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Ireland and Chartism

A study of the influence of Irishmen and the Irish Question
on the Chartist movement.

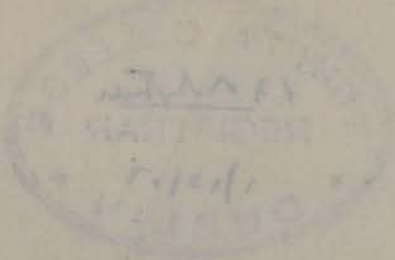
by

Rachel O'Higgins
(M.A., Trinity College, Dublin)



Thesis submitted in support of candidature for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, Trinity College, Dublin.

June 1959.



Ireland and Chartism

A study of the influence of Irishmen and the Irish Question

on the Chartist movement.

by

Rachel O'Riordan

(B.A., Trinity College, Dublin)



Thesis submitted in support of candidature for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy, Trinity College, Dublin.

June 1959

DECLARATION.

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree of any other university.

I declare that it is entirely my own work.

I.D.A. Irish Democratic Association.

I.D.C. Irish Democratic Confederation.

N.T.F.U. National Teachers' Federation.

L.N.R.A. Loyal National Repeal Association.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED.

L.W.M.A.	London Working Men's Association.
I.U.S.A.	Irish Universal Suffrage Association.
I.D.A.	Irish Democratic Association.
I.D.C.	Irish Democratic Confederation.
N.T.P.U.	National Trades Political Union.
L.N.R.A.	Loyal National Repeal Association.
S.P.O.	State Paper Office.
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
C.S.O.R.P.	Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers.
C.S.O.U.P.	Chief Secretary's Office Unregistered Papers.

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Introduction.

One of the most important developments in nineteenth century Britain was the growth of political radicalism among the working classes. This was a factor which contributed to the gradual reform of political life and institutions. The extent of Irish influence on this development is greater than is generally realised. This is especially true of the Chartist movement which began in 1836 and continued until the middle of the fifties, agitating much of England, Scotland and Wales and even extending to Ireland, although, for reasons to be explained, Chartism had little success in Ireland. In Britain, the Chartist movement was supported by a large number of Irishmen amongst the rank-and-file and in the leadership. Two of its best-known personalities, Feargus O'Connor, its leading agitator, and Bronterre O'Brien, its leading theoretician, were Irishmen. Had two Germans led the most important radical movement in nineteenth century France, and been supported by large numbers of their countrymen, the situation would not have escaped the attention of historians of the period. Although Ireland had, in varying degree and extent, been subjected by the English since the Norman invasion of the twelfth century, in fact the Irish were as foreign to the English in customs and outlook as they were to the French.

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of Irishmen and the Irish Question on the Chartist movement. The first chapter traces the development of political organisations among the lower classes in Ireland, secret agrarian confederacies among the peasants and trade unions among artisans. The second chapter deals with growth and influence of radical and Chartist groups in Ireland. The third describes the attitude adopted by the Irish national leader, Daniel O'Connell, and later the Young Irelanders to the Chartist movement both in England and Ireland. Particular attention is paid to the growth of an alliance in the early months of 1848 between the English Chartists and a section of the Irish Confederate party led by John Mitchel, and the attitude adopted by Repeal Associations and Confederate Clubs in Britain to this new policy. The fourth chapter deals with the Irish participation in the Chartist movement in Britain. Irish Chartist groups, Irish agitators and journalists all played an important rôle and formed the nucleus of the most militant and revolutionary section of the movement. In the fifth chapter, the general attitude of Chartists towards Irish questions is described. This would be irrelevant to my thesis were it not an indispensable factor in the most dramatic and, to the government, the most nightmarish development of Chartist politics - the planned simultaneous rebellion of the British and Irish peoples in 1848.

In order to understand the factors which drove Irish people to radical revolt, it is necessary to recognise the evils which, about the beginning of the nineteenth century, pressed most heavily upon them. The most important were religious disabilities, the absence of land rights and overriding these, because it was their immediate cause and stood in the way of their cure, foreign government. The religious difficulty arose from the fact that the majority of the Irish were Catholics ruled by a Protestant government which had imposed a Protestant Establishment. The struggle of the Catholics to obtain civil equality was a major issue since the impositions of the penal laws at the end of the Williamite wars. The struggle for Catholic emancipation had entered its final stage before the beginning of the nineteenth century. From 1770 onwards in Great Britain and Ireland Catholic disabilities were gradually reduced until the only serious ones remaining were exclusion from parliament and from high office in the law and in the State. These were removed by the Test and Corporation Acts of 1828, closely followed by the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. These two Acts were the successful outcome of the popular agitation for emancipation, which was led by Daniel O'Connell, the idol of the Catholic masses. There still remained the difficulty that the Established Church of Ireland was Protestant and that it was nevertheless empowered to collect tithes from Catholics and dissenters as well as from its own

members. To propitiate O'Connell, who placed himself at the head of an enraged peasantry, the Tithe Commutation Act was passed in 1838, which merely transferred payment of tithes from the parson to the landlord. Measures of this kind failed to remove the fundamental fact of the Established Church which remained a source of grievance far into the nineteenth century.

Far more pressing, however, was the land question which had its roots in the repeated confiscations and re-allotment of land. This historical process had put Irish estates in the hands of landlords who were almost without exception Protestant and often not Irish. However, it would be a mistake to regard Irish rural life as a pyramid, with clearly defined layers - landlords, tenant farmers and labourers. In fact it was composed of a numerous collection of persons who controlled the soil in a multiplicity of forms.¹ There was a rapid growth in population during the first half of the nineteenth century from about five million in 1780 to just over eight million in 1841.² The desire of the Irish farmer to secure labour without paying wages and the anxiety of many landlords to increase freeholders on their estates encouraged sub-division. The peasants were constantly breaking up their holdings to provide portions for their children. The Irish agricultural system need

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1. R.D. Edwards and T.D. Williams, The Great Famine (Dublin 1956), Chapter I, "Ireland on the Eve of the Famine" by R.B. McDowell, pp.7-8. This is an excellent introduction to the general background of Irish social and political conditions in the mid-19th century.
 2. K.M. Connell The Population of Ireland, 1750-1854 (Oxford 1950), Chapter I.

drastic revision in order to make it sufficiently productive to support the ever-increasing population. Only two forces, the state or the Irish landowners could be expected to undertake such an enormous task. The dominant laissez-faire attitude and the lack of the requisite machinery prevented the state from passing effective legislation to improve the relations of landlord and tenant in Ireland. The landed interest was composed of such heterogeneous elements, who were not prepared to embark on extensive changes and were generally regarded by their contemporaries as unenterprising and spendthrift. Absenteeism, which had existed in the eighteenth century, became more wide-spread after the Act of Legislative Union in 1800 and the peasants found themselves at the mercy of unscrupulous middlemen and agents. Rents, fixed by the competitive proposals from the prospective tenants rather than on a valuation of the land, were high. Many tenants were unable to pay the high rents and were subject to eviction and distresses were levied, that is to say, the tenants' crops and possession were taken as a means of recovering rent. The questions of improvements were generally ignored in the agreement between landlord and tenant. In the event of any improvement by the tenant, he had no claim to compensation at the termination of his tenancy. In Ulster, it was customary for a tenant to be left undisturbed on his holding so long as he fulfilled his contract and he could recuperate himself for any

improvement he had made. Any violation of this custom was penalised by agrarian direct action, and one local observer maintained that if the Ulster landlords attempted to destroy tenant right there was "not sufficient force at the disposal of the Horse Guards to keep the peace of the province".¹

Outside Ulster, the tenants were given no such protection and were left with no alternative to starvation but submission to rack-rents or emigration. In such circumstances, the Irish peasantry fell an easy prey to famine whenever a potato crop failed, however good the grain crop might be; the famine of 1846 and Black '47 was but the best known of a long series.

The appalling state of Irish agriculture affected the development of Irish industry. The poverty of the mass of the peasantry constituted a poor market for Irish manufactures. Moreover, the agricultural labourers, finding their services unwanted for many months in the year, drifted to the towns and provided the textile industries with semi-skilled workers, which tended to depress wages and conditions of work. Other factors tended to handicap the growth of Irish manufacture. Much of the eighteenth century Irish industries had been the victims of imperial mercantilism, but the Irish parliament in 1782 established a series of bounties and subsidies which resulted in a marked improvement. The industrial revolution

1. Report from H.M. Commissioners of inquiry ... in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland, H.C. 1845 (605), xix, p.484.

led to an intensification of British competition and after the Union, the protective duties were removed from Irish industry, which made it less able to resist this competition from abroad.¹

The growth of Irish nationalism in the latter years of the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century was the result of the failure of English government policy in Ireland and the existence of widespread popular discontent. The United Irishmen movement, which culminated in the rising of 1798, combined national aspirations and agrarian discontents with radicalism and the egalitarian beliefs of the French Revolution. It was a movement composed of Catholic peasantry and Protestant leaders. The Government made their rising an excuse to introduce the Act of Legislative Union in 1800, which deprived Ireland of all legislative and economic independence. From now on Ireland occupied a position similar to that of a colony within the British Empire. It provided a source of cheap labour and cheap food for the rapidly growing industrial population of the new urban centres in northern England. The Union ended any serious effort to develop the Irish economy in any way that might threaten British interests. The grant of Irish legislative independence in 1782, although limited by the retention of executive authority in English hands, had been followed by a

1. R.D. Edwards and T.D. Williams, The Great Famine, Chapter I, *ibid.*, pp.10-15.

brief period of prosperity to which many Irishmen looked back with nostalgia. The suppression of the legislature was followed by a decay of Ireland's nascent trade and industry and roused feelings of bitter hostility towards Britain.

The repressive measures adopted by the government towards the United Irishmen and subsequently to the Emmet rising in 1803 discouraged the participation of the middle classes in the movement for legislative independence in the early years of the nineteenth century. The movement was driven underground and appears in the programme of secret peasant confederacies. However, the persistent refusal of the British government to meet Irish demands by legislation led Irish leaders to use popular discontent to force an unwilling British parliament to introduce reform measures. Willing to support any measure which gave some hope of redress, the Irish peasantry supported the agitations for Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform. But the failure of the Catholic Emancipation Bill (1829) and of the first Reform Bill (1832) to bring any substantial benefits to the vast majority of the Irish people¹ resulted in a sharpening of relations between the peasantry and

1. The Catholic Emancipation Bill (1829) abolished all disabilities of Catholics but was accompanied by an amendment of the electoral law to deprive the 40/- freeholder in Ireland of his franchise. The Clare election (1828) in which O'Connell was returned in the face of bitter opposition from the Ascendancy candidate, illustrated the tendency among Catholic tenantry not to vote for the candidate adopted by their landlords.

The Irish Reform Bill (1832) maintained the disenfranchisement of the 40/- freeholders. Its only substantial reform was an introduction of a £10 franchise in the boroughs.

their leaders. Agitation for Repeal of the Legislative Union was intensified in the 1830's. But Daniel O'Connell, who had become the Irish national leader after his success in the struggle for Catholic emancipation, feared the rising tide of popular agitation. He believed that the hostility of the British parliament to Ireland and Irish questions would make Repeal impossible to obtain except by armed force. O'Connell hoped to satisfy the more moderate section of his supporters by securing from the Whig party a series of graduated reforms for Ireland in return for which the Irish Repealers supported the Whigs in Parliament. The Whigs were in office between 1835 and 1841 and introduced several measures of reform. Tithe was commuted and reduced, the municipal corporations were reformed, the police reorganised, poor relief introduced, and the machinery of county government improved. But from the standpoint of Irish Radicals, the Whigs did not go far enough. They failed to introduce extensive measures of land reform and the religious question still remained to be settled. By 1838, a growing body of opposition in Ireland to Whig rule began to demand a return to the agitation for repeal. O'Connell foresaw the return of the Tories to power and "began to gear up the agitation machinery and in 1840 he founded the National Repeal Association".¹

1. R.D. Edwards and T.D. Williams, The Great Famine (Dublin 1956), Chapter I. "Ireland on the Eve of the Famine" by R.B. McDowell, pp.74-5.

The return of Peel and his party to power in 1841 was followed by re-commencement of the repeal agitation, led by O'Connell. The year 1843 was marked by a series of large open-air meetings in the south of Ireland, at which O'Connell addressed tens of thousands. At the end of 1843, the cabinet became alarmed by O'Connell's movement and banned the last of the great meetings which was to be held at Clontarf in October, 1843. A few days after the proclamation, O'Connell and his associates were charged with conspiring to alter the constitution by force and he was subsequently sentenced; but when he and his friends appealed to the House of Lords, his sentence was quashed by a majority of one. "It was O'Connell's last great triumph for the initiative in Irish politics was passing into other hands."¹

The Tory party, led by Robert Peel, recognised the dangers inherent in the existence of a large body of Irish opinion pledged to support repeal and proposed several measures of reform by which to persuade a considerable portion of respectable and influential Catholics to abandon the measure. It was proposed to appoint a commission to consider the relations between landlord and tenant and to donate a grant to the Catholic clergy. In 1843, the Devon Commission was appointed and as a result of its report in 1845, the government introduced

1. R.D. Edwards and T.D. Williams, The Great Famine, Chapter I, "Ireland on the Eve of the Famine", p.77.

a bill giving Irish tenants the right to compensation for certain types of improvement but later dropped the bill on account of the strong opposition from those who disapproved of state intervention between a landlord and his tenantry.¹

The Tories proposed to increase the grant to Maynooth from £9,000 to £12,000, but this was vigorously attacked by Tories who frowned on the state assisting dissenters, bigoted Protestants who detested popery and radicals who disapproved of state subsidies for theological colleges. Despite violent opposition the prime minister carried the bill by large majorities.²

The rise of a new generation of repealers led to serious dissensions among the Irish national movement. During the thirties, O'Connell was the most outstanding figure among the advanced liberals, but when he began his last great drive for repeal in 1840 several young and gifted men joined the movement. In 1842, the Nation was founded by three of them, Thomas Davis, John Dillon and Charles Gavan Duffy. Their views were not formulated but emerged in their weekly articles and were based on ideals similar to those held by nationalists in many parts of Europe. "The importance of cultivating a self-conscious, active sense of nationality amongst Irishmen was urged with

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1. Hansards Parliamentary Debates ... 3rd series, lxxxi, 211 ff., 1116 ff.
 2. C.S. Parker, Sir Robert Peel (1899), iii, p.176; R.D. Edwards and T.D. Williams, The Great Famine, Chapter I, *ibid.*, *op. cit.*, pp.79-81.

astonishing vehemence and clarity."¹ "Nationality meant",
the Nation explained,

"the application of all the forces of a country to improve its physical comfort, enlarge its powers and enoble its soul. It means to a nation what prudence and great desires mean to an individual and can only be secured to the one as to the other, by self-respect, self-rule and self-reliance." ²

In a country rent with bitter political and sectarian conflict, where "all external symbols of nationality were nearly as effectually banished from Dublin as they were banished from Warsaw under the Cossack, or from Venice under the Austrian"³, the generous and comprehensive nationalism preached by the Nation introduced a new character into the Irish national movement.

Differences of opinion between O'Connell and his young followers began to develop, partly as a result of temperament and personal relations but also from differences in outlook. O'Connell was a convinced Catholic and tended to emphasise that Ireland was a predominantly Catholic country; the young men deplored this sectarian approach. Moreover O'Connell constantly denounced the use of force in politics since he sincerely believed that if public opinion was sufficiently well organised it would achieve its objectives. The Nation, while urging the people to strive for repeal by legal and

1. R.D. Edwards and T.D. Williams, The Great Famine, Chapter I, "Ireland on the Eve of the Famine" by R.B. McDowell, p.82.

2. Nation, 23 August 1845.

3. O.G. Duffy, Young Ireland (Dublin 1884), part 1, p.25.

constitutional means, did not regard the use of force as immoral and indeed appeared to endorse the view that, at times, it was necessary and desirable.

The defeat of Robert Peel in June 1846 precipitated a quarrel which led to the secession of several leading members of the Repeal Association. John Mitchel, Richard Gorman and other Young Irelanders repudiated any idea of compromise with the Whigs. After this first formal breach with the Repeal Association, the Young Irelanders were content to accept the suggestion by Smith O'Brien to contribute articles to the Nation devoted to the instruction of "their fellow countrymen in that intellectual and moral discipline that best fits men for freedom".¹ In Dublin and other centres food prices and unemployment began to cause discontent among the artisans but it was not until October that this discontent began to assume a definite form, which was critical of the policy of the Repeal Association. After a series of meetings in the autumn of 1846, the secessionists, finally decided to launch early in January 1847 a new political movement, the Irish Confederation.

With the onset of the Great Famine in the winter of 1846, the economic, social and political life of the country was strained to its limits. The failure of the Irish landlords

1. Nation, 31 October 1846.

to shoulder the responsibilities which now faced them, the inadequacy of Whig reform measures, and the apathy among the Irish people led to a deep sense of dissatisfaction among the Confederates. Smith O'Brien best expressed the apprehension when he declared that the famine was not so much the outcome of "inevitable doom", as the result of the "stolid incapacity of British misgovernment".¹ The hardship produced by the famine was the irritant which caused the secession of John Mitchel and Fintan Lalor from the main body of the Confederates in February 1848. The overthrow of the French monarchy in February 1848 produced a profound sensation in Ireland. Hopes ran high that the British government, faced with a revolutionary France leading the liberated nations of Europe, would be forced to capitulate to the Irish demand for repeal of the Act of Union.² It was during this same period that in seeking for allies, the Confederates began to consider a union with the British Chartists, who for many years had expressed their desire to co-operate with the Irish nationalists.

It was against this background of deep dissatisfaction and unrest that there developed in Ireland a small but vociferous group of Irish Chartists. R.G. Gammage, a Chartist who wrote a history of the agitation, referred to "a small band of

1. Nation, 15 January 1848.

2. Nation, 4 March 1848; Freemans Journal, 11 March 1848.
 Cf. R.D. Edwards and T.D. Williams, The Great Famine, Chapter III, "The Political Background", by Kevin B. Nowlan, p.177 ff.

Chartists in Dublin at the head of whom was Patrick O'Higgins, a merchant".¹ O'Neill Daunt made a reference to O'Higgins,

"who got up a nibbling opposition to O'Connell, and devoted a room at the back of his house to the reception of a few discontented deserters from O'Connellism. Mr O'Higgins professed himself an ally of Feargus (O'Connor), and promised to propagate Chartism in Dublin."²

Although they had little influence in the country, these Irish Chartists constituted a small but determined body of critics of contemporary Irish society. They were among the early Irish pioneers of the socialist movement which culminated in the formation of a militant, workers party led by James Connolly and Jim Larkin in the early years of the twentieth century.

Devotion to Ireland and the cause of Irish nationality was common to all Irish Chartists. Whether they remained at home to fight the battle of radical reform or joined the ranks of the British Chartists, they all supported the popular agitations for repeal of the Legislative Union, the abolition of tithes and reform of the existing relations between landlord and tenant. Irish Chartists differed from most nationalists only in their opposition to the existing class-structure of society which, they argued, must be altered if the labouring masses were to enjoy the benefits of reforms which the national

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1. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (London and Newcastle 1894), p.54.
 2. W.J. O'Neill Daunt, Eighty-Five Years of Irish History, 1800-1885 (London 1888), vol 9, p. 274.

party hoped to achieve. While the executive and legislative power of the state remained in the hands of a small but privileged minority the mass of the people would receive little advantage. Further, the Irish national question would be solved only when political power was vested in the people by means of universal suffrage. While a few Irish Chartists, such as Patrick O'Higgins, pursued this policy at home, the vast majority found a more congenial atmosphere in Britain in the growing working-class radical movement which centred round the agitation for the People's Charter. Men like O'Connor and O'Brien hoped to assist the Irish national struggle by working with British working-class radicals, and by drawing together the labouring masses of both countries into a union able to overthrow the interests which oppressed them both.

Irish Chartists came to regard the People's Charter as a key to the reform of Irish institutions; it was the rallying point of all their hopes and ambitions. This document, which was published in 1838¹, contained nothing that had not been included in the programme of parliamentary reformers since the middle of the eighteenth century. Its restricted platform of political reform, although denounced as revolutionary at the time, was afterwards substantially adopted by the British state.

1. The Charter was first proposed in London by the London Working Men's Association at a meeting on February 28, 1837; it was published in May 1838. Cf. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (Manchester 1925), pp.69-75.

The "Six Points" comprised, universal manhood suffrage, annual parliaments, vote by secret ballot, payment by members of parliament, abolition of property qualifications for Members of Parliament and equal electoral districts. Before the last of the Chartist leaders died, some of these demands had passed into law. In 1858, the property qualification for Members of Parliament was abolished. Next followed the vote by ballot established by the Ballot Act of 1872. Much later in 1911 the payment of members of the House of Commons was introduced and it was not until after the First World War that universal suffrage was finally attained.¹ Only one of the "Six Points" has not been legalised, namely annual parliaments. Yet even here, the curtailment of a normal Parliament's life from seven to five years is a step in that direction.

At first sight, the People's Charter was merely another programme for parliamentary reform. The middle-class Reform movement merely sought to modify the existing system, but the Charter embodied the fundamental desire of the working classes for political representation. Working-class radicals believed that the "Six Points" were but the first step towards a complete change, by means of which the mass of the people, in control of state power, would transform society in accordance with their own needs. This followed the tradition of working-class

1. This included votes for women, which was not advocated by the Chartists as a whole, although William Lovett was in favour of the enfranchisement of women.

radical movements which first emerged in England with the formation of the London Corresponding Society in 1782. This body drew its inspiration from the American and French revolutions; its programme demanded manhood suffrage and equal representation. Towards 1830 the demand for parliamentary reform became more insistent. There was a growing realisation by middle and working-class groups alike that, while political power remained in the hands of the landowners and a privileged section of the middle classes, the majority could hope for little improvement in their general condition. The popular agitation which resulted from the alliance of industrial and commercial interests with the factory workers led to the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832. This Bill extended the franchise and gave the northern industrial towns Parliamentary representatives for the first time; the middle classes now enjoyed a degree of political power hitherto denied them. However, as the vast majority still remained without the vote, conditions for them remained unchanged.

After 1832 the working-class radicals began to develop their own reform movement, which aimed to secure universal suffrage. This drew its strength from other agitations and discontents. There was the trade-union upsurge, which culminated in 1834 with Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. The collapse of the Union the same year forced its supporters to look elsewhere for trade union rights.

Simultaneous with this was the movement for factory reform, which centred round the demand for a ten hour day. Finally, the enactment of the new Poor Law of 1834, which replaced the old system of outdoor relief and offered the terrible alternatives of starvation, the workhouse or the factory, goaded the workers into a frenzy of resentment. The situation demanded a new kind of movement which would draw together all the separate but related agitations. It was this need and the realisation of working men that the state was controlled by a privileged minority, which produced Chartism.

The movement was composed of many different elements, who were united only in their support of the Charter. There was an important group of middle-class radicals, centred in the Birmingham Political Union, led by Thomas Attwood, a banker, who wished to impose his own theories of currency reform on the movement.¹ Then there were the London artisans, led by William Lovett, Henry Hetherington and John Cleave, who formed the nucleus of the London Working Men's Association. The third and most militant section of the movement was composed of the industrial workers of northern England. Many were hand-workers who were suffering the effects of the transformation from domestic to factory production. During the thirties and forties, the hand-loom weavers saw a deterioration in their

1. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), pp.100-110.

position¹, which engendered a mood of hopelessness and led many to join the Chartists. Factory workers also swelled the ranks of the organisation. Finally, thousands of Irish immigrants supported the movement and brought with them a tradition of combination and resistance to authority; they were the leaven in the mass of apathetic and depressed British workers.

Irish influence was not confined to any one part of the country; the London Working Men's Association could trace its origin to the Association for Civil and Political Liberty formed by London Irishmen in 1828², and it was particularly strong in northern England. There were large numbers of Irish workers in unskilled occupations and among the handloom weavers. The importance of the Irish contingent lay in the impressive number of political agitators and journalists who became the spokesmen of Irish ideas among British workers. Led by Feargus O'Connor and Bronterre O'Brien, the Irish element in the

1. Cf. Report from the select committee appointed to examine the petitions presented to them from the handloom weavers, H.C. 1834 (556), x; Report by Mr Hickson on the condition of Hand-loom weavers, H.L. 1840 (639), xxiv; Report of the Commissioners on Hand-loom weavers, H.C. 1841 (296), ix.

2. The Association for Civil and Political Liberty was organised by the London Irish in protest against the policy of the Catholic leaders who were prepared to abolish the 40/- freehold franchise in return for Catholic Emancipation. Cf. Cobbett's Political Register, 12 July 1828.

Many members of the London Democratic Association founded by Julian Harney were weavers and it is known that a large proportion of these weavers were recruited from Irish immigrants. Cf. E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (1951), p.127.

Chartist movement was distinguished by its radicalism and readiness for revolutionary change out of all proportion to the real social power which it could rally to the support of such a change. Nevertheless, their capacity for mass organisation and hatred of authority went far to overcome the difficulties which faced the movement. As Irish nationalists, they brought with them a harshly critical attitude to British institutions; their desire to achieve independence for Ireland made them all the more determined in their advocacy of the rights of oppressed Englishmen, who were, they believed, the natural allies of the oppressed Irish.

Differences of outlook and policy within the Chartist movement reflected the conflicting interests of its different sections. The distinction between "moral" and "physical" force Chartists is somewhat misleading, but it generally refers to the difference of attitude between the Birmingham radicals and London artisans led by William Lovett, on the one hand, and the northern Chartists led by O'Connor and O'Brien, on the other. The policy of the "moral" force Chartists was directed towards slow and thorough organisation within the law, towards peaceful trade unions, political and educational societies. Lovett and his compatriots had been driven to revolutionary thought by the appalling misery they saw around them. A feeling of helplessness in the face of the massed array of ignorance, prejudice and brutality drove them to protest in the only way then open to

them. They shrank, however, from the dangers and suffering inherent in every revolution by armed force. The objects proclaimed by the London Working Men's Association¹ reflected the cautious approach which distinguished the "moral" force Chartists from their northern compatriots.

The "physical" force Chartists were more revolutionary in their phraseology, more determined in their attitude, and more hostile to the middle classes. On the extreme wing of this group were some who favoured conspiracies, secret societies and armed insurrection. The majority, however, condemned this approach. This group of Chartists believed that the ruling class would be forced finally to concede the people's demands if public opinion was sufficiently well organised; that the use of forceful measures should be resorted to only in the final instant. O'Connor declared,

"I denounce (physical force) except where right corresponds with it and makes moral obligation for the suppression of might and wrong."

He defined the term "moral force" somewhat differently to Lovett,

1. Cf. William Lovett, Life and Struggles of William Lovett (London 1876), pp.92-3. The objects of the Association are thus stated by Lovett:

"To draw into one bond of unity the intelligent and influential portion of the working classes in town and country. To seek by every legal means to place all classes of society in possession of equal political and social rights."

Then follow two specific demands, "a cheap and honest press" and "the education of the rising generation" in the hope of creating "a reflecting public opinion" which would lead to a gradual improvement of the working classes "without commotion or violence".

as "a combination of right and might".¹ In 1848, Ernest Jones expressed a similar opinion.

"What does moral force mean? It means being in the right. And what does physical force mean? It means having the power to establish that right. Therefore they are twin cherries on one stalk."²

This group of Chartists, headed by O'Connor and O'Brien, derived their outlook from the theorists of "natural law", who argued that in the past a small minority of rulers had secured control of political and social institutions which they had since exploited for the benefit of a few. The whole system of government was a violation of the social contract which aimed to secure the happiness and protection of all its members. Despotism had destroyed the ancient rights and pledges. The people had a right to destroy the power of the usurpers and restore the law of nature, which had created men in a free state. O'Connor and O'Brien argued that the rightful claims of the people would best be secured by a powerful, mass movement of the working people, which was led by men devoted to their interests. By persistent and prolonged popular agitation, these Chartists believed that ultimately, without resort to violence and bloodshed, the people would win the right to political representation. The distinction between the "moral force" and the "physical force" Chartists lay in their different approach to the problems which faced them. The latter group

1. Northern Star, 20 March 1841.

2. Northern Star, 26 February 1848.

recognised the basic fact that the ruling powers would use every means ultimately to destroy the popular movement.

Prohibition of meetings, the trial and imprisonment of Chartist leaders would be followed, they argued, by an extensive use of police and military. While encouraging the people to struggle for the Charter by peaceful means, they warned their supporters to be prepared, in the final instant, to meet force with force.

To appreciate the part played by Irishmen, it is necessary to keep in mind the general history of the Chartist movement. This may be divided into three phases. The first began in 1836 with the formation of the London Working Men's Association and ended with the imprisonment of Chartist leaders in 1839. The second phase, in which Feargus O'Connor was the dominant figure, began in 1841 with his release from prison and concluded with his defeat after the fiasco of the monster demonstration on 10 April 1848, which was organised to present the Third Chartist Petition to Parliament. The final phase from 1849 until 1855 was marked by bitter internal dissensions. O'Connor and his supporters were challenged by George Julian Harney and Ernest Jones in 1849-50, who succeeded in securing the leadership of the movement. In consequence, O'Connor's power decreased in these final years.

Chartism dates from the formation of the London Working Men's Association in 1836, which, although small in numbers, had considerable influence. In the north, new radical papers

were founded, the Northern Liberator (1837-40), the Champion (1836-40) and the Northern Star (1837-52), all three either owned or edited by Irishmen.¹ In February 1837, a petition, which embodied the six points that later constituted the Charter, was launched by the L.W.M.A. In May and June the same year, meetings were held between the leaders of the L.W.M.A. and a group of radical Members of Parliament, which included Daniel O'Connell and William Sharman Crawford.² The latter group, although not enthusiastic, agreed to support a draft Bill based on the demand for the Six Points. In the same year, the Birmingham Political Union launched a National Petition which was published together with Lovett's draft Bill on 8 May 1838. The northern Chartists now entered the struggle and mass meetings were held up and down the country. Few believed in 1838 that the Charter would not be won in a matter of months or at most years.

1. The Northern Liberator (1837-40) was founded in Newcastle-on-Tyne by Augustus Harding Beaumont, a young man of well-to-do parents, who had been influenced by the revolution in France and was a member of the Dorchester Labourers' Committee. He edited the Liberator himself until his death in 1839. Thomas Ainge Devyr, an Irish journalist, was invited onto the staff in 1838, and became the working editor from 1839 until 1840 when the paper was obliged to close down from lack of popular support.

The Champion and Weekly Herald (1836-40) was owned by the sons of William Cobbett. It was on the whole hostile to O'Connor and tended to sympathise with William Lovett. Its working editor was James Whittle, an Irish journalist.

The Northern Star (1837-52) was owned by Feargus O'Connor, leader of the northern Chartists.

2. London Working Men's Association Minutes Ad. MSS, 37, 773-6, 7 June 1838.

The first Chartist Convention, known as the "General Convention of the Industrious Classes", met ^{in London} on February 4, 1839 at the British Hotel, Cockspur Street. The major task before the delegates was to decide the policy to be adopted if Parliament, as seemed probable, would reject the Chartist petition which was to be presented by Thomas Attwood in May. Lovett and the Birmingham radicals insisted on peaceful legal methods. At the extreme left a small group maintained that in the end they must be prepared to win the Charter by armed insurrection. O'Connor, O'Brien and most of the leaders rejected this idea, but failed to put forward clear-cut alternatives of their own. O'Brien was responsible for drawing up a compromise resolution which insisted on the constitutional right of the people to arm, but so emphasised the danger of rash and premature use of such arms that the exercise of the right was discouraged.¹ The Government, on the other hand, began to mobilise troops and arrested a number of Chartist members. After the petition had been presented on 7 May 1839, the Convention moved to Birmingham and then

1. Charter, 12 May 1839. The gist of the address issued by the Chartist Convention (1839) was that the first duty of the people was to obey the law since premature violence would ruin the cause. That the Government were trying to provoke an outbreak by means of spies and traitors; that some incautious men in Lancashire had already begun to practise training and drilling in contravention of the Six Acts. It was true that the Government was arming the rich against the poor, but the only way to avoid open conflict was to keep the arms in readiness, not to bring them to the meetings and be prepared to use them only if attacked by violence in their peaceful agitation.

adjourned to prepare for simultaneous meetings which were organised to take place up and down the country in support of the Charter. On 12 July Parliament rejected the Chartist petition by 235 votes to forty-six.¹ The first reaction of the Convention was to urge a general strike², but O'Connor and O'Brien, who had been touring northern England and Scotland, believed that with trade bad and unemployment prevalent such a step would end in disaster. Instead the Convention agreed to the suggestion that token strikes be held of two or three days, an alternative which met with a favourable response in many parts of Yorkshire and Lancashire.³

The retreat of the Convention encouraged the Government, who took it as a sign of weakness, to arrest large numbers of Chartist leaders. In face of this attack, the Convention offered no plan of action and dissolved itself on 6 September 1839. Deprived of open political expression, the movement was driven underground and secret committees, set up in several parts of the country, made plans for an armed rising. Only in Wales did plans come to a head. On 4 November 1839, a

1. Hansard, 3rd series, xlix, cols. 220-278.

2. The question of a general strike was first proposed by Robert Lowery, the Newcastle Chartist. He was supported by thirteen delegates who represented constituencies in London, Bristol, Bath and other southern towns. Delegates from northern England and the Midlands were absent when the vote was taken; it is almost certain that they would have opposed the proposal. Cf. E. Dolléans, Le Chartisme (1830-48) (Paris 1912-3), pp.372 ff.

3. Charter, 28 July, 11 August 1839.

large body of Welsh miners and working men, estimated at about 10,000 and armed with muskets and pikes, descended upon Newport jail with the purpose of liberating Henry Vincent, a Chartist leader. They were surprised by police and military who killed ten Chartists and wounded many more. The three leaders of the rising, Frost, Williams and Jones were charged with high treason and sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted to seven years transportation.¹ There is a possibility that had the Newport rising succeeded it would have been the signal for a general rising in South Wales and perhaps elsewhere. Its failure was followed by the imprisonment of nearly five hundred Chartists, including O'Brien and O'Connor. The Chartist agitation appeared to be over.

The next phase, which lasted from 1841 until 1848, was dominated by Feargus O'Connor, the Irish landowner. The failures of previous years aroused much thought and discussion among Chartists in and out of prison and resulted in the conviction that the movement required a stronger organisation with a centralised leadership. The Birmingham radicals took no further interest in the movement and Lovett now turned his attention to educational projects. Even O'Brien, who became increasingly critical of O'Connor's policy, now took a less prominent part. Although O'Connor's supremacy was distasteful

1. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.162 ff; M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925 ed.), p.174 ff.

to many, it resulted in a more unified movement, with a policy which satisfied the northern industrial workers. By the end of 1841, the National Charter Association had 282 branches and in 1842 claimed a membership of nearly 50,000.

