougham as a prospective candidate, which drove him into their arms. Distrusting Brougham for sincerely held political reasons, he was personally deeply hurt. Determined to make a fight of it, and anxious to gather about him men who would promote his election, he was to welcome the support of Cobbett and Hunt.

Cobbett and Hunt for their part are likely to have had no more real respect than the Westminster Reformers for Cartwright. But, conscious of his strained relations with them, and aware of his grievances, it seems they came to see it would be possible to take advantage of his feelings, and to turn him to account. If they were to back him against the Westminster Reformers
over local political arrangements, it would greatly embarrass and hinder their operations in Westminster itself. If he were to be held up in public and presented as the great champion of 'the people's' rights, the Westminster group must be even more embarrassed. If they did not support him, 'the people' should be told about it. If they opposed him it would make it even more clear they were the enemies of 'the people'. Cartwright himself would, doubtless, be flattered, but, in any case, he could scarcely object to the publicity they would give his cause. How far these truly represented the views of Cobbett and Hunt at this time, is uncertain, but it is certain they determined to set him up in the next election.

Important as it is that these developments should be noticed, it is equally important to re-emphasise they were taking place very largely beneath the surface, and were either not seen, or not appreciated by the public. On the contrary, at this very time, when the Westminster Reformers were separating

1. There is nothing in Hunt's Memoirs to suggest he had any higher opinion of Cartwright than Place. I can only say with regard to his and Cobbett's flattery of Cartwright, as it appears from 1815-16 onwards, that it seems to me far too obviously directed towards the embarrassment of the Westminster group to have any real sincerity.
themselves from the 'extremists', it seems that increasing numbers among the lower classes in the provinces were coming to look to Westminster for leadership, and Cartwright was actively encouraging them to do so. Not for some time did Cobbett and Hunt, caught up in the agitation on behalf of Princess Caroline in 1813, come to make a serious effort to warn 'the people' against the Westminster group, and not until later still did they break with them completely. The Westminster Reformers themselves certainly did not make clear, when they referred to 'the people', that they did not approve a 'working class' agitation. So long as all Reformers upheld Burdett as their leader, advocated his 1809 programme and co-operated in public, it must have been easy to overlook the signs of their increasing divergence.

Evidence of the public activities of the Westminster group during this period is scant, though it is clear many of them came to lead the metropolitan agitation on behalf of the Princess Caroline in 1813, whilst Burdett was one of her chief defenders

1. cf. infra. IV. Ch. x. II., and Ch. xii. II.
in parliament.

At the dinner, held on the 14th December, 1812, to celebrate his and Cochrane's unopposed return, Burdett referred to the results of the late general election and held that they clearly demonstrated the case for reform. His remarks on Brougham's stand at Liverpool, must, as already suggested, have been intended to introduce him to the electors as a prospective future candidate.

It had, he said, been considered a ground for complaint that, in many places during the late election, those who had uniformly maintained the cause of 'the people' had not been supported. But how could Westminster's example be followed when existing bodies of electors had no inclination to do so, and 'the people' who wished to imitate its example could not? Many compliments, however, had been given to those in Liverpool who had supported Brougham, and no one would deny his great claims to the support of the public. The fact that he had not been elected would do more to wake up 'the people', than if he had been returned. If the electors there had been free, as they should have been, he

1. Place Papers. B.M. Add. Ms. 27,340. f. 146. for newspaper cutting accounts.
would not have been rejected. Corruption was the true cause of his defeat and of other honest men as well. 'The people', who were, through their right of electing representatives, the true source of power, had been stifled.

Burdett's speech, however, though doubtless intended to be encouraging, suggested little enough reason for optimism, and the majority of Reformers seem to have been too discouraged after the election to start a new campaign against corruption immediately. Cartwright, however, as on other occasions was an exception. At the same dinner he spoke encouragingly of his recent tour of the distressed areas, of the great reception he had been given, and of the enthusiasm for reform he had found. He had, he said, started petitions in Manchester, Sheffield and Halifax and other places in Derbyshire, and in Nottingham. In Halifax, 17000 people had already signed a petition; in Sheffield 5000; and in Nottingham, "the majority". Cartwright made clear he believed such interest should be fostered by others present.

1. John and Leigh Hunt had just been sentenced to two years imprisonment cf. A. Aspinall op. dt., p. 36; For other evidence of 'dispiritedness', cf. Place Papers, B. M. Add. MS., 27, 840, f. 134, (newspaper cuttings); Life of Cartwright 11. 45.
In the event, Cartwright found he would have to undertake the active 'missionary' work of rousing and organising a demand for reform in the provinces, almost single handed, and it is he who appears as the most active worker for the cause of parliamentary reform at this time. He secured large numbers of petitions for reform, and did his best to get Burdett and Cochrane and others to raise a stir in parliament by presenting and defending them. When 'his' petitions were rejected because they were printed, he tried hard to make this itself a cause for a wrangle in the House. At the same time he busily wrote letters to the press and, in fact, did everything he could think of "to chase from the atmosphere of England, the foul and despicable fiend, despondence."

But even Cartwright, though he was not deterred from pressing

1. Life of Cartwright II. 52 et seq.
2. Ibid. He also tried to capitalise on an attempt to arrest him in Huddersfield via a petition which was presented to the Lords by Byron in June 1813.
3. Ibid. Cartwright repeatedly urged M.P.'s to raise the matter of reform in the House so as to excite discussion.
ahead with his schemes, must have been disappointed at the
poor response which met his efforts. Neither in parliament,
nor in the country did he succeed in doing more than ruffle
the indifference shown by the vast majority to the question of
parliamentary reform. Burdett's own comparative silence on
the matter, suggests he, and his Westminster supporters equally,
recognised the fruitlessness of trying to agitate the question
at this time.

How far it was the indifference they met which encouraged
the Westminster, London and other Reformers to join with the
'left-wing' Whigs in 1813 in an attempt to capitalise on the
notoriously bad relationship between the Prince Regent and his
wife, Princess Caroline, it is impossible to say. Numbers of
them doubtless welcomed the chance of helping to discredit
royalty in the public eye. Sharing the popular dislike
of the Regent personally, and still smarting at the way their
earlier fulsome praise of him had made them appear ridiculous,

1 Though not it would seem, all of them. Sturch and Weitman,
for example, were by no means keen that the agitation
against the ministers on behalf of the Princess should be
encouraged. Hunt was disgusted with them, cf. Hunt's Memoirs
111. 158-9. Cobbett's Political Register, April 15th, 1813.
it would seem the majority were only too ready, now all hope of his taking up their cause was past, to show their real feelings for him. In any case it was an obvious means of embarrassing the ministry.

It was the final dashing of their hopes of office though the Regent which drove numbers of the Whigs in factious fashion to cultivate the Regent's wife and daughter who, now George III's recovery was hopeless, was in effect, already 'heir apparent.' By early 1813, Brougham, Whitbread, and Creevy, recently appointed advisors to the Princess Caroline, had already been making use of her to embarrass the Regent and his ministers for some months, though it may well be that the actual decision to publicise the 'disgraceful' treatment she was receiving at their hands in February, was made on the spur of the moment. There is nothing to prove Burdett and the Westminster group knew what was, or was likely, to happen, nor that they planned any extra-parliamentary campaign in support of the Whigs. On the other hand, and in view of Burdett's known intimacy with the Princess' circle at this time, in view too of the Westminster group's closer relations with the 'left wing' Whigs and with Brougham in particular,

2. On the Royal scandal and Whig intrigues on behalf of the Princess Caroline at this time, cf. A. Aspinall, op. cit. p. 101.; M.W. Patterson, op. cit., l. 32 et seq.; R. Fulford, George the Fourth pp. 124 et seq.
it must seem impossible that they did not know beforehand what was going on.

The story of the tragic marriage, equally disastrous to both parties and to the royal family as a whole, is too well known to recount at length. At all times a source of embarrassment to ministers, the rival 'court' which the Princess Caroline attracted about her, contrived, on more than one occasion, to create an uproar in the country which made their position all but impossible.

It was the problem provided by their daughter, Princess Charlotte which came to provide perhaps the greatest single strain on the relations of the Royal couple. On no account would the Prince tolerate the idea of his wife influencing her education. In 1806, encouraged by advice of his wife's 'scandalous' behaviour, anxious for the unfitness of her influence on his daughter to be proved, and ready to be rid of her altogether, he had successfully pressed for an investigation into her conduct. The investigation, greatly embarrassing to the 'Talents' ministry, had produced no damning evidence against the Princess, though she was thereafter

1. cf. R. Fulford, George the Fourth.
refused admission to the Court. It had, however, made the Prince extremely unpopular.

Thereafter, though the Prince had remained the target of all manner of criticism which the Princess was one of the foremost to encourage, and the clamour which had risen at the way she had been 'tried and condemned' without a hearing, died away. The Princess, resuming her unhappy life in her own establishment, and attracting intriguers, social climbers, and all those who disliked the Prince about her, was allowed to see her daughter once a week. Not until after the Prince of Wales had become Regent, not until after he had 'failed' the Whigs, did a new flare up occur when Brougham and Whitbread, and it may well be, inter alia, Burdett, began to encourage her to insist she be allowed to see more of her daughter. Her first request was refused, and when her daughter became seventeen, new restrictions were placed on her intercourse with her. In consequence, she sent a letter to the Regent pleading to be allowed to defend her reputation, and when it was ignored, the


2. For Burdett's intimacy with Princess Caroline's 'court', *cf. M. W. Patterson, op. cit.* 1. 308.
whole matter was laid before the public.

There can be no doubt that the Princess was in no way worthy of the tremendous wave of popular sympathy and anger on her behalf which followed. Had the papers recording the investigation of 1806 been produced, as she now demanded, they must have destroyed popular support for her immediately. The Prince was by no means as much to be blamed as it was commonly supposed. But, as things were, the enthusiasm for her cause is easily explicable. The Regent was highly unpopular. Sympathy and liking for the young Princess Charlotte was considerable. It must have been easy, when her mother so rigorously protested her own innocent character, to see them both as the victims of oppression.

Thus the new ministry had a singularly difficult time, especially after a committee of Privy Councillors had confirmed the restrictions governing intercourse between mother and daughter, and the Princess, in turn, had pleaded with the House of Commons to protect her honour.