The following year the Chartists presented their Second Petition to Parliament which included repeal of the Union among its demands.¹ With the rejection of the Petition, which received even less consideration than its predecessor, the Chartists were faced with the problem of what to do next. In the summer of 1842, widespread wage reductions following a trade recession had led to extensive strikes in many parts of northern England. The Executive, headed by Dr. McDouall, urged that the Chartists support a general strike in order to force the government to grant the Charter.² At no time were the Chartists in closer sympathy with the trade union movement. But O'Connor condemned the outbreak of strikes³ and lost for the movement valuable allies among the working classes. Thus discouraged, the strikers drifted back to work and the government proceeded to make wholesale arrests of Chartists and workers thus implicated. McDouall fled the country, but O'Connor and fifty-eight other Chartists were charged with aiding and supporting the strikers.⁴ Although they were

1. Hansard, 3rd series, lxi, cols. 1372-1381.

2. Times, 15 August 1842.

3. Northern Star, 20 August 1842.

4. F. O'Connor, The trial of Feargus O'Connor, Esq., and

acquitted with much Chartist jubilation the movement began to decline. Press sales dropped and membership of the Association fell to four thousand.

O'Connor's emergence as Chartist leader was followed by a sharpening of relations between the working-class and middle-class radicals. From 1841, the National Charter Association conducted a vigorous campaign against the Anti-Corn Law League, which was agitating for the abolition of duties on imported corn. Chartists maintained that the League hoped to divert workers from the Charter by the promise of cheap bread. It became their practice to attend meetings of the League, and, when resolutions were proposed in favour of the repeal of the Corn Laws, to propose amendments demanding the enactment of the People's Charter. The struggle continued until 1844, when a meeting between O'Connor and Richard Cobden was organised on 5 August 1844. In the debate, the Chartists were outargued by their opponents, Cobden, Bright and W.J. Fox¹, and thus virtually brought to an end the struggle between the two organisations.

During 1842, the National Charter Association was threatened by the emergence of a rival organisation, the

fifty-eight others at Lancaster on a charge of sedition, conspiracy, tumult and riot (Manchester 1843). Cf. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), pp.232 ff.

1. Cf. R.G. Gammage, *ibid.*, pp.254-5.

Complete Suffrage Union. This was founded at the end of 1841 by Joseph Sturge, a radical Quaker and free-trader, who attempted to win back the leadership of the radical movement for the middle class.¹ The Union virtually adopted the six points of the Charter under the title "Complete Suffrage". It drew much of its support from radicals in the Anti-Corn Law League. The appeal of the Union to the working classes got a response almost exclusively from those Chartists who opposed O'Connor, such as Lovett and O'Brien. O'Connor recognised in the Union a threat to his own position and attacked the movement and its leader. A joint conference of Sturgeites and Chartists in April was attended only by Chartists critical of O'Connor. The decline of Chartist fortunes during 1842 led O'Connor to reconsider the position with the result that he and his supporters attended the second joint conference held in Birmingham in December. Alarmed at the numbers of O'Connor's supporters, Joseph Sturge and his

1. Cf. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925 ed.), p.241. "It was a kind of middle-class Chartism ... there was nothing to prevent middle-class people from supporting the principles of the Charter ... Such middle-class sympathisers found it difficult, in ... 1842 to give their opinions practical expression ... However much they sympathised with Chartism, middle-class leaders could scarcely hope to find any great following amongst their own class for the Chartist programme. Preoccupation with Free Trade, the class-war teachings of some Chartists, and the futile excuses of others prevented that. Nor could middle-class leaders find a place within the National Charter Association. The predominance of O'Connor prevented that ... The Complete Suffrage Movement was a well-meant, ill-conceived, but not wholly successful attempt to solve the difficulty."

party drew up a Bill of Rights which they presented to the conference in such a way as to prevent all discussion of the Charter in its old form. This was resented by Chartists, most of all by William Lovett, who declared that "to give up the name of the Charter was a sort of political sacrilege".¹ A vote was then taken and the Bill of Rights lost, the Charter being carried by an overwhelming majority. Sturge retired from the meeting and made no further attempt to gain the leadership of the main body of the Chartists.

There was a rapid decline in Chartist popularity after 1842, which forced O'Connor to devise new measures to retain the support of those adherents who still remained. He began to introduce policies with a distinctive Irish flavour. Irish problems were discussed with greater frequency in the Northern Star, and in 1843, the British Chartists supported repeal. More important than these specific Irish questions was the introduction of the Land Plan, which was influenced by O'Connor's experience of small-holdings in Ireland and which engaged the attention of the movement until 1847.

A brief revival of Chartism began in 1847 and lasted until the summer of 1848, coinciding with the general election of 1847 in which O'Connor was returned as Member for Nottingham. The overthrow of the French monarchy in February 1848 gave the

1. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), pp. 243, 342-4.

Chartists a tremendous impetus. A new Convention was called and a petition drafted in favour of the "six points" and repeal. A monster demonstration took place on 10 April 1848 on Kennington Common. To prevent the Chartist procession from making its way to Westminster, the government mobilised large bodies of police and military, which were stationed all round the Common and on the approaches to Westminster Bridge.¹ In order to avoid violence, O'Connor, accompanied by a few associates, made his way to the House with the Petition. Chartists claimed that the Petition had been signed by over five million but after ruthless examination, a parliamentary committee reported that many of the alleged signatures were forgeries and estimated the gross number to be somewhat less than two millions.² In July 1849, the House of Commons at last voted on the Chartist Petition, which was rejected by an overwhelming majority; only seventeen members voted in favour of the measure.³

The final phase of the Chartist agitation was marked by a decline in O'Connor's influence and the emergence of more militant leaders, such as Ernest Jones, George Julian Harney, Dr. McDouall and others. The rising tide of agitation

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1. P.R.O. (London). HO 41/26. London (1820-48), pp.78-85; Times, 11 April 1848; R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), pp.312-3.
 2. Hansard, 3rd series, xcvi, cols. 284-301 (13 April 1848).
 3. Hansard, 3rd series, cvi, cols. 1268-1304 (3 July 1849).

alarmed the government and by September 1848 many Chartists leaders were in prison and the rank-and-file disorganised. However, O'Connor and his associates attempted to regain the leadership of the movement. At meetings held in May and June 1849 in London O'Connor, supported by Thomas Clark, an Irish member of the Executive, proposed a union of the Chartists with the middle-class Reformers led by Joseph Hume.¹ This policy was resisted by Harney and Jones who succeeded in persuading the majority of the members to repudiate this suggestion. As a result of the dispute which followed, O'Connor was defeated and although he was re-elected to the Executive at the Chartist Convention in 1850 he no longer headed the poll. After 1850, O'Connor's popularity was on the wane and with it the influence of the Irish contingent in the Chartist movement.

1. Cf. Northern Star, 26 May, 9 June, 1 December 1849; A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge (London 1958), p. 194 ff. He gives an excellent description of the period after 1848.

Chapter I. Political Organisations among the lower classes
in Ireland (1820-1850).

The outstanding contribution of Irishmen to radical and Chartist movements in Britain was largely due to the fact that Irish immigrants came from a background where organisations for political and economic ends in opposition to the dominant orthodoxy was a familiar and honoured tradition. A marked feature of Irish life in the early nineteenth century was the extent and influence of political and economic organisations among the lower classes. Peasants joined secret agrarian societies and tradesmen banded together in powerful trade unions. Although these combinations developed in response to economic pressures, exorbitant rents and tithes in the countryside and low wages and unemployment in the towns, the memory of the long-sustained struggle for independence still lived to inspire artisans and peasants with the hope of a politically independent Ireland.

There was an increase of such political activity after the Union. The protectionist economic policy of the Irish Parliament was now replaced by Free Trade for Ireland. The textile industries, in particular the cotton industry¹, suffered

1. In 1800, the number of workers in the Irish cotton industry was estimated at between thirty to forty thousand. Cf. Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh (London 1848-53), vol.iii, p.252. In 1822, the total number of workers was estimated at between three thousand and five thousand hands. Cf. Edinburgh Review, June 1822, p.98.

very heavily. The distress in the Dublin luxury trades was very severe.¹ Ulster, alone, managed to recover somewhat by re-organising the old established linen trade, and by developing new industries such as ship-building in Belfast and shirt-making in Derry. Want of capital, English competition, and lack of trade all contributed to bring about a sharp decline in Irish industry in the years after the Union.²

Irish agriculture depended for its prosperity on foreign markets, and during the eighteenth century, Irish agricultural products found their way to France, Spain, the West Indies, and into the holds of ships which entered Cork and Waterford to secure provisions at the cheapest market. During the wars with France, Great Britain was unable to trade with Europe; Napoleon, in his Berlin Decrees (1806), prohibited all commerce between Britain and the lands over which he had influence. Until his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, Irish agriculture enjoyed a period of great prosperity. The cutting-off of continental supplies made grain and flour

1. Cf. speech by Daniel O'Connell in September 1810, when he explained that since the Union, "Ireland saw her artificiers starved - her tradesmen begging - her merchants become bankrupts". D. O'Connell, The life and speeches of Daniel O'Connell. Ed. by J. O'Connell (Dublin 1846), vol. i, p. 48.
2. The Act of Legislative Union in 1800 completed a policy of subordinating Ireland to a position of a colony dependent upon Britain and attacked the growth of Irish industry by the use of differential taxation, and in cases, for example, the woollen industry, direct interference. Cf. E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (London 1951), pp. 40-46.

imports from Ireland very important to Britain.¹ This period of prosperity was, however, brought to a speedy and immediately after the war. During the next thirty years, wheat prices fluctuated wildly and were usually considerably lower than half their top price in the halcyon days of 1812 and early 1813. The mass of the Irish people were too poor to buy wheat, or, indeed any food, and lived almost exclusively on home grown potatoes. There was no internal market for wheat and oats and now the farmer found it hard to economise on the two most important elements in his costs - labour and rent. The exorbitant rents demanded by the landlords were far beyond the means of the average small farmer and in consequence many lost their farms. At the same time, the demand for land by the steadily increasing population was so pressing that the majority of the peasants clung to their small holdings, at whatever cost, and sold their produce at any price, however low, to pay their inflated rents. Between Waterloo and the Famine in 1846, a fierce struggle was waged between the landlords and the Irish peasantry.

The economic burdens which now oppressed the majority of Irish peasants led to a rapid growth of agrarian societies. Already in the eighteenth century small and isolated groups

1. The value of Britain's grain and flour imports from Ireland increased from £598,370 in 1792 to £1,641,583 in 1812. Cf. Select Committee ... on the Corn Trade of the United Kingdom (1812-3), iii, p.27.

of Catholic tenants had banded together to refuse to pay exorbitant rents and tithes to an alien Church. A larger confederation, known as the Ribbon Society, drawing support from these groups was formed in the years after the Union. In the towns, want of employment and the threat to wages followed the decline of prosperity in many industries, and was reflected in the growth of "combinations" or unions in many of the trades. Like the agrarian societies, these unions were primarily concerned with the living standards of their members, and sought at least to restore the standards which had existed before the Union. Primarily concerned with economic affairs, both the agrarian societies and the trade unions began to take an interest in general political questions. The unions supported a programme of radical reform in Ireland and the movement for Repeal of the Legislative Union, while the Ribbon Society made attempts to organise a rising against the British government in the early 1820's.

Ribbonism in the early nineteenth century.¹

In the years after the Union, one finds abundant references in public records, newspapers, and parliamentary reports to the popular agrarian combination known as Ribbonism, yet a clear picture of this movement is hard to find. Sometimes the name of Ribbonism seems loosely to refer to local agrarian outrages, sometimes to a widespread secret society which was composed almost exclusively of Roman Catholics of the lower classes and extended throughout the country. Drawing its

1. Abundant references to Ribbonism appear in the following parliamentary papers:

Report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the state of Ireland, H.C. 1825 (129), viii; Report from the select committee on the state of Ireland, H.C. 1831-2 (677), xvi; Reports from the select committee appointed to inquire into ... Orange Lodges, Associations or Societies in Ireland, H.C. 1835 (377,475), xv, (476), xvi; Report from the Lords' select committee appointed to examine into the state of Ireland since 1835, H.L. 1839 (486), xi,xii; Report from the committee on outrages (Ireland), H.C. 1852 (438), xiv.

Police reports give much detailed information of outrages etc. Cf. Major Sirr's Papers (MS N.4. 6-7); P.R.O. (Dublin), State of the Country Papers, 2nd series (1819-1823); Trinity College, Police Reports of Confederate Clubs (1848-9) (MS S.3. 5-8).

There is additional material in various contemporary pamphlets. Cf. A report of the trial of M. Keenan for administering an unlawful oath. Dublin 1822; Report of the trial ... of Richard Jones, who was charged with being a member of an illegal society (Dublin 1840).

Other works consulted include G.C. Lewis, On Local Disturbances in Ireland (London 1836), Chapters I-IV; A.M. Sullivan, New Ireland (London 1877), vol.i, Chapter IV; W.E. Lecky, A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century (London 1892), vol.i, p.226, vol.ii, pp.19-40; J.A. Froude, The English in Ireland (London 1906 ed.), vol.ii, p.487 ff.; H.B.C. Pollard, The Secret Societies of Ireland (London 1922), Chapter III.

information from parliamentary committees, the British government believed that, throughout the first half of the century, the Ribbon Society possessed an organisation sufficiently disciplined to be able to mobilise the Irish peasantry to give effective resistance to the established order.

The origins of Ribbonism can be traced to the agrarian societies which flourished in the eighteenth century. The first organisation was known as the Whiteboy or Leveller movement.¹ In 1761, the country was ablaze with agrarian revolt, caused by the "tyranny and rapacity of the landlords".² Even at this time, the Whiteboy movement exhibited many of the features of the later Ribbon society. These included,

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1. G.C. Lewis, On Local Disturbances in Ireland (1836), p.4. The insurgents were so called, because they wore white shirts over their clothes, as a badge of their union, and because one of their principle objects was the levelling of the fences of newly-enclosed land.
 2. G.C. Lewis, On Local Disturbances in Ireland, p.5. He quotes Dr Curry's State of the Catholics in Ireland, in his Review of the Civil Wars in Ireland, vol.ii, pp.271-2 (London 1786). "These landlords had set their lands to cottiers far above their value, and, to lighten their burden, had allowed commonage to their tenants. Afterwards, in despite of all equity, contrary to all compacts, the landlords inclosed those commons, and precluded their unhappy tenants from the only means of making their bargains tolerable. Another cause of these people's discontents was the cruel exactions of tithe-mongers; these harpies squeezed out the very vitals of the people, and by process, citation, and sequestration, dragged from them the little which the landlord had left them."

"the swearing of the peasantry, and the compelling of them, by threats to join the association; the enforcement of the will of the insurgents by severe inflictions; the intimidation of witnesses and prosecutors." ¹

The Whiteboy movement made itself felt first in the midlands and the south of Ireland. ² Not many years later, the Protestant peasants of Ulster began to demonstrate in protest against local grievances. ³ About 1785, hostile feelings between Protestants and Catholics caused serious disturbances. The Protestant party began to visit the houses of Catholic to

1. G.C. Lewis, On Local Disturbances in Ireland, p.13. Cf. also A. Young, A Tour in Ireland (London 1780), pp.75-6. "It was a common practice with them to go in parties about the country, swearing many to be true to them, and forcing them to join by menace which they very often carried into execution. At last they set up to be the general redressers of grievances, punished all obnoxious persons, and having taken the administration of justice into their own hands, were not very exact in the distribution of it, forced masters to release their apprentices, carried off the daughters of rich farmers, ravished them into marriages, of which four instances happened in a fortnight. They levied sums of money on the middling and lower farmers, in order to support their cause, by paying attorneys, etc., in defending prosecutions against them; many of them subsisted for some years without work, supported by these contributions. Sometimes they committed several considerable robberies, breaking into houses, and taking money under pretence of redressing grievances ... Many of the magistrates were active in apprehending them; but the want of evidence prevented punishment, for many who even suffered by them had not the spirit to prosecute."
2. Tipperary, Limerick, Cork, Munster, Kilkenny, Queen's County and Kildare were all centres of disturbance.
3. G.C. Lewis, On Local Disturbances in Ireland, p.33. The Oakboys were so called because they wore oaken brances in their hats. "Their first object was to produce a more equal distribution of the burden of maintaining the roads; the second, to deprive the clergy of a portion of their tithe; the third, to regulate the price of land, especially peat-bogs."

search for arms. They became known as the Peep-of-Day or Break-of-Day-Boys; in 1795, or thereabouts, they changed their name to Orange boys or Orangemen.¹ To defend themselves against the Orangemen who often attacked their houses and chapels, Catholics organised themselves under the name of Defenders.² The Catholic Defenders joined the movement of the United Irishmen in 1795. After the defeat of the 1798 rising the Defenders were dissolved, but the nucleus of their secret committees survived to take part in the Ribbon movement.³

While the movement of the Whiteboys seemed to issue merely in the "driftless acts of outrage"⁴ of a peasantry exasperated

1. First report from the select committee appointed to inquire into... Orange Lodges, etc. in Ireland, H.C. 1835 (377), xv. Evidence of Lieut.-Col. Verner (qq. 6 ff.); evidence of Rev. M. O'Sullivan (qq. 544); G.C. Lewis, On Local Disturbances in Ireland, pp.36-7.
2. W.E.H. Lecky, A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century, vol.iii, p.384 ff. "Defenderism ... radiated in the first instance from the county of Armagh, and grew out of the local quarrel between Protestants and Catholics, but ... it almost immediately lost in most places its first character, and became a revived Whiteboy system, with the very serious difference, that a strong political element now mingled with it."
3. G.C. Lewis, On Local Disturbances in Ireland, p.37. "At length the Defenders were partially dissolved and partly absorbed into the body of the United Irishmen, till they were finally lost in the more important movement which gave rise to the rebellion of 1798; since which time their society has been revived under the name of Ribbonmen."
4. First Report from the select committee on the state of Ireland, H.C. 1825 (129), viii, p.71. Evidence of Daniel O'Connell. He regarded the existence of the Orange Society in Northern Ireland as a great irritant but not the cause of the disturbances. "The Orange system aggravates and perpetuates the evil."

by poverty, the nature of land tenure, tithes, church rates and other impositions¹, the Ribbon Society was a more deliberate organisation having political and religious objects. Yet the same grievances influenced labourers in a varying degree in different parts of the country and gave rise to both movements.² The Ribbon Society attempted to combine existing agrarian groups into one association which also included artisans, labourers and publicans from the towns. It would be wrong to attribute to the Society all the acts of intimidation and violence committed in its name. The local Whiteboy associations of the south and west were known as "Captain Rocks" in the twenties and thirties.³ These groups committed arson, distrained cattle, stole arms and sometimes were guilty

1. Report from the select committee on the state of Ireland, H.C. 1831-32 (677), xvi, p.1. Evidence of Mathew Barrington, Esq., These outrages "generally arise from the attachment to, the dispossession of, or the change in the possession of land; hatred of the tithe proctors prior to the Composition Act ... Then the compelling of the reduction of prices of provisions, the want of employment, and in Clare the want of potato ground."
2. A.M. Sullivan, New Ireland (1877), vol.i, p.71. "In Ulster it professed to be a defensive or retaliatory league against Orangeism. In Munster it was at first a combination against the tithe-proctors. In Connaught it was an organisation against rack-renting and evictions. In Leinster it often was mere trade-unionism, dictating by its mandates and enforcing by its vengeance the employment or dismissal of workmen, stewards or even domestics."
3. P.R.O. (Dublin), State of the Country Papers (1822-3), Co. Tipperary, 27/2355/435; 8/2356/435; Co.Clare (1822), 17/2510/440; Roscommon Co. (1823), 49/2502/439; Co.Cork (1823), 36/2512/440, 86/2513/440; Co.Meath (1821), 1,2,3/2299/432.

of rape and murder.¹ In 1823, the government secured the confession of John Hickey, alleged to be the "Captain Rock" of his neighbourhood, that his group had connections with the Dublin Ribbonmen.² The leaders of the Ribbon movement opposed sporadic outbreaks of violence since they feared it would lead to the exposure of their plans for a general rising.³ Yet, without the support of the small, local associations, the larger society would have failed to secure members throughout the country. However, local groups tended to revert to their own interests when the central organisation became weakened by internal dissensions. When the Ribbon conspiracy failed in 1822, many of the "Captain Rocks", previously associated with

1. Cf. P.R.O. 17/2510/440 Warning Notice signed by Captain Rock, 28 February 1823 (Co. Clare).

"The Depredations which have been committed in this parish is not in opposition to the laws of our Country nor with an idea to offend our neighbourly gentlemen because the poor are indebted to them for the good feeling and humanity ... done to put down those Land Jobbers who are daily tyrannising ... if they do not surrender the lands we will ... have revenge. Not satisfied with betraying their properties, we will put an end to their existence which is dearer to them than all Ireland. According to the Directions of our new Lord Lieutenant, if the lands were divided fair among the poor, there would be no sort of complaint."

Signed Captain Rock.

2. Cf. P.R.O. 16/2512/440. Confession of John Hickey on eve of execution in Cork, 13 April 1823. He was alleged to be the Captain Rock of the neighbourhood. He said that they "were informed from Dublin, the head committee is there"; that their objects were the "getting rid of taxes and tythes".
3. Cf. Major Sirr's papers, MS No.4. 6, pp.160,170,181,189 ff. At the time of the disturbances in Limerick and Cork during the winter of 1821-2, the leader of the Ribbonmen in Dublin, Michael Keenan, urged the Limerick men to do all in their power to put a stop to the disturbances in their country until such time as the country as a whole was ready to rise against the oppressor.

the society, acted independently and contributed to the general anarchy existing in the south and west during the years 1823 and 1824.

The basis of the Ribbon Society's programme remained the abolition of tithes and the reduction of rents, although contemporaries were prepared to argue before a Parliamentary Select Committee that its aims were more extensive.¹ The question is confused by the web of secrecy which surrounded all Ribbon activities. Moreover, the practical policy proposed by the Ribbon leaders to secure their aims varied from one year to the next. In the early twenties, the Dublin Ribbonmen started to organise a nation-wide rising against the government.²

1. Report from the select committee to inquire into the state of Ireland since 1835. H.L. 1839 (486), xi.

Evidence of Hill Wilson Rowan (esp. qq. 1727-9). "The principle Object of the Chief or Head Committee, as stated to me, being to overturn the British Government in Ireland, to subvert the Protestant religion, to recover the forfeited Estates, and, when strong enough, to establish an independent Monarchy in Ireland under a Roman Catholic King."

Evidence of Major George Warburton (qq. 1119). "It appears to me to be a System that is convertible for any Object which may arise; ... that if any Occurrence took place where a popular Demonstration was desirable they could be collected immediately. (qq. 1120) All the instructions or regulations I have seen tend to the Object of Disaffection generally."

2. Cf. Major Sirr's Papers (MS N. 4.6-7); also Report of the trial of Michael Keenan (Dublin 1822), pp.7-9. "For some time past a plan has been formed in Ireland for ... members of the community by unlawful oaths and engagements to resist the laws, disturb the public peace and overthrow the Established Government."

In the Thirties, the object emphasised was the organisation of a strong and united movement.¹

The marked element of sectarianism which appeared in many Ribbon oaths and documents² gave the impression that it was primarily a religious movement, of Catholics against Protestants. Actually, it was the war of a poor tenantry, who were almost all Catholic, against local landlords and churchmen of the Established Church, who were Protestants. The movement was, in fact, attacked by Catholic leaders and members of the hierarchy, who feared and resented any brand of organisation

1. Report of the trial... of Richard Jones, who was charged with being a member of an illegal society (Dublin 1840), p.9.

"There is no indication of any specific act, no contemplation of any direct proceeding of a seditious nature, such as the providing of arms and muniments of war ... it is a secret society possessing a skilful and extensive organisation capable of being applied to purposes very far beyond the contemplation of those who may become connected with it."

2. P.R.O. 3/2177/428. Copy of Ribbonman's Oath. 15 March 1820. Co. Dublin.

"I do swear in the presence of my brother members, the birth of Christ and by our holy father the Pope that I will aid and assist the French or any other catholic power that is endeavouring to free us from the tyrannical law of George III. I will be ready at a moment's warning to assist in collecting money and arms to put this our sacred design into final and immortal execution and that I will exert myself in forwarding this from Parish to Parish till we may embrace this long waited for moment of freeing ourselves from the yoke we now labour under, that I will spare neither person nor property of the protestant heretick, that I will pay 10 pence to this or some other committee, that I will never divulge the least part of any of my secrets to unworthy persons, that I never will appear before Judge or jury to give evidence of prosecute any of my brothers or known Catholics, that neither death or torture will ever make me betray my trust, that nothing but sickness or death will prevent me from using my endeavours in every measure until we may smile at liberty and embrace each other freely. So help me all you Holy Fathers.

among the peasantry which was not controlled by the middle or upper class Catholics. Daniel O'Connell persistently attacked every such manifestation¹ and Dr Doyle's Address to the People against Whitefeet and Blackfeet in 1822 expressed the views held by the majority of Catholic prelates.² Despite the official Catholic attitude, Ribbon leaders encouraged the participation of peasants and labourers by hinting that Catholic politicians and noblemen headed their conspiracy.³

In 1820, the Dublin Ribbon leaders drew up a series of regulations governing the proceedings and conduct of the

1. W.J. Fitzpatrick, Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell (London 1888), i, p.115. D. O'Connell to Rt. Hon. W.C. Plunkett, Attorney General, 7 March 1826. "... The Ribbon connection has assumed a new form. There is now no oath, nor any distinct assertion of object. It is spreading fast through Leinster - in Southern Counties almost as much as in Northern ... I have no remedy save the increase of the Kings troops in Ireland. The exhibition of force may alone do good ..."
2. Dublin Evening Post, 23 November 1822.
3. In the 1820's, the names mentioned by the Ribbonmen were Daniel O'Connell and Lord Fingall. Cf. P.R.O. (Dublin), 17/2370/438. Major Powell to W. Gregory, Esq., 1 March 1823.

For the 1840's see Report from the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the State of Ireland, with minutes of evidence, appendix and index. H.L. 1839 (486), xii. Evidence of T. Drummond, Esq. (13,937) "It is stated that it is the Object to make Mr O'Connell King, and to appoint Mr Maurice O'Connell, Head of the Ribandmen."

society.¹ These rules recall the type of organisation set up by the United Irishmen. The Ribbon Society developed a hierarchical character and protected itself by strict rules of secrecy. At the base of the pyramid were "bodies", each composed of thirty-six men; there might be several in a parish. Each "body" elected three committee members, a Master and a Treasurer to represent it at the parish meeting. The Parish Committee sent delegates to the County meeting, which in turn

1. Major Sirr's Papers, MS N. 4.7, pp.13-7. General Regulations for the Patriotic Association of Sons of the Shamrock.

1st. Resolved that as far as our system has extended throughout each Parish in the Kingdom they shall be divided into bodies of thirty-six in number who are to elect three Committee men, a Treasurer and a Master and to represent them at the Parish meeting and a book to be kept by the Master and another by one of the Committee men and by that means no defraud can be committed.

2nd. That a meeting of each body shall be held at a regular period where differences between members may be tried by four men of the same and if they cannot agree or either parties consider themselves not justified it may then be lawful to bring it forward to the Parish meeting where the Masters assembled shall appoint a select Committee to decide upon it.

3rd. That the different bodies before each Parish meeting do hold a meeting in order to represent the state of their body to Parish Masters in like manner before the County or District meeting, where they are to divide each county into two or more districts who are to send Delegates to the Provincial meeting in order to make or repeal laws for the benefit of the institution and those delegates shall in four days after their return hand down those returns for the ensuing quarter.

To the Delegates Assembled at the County Meeting.

General Restrictions.

1. That no Delegate shall be received from any of the two districts of any County without an accredited certificate from the Constituents.
2. That no Delegate shall issue or communicate any regulation that shall come to him through the Provincial

authority of this institution to any other than the Masters or Committee men of the Society in his parish.

3. That no Committee man shall communicate any such regulations to any other than the members of his Society, and it shall also be enacted, that all persons in Office shall, at stated periods, lay down their office as once a quarter and they shall or may stand Candidates for the same if they please and their re-election will prove their Merit.

4. That no member be admitted or retained who will not yearly receive the Sacrament, and perform the Christian duties in a regular manner.

5. That Members shall not be restrained from forming side laws for the internal regulation and benefit of their own bodies, and they at the same time shall conform with respect to the General Laws.

6. That each member shall pay quarterly 5d. or any sum that may be thought necessary by the Parish Masters to defray their quarterly expense and any member refusing so to do shall be expelled and reported.

Fines for Non-Attendance.

Resolved that the attendance of persons in office shall be indispensable but when they send a person in their absence bearing the necessary Credentials, or pay the following fines promptly. Provincial delegates the sum of £1-0-0 for absence from Provincial meetings, for absence from County meeting, 5s, for absence from District meeting 2/6; Masters absent from Parish meeting, 1s; Committee men from a body meeting 10d, Members 5d.

Fines for Violation.

Any member that knowingly strikes another is to pay for the first offence 2/6, for the next exclusion of friendship - that provokes 2/6 and 5s for the next. Any Delegate that strikes to pay 5/8 for the first and for the next exclusion of friendship - that provokes 3/4 and 5s for the next and for wronging and speaking ill of each other to be decided by a Select Committee.

That each Delegate from any County shall return the yearly number of members in his District and the same shall be entered in the Provincial Registry.

sent delegates to the Provincial or National meetings. The National Committee held its meetings quarterly in one of the four provinces. In 1822, for instance, one such meeting was held in Granard and another in Armagh.¹ The main purpose of the National Committee was to discuss policy and issue instructions, passwords and signs for the next quarter. These instructions were passed by word of mouth ultimately to the "bodies", which it would be true to say, gave the movement its chief strength. Without the mass of small groups in the countryside the Ribbon Society would have been unable to survive.

To strengthen this structure, strict secrecy was insisted upon and maintained by an elaborate system of secret signs and passwords. These were usually in the form of simple questions and answers accompanied by simple gestures.² Instructions were passed by word of mouth and the ordinary Ribbonman had no knowledge of any "body" but his own. Entry into the

1. Major Sirr's Papers, MS N. 4.6, p.164.

2. Major Sirr's Papers, MS N. 4.6, p.40.

Questions and Answers

Q. You seem to be fatigued.

A. The night is for rest and so is the Sabbath day.

Q. How do you stand.

A. On the Shamrock.

Q. (repeated) How do you stand.

A. On the Serpents Head.

Signs.

The right hand on the left shoulder as if shifting up the coat. Returned by raising the hat gently off the head with the right hand.

Society was made by an oath which included the promise, made with the sign of the cross, to "keep inviolate all the secrets of this Board or Fraternal Society".¹

Reports of Ribbon meetings indicate that there was much discord between individual members and between different Ribbon

1. Major Sirr's Papers, MS N. 4.7, pp.10-12.
Obligations for the Fraternal Society.

I, B.A. (with the sign of the Cross) do declare and promise in the name and through the assistance of the blessed Trinity that I will endeavour to keep inviolate all the secrets of this Board or Fraternal Society from all but those whom I believe to be regular members and bound in the same fraternal ties.

1st. I declare and promise without any dread or compulsion allegiance to his present Majesty.

2nd. That I will be true and steadfast to my brethren of this Society, dedicated to St. Patrick, the holy patron of Ireland, in all things lawful and not otherwise and that I will duly and regularly attend when any lawful superior shall think proper and conform myself to the regulations made by them so long as those who are or may be in trust think proper.

3rd. That I will not knowingly or willingly provoke challenge or fight any of my Bretheren, if a Brother should be ill spoken of or otherwise treated unjustly, I will according to circumstances espouse the cause and give him the earliest information aiding him with my sincere friendship when in distress.

4th. I also Declare and promise that I will not admit or propose a person of bad or suspicious character into our Honorable Board knowing him to be such, and that I shall endeavour to propagate brotherly love and friendship among such of my acquaintances as may be thought worthy.

5th. That I will not at any of our meetings drink to intoxication so as to endanger a disclosure of names, regulations, or members thereof.

6th. That in towns and Counties I will give the preference in dealing to those attached to National Interest according as our circumstances may answer me.

7th. Resolved that I will not withdraw myself from this honorable Society or join in a society where persons of other denominations are under the censure of God's Judgement in his compassionate Mercy not meaning trade Society or Soldiers.

I, B.A., having made the above promise of my own free will and accord, May God assist me in my endeavours to fulfil the same and may God protect our friendship and grant us to live in a state of Grace. Amen.

groups. Without strong discipline, the leadership found it impossible to maintain a united front for any length of time. Even so, internal dissensions weakened the Society. In the early twenties, disputes between the Ribbonmen of Dublin and of the country were frequent. The Dubliners feared that the countrymen would rise too soon and thereby destroy their chances in the proposed rising, whereas the Ribbonmen in the country were suspicious of their leaders. Believing that the money and pikes they had collected might be misused, they refused to despatch further supplies to Dublin.¹ In the late twenties, a dispute arose between the leaders, and two societies were formed, a Northern Society with its centre in Belfast and a Southern Society with its centre in Dublin. These two associations opposed one another until 1835, when they agreed to amalgamate under the name of "Irish Sons of Freedom" or the "Sons of Irish Freedom".²

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1. Cf. Major Sirr's Papers, MS N.4.6, p.158. "The disturbance at Limerick is disapproved of as 'nothing of importance is likely to take place until every County and town rise together'; p.181. "The only thing that alarms the Association is the Country breaking out too soon." Cf. p.187. The arms were in readiness but withheld by the Countrymen, "until all was ready".
 2. S.P.O. (Ir.) C.S.O.R.P. C. 14721. Lietrim's Summer Assizes Crown Court, 15 July 1840. p.29 ff. Evidence of E. Kennedy. "There were two systems the Northern and the Dublin system. I attended as a member of the Committee to settle the dispute between them. They were both Ribbon societies but did not use the same passwords. At a meeting held about the time of the meeting in Colburg gardens in 1835, the societies were joined into one at that meeting and was called the 'Irish Sons of Freedom' or the 'Sons of Irish Freedom'.

Between 1820 and 1840, Ribbonism spread into every part of Ireland and established branches in several English towns. Already in the twenties, Ribbonism flourished in nearly every Irish county: Major Sirr's informers reported the visit to Dublin in February, 1821, of delegates from Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Belfast, Newry and Armagh¹, and in a Ribbon meeting in June, 1821, it was stated that all the west of Ireland was in union with the Dublin Ribbonmen and well prepared for a rising.² In the thirties, as indeed in the twenties, the most active centres of Ribbon activity were Dublin, Belfast, and their surrounding districts.³ As early as 1821, visits by Irish Ribbonmen to their fellows in England were reported by police informers.⁴ By 1840, it was customary for delegates from England and Scotland to attend meetings in Ireland.⁵ Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester in England, and Glasgow

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1. Major Sirr's Papers, MS N.4.6, p.31. 29 February 1821; cf. also p.44. 1 March 1821, p.85. 1 June 1821.
 2. Major Sirr's Papers, MS N.4.6, p.90. 4 June 1821; cf. p.134 ff. for reports of preparations for a general rising in the southern counties and elsewhere.
 3. S.P.O. Ir., C.S.O.R.P. (1840), carton 981 (C. 14721). Leitrim Summer Assizes Crown Court. 15 July 1840. Report of the trial of Ribbonmen.
 4. Major Sirr's Papers, MS N.4.6, p.92. 8 June 1821. Informer reports the visit of a Dublin Ribbonman to Liverpool; p.114. 22 June 1821. There is a reference to the Friendship Tavern in Liverpool which is frequented by the Ribbonmen.
 5. S.P.O. Ir., C.S.O.R.P. (1840), carton 981 (C. 14721), Leitrim Summer Assizes, p.34 ff. This refers to the contacts of Irish Ribbonmen with Ribbonmen in Manchester and parts of Scotland.

and Edinburgh in Scotland were mentioned as centres of Ribbonism in 1839.¹ In 1848, Dublin Castle held the opinion that Ribbon groups were responsible for the shipment of arms from these centres to Dublin, although proof remained wanting.²

During periods of economic hardship, the Ribbon Society increased its power and influence as the peasantry, desperate in their poverty, sought a solution to their increasing poverty and distress. An instance occurred in the years after the Napoleonic Wars, when through the fall in the price of wheat many small farmers lost their holdings, the wages of labourers fell, and many of them lost their employment. In consequence, between 1819 and 1823, the Ribbon Society became very powerful and extended its influence to every county in Ireland. Plans for a general rising were made. By co-operation with discontented elements in England, it was hoped that a general rising in England and Ireland would result.³ The Ribbonmen alleged that they were in contact with a section of the English Radicals, and individuals were reported to be visiting Irish fairs and distributing Radical literature to the peasants.⁴ That insurrection was ill-conceived and over-ambitious but had some importance as an attempt to unite the unenfranchised of both countries into a united movement against the ruling

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1. Report from the Lords' select committee appointed to examine into the state of Ireland since the year 1835, H.L. 1839 (486), xii, p.366 (particularly qq. 4380).
 2. P.R.O. (Dublin), C.S.O.U.P. (1848) carton 1495/C.15. 11 January, 13 January 1848.

3. A report of the trial of M. Keenan for administering an unlawful oath (Dublin 1822), pp.10-11. The objects of the Ribbon Society were various. At one time it was hoped to co-operate with the party in England known as Radicals. Some believed that if an insurrection broke out in England, the Irish Ribbonmen were to organise "a sort of diversion by a shew of rebellion". When the prospect of disturbance in England ceased, the plan was abandoned. Cf. p.23. M. Keenan was reported to have said that during the trial of Queen Charlotte in England, "there was communication between the Radicals in England and Ribbonmen in Ireland; that if the Queen was convicted an insurrection was expected in England and that papers would be dropped in Ireland, stating that an insurrection was to break out in Ireland". This would cause the English government to send an army to Ireland and in this way the English Radicals would overthrow their government.
4. P.R.O. (Dublin), State of the Country Papers 7/2079/426. Hon. Arthur Vesey, Queen's Co. to - 30 December 1819. "Two young men wearing white hats covered with oil silk were apprehended last night in the village of Abbeylei ... they had in their possession several of the Manchester newspapers relating to the late affair in that town, the pamphlets I enclose you and a pocket handkerchief with the field of Peterloo stamped upon it." The pamphlets included a Radical weekly, The Cap of Liberty, published in London by T. Davidson, 10, Duke St.
- P.R.O. (Dublin), State of the Country Papers 32/2083/426. R. Willcocks, Esq., Cashel to - 4 November 1819. "I have the honour to enclose you a printed paper (a report from the Dublin Evening Post of the Grand Procession of Mr Henry Hunt into London) which I took from a miserable looking creature who was selling them for a halfpenny or a penny each at the Fair at Thurles on Tuesday last, which the people appeared to purchase with much avidity ... I took home above 300 copies which I destroyed and had him turned out of the fair."
- P.R.O. (Dublin), State of the Country Papers 9/2085/426. Fleming McNeill, Belfast, to Right Hon. Charles Grant, 26 October 1819. "From commendable authority there are Corresponding Societies for men in Belfast for the purpose of Communicating with the Disaffected in England and Scotland ...

powers. It was emulated in 1848 by the English Chartists and Irish Confederates led by John Mitchell.

At this time, it was hoped by the Irish Ribbonmen to enlist foreign aid. In a Ribbon oath administered in 1820, one sentence read,

"I will aid and assist the French or any other Catholic power that is endeavouring to free us from the tyrannical law of George III ..." ¹

In 1821, the Ribbon leader, Michael Keenan, made encouraged his followers in the belief that "all the Catholics in Europe hold the cause of the Irish Catholics as their own".² The threat of a French invasion was feared by the authorities as late as 1832³. In fact, the hope of the Ribbonmen seems to have been wasted, since it was unlikely that the French government would assist an organisation of peasants.

The rising never materialised and many local groups left the Society, reverting to their old methods of intimidation and violence. The Ribbon Society was rent with internal dissensions which, we have seen, culminated in the formation of two rival societies which were not re-united until 1835. From this time until 1840, the Society enjoyed some success under the leadership of Richard Jones, a clerk in a Dublin

1. P.R.O. (Dublin), State of the Country Papers, 37/2176/428. Copy of a Ribbonman's oath. 27 April 1820.
2. Major Sirr's Papers (MS N. 4.7), p.4. 3 December 1821.
3. R.B. McDowell, Public Opinion and Government Policy in Ireland. 1801-1846 (London 1952), pp.51-2.

warehouse. His primary aim was to spread the Society into all parts of Ireland and increase its membership. There is no evidence that he intended to organise a rising nor that he had any connection with the Chartists in England. After his trial in 1840 on the charge of "unlawful combination and confederacy", he was sentenced to seven years transportation.¹ With his departure the Ribbon society lost its highly organised character. Jones returned to Dublin in 1848, when it was reported by police informers that he reorganised the Society. He now co-operated with the secret Confederate groups who were then planning a rising in Dublin in 1849.²

One factor which aggravated the spread of Ribbonism among Catholics in northern Ireland was the existence of the Orange Society.³ Originally founded in 1795 with the purpose of resisting the United Irishmen of Ulster⁴, it had continued to exist "to preserve the Protestant Church, the settlement

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1. Report of the trial of Richard Jones (Dublin 1840), Police Reports of Confederate Clubs (1848-49).
 2. Trinity College (MS S.3.7), C.D.'s Statement (continued) from Committee of Trades and Citizens, p.133. 21 June 1849.
 3. The main sources are the Three Reports from the select committee on Orange Lodges, Associations in Ireland; minutes of evidence, appendix and index. H.C. 1835 (377 and 475); xv; (476), xvi.
 4. First Report from the select committee on Orange Lodges. H.C. 1835 (377), xv. Evidence of Lieutenant-Colonel Verner, M.P. Deputy Grand Master of the institution (qq.6). "The original intention of the Orange Society was to support the constitution of the country and allegiance to His Majesty, in opposition to societies of a rebellious and treasonable nature, to join the Government in protecting the country in case of foreign invasion, and for the purposes of self-defence."

of Protestant property, and the connexion between England and Ireland".¹ The Society was composed exclusively of Protestants, of all classes, though the leaders were drawn from the most powerful sections of society, the clergy and landed aristocracy. Roman Catholics were excluded because it was believed that they were hostile to the Protestants.² The Society was organised in Lodges, each with its Masters and Deputy-masters, secretaries and committee members, who alone could vote and decide on policy. Like the Ribbon society, the Orange lodges were hierarchical in character and received orders from the deputy grand Master, though he, himself, claimed that he had no power to call the whole body of Orangemen together.³ Orange processions and demonstrations were a constant occurrence.⁴ Orangemen admitted that they used oaths and signs on occasion but denied being bound by them. It was a means of distinguishing members of the Society.⁵ To be initiated members were obliged to undergo an elaborate ceremony which included a long oath to which

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1. First Report from the select committee on Orange Lodges, H.C. 1835 (377), xv. Evidence of Lieut.-Col. Verner, op. cit. (qq.255).
 2. First Report from the select committee on Orange Lodges, H.C. 1835 (377), xv (qq.252).
 3. First Report from the select committee on Orange Lodges, H.C. 1835 (377), xv. Evidence of William Swann, Deputy Grand Secretary, p.83 ff.; evidence of Rev. M. O'Sullivan (qq. 707-725).
 4. First Report from the select committee on Orange Lodges, H.C. 1835, xv. Evidence of Lieut.-Col. Verner (qq. 408-451).
 5. First Report from the select committee on Orange Lodges, H.C. 1835(377), xv. Evidence of Lieut.-Col. Verner (qq. 504-526).

members pledged themselves.¹

The importance of the Orange Society lay in its wide-spread influence and its support of the English Establishment. Orangemen admitted that they opposed any concessions to the Catholics; that they resented the extension of the franchise as legislated in the Reform Bill of 1832; that whenever possible they rallied the support of their members at elections.² A great many sheriffs and magistrates in Northern Ireland were Orangemen and it was estimated that in Armagh there were over 20,000 Orangemen, many of whom formed a body of yeomanry which could be called upon by the government if the need arose.³ The Society constituted an important reserve of strength to the English government should widespread opposition to it develop. Catholics resented the

1. First report from the select committee on Orange Lodges, H.C. 1835, xv. Evidence of Rev. M. O'Sullivan (pp. 700 ff.); evidence of S. Blacker, Esq. (qq. 1729).
2. First report from the select committee on Orange Lodges, H.C. 1835, xv. Evidence of S. Blacker, Esq. (qq. 2224-5). He claimed that the passing of the Emancipation Bill was feared since it might endanger the Established Church. He claimed that there had been a growth in the number of Orangemen since 1829. They objected to the Reform Bill on the same grounds. If numbers alone were to be taken as a criterion, "the power of electing members would be thrown entirely into the hands of the very well organised body, the Roman Catholic priesthood."
3. First report from the select committee on Orange Lodges, H.C. 1835, xv. Evidence of S. Blacker, Esq. (p. 126 ff.), cf. particularly qq. 1995-2001; evidence of William Sharman Crawford (qq. 5795, 5,805, 5,825).

organisation of militant Protestant opinion and thus established organisations of their own. Daniel O'Connell established his Catholic Association in 1823, the first of a succession of political organisations composed almost entirely of Catholics. Among the lower classes, the Ribbon Society flourished, encouraged by the provocations of the Orangemen.

Ribbonism was an interesting phenomenon in Irish political life. It exerted a considerable influence over a large section of the peasantry many of whom emigrated to England and other countries. Accustomed to confederacy, Irishmen in England were ready to join political associations. In the thirties and forties, many joined radical and Chartist groups, although their knowledge of radical principles was limited to those current in Ireland. On the whole, radical and Chartist leaders condemned secret organisations in the belief that their principles could be achieved only by open mass agitation. Nevertheless, Chartists sometimes began to organise secretly as when the Chartist convention, after the rejection of the Chartist petition in May 1839, showed itself totally unable to cope with the situation. In Newcastle, Irishmen were active Chartists, and the secret committees established there during the summer and autumn of 1839 bore a resemblance to Ribbon "bodies".¹ The direct influence of

1. T. Devyr, The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century (New York 1882), p.196.

Ribbonism on the Irish in England manifested itself mainly, however, in their readiness to participate in movements of protest against the living conditions of factory workers and labourers.

Irish Trade Unionism in the early Nineteenth Century.¹

Agrarian societies were not the only form of organisation among the lower classes in Ireland in the early part of the nineteenth century. Trade unions flourished among the workers of many trades and were bitterly resented by manufacturers, who demanded parliamentary inquiries into their activities in the hope that all forms of trade combination would be suppressed. The unions were primarily concerned with protecting the living standards of their members against the encroachments of master manufacturers. However, matters

1. References to Irish trade unionism appear in the following parliamentary papers:

Reports from the select committee appointed to inquire into the state of the law respecting artisans ... and machinery, H.C. 1824(51),v; Reports from the select committee appointed to inquire into... combinations of workmen, H.C. 1825(129),viii; Two reports from the select committee appointed to inquire into... combinations of workmen, H.C. 1837-8 (488 and 646), viii.

Police reports contain valuable information relating to combinations and "unions of trades". Cf. S.P.O., Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers (1841-1843), P.R.O., State of the Country Papers (2nd series, 1820-1831), Trinity College, Police Reports of Confederate Clubs in Dublin (1848-9) (MS S.3.5-8).

Contemporary pamphlets on unionism include George Kerr, Exposition of Legislative Tyranny and Defence of the Trade Union. Respectfully dedicated to the Trade Unionists of Great Britain and Ireland (Belfast 1834).

Published works which deal with Irish trade unionism include J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland (New York 1925), which is especially useful. Cf. also W.P. Ryan, The Irish Labour Movement from the twenties to our own day (Dublin 1919), Sidney and Beatrice Webb, The History of Trade Unionism (revised ed. 1920), James Connolly, Labour in Ireland (new ed. Dublin 1944), J.J. Webb, Industrial Dublin since 1698 and the Silk Industry (Dublin and London 1913).

of national importance also excited their attention; they supported the agitation for repeal and some Dublin tradesmen participated in the national struggle in 1848. They remained, however, aloof from radical and Chartist associations in Ireland. The extent of unionism in Ireland reflected the awareness of Irish tradesmen of the general economic issues confronting men of their class. Irish industry was less developed than that of England. The absence of large-scale industrial expansion in the early years of the century made competition for employment more severe, wages were lower and unemployment more prevalent than in England.

Trade combinations existed in Ireland in the eighteenth century but were made illegal by an Act of 1729¹ which, however, proved ineffectual and was reinforced by the Act of 1743² and of 1780³. These remained in force until 1824 when the Combination Laws were repealed.⁴ Up to 1824,

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1. 3 Geo.II, c.14. "An act to prevent the unlawful combinations of workmen, artificers, and labourers employed in the several trades and manufactures of this kingdom, and for the better payment of their wages."
 2. 17 Geo.II, c.8. This enacted that assemblies of three or more persons, not legally incorporated, meeting for the purpose of making by-laws, etc., respecting journeymen, apprentices, or servants, were unlawful.
 3. 19 and 20 Geo.III, c.19. In this act, all combinations among masters or journeymen were proclaimed "publick nuisances", which ought to be suppressed, and all civil officers are instructed to oppose them and prosecute all persons concerned.
 4. i.e. Acts of 1824 (5 Geo.IV, c.95) and 1825 (6 Geo.IV, c.129).

combinations were rarely permanent except in Dublin.¹ It was the opinion of one historian that the Dublin trades were better organised than any in Britain when the Combination Laws were repealed.²

In the years immediately after the Repeal of the Combination Acts, newspapers and leading manufacturers attacked the spread of trade unionism in Dublin.³ Every effort was made to discredit the unions by reporting incidents of violence alleged to be committed by their members.⁴ Acts of violence committed by tradesmen on "colts", men who were not members of their union, did not conceal the many positive

1. J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland, p.99. "In general, workmen were able to organise only sporadically in Belfast and other lesser towns of Ireland. Their wages were not sufficient to permit them to maintain unions capable of surviving a struggle with a determined master-manufacturer. The prevalence of the domestic system added to the difficulties in the way of combination. Above all, the absence of a well-established system of apprenticeship, the vast body of the unemployed was an insuperable obstacle to the success of trade unionism."
2. S. and B. Webb, The History of Trade Unionism (1920 ed.), p.104. "The Dublin trades, then (1824) the best organised in the kingdom, ruthlessly enforced their by-laws for the regulation of their respective industries."
3. Dublin Evening Post, 11 March 1824; 24 March, 6, 30 August 1825.
4. Cf. Dublin Evening Post, 24 March, 17 May, 21 July, 22 September 1825; 22 April 1826. These reports refer to incidents in which tradesmen attacked fellow workers who were unaffiliated to the "Body". Cf. also Dublin Evening Post, 30 June 1825. Mr Butterworth, a leading clothing manufacturer, was attacked by his workmen because he introduced machinery into his factory; Dublin Evening Post, 28 July 1825, one "turn-out" of coach builders employed by a Mr Lond resulted in the Lord Mayor's coach being unfinished and thereby necessitated the importation of another coach from England to take its place in the Lord Mayor's procession

features of the unions which resulted ultimately in improved relations between masters and men. Their primary concern was to prevent a depression in wages. For this reason, limitation of apprentices occupied a prominent place in the programme of all trades.¹ It was a common practice among manufacturers to employ a large number of apprentices, only to dismiss many when it came to pay them a man's wage. The masters in nearly every trade resented interference with this time-honoured practice which saved them so much in wages but led at the same time to excessive unemployment.² Second only to this question was the demand that a minimum wage should be paid to all workers. Dublin tradesmen claimed that the cost of living was higher in Dublin than in England and yet, as a rule, wages were lower in Ireland.³ Though in communication with corresponding unions in England, the Irish unions regulated their wage demands independently.⁴ In general, union members were not allowed

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1. J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland, p.61 ff.
 2. Reports from the select committee appointed to inquire into the state of the law respecting artisans... and machinery, H.C. 1824 (51),v. Evidence of W. Hall, Esq., p.466; evidence of J. Houghton, Esq., p.291. Second report from the select committee appointed to inquire into... combinations of workmen, H.C. 1837-8 (646),viii. Evidence of W. Fagan, Esq., qq.3817-5225, Mr Morton, qq.5900-6000, and T. Grimshaw, Esq., qq.3143. Cf. also J.J. Webb, Industrial Dublin since 1698 and the silk industry in Dublin (1913), pp.82-3.
 3. Second report from the select committee appointed to inquire into... combinations of workmen, H.C. 1837-8, viii. Evidence of James Kavanagh, qq. 8000-8001.
 4. J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland (1925), p.76.

to work in shops or factories where non-union men were employed. Membership in the unions was denied to men who had not served the regular apprenticeship period in full, to men who were willing to work for lower rates of wages than those fixed by the unions and to women.¹

Unlike the agrarian societies, the trade unions did not limit their members to either Protestants or Catholics.² In contrast, the guilds which still existed in Dublin and a few other Irish towns were sectarian. In 1793, Catholics had been admitted by an Act of Parliament³ to membership of the guilds but, in fact, membership remained confined to Protestant merchants. With the exception of three Catholics, who by a mandamus (which was not defended) forced their way into the smith's guild, there were no Roman Catholics in any guild in 1835.⁴ The method of admission to the Dublin guilds was by birth, marriage and "servitude". Admission by birth was confined to sons born after their father's admission to the

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1. Second report from the select committee appointed to inquire into... combinations of workmen, H.C. 1837-8, viii. Evidence of T. Grimshaw, Esq., qq. 3139-3163.
 2. Second report from the select committee appointed to inquire into... combinations of workmen, H.C. 1837-8, viii. Evidence of P.D. Hardy, Esq., qq. 4346-4553; evidence of Thomas Daly, Esq., qq. 5517-5519.
 3. 33 Geo.III, c.21.
 4. Appendix to the first report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into Municipal Corporations in Ireland: Part II. Report on the City of Dublin, H.C. 1836 (26), xxiv, p.269 ff.

freedom of the guild; admission by marriage extended to the husbands of daughters of a free brother. Apprentices to the trade could be admitted after their seven years service, but only if the guild was willing to accept them. Jordan Lambert, one of the officers of the Smith's guild, stated on oath that the leaders of his guild "did everything in their power to keep out Catholics and Protestants". The Protestants excluded were men of political principles which differed from those of the majority of the corporation.¹ These stringent rules led to the situation in which the majority of both employers and workmen in a particular trade were excluded, whereas the majority of the members of the trade were not connected with the trade at all. The working tradesmen derived little or no benefit from the guilds and were therefore forced to establish organisations of their own.

Though the various Dublin trades were organised separately, and each had its own governing body and its own rules, yet there was a marked similarity between them. The members of each union elected a committee which was entrusted with the collection and expenditure of funds, negotiations with employers and all administrative business. Members were obliged to pay a fixed sum weekly; fines were imposed for the violation of union rules. To save money, meetings were held in public houses,

1. Report on the City of Dublin, H.C. 1836 (26), xxiv, p.269 ff.

and a few pence spent on stout was sufficient recompense for the publican.¹ The printers and carpenters had powerful unions and the cabinet makers established an organisation known as the Samaritan Society, which although illegal up to 1824, met with little adverse criticism from the employers.² The larger unions, such as that of the printers called the Irish Typographical Union, established branches in various Irish towns.³

Some unions such as that of the iron-moulders and foundry-men, the curriers and hatters had connections with societies in the United Kingdom.⁴ Inspired by the example of Manchester cotton spinners, attempts were made in Belfast to form a union among cotton weavers in 1819.⁵ Some years later in 1824, these Belfast cotton weavers held a meeting to form an association with their fellow workers in Scotland to advance "the general interests of the Operatives of the Cotton trade". It was agreed that the Irish cotton weavers should be organised in a manner similar to the Scottish weavers with whom they determined to maintain close links.⁶ Cork and Limerick were lively

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1. J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland (1925), p.100.
 2. W.J. Ryan, The Irish labour Movement (Dublin 1919), pp.56-7; S. and B. Webb, The History of Trade Unionism (1920 ed.), p.76.
 3. Second report from the select committee appointed to inquire into... combinations of workmen, H.C. 1837-8, viii. Evidence of F.D. Findlay, Esq., Mathew Ryan and H. Courtenay, esp. qq. 5350, 5372, 5625, 5675, 5694.
 4. J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland (1925), p.111 ff.
 5. Dublin Evening Post, 30 August, 19 September 1819.
 6. Dublin Evening Post, 28 September 1824.

centres of union activity. In 1822, manufacturers complained of the activities of a "union of Trades"¹. In the forties, police reports refer to a body known as "the Trades"² and combinations such as those of the coopers³ and the bakers.⁴ Other cities known to have extensive trade unions were Kilkenny and Waterford, where masters complained of unions among bakers, carpenters, sawyers, and shoemakers.⁵

During the twenties and thirties, the Irish trades wielded considerable influence over a large section of tradesmen. In the opinion of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, this was due to the existence in Dublin of a body known as the Board of the Green Cloth, "whose dictates had become the terror of the employers".⁶ J.D. Clarkson asserts that this body was "nothing more than a joint committee for the woollen trade".⁷ Testimonies of Mr Michael Farrell, Chief Constable of the Dublin Police,

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1. P.R.O. (Dublin), State of the Country Papers (1822-3), 5/2344/432. Charles Broke to Colonel Sorrell, 30 January 1822. "A great source of mischief here, as in Limerick and most of the large towns, is what is called a Union of Trades; it is carried on by meetings and clubs which assist the promotion of conspiracies."
 2. S.P.O. Ir., C.S.O.R.P., Outrage reports, cartons 1044, 6/6031 (1841), 1090, 6/12173, 6/16165 (1842), 1267, 6/7229 (1843).
 3. S.P.O. Ir., C.S.O.R.P., Outrage reports, cartons 1044, 6/18261 (1841), 1267, 6/9899 (1843).
 4. S.P.O. Ir., C.S.O.R.P., Outrage reports, cartons 1090, 6/21179 (1842), 1267, 6/23713 (1843).
 5. W.P. Ryan, The Irish Labour Movement, p.87.
 6. S. and B. Webb, The History of Trade Unionism (1920), p.104.
 7. J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland, p.115.

before the Parliamentary Committee of 1824 denied the existence of any regular union of trades. There was, however, a private understanding among the different trades; "they frequently lent money to other trades that were in want of it".¹ The nearest approach to a "Union of Trades" reported in some of the southern towns was the "aggregate" meeting usually called for some specific purpose. For instance, in 1841, a general meeting of trades from many cities in the south took place in Cork, and members walked in procession through the streets.²

Although primarily concerned with economic questions, Irish trade unions took an active interest in general politics between 1830 and 1850. Tradesmen did not play much part in the movement for Catholic Emancipation since it did not benefit them directly, but they actively supported the movement for Repeal of the Union, rousing public opinion in favour of the measure and in securing the return of Repealers to the Reformed Parliament in 1833.³ In November 1830, the working carpenters held a meeting at which they passed resolutions condemning the Union and proposed that a petition be sent to Parliament. They expressed the hope that their meeting "would be received

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1. Reports from the select committee appointed to inquire into the state of the law respecting artisans... and machinery, H.C. 1824 (51),v. Evidence of Michael Farrell, Esq., p.292.
 2. S.P.O. Ir., C.S.O.R.P., Outrage reports, carton 1044, 6/6031. 26 April 1841.
 3. D. Owen Madden, Ireland and its rulers since 1829 (London 1843-5), vol.i, pp.195-6.

as a pattern for other trades".¹ In the weeks that followed other trades met and petitioned Parliament for Repeal of the Union.² The argument put forward at these meetings was that the Act of Union was responsible for the decline in Irish trade and commerce. Pledging their loyalty to the King, the Irish tradesmen nevertheless declared that he should take account of the sufferings of the people.³ The conservative newspaper, the Dublin Evening Post, attacked these demonstrations by the tradesmen, who, it maintained, should confine their activities to those which concerned their trade and leave public affairs to those whose rank and station had given them experience to legislate wisely.⁴

Undaunted by press attacks, the trades went forward to organise a monster demonstration, which took place in December, 1830. They planned a procession through the streets of the city to Daniel O'Connell's house in Merrion Square of the various trades and crafts. The procession was forbidden by the Lord Lieutenant and O'Connell persuaded the tradesmen to abandon their project. Instead, three representatives from each trade waited upon him to present an Address from the Dublin trades in favour of Repeal of the Union. In January 1831, the

1. Freemans Journal, 5 November 1830.

2. Freemans Journal, November 1830 - January 1831.

3. Dublin Evening Post, 30 November 1830.

4. Dublin Evening Post, 20 November 1830.

body of the trades in Cork and Tullamore held monster meetings in favour of Repeal.¹ The Dublin trades followed up their public avowal of the measure with an address which they directed to "their bretheren throughout Ireland". They called upon Irish tradesmen everywhere to seek parliamentary reform and vote by ballot, and to allow no candidate to be returned as a member for Parliament unless he pledged himself to support Repeal of the Union.²

In many parts of Ireland, political excitement reached its height in the months preceding the election of members to the 1833 Reformed Parliament. Encouraged by their fellow-tradesmen in Dublin, the Cork men presented a united front in demanding the return of Repeal candidates. So powerful did their influence appear at the time, that a deputation of leading citizens, well-known for their liberal principles, attended a meeting of the Cork trades. Describing the scene, D. Owen Madden wrote:

"The 'Trades Association' met at that time in a large loft of a ruinous old store, whose walls were decorated with halfpenny candles which shed a dim flickering light on the sweltering mass of workmen congregated together. It was anything rather than a brilliant assembly; at the utmost, some five or six men of property patronised the proceedings, but they had some men of the working classes, whose intelligence equalled, and whose patriotism surpassed most of the semi-aristocratic liberals of the 'beautiful city'.

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1. Freemans Journal, 7, 8 January 1831.
 2. Freemans Journal, 14 January 1831. "The Address of the Tradesmen of Dublin to their Bretheren throughout Ireland."

Indeed so fierce was the republican and democratic fanaticism of the body, that 'gentlemen' were held in disgust, if not in aversion by all its members."¹

The meeting was addressed by William Fagan, an Irish liberal member of Parliament, and Daniel Meagher, who for "thirty years battled the popular cause". They were given a freezing reception, because they were not "root and branch Repealers".² Leading men in the city were convinced that public opinion in Cork and its environs was so roused in favour of Repeal, that they must of necessity bow to the inevitable. Daniel Callaghan had, in the past, been violently opposed to the measure but now suddenly became an ardent partisan. In consequence, he secured the seat for Cork city in the face of fierce opposition from candidates put up by the aristocratic families of Hutchinson and Boyle. The aristocracy lost their control of the city seat, now "in the democratic custody of a body of electors under the influence of the 'Trades Association'". It was also claimed by Owen Madden that the Trades had acquired sufficient influence to induce nearly all moderate liberals and Whig politicians to join the Repeal party.³

Likewise in Dublin, the movement for Repeal gained ground partly as a consequence of the growing power of the trades.

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1. D. Owen Madden, Ireland and its rulers since 1829, vol.i, p.195.
 2. D. Owen Madden, Ireland and its rulers since 1829, vol.i, p.196 ff.
 3. D. Owen Madden, Ireland and its rulers since 1829, p.199.

The monster demonstration for the measure was followed by another address "to the honest industrious classes in England". Appeal was made to fellow workers in Britain to support the Irish demand for Repeal of the Legislative Union, which, it was argued, had adverse effects in England also. The constant stream of Irish labourers to England caused by the decline of trade and industry was one consequence of the Union.¹ At this time, the English radicals were more concerned with their own affairs, in particular, the growing trade union movement, and made little response to the Dublin tradesmen.

To make a greater impact on the general political life of the country, the Dublin tradesmen established in 1832 the Dublin Trades Political Union, later known as the National Trades Political Union. It was originally intended that it should supply a forum for tradesmen to air their views on current political problems. Its objects included the support of Parliamentary reform, Repeal of the Legislative Union, and the discussion of all matters which affected the interests of the working classes.² Daniel O'Connell feared any political organisation of the lower classes over which he had no control. He, therefore, took steps to make the Trades Political Union subservient to his interests; from 1835, it rarely opposed

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1. Freemans Journal, 29 January 1831. "Address of the Tradesmen of Dublin to the Honest and Industrious Classes in England."
 2. Freemans Journal, 15 November 1832.

the "Liberator". It did much useful work in improving the registration of voters in the city and county of Dublin. A committee with subsidiary bodies in all parishes was set up to ensure that all liberal voters were duly registered and voted at elections.¹ It was argued by leaders of the Trades Political Union that little improvement could be made to working conditions until representatives were returned to Parliament, pledged to their interests of the mass of the people. In fact, this concentration on matters of electoral organisation diverted the Trades Political Union from its original objects and rendered it less effective as a representative body for the working tradesmen in Dublin and elsewhere.

In the early 1830's a number of newspapers were started which aimed primarily at securing a circulation among the working class. The participation of tradesmen in demonstrations for Repeal of the Union encouraged the editors of these journals to seek a new audience for their principles of reform. The first of these newspapers, The Repealer and Tradesman's Journal, generally known as the Repealer, appeared in June 1832. It proclaimed itself to be "devoted to the interests of the Trade Union ... and (to) adopt a calm and elaborate discussion of Repeal".² Through knowledge the working tradesman would

1. Freemans Journal, 30 June 1832.

2. The Repealer and Tradesmen's Journal, vol.1, 6 June 1832. It appeared twice a week and cost 7d. It was intended to survive on its circulation in the public houses but only lasted until December 1832.

learn his best course of action; the Repealer aimed to provide this knowledge. Under individual ownership for a period, it was supported by the Trades Political Union and prospered. The Union later decided to start a weekly of their own, and in 1833 The People made its appearance which announced that "it would mirror the views of the humbler orders of society".¹ A section of the Trades Political Union remained unsatisfied and urged their members not to support the new venture. In fact, these newspapers were unable to compete with the established press and did not attain a regular circulation and, by the end of 1833, both papers had failed.

Deprived of a newspaper press of their own, the Trades Political Union began to lean for support more and more heavily upon O'Connell. The hostility of many sections of Dublin opinion made it more necessary for them to ally themselves to the man, who appeared to be such a staunch supporter of Irish trade unionists in the 1820's. Indeed, O'Connell was revered by the majority of trade unionists. When he launched his campaign for Repeal, they flocked to his support. When it was first started the Trades Political Union quarrelled with O'Connell over the time of meeting and opposed the suggestion that one-third of their council should pay £1-0-0 a year.

1. The People, a weekly which cost 7d. First issue, 9 February 1833. It lasted until 25 September 1833. Cf. B. Inglis, The Freedom of the Press in Ireland (London 1952) for an interesting section on radical newspapers (1832-5), pp.204-5.

The majority of their members could not afford such a sum and it was argued that it would give wealthy citizens a preponderating influence in their debates. The parties agreed to compromise. Certain tradesmen, on the recommendation of the Secretary, were to be admitted to O'Connell's association, the National Political Union, and in addition O'Connell proposed to build a hall for the meetings of the Trades.¹ In return, O'Connell's supporters were given offices in the National Trades Union. From now on, the tradesmen rarely opposed the "Liberator". In 1835, they staged another monster demonstration on the occasion of the entry into Dublin of the new Lord Lieutenant, Lord Mulgrave. At O'Connell's instigation, the tradesmen mustered their members and marched, by trades and under banners, from Kingstown to Dublin.²

By 1837, it became apparent, however, that the "idol of organised labour"³ was hostile to trade combinations. In that year O'Connell attacked the Glasgow cotton spinners⁴ and later

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1. R.B. McDowell, Public opinion and government policy in Ireland (1801-1846), p.135.
 2. J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland, p.135.
 3. J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland, p.135.
 4. In April, 1837, the Glasgow cotton spinners struck against a wage cut, and the strike was smashed by the arrest of the whole strike committee. They were charged with acts of violence and terrorisation against blacklegs, and, on very dubious evidence, five men were sentenced to seven years' transportation. Cf. A. Alison, Some account of my life and writings (1883), vol.i, p.384 ff.

the same year outraged his warmest supporters, the Dublin trade unionists, by a series of attacks on the system of combination. His first onslaught was delivered at the Trades Political Union on 6 November 1837. He proposed a resolution condemning all forms of combination and declared that the tradesmen "may rest assured that the vengeance of an outraged God, and the severe but just punishment of the laws will not fail to overtake their abominable crimes".¹ In the following February, he denounced trade unions on the floor of the House of Commons.² In the words of Sidney and Beatrice Webb,

"By a clever analysis of the rules of the Irish societies, which he made out to be purely destructive and selfish, he condemned in a speech of great power all attempts on the part of the trade combinations to regulate the conditions of labour."³

After these attacks, many of the Dublin tradesmen lost confidence in O'Connell and retired from active politics. The Trades Political Union remained in existence but was now composed of a small minority of men who were close supporters of O'Connell.⁴

1. Freemans Journal, 7 November 1837.
2. Hansard, 3rd series, xl, cols. 1084-97 (13 February 1838).
3. S. and B. Webb, History of Trade Unionism, p.171.
4. Freemans Journal, 9 November 1837. Cf. James Martin's resolution in support of O'Connell's attack on combinations delivered at a meeting of the Trade Political Union on 6 November 1837. Martin declared that he "felt that he could pronounce boldly and confidently that the Trades Union was totally disconnected with the system (i.e. combination) in the resolution".

Feergus O'Connor, the Chartist leader, described the Trades Political Union as a body

"consisting of briefless barristers, pettifogging attorneys, shopkeepers, clerks, and a set of fellows who haunt the public officers like locusts, their motto being 'Place or Exposure'".¹

In the summer of 1839, on the occasion of the visit of Robert Lowery, the Chartist missionary to Dublin, his meetings were broken up by leaders of the Trades Political Union.² Writing to Mr James Martin, O'Connell referred with pride to the part the Union had taken "in this loyal demonstration" to reject and defeat "the missionaries who had come to preach Chartist violence and insurrection".³

After 1839, Irish tradesmen confined their attention to trade matters. In 1843, during the Repeal agitation, they demonstrated in favour of the measure but without the enthusiasm of previous years. One monster demonstration was held in July, 1843, when all the Dublin trades took part in a procession through the streets of the city to Donnybroke where a vast meeting was held and petitions to Parliament for Repeal of the Union were drawn up.⁴ Little is heard of the tradesmen after this until 1844, when the operative tanners were in

1. Northern Star, 9 November 1839.

2. Cf. Freemans Journal, 6 June, 14, 17, 21 August 1839.

3. W.J. Fitzpatrick, Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell (London 1888), vol.ii, pp.222-3. D. O'Connell to James Martin. London, 4 February 1840.