1. S. Maccoby, op. cit. p. 298.
The 'left wing' Whigs, Burdett and other Reformers in parliament, and Cobbett and many of the Westminster and London Reformers outside, did all they could to increase the volume of popular ill feeling against the Regent and his advisors. Coincidentally, the Princess Caroline's mother, a sister of George III, died, and Burdett, in particular, was able to make great play with the Commons' refusal to present her with an address of sympathy.

However apparent to them was the Regent's personal share in the responsibility for the treatment accorded his wife and daughter, it was the Reformers' policy to condemn the ministers who influenced the Prince, and to represent him as being as much the 'victim' of 'corruption' as 'the people'. It was 'clear' the boroughmongers were seeking to gain control of the heir-to-be in order to preserve their hold in power.

Meetings were, therefore, summoned in both London and Westminster, to address the Princess and to direct the attention of 'the people' towards the true cause of his - and their - sufferings.

On April 15th, a monster Westminster meeting passed resolutions denouncing the introduction of "tribunals unknown

1. A majority of the issues of Cobbett's 'Register' were devoted to the Princess and her 'ill treatment' in 1813; cf. also, M.W. Patterson, op. cit. 1. 326.
to the Constitution", congratulated the Princess on the way she was rising to triumph over her enemies, and voted an Address declaring the city's indignation at the "foul conspiracy" against her. Burdett, who could not attend through illness, sent a letter which was read aloud. It was curious to observe, he said, that those persons so sensitive to the sufferings of the Queen of France who "thought all England and all the world should draw the sword to defend her... injuries"... had no sympathy for the innocent and calumniated Princess of Wales. His implication was clear.

In the latter half of 1813, the popular clamour against the Regent and his ministers subsided as Liverpool and his colleagues began to enjoy the credit which came to them through Britain's resounding military success. By early 1814, when it began to become clear that complete victory was in sight, they, and conservatives generally, must have began to look to the future.

1. The 'tribunal unknown to the Constitution' was the committee of Privy Councillors referred to above. For the meeting cf. op. cit., ibid.; and Cobbett's Political Register. April 22nd, 1813.
with considerable optimism. If, even for a moment, however, they imagined that now revolution was crushed abroad, the 'Jacobins', 'traitors', and 'sedition mongers' of England would fade away, they were very rapidly to be disillusioned. The 'Jacobins' and 'sedition mongers' had no thought of retiring whatever. Equally heartened by the prospect of peace, they were already preparing to increase their efforts to rouse and direct 'the people' to demand reform.

Though all Reformers had opposed the war in the first instance, though some had continued to disapprove of it throughout its course, yet they had recognised that force would never prevent the awakening of the peoples of Europe. On the contrary the very disasters of war, the very sufferings and hardships it brought, would serve to heighten and spread recognition of the 'evils' of the old forms of government. Men who reflected, men who fought and travelled abroad, or who suffered privations and the loss of liberty at home, would increasingly be driven to see the need for a complete change.
of system.

They had never supposed peace would, of itself, bring any improvement in the lot of 'the people'. They had believed it would be more likely to lead to an increase in their hardships. The governing aristocracy, having fought so long to maintain their ascendancy, would certainly not surrender their monopoly of power. 'The people' would find, not that their burdens would be eased, but that they would have to pay, and go on paying their rulers for their trouble and expense in undertaking the war to preserve it.'

On the other hand, when 'the people' of England could neither be frightened by the bogey of French domination, nor be repressed on the grounds of national emergency, when patriotism no longer demanded they suffer in silence, they would come to voice their feelings more strongly than ever. Then they would come to realize that Reformers were not the 'traitors' they had been branded. Then they would recognise there could be no easing of their burdens without parliamentary reform.

Thus, even whilst the Peace Treaties of 1814 were being drawn up, the first Westminster meeting for reform since 1812, arranged with the aim of giving a new lead to the country, was
held on May 21st. It was Cartwright who took the lead, though Burdett, Cochrane and other well known members of the Westminster group were also prominent. Speaking first, he moved an Address which took the form of a lecture to the Regent congratulating him on the end of the war, but reminding him it would never have been undertaken but for the 'borough faction', who were even now trampling upon his own and 'the people's' rights. The Regent was advised to follow the example of those allied sovereigns who were coming to show their trust in their peoples, and to insist upon parliamentary reform. Burdett, described by Cartwright as the "truly patriot representative", who was pledged to bring the subject forward, felt himself able to add little to what Cartwright had said.

Two days later, the Reformers' annual dinner revealed them in highly optimistic mood. Cartwright went the furthest in saying he believed the situation to be more promising than any for forty years; but every speaker professed

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1. Place Papers. B.M. Add. MS. 27840f.252. (cutting from 'Champion').
2. ibid. p. 253. Brougham and several of his friends were guests. Others of the Whigs, including Brand and Grey Bennet; excused themselves since they wished to be in the House to support a motion in favour of Cochrane who had been involved in the famous Stock Exchange scandal cf. infra pp. 106; pp.108-131.
to have the highest hopes for the future.

Their optimism, at this time, was to appear well grounded. Even as the war was ending, even as the victory celebrations were in preparation, there were many clear indications of the popular temper, and much which came to renew the alarm of conservatives. Whatever 'the people' wanted, it was a great deal more than peace alone.

In the first place, there was the agitation which sprang up during the parliamentary session which began in March 1814, against the proposals of the 1813 select committee for a new Corn law. Designed to protect the interests of the agricultural community (vice the nation), many saw the proposals as designed solely in the interests of those who had used their capital or incurred debts in acquiring land in order to take advantage of the high wartime price of corn. Now that the price of corn appeared likely to fall, it seemed as if the intention was to keep it at the semi-famine price of at least 90/- a quarter, entirely for their benefit. Public excitement at what was represented by the Reforming press to be an entirely
self-interested measure, designed to safeguard the interests of the landed aristocracy, led to a large number of meetings, and petitions of protest flowed in to parliament from the capital and from places all over the country.

Information on the precise part played by the Westminster group in the agitation is lacking, though it is known they and the London Reformers took a leading part in organising outdoor opposition to the proposals, and that Place seems to have been active behind the scenes. In the event, the ministry was driven, towards the end of the session, to postpone consideration of the report for six months. But Place believed there would be no hope of preventing legislation later. In a letter to Mill he wrote ....

"It is only for the purpose of diffusing information that it can be at all desirable to interfere with the Corn Laws; for the legislature will certainly do all in its power to keep up the rent of land, and will pass an act for that purpose next session in spite of everything which can be done to prevent it"..

In the second place, there was the furore which arose when

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2. ibid G. Wallas, op. cit., p. 57, quotes Place as saying. "I was one cause of preventing the enactment of the Corn Laws in 1814"... (Place to Cobden Nov. 15th 1841).
3. Place to James Mill Sept. 9th 1814. quoted by G. Wallas op. cit. p. 159. The part played by the Westminster group in the 1815 anti-Corn Law Agitation is discussed infra, p. 134 et seq.
once again the 'ill-treatment' of the Princess Caroline and her daughter was brought before the public. In June, the Princess Caroline had been excluded from the company of the royal visitors from Russia and Prussia, and, once again, her plight was carried before parliament where there were those delighted to take up her case. In July, an even greater storm broke when it was known that the Princess Charlotte had fled to her mother, after she had been 'harshly' ordered by the Regent to live with him in Carlton House in future.

In the third place, there was the popular clamour raised on behalf of Lord Cochrane, held to have been implicated in the famous Stock Exchange Hoax of February 1815. During the spring, his own efforts and the efforts of his friends (among them Burdett and others of the Whig 'left wing') to show he was not in any way involved, and to disprove evidence accumulating against him, came to nought. In April, the Grand Jury returned a true bill against him and six others. In June, he was tried,

1. H. Martineau op. cit. p. 470 et seq.

2. The Stock Exchange Hoax and the question of Cochrane's complicity is discussed in H. W. Patterson, op. cit. l. 329 et seq. cf. also Cochrane's Autobiography (Thomas 10th Earl Dundonald, Autobiography of a Seaman); and the 11th Earl of Dundonald's, and H. R. Fox Bourne's 'Life'; also C. Lloyd. Lord Cochrane, pt. 11 ch. 111.
convicted, refused a new trial, and viciously sentenced to a penalty, which included the pillory. Immediately dismissed from the Navy, and degraded from the Order of the Bath, he failed in July, despite his own violent protestations of innocence, and the backing of Burdett and numbers of the Whigs, to impress parliament that a further enquiry was called for. On the contrary, and despite the risk of raising a fresh public outcry, he was expelled from the House.

A bye-election in Westminster thus became necessary at a time when popular ill feeling towards the ministry, roused on three different counts, could scarcely have been stronger.
il. The Westminster Bye-election of July 1814.

As Professor Aspinall has already pointed out, the news, revealed on March 7th, that Cochrane was held to be implicated in the Stock Exchange hoax of February 1814, occasioned an immediate flutter of excitement and speculation in Westminster.

Long before it was held his guilt had been proved, long before there was any question of his expulsion from the Commons, there were those prepared to take it for granted he would be forced to vacate his seat. Others, preferring to keep an open mind, proved no less ready to admit the possibility, and all politicians seem to have agreed on the necessity of making immediate preparations to meet it. Thus, within a day or so of the appearance of the report, the chances of both Brougham and Sheridan, as possible candidates in the forthcoming bye-election, were being discussed; and on the 12th March, gossip items in the papers, suggesting both intended to stand, made speculation public.

1. A. Aspinall 'The Westminster Election of 1814' E.H.R. Vol. XL.
2. Ibid. Aspinall quotes from Byron's Diary.
3. Ibid.
It seems clear that the Westminster group decided that, 'officially', they must back Cochrane for the time being, until his position became clearer. 'Unofficially', beyond the evidence that they recognised they must prepare for a bye-election and intended to put Brougham forward if possible, their attitude towards Cochrane's misfortune is less clear. As time went on, it seems that Burdett certainly, and many others, became convinced of his innocence. At this stage, however, in view of what is known of their long held objections to Cochrane as their representative, in view of the evidence they had long been contemplating his replacement by Brougham, it is not unlikely they allowed themselves to become at least half-convinced of his guilt. Place's attitude, made clear at a later stage when most people appeared to believe him guilty may well reflect the feeling of others. He was sorry for him, but guilty or innocent, it was sufficiently disgraceful that he was a 'stock-jobber' at all.


2. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27840 f. 220. Place to S. Brooks, 29th May 1814. He added..."I consider every speculator of this sort to be a rogue, not only because he has violated the law, but as a rogue in principle"...
But whatever the feeling of others on that point, it is quite certain they did not wish to retain him as their representative.