4. Nation, 8 July 1843.

dispute with their masters for an advance in pay, to bring their weekly wage up to 14/-. A number of trade societies supported the tanners in their dispute and a meeting was held in the Theatre, Fishamble Street, at which the Dublin tradesmen declared their intention to form themselves "into a union by legal and constitutional means". As a result an organisation known as the Regular Trades Association was formed which aimed to protect the interests of tradesmen.¹ In 1846, a newspaper called The Guardian and Tradesman's Advocate was founded, which lasted for nearly a year. It had as its slogan, "A Fair Day's Wages for a Fair Day's Work".² In the first issue, The Guardian declared that,

"The primary object of The Guardian will be to afford the Operative Classes of Ireland a Channel by which their wants may become known, their rights asserted, and their grievances redressed."³

At the same time it was hoped to secure the "mental, intellectual and social improvement" of the labouring classes on the one hand, and the enlightenment of public opinion about material conditions of Dublin tradesmen on the other.⁴

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1. Freemans Journal, 28 August 1844.
 2. The Guardian and Tradesman's Advocate, price 1d. A weekly literary and industrial journal, especially patronised by the Associated Trades of Dublin. Owned and edited by Cornelius R. Mahoney and published at the office, 26, Capel Street.
 3. The Guardian and Tradesman's Advocate, 31 October 1846.
 4. The Guardian and Tradesman's Advocate, 31 October, 5 December 1846.

Many Dublin tradesmen sympathised with the growing movement within the Repeal Association in opposition to O'Connell's temporising policy. Many of the members of the Young Ireland movement resented the attempts of leading Repealers to suppress freedom of opinion and discussion at their meetings as well as their attempt to close down the organ of the Young Irelanders, the Nation, by the withdrawal of financial support. A number of Dublin tradesmen joined with dissatisfied elements in the Repeal Association to draw up a Remonstrance which was signed by 15,000 citizens of Dublin.¹ The Dublin trades were represented by Martin Grean, a shoemaker and former president of the Trades Political Union, and Edward Holywood, who later became prominent in the 1848 rising and escaped to France when that rising was crushed. When the Remonstrance was presented to the Repeal Association on 24 October 1846, John O'Connell ordered it to be thrown into the gutter.² The Remonstrators held a meeting on 2 December 1846, at which it was agreed to take such measures as were necessary to recommence the repeal agitation. In January, 1847, the Young Irelanders established their own autonomous body known as the Confederation, and the tradesmen formed the Trades and Citizens Committee in conjunction with several

1. Northern Star, 10 October 1846.

2. M. Doherty, The felon's track (Dublin 1914), p.113; C.G. Duffy, Young Ireland (Dublin 1884), vol.ii, pp.106-9; R. Dudley Edwards and T.D. Williams, The Great Famine (Dublin 1956), Ch.III, pp.146-7.

Young Irelanders. The Committee was formed by thirty working men but control remained in the hands of two Confederates, William Bryan and P.J. Barry, as Chairman and Secretary.¹

During the early months of 1848, this Committee encouraged the growth of the Confederate-Chartist union. In April 1848, the Committee received warm greetings from a joint committee of Irish Repealers and Chartists in Manchester.² The Committee replied by thanking the men of Manchester for their "sympathy and timely offer of aid"³ and to show their good faith sent Michael Doheny to represent them at the Chartist Assembly held in London in May, 1848, "to convey personally our utmost sympathy and warmest support".⁴

With the growing political excitement in Ireland during the early months of 1848, tradesmen took a more active interest in the situation which was developing in Dublin and elsewhere. Undoubtedly the successful co-operation of tradesmen and

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1. P.J. Barry to Smith O'Brien, 8 October 1846. Smith O'Brien Papers, vol. 437, no.1690.
 2. Nation, 1 April 1848, "Address of the Irish and English Repealers of Manchester and surrounding Districts."
 3. P.R.O. (Dublin), C.S.O.U.P. (1848), carton 1523/105. "The Answer of the Trades and Citizens of Dublin to the Address to English and Irish Repealers of Manchester and Surrounding Districts; cf. also Police Reports of Confederate Clubs in Dublin (1848-9), MS S.3.8. Report of the Trades and Citizens Committee, p.31 (21 April 1848).
 4. P.R.O. (Dublin), C.S.O.U.P. (1848), carton 1523/105. "The Answer of the Trades and Citizens of Dublin."

middle-class elements in the Trades and Citizens Committee encouraged the formation of a number of Confederate Clubs all over Dublin. Unlike Daniel O'Connell's political associations which had excluded all but middle and upper-class Catholics, the Confederate clubs encouraged the participation of the trades. While leading positions on the committee remained in the hands of the Confederates, the rank and file members were drawn from the Dublin trades.¹ The shoemakers formed their own club, known as the "Molyneux Club", which held regular meetings in a newspaper shop at the corner of George Street and Dame Lane. Michael Grean became president of this club which became very active in 1848.² A number of tradesmen including Michael Grean and Edward Doran, a leading member of the Garryowen club, were respected and trusted by their more wealthy compatriots. It was felt by many, however, that unless "some man of property is connected with the clubs" in some official capacity, the majority of the members would feel "no confidence in the Club".³

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1. Police Reports of Confederate Clubs in Dublin, 1848-9. (MS S.3.7). Cf. reports of activities in the Swift Club by E.F. pp.20, 25, 28, 46, 47, 52. Reports of the activities of the Garryowen Club, p.6. 19 June, 1848. It stated that no more than half a dozen of the regular members attended because the tradesmen were attending the quarterly meeting of the Trades.
 2. Police Reports of Confederate Clubs (1848-9), (MS S.3.7), p.14. 26 June 1848.
 3. Ibid. (MS S.3.7), p.15. 27 June 1848.

The defeat of the rising in the summer of 1848 led by Smith O'Brien, and the imprisonment of a large number of Confederate leaders, discouraged tradesmen from taking part in general political movements. A few supported the secret confederacy of Dublin clubs, based on the old Confederate Clubs, which began to be organised during the winter of 1848-9. Under the leadership of James Fintan Lalor, a rising was planned to take place in the autumn of 1849.¹ In fact, Lalor's plan was abortive and failed to rouse support in any part of the country except in Dublin and a part of Tipperary.²

The participation of considerable numbers of Irish tradesmen in the national movement arose from their belief that Repeal of the Union would restore Ireland's economic prosperity. Irish trade unionists endorsed the view held by the British Chartists that union of the lower classes of England and

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1. Police Reports of Confederate Clubs, MS S.3.7., p.40 ff., p. 80, 17 October 1849.
 2. C.G. Duffy, Young Ireland (1884), vol.ii, p.277. "Lalor proceeded by other methods. Before O'Brien was two months at sea a day was fixed for a general insurrection (16 September 1849). But it failed so hopelessly that scarcely a memory of it remains. Brennan, at the head of a muster of young men from the neighbouring towns, attacked the police barracks at Cappoquin. The attack was repulsed, and his party dispersed. As a policeman and one of the insurgents was killed in the affray, Brennan found it necessary to fly to America ... Lalor's attempt was a more complete fiasco; ten days after the flight of Brennan he wrote to (Gavan Duffy) in utter despair: '... As to being of service to Ireland, such as it is, I give it up. The coffin-lid has closed on the last hope of the living generation'."

Ireland would destroy the power of the aristocracy; they were accustomed to the idea of unity as many of their own unions had branches in England and Ireland. Many were obliged to emigrate to Britain where they soon became prominent in disputes over working conditions and wages. Irishmen were in advance of their fellow workers in Britain in matters of organisation. The presence of large numbers of Irish immigrants in the northern industrial centres of Britain and Scotland, who were accustomed to political organisation, strengthened the forces of trade unionism and provided the Chartist movement with many of its most ardent supporters. The Irish artisans no less than the peasantry contributed to the development of the mass movement in Britain.

Chapter II. Radical and Chartist organisations in Ireland
(1830-1850).

The ill-balanced, archaic Irish agricultural system and the melancholy decline in Irish industry during the early years of the nineteenth century resulted in conditions of frustration and distress which appeared to favour the growth of political radicalism among peasants and artisans. Between 1830 and 1850 several attempts were made to introduce the principles of English Radicals into Ireland, but, on the whole, they failed from lack of popular support. The persistent emigration, caused by economic distress, which drained away the youth of the country combined with the hostility of the Irish political leaders to prevent the building of a strong Irish Radical movement.

The philosophy of radical reform as it developed in England during the early half of the nineteenth century was held to be alien to the traditions of the Irish people. The Roman Catholic Church and Daniel O'Connell opposed any manifestations of Jacobinism among the peasantry; radical reform was equated with the excesses of the French revolution, communism and the destruction of life and property. Nor did the Young Irelanders desire to associate themselves with the Chartists in Britain. The Chartist emphasis on class was alien to the approach of the orthodox repealer to political

action. Despite the hostility of the Irish national movement, the Chartists did extend to Ireland, although the groups remained small and relatively unimportant. They were submerged in the national tide of hostility and resentment to British rule in Ireland which characterised the 1840's.

The great pioneer of the co-operative movement, Robert Owen, visited Ireland in 1817 and conducted similar tours in other regions. He debated with members of Trinity College Dublin and at a public meeting in the Theatre, Dublin, where

1. Robert Owen (1771-1857) was the central figure of which socialised in the first half of the nineteenth century. He was founder of the New Lanark cotton factory, and the initiator of the co-operative movement in England, his work inspired English reformers from that century.

His published work, *Woolen Manufacture*, 1801, and *Discourses*, 1813, expounded his philosophy that the first duty of the reformer is to spread the truth about the conditions of existence which he regarded was the product of the environment. Change of circumstances could create good characters. Poverty and vice of the poor arose since it caused ignorance, bad health, and depravity and must be eradicated in the establishment of socialist colonies.

He went to America in 1825 and bought an estate in Indiana, U.S.A., where he established a community called New Harmony. He returned to England after this project failed and became a leading figure in the co-operative and trade union movements of the early 1830's. He founded the National Moral, Commercial and Trade Union in 1833 which failed in the following year. Its collapse was followed by a series of unsuccessful efforts to establish co-operative communities. He remained aloof from the Chartist movement since he believed that reform would come only from the establishment of co-operative communities such as he had built in New Lanark and not by political agitation for the reform of legislation.

He died in 1857, a disappointed man.

The Beginnings of Radical Reform in Ireland.

The first attempts of English reformers to introduce their principles into Ireland were made in the 1820's. The destitution of the Irish peasantry, backward methods of land cultivation and the cruel rapacity of Irish landlords offered wide possibilities to the advocates of co-operation. The great pioneer of the Co-operative movement, Robert Owen¹, visited Ireland in 1823 and received little less than a royal welcome. He debated with doctors of theology at Maynooth College and at a public meeting in the Rotunda, Dublin, where

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1. Robert Owen (1771-1858) was the central figure of British socialism in the first half of the nineteenth century. As the founder of the New Lanark model factory, and the initiator of the co-operative movement in Britain, his work inspired English reformers from 1815 onwards.

His published work includes Essays on the Formation of Character (London 1815), Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System (London 1815), and Report to the County of Lanark (London 1820). In these works he expressed his basic philosophy that the first duty of the reformer is to spread the truth about the formation of character which he argued was the product of the environment. Change in circumstances would create good characters. Poverty was one of the evil circumstances since it causes ignorance, bad health, and cowardice and must be eradicated by the establishment of socialist colonies.

He went to America in 1826 and bought an estate in Indiana, U.S.A., where he established a community called New Harmony. He returned to England after this project failed and became a leading figure in the co-operative and trade union movements of the early 1830's. He founded the National Grand Consolidated Trade Union in 1833 which failed in the following year. Its collapse was followed by a series of unsuccessful efforts to establish Co-operative Communities. He remained aloof from the Chartist movement since he believed that reform would come only from the establishment of co-operative communities such as he had built in New Lanark and not by political agitation for the reform of legislation.

He died in 1855, a disappointed man.

he described how the population could be increased to fifty million, the Duke of Leinster, the Catholic Archbishop Murray, Lord Meath, and Lord Concurry sat on his platform.¹ His audiences were drawn from wealthy citizens who formed the majority of an association called the "Hibernian Philanthropic Society", which aimed to promote a system of socialist co-operation as outlined by Owen. The society was short-lived and ineffectual, but one of its members, Mr John Scott Vandaleur, a landlord, was so deeply impressed that in 1831, when acts of revolt in the country had reached their zenith and the insecurity of his own class was brought home to him by the assassination of his own steward, he resolved to establish a Socialist colony upon his property at Ralahine, County Clare.

He, therefore, invited Mr Craig of Manchester, a follower of Owen, to become the manager of the colony. It was turned over to an association of the people, "The Ralahine Agricultural and Manufacturing Co-operative Association"², which was organised on a Co-operative basis, although Vandaleur, the landowner, continued to draw both rent and interest. The rapid improvement of the peasants, and the absence of lawlessness and discontent so prevalent before attracted many visitors,

1. E.T. Craig, An Irish Commune: The History of Ralahine (Dublin 1920), p.126.

2. E.T. Craig, An Irish Commune (1920). The author gives a complete record of the Ralahine Co-operative (1831-3).

and the colony became a mecca for social reformers, like Owen's community established in New Lanark in Scotland. Mr Finch, a Liverpool merchant, and advocate of co-operation, giving evidence before a committee of the House of Commons, appointed in 1834, to inquire into the causes, effects and the best means of preventing drunkenness, referred to his visit to Ralahine.¹ He quoted from a conversation with an agricultural labourer on the estate who contrasted the present with the former condition of his fellows under a steward.

"We formerly had no interest, either in doing a great deal of work, doing it well, or in suggesting improvements, as all the advantage and all the praise were given to a tyrannical task-master, for his attention and watchfulness. ... you may depend we did not hurt ourselves by too much labour; but now our interest and our duty are made the same we have no need of a steward at all."²

The success of the colony led agricultural labourers elsewhere to hope that other landlords would adopt similar measures on their estates. Ralahine prospered until the proprietor brought about its collapse in 1833 through his fatal addiction to gambling.

Among those who visited Ralahine in its heyday was William Thompson, a Protestant landlord of Cork. He was

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1. Report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the extent, the causes and consequences of the prevailing vice of intoxication among the Labouring Classes of the United Kingdom, H.C. 1834 (559), viii. 315. p.316 ff. Evidence of Mr John Finch.
 2. E.T. Craig, An Irish Commune (1920), p.53.

already before this visit one of the best-known advocates of Co-operation and Socialism in Britain in the 1820's and early 1830's. The son of Alderman John Thompson, one of the richest merchants of Cork, William inherited the family business with its little fleet of trading vessels, and became the owner of an estate in Glandore in 1814 at the age of thirty-nine. He had travelled a good deal on the Continent and during one of his visits to France had established contacts with the advanced school of French political economists. These associations caused Irish provincials to dub him a "red republican". The vivid contrast of the "two nations" and the callous pride of the wealthy section of Cork society drove him into opposition to the social attitudes of his own family. He was profoundly convinced that human labour was the source of all wealth, and he was at times depressed by a sense of guilt at being a landlord and deriving his income from the labour of poverty-stricken peasants.¹ At Glandore, he was an enlightened landlord, spending much time on his estate, giving leases on generous terms to his tenants and introducing improved methods of cultivation.

Thompson was influenced by the doctrine of Utilitarianism and in 1822 became a personal friend of the philosopher of this new creed, Jeremy Bentham. During 1822-3 he spent more than

1. R.K.P. Pankhurst, William Thompson (1775-1833) (London 1954) p.2 ff.

a year in London, where he became acquainted with many of the leading Utilitarians and Radicals of the day. Some of Thompson's best work was written while he was a guest of Bentham, and there is a marked similarity in literary style between the two men. In 1824, Thompson published his first work entitled, An Inquiry into the Principles and Distribution of Wealth¹, which was followed by Labour Rewarded in 1827.² By these two books, Thompson established himself as a leading advocate of the principle of co-operation, and an economist of the anti-capitalist school, advocating the thesis that labour was the sole source of all wealth, most of which was wrongfully appropriated by the owners of the means of production, the capitalists.

1. W. Thompson, An inquiry into the principles and the distribution of wealth most conducive to human happiness (London 1824). The primary object of the inquiry was to examine what distribution of wealth would achieve the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Thompson developed the theme present in the works of William Godwin, Charles Hall and Percy Ravenstone in England and of Simon de Sismondi in France that the "idle classes" have no right to share in the national product and that exploitation was the basic characteristic of capitalism and the source of the great part of its ills. His criticism of competitive society was perhaps the first sustained attack on it to appear in Britain; it laid the foundation of anti-capitalist thought for some time and set the tone of Socialist critics of capitalism for a long time to come. Thompson assailed the view that the profit motive was the only incentive to production and pleaded the necessity of "Co-operation as against labour by individual competition". Cf. R.K.P. Pankhurst, William Thompson, Chapters III-VI for a detailed analysis of his work.

2. W. Thompson, Labour Rewarded (London 1827). This book pleaded for co-operation against any other system of society, and devised a constructive plan for the emancipation of labour by establishing co-operative societies of production.

The impact of Thompson's writings was more directly felt in Britain than in his native country. On account of the completeness of his exposition, he was held to be one of the most important exponents of the so-called Ricardian school of economics which was the champion of the rights of labour against the claims of capital. In the late 1820's Thompson became a leader of the English co-operative movement, and formulated the blue prints of Communities to be established in opposition to competitive capitalism.¹ His Practical Directions and other writings placed him, equally with Robert Owen, in the forefront of the Co-operative movement. He opposed Owen's assumption of authority and contempt for democratic methods and never shared Owen's belief that the governing class would assist the Co-operative cause.

Thompson was deeply impressed by the success of the venture at Ralahine and proposed to found a similar colony on his own estate. He began work in the townland of Carhoogariff and constructed a round tower a hundred feet high on a lofty peak overlooking the estate which he furnished as a private residence and intended to be the centre of operations. His death in the spring of 1833 deprived the Co-operative movement of a talented leader. He bequeathed his estate to the

1. W. Thompson, Practical Directions for the Speedy and Economical Establishment of Communities, on the Principles of Mutual Co-operation, United Possessions and Equality of Exertions and of the Means of Enjoyment (Cork 1830).

Co-operative movement, but his relations contested the will, and the estate was never taken over by the Co-operators.¹

In Belfast, too, the idea of co-operation was taken up by a group of artisans and tradesmen who founded the Belfast Cooperative Trading Association in January 1830. The Association adopted views similar to those being propagated by Co-operators in Britain that first,

"Labour is the source of all wealth, and consequently the working classes have created all wealth; but, as they are the poorest, they cannot be receiving a recompense for their labour."

It followed from this that,

"Co-operation, in its fullest extent, means the union of all the powers and energies of man for the promotion of these objects which shall conduce most to their happiness as individuals and as a whole."²

Their immediate objects were "the purchase of land, the setting-up of Manufactures and the establishing of Schools, Lectures and Libraries and Reading Rooms, Hospitals and Boarding Houses".³ To finance this ambitious project, it was proposed that each shareholder pay 20 shillings for each share and as soon as sufficient money had been collected the Association should buy a shop and procure a shopkeeper, who had to be a member and commence business. The affairs of the Association

1. R.K.P. Pankhurst, William Thompson, p.183 ff.

2. Belfast Co-operative Advocate, January 1830. No.I. This printed the Rules of the First Belfast Co-operative Trading Association in full.

3. Ibid.

were placed in the hands of twelve Directors, all of whom were skilled craftsmen or tradesmen.¹ Their activities were recorded in the Belfast Co-operative Advocate², a journal founded with the express object of publicising the transactions of the Society, comment on the progress of Co-operation at home and abroad, and explain the nature of co-operation to all who wished to know about it.³

During the first weeks, the Belfast Co-operatives succeeded in founding a Library and Reading Room in No. 56 John Street. The London Association of Co-operatives praised the efforts of the Belfast mechanics and working classes and offered them every encouragement. Two infant schools were founded along the pattern of Robert Owen's community at New Lanark.⁴ The Belfast Co-operators claimed that,

"A great interest appears to be taken in our welfare by many who are not members; but it is only necessary for the members to be actuated by it to ensure our permanent success."⁵

This confidence was misplaced however; the Association barely survived three months in existence when it was obliged to close down.

1. Belfast Co-operative Advocate, January 1830.

2. Belfast Co-operative Advocate was a monthly periodical, price 1d. which first appeared in January 1830 but only survived until March 1830. There is a copy of this newspaper in The Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

3. Belfast Co-operative Advocate, March 1830.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

Apart from these isolated attempts to organise a trading co-operative in Belfast and colonies in the countryside, Irish life was untouched by the movement which gained wide acceptance in Britain in the early 1830's. Moreover, the growth of trade unionism in England, which culminated in the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union in 1833, was more ambitious in its design than trade unions in Ireland. About the beginning of 1833, the workers, left voteless by their allies in the successful crusade for parliamentary reform, founded general unions based on the previously existing separate societies in the various trades, and demanded the restoration of the wages lost during the depression and an improvement in their conditions of work. Robert Owen, the leader of the British Co-operative movement, conceived the idea of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, which he hoped would achieve among the tradesmen what co-operative communities could achieve on the land and in factories. The Poor Man's Guardian described the Union as,

"A grand national organisation, which promises to embody the physical power of the country ... and the object of it is the sublimest that can be conceived, namely - to establish for the productive classes complete dominion over the fruits of their industry."¹

Trade unions in Ireland demanded protection for their members against the master manufacturers as a matter of self-

1. Poor Man's Guardian, 19 October 1833.

preservation; English trade unionists believed that they were the sole producers of industrial wealth and hence the rightful directors of industry.

The passing of the Catholic Emancipation Bill in 1829 followed by the Reform Bill in 1832 was accompanied by intensive popular agitation in Ireland. This was reflected in the growing popularity of radical ideas and led to the return of a large number of repealers and radicals to the Reformed Parliament which met in 1833. Most notable of these were Feargus O'Connor for County Cork, for Kilkenny F. Finn of the Dublin Comet, a radical newspaper, and Patrick Lalor of the Carlow Post for Queens County. Irish radicals were never more successful at the polls than in this 1832 election; at least thirty-eight of the Irish members were pledged repealers and others supported radical policies. The gradual defection of O'Connell to the Whigs led to a sharp drop in the number of radicals and repealers at the next election (1835) and the decline was maintained in later elections.¹

During the early 1830's a number of radical newspapers were established in Dublin. One small group of intellectuals

1. R.B. McDowell, Public Opinion and Government Policy in Ireland, pp.134-5. In the first election after the Reform Bill in 1832, the repealers secured thirty-eight seats, and of the forty (who labelled themselves whigs, reformers, or radicals) at least five were pledged to adopt repeal if justice was not speedily secured for Ireland. In the next election (1835), the repealers won only twenty-eight and this was repeated at the next election in 1837. In 1841, however, the repealers won only eighteen seats.

in Dublin founded The Comet in 1831 to advocate radical opinions and especially to keep "a steady, scrutinizing and uncompromising eye on ecclesiastical hypocrisy, humbug and cant".¹ It focussed its attention on the abuses of the Established Church and Repeal of the Legislative Union.² With the growth of the trades union movement, a number of newspapers were launched, as we have seen, designed to circulate among working tradesmen, and to discuss the burning issues of the time, in particular the evil consequences of the Union.³ Nevertheless, these newspapers, while radical in content, remained critical rather than constructive in their approach and did not reflect the general principles of Radical reform which were being voiced in England and Scotland at this time.

One newspaper, however, The Tribune, founded in 1834, professed the principles of Radical reform and had as its motto: "1798. Do not dare to lay your hands on the Constitution." Its proprietor was Patrick O'Higgins, a wool merchant, who later became the leader of the Irish Chartist movement. The editor was James Whittle, an Irishman, who had lived much of his life in Manchester and had been

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1. The Comet, 1 May 1831. Quoted in R.B. McDowell, Public Opinion and Government Policy in Ireland, p.145.
 2. The Comet, 1, 15 July, 12 August 1833.
 3. The Repealer and Tradesmen's Journal (1833) and The People (1833).

editor of the Manchester Advertiser.¹ In the first issue, in an article signed by O'Higgins and Whittle, the principles and aims of the newspaper were proclaimed. It was called "The Tribune" because the paper was designed to fulfil

"the duty with which the Romans charged the most sacred of their public officers, when, rising against the intolerable burden of aristocratic oppression and usurious exaction, that noble people determined to take back the custodies of their liberties into their own hands, and establish in the annual elections of the Tribunes of the people a shield for the liberties of the Commons against the insulting and cruel aggressions of the privileged monopolisers of power and patronage."²

The writers declared themselves to be "lovers of Democratic government" and maintained that "the only security for good government is the responsibility of the lawgivers to the community for whom they act, and which their laws ought to bind only by force of reason and of justice". In addition they declared,

"It is by the voice of the House of Commons that under the British Constitution the people express their assent to the laws to which they agree to submit. In order that the assent of the whole may be obtained, it is necessary that the will of the whole should be represented in the House of Commons; where alone, assent of the people is given or received; in order that the assent may be full, free, and independent, it ought to be guarded from the remotest danger, and vindicated from the slightest suspicion of regal or aristocratic control."³

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1. R.R. Madden, Irish Periodical Literature, MS 278.
 2. The Tribune, 21 June 1834.
 3. The Tribune, 21 June 1832.

This, in the writers' opinion, could only be insured if Parliament was frequently dissolved and re-elected, and the members elected by universal suffrage. In order that "the voices of the people may be free from the suspicion of control, the Radical reformers demand the shield of the ballot for the independence of the elector".¹

O'Higgins and Whittle were quick to point out that, while they supported those principles which were commonly held by Radical reformers of the time, they, as Irishmen, were concerned equally with the injustice and oppression suffered by their compatriots. Some of the best articles in favour of repeal and against the Established Church and the payment of tithes were, in the opinion of Dr. Richard Madden, to be found in The Tribune.² Many of the articles were written by John Cornelius O'Callaghan³, who was known as the author of "The Green Book".⁴

1. The Tribune, 21 June 1832.
2. R.R. Madden, Irish Periodical Literature (MS 278).
3. Cf. The Tribune, 24 July 1834. This issue contains two articles, one entitled "Protestant depopulation in Ireland, its causes" and the other "Intended Sale and Transportation to the Continent of the Ancient Annals of Ireland".
4. John Cornelius O'Callaghan, 1805-1883, was born in Dublin. He became a member of the Comet Club which espoused radical principles and wrote for the Comet over the signature of Caralan or J.O'C. Afterwards he contributed to the Irish Monthly Magazine in 1831 and 1832 as well as for The Tribune in 1834-5. Later he contributed to the Nation and the Irish Chartist paper, the Irish National Guard (1848) usually signing himself Grachus. His best-known work was The Green Book, or gleanings from the writing desk of a literary agitator, prose and verse (Dublin 1841).

The sponsors of The Tribune did not isolate themselves from the radical movement in Britain. They were associated with a well-known Radical, William Cobbett. Many articles which appeared in Cobbett's Political Register were reprinted in the Irish paper.¹ During the autumn of 1834, Cobbett made his long-awaited visit to Ireland. O'Higgins accompanied him on his tour of southern Ireland and helped to make arrangements for the public lectures which Cobbett gave in Dublin.² Following his visit to Ireland, Cobbett suggested that The Tribune become the channel for a more direct and rapid communication between his paper and Ireland. He proposed to write a weekly article which would be published simultaneously in the Register in London and The Tribune in Dublin.³ The Tribune had agents in London, Liverpool and Manchester and thus secured a considerable sale among Irishmen living in England. O'Higgins was able to announce at the beginning of 1835 that the paper would be extended and enlarged.⁴ Financial difficulties forced O'Higgins to close down the paper the following year.

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1. Cf. The Tribune, 28 June, 19, 26 July, 30 August 1834. One contributor, "O.P.Q." sent articles to both papers. Cf. "Letter from Paris", 18 October, 6 December 1834.
 2. Morning Register, 19 September 1834, Evening Freeman, 16, 25, 27 September 1834.
 3. The Tribune, 3 January 1835.
 4. *Ibid.*

This visit of William Cobbett¹ reflected the increased interest taken in Ireland by English radicals in the early thirties. Since the time of the agitation for Catholic emancipation, Cobbett had been concerned with Irish problems. He regarded the restrictions imposed by the Penal Code on Catholics as unjust. In his work, A History of the Protestant 'Reformation' in England and Ireland, which was first published in 1824, he revealed himself as an ardent supporter of emancipation.² His writings on Ireland appeared in the Political Register and were well-known to many in Ireland. During his visit in 1834, he was welcomed by the Irish people as "the stranger who advocated their cause, who sided with their friends and confounded their enemies".³ He described

1. William Cobbett (1763-1835), son of a small farmer and inn-keeper enlisted in the army in 1783 and served in Canada; went to France in 1792; emigrated to the United States in 1793 where he wrote in defence of English policy and attacked Thomas Paine. He published a daily newspaper, Porcupine's Gazette (1797-9); fined 5,000 dollars for libel and returned to England in 1800. He began the Weekly Register, 1802, and the Parliamentary Debates (1804) and became a reformer; made several journeys through England described as Rural Rides (1830); became M.P. for Oldham, 1832 and died in 1835.

His published work included several works which referred to Irish affairs, namely, A History of the Protestant 'Reformation' in England and Ireland (London 1824), Manchester Lectures (London 1832), Doom of the Tithes (London 1836).

2. A History of the Protestant 'Reformation' (1824) first appeared on 29 November 1824 in serial form and sold at 3d a copy. It was later published in two volumes and there was a Dublin edition. Based on the "History of England by a Catholic scholar, Dr. John Lingard, it was criticised for its bias and was, in fact, a polemic in favour of Catholic Emancipation.
3. Evening Freeman, 16 September 1834.

much of his Irish tour in the series of articles addressed to Charles Marshall, which appeared in his Political Register and in O'Higgins paper, the Tribune.¹ Appalled at the poverty of the Irish people, Cobbett offered one remedy, the introduction of a poor law for Ireland. His death in 1835 ended a valuable connection between the Irish and radicals in England.

The abandonment by O'Connell of the repeal agitation and his alliance with the Whigs in 1835 was vigorously opposed by Irish radicals. In the House of Commons, Feargus O'Connor led a small number of Irish Repealers in a protest against O'Connell's policy. In Ireland, between 1835 and 1839 there was a period of quiet after the excitement which surrounded the passing of the Reform Bill. The Whig Coercian Bill, which was passed in 1835, did not arouse the opposition which it would certainly have aroused several years earlier. Political radicalism in Ireland suffered a decline in popularity. There was some agitation for an Irish poor law but it failed to excite the degree of popular support that it secured in England.²

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1. Cf. Political Register, October-December 1834; the Tribune, October-December 1834.
 2. Cf. reports of meetings in favour of a poor law in Ireland, Freemans Journal, 18 January, 1 February 1837, 31 July 1838.

Chartist Organisations in Ireland, 1839-1848.¹

The first attempt to establish a Chartist organisation in Ireland was made in 1839, when the Dublin Chartist Association was formed. It drew its support from a small number of Radicals, who had become disillusioned with existing political parties. Encouraged by the growth of the popular radical movement in England, the Irishmen took steps to ally themselves with British Chartists. They held weekly meetings, and at first confined their activities to the distribution of Chartist periodicals such as the Northern Star, the Champion and the Scotch Patriot. Their secretary, L.T. Clancy, spoke of the absence of radical newspapers in Ireland and maintained that without "the aid of a Radical press" Irish Chartists could never hope to spread their ideas among their countrymen.²

1. The chief source is Chartist periodicals of the period. The Northern Star carried regular reports of Chartist groups in Ireland from 1840 until 1844. The Irish Universal Suffrage Association sent a regular weekly account of their meetings. In addition, Irish Chartist leaders such as L.T. Clancy and Patrick O'Higgins wrote letters and articles which were published in the Northern Star.

Other sources include the Freemans Journal, Belfast Vindicator, United Irishman (1848) which contain occasional references to Irish Chartism.

The Irish Universal Suffrage Association published two pamphlets. Chartism and Repeal. Address to the Repealers of Ireland by a member of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association (Dublin 1842). There is a copy of this work in the National Library, Dublin. A shorter pamphlet entitled Civil and Religious Liberty. Address of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association to the Most Rev. and Rt. Rev. Roman catholic arch-bishops and bishops of Ireland (Dublin 1843). There is a copy of this pamphlet in the Halliday Collection in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

2. Northern Star, 6 June 1840. "To the Radicals of Great Britain."

Little progress had been made by this little group before they suffered a severe set-back. In the summer of 1839, they invited the Chartist Convention, which was then sitting, to send a speaker to Dublin. Robert Lowery was appointed by the Convention and a meeting to welcome him was called on 13 August 1839 at the London Tavern, Henry Street. The placards announcing the meeting created quite a sensation in the city¹, and the Chartists expected a full attendance. A certain section of the audience was determined not to allow Robert Lowery a hearing. They were led by J.J. Murphy and Thomas Ray, who were members of Daniel O'Connell's association, the Precursor Society, and Thomas Atkins of the National Trades Political Union. The Chartists were denounced as "violent incendiaries anxious to plunder ... to dupe the people of Ireland into illegal practices".² Murphy proposed a resolution that his hearers should have no connexion with the Chartists who advocated violence and anarchy. He was

1. British Museum. Ad. MSS. 34,245. General Convention of the Industrious Classes (1839), vol.B, p.131. Robert Lowery to Mr Smart, Salisbury, 13 August 1839.

"Yesterday morning our address to the People appeared on the walls, and, of course, produced quite a sensation. 'God it's true...' were intermixed with acclamations of animosity, the Bills were torn down during the night and we have posted others to-day ... The Whigs are in astonishment at our having got a footing here; it has occupied the attention of the Castle."

2. British Museum. Ad. MS 34,245. General Convention of the Industrious Classes, vol.B, p.153. Robert Lowery to Mr Smart, Arundell Coffee house.

followed by Atkins who appealed to the audience to follow the Liberator and disavow those men who supported the Chartist periodical, the Northern Star, "which spreads the sentiments and supports the views of Mr Feargus O'Connor, that violent and disgraced Irishman".¹ Then Thomas Ray read a series of propositions which opposed the attempt "to seduce the people of Ireland into a junction with the Chartist confederates", and called on all men who valued their liberty, and the peace and prosperity of their country to reject all connection with them.² The Chartists were quite unable to obtain a hearing, the meeting was broken up after scenes of confusion and violence. Robert Lowery and other Chartists were threatened by several members of the audience, and Lowery might have been seriously injured but for the fact that he escaped from the hall. O'Higgins did not arrive on the scene until the meeting had been broken up. He at once set about organising another meeting to take place the following week. This too was made the scene of an attack by Thomas Atkins and Thomas Ray who stated that the Liberator had declared Chartism illegal in Ireland.³

1. Freemans Journal, 14 August 1839.

2. Ibid.

3. Freemans Journal, 21 August 1839. Cf. also Freemans Journal, 17, 19 August 1839. BM Ad. MS 34,245. General Convention of the Industrious Classes, vol.B, pp.110-175 for the opinions of the Chartist delegate Robert Lowery of the affair.