It was not, however, until after the Grand Jury had found a true bill against Cochrane on April 27th - not until Cochrane's fate in the trial which was to ensue seemed more certain - that they and other politicians began to make definite arrangements to secure the election of someone in his place. Sheridan seemed a definite starter, and a ministerial candidate, too, began to seem likely.

Place himself was even less disposed to concern himself with the Reformers' arrangements than he had been in 1812. Still embittered at the countenance given the accusations made against him in 1810, he was only too conscious they were still being made, and almost certainly aware there was a move to secure his removal from the Committee of the West London Lancastrian Association. In any event it is quite clear

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1. Burdett was preparing to denounce Place as a government spy and J. Richter as his 'tool', and to demand their resignations from the Committee of the West London Lancastrian Association. He sent a letter to this effect to the Committee in July. Place knew of Burdett's feelings the preceding year. Cf. G. Wallas, op. cit. pp. 56-7, 108. The recent scandal over Lancaster had involved him in many new accusations. Ibid p. 107.
he still had little love for his fellow men at this time, and was, as he told Brooks who sought his advice, more than ever determined to....

..."take no part in what are called politics or to interfere in any way whatever in a Westminster election".... (in public)

← It seems he cared little who was elected.

Despite his feelings, however, he believed it his duty to communicate to Brooks such information as "I may happen to possess!" (to those who)." with different feelings, felt bound by principle to interfere".

He wrote...

"Lord Cochrane is, it seems, to be convicted and of course to be expelled from the House. Such is the language of almost everyone who speaks to me on the subject, and many persons are busily employed in preparing for an election... Should... a vacancy occur it is intended to start Sheridan, and he will burst upon you with all manner of professions and promises. I hear from Lee, and have reason to believe, he will not be the only candidate. 3. An attempt, I suspect, will be made to procure the return of some one for the purpose of breaking up the Westminster

2. ibid.
3. Lee was the High Constable of Westminster.
Committee, and I will tell you some circumstances which will perhaps satisfy you on this point. Now I really care very little whether Mr. Sheridan or Mr. Hume or Mr. Anybody else be returned. I know corruption will continue until it burns itself out and we might as well attempt to arrest the course of nature. I know of few honest people who would be prepared to sit night after night in the Commons surrounded by infamy. However, if you and your associates think it your duty to do your best towards procuring reformation, and that to interfere for the Westminster people is of importance, be it so. You will then I suppose, should a vacancy occur, take up Mr. Brougham - but take up whom you may, one thing is absolutely necessary, not only to save a deal of trouble, but to give you a fair chance of success, and that is to take from the person proposed a declaration in writing that he will on all occasions endeavour to procure a reform in the representation as follows..." (Place here enumerates Burdett's 1809 proposals for taxpayer Suffrage; a fairer distribution of the representation and shorter parliaments).... "The man who will not sign this shall never have my vote... But if it were signed and published it would palsy all opposition".

1. cf. Examiner, July 10th, 1814. It seems there was talk of setting up the naval officer Broke of the famous 'Shannon'.

2. Joseph Hume, later to become one of the principal spokesmen of the Westminster group, closely 'tutored' and guided by Place. He had entered parliament in 1812, purchasing a seat for Weymouth. Latterly he had come to be concerned with the Lancastrian School scheme and had met Place. (G. Wallas, op. cit. p. 183) He had been to school with James Mill, and it was largely through Mill that Place took him up. The Place Papers throw little light on Hume's career, though they contain a little unpublished information about him (cf. & e.g. 27, 789) and his character, through Place's eyes, emerges clearly enough. It would seem he had been considered for election in Westminster at this time. A biography is much needed. Meanwhile cf. D. N. B.

3. Place specified annual parliaments.
Place concluded by sketching a concise form of declaration, and by suggesting that, after it was signed by the candidate, it should be published along with a notice calling for a general meeting, to discuss electing him free of expense.

Whether or not the Westminster Reformers were worried at the prospect of opposition from Sheridan and a ministerial candidate, is uncertain. Though it is little likely they thought much of Sheridan's chances - it is probable they were anxious to avoid a contest and believed their support of Brougham would be likely to prevent 'official' Whig interference. Whatever the case it is likely they were much more alarmed at the prospect, which now began to become serious, that Cartwright would stand, and would be backed by Cobbett and Hunt.

On May 30th, Cleary, Cartwright's general assistant, came to see Place about securing Cartwright's election. In view of

1. cf. A. Aspinall, op. cit. Sheridan was considered ruined socially and politically at this time.

2. Place Papers B. M. Add. MS., 27,850 ff. 278 et seq.
Place's known objections to Cartwright and his belief that he was totally unfit to represent Westminster, in view too of his energetic efforts to prevent his candidature in subsequent years, it must be considered a further indication of Place's mood, and of his indifference to the outcome if an election were held, that he made no effort to discourage Cleary at this stage. If Cleary wished to know his sentiments, he could refer to his (Place's) letter to Brooks. Meanwhile, he might be reassured that he would certainly take no active part against Cartwright, and would even vote for him if he were set up.

Place, probably, had at the back of his mind a belief that the chances of Cartwright's candidature being successfully pressed were very slight. In fact, though unconsciously, he had encouraged Cleary and other friends of Cartwright to believe he could be persuaded to use his influence on Cartwright's behalf, and was himself partly responsible for his being set up! Without any of the inhibitions which prevented the Westminster group and Sheridan's supporters calling meetings, or announcing their candidates, until Cochrane's
guilt was established, Cartwright's friends went ahead. On June 3rd, a public letter, written by Peter Walker, appeared in the press calling upon Cartwright to stand in the event of a vacancy, and a few days later a lengthy reply from Cartwright appeared, signifying his acceptance.

Meanwhile, though the Westminster group had invited him to their Annual Dinner, they had taken no steps to secure Brougham's formal adoption. Quite apart from the extreme indelicacy of proposing a new candidate whilst their existing representative's guilt was still unproved; apart from the fact that so open a 'pre-judgement' of his case might influence the jury in his trial, there was also the fact that Brougham was engaged as one of Cochrane's defending Counsel. It was clearly impossible to set him up as a candidate until after he had done his best for Cochrane.

Thus it was not until the evening of the first day of the

1. ibid 27,840 f. 22
2. cf. supra p.103 n. 2.
3. A. Aspinall, op. cit.
trial, on June 6th, that they held a meeting at the Crown and Anchor. Resolutions were passed declaring that those present would not support any candidate who did not subscribe to their reform programme, but no mention was made of Brougham's name, and the resolutions were not published until after Cochrane's guilt had been declared the following day. Nor was any attempt made to put Brougham forward until after Cochrane's efforts to secure a new trial, during the next few days, had failed.

By June 11th, it appeared that danger to the Westminster Reformers, from one side at least, was lessening. Both parliamentary parties, it seemed, were anxious to avoid a contest, particularly a contest with Brougham. On that day the Whig Duke of Norfolk called on Brooks and... "pressing upon him the necessity of supporting Sheridan"... urged that if the Committee would do so, the ministry would bring no-one forward to oppose him.

Norfolk may not have been representing both parliamentary

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1. Place Papers B. M. Add. MS/ f. 228.
2. For these efforts cf. M. W. Patterson, ap. cit. 1. 338.
3. Place Papers, B. M. Add. MS. 27,850 f. 278 (Place's M.S. Notes. June 12th)
parties 'officially', but if, as seems likely, he was, their attitude is understandable. Neither wished to risk their popularity; neither wished to see Brougham's position strengthened. The ministry must obviously have recognised the easily excited state of the public temper, and was doubtless fearful of the disorders which might arise in the middle of the victory celebrations. But they cannot have wished to see Brougham, the heroic defender of the Queen returned unopposed. The Whig leaders may have had little fondness for Sheridan and his Carlton House connections, but they may well have disapproved of Brougham even more strongly at this time. If Brougham was put forward by the Reformers and supported as they must have known he would be, by his Whig friends, it would only increase the disunity of the party as a whole. If official support were given to Sheridan, it might prove acutely embarrassing. If, on the other hand, Brougham were returned unopposed, as the 'nominee' of the Westminster Reformers

1. Grey and other conservative Whigs never approved of the way Brougham and others sought to make capital out of the Princess Caroline, cf. e.g. G.M. Trevelyan, Lord Grey of the Reform Bill p. 193.
it might prove more embarrassing still.

Whatever the case, the Westminster Reformers refused Norfolk's suggestion, and, doubtless, recognised it was most unlikely party opposition would now appear, or that Sheridan would now receive any 'official' support.

'Danger' from the other side, however, was, at the same time, increasing. It may well be that the Westminster group had not taken the opposition from Cartwright seriously, but, by June 12th, it had become quite evident not only that Cleary did suppose that Place would use his influence on behalf of Cartwright, but that he and others of Cartwright's following had every intention of pressing forward his candidature. Place was forced to explain his attitude to Cleary again, and to re-emphasise his determination not to have anything to do with the election. But it is a further instance of Place's determination to leave matters well alone, that he told Cleary he was in agreement with those who favoured calling a meeting of all those most active at the last election, and letting this meeting decide who would be

1. Place Papers. B.M. Add. MS. 27,850 f.278 (Place M.S. notes June 12th).
the most suitable representative for Westminster.

In the circumstances such a meeting positively invited disagreement and trouble, and on the 16th June, when it was held, both appeared. A resolution confirming the earlier resolutions of the meeting of the 8th was passed without dispute. Thereafter, though the meeting was chaired by one of the Westminster group, Lochee, it was the supporters of Cartwright, who held the floor. Wood promptly proposed Cartwright. Lochee hurriedly wrote a note to someone, who thereupon proposed Brougham. An altercation on their respective merits followed, and once again it was Cartwright's supporters who did most of the talking. Brougham, it was said, was an unknown quantity. The views he had expressed in 1810 showed him strongly opposed to reform. Cartwright on the other hand, was tried and trusted. The meeting began to break up

1. ibid.

2. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,840 f. 225 for a pro-Cartwright pamphlet version of the meeting; and f. 228 for other accounts.
without any decision being reached, though Wood did his best to gather the friends of Cartwright together to stage a fresh meeting with a new Chairman.  

A few days later, there appeared, anonymously, a 'Letter to the Electors', in the form of a pamphlet which described the meeting and attacked Brougham for his 'Edinburgh Review' article of 1810, in which he had called the Westminster electors "the contemptuous tools of a tumultuous faction." They were the "tools", the Reformers, the "faction", he now wooed! Cartwright, it was pointed out, however, was an honest and indefatigable Reformer, who had long ago warned the public against Whig duplicity in his 'Comparison', and extracts from it were quoted.