Several months later Patrick O'Higgins referred to these incidents and wrote,

"Now it has come out, that when it was publicly announced that Mr Lowery had arrived in Dublin, the Privy Council was summoned - the police ordered to be on the alert - all the troops received orders to be in readiness at a moment's notice. The matter does not stop there. The Irish executive, according to Mr Drummond's evidence, have descended so low as to set up public-houses in the city, for the purpose of entrapping the ignorant and unwary in the meshes of sedition."¹

It took some time for the Dublin Chartists to recover from this set-back. As we have seen, O'Connell congratulated his supporters for their attack on the Chartists.² For a time, little was heard of them apart from articles and letters written by the secretary, L.T. Clancy and published in the Northern Star during the winter 1839-40.³ Clancy emigrated to England in 1840 and later became the leader of a group of Irish Chartists in London, known as the Irish Democratic Confederation, which was founded in 1847.⁴

In the autumn of 1840, the Northern Star reported that "the doctrines of Chartism are taking root and extending",

1. Northern Star, 2 November 1839. Patrick O'Higgins, "Mr Lowery and his Irish mission."
2. W.J. Fitzpatrick, Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell, 2 vols. (London 1888), vol.ii, p.222. D. O'Connell to James Martin. London, 4 February 1840.
3. Cf. Northern Star, 7 December 1839, 12, 26 December 1840.
4. Reports of the Irish Democratic Confederation appear in the Northern Star, July-December 1847, January-August 1848.

and that

"a Chartist association was being formed in Dublin and its members express great hope of being able speedily to move the bandage from the eyes of all their compatriots who at present do not understand the Charter." ¹

The Dublin Chartist Association was then holding weekly meetings at the house of the secretary in Golden Lane.²

Dublin Castle began to take notice of the activities of the Dublin Chartists: it was announced by the Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police that "Chartism is rapidly on the increase in Dublin".³

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1. Northern Star, 17 October 1840.
 2. Northern Star, 17 October, 5 December 1840.
 3. S.P.O. Ir., C.S.O.R.P. Outrage reports, carton 1045, 9/9445. 5 June 1841. "The Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police beg to report for the information of his Excellency, the Lord Lieutenant, that Chartism is rapidly on the increase in Dublin but nothing has yet taken place which would (according to the opinion lately expressed by the Solicitor-General) justify the active interference of the Police - the body is however under strict surveillance."

The Irish Universal Suffrage Association.

With the spread of Chartist principles through many parts of Ireland, a wider organisation to co-ordinate Chartist groups became necessary. With this purpose in view, the Irish Universal Suffrage Association was formed in August, 1841. In the Declaration of Principles and Objects drawn up by Patrick O'Higgins, former proprietor of The Tribune, it was declared that the Association was founded,

"upon the pure and genuine principles of Radical Reform; its motto is 'Peace-Law-Order'; and its object is to secure a full, free, and fair representation of the people in the Commons House of Parliament."¹

This corresponds closely to the principles adopted by The Tribune several years before.

In the Declaration O'Higgins asserted that by the principles of the Constitution the whole body of the people should be really represented in the House of Commons. With the existing system of virtual representation, a true and just method of electing the people's representatives did not exist. Those who had not votes were the slaves of those who had; where there was no representation there was no constitutional right of taxation. The Declaration contained much that was not found in English Chartist documents of the same period.

1. Appendix I. Declaration of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association.

For example, O'Higgins distinguished between the condition of rich and poor in the following words:

"The rich and poor, being of the same species, are under the same laws of nature; and being alike capable of benefit or injury from their legislators, necessarily have, in the election of those legislators, the same right; but the rich, in defence of their liberty and property have every advantage which wealth, knowledge, and the purchased power of others afford them; while the poor, destitute of these have no security, but in the purity of legislation, nor any means of self-defence but in the possession of the elective power. The poor, then, have an equal right, but more need, to elect representatives than the rich."¹

It is interesting to note that much of the preamble of this Irish Chartist Declaration was incorporated into the Chartist Plan of Organisation which was presented to the Chartist Convention held in Manchester, 1844. O'Higgins was indeed one of the authors of the Plan.²

Like the British Chartists, O'Higgins maintained in his Declaration that, to secure to all men their constitutional rights, the "Six Points" of the People's Charter should be made law. O'Higgins argued that the introduction of these reforms, in particular of universal suffrage, would create a better feeling between different classes in society since it would

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1. Appendix I. Declaration of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association.
 2. Northern Star, 20, 27 April 1844. Report of the National Convention of the Industrious Classes held in the Carpenter Hall, Manchester, April 1844.

"cause the upper classes of society to set a higher value on the labourer and the artisan than they have hitherto done; and to consider the happiness and prosperity of the working classes as the surest test of the landlords' and the employers' respectability."¹

O'Higgins firmly opposed any resort to force. Like O'Connell, he believed that public opinion, if sufficiently well organised, would achieve these reforms. In the Declaration, O'Higgins announced that the Association would adopt peaceful and constitutional means to win the Charter and outlined the measures to be adopted by the Association. Its aim was to create,

"a public opinion in favour of these rights and principles through the medium of public meetings, petitions to parliament, discussions, lectures, cheap publications, and the newspaper press; and also by securing the return of members pledged to support the objects of the Association."²

To the Six Points, O'Higgins added another reform to which the Association pledged itself, repeal of the Union. He argued that the Act of Legislative Union had been brought about through bribery and intimidation.

"We know that rebellion was formented as a pretext for this ruthless robbery and subjugation of a country whose bosom was red with the gore of her brave but misguided sons; that distrust and terror were abroad, while corruption was in secret offering her filthy lure - tithes, pensions, purses and places to the vain rapacious eyes of ambitious and unprincipled men."³

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1. Appendix I. Declaration of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Chartism and Repeal (Dublin 1842), p.15.

The Union had led to the domination of Ireland by the English aristocracy, and the increase of one of the worst evils which troubled Ireland, namely absenteeism. In addition, Irish manufactures and trade suffered by the removal of protective duties from Irish industry.¹ Whatever the supposed benefits of the Union, none were enjoyed by Ireland. O'Higgins argued, however, that repeal would never be won in the existing constituencies. Only with the extension of the franchise would a change in the law be made possible.² He appealed to compatriots in England to assist in the liberation of Ireland from the oppression of the English aristocracy "by bringing their moral power to bear upon the ... British members of Parliament". Finally, even if repeal were secured in the immediate future by popular agitation, the vast majority of the Irish people would derive little benefit from the change because,

"the enemies of public liberty would have a preponderating majority in both Houses of an Irish Parliament, with the present constituency of Ireland."³

The Irish Chartists accompanied their Declaration with a series of regulations to which their Society adhered.⁴

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1. Appendix III. Petition of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association to the House of Commons in favour of Repeal of the Union.
 2. Chartism and Repeal, p.15.
 3. Appendix I. Declaration of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association.
 4. Appendix I. Rules of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association.

Modelled on Chartist organisations in Britain, it contained some sections reminiscent of Daniel O'Connell's political associations. For example, to become a member of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association, it was necessary that two members should propose each candidate and that the nomination be approved by the meeting. In order to create a united body, "no religious or sectarian discussion" was permitted at any meeting. Catholics and Protestants were equally at liberty to join the Association of Irish Chartists who, like the Young Irelanders, opposed sectarianism. There was a low subscription of twopence on joining the society followed by a penny subscription each week, which was clearly intended to encourage the membership of artisans and labourers. Of the committee of thirteen, seven had to be working men¹ and the first secretary, Peter Brophy, was a labourer.² These regulations, which were strictly observed, contributed to make the Association strong and united, able to withstand the tremendous forces of public opinion matched against them.

During the year, 1841, small groups of Chartists were formed in other Irish towns, such as Belfast, Newry, Drogheda and Loughrea. These groups generally centred around one or two local individuals, and remained informal in character.

1. Appendix I. Rules of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association.

2. Freemans Journal, 11 August 1841. Letter to the Editor of the Freemans Journal from Peter Michael Brophy.

The members were entered in the books of the Association in Dublin, with which they were in close correspondence.¹ To facilitate the growth of the movement, the Dublin Association resolved to send missionaries into the country.² By the summer of 1841, the Newry Chartists were sufficiently active to provoke the anger of Daniel O'Connell³ and the Roman Catholic clergy of the town.⁴ Yet despite fierce opposition, the secretary, T. M'Douall, reported that progress had been made during 1841.⁵ In Loughrea, too, due to the

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1. Cf. reports of meetings of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association reported in the Northern Star, May-December 1841. The early hopes of establishing Chartist groups in the country towns seems to have declined in the following year and attention was concentrated on Chartist activities in Dublin and Belfast.
 2. Northern Star, 9 January (p.8) 1841.
 3. Freemans Journal, 6 April 1841. D. O'Connell's address to the Loyal National Repeal Association, in which he said, "We cannot overlook for one moment this attempt to sow disunion among the Repealers of Ireland ..."
 4. Belfast Vindicator, 10 April 1841. The Right Rev. Dr. Blake addressed the Newry Chartists on Sunday last on the evils and dangers of Chartism.
 5. Cf. Northern Star, 5 June 1841. Letter from the Secretary of the Newry Chartists. "... I have the pleasure of informing you and your bretheren in general... that Chartism is gradually gaining strength here, although O'Connell and the clergy are set in array against us. Some who have been stiff O'Connellites here have utterly denounced their blarney, declaring that he shall never get another penny of their money... all the information we get is from the Star. We get one every week from a friend in Liverpool, and sometimes one from Bilston, and also a Scotch Patriot from a friend in Paisley, which we circulate as well as possible. All we require in a few months, is a few good lectures (when the principles will be properly disseminated amongst the people) to augment our Association to a goodly number ..."

efforts of Bernard M'Donnell, a local man, an Association was established and appeared to flourish for a few months in 1841.¹ Drogheda too had its small group encouraged by the visit of a former inhabitant, Peter Hoey, who had become a prominent Chartist in Barnsley.² Sligo, Athboy and Newton Mt. Kennedy also had a Chartist group.³ In Cork, there was

1. Northern Star, 3 April 1841. Bernard M'Donnell, Loughrea, to the Editor of the Star, 9 March 1841.

"With respect to the Chartists, I doubt much whether the English are half so zealous in the cause as the people of the town of Loughrea ... I assure you, the Irish, at least those living in this neighbourhood, were quite blindfolded to the cause, until I circulated the Northern Star amongst them, and now they have imbibed those principles, all the Whigs in England would not put them down." Cf. also Northern Star, 21 September 1841. B. M'Donnell to P. O'Higgins, 14 August 1841. "When I commenced circulating the Star ... people looked on me as a rebel ... but now, thank God, it is different." Northern Star, 30 October 1841. B. M'Donnell to the Editor of the Star. "I am happy to inform you of the firm and steady advance the principles of the Charter are making in this quarter, and independent of those who are using all the means in their power to put them down. ... at the head of those I may place his Lordship, Bishop Cowan, has no less than twice publicly denounced me from the altar, warning the people to have nothing whatever to do with me, and said I wanted to stir them up, so that they would be hung and transported as they were in the year ninety-eight ... it has had the desired effect on the minds of the lower class of the community ... but I am proud to say, the contrary has been the case with the more learned portion of the public, several of the most respectable inhabitants of the town have given me their names, declaring themselves Chartists who, if they were before, did not publicly avow it." Cf. also Northern Star, 13 November 1841.

2. Cf. Annals of Barnsley, p.80 ff.

3. Northern Star, 27 March, 30 July, 18 September, 2, 9 October, 1841, 5 March, 30 July 1842, 18 November 1843.

no association but sympathy for the Charter was expressed by at least one eminent citizen and well-known Repealer of the town, Joseph Hayes.¹ In a letter to the Irish Chartists in Barnsley in 1841, Hayes had this to say about the People's Charter.

"I have never entertained the slightest misgivings as to the valuable principles embodied in the People's Charter, now for some years the object first in consideration of those who care not for party or factional purposes, which interposed between the people and their just and rightful demands."

He claimed that many people in Cork supported the principles of the Charter and that but for the antipathy between O'Connell and O'Connor many more Irishmen would join the movement.

"I am not now going to discuss how far Mr O'Connell is entitled to all the respect and attachment felt for him in Ireland ... the majority of the people of Ireland do entertain this attachment to him, and consequently any political movement directed on them bears a most repulsive aspect, when connected with an unsparing and continual abuse of him, both personally and politically ... Herein lies the obstruction to our adhesion, as Irishmen to the Charter, and that if this obstruction did not exist, the whole body of the humble classes of Ireland would long since have declared for the Charter."²

Thus the minds of many Irishmen were prejudiced against Chartism by the persistent attacks of its leaders on O'Connell,

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1. Joseph Hayes was an Alderman of Cork, and associate of William Fagan, a liberal Irish member of Parliament and one-time Mayor of Cork.
 2. Northern Star, 30 October 1841; Annals of Barnsley, p.213. 21 May 1843.

who, despite his failings, was one of the first Irish politicians of any importance openly to support the claims of the Irish people in a hostile British Parliament. Moreover, in the countryside, ignorance and misunderstandings about the Chartists were prevalent and one of the major problems of these small Chartist groups in Ireland was to create a means of communicating with the people. The main source of propaganda was the Northern Star, which was the most successful of the Chartist newspapers. Chartists in Britain sent copies of the Star and other Chartist periodicals to their brethren in Ireland, where they were usually read aloud at meetings. As a result, it was claimed that converts to the movement had been made in nearly every Irish county. Letters were received by the Dublin Association, which showed that there were many individuals who supported Chartist principles, although they remained unattached to any specific group.¹ In Leitrim, one such man, John Lowry, was persecuted by the Catholic clergy and forced to leave his home and settle elsewhere. Nevertheless, he remained faithful to Chartist principles and wrote to O'Higgins in 1844,

"Is Chartism crushed in Ireland? I answer No, it is spreading. The lecturers in the shape of Stars are doing their duty nobly in every part of Ireland. Persevere, then, my brave political teacher."²

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1. Cf. reports of meetings of the I.U.S.A., Northern Star, 18 September, 27 November 1841, 25 June, 12 November 1842, 8 July, 18 November 1843, 18 March 1844.
 2. Northern Star, 4 May 1844. John Lowry to P.O'Higgins; Northern Star, 18 November 1843. Cf. S.P.O.Ir., C.S.O.R.P. Outrage reports, carton 1045, 14/919, 18/663, 3 October, 16 December 1841.

The largest single group of Chartists outside Dublin was in Belfast. It was formed in 1841, and affiliated to the Dublin Association. Nevertheless, it acted independently, elected its own officers, and drew up its own rules.¹ Named the Belfast Universal Suffrage Association, this group attracted the attention of Dublin Castle which followed its progress during the winter and spring of 1841-2 with interest. The president, James Hepplewaite, a mill-wright, was asked to submit the rules and regulations of the Association to the police. He did so and in an appended letter declared that it was the sincere desire of the Belfast Chartists,

"to act in accordance with the established laws of the empire ... because an illegal step would subject all to personal punishment and retard the furtherance of that object of which they sincerely desire to promote."²

The Belfast Association was faced with the same problems as all other Irish Chartists. Their countrymen, lacking authentic information about Chartist aims and often deliberately misinformed by their leaders and press, were hostile to the growth of Chartism. In Belfast, the Whig liberal press poured its scorn and loathing upon the Chartists. When the Northern Star referred to a "great Chartist movement" in

1. Northern Star, 18 September 1841.

2. S.P.O. Ir., C.S.O.R.P. Outrage reports, carton 1043, 1/18237. James Hepplewaite to Walter Molony, 21 September 1841.

Ireland, a writer of the Belfast Vindicator wrote of "chartist lies" and described the Association's secretary, Francis Mellon, as a "journeyman shoemaker who was recently hunted out of Antrim and Newry", and declared that he had never heard of the other committee members.¹ The Association found it difficult to rent a room in which to hold its meetings. Three of the committee members were charged with assaulting James Stuart of Mill Street, who had rented a room to them once a week for the purpose of holding a meeting, but when he learnt that they were Chartists, he said he wanted to have nothing more to do with them.² Despite these difficulties, the Belfast Chartists reported that during the summer months of 1841 it had made "striking advances in the north of Ireland".³ Once again, the need for copies of the Northern Star and other radical periodicals was felt, and many were sent from Scotland and parts of Britain to Belfast. Letters of encouragement from many parts of England and Scotland were read at their meetings.⁴ New members were enrolled nearly every week.⁵ A small

1. Belfast Vindicator, 7 July 1841.

2. Freemans Journal, 7 September 1841; S.P.O.Ir., C.S.O.R.P. Outrage reports, carton 1043, 1/18237. W. Molony to E. Lucas, 10 December 1841.

3. Northern Star, 24 July 1841.

4. Cf. reports of meeting of the Belfast Universal Suffrage Association in Northern Star, 3 July, 24 July, 21 August, 18 September 1841.

5. Northern Star, 26 March 1842.

Chartist group was formed in the town of Armagh, which had much to contend with, though the Northern Star carried the report that "opposition only makes them more zealous and determined in the cause they have espoused".¹

By the spring of 1842, the sponsors of the Belfast Universal Suffrage Association considered that it had made considerable progress. They claimed:

"Some individuals are joining our society every week, and thousands who stand apart from us are deeply interested in our welfare. The papers of Belfast which profess to be liberal are banded together to beat us down - not by meeting our arguments but by vilifying our motives and pouring their vile vituperation against us, because we will not descend from the lofty position we now occupy ... We contend for the Charter, and nothing short of the Charter." ²

The Association passed resolutions in favour of the People's Charter as embodied in the National Petition in 1842 and claimed that by May of that year they had obtained more than two thousand signatures from Northern Ireland, sixteen hundred of these coming from Belfast.³

Links with the Chartist movement in Britain were close, and the Belfast Association appeared to concern itself more with topics of interest to Radicals everywhere than to subjects of Irish interest. One of their leading members,

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1. Northern Star, 21 August 1841.
 2. Northern Star, 26 March 1842. Report of the Belfast Universal Suffrage Association.
 3. Northern Star, 21 May 1842; Belfast Vindicator, 25 May 1842.

Hugh Carlisle, a Scotsman was particularly active in publicising Radical ideas. A public meeting was organised by the Belfast Chartists in April, 1842, at which Hugh Carlisle gave a lecture on the merits of the People's Charter. In his opinion this was the only measure which could rescue

"the producers of all wealth from the tyrannical usurpation of Class Legislation, that merciless dragon of oppression and slavery, beneath which we are all compelled to suffer." ¹

It was later reported that about two hundred people attended this meeting.² Hugh Carlisle also attended a couple of meetings of the Corn Law Repealers in Newtownards in February, 1842, at one of which he attempted to address the assembled crowd on the merits of the People's Charter. He was called to order by the Chairman and obliged to continue his discourse from a pile of logs in the corner of the meeting place. His activities were reported in the Belfast Vindicator and a correspondence ensued in that newspaper following the incident.³

1. S.P.O.Ir., C.S.O.R.P. Outrage reports, carton 1089, 1/7507. Walter Maloney to - 29 April 1842.

2. Ibid.

3. Northern Star, 26 March 1842; Belfast Vindicator, 13 April 1842. Report refers to Northern Star reporter as saying that at three meetings recently held in Newtownards and two in Belfast, "the principles of the Charter have now obtained a footing in the north of Ireland which will never be supplanted". The Vindicator comments that "this is excellent a specimen of lying by wholesale as we ever read; the beauty of the thing being that no meeting was ever held". Cf. also Belfast Vindicator, 9 April, 20 April 1842.

Associated with the Belfast Chartists in 1841 was James O'Neill, a printer and publisher, who published documents, placards and notices, issued by the Belfast Universal Suffrage Association. He later produced a number of radical periodicals of his own. The first of these was the Labourers Advocate, which appeared in April, 1847.¹ It directed its attention to the tenant right question and the rights of the factory workers and claimed to represent "the felt need for a disinterested advocate in the press" for the labourer. The editor declared himself to be neutral on matters of religion and politics "except in so far as the interests of Labour may be involved in the present or the future".² In the course of its existence, the Advocate wrote articles defending combination and the rights of the labourer and quoted a poem by the Chartist leader, Ernest Jones. Early in May, 1847, the proprietor complained of the lack of support from the tradesmen and on 22 May 1847 the last issue appeared; it had survived barely six weeks. To replace the Advocate, O'Neill started another periodical, The Belfast Penny Punch³, a satirising and humorous broadsheet, which nevertheless

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1. Labourers Advocate (printed and published by James O'Neill 40, Ann-Street). Price 1½d. 3 April 1847 - 22 May 1847. There is a copy of this newspaper in the British Museum. Newspaper Library, Colindale.
 2. Labourers Advocate, 3 April 1847.
 3. The Belfast Penny Punch (printed and published by James O'Neill, 40 Ann-Street), Price 1d. 27 May 1847 - 28 April 1848. There is a copy of this newspaper in the Linen Hall, Library, Belfast.

contained radical content. The Chartists were treated with a marked lack of sympathy¹, although Radicals such as William Cobbett were treated with greater respect. The Belfast Penny Punch enjoyed a greater success than its predecessor and lasted until April, 1848.

It was not until July, 1849, that O'Neill successfully launched yet another working-class radical newspaper known as the Belfast Comet.² This journal devoted much of its space to poetry and prose but in every issue at least one article appeared with a strong radical flavour. The editor wrote, on one occasion, that "according to the law of creation the industrious alone should possess the soil".³ The working people should be educated in the question of class legislation and the need to elect candidates to parliament willing to represent their interest. In two articles entitled "A walk among the Workers", the poverty and degradation of the Belfast working people was vividly described.⁴ O'Neill also dealt with the tenant-right question from the viewpoint of the

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1. Belfast Penny Punch, 28 April 1848. Cf. article "How to make a monster petition".
 2. The Belfast Comet (1849-50) (printed and published by James O'Neill, 4 Castle Place, price 1d. July 1849 - June 1850). There is a copy of this newspaper in the British Museum. Newspaper Library, Colindale.
 3. Belfast Comet, 18 January 1850.
 4. Belfast Comet, 1 March, 8 March 1850.

tenant, absenteeism, one of the causes of the present evils in Ireland¹, and a comparison of the conditions of the industrial worker with the tenant farmer and labourer.²

Despite a promising beginning, the Belfast Comet was obliged to close down in June, 1850, owing to lack of public support.

These small Chartist groups in Belfast and elsewhere depended, for their continued existence, upon the Irish Universal Suffrage Association in Dublin. In order to destroy Irish Chartism at its inception, Daniel O'Connell, the Irish national leader, instigated a series of attacks on the groups of Chartists in Dublin and other Irish towns. In the spring and summer of 1841, O'Connell referred to the groups of Chartists which had made their appearance in Newry³, Drogheda⁴ and Dublin⁵ and commanded his supporters not to associate with them and make every effort to prevent the spread of Chartist principles to other parts of Ireland. O'Connell's opposition to the movement was successful in putting a stop to the growth of Chartist groups in the country towns. In Dublin, however, the Association continued and in

1. Belfast Comet, 18 January, 15 March 1850.

2. Belfast Comet, 25 January 1850. "Land and Labour".

3. Freemans Journal, 6, 14 April 1841.

4. Freemans Journal, 17, 24 August 1841.

5. Freemans Journal, 10, 17 August 1841.

1843, with the onset of the Repeal agitation it appeared possible that the Chartists might extend their influence; O'Connell himself admitted that there was a small danger of Chartism spreading through Ireland and that his followers "should be prepared against it".¹ Determined to put an end to the Irish Chartists, O'Connell rallied all his talent of invective to make a stinging attack upon them in January, 1843. Addressing his supporters in the L.N.R.A. he attacked the new sect

"purporting to be political and sometimes assuming the name of Chartist - but frequently called by their right name Socialists, (who) have recently been introduced from England ... the Socialists whatever shape they assume are rank, arrogant and blasphemous infidels."

He referred to the so-called

"anti-Christian principles of the organisation introduced cautiously, and in a disguised form - (the members) circulate small tracts containing seductive, though very unfounded matter respecting the right of private property - they insinuate charges against the Catholic clergy ... and they endeavour to conciliate the poorer classes of Protestants in the towns by their abuse of the Catholic priests."²

The Irish Chartists answered the charges made against them in an Address.³ They declared,

1. Pilot, 17 July 1843.

2. Freemans Journal, 31 January 1843.

3. Civil and Religious Liberty. Address to the Most Rev. and Rt. Rev. Roman catholic archbishops and bishops of Ireland (Dublin 1843).

"We are neither infidels nor socialists ... but CHARTISTS subscribing to the PEOPLE'S CHARTER ... There is no danger to the Catholic religion ... We do not belong to any unlawful association or confederacy, or secret society; and we do not, nor did we ever tender unlawful oaths; the whole of the accusations made against us by Daniel O'Connell are utterly false and unfounded." ¹

While the Irish Chartists were prepared to answer the Liberator in these bold, uncompromising terms, their reply had little effect on public opinion since the address was read by few. On the other hand, O'Connell's attack on the Association received wide publicity in the press and greatly influenced the attitude of the general public. The Association admitted that prejudice, especially in the country districts, was very evident and was attributed to "O'Connell and the Corn Exchange". Many, who sympathised with Chartist principles, did not dare to join the organisation for fear of loss of their employment and the social ostracism which so often accompanied membership of the organisation. One member spoke of several labourers in his own trade of bricklayer who were anxious to join, but were deterred from so doing by "O'Connell and his tyrannical satellites". ²

O'Connell was always ready to attack individual Chartists. Peter Brophy, the first secretary of the Association, was

1. Civil and Religious Liberty. Address to the Most Rev. and Rt. Rev. Roman catholic archbishops and bishops of Ireland (Dublin 1843).

2. Northern Star, 25 June 1842.

publicly denounced as an Orangeman and a Chartist¹ with the result that he lost his employment and was forced to emigrate to England. It was said that his wife died of a broken heart soon after.² Brophy joined the Chartist movement in England and became a successful lecturer in Yorkshire. He returned to Ireland only once on a visit to his old friends of the Dublin Association.³ William Dyott, who succeeded Peter Brophy as secretary, came under fire from O'Connell "when he had the audacity to send to the 'Freeman's Journal' a vindication of Socialism".⁴ The leader, "Paddy" O'Higgins as he was generally called, was often slandered by O'Connell for the part he was playing in attempting to introduce "such a system among us".⁵ In the summer of 1841, attempts to intimidate members of the newly formed Chartist group in Drogheda were very successful. O'Connell addressed the Repeal Association of the town and referred to the activities of a certain Peter Hoey, a Chartist leader in Barnsley, who was visiting his native town. The Liberator described Hoey as "the emissary of Feargus O'Connor", and demanded whether it was "a recommendation to the eyes of my countrymen that

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1. Freemans Journal, 11 August 1841; Northern Star, 28 August 1841.
 2. Northern Star, 30 September 1843.
 3. Northern Star, 21 October 1843.
 4. Freemans Journal, 31 January 1843.
 5. Freemans Journal, 18 August 1843.

this foul-mouthed Chartist vagabond should pour his vituperation upon me".¹ The results of this exhortation soon appeared. In less than a week a number of those associated with the Chartists disowned all connection with them. One of these was John Quaine, a hairdresser, who wrote,

"I am one of the poor, unthinking Irishmen who have allowed themselves, by the smooth hypocrisy of a Mr O'Connor who came from Dublin to Drogheda, and told me ... that he would get much pleasure in proposing me as a member (of the Association) on the following Sunday. I consented. He proposed me accordingly on the 15th August, 1841. The number of the card is 50. But now with feelings of indignation against my own weakness, I do renounce all connexions with O'Connor, O'Higgins, and the anti-Repeal Association ... I shall henceforth use every influence against the North Anne Street jobbers and for the Corn Exchange Royal Irish Patriots. Hurra for the Repeal. I now publicly call on Brophy to erase me from his books and would also most respectfully yet earnestly call on the other forty-nine to follow my example."²

It was not uncommon for Irish Chartists to be physically assaulted by their fellow countrymen, as on the occasion of Lowery's visit to Dublin in 1839. Sometimes, O'Connell's supporters attended Chartist meetings in order to create a disturbance and so call in the police to disperse the meeting. On one such occasion, a gentleman by the name of Luke Kelly, tried, with a number of his friends, to create a riot but was ordered to leave the house. Shortly afterwards a party of police arrived because they had been informed by someone

1. Freemans Journal, 17 August 1841.

2. Freemans Journal, 7 September 1841.

unknown to the Chartists that an illegal meeting was taking place. O'Higgins invited the police in and they declared that they had never seen a more orderly meeting and promised to prevent rioters from doing further mischief.¹ Some time after this incident the members found that a large crowd of O'Connellite Repealers had gathered outside O'Higgins' house where they were to hold a meeting. They were unable to enter until the police had dispersed the crowd.² In 1842, Mr Christopher Coyne, an ardent supporter of O'Connell and one of those involved in the attack on Robert Lowery, attended a number of meetings of the Association to see at first hand what the proceedings were really like.³ It was later reported, in the Northern Star, that he had been brutally attacked by several unknown assailants and forced, by Thomas Atkins and T. Steele, publicly to explain his conduct in "attending an illegal assembly held at the house of 'Paddy O'Higgins', the mortal assassinator of the character of the Liberator".⁴

The Catholic clergy were known to address their flocks from the altar on the dangers and evils of Chartism⁵, although

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1. Freemans Journal, 14 August 1841.
 2. Northern Star, 6 November 1841.
 3. Northern Star, 5 February 1842.
 4. Northern Star, 5, 19 March 1842.
 5. The clergy attacked the Chartists in Newry; cf. Belfast Vindicator, 10 April 1841, Lougherea, cf. Pilot, 15 September 1841, Lucan, Ruskey and Sligo, cf. Northern Star, 30 April 1841, report of I.U.S.A. committee.

the Chartists themselves often pointed out that there was nothing in the "People's Charter" to which a Catholic as such could object.¹ Many of the leading members of the Association were devout Catholics and bitterly resented the attempts of their clergy to intimidate them. They complained of those

"who refused to baptise the children of Chartists and withhold the sacraments from them until they promised to withdraw themselves from the Irish Universal Suffrage Association and surrender into their hands the cards of membership." ²

Certain priests took it upon themselves to expose the activities of leading "Chartists" in their district. The Association described the misfortunes of John Lowry the Leitrim Chartist, a schoolmaster who

"was forced to abandon his school and leave that part of the country, and seek a living in some other quarter in consequence (as it is alleged) of the parish priest having denounced from his altar such of his parishioners that should dare to send their children to his school; and, in addition, threatened to withhold the sacraments from them, should they disobey his orders." ³

With such strong forces matched against it, it is surprising that the Irish Chartist movement developed at all. It is true that the Association never claimed more than a thousand members.⁴ Yet they battled on against overwhelming odds,

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1. Northern Star, 14 August 1841.
 2. Civil and Religious Liberty (1843).
 3. Northern Star, 30 April 1842; Pilot, 6 April 1841.
 4. Northern Star, 20 August 1842.

drawing courage from the belief that their cause was worth fighting for and that, if the Irish people once understood the advantages they would enjoy as a result of the enactment of the People's Charter, they would all support it without question.

When the Association was first formed in 1841, much of the attention of its members was directed to the activities of their fellows in Britain. They were loyal followers of Feargus O'Connor and his party and passed resolutions in support of "our illustrious unflinching patriotic countryman, Feargus O'Connor, who is now suffering in a felon's dungeon for advocating the People's Charter".¹ They welcomed the interest that O'Connor took in the Irish Chartist movement and his praise of their leader, O'Higgins.² In 1842, the Association, in an address to O'Connor, described him as "one man, at least, who since his entrance into public life has never for one moment deserted or lowered the standard of the people ..." Though "born of patrician rank", he nevertheless showed that he had overcome the prejudices of his class to become "the great moral leader of a united nation". Finally, he had withstood the attempts to trick

1. Northern Star, 27 March, 5 June 1841, 14 May 1842.

2. Cf. addresses by F. O'Connor to the I.U.S.A. "Addresses to O'Malley of the Dublin Chartist Association, Northern Star, 20, 27 March, 10, 17 April, 1 May 1841; cf. also Northern Star, 28 May 1842, 10 January 1846.

him into abandoning "those great leading principles of true liberty, which admit neither of modification or deduction without deadly injury to the great cause of mankind".¹

The attachment of the Irish Chartists to Feargus O'Connor was maintained until the decline of the Chartist movement in 1848.

Irish affairs always loomed large in the discussions of the Association; its attitude was bold and uncompromising. Peter Brophy declared that the Whigs "were the real enemies of the producing classes" and that Daniel O'Connell, their supporter, "was the enemy of the unrepresented classes of England and Ireland". Moreover, the Irish Chartists believed that it was wrong to assume that repeal of the Corn Laws would bring relief to the people of England or Ireland. "Nothing short of the Charter can get for the people equal rights and equal laws".² Members stressed the need for "union among the working classes of Ireland" and thought the terms 'No Popery' and 'Orangeism' "ought to be banished as being the enemy of the peace and prosperity of Ireland".³ When the Tories returned to power in 1841, William Dyott complained of their effort to bring about the

1. Northern Star, 14 May 1842. "Address of the I.U.S.A. to Feargus O'Connor".

2. Northern Star, 26 June 1841.

3. Northern Star, 21 July 1841.

Repeal of the Corn Laws. He described it as a "political bargain" for the purpose of uniting "land-ocracy with money-ocracy".¹ This criticism of the existing governments, both Whig and Tory, was coupled with an unyielding opposition to Daniel O'Connell. Although O'Connell co-operated with the English Radicals in 1837, he was later hostile to Radicals and Chartists. His persistent refusal to co-operate with the British Chartists, who, in the opinion of the Association, were the most loyal friends of Ireland in her desire for repeal of the Union, showed O'Connell's insincerity.²

In the years following its formation, the Dublin Association reported steady progress. Meetings were held every Sunday in the house of Patrick O'Higgins, who became the President of the Association in 1841. Unlike the British Chartists, members of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association did not take any part in militant processions or public meetings. They confined their activities to the distribution to sympathisers of Chartist periodicals and to discussion of important topics of interest at their weekly meetings. These meetings were reported in the Northern Star regularly every week for several years. Unable to produce a newspaper of their own, the Irish Chartists relied upon the Star as the main source of information of Chartist activities in England

1. Northern Star, 12 February 1842.

2. Northern Star, 19 August 1843.

and Ireland.