Though it seems to have been known very soon that Cartwright, himself was the author, there can be no doubt that at this time, Cartwright's stock seemed to be rising. It must have been at this point that Hunt wrote to the Westminster group condemning their favour for Brougham, and saying that if they

1. Place wrote of Wood. "it is supposed he has some day thoughts of being returned for Westminster himself, and that the present will be a good opportunity to introduce himself to the electors"...

continued to support Brougham and reject Cartwright, he would himself come forward to oppose Brougham. Cobbett likewise, made clear he strongly objected to Brougham.

Meanwhile, Brougham himself, dissatisfied that the meeting of the 16th had not adopted him, let Place know, via Edward Wakefield, that he was willing to subscribe to the necessary pledges. On the 19th, James Mill, himself a strong supporter of Brougham, came to tell Place that he had said he was quite willing to give the pledge the Reformers' required, but that he had done so frequently before at the Liverpool Hustings.

At this point, it seems, Place's resolve not interfere weakened. Whether it was recognition of the trouble Cartwright was making, desire to help Brougham, or the entreaties of Mill and/or others, cannot be known, but there is little doubt that he now set himself to help Brougham. Brougham, he argued, must certainly pledge himself, but if his pledges were to carry weight at this stage, they would have to be made

1. Cobbett's Political Register, Jan 3rd, 1818.
2. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,350 f. 278 (Place's MS. notes Thursday 16th).
3. Ibid. (Place's MS. notes, Saturday, 18th).
publicly. It was arranged, therefore, apparently through Place, that he should make them at the City of London Livery dinner which was to take place on June 23rd.

But, on June 21st, Ellenborough pronounced the savage sentence on Cochrane, which greatly increased an already growing sympathy for him. Already the popular belief in his innocence, which was to become a fierce conviction that he was yet another 'victim' of corruption, was beginning to spread. Contemporarily, popular anger at the fresh insult to the Princess of Wales was also rising.

Thus, few eyes were on the Livery Dinner when Brougham, attended by a number of his Whig friends, duly delivered his speech. The 'Morning Chronicle' alone reported it, in some detail. Place, though disappointed, clipped out all the reports and sent them to Brooks, suggesting they be laid before the Committee for consideration, and he also suggested they be sent to

2. M.W. Patterson, op. cit., 1,340; and cf. supra p. 105-6.
Brougham for correction.

On the 25th, Mill brought Place a corrected manuscript version of the speech and arrangements were made to publish it in the 'Sunday Review' of the 26th. In this version, Brougham asserted that "the fundamental maxims of liberty had been solemnly recognised in the face of the world that all power is from the people". He went on...

..."Where is now the gag with which our mouths have for five and twenty years been stopped, as often as we have recognised that parliament should be chosen yearly, and that the elective franchise should be extended to all who pay taxes."

How much attention was given to it by the public cannot be known, but Cartwright and his supporters were not impressed, and it seemed nothing would prevent an open rupture between his group and the Westminster Reformers. On the 29th June, six

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1. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS 27,059 f. 278. (Place's MS. notes 24th, 25th June).
2. Sunday Review June 26th, 1814. Place duly kept Brougham's 'pledge' for future reference, and was subsequently to make use of it against him. cf. infra V.p. 144 & 145, winning Brougham over. Cartwright replied..."Depend on it Cleary, you will find it all moonshine".
3. A. Aspinall, 'The Westminster Election of 1814'. E.H.R. Vol. XL. When Cleary congratulated Cartwright on winning Brougham over, Cartwright replied..."Depend on it Cleary, you will find it all moonshine".
of Cartwright's friends met six of Brougham's supporters to try to reach a decision. Deadlock resulted. Brooks, Adams and James Mill stood up for Brougham, but Wood staunchly held out for Cartwright. Sheridan, too, was still very much in the field, and Lord Yarmouth was reported to have received the promise of 600 votes on his behalf. The unsettled state of things encouraged even Curran to think of standing: 1.

It was the dramatic way in which Cochrane protested his innocence in the Commons, which completely changed the complexion of things. The show of feeling in his favour, which had begun after he had been sentenced, now became a torrent. His speech did not prevent his expulsion from the House, but it made certain that no one else would have the slightest chance if they stood against him.

By the following day, supporters of Brougham, as well as supporters of Cartwright, had concluded that it was necessary 

1. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,840 f. 278 (Place's MS., notes June 29th, 30th).
2. Ibid. (Place MS., notes, June 26th, July 5th).
3. Ibid. 27,840 f. 232. The Constitution, July 10th, gave an account of Cochrane's protestations of innocence, and professed its belief his re-election would now be unanimous.
to support Cochrane. Even Jennyns wrote a pamphlet in his favour. James Mill, as well as Place, saw that the chances of bringing Brougham forward were ending, though Place suggested that Brougham should be nominated and kept second on the poll, in case the House rejected Cochrane, and made "any vagabond who had ever so small a number of votes the sitting member". Place, at least, did not believe that a sense of the injustice of Cochrane's treatment must oblige the electors to return him repeatedly!

On Friday 8th, it was finally agreed, at the Crown and Anchor, to promote his return. Burdett spoke strongly in favour of it, and James Mill, Adams, and Wishart were among those placed on a sub-committee to prepare the business for a Palace Yard meeting, which was eventually held on the 11th.

1. ibid. 27,850.f. 278. (Place MS. notes, July 6th)
2. ibid.
3. ibid.
4. ibid. (Place's M S. notes, July 8th, 9th).
Speaking to the crowds, Burdett and Wood joined in condemning the Commons' action, and affirmed their belief in Cochrane's innocence. Cochrane himself sent a letter. It had been intended that his speech to the Commons should be read, but the High Bailiff was forced to declare he dare not read it for fear of prosecution. Sheridan sent a letter declining to stand and acknowledging Cochrane's right to present himself to his constituents who would clear his character. Cochrane's re-election was thereupon approved unanimously.

On Saturday July 16th, when excitement over Cochrane had been still further increased by the Princess Charlotte's flight to her mother, the election was a formality. Cochrane was triumphantly returned. For what must seem obvious reasons, he was not re-expelled. The election may be considered as important in various ways. In the first place, Cochrane, deeply embittered at his treatment, became the rancorous enemy of the established order. Determined to prove his innocence and to

1. cf. ibid 27,840 ff. 2367 for newspaper cuttings on the meeting e.g. Morning Herald, July 12th.
2. ibid. f. 252.
obtain redress, he was now prepared to join with the Reformers so wholeheartedly, that many must have found him an ally far more 'radical' than they had wished for.

There is nothing to suggest the Westminster group grew more satisfied with him as one of their representatives. Apart from their disapproval of his character, they recognised clearly the very personal source of his interest in reform. The chances of his going to the Lords remained strong, and their interest in securing some other representative - in the first instance Brougham - seems to have remained equally strong. At the same time there could be no doubt of his great value to them as a popular 'hero', and his subsequent escapades were to provide them with more than one opportunity to capitalize upon popular sympathy for him.

In the second, the election helped to widen the divisions appearing among Reformers. If there had not been a tremendous revulsion of popular feeling in Cochrane's favour, which made it impossible any other person should be returned, nothing else,

1. cf. infra. pp. 170, and IV. Ch. X. 1.
2. cf. infra. p. 114, and IV. pp. 99-100
it seems, could have prevented an open breach between the two wings of the Reformers at this time. Up to that point, everything suggests that they were drawing further apart, that the chances of compromise were lessening. Even after agreement had been reached in favour of Cochrane, Wood made clear that if the slightest move were made to put Brougham in nomination, Cartwright too, would be nominated. Without that agreement, unexpectedly forced upon them, it must be virtually certain that both Brougham and Cartwright would have been set up.

If that had happened, it must be equally certain that two developments would have followed. Cobbett and Hunt would have taken Cartwright's side openly, and Cobbett, through the 'Register', would not only have made the breach in the Reformers' ranks obvious to the nation, but would have widened and made it irreparable, as he contrived to do little more than two years later. Brougham's supporters would have included, in addition to the Westminster Reformers, virtually the whole of the Whig 'left wing'. Grey Bennet offered to subscribe money and Tavistock, Whitbread, Crevy, Ossulston and Lord William Hamilton

1. Place Papers B. M. Add. MS. 27. 850 f. 278 (Place's M. S. notes, July 8th).
2. cf. infra, IV, Ch. x, ii.
were preparing to support him. The Westminster Reformers might have claimed Brougham as an independent Reformer, but they must have been driven even closer to the 'left wing' Whigs - a move which would, even more clearly, have divided them from the 'extremist' Reformers.

On the face of things it might appear that matters had worked out extremely fortunately for the Reforming party. Not only was a breach prevented, but they had a new 'martyr' and a new leader who could be relied upon to be as energetic for reform as they could wish.

In fact, the way things worked out, must be regarded as most unfortunate both for them and for the country. A clear breach at this point must have done much to prevent the illusion, which gained increasing currency in 1815 and the immediate post-war years, that the Westminster Reformers were behind the efforts to rouse a 'working class' agitation. Equally it would have saved them from Cobbett's subsequent, and violently bitter, attacks upon them, as apostates, who should have made clear their

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1. cf. A. Aspinall, op. cit.; and Place Papers B. M. Add. MS. 27,850 f. 278 (Place's MS. notes, 16th June) Grey Bennet had given James Mill a promise to subscribe and do all in his power to secure Brougham's return. The others named had all attended the Livery Dinner of 23rd June.
views sooner. Further, a breach at this time would have been likely to have drawn the Reformers and 'left wing' Whigs much closer, with incalculable effects on their future relations and on the future development on the Westminster Reformers as a separate 'party', and perhaps on the future relations of the 'governing classes' and 'the people'.

As things were, Cartwright was far more deeply hurt and embittered than he had been in 1812 - not only for the negative reason that the Westminster group would not accept him, but for the much more positive reason, that he intensely distrusted Brougham and the Westminster group's favour for him. Cobbett and Hunt, who equally resented the Westminster group's attitude, only just restrained themselves from breaking with them.

For their part the Westminster group continued to look to the day, when, after Cochrane had gone to the Lords, they could secure Brougham's election. They and the 'left wing' Whigs continued to draw closer together, and it must have been at this time that ideas of a new party of advanced Whigs and Westminster Reformers first came to be canvassed. Never was the possibility of a political union of these two groups

to be closer than in the period between this election and early 1816.