Most of the members of the Association were tradesmen or small farmers and farm-labourers. Their numbers remained small and so the influence of the Association was necessarily limited. In England, much of the support to the Chartist movement came from workers in the new industrial towns; in Ireland, the trade union movement was strong, but the majority of tradesmen remained aloof from radical politics. The leaders of the Irish Chartists were mainly of the middle class; men stirred by hopes of radical reform. Disillusioned by the actions of party politicians, they thought the hopes of a better society lay with the "producing classes", the men who had nothing to lose. After the emigration of Peter Brophy to England in 1842, the leadership of the movement passed entirely into the hands of Patrick O'Higgins and of William Dyott, the owner of a small printing works in North King Street. Dyott now became Secretary, and O'Higgins had been made President the previous year: they held their positions until the final collapse of Irish Chartism in 1848. One Catholic priest only, the Reverend Mr Patrick Ryan of Donabate, became a member in 1841. In his speech to the Association, he described how he had come to sympathise with Radical reformers. Twenty years before, he had been sent on a mission to Bradford and the only room he had been able to secure for saying Mass was the workshop of a carpenter, who

was a radical reformer. In return, the carpenter asked the priest to read the writings of William Cobbett. Reverend Ryan declared that he found the Reformers were not "rascals, levellers, torch and daggermen" as represented by the Whigs and Tories, but friends of peace, civil and religious liberty.¹ From the time Reverend Ryan joined the Association he was a close friend of Patrick O'Higgins and a loyal Chartist.²

Because of the hostility of the majority of the Irish, the progress made by the Association was largely due to the encouragement and help received from their fellow Chartists in Britain who sent copies of the Northern Star and also Chartist lecturers.³ Letters of encouragement came from many parts of Britain, in particular from the large manufacturing towns in northern England and Scotland, where Irish emigrants played an important rôle in the Chartist movement.⁴ Some leaders and members of the British movement, including George Julian Harney⁵ and Feargus O'Connor himself⁶, joined

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1. Northern Star, 7 August 1841; Freemans Journal, 7 August 1841
 2. P.R.O. (Dublin), Constabulary letters (1846), carton 1379, 6/999. Geo Hamilton to - , 2 November 1845 (9/23227).
 3. Northern Star, 19 June, 31 July 1841.
 4. Cf. reports of I.U.S.A. meetings, Northern Star, 11 September 1841, at which letters from Barnsley, Stoke-on Trent, Glasgow read; cf. also Northern Star, 25 September 1841, 8 July 1842.
 5. Report of I.U.S.A. meeting, Northern Star, 3 July 1843.
 6. Report of I.U.S.A. meeting, Northern Star, 20 November 1841.

the Dublin Association.¹

The Association was most active between the years 1841 and 1844. During that time, it organised several petitions to Parliament, the first of which was a petition in favour of the Charter. This appeal was sent by the Secretary, William Dyott, to William Sharman Crawford to present to the House of Commons. In an accompanying letter Dyott wrote,

"After many delays, consequent on the difficulty of collecting the sheets scattered through the provinces, we have at length succeeded in perfecting our petition, which you will find contains close on three thousand signatures ... no immediate good is expected to flow from this one (petition) in question save that of showing that the public mind is astir in Ireland on the importance of obtaining the Charter as constructed by the people of England ..."²

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1. Con Murray, an Irish exile living in Lanark, wrote letters to Dublin Association and became a member in 1841. Northern Star, 20 November 1841. Thomas Clark, a leading Chartist from 1843 until 1850, was an Irishman living in Stockport and took an interest in the Association; he became a member in 1841. Northern Star, 18 September 1841, 9 October 1841. Christopher Doyle, a Manchester Irish Chartist, joined in 1841, Northern Star, 25 September 1841.

Several members of the borough of Anderton, who were admirers of O'Higgins and invited him to be their delegate at the joint Chartist-Complete Suffrage conference in December 1842, were admitted as members of the Dublin Association in 1843, Northern Star, 30 September 1843.

English Chartists, who sent Northern Stars regularly to the Dublin Association, were admitted as members. Cf. W. Wood of Chorley, who became a member in 1842. Northern Star, 22 January 1842.

2. Freemans Journal, 13 August 1842. W.H. Dyott to Sharman Crawford, 2 August 1842.

The Secretary of the Drogheda Chartists claimed to have secured six hundred signatures for the petition.¹ The Belfast Association secured more than fifteen hundred signatures to a petition of their own at this time.²

Sharman Crawford was chosen by the Dublin Association to present their petition as

"the constant and consistent advocate of the claim of the people to be admitted to a participation in the benefits of that constitution from which they are at present altogether excluded."³

The Association launched several more petitions, one in 1843, against the Irish Arms Bill⁴, and two the following year in favour of repeal of the Union and of the Charter.⁵

One of the subjects which engaged the attention of the Association in 1843 was the question of emigration to the colonies, in particular to Canada. This question had received much attention in the 1820's and 1830's⁶, since it was thought that a cause of the poverty in Ireland was the

1. Northern Star, 5 March 1842.

2. Northern Star, 21 May 1842.

3. Freemans Journal, 13 August 1842. W.H. Dyott to Sharman Crawford, 2 August 1842.

4. Northern Star, 22 July 1843.

5. Appendix III and IV.

6. Cf. M. Sadler, Ireland: its evils and their remedies, Chapter VII (London 1828). G.C. Lewis, On local disturbances in Ireland (1836), p.332.

overpopulation on the land, which had resulted in the subdivision of holdings with each succeeding generation. This view was opposed by the Association, which claimed that the system of tenant right lay at the root of much of the distress and poverty in the country.¹ In a series of public meetings, leaders of the Association discussed the problem. They called attention to an organisation called the "Catholic Emigration Society", which, they claimed, really intended to help the "Irish Protestant Colonization Association to clear their estates of Catholic tenantry."² Conditions on the emigrant ships were often poor and when emigrants reached their destination many were unable to face harsh winters and died an untimely death. Irish Chartists claimed that these facts were well-known to the promoters of the Catholic Emigration Society, and it was hoped that following their exposure Catholic priests who had been prevailed upon to support the Society would resign.³ The Association sent a petition on the subject to Sharman Crawford to present to the House of Commons.⁴ When a Colonising Bill was introduced

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1. Cf. P. O'Higgins, Landlord and Tenant (Dublin 1845).
 2. Northern Star, 25 March 1843. Irish Universal Suffrage Association and the Catholic Emigration Society. Cf. reports of I.U.S.A. meetings in Northern Star, March-April 1843; Northern Star, 22 April 1843. P. O'Higgins to the Editor of the Freemans Journal.
 3. Northern Star, 1 April 1843. Irish Universal Suffrage Association v. Catholic Emigration Society.
 4. Report of I.U.S.A. meeting, Northern Star, 25 March 1843.

into Parliament in April, 1843, Sharman Crawford opposed the Bill which was subsequently withdrawn.¹ The Irish Chartists praised Crawford's speeches and declared that he had "justly earned not only their most cordial thanks but the gratitude of the whole country".²

In the same year, the attempt by the Tory party, under Peel, to subdue Ireland by strong coercive measures at once roused the opposition of the Association leaders. They compared the Irish Arms Bill (1843) to coercive measures introduced by the Whigs which had failed to end violence and disturbances in Ireland. They maintained that peace could only be secured if the causes of the disturbances were found. In an open letter to Lord Eliot, O'Higgins wrote, that "nine-tenths of those murders were committed in the collection of or resistance to the payment of tithes". He criticised the part played by parsons and priests in the collection of tithes and taxes from the peasants.

"I have always looked upon the meddling of the Irish Catholic priesthood, in matters which I considered strictly temporal, to have been exceedingly mischievous... when the people were goaded to madness by rack-renting, heartless landlords... and ministers of religion slaughtering and plundering wholesale... finding the laws afforded them no redress their only hope of preserving themselves from utter annihilation

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1. Hansard, 3rd series, lxviii, cols. 531-599 (6 April 1843).
 2. Report of I.U.S.A. meeting, Northern Star, 6 May 1843.

was to shoot half-a-dozen of bishops and as many titled rack-rent landlords."¹

At a meeting of the Dublin Association, William Dyott maintained that one outcome of the debates in Parliament on the Irish Arms Bill had been the decline of Whig prestige in Ireland. The vote by Lord John Russell in favour of the Bill had resulted in the spread of Chartism in the country; many more of their compatriots now recognised the fact, so long pressed by the Association, that the Irish policy of the Whigs was no better than that of the Tories.²

One of the constant demands of Irish Chartists was Repeal of the Legislative Union. In 1841, the Secretary, William Dyott, urged the Association to discuss the repeal question.³ In 1842, the group produced a pamphlet, "Chartism and Repeal", which presented the views of the Association on the question. Published anonymously, it was written in part, at least, by O'Higgins.⁴ The pamphlet was directed to Irish repealers in the hope that they would begin to reconsider their attitude to the British Chartists, who since the

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1. Northern Star, 29 July 1843. P. O'Higgins to Lord Eliot, 10 July 1843. Cf. also Freemans Journal, 20 July 1843 and 24 July 1843 for laudatory remarks on O'Higgins' letter.
 2. Report of I.U.S.A. meeting, Northern Star, 24 June 1843.
 3. Report of I.U.S.A. meeting, Northern Star, 27 November 1841.
 4. Chartism and Repeal. An Address to the Repealers of Ireland by a member of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association (Dublin 1842). This is the only pamphlet of any length known to have been published by the Irish Universal Suffrage Association.

beginning of their agitation had attempted to secure an alliance with repealers in Ireland. The author gave a brief review of the Six Points all of which would, he claimed, result in marked improvements in Irish political and social life. Not only were the "claims of the unrepresented in constitutional theory and national right" just but expedient. The distress of the people was due not so much to bad legislation as to deep-seated evils, which could only be remedied by the extensive political reforms envisaged in the Charter. The pamphlet concluded with a section on Repeal. Addressing himself to the Irish Repealers, the author declared:

"We contend with you, that Ireland, on every principle of common honesty and common sense is entitled to the restoration of her parliament; that she is too mighty to be kept under the tutelage of Britain ... We concur with you too, in claiming the Act of Union as unconstitutional; we believe with you that the purchased ministerial majority had no legitimate power to surrender or transfer the rights they were appointed to administer and guard. We remember with shame, the treachery and depravity of degenerate Irishmen, who sold their fatherland for the blood-stained gold of Britain."¹

But by what means did they hope to win repeal? The number of Irish members in the House of Commons who supported repeal had been reduced to a handful.

"In the words of your leader we tell you 'There is nothing to be expected from a parliament returned by the existing constituencies.'" ²

1. Chartism and Repeal (1842).

2. *Ibid.*

Surely it was clear that other changes in the political structure were necessary as an indispensable first step. Moreover, if the Union was repealed, what benefits would the mass of the people derive from it "if it merely threw power into the hands of men who would take the first opportunity of selling the country again". The author of "Chartism and Repeal" urged:

"Let neither the worn-out buggado, "physical force", nor the personal differences of Messrs O'Connell and O'Connor make you stand aloof from the great cause of Justice and the People. The poor man's cause is the same everywhere. Labour can never command attention or procure redress till it be armed with the elective franchise. Urge then your mighty leader to lead you to the field where four millions are battling for a people's rights ... The Repealers of Ireland are the Prussians whose coming up will enable the English brethren to win the great moral Waterloo and prostrate for ever the monster oligarchy in the dust." 1

During 1843, when the repeal agitation was at its height, the Association joined with the popular demand to restore Ireland's legislative independence. It welcomed the sincerity and enthusiasm of the mass of the people and the Catholic clergy for repeal. Addressing the Association at the time of the monster meeting at Tara, O'Higgins declared:

"It would be one of the greatest meetings ever held in Ireland. The great farmers of the County Dublin not only gave permission for their labourers and servants to go to the great meeting on Tuesday next but had actually supplied them with the means to go and paid them wages as if they were working."

1. Chartism and Repeal (Dublin 1842).

Had the movement for the People's Charter been conducted in "the same master-spirit ... it would have been carried in 1839".¹ The Dublin Association, however, doubted the O'Connell's sincerity from the onset of the agitation. Addressing a meeting of the Association in June 1843, O'Higgins declared that

"he had no difficulty in believing that O'Connell had not the slightest intention of repealing the Union; that the whole object was to force the Whigs into power again."²

O'Higgins believed that throughout O'Connell's political career his guiding principle had been a selfish one; that O'Connell's primary concern had been to provide himself with a position of power and his family and supporters with place and patronage.³ His great achievement, Catholic Emancipation, had only been secured at the expense of the forty-shilling freeholders. The Irish people had been "cheated, sold, and betrayed and banished, for money and office by the very man in whom they put their whole trust".⁴ O'Higgins believed that for O'Connell and his supporters emancipation was merely

1. Northern Star, 19 August 1843.
2. Northern Star, 10 June 1843; cf. also Northern Star, 17 June, 19 August, 14 October 1843.
3. Cf. reports of O'Higgins' speeches at I.U.S.A. meetings, Northern Star, 24 July, 30 October 1841, 6 August 1843; cf. also Northern Star, 1 August, 12 September 1846, "To the Irish resident in Great Britain".
4. Northern Star, 7 March 1846. "To the Irish Labourers and Tradesmen resident in Great Britain."

a stepping-stone towards political power, and the demand for repeal of the Union was the logical answer to the frustration of their hopes in the immediate effects of the Emancipation Act which remained a dead letter until 1835. Repeal would appear and disappear as a political slogan as the chances of success within the existing system grew dimmer and or brighter. When the Whigs were in power and promised concession, the repeal agitation died down only to be revived under a Tory administration.

The repeal agitation, which steadily gathered momentum after 1840, might never have begun if the Whigs had not lost the 1841 election. The Dublin Association argued that the agitation had been forced on O'Connell by the return of the Tories and that it was O'Connell's intention to call for repeal to embarrass the Tories and ultimately secure the return of the Whigs.¹ However, O'Higgins believed that, if, in 1841, the Tories had rewarded O'Connell and his supporters with the patronage and support given him by the Whigs, O'Connell would have been ready to abandon the agitation.² O'Higgins also maintained that there was a further motive in the organisation of these mass agitations since it had secured the payment of the O'Connell tribute

1. Cf. reports of I.U.S.A. meetings, Northern Star, 10, 17 June, 19, 26 August, 14 October 1843.

2. Northern Star, 19 August 1843.

annually since 1830. He wrote:

"How does it come to pass that with all his unparalleled popularity he has ... not driven a coach and six through the Act of Union? ... Because he has been making about £ 30,000 a year since the year 1830 by the agitation of it ... He will take good care that the Union shall not be repealed while he lives. Everybody knows that the tribute, as it is called, would have died a natural death long ago, had it not been kept alive by the REPEAL AGITATION." ¹

O'Higgins gave the figures for monies received by the Repeal Association between 1840 and 1845: of a total of £ 188,361, he claimed that £ 64,000 had not been accounted for. ²

When O'Connell's agitation for repeal was brought to an abrupt end by the proclamation of the meeting which was to be held at Clontarf in October, O'Higgins in an address to the Association described the débâcle:

"It was to have been held in the spot where the Irish defeated the Danes in the year 1011 ... Swords was coming; Leinster was coming; Manchester and Liverpool were coming; but the Privy Council issued a proclamation, which put a stopper on it ..."

O'Higgins described how members of the Association had made their way to the spot where the meeting was to have been held, only to see

"Tom Steele, dressed in a dirty, old military undress frock coat, O'Connell's chief pacificator, accompanied by a group of little boys calling 'Go Home, Home' ... it was a ludicrous sight." ³

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1. Northern Star, 29 August 1846. "Letter to the Irish resident in Great Britain."
 2. Northern Star, 29 August 1846. Ibid.
 3. Northern Star, 14 October 1843.

O'Higgins believed that the proclamation of the Clontarf meeting arose partly out of the provocation given by O'Connell himself, when he publicly called upon the Repeal Cavalry to muster for the great Clontarf meeting, a threat which the government could hardly ignore.¹

The Association expressed its dismay at seeing

"a noble, brave, generous, confident people dragged about in this manner - deluded, cheated, plundered, deserted." ²

It urged the Irish people to seek new allies and criticised those

"who assume the exclusive right to agitate for this question and who in their folly reject the aid and co-operation of their real friends." ³

A serious attempt was made to bring about a reconciliation between Feargus O'Connor and Daniel O'Connell in order "to overthrow tyranny in England and Ireland".⁴ At a public meeting on 4 November 1843, attended, the Association claimed, by about two thousand people, leading members of the Association proposed that efforts should be made to bring about "a friendly union between the working classes of both countries". O'Higgins outlined the basic principles underlying the radical reform movement and maintained that the People's Charter only embodied

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1. Northern Star, 10 October 1846. "To the Irish Labourers and Tradesmen resident in Great Britain."
 2. Northern Star, 14 October 1843.
 3. Northern Star, 8 July 1843.
 4. Northern Star, 4 November 1843.

reforms which had been advocated by reformers since the time of the Corresponding Societies in the 1780's. Dyott called on the large numbers of repealers present to "influence their friends and expose their desire to O'Connell in order that an amalgamation of all Radical Reformers take place".¹

During the summer and autumn of 1843, the meetings of the Association attracted increasingly large numbers. Although many of their audiences were critical, some declared that they were impressed with the speeches of the Irish Chartists and that, contrary to reports in the press, they were men of sound principle.² The Association proposed to hold its meetings in a larger and more central hall.³ For the first time, Chartism in Ireland began to make substantial progress.

Chartists in Britain began to pay increasing attention to the affairs of the Association, which received many letters congratulating the Dublin Chartists on their success in introducing Chartist principles into Ireland and assuring them every support in their efforts to win repeal.⁴ A group of Chartists in London, who called themselves "Emmett's Brigade", sent an address which read:

"We wish to have the earliest opportunity of transmitting to you the assurance of our warm esteem and sympathy ... Your sufferings are deeply deplored by

1. Northern Star, 18 November 1843.

2. Northern Star, 18 November 1843, 6 April 1844.

3. Northern Star, 18, 25 May 1844.

4. Cf. report of I.U.S.A. meeting, Northern Star, 3 June 1843.

the working friends of REAL 'JUSTICE TO IRELAND' ...
When speaking of England a line of distinction should
always be drawn between the Government and the people,
always remembering that the power which oppresses
Ireland, also enslaves and tramples the working
men of England." ¹

O'Higgins's articles on repeal influenced the attitude of
British Chartists towards the Repeal Association. Several
leading Chartists, including O'Brien and O'Connor, had applied
to join Repeal Associations in London and elsewhere, but were
refused admission by O'Connell.² O'Higgins opposed this
approach; he maintained that Chartists should on no account
join the Repeal Association. The organisation was undemocratic
in character and completely dominated by O'Connell who had
repeatedly expressed hostility to the Chartist movement. It
was unnecessary for the Chartists to join the Repeal Association
since the People's Charter of 1842 included repeal of the Union
as one of its demands; and the leaders of the Repeal Associa-
tion did not recognise the People's Charter. By joining their
ranks, the Chartists

"would formally abandon the great principle and admit
that a part of it was better than the whole Charter
of which repeal is just a small part." ³

On the other hand, O'Higgins urged that every effort be made
by the British Chartists to agitate for the measure in England
by such means as public meetings and petitions to parliament⁴,

1. Northern Star, 7 October 1843.

2. Freemans Journal, 7 June 1843; The Liverpool Mercury,
9 June 1843.

3. Northern Star, 10, 17 June 1843.

4. Northern Star, 24 June 1843.

and his advice was taken by a large number of the British Chartists.

Despite the growing strength of the Dublin Association, it decided to suspend its activities during the period of O'Connell's trial and imprisonment "lest it should seem guilty of offering a further and selfish obstruction to the national feeling".¹ The absence of regular meetings resulted in a fall in membership and the Association was unable to reform as an effective group until 1848. During these quiescent years, little is known of Irish Chartist activity, though William Dyott, secretary of the Association, claimed: "We are neither dead or sleeping here; we bide our time".² Dyott and several other Chartists joined the Dublin Confederate party in 1847 but were distrusted by the majority of the members and did not play any significant part in the movement.³

In April 1848, the Chartists again began to thrive in Dublin, in consequence of the more friendly attitude adopted by a section of the Confederate party led by John Mitchel towards the British Chartists. Irish Chartists welcomed the development of a Confederate-Chartist union. They took

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1. United Irishman, 4 March 1848. This appears in an article written by W.H. Dyott, the secretary of the Association, "An Apology for Chartism in Ireland".
 2. Police Reports of Confederate Clubs(MS S.3.7). C.D.'s statement of the Trades and Citizens Committee, p.48, 28 July 1848. Henry Clarke, a Dublin Chartist, joined the St.Patrick's Club but was regarded by his fellow Confederates as a "coward like all Chartists", p.50, 29 July 1848. William Dyott joined the Confederates in 1847 but left them the following summer because "he stated that some of their resolutions he considered too strong, he being a moral force man"; cf. also Nation, 1 July 1848 for a letter from W.H. Dyott to the Editor.

advantage of this change in public opinion to organise a series of public meetings in April and May, 1848, which were held in the Theatre, Lower Abbey Street. The purpose of the first meeting held on Easter Monday was to

"to adopt the best, surest, and shortest plan to Repeal the Legislative Union, by forming a League with the Repealers and Radical Reformers of Great Britain for that purpose, and bound on the principles of a full and complete Representation of the people in the House of Commons." 1

For the first time, Irish Confederates appeared on the platform with Irish Chartists. Representing the Chartists were Patrick O'Higgins, William Dyott and Reverend Mr Ryan, the Catholic priest who joined the Association in 1841. Richard O'Gorman, the Confederate, took the Chair. He spoke of his sympathy with the working people of England and Ireland but declared that, while the distinction between Englishmen and Irishmen should be forgotten, the differences between the people and their government should not; that the Irish people had been treated with terrible injustice by the English government. John Fisher Murray proposed a motion which called upon the repealers to co-operate with British Radicals which could only hasten repeal, while in return the Irish repealers should be willing to support the efforts of the radicals to achieve equal

1. Nation, 22 April 1848; United Irishman, 22 April 1848. The list of persons known to be present at this meeting included several known Irish Chartists, viz. Patrick O'Higgins (President), W.H. Dyott (Secretary), Rev. W. Ryan, C.P. Mahony, H. Clarke, P. Moran, J. M'Cormick.

rights and privileges for the working-men of both countries. O'Higgins appealed to the meeting to support his motion for universal suffrage, "the only sound basis for the reconstruction of an Irish Parliament". Of the two methods advocated to win repeal, he favoured the constitutional method which could secure its object provided the Irish Repealers co-operated with the English Chartists. The meeting concluded with a stirring address from John Mitchel. He said he was not a Chartist but a repealer. Nevertheless, the Chartists deserved their support if only because the People's Charter demanded from the "jeering House" of Commons that,

"those who pay taxes for the support of the state - who enabled the court to keep a royal magnificence, and the landlords to live in luxurious indolence - ... that these men, the bone and sinew of their country should have a voice in the disposal of their own money ... that all the people of England, Ireland and Scotland, should have that control over their representatives which an annual election of parliament would give..."¹

Referring to O'Higgins, Mitchel described him as an advocate of the rights of the poor man and the labourer, a man for whom he, personally, had the greatest respect. He felt obliged to disagree with him on the question of the methods to secure Repeal; he doubted very much whether it would be won by constitutional measures only.²

At an adjourned meeting held a week later, John Mitchel

1. Nation, 22 April 1848; United Irishman, 22 April 1848.

2. Nation, 22 April 1848; United Irishman, 22 April 1848.

welcomed the delegates from England sent by the Chartist Convention which was held the same month. Among the speakers was the Irish Chartist, William O'Connor, who moved a resolution in favour of the Six Points, with the exception of Equal Electoral Districts, which he regarded as impolitic to introduce at that time.¹ Encouraged by their reception at these two meetings, the Dublin Association organised another on Monday, 1 May, "to secure the rights of the working classes".² A resolution was proposed by Mr Mahoney and seconded by James M'Cormick,

"That it is indispensably essential to the prosperity of the kingdom that the energies of the whole people be directed to, and concentrated upon, the achievement of the one great and permanent right - that right is universal suffrage without which the working classes must still continue to be mere serfs and slaves of their task masters, victims of class legislation, and never recognised by the laws, except for punishment; that, therefore, a purely democratic association be formed, bearing the name of the 'Irish Universal Suffrage Association'." ³

The Association was reborn with the same determination to win the Irish people to the acceptance of the class-war, the necessity to protect the working classes from the consequences of "class legislation by the enactment of the People's Charter. In this, they differed from John Mitchel and his supporters. The Irish Confederates were never democrats, they never endorsed

1. Northern Star, 29 April 1848.

2. Nation, 6 May 1848.

3. Nation, 6 May 1848.

the ideas of O'Higgins and his compatriots of the rights of the masses to a political stake in the community, to them the rights of nationality came before those of democracy, while the converse was true of Patrick O'Higgins and his compatriots.

In the course of the same month, a Chartist newspaper, the Irish National Guard, was launched and appeared for about two months.¹ Its printer and publisher, James M'Cormick, was known in Dublin for his Chartist sympathies.² Addressing the public in the first issue, M'Cormick declared that he favoured "Irish legislative independence" provided it was accompanied by safeguards for the working-men of the country. He declared, that the Irish National Guard demanded Irish legislative independence, while insisting upon

"the right of every Irishman to have a voice in the workings of the laws of his country - while maintaining the right of every workman to the benefit of his labour - while protesting against, and exposing the present system of taxation and legislation, - and while guarding and protecting the rights and liberties of the people of Ireland - ABHORS unnecessary violence and bloodshed - STIGMATISES the weak - and BRANDS as traitors the men who would dare lift a hand against his fellow countrymen, except driven to do so in defence of life, his liberties and country." ³

1. The Irish National Guard, a copy of which exists in the Irish National Library, Dublin, first appeared on 22 April 1848 and appeared weekly until 3 June 1848, when James M'Cormick fled to Liverpool to escape arrest, and later set up business as a printer and publisher there. Cf. Police Reports of Confederate Clubs (MS S.3.7), p.176. 31 December 1848.

3. Irish National Guard, 22 April 1848.

Here at last was a newspaper which united the demand for Ireland's national independence with a demand for radical reforms in her constitution. John Cornelius O'Callaghan, who had been associated with the Tribune, the Nation, and other progressive journals, wrote several articles for the Irish National Guard.¹ M'Cormick had plans to distribute the paper in many parts of Ireland and had already named a list of agents in many Irish country towns and in several of the northern manufacturing towns in England also.² The arrest of a number of leading Confederates and Chartists in June and July forced M'Cormick to emigrate. Later he set up in business in Liverpool.³

Among those who associated with the Irish Chartists in 1848 was Reverend Thaddeus O'Malley, a Catholic priest, who was known for his radical opinions. In 1837 and 1838, O'Malley had been prominent in the agitation for a Poor Law for Ireland.⁴ In 1848, O'Malley published a "Working Man's Bill of Rights", which was published in the Irish National

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1. Cf. Irish National Guard, 13 May 1848 (article by O'Callaghan on Brien Boru), 3 June 1848 (article by O'Callaghan on the "Seige of Limerick").
 2. Irish National Guard, 10 June 1848. M'Cormick claims to sell 12,500 copies weekly at this time.
 3. Police Reports of Confederate Clubs (MS S.3.7), p.175.
 4. Cf. Freemans Journal, 1,7 January, 18 February 1837, 31 July 1838.

Guard.¹ It was claimed that this document embodied the points of the Charter and, in addition, "sets forth the real substantial grievances which oppress the working classes in the country (Ireland), and boldly applies to them the only efficient and radical cure". It made proposals for the introduction of tenant-right and the utilisation of waste lands. Skilled and unskilled labour should be protected by regulations on hours of work, wages and standards. The taxation levied on consumer goods should be transferred to the wealthy members of the community in the form of income tax. Finally to guarantee these rights

"every working farmer (holding five acres) and every regular tradesman, and every labourer who is head of a family, being respectively of a full age, and of sound mind, and unsullied by any civil offence, shall have a vote in returning members to our Irish House of Commons, and give that vote by ballot." ²

This Chartist revival in Dublin caused O'Higgins to suggest to the British Chartists that they hold their National Assembly in Dublin instead of London as planned. In its favour, he argued that the Irish press, in particular the Freemans Journal, would report their proceedings. Moreover, such an Assembly would "show to the people of Ireland that the only means to their political redemption is to be found in the People's Charter".³ Thirty-two missionaries could be sent by

1. Irish National Guard, 29 April 1848. "The Working Men's Bill of Rights."

2. Ibid.

3. Northern Star, 6 May 1848.

the Convention into the countryside to teach the Irish people the true nature of Chartism.¹ But these schemes were not considered seriously by the English Chartists and it was not long before the hopes of Irish nationalists and English radicals alike disappeared before the determined onslaught of the government.

On 22 July 1848, a bill suspending the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland passed through all its stages in the House of Commons and was given royal assent the following day. Forthwith proclamations were issued offering rewards for the capture of Young Ireland leaders. Mitchel had been tried and transported in May and Duffy awaited trial but the others remained at large. The rest of the leaders dispersed themselves over the country to head the rising, but the call had come too late and the people failed to revolt. Smith O'Brien "took the field" and wandered aimlessly about the counties of Kilkenny and Tipperary with a bodyguard of unarmed peasants until he came into collision with a bodyguard of police in Ballingarry. He was taken prisoner a few days later and tried with other Young Ireland leaders, Meagher, Macmanus, Martin and Doherty; all were condemned to death but had their sentences commuted to transportation. Dillon, O'Gorman, Doheny and a few others

1. Northern Star, 6 May 1848.

escaped to America. A large number of members of the Confederate Clubs were also arrested under the Habeas Corpus Act including Patrick O'Higgins, who was arrested and charged with hoarding arms in his premises in North Anne Street.¹ Other Irish Chartists escaped arrest but Chartism as an organised force ceased to exist.

1. Northern Star, 5 August 1848; Times, 3 August 1848; P.R.O. (Dublin), C.S.O.U.P., carton 1515 (1848) (9. 350).

The Irish Democratic Association (1849-50).¹

The immediate results of government policy in England and Ireland was to destroy effectively the radical and national movements by the imprisonment of the leaders; the first alliance of English and Irish working-class radicals and Irish Nationalists ended in failure and disappointment. In Dublin, there remained a few of the young men, associated with the Young Ireland movement, who had been influenced by the ideas expressed by Irish Chartists at public meetings during the summer of 1848. Deprived of a newspaper press, for the Nation and Tribune had been suppressed by the government, a group of these men rallied their forces and launched a new journal, the Irishman, in January 1849. It was identical in size and appearance with the suppressed Nation, and was issued from the same office, No. 4, D'Olier Street. Its proprietor was Mr Bernard Fullam, who had been Gavan Duffy's business manager, its editor was Mr Dunham Dunlop, who also conducted an evening paper of moderate politics. He was ably assisted on the Irishman by a number of young students from Trinity College, who had been imbued with the Young Ireland spirit. Exceedingly well written, the Irishman advocated

1. The material sources for the Association are drawn from weekly reports in the Irishman and occasional references in Chartist periodicals, the Northern Star and Reynolds News. See also R. Pigott, Recollections of an Irish Journalist (Dublin 1882), Chapter III for some interesting comments on the growth of this new movement.

John Mitchel's policy as far as it was safe so to do. It was nine months in existence when the new Nation was revived and the Irishman soon felt the effects of the competition of its more formidable rival. Mr Gavan Duffy had formed a society called the "Irish Alliance" for the inculcation of national sentiment, which met but limited success. Mr Bertram Fullam replied by starting the "Irish Democratic Association", which had aims "almost entirely socialistic and revolutionary".¹

Its sponsors hoped to achieve a social revolution by the education of the working classes "into a full and complete knowledge of the power, the position they occupy, and the power they are entitled to occupy".² In the past, the interests of the mass of the people had been neglected by Parliamentary representatives. It was the Association's aim to remedy this situation and to see

"the elevation of the character and condition of working classes, so that our artizans may understand their true value; and the tiller of the soil, on whom all are dependent, his just and infeasible claim to live happily on land he has made productive by the sweat of his brow."³

The Association expressed its sympathy with other working class radicals; it was prepared to co-operate with

"all other existing Democratic Institutions, whose aims and interests may be identical with those of the

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1. R. Pigott, Recollections of an Irish Journalist (1882), p.31.
 2. Appendix IV. Objects of the Irish Democratic Association.
 3. Ibid.

Association - namely the recognition and just appreciation of the rights of labour, and the overthrow of a heartless and useless oligarchy."¹

In an article which appeared in December 1849 in the Irishman the underlying principles of the new Association were explained in a forceful manner, under the title "Social Democracy".² To ensure the success of the new Association, it was essential that its members become "social democrats" as well as political democrats. The political representation of the majority, as envisaged by universal suffrage, should be accompanied by a new understanding of the needs and desires of the working people. More than this, the economic factors which reduced the worker to poverty must be destroyed. "The tyranny of capital must be plucked down. The grinding influence of the great master employer must be plucked down."³ The land question could not be successfully tackled unless the powers of the new industrial and commercial interests were curtailed, for they bolstered up the "landed aristocracy, nearly rotted off its stem". The author declared:

"We must tumble from its base the complicated structure of social tyranny and as 'the labourer is worthy of his hire' see that he procures it ... The principles we have suggested will be branded as communism and anti-social ... Can it be the law of the benevolent Creator that the prosperity of a nation, and the wealth of individuals, should only be raked together by the suffering and misery of the multitude? Is the task difficult -

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1. Appendix IV. Objects of the Irish Democratic Association.
 2. Irishman, 29 December 1849.
 3. Irishman, 29 December 1849.

the prize is great. To create a nation. To dash down a tyranny. To raise a flag that has rotted in degradation for five hundred years ...

"To establish political equality and make our social institutions keep company with it. To redeem the seamstress and the artisan. To put the song of joy and plenty into the heart of the labourer ... To unlock the resources of the pregnant soil and bid our mineral treasures spring to daylight. To garner the fishy wealth that nature has piled in vast abundance on our coasts, and bid a famished people eat - eat to the full and be merry. This is the glorious task, social and political, that lies before the Democrats of Ireland ..." ¹

Here we find, as in the writings of contemporary Continental socialists, the demand for a political voice for the working people coupled with an analysis of the economic factors which reduced them to degradation and poverty.

The Association was launched in January 1850 and very soon reported that branches had been formed in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, and Carrick-on-Suir.² Feargus O'Connor, the Irish Chartist, supported the new venture which succeeded in pushing its organisation into some of the large towns in Britain.³ The Chartists supported the Democratic Association which was

1. Irishman, 29 December 1849.

2. Cf. Irishman, March-May 1850, for reports of the activities of local branches.

3. Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Wigan and Barnsley all report the founding of branches. In Barnsley, Michael Segrave, a leader of the Barnsley Irish Chartists, took a prominent part in its proceedings. (Cf. Irishman, 23 March 1850.) See also Irishman, 3 April, 27 April, 4 May 1850 for reports of English branches.

supported by Reynolds Newspaper.¹ O'Connor wrote strongly against the opponents of the Association led by Charles Gavan Duffy, who he decried as "an infamous hell-born liar; a cowardly dog; and man of no principle" and so forth.² In a series of articles "To the Irish People" O'Connor appealed to Irishmen to support the Association.³ He spoke at two public meetings organised by its supporters, in November 1849 and again in March 1850.⁴ A number of Irish Chartists joined the new movement⁵ and Patrick O'Higgins spoke at the public meeting held in March 1850.

The Irish Democratic Association demonstrated the value of alliance with working-class radicals, which before 1848 Irish nationalists had refused to contemplate. But despite this, the Association was unable to withstand the pressure brought to bear upon it by Gavan Duffy and the "Irish Alliance". From the beginning, the Irishman had found it almost impossible to pay its way; the brief revolutionary fever had given way to

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1. R. Pigott Recollections of an Irish Journalist, p.32.
 2. R. Pigott Recollections of an Irish Journalist, p.33. He quotes from article in Northern Star.
 3. Irishman, November 1849 - February 1850.
 4. Irishman, 24 November 1849, 9 March 1850.
 5. Cf. the lists of members present at the two public meetings organised by the Association. At the November meeting, those present included Patrick O'Higgins, William Connor, J. M'Cormick, Christopher Coyne, Reverend T. O'Malley. At the March meeting, P. Moran, an Irish Chartist, was listed in addition to some of those mentioned above. (Irishman, 24 November 1849, 9 March 1850.)

apathy, and those who continued to propagate revolutionary ideas were not received with any marked enthusiasm by the mass of the people. Early in 1850, the Irishman was involved in a controversy with Mr Maurice Leyne, a Young Irelander, who had pledged his support for the "Irish Alliance". Leyne wrote an article in the Nation, in which he asserted that Fullam had used Mr Duffy's name dishonestly in the establishment of the Irishman.¹ The unwelcome publicity which resulted from this quarrel hastened the disappearance of the Irishman. On 25 May, Bernard Fullam announced that, unless he received 3000 quarterly subscriptions, he would not be able to continue publication. The subscriptions were not forthcoming and Fullam was obliged to close the paper. With the Irishman went the Irish Democratic Association, and all hope of an alliance between English working-class radicals and Irish nationalists. Many years passed before Irish nationalism raised its head again with the Fenian movement. One well-known Fenian, Thomas Clarke Luby, contributed to Fullam's Irishman.