In the circumstances the mutual distrust of the two wings of the Reformers was rapidly increased. In the months which followed, political divergence, encouraged by changing circumstances and by the efforts of rival groups to promote the election of their respective candidates, was to have a disruptive effect upon the Reforming party, and to cause increased friction beneath the surface of the Westminster political scene.

1. cf. infra IV. Ch. X. 1.
The Rift Grows Wider.

(The Income Tax, Corn Law and Anti-War agitations 1814-15)

If the popular clamour of the earlier months of the year again subsided after parliament was prorogued in July 1814, it was not because of any improvement in the temper of 'the people'. On the contrary, as the economic effects of the ending of the war began to make themselves felt more, their temper worsened.

Whilst landlords and farmers with long leases continued to suffer from the heavy fall in farming prices, they won no sympathy for their hardships from those who had never shared in their prosperity, and who, in any case, felt they had paid for it. There had long been a tendency to regard those who had sought to take advantage of high prices and/or to establish themselves on the land as gentry, with disgust, and many were now inclined to view those who went bankrupt, as reaping a just reward for their selfishness. At this time, men from all sections of the community were preparing to protest even more strongly when - as it was certain they would be - proposals designed to restore the old high prices of corn artificially 1.

1. A very great deal had been written about the economic and social effects of the ending of the war. For a contemporary or near contemporary view, cf. H. Martineau, History of England 1800-1815, 2k. 11, 398 and A. History of the Thirty Years Peace I, chs. III, IV.
were re-introduced in parliament. Agricultural labourers, at long last enjoying a degree of prosperity and suspicious of attempts to reduce their wages, were becoming ready to protest violently. Merchants and manufacturers with problems of their own, and with an especial interest in preventing wages from soaring, were equally preparing to offer the strongest opposition.

At the same time, the manufacturing community was hard hit, both directly and indirectly. Directly, it suffered from the cessation of war time orders and contracts, and from the interruption of a contraband trade, carried on during the war. Indirectly, agricultural depression, which had brought the failure of many country banks, also seriously affected many merchants and manufacturers, and those who worked for them. True, merchants and manufacturers were not without optimism for the future. They believed, fallaciously, that now Napoleon's power was destroyed, and the ports of the continent opened, there would be no limit to the demand for British goods. But they were determined to see the enormous wartime burden of taxation reduced, and their determination was shared by the great majority in the country. In particular, they were
determined to see the property or income tax abolished. This tax, imposed with the promise that it was a wartime measure only, was due to expire in April 1815. Aware that the ministry must introduce new financial proposals in the next session, the public was prepared to be, at the very least, highly critical of its every move. Thus, when, at the opening of the session in November 1814, the Chancellor made clear that it was intended to carry on the income tax, though on a reduced scale, there was an immediate popular outburst. By the time the proposals for a Corn Bill were re-introduced, there had developed a considerable agitation in the country, and the capital itself was again in a state of uproar.

Evidence of the attitude of the Westminster Reformers, and of the precise part they played in rousing the popular agitation, is scanty, but certain features are apparent enough. It is evident they were strongly against the proposals for a new Corn Law, and were ready, as they had been earlier in the year, to encourage an agitation against it, even if, as Place had said, it could be of no use save to disseminate
information. Again, though, many of them foresaw that the removal of the income tax at this point would inevitably lead to the imposition of high indirect taxation and were, therefore, at first inclined against its immediate abolition, yet they came to be ready to encourage opposition to its retention as well. It was felt that, even though success must lead to heavy indirect taxation, it was more immediately important that it should be brought home to the ministry how strong was the popular determination to resist a continual demand for money, and brought home to 'the people' that they could never look for any real relief from their burdens without parliamentary reform. It is further evident they did, in fact, assist, as individuals or in small groups, in the preparation of many of the larger and some of the smaller metropolitan meetings at this time. Burdett, for his part, vigorously attacked the ministry both in and out of parliament and repeatedly called for a national effort to secure reform.

Yet, there can be no doubt that Cartwright, who certainly

1. Place was at first against the repeal of the Income Tax since, as he wrote to Mill, (Feb. 15th 1815, G. Wallas, op. cit p. 165) the burdens would be "shifted from the rich to the other classes". The rich will be relieved, the middle classes injured, and the labourer distressed". Mill agreed, but urged Place (Add. MS. 35152 f. 168, quoted, A. Aspinall Lord Brougham and the 'Whig Party' p. 54) that he should not seek to check the agitation since "nothing is so good for all the wicked purposes of the Ministers as that they should be at their ease with regard to money - nothing so good for the people as that they should find it difficult to get money"."
did take a leading part in the agitation, not only found the Westminster group unwilling to cooperate with him, but believed they were positively seeking to dampen the agitation. There can equally be no doubt that Cobbett and Hunt agreed with him, that their reaction was to stand even more closely behind Cartwright, and that there was a rapid deterioration in their relations with the Westminster group.

At first sight it may seem there is nothing remarkable in their 'testimony'. That the Westminster Reformers should have been extremely tardy about cooperating with what - for want of a better term - may be called, at this time, the 'Cartwright group', cannot appear in the least surprising in view of the developments which had so nearly led to their public collision in the July election. Since the Westminster group continued to make clear their desire to secure Brougham's election, and since that desire came to reflect an interest which developed during 1815 in a definite political alliance

with the 'left wing' Whigs - a development referred to more fully below - then the growing ill feeling of Cartwright, Cobbett and Hunt towards them must be even less surprising. On political grounds they could not have disapproved the direction the Westminster group were taking more strongly. Cartwright's personal desire to promote his own election would in any case have kept the issue of the future disposal of a second Westminster seat alive. Now that personal desire had come to be reinforced by strong political feelings, it was brought and kept to the forefront. Much of the distrust with which both groups eyed each other during and after 1815 is to be seen as arising from suspicion of what each regarded as the other's election manoeuvres.

These factors go far to explain, and to explain away, the readiness of Cartwright, Cobbett and Hunt to believe and/or claim that the Westminster Reformers sought to dampen the agitation. The possibilities of a general or a bye-election, during 1815 and 1816, were such as to insure that

1. cf. infra. IV, Ch. x. l.
the election issue remained a source of persistent tension between them. But they do not explain away the formers' testimony completely, and there is, in fact, much to suggest that their view — that the Westminster Reformers were tardy in coming forward to lead the agitation of 1815 — must be accepted. There does appear an unusual hesitancy about their actions which contrasts strangely with their readiness to take advantage of, and to increase ministerial embarrassments at other times — a hesitancy all the more unexpected in view of their known detestation of the proposed Corn law, and their decision that the ministry should be pressed as hard as possible on the income tax issue, not so much their refusal to cooperate with Cartwright which has to be explained, as their willingness to let him take the lead in the first place,

1. cf. infra, pp. 170—173.

2. G. Wallas, op. cit., pp. 57, 159, suggests Place took a leading part in opposing the Corn Law in 1815, but the extract from a letter from Place to Cobden (Nov. 15th 1841) that he quotes would bear an interpretation that he did not. He wrote "I was one cause of preventing the enactment of the Corn Laws in 1814, and all but fought against it in 1815" (underlining my own). Place himself claimed, in December 1814, (Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27809 f. 5) that he had quite freed himself from all public politics, and it is known he spent much of the next two years in studying and writing, and advising privately.
and their readiness to discourage the staging of certain meetings altogether.

Extremely scattered and slight though the evidence is, there were, it seems, two main reasons for their hesitant attitude. In the first place, it is clear that towards the close of 1814 and in the early months of 1815, Cartwright came to intensify his efforts to harness the restlessness and discontent of the labouring classes. Making increased use of the name of the Hampden Club, and drawing up and arranging for the circulation of printed petitions in the provinces, he was obviously anxious that Westminster meetings should give a vigorous lead to the new popular movement he was anxious to encourage among the 'property-less' classes. There can be little doubt that the nature of Cartwright's activities played an important part in increasing their unwillingness to cooperate with him at this time. Their reluctance to assist in the staging of all the public meetings he pressed for, at a time when the temper of the lower classes was such that they might easily have been encouraged to break into disorder, would,
therefore be understandable.

In the second place, and this is likely to have been an even more important factor, they must have been acutely embarrassed at Burdett's attitude towards the Corn Law proposals. Publicly that attitude was professed by himself to be one of complete indifference. Privately it must have been known either that he favoured them, or, at least, strongly disapproved of them being represented as a self-interested class measure, and that he was unwilling to oppose them in Parliament. It must have been known that he was not only against popular meetings being staged to protest against them, but unwilling to appear at them.

If that is the case, then the exceptional 'quietness' of the Westminster Reformers would be even more understandable. Understandable, too, would be the reason why Cartwright, Cobbett and Hunt, though drawing further away from the Westminster

1. For Cartwright stepping up his efforts cf. Life of Cartwright 11 72-3, 104; and Place Papers B.M./Add. MS. 27809 f.8. Cartwright himself was very much under fire for his activities at this time, cf. Life of Cartwright 11, 95; also infra, W., pp. 58, et seq.

2. cf. infra p.133. M.W. Patterson, op.cit., makes no mention of Burdett's attitude at this time.
Reformers, yet refrained from revealing their disapproval of them openly at this time.

The Westminster Reformers had often been dissatisfied with Burdett's political attitude in the past. They were certainly to be dissatisfied with his attitude on other occasions in the future. At this point it is probable they were furious with him. But it is clear that could not have wished to have their disagreement publicly advertised. and Burdett, who had been so long the hero of 'the people', now displayed as a 'selfish' landlord. Nor could they have wished to risk offending him seriously. Thus it seems that they fought to discourage Cartwright from holding meetings on the subject in Westminster, in deference to Burdett's wishes.

In view of what they later claimed were their own feelings towards Burdett and the Westminster group at this time, it would seem that Cobbett and Hunt, who were busy pressing the agitation as hard as they could, exercised a remarkable self-restraint! Hunt claims he did oppose Burdett at one meeting, but no campaign to denounce him and his supporters followed. It must be evident, however, that they could no more have wished
to have Burdett's attitude publicised, could no more have wished to risk a public rupture with him than the Westminster group. They must have recognized that if they attempted to pull him down at this time, especially after they had lavished so much praise upon him, they could only harm their cause, and circumstances which later came to show that Burdett was still far too valuable to be dropped were to make it easier for them to keep quiet. But it cannot be surprising that their hostility for Burdett and the Westminster group in 1816 was very thinly veiled.

Whether or not he had already found the Westminster group hanging back, it was certainly Cartwright who was foremost in pressing the arrangements to stage public meetings in Westminster and Middlesex at the close of 1814, to give the country a lead. After meeting for three weeks, parliament had adjourned until February 9th, and it is obvious Cartwright was particularly keen that advantage should be taken of the interval to organise

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popular resistance to the ministry's income tax and Corn Law proposals. There is no evidence of his plans for the Middlesex meeting, but it may be certain that he was anxious that the meeting in Westminster should be held to protest against the retention of the Income Tax and the Corn proposals jointly — both of which topics were to be raised again immediately parliament reassembled. Precisely what were the difficulties he encountered is not clear, though, in the light of a letter he wrote later, they may be surmised.

It was usual, when public meetings were projected, to consult the representative(s) of the places concerned and to ask them to attend. Their presence was desirable, not only as an indication of their interest in their constituents, but so they could be publicly asked to present the petitions and/or addresses, which the meeting would be expected to approve. It was certainly the usual practice in Westminster to contact Burdett and seek his consent and approval.

Whether he had contacted Burdett, who was then in the country, himself, or had left Brooks or some other 'member' or through

1. ibid
members of the Westminster group to approach him, is uncertain. But it seems that Cartwright believed he had every reason to expect he would not approve of a meeting which brought up the subject of the Corn Laws, and might refuse to attend. The arrangements for the Middlesex meeting went ahead, and it was held on the 16th of December. Arrangements for the Westminster meeting, fixed for the 29th December, were delayed, possibly until a final reply was received from Burdett - possibly while efforts were made to reach agreement about the meeting.

Not until about the 22nd or 23rd December did Cartwright learn (as he wrote in a letter to Northmore) that there were... "hopes of things taking a right turn on the 29th". He had, he told Northmore, preserved the "original requisition" (drawn up for presentation to the High Bailiff, informing him of the purpose of the meeting) which had included a phrase, which made clear it was intended to consider "the state of the national taxation"... "for guarding against evil". That, as Northmore would see, if he looked at the 'Morning Chronicle' of the 23rd, was now the...
The meeting was duly held. Burdett did not appear. He was, it was said, held up by a heavy fall of snow, and Cartwright went out of his way to praise him in his absence. There can be no doubt that - as much as the Middlesex meeting had been before - it was 'his' meeting. It was 'his' resolutions condemning the income tax and 'his' petition to both Houses, pleading for its removal and urging parliamentary reform, which were approved.

A few days later Burdett wrote to Cartwright, congratulating him on having expressed sentiments at the meeting, which entirely accorded with his own, expressed in an earlier, hurriedly written, note. He hoped to be in town shortly and would discuss future arrangements then.

Quite apart from his disapproval of Burdett's political attitude, Cartwright was probably irritated at his being out of town at this time, because of the difficulties of contacting him. In any event, he wanted to make sure he was in the House

1. ibid.

2. Cobbett's Political Register Vol. 26 p. 858; Examiner Jan 1st, 1815.

3. Life of Cartwright 11. 97. Burdett's letter, as printed, appears very flattering to Cartwright; but he may well have been thanking him, between the lines, for not bringing the matter of the Corn Laws forward.
the moment it re-opened on February 9th. Nine days later, (January 11th) when Burdett had still not reappeared, he wrote to him urging his early attendance, so that he could present the Westminster petition, and be ready to support the Middlesex petition, when it was presented. It was important, he wrote, that they be presented before Castlereagh's return with his report from Vienna, and before Vansittart, the Chancellor, spoke further about his finance proposals, if they were to excite public attention.

It may well be that Burdett was in attendance at the opening of the session and that he did present the Westminster petition, though, if that is the case, he did not attract the attention of Hansard's reporter. Nor, if he was present and spoke, did he attract attention when the subject of the Corn Laws was raised on February 14th. There is, in fact, no record of Burdett speaking in parliament at all, from the day of opening of the session, (8th November) until March 10th.

Precisely what went on between Cartwright, Burdett and the Westminster group, between the time the Corn Law proposals

1. ibid. 11. 98
were raised in February, and March 6th, when a Westminster meeting on the subject was finally held, is not known. But once again much can be surmised.

Cartwright, it seems, was anxious that a Westminster meeting should be held to lead popular opposition both to the Corn Law proposals, before they were brought in as a Bill, and to ministerial proposals that the Income Tax should be replaced by a new schedule of Assessed Taxes. It is quite certain that he blamed the attitude of Burdett and the Westminster group for making it impossible to stage a Westminster meeting earlier. In the event it was Waithman and the London Reformers who led the way at a Common Hall meeting, held a few days before the Corn bill was introduced. Petitions were passed which vigorously denounced the proposed new Assessed Taxes and the Corn Law proposals, as designed solely in the interests of the landed classes.

Whether or not Cartwright's influence was behind this meeting, there can be no doubt he had great difficulty in

1. Life of Cartwright 11.104. Cartwright to Northmore, 10th March, 1815.
2. Examiner, February 26th, 1814.
persuading the Westminster group to agree to the staging of a Westminster meeting at \( \textit{al.} \). Again it seems certain Burdett had shown himself to be against protesting at the Corn Laws proposals, and it is not impossible he had been against protesting at the proposed Assessed Taxes as well. Though the leaders of the Westminster group seem to have kept Cartwright fuming, it is more than likely they were themselves doing their utmost to find a way of persuading Burdett to cooperate. In view of the disorders in the capital at this time, however, it is not impossible many of them felt it would be too dangerous to assemble a great open air meeting.

Whatever the case, it proved impossible to arrange a meeting before the day set aside for the Corn bill to be committed. In a letter to Northmore, Cartwright's irritation and regret appears clearly. From causes Northmore will guess..."the opposition to the Corn Bill was put off till the last minute." It can only be supposed that Burdett recognised, or was made to recognise, that he must attend a Westminster meeting and explain

1. Life of Cartwright ii. 104. Cartwright to Northmore, 18th March, 1816
3. Life of Cartwright II. 104. Cartwright to Northmore, March 10th, 1815.
his attitude, that his failure to do so was only encouraging adverse speculation.

By this time the capital was in an uproar and the avenues to the Commons were guarded by troops to protect members from molestation by the riotous crowds which had gathered. The Westminster meeting in Palace Yard inevitably attracted thousands of people – the 'Examiner' claimed it was the largest ever held – and it must have helped to increase the tension of the atmosphere.

Sturch, of the Westminster Reformers, spoke first. There could certainly be no doubt of his sentiments. He denounced the way in which the landed classes who were feeling the pinch of their own extravagant speculation, now sought to pass their burdens on to the poorer classes. Resolutions and petitions echoing the same sentiments were then passed, protesting against the Corn Bill and the Assessed taxes, and demanding parliamentary reform. Burdett followed. He expressed great satisfaction at having so numerous and respectable a meeting to address. He had,

1. Examiner March 12th, 1814.; S. Macolby, op. cit. p305, speaks of a "real attempt.... to overawe parliament into an abandonment of the bill".
he said, never before seen... "such prospects opening to his mind of the acceptance of those great objects on which his attention was already fixed." Then — as Henry Hunt later emphasised — his tone changed. He had, he said, only held up his hand in support of one of the resolutions carried — that which stated the present evils arose from the state of the representation. He wished to see everyone united. He did not wish to see landholders and the manufacturing classes divided and... "could by no means join in the reprobation against the conduct of landowners". High taxation had been the immediate cause of evil since the present reign began. Landholders had suffered in the same way as all other classes. All classes had been forced to raise their prices because of high taxation. Agriculturalists, therefore, could not especially be singled out for blame.

How far the crowds, certain to have disapproved, were stunned.

1. ibid.
3. Examiner March 12th, 1814.
into silence, how far they showed anger towards him is not clear. The 'Examiner' reports that Burdett was 'chaired' from the scene, but it may well be that arrangements were made for his triumphal exit to be somewhat prompter than usual. On the other hand, though riotous crowds later attacked the houses of unpopular ministers and others who had supported the Corn Bill, Burdett's house, as he later pointed out in parliament, was untouched. It may have been that the crowds, in their excited state, rapidly forgot what Burdett had said, for there can be no doubt of the popularity of the petition and the rapidity with which it was signed in the next few days. Cartwright, writing to Northmore a few days later, makes clear the great speed with which the people came forward to sign it at the various places it had been posted. In all 42,473 people are held to have signed.

Burdett did not approve the petition, but he had agreed to present it. It was quite clear he would not support it in parliament, however, and it is likely Reformers had no small

1. ibid.

2. Life of Cartwright 11.104. Cartwright to Northmore, 10th March, 1814. So great was the readiness to sign the petition that Cartwright seized the opportunity to get an other petition for reform signed. He sent 35 blank sheets to Brooks together with the printed form of petition he was circulating in the name of the Hampden Club in Yorkshire, cf. ibid and 11.72-3.; cf. also Examiner March 12th, 1814.
misgivings about just what he would say. Cartwright made clear his feelings to Northmore..."At such a moment the freezing coldness of a certain party would drive one mad, if I had not ten times the patience of Job." ....

On 10th March, the last day of the committee debates on the bill, Burdett presented the petition for better or worse and spoke up in parliament.

The House, he began, by suggesting, had surely come to wonder, and the ministry to rejoice, at his long silence. He spoke, however, to make clear his own sentiments on the subject of the Corn Bill, and with a view to correcting a..."great mistake that has gone abroad of my being a friend to the measure"....

..."I am, sir, no supporter of the Corn Bill"...but...
"I think that none of those who think themselves interested in this measure are really interested in it"... (save the boroughmongers who viewed it as a means of ensuring the country would still be able to go on paying the high taxes they imposed)..."If I differ in opinion from some of my constituents, it is not with respect to the measure itself, but with respect to the remedy they ask..." (in reflection)..."I think it unworthy of any man that the public indignation should be directed to individuals of any description"....

It had been said of him, out of doors, that he had abandoned his former principles....

1. Life of Cartwright 11.104. Cartwright to Northmore, 10th March, 1814.

2. Parliamentary Debates Vol. XXX. pp.110-111, from which the following is taken.
"it has been said that the landlord, at length appears and the patriot disappears... that I have been swayed by private interest, and that it has stifled any other consideration".

But he did not care whether the bill passed or not...

"If it passes I shall not raise my rents and if it does not pass I shall not lower them"...