1. R. Pigott, Recollections of an Irish Journalist (1882), p.33 ff.

Patrick O'Higgins: the Irish Chartist Leader (1790-1854).¹

No discussion of the Chartist movement in Ireland would be complete without considering the contribution made by its leader, Patrick O'Higgins, to its growth and development. The impersonal nature of most of the available materials on O'Higgins, mainly newspapers and periodicals, leaves us with little more than conjecture about the more personal aspects of his life. Nevertheless, he emerged as a man of great personal integrity who sacrificed his business, a comparatively well-to-do position to the cause of the people. He inspired the loyalty of his fellow Chartists in Ireland; his courage and good political sense enabled them to survive several difficult years. He won a grudging respect from some of his

1. The material sources are confined to the newspapers and periodicals of the period. O'Higgins' activities during the 1830's were reported in the Freemans Journal and other Dublin papers. After he joined the Chartists, the Northern Star became the main source, both for reports of his activities in Ireland and his writings.

There is some information about his early life in R.R. Madden, Irish Periodical Literature (MSS 272, 278) in Pearse St. Library, Dublin.

His writings include a tract entitled "Landlord and Tenant" published in 1845. This involved him in legal proceedings. O'Connell hoped to bring a charge against him as an incendiary but lack of evidence resulted in the charge being dropped. Cf. Public Record Office (Dublin), Constabulary letters to the Chief Secretary's Office (1846), carton 1379. The Queen v. O'Higgins (C. 6999).

He was also the author of the Chartist pamphlet "Chartism and Repeal" (Dublin 1842).

political opponents. Dr. Richard Madden, the author of a work on the "United Irishmen", described O'Higgins as "a man of advanced political opinions but perfectly honest, a good Irishman and an upright man".¹

Patrick O'Higgins was born in the small village of Ballymagrahan, near Castlewellan, County Down, in March 1790.² His father was a prosperous Catholic farmer. Although little is known of O'Higgins' early years, it is probable that he attended an Irish "hedge school", where he acquired a knowledge of mathematics, Latin and a command of English. While his brother Francis and himself were still young, their father suffered a change in circumstances. Obligated to give up his "guns, pointers and greyhounds", Patrick came to Dublin with his brother and was apprenticed to woollen draper, Peter Power. After serving his time, Patrick O'Higgins set up on his own in North Anne Street as a wholesale merchant of woollen goods.³

O'Higgins was introduced to English radical thought by the works of William Cobbett whom he ardently admired. He soon became known for his forthright criticism of prevailing abuses and was particularly hostile to any form of corruption among government and municipal officials. He publicly avowed his support of Radical reform principles in 1834 in his

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1. R.R. Madden, Irish Periodical Literature (MS 278).
 2. R.R. Madden, Irish Periodical Literature (MS 272). Francis O'Higgins to R.R. Madden, 3 December 1864.
 3. Ibid. P. O'Higgins to R.R. Madden, 4 November 1847.

newspaper The Tribune. His basic beliefs were expressed in a passage published in this paper in June, 1834. He declared:

"He knew of no freedom in that country, in which the ordinary condition of the healthy workingman is a condition of privation and misery. He knew of no Justice in that country in which the enactments of man pretend to overrule the ordinances of God, and deprive his creatures of the general rights of subsistence, by their own toil, from the fruits of the earth which is the common inheritance of man. The right of the owner in the land is a qualified right. It is the trust of Society. The right of the labourer is absolute and indefeasible. It is the gift of God." ¹

O'Higgins was a devout Catholic and remained so all his life, but this did not prevent him becoming the best-known Chartist in Ireland. Like others, such as O'Brien and O'Connor, O'Higgins accepted the arguments advanced by the theorists of "natural law". He agreed with their view that the democratic rights had been usurped by a selfish minority whom he described as the "privileged monopolisers of power and patronage - the Aristocracy".² He believed that with the enactment of the "Six Points" of the People's Charter, the mass of the people would recover the lost freedom so long denied them by aristocracy. He maintained moreover that governments should be judged by the general material welfare of the men and women whom they ruled.

1. The Tribune, 21 June 1834.

2. Ibid.

"It is in the condition of the industrious masses of the people, and there alone, that men of sense and integrity look for the character of a Government; and when industry, sobriety, skill, shall again be sure of their reward; when the Irish artisan shall again feel that his craft is a security against want; and when the Irish farmer shall again find, in a life of frugal industry, a certain safeguard against the torments of anxiety; when the Irish labourer shall feel that, in the ability and the will to work, he possesses an independence; and when the healthy limbs and happy looks of his children shall bespeak that they are members of a community in which the labourer is held 'worthy of his hire', then, and not till then, will (O'Higgins) profess himself content with the Government under which they live." ¹

O'Higgins was particularly conscious of the power of the aristocracy in his own country. In no state had the aristocracy carried their pretensions further. But the first step towards extensive reform in Ireland was, he believed, Repeal of the Legislative Union.

"The control of public opinion is essential to good government and the public opinion of Ireland cannot control the resolutions of an English Parliament." ²

He insisted, however, on the further point that he was "always far from the folly of imagining that the character of the government is to be determined merely by the spot where it sits".³ An Irish parliament similar to that established in 1782 on an aristocratic basis and without any machinery whereby the popular will could make itself felt was, O'Higgins believed, little better than the parliament at Westminster.

1. The Tribune, 21 June 1834.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

Soon after starting business in North Anne Street, O'Higgins began to interest himself in the affairs of his parish, St Michans. He attended meetings organised to discuss the Catholic Emancipation question.¹ He first took an active part in parish affairs when he was asked in 1829 to act as Secretary to the committee in St Michan's established to collect Daniel O'Connell's tribute for the year; it is recorded that he handed in £5 as his subscription.² In the succeeding years, O'Higgins often acted on committees and helped to organise meetings in the parish.³ His interest in public health⁴ led to his appointment as Officer of Health in 1834, an office which he performed conscientiously.

His work on behalf of the parish did not pass unnoticed. In 1835, a number of the parishioners of St Michans presented him with several pieces of silver plate. An active member in the parish, Marcus Hickey, at the meeting held to mark the occasion, described O'Higgins in the following words:

"He was the first to combine the parish in that systematic opposition ... which has finally extinguished the abuses of parish cess amongst us, and made the parish of St Michans an example to the rest of the country; that (he) has suffered the seizure, sale and (waste of (his) property rather than give a voluntary) submission to the odious impost of Ministers Money; that out of office (he was) the resolute enemy of waste and jobbing in the parish expenditure; that entrusted

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1. The Patriot, 7 January 1828; Freemans Journal, 10 January 1829.
 2. Freemans Journal, 21 May 1829.
 3. Cf. Freemans Journal, 8 June 1833. O'Higgins suggested the establishment of a committee to survey the parish with regard to assessment.
 4. Freemans Journal, 3 May, 2 August 1832.

as an officer of health with the public Funds, (he) combined the most zealous and Christian attitude to the wants and distresses of the sick, with an exact and scrupulous economy in the necessary expense; and in matters of more general concern (he) has always been among the first to show an example of active and practical patriotism ..."¹

This was praise indeed for a man who was already well-known for his Radical opinions.

O'Higgins did not confine himself to parish activities. In the early 1830's, he became well-known as a supporter of the movement to encourage Irish industries. He joined the Association for the Encouragement, Promotion and Consumption of Irish Manufactures and Produce in 1832. He wrote a series of letters discussing the condition of the Irish textile industry with suggestions for its improvement. He said that after experiencing twelve or thirteen years in the trade he had learnt that the Irish people never wore clothes of their own manufacture but tended to buy what seemed to be the cheapest and best. As a wholesale woollen merchant, he now became "exclusively and entirely devoted to the sale of Irish woollens", and was determined to make Irish woollens as acceptable to the Irish consumer as Irish linens then were.²

O'Higgins first entered politics during the popular agitation in favour of Catholic Emancipation. He became an ardent supporter of Daniel O'Connell and was one of the

1. Freemans Journal, 11 November 1835.

2. Freemans Journal, 13 October, 7 November 1832.

first to support the idea of an annual tribute to the Irish leader.¹ He joined O'Connell's Volunteer Association soon after it was formed and was elected on to the committee late in 1832.² Long before O'Connell knew of O'Higgins' radical sympathies, he took offence at the attitude the Irish merchant adopted on several occasions.³ Early in 1833, O'Higgins was foolish enough to accuse another member of the committee and friend of O'Connell, Mr Reynolds, of fraud and dishonesty. Although the charges were never answered, O'Connell determined to oust O'Higgins from the Association and forced him to resign in February, 1833.⁴ The immediate effect of this expulsion was the ruin of O'Higgins' wholesale woollen business. Writing later, he said,

"In 1833, I was realising about £400 a year. But when O'Connell's attack on me became public there was a run

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1. Freemans Journal, 21 May 1829.
 2. Cf. Repealer and Tradesmen's Journal, 19 January 1833, which lists O'Higgins as one of the committee of the Volunteers.
 3. O'Higgins was known for his sympathy towards O'Gorman Mahon who had quarrelled with O'Connell over election matters in 1830-31. Cf. Northern Star, 16 April 1842. "Patrick O'Higgins to Daniel O'Connell." He was a member of the committee appointed to agitate for the "tythe martyrs" Costello and Reynolds, imprisoned by the government in 1832, and resisted the attempt by O'Connell's supporters to use the fund collected for their defence for other purposes. Cf. Repealer and Tradesmen's Journal, 19 January 1833, Freemans Journal, 10 February 1833, Northern Star, 16 April 1842.
 4. Cf. report in The People, 16 February 1833, Freemans Journal, 13 February 1833.

on me like a run on a bank; the banks refused to discount bills I had drawn on my customers. My own bills, my acceptances were full due; and besides this, bad debts to the amount of £500 were announced from Tuam and Galway on the same day ... I got the bills discounted, paid every bond twenty shillings in the pound, but lost my trade and business ..." ¹

This attack by O'Connell made O'Higgins still more determined to resist him. As a member of the National Trades Political Union, which he had joined in 1832, O'Higgins took an active part in meetings, often taking the chair; as a member of the committee he was responsible for suggesting the policy of the Union.² He spent a good deal of his time working on the committee which dealt with the registration of voters; he believed that all those eligible to vote should be persuaded to register. He maintained that it was the work of this committee which helped to secure the return of two Repealers at the city election of 1832.³ O'Higgins publicly denounced the decision of the Whig government to prohibit the National Trades Political Union on the ground that it was "dangerous to public peace". He called upon the Dublin

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1. Freemans Journal, 14 August 1841. Letter from Patrick O'Higgins to the Editor.
 2. Cf. reports of the National Trades Political Union which appeared in the Freemans Journal, Repealer and Tradesmen's Journal, 1832-33. Cf. Freemans Journal, 9 March 1832 (O'Higgins takes Chair at Union meeting), Freemans Journal, 11 April 1832 (O'Higgins supports expulsion of John Lawless from the N.T.P.U.), Freemans Journal, 13 April 1832 (O'Higgins is named as a member of the N.T.P.U. committee, etc.).
 3. The People, 30 March 1833.

tradesmen to contribute money to pay off the debts of the Union,¹ and declared that, contrary to government opinion, illegal combinations among the tradesmen had ceased since the formation of the Union and that never were the tradesmen so peaceable and well-behaved.² In 1835, the Trades Political Union was allowed to function again, but by this time O'Connell had abandoned the agitation for repeal in favour of an alliance with the Whig party. Thus the attempt of O'Higgins and James Whittle, the editor of the Tribune, to secure the official support of the Union for a petition to the House of Commons condemning the Coercion Bill for Ireland then being introduced by the Whigs was resisted by O'Connell and his supporters in the Trades Political Union. Messrs Reynolds, Atkins, and Costello called on the Dublin tradesmen to oppose the petition on the grounds that it

"might be inexpedient in present circumstances, and would only tend to embarrass a (Whig) ministry and those Irish members who had the confidence of the country."³

This was rapidly followed by the expulsion of O'Higgins and Whittle from the Trades Political Union. Writing to the Freemans Journal, Thomas Reynolds stated,

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1. The People, 30 March 1833.
 2. The People, 30 March 1832.
 3. Freemans Journal, 26 August 1835. See also references to the affair in Freemans Journal, 20 August, 28 August, 29 August, 1 September 1835.

"Those persons, O'Higgins and Whittle, by an insidious and mischievous proceeding, involved the Trades Union in an act calculated to embroil that body with the present liberal government and O'Connell, it became necessary to reverse and annul that proceeding ... I, in common with other members present, animadverted in strong terms on his conduct." ¹

Excluded from the two most influential political organisations in Dublin, O'Higgins now became virtually a political outcast. He was already well-known in Ireland as an advocate of Radical reform, as proprietor of The Tribune, the first Irish newspaper to adopt extreme radical principles. In 1837, he supported Reverend Thaddeus O'Malley in the agitation for a poor law for Ireland. ²

Although O'Higgins was an avowed Chartist by October 1839³ he did not join the Dublin Chartist Association when it was first formed in that year. He was critical of the manner in which the visit of the Chartist missionary, Robert Lowery, had been conducted by the Secretary, L.T. Clancy, and others; that the spread of Chartism had been much exaggerated by leading Irish Chartists. ⁴ In reply to these attacks, L.T. Clancy retorted that Patrick O'Higgins

"had never identified himself with our meetings or subscribed a penny to the Chartist cause; nay more,

1. Freemans Journal, 29 August 1835.
2. Cf. Freemans Journal, 18 January, 1 February 1837.
3. Northern Star, 5 October 1839, "To the Editor from a Chartist in Ireland", Patrick O'Higgins.
4. Northern Star, 5 October, 2 November 1839.

we have never heard of him as a Chartist till Mr Lowery came to Dublin, though the Dublin press gave him the credit of being the head of the Chartists here." ¹

When Clancy emigrated in 1840, O'Higgins began to interest himself in the affairs of the Dublin Chartists. In July 1841, he made his first public speech at a meeting of their association and was immediately heralded as an important acquisition to their small band. His reputation was such that the next month he was elected President of the newly formed Irish Universal Suffrage Association, a position he held until the decline of Irish Chartism in 1848.

Most of O'Higgins' political writings related to Ireland.² The keystone of his proposed measures of reform remained land reform, repeal and the People's Charter. Such was the power

1. Northern Star, 12 October 1839.
2. Northern Star, 5 October 1839. "To the Editor from a Chartist in Ireland, Patrick O'Higgins", 2 November 1839, "Mr Lowery and his Irish Mission", 29 February 1840, "The degraded state of Ireland under the Whig-O'Connell Despotism", 20 November 1841, in which he replies to O'Connell's attacks on him in the L.N.R.A., 26 October 1841, 4 March 1843, "P. O'Higgins to the Right Rev. Dr. Blake, Catholic Bishop of Drommore on O'Connell and the Irish clergy", 27 May 1843, "P. O'Higgins to Lord Eliot on Repeal of the Union and the Irish Arms Bill", 2 September 1843, "P. O'Higgins to Daniel O'Connell", 17 May 1845, "To the Irish Repealers resident in Britain", 7, 14 March 1846, "To the Irish Labourers and Tradesmen residing in Great Britain", 31 March, 9 May, 1, 8, 29 August, 5, 12, 26 September, 10 October, 7 November 1846, 10 April 1847, "To the Irish Resident in Great Britain", 10 April 1847, "Royal Prerogative and Repeal of the Union", 29 April, 6 May 1848, "A Conference in Dublin".

and prestige of Daniel O'Connell at the time O'Higgins was writing, that he was unable to discuss Irish problems without reference to O'Connell. He, therefore, concentrated his attention on the policy of the Liberator, in particular from the time of Catholic emancipation in 1829 to the repeal agitation of 1843. Most of his writings were published in the Northern Star. In Ireland, O'Higgins' writings were almost unknown outside Dublin except to his supporters in the Irish Universal Suffrage Association, as the Irish press refused to publish his articles on account of his hostility to O'Connell except for very rare occasions.¹

O'Higgins became critical of the Liberator's policy in the early 1830's when it became evident that O'Connell preferred an alliance with the Whigs to the uncertainty of the repeal and tithe agitations. In his desire to keep the Tory party out of office, O'Connell urged the Irish people to support the party described by O'Higgins as "the cunning and deceitful Whigs".² The Whig Coercion Act of 1835, the "tithe murders by the Whig police and yeomanry" at Rathcormac in 1833, even repeal were all forgotten. Instead there was a general run for place by

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1. Cf. Freemans Journal, 14 August 1841, "To the Editor from Patrick O'Higgins, replying to allegations of O'Connell published in Freemans Journal, 10 August 1841; cf. also Freemans Journal, 20, 24 July 1843.
 2. Northern Star, 29 February 1840. "The degraded state of Ireland under the Whig-O'Connell upstart despotism by P. O'Higgins."

the Irish Catholic leaders and their supporters. O'Higgins claimed that "there is not a place at the disposal of the Government, or the Irish executive, for which there are not at least one hundred applicants".¹ Thus by 1840 the Irish repealers were weakened by internal dissension and corruption. In February of that year, O'Higgins wrote:

"The Irish have many objects to contend against here which you have not in England. The great majority of the people are Roman Catholics. The Tories were and still are the advocates of Protestant ascendancy ... They always excluded the Catholics from every office of trust and emolument, from that of the petty constable at the petty sessions' court to that of the high sheriff, or judge, or king's counsel, while their inferiors in rank, and station, and talent, were promoted and thus placed above the heads of men who ought to be their masters ..."²

The Whigs exploited the hostility of Irish Catholics to the Tories in order to secure their support in the House of Commons of the Irish party led by O'Connell.

"The Whigs commenced the wholesale bribery of the great Catholic leaders, knowing right well that the influence of these leaders over the Irish Catholics was great indeed; and knowing, too, that the great majority of the Catholics in Ireland would be rejoiced to see their friends in power, and their hereditary enemies out of power.

The Catholic leaders, thus placed by a Whig Government, found it no difficult task to persuade their dupes that, in their promotion to place and power, a compliment was paid to the Irish nation; and that the intention of the Whigs was not giving a place to an individual, but of doing an act of justice to the Catholics of Ireland,

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1. Northern Star, 29 February 1840. "The degraded state of Ireland under the Whig-O'Connell upstart despotism" by P. O'Higgins.
 2. Ibid.

and the putting down 'for ever' by this act of justice of their enemies, the Tories ..." ¹

O'Higgins maintained firmly that the man primarily responsible for this situation was the great Liberator himself. He had deceived the mass of the Irish people into believing that an alliance with the Whig party would lead to far-reaching reforms in Ireland. The so-called policy of "justice for Ireland" had resulted in several reform measures ² none of which satisfied the demands of the Irish radicals. O'Higgins wrote, in reference to O'Connell, that "if the people once saw how far they were deceived and betrayed, I do not think that one stone would be left standing in his house in Merrion Square". ³

The refusal by O'Connell to ally himself with the English Chartists, though he was in sympathy with several of their principles, O'Higgins believed was a deliberate policy: that O'Connell feared the social upheaval which he feared would follow the union of the peoples in both countries. Instead of allying himself with those "strenuous advocates" of Irish legislative independence, O'Connell chose to support

"the Attwoods, the Cobdens, and the whole of the anti-Corn Law league ... Now Mr Attwood and the majority of the leaguers were opposed to Repeal of the Union or even of equal rights and privileges with England." ⁴

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1. Northern Star, 29 February 1840.
 2. Cf. Irish Municipal Reform Bill (1838), Irish Tithe Bill (1838), Irish Poor Law (1838).
 3. Northern Star, 29 February 1840.
 4. Northern Star, 19 August 1843.

Moreover, as we have seen, O'Higgins had little faith in O'Connell's sincerity in raising the slogan for repeal.

O'Higgins was concerned with the land question and supported the movement for the abolition of tithes. Early in his career he became well-known in the parish of St. Michans as a vigorous opponent to the payment of "minister's money"¹, which he compared to the payment of tithes in the country. O'Higgins praised the efforts of William Sharman Crawford in his endeavours to secure the abolition of tithes and a measure of tenant right for the peasantry. He supported Sharman Crawford's Landlord and Tenant bills which Crawford introduced into Parliament between 1835 and 1845. Addressing the Association in 1842, O'Higgins declared that, in his view, the introduction of tenant rights as envisaged by Sharman Crawford's Bill of that year would result in lasting benefits, since its object was to prevent Irish landlords from depriving their tenantry of their houses and lands without due cause. This Bill would "do more to tranquillise Ireland than any other measure that has been passed during the last forty years".² O'Higgins attacked O'Connell for his opposition to Sharman Crawford. O'Connell had succeeded in convincing the electors of Dundalk that Sharman Crawford was no longer fit to represent

1. Freemans Journal, 11 August, 11 November 1835.

2. Report of the I.U.S.A. meeting, Northern Star, 1 January 1842.

them because he had opposed on the question of tithes and the "Whig Coercion Act of 1835".

"So prostrate and so degraded was the Irish mind, at that period, that the electors of Dundalk actually called upon Mr Crawford to resign as a result of his independent attitude." ¹

In 1845, O'Higgins wrote a short tract, on the tenant-right question; it was entitled "Landlord and Tenant".² This tract was later published by Mitchel in his paper, the United Irishman.³ Mitchel maintained that he agreed with the opinions expressed in this document. O'Higgins declared that the landlord has a right to turn out a tenant only if he has neglected the farm or does not pay his rent. He has no right to turn out a tenant without first paying in full for all his outlay in building, reclaiming, manuring, enclosing and draining. He claimed:

"It would be robbing the tenant to take the land without first having paid him the full value of those improvements, and also compensation for the cost incurred by removing to another place, even to a settlement in America, if he chose to go there. Because when a tenant is deprived of his land whether by the cupidity, whim, or tyranny of his landlord, he has nothing to live on, and consequently becomes either a burden to society, or he, his wife and children die of want, which is too often the case; and therefore, the landlord is, to all intents and purposes, guilty of causing the death of unoffending men, women and children ..."

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1. Northern Star, 4 March 1843. "To the Right Reverend D. Blake", 6 February 1843.
 2. Northern Star, 3 January 1846.
 3. United Irishman, 4 March 1848.

He went on to compare the conduct of the landlord who charges additional rent to a tenant for rough land which the tenant had reclaimed and made fruitful with the man who owned a rough block of mahogany and charged the cabinet-maker for making him a chest of drawers instead of paying him for his labour.

"The conduct of the landlord is worse by far than that of the owner of the block because a poor tenant cannot go to law with his landlord - he must either submit to the fraud, or be turned out to die. He cannot carry the land with him. It is stationary and there it remains. The cabinet-maker can carry his trade and his tools with him ..."¹

This document was posted up in several parts of Dublin including the front of Conciliation Hall. It was brought to O'Connell who at once publicly denounced the author to the government as an incendiary. The government indicted O'Higgins but a charge was never brought because it was decided by the Crown prosecution that there "was not sufficient material for the institution of any proceedings".²

Patrick O'Higgins was known to Chartists in Britain as a result of his letters and articles in the Northern Star. Chartist associations praised him for his "attempt to enlighten the minds of the Irish and open their eyes to the real motives

1. P. O'Higgins, Landlord and Tenant (1845), reprinted in Northern Star, 5 January 1846.
2. P.R.O. Constabulary letters (1846), carton 1379. *The Queen v. O'Higgins* (C. 999); cf. also Pilot, 19, 26 November 1845, Pilot, 9 January 1846.

of O'Connell and his party".¹ O'Higgins made several visits to England when he spoke at Chartist meetings. In 1839, he addressed a public meeting in Huddersfield along with Feargus O'Connor.² Some years later he was invited to take part in the Birmingham Conference held in January, 1843. This conference attempted to reconcile the Complete Suffrage party, led by Joseph Sturge, with the O'Connorite Chartists. On the third day of the conference, Joseph Sturge resigned the chair and, on the motion of Feargus O'Connor, Patrick O'Higgins was appointed his successor. This was an opportunity for the Irish Chartist to show his worth. His opening speech was conciliatory. He declared his opposition to any group of men who attempted to cause the two sections of the reformers to disagree; in order to promote their objects, it was necessary to be united in the future; that while the Conference as a whole disagreed with the position taken up by the Suffrage party, they should give them credit for honest intentions.³ Writing later, O'Higgins declared that Mr Sturge and his friends, after they left the Conference, "formed a little middle-class meeting of their own, partly republican partly revolutionary, and at all events they

1. Northern Star, 26 February 1842. "Address by the Leicester Chartists to P. O'Higgins"; cf. also Northern Star, 28 August 1841, resolution of Salford Chartist Association which praised O'Higgins and his work in Ireland for Chartism.

2. Northern Star, 30 November 1839.

3. Northern Star, 7 January 1843.

went far beyond the Charter's propositions".¹ At the same conference, O'Higgins spoke to a motion on Repeal of the Union and called for the unity of the Irish and English people to win the political rights of them both. He said

"the Union of England with Ireland had been brought about by men who sought to crush the people: but if the people became thoroughly united they would make it the dearest union that ever was heard of ... a friendly union between the two countries for obtaining the political rights of both would be received with that gratitude for which the character of his countrymen was so signally distinguished." ²

O'Higgins performed his duties as Chairman at this meeting with dignity and restraint. Thanking him for performing this task, Mr Parry, an English Chartist, described O'Higgins as the "representative of the Chartists in Ireland" whose presence among them might be a good omen, and "that the day would arrive when 'justice to Ireland' would find a practical echo in the breasts of every Englishman".³

O'Higgins attended the Chartist Convention at Manchester in April, 1844. He acted on several committees, in which he met several other Irishmen prominent in the English Chartist movement, such as Thomas Clarke and Christopher Doyle. He was a member of the Committee which drew up a new plan of organisation for the Chartists to "ensure enactment of the

1. Northern Star, 19 August 1843.

2. Northern Star, 7 January 1843.

3. Northern Star, 7 January 1843.

People's Charter by peaceful, legal and constitutional means".¹ While in Manchester, he spoke at a public meeting organised by the Chartists. He was received with great enthusiasm and declared that no one would persuade him that the English people were hostile to the rights of Irishmen. Addressing the English Chartists he declared that

"there he saw the English in their thousands assembled to aid Ireland in accomplishing their great national object, to weaken her bitterest enemy - to put the English Minister from so strengthening his hand by destroying what little remained of representation in Ireland ..."²

O'Higgins did not visit England again but maintained his links with the English Chartists by means of articles and letters in the Star. In 1846 he addressed a series of letters "To the Irish Labourers and Tradesmen residing in Great Britain" in which he hoped to expose the truth of O'Connell's political career; to show that he was not the great "Liberator" as he was generally supposed to be but the greatest "knave in politics" that Ireland had produced. A Repeal warden in London described these letters as containing "some little exaggeration though they contain a great deal of truth, which will be the means of keeping open the eyes of those already enlightened by the later arbitrary proceedings of the Repeal Association towards William Smith O'Brien and the Young

1. Northern Star, 20 April 1843.

2. Northern Star, 29 April 1844.

Irelanders".¹ A correspondent, signing himself "a Drogheda Chartist", expressed his admiration of the exposure of Daniel O'Connell and was only sorry that the Irish at home could not read the letters.² O'Higgins' popularity with the O'Connorite Chartists was demonstrated when in 1846 he was being charged with sedition, as author of the tract "Landlord and Tenant". Articles appeared in the Northern Star expressing sympathy with the Irish Chartist leader, whose "straightforward, patriotic and manly outlook has made him the object of love and esteem to the English working men".³ The newspaper brought out a printed portrait of O'Higgins which was to be distributed to subscribers of the paper.⁴ Feargus O'Connor described O'Higgins at this time in the following terms:

"there breathes not a more wise, more sensible, more prudent, and more courageous or more devoted patriot than O'Higgins. He is a man upon whose judgment, if at fault myself, I would confidently rely ... He is the one man of our ranks who has suffered the largest amount of misrepresentation ... O'Higgins was the foremost in his endeavour to establish your principles in Ireland ..."⁵

O'Higgins returned these friendly feelings and always gave his support to the policies of O'Connor. Writing to O'Connor on the Land Plan, O'Higgins said:

1. Northern Star, 26 August 1846.

2. Ibid.

3. Northern Star, 10 January 1846.

4. Northern Star, March 1846.

5. Northern Star, 11 April 1846.

"In my opinion, your land plan deserves the unqualified support of every honest man. It appears to be not only practicable but inimitable. The little holdings, or houses and lands, are, as I understand it, to be bona fide estates, and if so, nothing can surpass the plan. The houses and lands held in perpetuity at a small rent for the benefit of the little community ... Once you get the first colony settled you can accomplish anything ..."¹

He could have done much to establish such colonies in his own country. Instead, Ireland was ravaged by a famine which killed hundreds of thousands of his fellow-countrymen. Chartism virtually disappeared in Ireland during these dismal years. O'Higgins did not discontinue his efforts for the cause he had embraced; he still made attempts to distribute the Northern Star to his various friends and associates.² He was also in the habit of visiting the Reverend Mr Ryan of Donabate, who remained a close friend of the Irish Chartist up to his death.³ While the Chartists were inactive, O'Higgins took an interest in other groups of a progressive and democratic character. He drew the attention of the English Chartists to the group of repealers who, dissatisfied with the activities of O'Connell's Repeal Association, formed an independent body, known as the Committee of Trade and Citizens, and produced a manifesto

1. Northern Star, 18 April 1846.

2. P.R.O. (Dublin), Constabulary Letters (1846), carton 1379, G/6999. Geo. Hamilton, Esq. to Colonel Browne, 6 December 1845 (9.23327).

3. P.R.O. (Dublin), Constabulary Letters (1846), carton 1379, G/6999. Geo Hamilton, Esq. to - , 21 November 1845(9.23327).

expressing their disagreements with the main body of Irish Repealers.¹

O'Higgins had implicit trust in the benefits which the People's Charter would bring to the people of Ireland. He distrusted "Mr William Smith O'Brien's empty bombastic threat that he will fight for Repeal".² He, therefore, did not participate in the Confederate movement but welcomed the Confederate-Chartist union in 1848. Speaking at a meeting of Confederates and Chartists on Easter Monday, he confessed that

"he stood there that day for the first time before an assembly of his countrymen for the last ten years. He had been for a considerable time what was called a political outcast."³

O'Higgins' arrest in August 1848 shattered the hopes of a revival of Chartism in Dublin.⁴ After his release from prison the following year, he took little part in radical politics apart from expressing his sympathy with the Irish Democratic Association.⁵ His health had been affected by his imprisonment and he died in 1854 at the age of sixty-four.

No other Chartist in Ireland displayed such an astonishing

1. Northern Star, 10 October 1846.
2. Northern Star, 3 May 1845.
3. Nation, 22 April 1848.
4. Northern Star, 5 August 1848; Times, 3 August 1848.
5. Irishman, 24 November 1849, 9 March 1850. O'Higgins was present at the two public meetings of the Association.

array of gifts as Patrick O'Higgins. A first-rate organiser, public speaker, pamphleteer and practical politician, he gave his services to the cause of Chartism in Ireland. But for his leadership it is doubtful whether Chartists would have survived for so long in Ireland. Although he was bitterly attacked by O'Connell and others during his life-time, the principles he supported have long since passed into law. It was O'Higgins' sense of public duty which led him to participate first in the affairs of his parish, St. Michans, and later in the wider field of the Chartist movement. O'Higgins' uncompromising attacks on existing abuses are reminiscent of his compatriot, O'Connor. O'Higgins believed it to be his moral duty to protest against those aspects of government and society which appeared to conflict with the basic principle that society existed for the good of the people. Unlike O'Connor, O'Higgins was an unassuming man who only too readily retired from the public scene when he felt he could no longer offer his services to the radical movement. The diminution of O'Connell's influence in the counsels of the Repeal Association with the rise of the Young Ireland movement and the growth of the new policy, adopted by the Confederate party, of co-operation with the British Chartists justified O'Higgins' faith in the progress of

the Irish people towards a more prosperous future. The formation of the Irish Democratic Association, which embodied so many of the principles for which O'Higgins had struggled during his lifetime, and which bore the imprint of the early Chartist associations, gave him the satisfaction that a few of his countrymen at last were adopting the beliefs which he had proclaimed so ardently for so many years.

1. The material for this chapter is largely derived from Irish and Chartist newspapers. There are also a few references to the F.R.O. (Dublin), *Irish Historical Records and Documents*, Volume 11640, Trinity College, and the *Journal of the Proceedings of the National Convention of the Irish People*, 1847-1848, Dublin, 1848.

Chapter III. The relations between the Irish national movement and the Chartists.¹

To a superficial view it seems hard to understand why prominent Irish politicians of the time not only held themselves aloof from the Chartist movement, but actually viewed it with something of the abhorrence it excited in the breasts of the privileged classes in Britain. An alliance between the two groups seemed to be plainly dictated by common sense. Both were struggling to end a situation maintained in their countries by the English government; neither Britain nor Ireland had a Parliament, elected by, and legislating for, the welfare of the majority of the people. Yet there existed, to prevent an effective alliance between the subjected Irish nation and the other submerged nation, the poor of Britain, other historically created obstacles. To the British Chartist the question seemed simple. He saw his people, divided like the Irish, between the enfranchised and the disenfranchised. But the question was not simple, and, partly for that reason, the British Chartist did not obtain the support of the majority of the disenfranchised for whom he fought. The British poor benefited to some extent from the Empire, and devotion to the Empire precluded sympathy

1. The material for this chapter is largely confined to Irish and Chartist newspapers. There are also a few references in the P.R.O. (Dublin), Chief Secretary's Office Unregistered Papers (1848), Trinity College, MSS S.3.5-8, Police Reports of Confederate Clubs in Dublin (1848-1849), Smith O'Brien Papers.

with the Irish. The question was still more involved in Ireland. Whereas in Britain no one of whatever creed or class looked abroad for his political centre, the two material centres of power, the British government and the Papacy, to which different inhabitants of Ireland were drawn, lay outside the country.

From the time of the English Civil War, the inhabitants of Ireland were divided into several distinct groups. There were those who, whatever their creed, and some were Catholic, desired to maintain the imperial connection: those who were Irish in body, Roman in heart, to borrow terms from their most prominent representative, Daniel O'Connell, who wanted Ireland to be ruled according to political principles emanating from Rome: and those, of whom many were Catholic, and some of English descent, Protestant or Presbyterian, who wanted Ireland to have her own government, which would remedy the ills and serve the interests of a united Irish nation. It is clear that only members of the latter group could have any sympathy with Chartist aims, but it was their group which, in principle, was most averse to foreign combinations, especially with Englishmen. Yet some members of this group were prepared to ally themselves with sympathisers in England.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century contacts were established between the United Irishmen and English Radicals. Feargus O'Connor's father and uncle were prominent United

Irishmen. Roger, his father, dedicated his book, the Chronicles of Eri¹, with cordial expressions for his political acts, to Sir Francis Burdett, a noted Radical. Arthur O'Connor was also a friend of Burdett, with whom he visited William Godwin more than once. All three, Godwin most closely, were associated with Barry, the Cork painter and Radical.² Arthur O'Connor had connections with the London Corresponding Society. When Thomas Paine was in Paris, he was visited by Irish as well as English disciples. All these friendly associations were based, it can hardly be doubted, on political sympathy.