Burdett was, doubtless, doing his best to pass off an embarrassing situation and his speech, and his proclaimed indifference to the Corn Bill, still left, and leaves, room for speculation on his real attitude. But whatever the feeling of members on that subject, however, there is no doubt that intentionally or unintentionally, he diverted their attention and aroused strong feelings on another, when he went on to condemn the ministry's use of the military to preserve order, and to demand parliamentary reform.

The ministry, he said, had used dragoons to fire on citizens from ambuscades even when they were not rioting. He was certain 'the people' were peaceable. Neither he nor his house had been attacked, even though 'the people' believed him to be a supporter of the bill.

Until parliamentary reform was carried, however, protest
must be useless. Could discussions on any subject, before the
House, appear as other than a mock debate, when the members on
the treasury bench - and he indicated Castlereagh - could carry
any measure they chose?

Castlereagh immediately rose angrily, and the House was
with him when he denounced Burdett. He recalled the time when
Burdett had resisted legal authority in his house. But...

..... "now the baronet changes his tone and he who
defends his family and prosperity against a lawless
mob, if any accident occurs, is guilty of murder, and
he who defies the constitution and obedience to law,
if lives be lost, is a true patriot and loyal subject"....

He and his friends, he concluded, would subvert the constitution.

After others had spoken in support of Castlereagh, Burdett
replied that the...

..... "the noble Lord who charged him with overturning
the constitution ..." was himself detected in an act
for which he ought to have lost his head, and by an
uncorrupt House of Commons he would have been impeached".

Called to order, he replied that he knew it was a breach of the
orders of the House to use such language, and that he only wished
it was a breach of truth.

(Only the recent reminder of the affair of 1810, and
recognition of the state of the public temper, seems to have
Paragraph

prevented further action being taken by the House against him.

If it was easy for ministers and the majority of the House to view him as largely responsible for the agitation out of doors, it was not for Reformers to tell the people that the House was wrong! After this evidence of Burdett's 'patriotism' and the attitude of the borough-mongers towards him, it would have been the worst possible tactics for other Reformers to go out of their way to encourage popular suspicion of him. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that the public should have rapidly forgotten any distrust which his attitude to the Corn Bill has aroused in them, especially when Burdett's 'indifference' permitted him to vote with the minority against the bill's third reading! Still less surprising is it when it is considered that immediately after the Corn Bill debate, Castlereagh revealed Napoleon had returned to France. Speculation and concern at the prospect of a renewal of the war, which followed immediately, diverted the attention of the public - and, for the time being, Reformers too, away from the Corn Bill.

In proportion as the possibility of war became a probability

1. ibid.
so Reformers came — indeed, were forced — to change their tactics. Eyes, up to this point focussed on parliament, were now directed towards developments in France. It became difficult to rouse protest against the Corn Bill, when the price of corn, which had immediately risen at the prospect of a new wartime demand, became higher than the 80/- per quarter figure envisaged as satisfactory by those who supported it. It became equally difficult to rouse protest against continued high taxation, when a state of national emergency appeared to justify it.

On the other hand, the war itself not only could be, but must be opposed. A war is likely: the country is in danger. Therefore, high prices are unavoidable and high taxation must be accepted. These were premises and these were conclusions which Reformers utterly rejected. There need be no doubt whatever of the sincerity with which they voiced their detestation of the idea that ministers should undertake a new war, and sought to rouse the country to prevent them doing so.

Whether they approved of Buonaparte or not, his re-acclaim was the decision and the action of the French people. It was, in their view, intolerable that the ministry should interfere

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against them to restore the Bourbons, and equally intolerable that 'the people' of England should be called upon to pay for their interference. The 'borough-mongers' were evidently determined, at one and the same time, to silence the voice of 'the people' of France by force, and to silence the voice of 'the people' of England by 'deluding' them that it was necessary to go on paying the high prices and taxes against which they had dared to protest. 'The people', therefore, must be made to recognise that they were being 'deluded' - that a renewal of the war would be ruinous and disastrous for them.

In April it was evident the crisis was approaching. On the 6th Castlereagh proposed measures for 'preserving the peace'. On the 19th, the Chancellor proposed the renewal of the Income Tax in its old form and, despite the bitter opposition of Burdett and others of the Whig 'left wing', his proposals were approved by a great majority. Reformers, therefore, girded themselves for battle.

The London Common Hall meeting on May 1st, where Waithman took the lead, seems to have been the first large metropolitan meeting. It was clearly designed to mobilise opposition to the third reading of the Income or property tax bill on May 6th.

1. Examiner April 23rd, 1814.
Waithman vehemently condemned the proposed property tax renewal and denounced the very idea of interference in France's domestic concerns. Pointedly he referred to the Revolution in 1688. The Crown of England was held no by hereditary right but by the free choice of 'the people'. A war against the French people could only be in the interests of the borough faction. A petition to the Commons expressing the same sentiments and concluding with the plea that the property should not be restored and that all thoughts of war should be banished, was then carried. Presented to the Commons, it was promptly rejected for its offensive tone, though not without protest by those who foresaw that it would only encourage further agitation. As Burdett remarked, its rejection would make a far bigger impression on the country.

On May 6th, however, the bill to revive the property tax passed its third reading and it was not until the 17th that further protest meetings were staged in Westminster and Southwark.

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1. Examiner May 7th, 1814.
2. ibid.
3. ibid. May 21st, 1814.
At the Westminster meeting, Burdett dwelled long upon the right of 'the people' to choose their own rulers, and upon the self-interest of the 'borough faction', who were determined to stifle freedom everywhere. He hoped 'the people' of England would imitate the example of London and Westminster, and would petition against the shameful injustice of the war and denounce the property tax. On 22nd May, the Westminster petition, similar in form to the rejected London petition, was presented at what must have been chosen as a dramatic moment most likely to excite attention - immediately before the debate on the message from the Regent announcing the re-entering of an engagement with the allies.

Castlereagh immediately objected to its being received on the grounds that it was offensive and disrespectful, and did not, in any case, represent the true state of opinion out of doors. Burdett replied that he...

..."wished it were as void of truth as the noble Lord would intimate"... But it would be... "as easy to convince the people out of doors that it was so, as it would be to persuade them within the walls of the House that the majorities which passed its measures were influenced by any unpatriotic motive... The opinion of the public, from the manner in which petitions were received in that house, was that they might as well be thrown under the table as laid on it"...

1. ibid May 28th.
He was, he went on, pledged to bring forward the question of parliamentary reform, but he would not do so until the period came when support for it out of doors was such that the House must be forced to hear of its corruption, and to realise that its members were anything but the representatives of 'the people' of England. Despite Burdett's protest — doubtless in part because of it — the petition was rejected.

The presentation of the Westminster petition may be regarded as marking both the climax and the failure of the Reformers' campaign to rouse feeling against, and to prevent, the war. Though Burdett and others still protested, armies had once again begun to manœuvre for battle in Europe.

From the outset it must have been clear it had little chance of success, and Reformers are likely to have recognised that they could do no more than warn 'the people' in the hope their warning would be remembered later. Men of substance there were who had agreed with them in viewing the prospect of war as disastrous, and who believed an attempt should have been made to negotiate with Buonaparte. But they were a small minority.

1. ibid.
2. It is well known Whitbread and a number of the Whig 'left wing' were violently against a renewal of the war. But even a moderate Whig such as Sir Robert Heron would write, "Sixteen Millions are already voted... and the expense of the campaign is estimated at eighty. I do not think the choice of all the Sovereigns on earth is to us worth one hundredth part of this sum in our present circumstances." Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart pp55-4, quoted by S. Macoby, op. cit. pp. 308-9.
The large numbers of men of all classes in the country who, earlier in the year, had been prepared to join with Reformers in a drive for economy, had fallen away. When, once again, it seemed the safety of the nation was endangered, when men came to recognize in more sober mood they must continue to bear their burdens a while longer, when they saw the disorders which, it seemed, Reformers had encouraged, their agitation had ceased. Once more, to the majority in the country, Reformers appeared as 'traitors' and 'Jacobins'.

But though Burdett may have failed to lead the Reforming 'party' to victory in the campaign against the war, there can be no doubt that he had made good his title as its leader. If, to the ministry and to the great majority of conservative-minded, he still appeared one of the most dangerous of public figures, then conversely, to those among the population, who still strongly believed in 'radical' reform - and their numbers were growing among the provincial lower classes as a result of the increased attention devoted to them - he must have appeared even more clearly as their greatest champion. He had constantly reiterated 'the people's' right to choose their governors; he had again and
again called upon them to demand their rights and to call for parliamentary reform; he had repeatedly pledged himself to lead them in the struggle to secure it. He could have had no better recommendation than the bitter hostility and distrust displayed by the borough-mongers towards him in parliament.

Chance, and his own exertions, may be regarded as having saved Burdett from an awkward situation and as having preserved his reputation with 'the people'. The Corn Bill passed into law unnoticed and his attitude towards it was forgotten by the public. In the circumstances, it must be clear why all Reformers should continue to accept him and uphold him as their 'leader', why neither Cobbett nor Hunt nor Cartwright made any attempt to discredit him openly. Very obviously he was far too valuable as a spokesman and figurehead, and almost certainly coming to be far too popular among the lower classes in the provinces. Yet, at this very moment, Cartwright, Cobbett and Hunt, it appears, were receiving what they regarded as fresh evidence of the growing unwillingness of Burdett and the Westminster group to encourage an agitation among the lower

1. cf. eg. His speech at the 1815 Anniversary Dinner. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,840 f. 265.
classes.

The Westminster group may or may not have helped in the organisation of the meeting of May 17th. But it was Cartwright, as Place himself said, who organised it, and it may even be that they opposed him. In any event, their unwillingness to take the lead or to assist Cartwright in staging another meeting to protest at the rejection of the Westminster petition, seems to have led to something like a showdown between them.

Cartwright, Cobbett and Hunt were all undoubtedly strongly in favour of such a meeting. Whether the Westminster group contemplated it at first cannot be known, but certainly, after they had found the High Bailiff determined to refuse his permission and Burdett unwilling to countenance a meeting, they opposed the idea. It may well be, in any case, they recognised the strength of conservative hostility and the fruitlessness of further agitation at the moment. In the eyes of Cobbett and Hunt, however, it was because Burdett and they were scared of starting an agitation amongst 'the people'.

According to Cobbett's account, written later, Cartwright was left frantic with impatience, trying to get the Westminster

1. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27809 f. 9.
group to move, whilst he and Hunt wondered why nothing was being done. Hunt, therefore, called on Brooks, to ask about the meeting and was told that no meeting was intended, that Burdett was against it, and that, in any case, in view of the opposition of the High Bailiff, there was no means of calling one. When Hunt argued that he had been to see Burdett in the morning and that he (Burdett) had then favoured holding a meeting, Brooks is held to have replied that Burdett had seen him afterwards and expressly refused to countenance one at all.

Hunt and Cobbett thereupon went to see Cartwright and found out about the vain efforts he had been making to get a meeting. Cobbett depicts himself as being disgusted the poor old Major should have had to dance attendance on the Westminster group, and as determining that he and Hunt would arrange the meeting themselves. As he himself could not stay in town, it was arranged that Hunt should get a house (to qualify himself to act as a householder) stay a week, and make a start with the arrangements. Meanwhile, Cartwright agreed to go ahead and prepare the petition of protest.

1. Cobbett's *Political Register*, Jan. 3rd, 1818; cf. Place Papers B.M. Add. MSS. 27, 309 f. 117. J. Richter's 'Comments' on Cobbett's Calumnies. Richter annotated this issue of the Register. He said Burdett was against a meeting, but that Brooks was in favour.

2. Cobbett's *Political Register* Jan. 3rd, 1818.
Afterwards Hunt returned to Brooks and, finding the Westminster group still unprepared to do anything, made clear that it had been determined to call the meeting in defiance of the High Bailiff and to propose the setting up of a committee, which would undertake such arrangements on behalf of 'the people' of Westminster in future.

This is represented as having caused consternation among the Westminster group and as having persuaded Burdett to consent to the meeting and to promise his appearance. Burdett certainly seems to have agreed, but it was Cartwright and Cleary — not the Westminster group — who organised the meeting. No serious effort seems to have been made by the authorities to prevent its being staged.

In the event, the meeting — called to protest against the war and to draw attention to the way their advice on the ruin it would bring had been rejected — was held, ironically enough, on June 15th — just before Waterloo.

1. ibid J. Richter commented (Place Papers B. M. Add, MS., 2780 f. 117) that Hunt's sole contribution to the meeting was £1 for expenses, while Cobbett did nothing at all.
2. Place Papers B. M. Add, MS., 27,809 f. 9; and 27,840 f. 268 for Cleary's Public Letter announcing the summoning of a meeting to consider ways and means of preserving the right of petitioning in view of the opposition of the High Bailiff.
3. For an account of the meeting cf. Place Papers, B. M. Add, MS., 27,840 f. 269. British Press June 16th.
The importance of the meeting, so far as it had any effect on popular opinion, may, then, be considered negligible. It is, however, important for another reason — namely that a committee, on the lines mentioned, was projected at the meeting and set up after it.

Burdett, whatever his feelings, was prepared to justify the holding of the meeting in defiance of the High Bailiff. The High Bailiff's 'permission', he said, was really an act of courtesy which he had sought to erect into a right which gave him the power of refusal. As representative of the city, therefore, he was defending the right of 'the people' of Westminster to meet whenever they chose. In the days of Fox, it was he, not the High Bailiff, who had acted as chairman at meetings. In meeting under his chairmanship, they were only reverting to the ancient practice.

Burdett spoke moderately enough about Morris, the High Bailiff, personally, and may have been intending to imply the hand of another and stronger authority behind him, which is more than likely. Cartwright, however, was more forthright and

1. viz.: Home Secretary, Lord Sidmouth himself, who, in 1813, had been appointed Lord High Steward of Westminster. cf. D. Pellew, Life of Sidmouth III. 85.
and specific in blaming the High Bailiff. He declaimed against his habit of insisting on the alteration of requisition notices —

of dictating the words of a requisition before he would agree to the holding of meetings at all. Both he and the Deputy Bailiff were corrupt tools. The High Bailiff bought his office from the Dean and Chapter and was, therefore, little likely to look to the interests of electors. As things were the electors of Westminster had been blamed for not meeting to protest earlier. He recalled that, in 1780, when both he and Fawkes had been members of the then Westminster Committee, Fawkes had been the chairman of a sub-committee with the power to summon public meetings whenever he saw fit. He was now going to propose a similar scheme. (Paragraph) There may have been some misunderstanding as to the nature of the Committee to which Cartwright’s proposal gave rise, known sometimes as the ‘Committee of Public Safety’. It may be said at once, that it had no sinister significance whatever and was to have very little political importance at all. Its projection, however, is by no means without significance.

1. for this title cf. E. Halévy. History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century III, 15. referring to what seems to have been its one subsequent public activity. cf. also, Place Papers R. M. Add. MS. 27809 f. 18, for Place’s own illuminating comments.
Cartwright proposed a committee of thirty one. Burdett as chairman would be supported by thirty other "trustworthy fellow citizens". It would be appointed for "watching over the political rights and liberties of the citizens of Westminster" as well as for "convening general meetings whenever the said committee may judge it necessary".

In addition to Sir Francis, he named Brooks, H. Hunt, Alderman Wood, Knight, Peter Walker, G. Rogers, Cleary, Dickerson(?) Long, Samuel Miller, Prince, Morrell, Wilson, James Mill and himself. Thirteen others were to be chosen, by a mode unspecified. Five were to be a quorum for business, and the committee was to nominate persons to fill vacancies, subject to the approval of a general meeting.

The purpose of the Committee, as proposed by Cartwright, is clear enough. It was projected as a means of arranging public meetings or other political business on behalf of the electors if necessary without the High Bailiff's approval. The majority of contemporaries must have seen it as a specific answer to a specific move by the High Bailiff and are unlikely, for a moment, to have viewed it as formed with revolutionary intent - except in so far as they regarded Reformers themselves as 'revolutionaries'.

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1. Place Papers B. M. Add. MS. 27, 840 f. 269.
At its face value then, it was, at most, no more than a variation of Place's 1812 Westminster Club, or constituency association, though much less elaborate in appearance and much more suited to the conduct of business in the existing circumstances, with its quorum of five. The similarity is carried further, if it is recognised that, though no public mention was made of its function with regard to elections, it was intended as an election committee.

Even in this aspect, therefore, as a further attempt to set political and election matters in Westminster on a more regular footing, it is not without significance. It must, however, have an even greater significance once it is realised that it was projected by Cartwright and supported by Cobbett and Hunt at this time, partly with the aim of frustrating the efforts of the Westminster group to secure Brougham's election, and to promote Cartwright's election instead.

It comes, in fact, as a reminder that, when viewing the political divergence of the Westminster group and the 'extremists' at this time, it is essential to take into account the continuing

1. ibid 27,809. f. 9.
2. ibid. Place wrote. "The persons named on the Committee were mostly such as were thought likely to promote the Major's return for Westminster".
rivalry of these groups for control of the second Westminster seat, and essential to view their rivalry as part cause, part effect of their drawing apart.

Throughout 1815, as it has already been suggested, this election rivalry remained a live issue. Early in the year it was proposed Brougham should stand for Southwark at a bye-election. Had he stood, Place and Mill would certainly have backed him, though, viewing his chances of success as limited, it seems they were not sorry he declined. In the event Jones Burdett stood again instead, with the backing, advice and possibly the active support of the Westminster group, and his defeat suggests the pessimism expressed over Brougham's chances were justified.

Whether Cartwright, Cobbett, and Hunt had any interest in the Southwark election or not - and it may well be they were suspicious of Jones Burdett's being 'his brother's brother' - it must certainly have kept them in mind of the Westminster group's interest in Brougham.

But, quite apart from the possibilities of a general election, it came to seem highly probably there would be a

1. A. Aspinall, Lord Brougham and the Whig Party p. 35.

2. H. S. Smith, Register of Contested Elections. This bye-election was occasioned by the death of Henry Thornton.
further bye-election in Westminster itself - to select a new member in the place of Cochrane.

On March 6th, escaped from the prison to which, in the previous June, he had been sentenced for twelve months. Re-appearing in the Commons on March 20th, he was seized and confined in a 'strong room' until he agreed to pay a fine of £1,000. In April, he wrote a 'Letter to the Electors' complaining about his treatment, but not until July did he pay his fine.

Inevitably, there must have been speculation on his future. Apart from the prospect of his father's death, and his elevation to the Lords, it now seemed that he might - perhaps through an increased term of imprisonment - be prevented from taking his seat in the Commons at all, in which case he might be called on to resign. It might be that the Commons would expel him again. Though neither of these possibilities developed, they help to explain the continuing tenseness of the election rivalry between the two groups so apparent in early 1816.

1. M.W. Patterson, op. cit. I. 345. Examiner, April 23rd, 1815, for Cochrane's 'Letter'.
2. Four days after Cochrane's escape on March 10th, Cartwright noted in a letter to Northmore (Life of Cartwright II. 104) that Brougham had expressed himself in favour of representation coextensive with taxation but... "he can unsay as well as say - a mere feather of faction, blown this way or that as the wind changes" ... cf. also, Place Paper B. M. Add. MS. 27809 f. 12.
Thus personal and political differences and election rivalry all intermingled in 1815 to increase their divergence. Burdett's attitude to the Corn Bill; his readiness, backed by the 'Westminster Committee', to shy away from any step which might encourage rioting or disorders; the Westminster group's interest in the 'left wing' Whigs and their hopes of Brougham, more than ever divided them from the 'extremists'. In outline, Cobbett's account of their behaviour over the meeting of June 18th is almost certainly correct. But their attitude is understandable, and their dislike of Cartwright's 'Committee of 31', even more so. It is clear they recognised it was intended by Cartwright partly as a means of gathering about him men who would promote his election, partly as a means of strengthening his hand in Westminster generally. It need not be supposed that Cartwright imagined Adams, Brooks, Burdett and James Mill, for example, would promote his election. Indeed, it may well be that they did not even know that their names were included. Cartwright seems to have put certain names down for appearances and those so named may have felt that, for appearances and to prevent a rupture, they must give their nominal support.

1. Place Papers B.M. Add. MS. 27,809 f. 9. "Several of the names were inserted without the knowledge of the parties themselves."
In fact the 'Committee of 31' was, as so many of Cartwright's brain children, to decline rapidly from the moment of its birth, though nominally it remained in existence at least throughout the following year. But Committee or not to divide them, by the time the country had once again returned to peace, the Westminster group and Cartwright, Cobbett, and Hunt had come near to breaking point. Only in the eyes of the public, were Burdett and his Westminster followers waiting to lead the new popular movement, which was now rapidly to grow in the country.

1. ibid. f. 18.