Feargus O'Connor knew something of these meetings and used his position in the Chartist movement to propagate the union of the English and Irish people to a far greater extent than had been possible hitherto. In Ireland, however, only the Chartists were constant advocates of this union and they remained, as we have seen, numerically few and lacked much influence in the country as a whole. The majority of the Irish nationalists remained aloof from such a connection. It was not until 1848, when the Confederate party began to look abroad for allies, that a union of Confederates and Chartists began to develop.

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1. R. O'Connor, Chronicles of Eri (London 1822).
 2. W.T. Whitely, Art in England 1800-1830 (Cambridge 1928), p.102; cf. also D.V. Erdman, Blake Prophet against Empire (Princeton 1954), pp. 37, 446.

Daniel O'Connell and the Chartists.

From the first, Daniel O'Connell's attitude to the English radical movement was ambivalent, influenced as it was by several factors. By inclination he was a radical and supported many measures of radical reform. While still a student he had read widely such writers as Thomas Paine, William Godwin and Mary Wolstonecraft.¹ His part as leader of the Catholic Emancipation movement and his support of Parliamentary reform led William Cobbett in 1830 to describe O'Connell as the only politician to retain the confidence of the English radicals.² In 1832, O'Connell and his supporters were returned to the Reformed Parliament pledged to an ultra-Radical programme, which included Repeal of the Legislative Union, abolition of tithes, repeal of vestry and church cess, and improvements in grand jury laws.³ O'Connell emphasised the importance of mobilising popular support. In Ireland he developed mass agitations to unprecedented heights and in England he showed that he was not afraid to appeal to industrial workers when in 1835 he made a tour in the north of England during which he denounced the House of Lords in remarkable speeches to enthusiastic crowds.⁴

1. D. Gwynn, Daniel O'Connell. The Irish Liberator (Cork 1938), pp.61-2.

2. M. Tierney, Daniel O'Connell (Dublin 1949), p.153.

3. S. Maccoby, English Radicalism 1832-52 (London 1935), p.136.

4. S. Maccoby, English Radicalism 1832-52 (1935), p.136.

O'Connell was willing to support measures of reform provided they could be made within the existing social and political framework. But he was strongly opposed to any movement which threatened to undermine the "groundworks of the social state - the protection of property and the institutions of the country".¹ His early experiences and training made O'Connell averse to violence. It is said that, while studying in France in a Catholic college during the years between 1791 and 1793, he lived in terror of passing French soldiers who used to threaten "les jeunes Jésuits".² Returning to Dublin in 1797, O'Connell, then only twenty-three years old, became associated with members of the United Irishmen. In the spring of 1798 he was admitted to the bar; immediately afterwards he entered the "Lawyers Yeomanry Corps", but afraid of being implicated in any military adventures he left Dublin in June, 1798.

"It would appear probable that O'Connell remained in the peaceful wilds of Kerry during the most eventful period of the rebellion."³

O'Connell's dislike of bloodshed and mob violence influenced his attitude to the Chartist movement.

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1. W.J. Fitzpatrick, Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell (London 1888), vol. 11, pp.213-6. D. O'Connell to Henry Townsend, D.L., 19 November 1839.
 2. J.D. Clarkson, Labour and Nationalism in Ireland (1925), p.131.
 3. M. Cusack, The Liberator, his life and times (London 1872), p.179.

During the early 1830's O'Connell maintained an uneasy friendship with several of the Parliamentary radicals; he sympathised with their grievances, though he was never, like them, prepared to press demands for political reform to the point of imperilling the Whig ministry. He was among the group of radical Members of Parliament who participated in the meeting organised by the London Working Men's Association to discuss the introduction of a draft bill containing the demands of the People's Charter. O'Connell took an active part in these meetings and at one stage attempted to place himself at the head of the London artisans. He proposed that an alternative Association be established organised along lines familiar to him in his political organisations in Ireland. This body, designed to "procure justice for the working classes", should base its policy on three of the six points of the Charter, that is to say, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and abolition of the property qualification. O'Connell refused to support annual parliaments, believing triennial parliaments to be preferable, but he wished to add a demand for reform of the House of Lords, which, he argued, should be

"responsible directly and potentially to the people for whose properties, lives and liberties it contributes the right to legislate." ¹

William Lovett and his fellow artisans objected to his proposal

1. London Working Men's Association Minutes. Ad. MSS, 37, 773-6.
7 June 1838.

on the grounds that an organisation pledged to secure this reform existed already.¹ O'Connell resented the reluctance of the London artisans to accept his leadership, withdrew from the meeting, and never again supported Chartist policies.

At the time, O'Connell's change in attitude appeared to be a gross example of personal vanity. In fact, it illustrated his dislike of political organisations among the lower classes which unless led by men of substance would, he believed, threaten the basis of society. The refusal of the London artisans to accept O'Connell as their leader made them suspect in his eyes. Moreover, the Chartists, in the early years of their agitation, appeared to justify his apprehension. In the months following the publication of the People's Charter in May, 1838, mass meetings were held up and down the country, many of them at night in the murky glare of hundreds of torches. More than once O'Connell spoke of the "torch and dagger" Chartists² who were encouraged by their fiery leaders,

"Oestler who is constantly urging on his followers the necessity of shedding blood, Stephens the miscreant ... and Feargus O'Connor more bloody-minded and more atrocious than ever was Danton."³

He refused to consider it possible "for any honest Irishman to co-operate with them in any manner".⁴

1. W. Lovett, Life and Struggles (London 1876), pp.112-3.
2. Cf. Northern Star, 28 November 1840. "Address of the L.N.R.A. to the people of England."
3. Pilot, 12 December 1838.
4. Ibid.

This attitude of O'Connell was clearly manifested when in August 1838, William Lovett, on behalf of the London Working Men's Association, issued an address to the Irish people which appealed to them for co-operation with the English Chartists.¹ Taking it upon himself to speak on behalf of all the Irish people O'Connell repudiated any form of alliance with the London Working Men's Association or any other section of the English radical movement now calling themselves Chartists.² O'Connell took the part of his allies, the Whigs, against the onslaughts of the Chartists. He explained, in answer to Lovett's appeal, that his policy in 1839 was confined to certain reforms. He hoped with the aid of the Whigs to obtain for Ireland equality with England in reform of municipal corporations, parliamentary franchise, and religious liberty, together with a "due and adequate proportion of the representation in the united parliament". He pointed out that the Chartists, unlike his own political organisation, appeared to lack a central organisation.

"They have several occasional meetings but no permanent body to do their business publicly and skilfully ... They have no skilful or well-trained leaders. Their leaders are only for a day, and do not know how to carry on - or have no leisure to carry on continuous action. If they had a public, open and permanent association to conduct their business, the men of political tact and skill would show themselves."³

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1. W. Lovett, Life and Struggles (1876), p.
 2. Pilot, 19 September, 30 November 1838.
 3. Pilot, 19 September 1838.

In fact, O'Connell continued to criticise the Chartists after the National Charter Association was formed in 1840. His main grounds for criticism was rather the apparent willingness of William Lovett to follow the policy of the northern Chartists led by O'Connor, who by their conduct

"injured instead of served the cause of peaceable reform - disgusted their friends and increasing and strengthening their enemies." ¹

He regarded the Chartists as being, not less than the Tories, enemies of real liberty and reform. The only difference lay in the relative strength of the two groups.

"The Chartists are the less formidable of the two, because their only means - physical force - can be easily and effectually resisted. 'The Oligarchs' have already one branch of the legislature their own - the House of Peers - and they almost predominate over the Commons House." ²

The Newport rising in the autumn of 1839 appeared to vindicate O'Connell's arguments against the "wretched and deluded Chartists".³ He seemed to think that the rising was as much the result of Tory manoeuvres as of Chartist rebellion and proudly declared that 500,000 fighting men from Ireland would be ready to protect Queen and country.⁴ He rejoiced that no Irishmen had taken part in the rising and spoke of the

1. Pilot, 19 September 1838.

2. W.J. Fitzpatrick, Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell (1888), vol.11, pp.213-6. D. O'Connell to H. Townsend, D.L., 19 November 1839.

3. Freemans Journal, 9 December 1839.

4. Freemans Journal, 9 December 1839, 17 September 1841; Northern Star, 23 November 1839.

hundred Irishmen who acted as special constables and assisted in suppressing the rebellion.¹ Addressing the Trades Political Union, O'Connell admitted that the outbreak in Newport was a positive sign of deep discontent among the working classes in England. This was due to

"the limited nature of the elective franchise and the refusal of the protection of the Ballot ... They really are a slave class in England, deprived of all legal and constitutional means of protection ... It is this and this alone which makes the Chartist spirit dangerous to the existing institutions of the nation."²

In the years following the Newport rising, O'Connell persisted in abusing the Chartists and their leaders at every opportunity. He criticised the attempts of the National Charter Association to interrupt the meetings of the Anti-Corn Law League. O'Connell complained that the Chartists attempted to prevent all persons who did not agree with them from holding public meetings. In the 1841 election the Chartists followed the policy proposed by O'Connor of supporting Tory candidates with the purpose of preventing the return of the Whig party to power again. Commenting on this O'Connell declared that, as the Chartists

"are the worst enemies of Ireland, (they) are, on the other hand, the best friends of the Tory principle of absolutism, making a pretext of being Reformers but, in reality, being the active opponents of practical reform."³

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1. D. Williams, John Frost. A Study in Chartism (Cardiff 1939), p.240.
 2. Northern Star, 23 November 1839.
 3. Freemans Journal, 14 September 1841.

With the rise of the Complete Suffrage movement in 1842, O'Connell saw the answer to his ever-present dilemma. At last, Chartist principles were being expounded by middle-class leaders. The leader of the Complete Suffrage movement, Joseph Sturge, was a respectable corn-miller and alderman of Birmingham, who feared the upsurge of popular discontent as much as O'Connell. The *Liberator* urged the Irish living in England to join the movement "and within the limits of the law to further its purposes".¹ Addressing his Irish followers on the subject of the Chartist-Sturgeite conference held in April, 1842, O'Connell declared that he had great confidence in those Chartist leaders, such as Lovett and Collins, who had participated in the meeting. He declared:

"The rational and sober portion of the Chartists who abhor physical force ... will rally round 'the Complete Suffrage movement'." ²

At the second joint conference of Chartists and Complete Suffragists in December, O'Connell participated. O'Connell was outraged at the part taken by Lovett in opposing Joseph Sturge's Bill of rights. His comment was that "Feargus O'Connor had a great influence over the half-brutalised minds of the English people".³ When William Lovett made a fresh appeal for co-operation of the English radicals with the Irish people in his

1. *Pilot*, 27 April 1842.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Nation*, 7 January 1843.

Address to the people of Ireland¹, O'Connell refused to answer the address. He declared:

"It was signed by a man that he had once a high opinion of, William Lovett, a man of considerable talents, but he did not think him politically honest. He had joined Feargus O'Connor against Mr Sturge at Birmingham."²

O'Connell was particularly anxious to prevent Irishmen living in England from joining the Chartists³, whose leaders were, for their part, making every effort to overcome the differences which divided their English supporters from the immigrants. The danger of co-operation between them had been present in O'Connell's mind since 1839. He boasted in May of that year that scarcely one Irishman in England had joined the Chartists⁴, although a few months later he was forced to admit that the Irish in Newcastle "allowed themselves to be seduced ... There were a few individuals, who met in one room and of course abused your humble servant".⁵ He did not appear to know of the groups of Irish Chartists in Manchester, Barnsley and other northern towns. In 1841, he urged Mr Ray, a leading figure in the Loyal National Repeal Association, to write to members of the Repeal Association in Birmingham and other towns in England to warn them against any contact with the Chartists. He attempted

1. Nation, 5 August 1843.

2. Pilot, 9 August 1843.

3. Cf. Pilot, 24 May 1839; Freemans Journal, 9 December 1839.

4. Pilot, 24 May 1839.

5. Freemans Journal, 23 December 1839.

to prejudice his followers by accusing the Chartists of not only suffocating the cause of reform in England but also appearing "determined to try the same game with respect to Repeal in Ireland". Their attacks on Irish leaders were calculated to encourage dissensions among the Irish Repealers.¹ In November 1842, the L.N.R.A. formed a committee to "consider the present state and prospects of the Repeal cause". The report of the committee contained a discussion on the relations between Chartists and Repealers. The Chartists were criticised for their refusal to co-operate with middle-class radicals except on the basis of unconditional acceptance of their principles. The arguments used so often by O'Connell were repeated, namely, that the Chartists

"prevent all persons who do not agree with them in all their opinions from holding public meetings, and in the doctrines of physical force and of interfering by violence with existing institutions. In short, we utterly repudiate both the practices and the principles of the leading Chartists, and can never have any connexion with them."²

O'Connell's policy was implemented in no uncertain terms. In June 1843, the Dublin Repealers were informed that Feargus O'Connor and Bronterre O'Brien had become members of a Repeal Association in London. On the instructions of the Liberator, their money was returned, and Mr Ray wrote a letter to the

1. Freemans Journal, 14 September 1841.

2. Nation, 5 November 1842.

London Repeal Associations instructing them to have no further contact with the Chartists if they desired to "act with us and under the guidance of our august leader".¹ Addressing the L.N.R.A. the following week, Mr Ray declared that the response had been encouraging. Letters received from London and other parts of England stated that the Repealers were ready to accept the advice of their leader in everything.² From now on, all official relations between Irish Repealers and Chartists were broken off, although in many places individual members of these groups remained friendly.

As we have seen, Daniel O'Connell was one of the fiercest of the opponents of Chartism in Ireland. He believed that "the revolutionary mania ... would wreak its choicest havoc in Ireland".³ He used every argument to discourage Irishmen from joining the Chartists. On one occasion he declared that to be a Chartist in Ireland was "a transportable offence".⁴ O'Connell insisted that, since much of the information about Chartism in Ireland came from "Feargus O'Connor's newspaper", the Northern Star, it could not be taken seriously.⁵ He

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1. Freemans Journal, 7 June 1843; The Liverpool Mercury, 9 June 1843.
 2. Nation, 24 June 1843.
 3. W.J. Fitzpatrick, Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell (1888), vol.ii, pp.213-6. D. O'Connell to Henry Townsend, D.L., 19 November 1839.
 4. Freemans Journal, 6 April 1841.
 5. Freemans Journal, 24 April 1841.

stressed the unimportance of Chartists in Ireland. "They are so numerically few and so thoroughly insignificant as to be unworthy of notice".¹ Believing that his attacks during the summer of 1841² had been successful, he addressed his followers in the Loyal National Repeal Association and declared:

"We all know what the Chartists have done. We know who their leaders are in Dublin, and that the attempts made by them in Ireland have been totally abortive. In Drogheda, the clique was broken up, and Hoey, who came over from Barnsley, found he had nothing to do ... It was said that Chartism had made some headway in Lougherea, but if there was anything of the kind, there is little doubt that it would be put right by that pious and exemplary prelate, the Right Reverend Dr. Cohen, the Catholic bishop."³

As we have seen, O'Connell did not destroy Irish Chartism, although he was largely responsible for preventing the movement from becoming very important in Ireland. This was O'Connell's own opinion which he clearly expressed in his speech, at the State Trials, February 1844, when he was tried for conspiracy. He declared:

1. Nation, 5 November 1842.
2. Cf. Freemans Journal, 6, 14 April, 3, 11, 24 August, 7 September 1841.
3. Pilot, 15 September 1841.

"You have seen my conduct with respect to the Chartists ... there was something fascinating for the poorer classes in the principles of the Charter. It purposed a violation of all property - its followers were numerous - they offered me aid ... I denounced them - I denounced their doctrines - I drove them from Ireland ... I do firmly declare that if I had not opposed Chartism, it would have passed over and spread from one end of Ireland to the other ... I shall ever rejoice that I kept Ireland free from this pollution." ¹

O'Connell died in 1847, but feelings of hostility towards the Chartists persisted among a considerable section of Irish repealers.

There was a dissenting voice, however, that of Thomas Davis. As early as 1842, he described the British Chartists as "a growing power with no interest hostile to ours, and which might become our ally". ² He believed that the hostility felt by Irishmen towards the Chartists had arisen from the personal quarrel between O'Connell and O'Connell. Writing in the *Repealer* in the winter of 1843, he described the Chartists as "one paper denouncing of violence" for the reason that it

"has declared that no Chartist will lift a finger against Ireland - that, instead of remaining neutral, it will be the first to take up arms against the British Government."

1. Times, 7 February 1844; Pilot, 5 February 1844.

2. C.O. Davis, Irish Repealer, 1842, p. 67.

3. Repealer.

4. Repealer, 18 Feb 1843.

The Young Ireland Movement and the Chartists.

Despite differences between O'Connell and the Young Irelanders, they were in agreement in resisting the appeals by the British Chartists to co-operate with them. The movement was discredited in their eyes by its leader, Feargus O'Connor. Charles Gavan Duffy, writing later, remarked that,

"English Chartism at that time (1843) numbered in its ranks several men who have since won a respectable position in art, literature, or the practical business of life. It failed, not because its aims were wholly wrong - most of them have been since accomplished - but because it fell under the control of a man so incompetent for the office of leader as Mr. Feargus O'Connor." ¹

There was a dissentient voice, however, that of Thomas Davis. As early as 1842, he described the British Chartists as "a growing power with no interest hostile to ours, and which might become our ally".² He believed that the hostility felt by Irishmen towards the Chartists had arisen from the personal quarrel between O'Connell and O'Connor. Writing in the Nation in the summer of 1843, he described the Northern Star as "one paper deserving of notice" for the reason that it

"has declared that no Chartist will lift a finger against Ireland - that, instead of resisting Repeal, they will aid it in every way; and that the English aristocracy shall have to crush not one but two nations." ³

1. C.G. Duffy, Young Ireland (1884), part i, p.65.

2. Ibid.

3. Nation, 20 May 1843.

The majority of the Young Irelanders, however, took the view that the British Chartists supported repeal in Ireland in order to assist their own agitation, "calculating that a civil war in Ireland would afford them an excellent opportunity of upsetting the constitution and abolishing the national debt through a civil war in England".¹ Young Ireland leaders rejected an appeal by the Chartist Convention of 1846 for union of the two groups. The party, it was announced in the Nation on 15 April, 1846, desired:

"no fraternisation between the Irish people and the Chartists ... simply because some of their five points are to us an abomination, and the whole spirit of their proceedings, though well enough for England, are so essentially English that their adoption in Ireland would be neither probable or desirable." ²

At this time, none of the Young Irelanders, apart from Thomas Davis, had perceived the essential unity of interest of nationalist Ireland with the working-class party in Britain. Instead the party emphasised the differences between the two groups and their hatred of all English institutions. "Between us and them there is a gulf fixed; we desire not to bridge it over, but to make it wider and more complete."³

However, events in Ireland led eventually to a closing of the differences between them. The extreme elements in the

1. Nation, 20 May 1843. Letter from G. Smyth, Liverpool, to T.M. Ray, Dublin.

2. Nation, 15 April 1846.

3. *Ibid.*

Irish nationalist party, unable to depend upon their own leaders in the struggle for Irish independence, turned to parties outside Ireland for assistance. The seeds of discord within the Repeal Association were already manifest by 1846. Many of the Young Irelanders resented O'Connell's domination over the Repeal Association. The founding of the Irish Confederation in January 1847 ushered in a new era in the relations between Irish nationalists and British Chartists. Accounts of the early days of the Confederation, written by two of the leaders, remain, "Young Ireland" by C.G. Duffy, and "The felon's track" by Michael Doheny.¹ The purpose of the Confederation, so Doheny tells, was to secure the independence of the Irish nation, and "no means to that end were abjured, save such as were inconsistent with human morality and reason".²

Soon the attitude of the Confederation to the British Chartist movement began to change. The unexpected election of Feargus O'Connor as Member for Nottingham in the autumn of 1847 had important repercussions in Ireland. From the beginning O'Connor adopted a firm approach towards Irish questions. It may well have been that O'Connor aspired to the leadership of the repeal movement.³ His hostility towards John O'Connell

1. C.G. Duffy, Young Ireland (Dublin 1884), and M. Doheny, The felon's track (Dublin 1914).

2. M. Doheny, The felon's track (1914), p.113.

3. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), p.283.

was evident from the beginning. In the debate on the crime and outrage bill, he attacked O'Connell's speech and described it as weak and humble in character.¹ He followed this by a resolution on the Act of Union. He demanded the setting up of a select committee of the House to report on the means by which the Union was accomplished, its effects on Britain and Ireland and the probable consequences of its continuation.² O'Connor's resolution was defeated with only twenty-three votes cast in favour and 255 against it. The Confederate leader, John Mitchel, praised O'Connor's opposition to the crime and outrage bill, and Thomas Meagher declared, "I am no Chartist but the leader of the Chartists deserves the gratitude of this country".³ In Dublin, Confederate clubs commented favourably on O'Connor's conduct in the imperial parliament.⁴ However, John O'Connell, embarrassed by the introduction of O'Connor's motion on repeal, absented himself from the House when it was being debated. Maurice O'Connell spoke to the motion in his place.⁵ Later John O'Connell declared himself in agreement

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1. Hansard, 3rd series, xcv, cols. 317-21, 728-38 (6 December 1847); R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.291.
 2. Hansard, 3rd series, xcv, cols. 752-765, 797-8 (7 December 1847).
 3. Nation, 27 November 1847.
 4. Nation, 18 December 1847. Report of Dr. Doyle Club; Nation, 1 January 1848. Report of Dr. Dreenan Club.
 5. Hansard, 3rd series, xcv, cols. 769-774 (7 December 1847).

with the principle of repeal, but argued that it was inopportune to introduce the question while the crime and outrage bill was under discussion. The member for Cork, William Fagan, who supported O'Connor's motion for a select committee of enquiry on repeal¹, wrote, in a letter to the Desmond Club, that in England the question "is screamed at, as a mere joke". Writing about the debate, Fagan declared:

"When it was perceived that I intended to go at length into that 'vexed question' shouts and screams of anger which I cannot describe began ... and if it were a commonplace subject I would have instantly given up ... But on a question so deeply interesting to Ireland, I felt it would have been an abandonment of my post ... As to the Repeal question, it is utterly hopeless to discuss it with calmness."²

It was just at this time that news of revolutionary disturbances on the Continent reached Ireland. Dissensions within the Confederate party became more acute. Smith O'Brien and Charles Gavan Duffy hoped to conciliate the Irish repealers led by John O'Connell and thereby strengthen the moderate elements in the national movement. John Mitchel, the leader of the extreme wing of the Confederation declared that he wished to see united in a common effort to fight the enemies of Irish nationality, "Conservatives, Radicals, Chartists, Orangemen - all parties in short, all the interests and elements that go

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1. Hansard, 3rd series, xcv, cols. 789-791 (7 December 1847).
 2. Nation, 1 January 1848. William Fagan, Member of Parliament for Cork city, had been a prominent radical in the thirties and one-time Mayor.

to make up a nation".¹ Mitchel led the party within the Confederation who desired to ally the Irish national party with the British Chartists. He now recognised the potential force of such a combination and became one of the most ardent champions of the Confederate-Chartist alliance. At first Mitchel was isolated from the majority of the Irish Confederates by his extreme views. He opposed William Smith O'Brien, on the question of methods to be adopted by the Confederates in their struggle against the government. O'Brien, who was described by one of his supporters as an aristocrat and a monarchist², clung to the hope of winning "an Irish parliament" by constitutional methods. He envisaged the restoration of the Parliament of 1782, which had been composed of members of the Protestant ascendancy and elected by a limited franchise. John Mitchel, however, wanted a Parliament which would include men of all religious persuasions and be elected by a more extensive franchise, though he never supported universal male suffrage. He maintained that the Irish people had never enjoyed a constitution, and that it was "a fatal misdirection of the public mind to assert we have".³ He resented the attempts of leading Confederates to "forbid expression of sentiment

1. Nation, 20 November 1847.

2. R. Piggott, Recollections of an Irish Journalist (1882), p.7.

3. United Irishman, 12 February 1848.

calculated to repel or alarm any section of our 'fellow-countrymen'".¹ Mitchel made a proposal that the Confederates should support the right of the people to arm and the movement for tenant right. By refusing to support the claims of the Irish peasantry for fear that it offend the gentry the Confederation would lose their most useful allies. They were, indeed, doomed to failure if they did not win widespread support from the people. Mitchel maintained, however, that he did not support indiscriminate resistance to the payment of rents nor any threat to "property rights".²

Mitchel's disputes with other Confederate leaders resulted in his secession from the main body in February 1848 with John Martin and a number of his supporters. He launched his own newspaper, the United Irishman, the same month and thereby created a strong focal point for those who were determined to expel, once and for all, the English garrison from Ireland. He published reports of Chartist meetings in Britain in every issue of his paper and gave his blessing to the efforts made by Chartists in Ireland to build a united front of the extreme elements within the national party.³

1. United Irishman, 12 February 1848.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Cf. United Irishman, February-June 1848, for reports of Chartist meetings. Cf. also advertisements of Irish Chartist meeting in United Irishman, 15, 22 April 1848, and report of Confederate-Chartist meetings, 22 April 1848.

Mitchel was not alone in his desire to build an alliance with the English Chartists. In Britain, Irishmen who participated in the Repeal Associations and later the Confederate Clubs were already pressing for such a union. Since 1843, the year of the Repeal agitation, the Irish in Britain had been more predisposed to unite with the Chartists than their compatriots in Ireland. In 1843, contact between Irish repealers and British Chartists had been established in several places. In Sheffield and nearby Barnsley, the Irish made common cause with the Chartists in the agitation for Repeal.¹ In London, as we have seen, O'Connor and O'Brien joined a Repeal Association, although their connection with the Chartists was well known. Despite O'Connell's ruling to the contrary, Irish repealers continued to associate unofficially with Chartists.² In October 1844, T. O'Callaghan, a leading Repealer of the Gray's Inn Ward, spoke of the need to conciliate the Chartists. At the same time, another London Irishman, Dr. M. Drury, Repeal warden for Deptford, expressed his desire to see "a thorough combination of the working classes of England and Ireland".³

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1. Northern Star, 17 June 1843; Annals of Barnsley, p.213 (21 May 1843).
 2. Cf. Reports of meetings organised by the Chartists in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford and elsewhere, organised by Chartists and attended by considerable numbers of Repealers. Northern Star, 28 June, 13 July, 12 October 1843.
 3. Northern Star, 12 October 1843.

In Liverpool, T.B. Smith, addressing an audience of Irish repealers on the State trials, declared that he was "a Chartist and a Repealer".¹ A London Repeal Warden writing in the Northern Star in the autumn of 1844 admitted that, while feelings between the Repealers and Chartists were not always friendly, there was growing confidence in Feargus O'Connor.² Scarcely two months later, the same correspondent declared that there was no better moment for O'Connor to address his compatriots in London.³ The London Repealers invited him to address a public meeting in Blackfriars in November 1846. Introducing his speaker, Denis Davayne, a prominent Irish repealer in London, praised O'Connor for his work in bringing about friendship between the working people of both countries. He declared that

"from the feeling which now existed, he was satisfied that Mr O'Connor would soon be back in his native land, old Ireland, taking the lead in the movement which his exalted patriotism and eminent talents so justly entitled him ... Feargus O'Connor would soon head the Repeal cause in Dublin."⁴

With the creation of the Irish Confederation early in 1847, affairs began to assume a more exciting aspect. Many repealers

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1. Northern Star, 13 July 1844.
 2. Northern Star, 5 September 1844.
 3. Northern Star, 7 November 1844.
 4. Northern Star, 14 November 1844.

sympathised with Smith O'Brien and his associates in their quarrel with O'Connell and joined the Confederation. Confidence in Daniel O'Connell waned, and many who, following his ruling, had refused to associate with the Chartists, now adopted a more friendly attitude. A number of well-known Confederates in Manchester and Liverpool became firm advocates of an alliance with the Chartists. Among them were George Archdeacon of Manchester¹, and two men who had been censured by Daniel O'Connell, Peter Feeney, President of the Manchester Confederates, and Bernard Sebastian Traynor of Stalybridge, an Englishman who had been associated with the Repeal movement for many years.² They were followed by Dr. Reynolds, Terence Bellew McManus and George Smyth of Liverpool. In London, Thomas Daly, who founded many of the London Confederate Clubs, was a keen supporter of Feargus O'Connor and supported the Confederate-Chartist union.³

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1. George Archdeacon was a prominent Repealer who had been expelled from the Repeal Association by O'Connell in 1843 for his "war-like language". He was imprisoned in 1848 and participated in the Fenian rising some twenty years later. Cf. J. Denvir, The Irish in Britain (London 1892), p.126.
 2. J. Denvir, The Irish in Britain (1892), pp.126-7. Feeney and Traynor were both expelled from the Repeal Association by O'Connell. They opposed the removal of Rev. Daniel Hearn from his mission in Manchester by the Catholic Vicar Apostolic because of his support of the Irish national movement in Manchester. Cf. J. Denvir, The Irish in Britain, p.136. Denvir claims that Traynor led the thousand Manchester repealers who arrived in Dublin in October, 1843, to attend the Clontarf demonstration.
 3. Cf. speeches by Thomas Daly in Northern Star, 4 December 1847, 22 January 1848; Nation, 15 January 1848.

Thus early in 1848, there was a considerable body of opinion among the extremist elements of the Confederate party in favour of an alliance with the Chartists. The existence of groups of Irishmen on both sides of the Irish Sea willing to support such a policy made it seem the more formidable. The British government was more alarmed by the manifestations of the Confederate-Chartist union than by any feature of the Chartist agitation since the disturbances in 1839. The first meeting of Chartists and Confederates took place in Dublin on 12 January 1848. David Ross, a Confederate, took the Chair and welcomed the visitors from England who had come to tell the Irish people "of the sympathy which has sprung up and is clearly increasing in that country in favour of your cause". Representing the English Chartists was James Leach, a prominent Manchester Chartist. The Irish Confederates of Britain were represented by Thomas Daly of London and Bernard Sebastian Traynor, President of the Stalybridge Confederates.¹ Leach and the two Confederates from Britain emphasised the fact that large numbers of English workers in London and the northern manufacturing towns were ready to assist the Irish people in their struggle against the British government. John Mitchel spoke on behalf of the Confederates and made his first public statement in support of union with the Chartists. He declared:

1. B.S. Traynor to J. Brennan, Editor of the Felon, 4 July 1848, Fintan Lalor papers (MS 340), no. 56.

"The Union is an English question as well as an Irish question. If Ireland is to be disunited from England, why England must also be disunited from Ireland. And it is quite true that the English people suffer from the Union as well as we do, though not to the same extent. The enemy we have both to contend with is the same - namely that foul and most corrupt institution - the English government ... And I say that if the people of England, who are suffering as well as ourselves under this intolerable government, offer us a hand to help us to get rid of the enemy, we will help them to strike down theirs ..."¹

Having thus established the common aims of the union, Mitchel was quick to point out that the Irish would tolerate no interference from the Chartists in matters of internal policy.

"Let us, then, each, by the best mode we can, pull down the common enemy ... And when that is done we will not quarrel with the people of England for establishing a Charter in their own country - they have a right to a Charter if they wish it ... but, on the other hand, I hope they won't quarrel with us for building ... any institution we may think necessary for our preservation and government."²

The moderate elements in the Irish Confederation at first refused to support this new policy. But there was a growing realisation that, without the assistance of a body of public opinion in England, the Confederation could not hope to succeed. Charles Gavan Duffy and William Smith O'Brien were encouraged by the assurance of the Chartists that they would not attempt to extend their principles to Ireland. The Nation, the official organ of the Confederate movement, began to publish

1. Nation, 15 January 1848.

2. Ibid.

accounts of Chartist meetings in England.¹ An invitation to Smith O'Brien and other members of the Irish Council to attend a joint meeting in Manchester on St Patrick's Day was accepted on the understanding that "the Chartists have promised not to introduce their doctrines at the meeting".² The deputation named by the council to attend this meeting included William Smith O'Brien, Charles Gavan Duffy, Thomas F. Meagher, John Dillon, and Richard O'Gorman. In fact the majority were unable to attend on account of meetings and demonstrations in Dublin, and in the end Michael Doheny and Thomas Meagher represented the Dublin Confederates at the meeting.

As a result of these negotiations two successful Confederate-Chartist demonstrations were held in Manchester on St Patrick's Day and the following afternoon at Oldham's Edge. At the first meeting, Irish Confederates from Manchester proposed a series of resolutions supporting the right of the Irish to win Repeal of the Union and to be governed by a "distinct and independent legislature."³ Feargus O'Connor addressed the meeting. To him, the union of Confederates and Chartists was an ideal for which he had long strived. He declared that he had often been told that

1. Cf. Nation, 1, 15, 22 April, 6 May 1848.

2. T.M. Halpin to Smith O'Brien, 9 March 1848, Smith O'Brien papers, vol. 442, no. 2391.

3. Nation, 25 March 1848.

"that the time would never arrive when Englishmen and Irishmen stood together on the same platform, advocating the same principles - thank God he had lived to see the day ... He had always declared that whenever the peoples of both countries were united, the oppressors of both countries would fall ... His countrymen had borne oppression too long and too tamely. He hated the slavish doctrine of unconditional loyalty, and passive obedience to wrong." ¹

The meeting concluded with speeches from the two Dublin Confederates, Meagher and Doheny. Thomas Meagher asked the Englishmen to forgive Irish nationalists for the "hot words flung from our Irish meetings upon the people of England".

He continued,

"We have been indiscriminating in our accusations and our resentments. We have confused the English government with the English people, and have involved them both in the same maze of criminality."

Michael Doheny supported a motion asserting the "right of Ireland to legislative independence" but pointed out that "the terms of the union which (the Irish) offered were these - Ireland for the Irish and England for the English".²

At the meeting on Oldham's Edge held the following Sunday, Michael Doheny and Feargus O'Connor were the chief speakers. They reiterated the pledges of solidarity which had been made at the previous meeting.³ Writing to his wife after these demonstrations, Michael Doheny declared,

1. Nation, 25 March 1848.

2. Ibid.

3. Northern Star, 25 March 1848.

"For the first time for many a day I have downright hope for Ireland. O such a meeting and such spirit - it put all monster meetings ever held into the shade, and the English fellows spoke so stoutly and there seemed such truth in them. The only drawback was Feargus O'Connor ... He spattered so much about his character and his teaching and his everything. But still he has done great work here and banished O'Connellism out of the land and paved the way for fraternity."¹

A committee of Confederates and Chartists elected at the Manchester meeting on St Patrick's Day drew up an "Address to the Irish People".² It was answered by the Trades and Citizens committee which, as we have seen, was composed of a number of leading members of the trades and several Confederates. After expressing their thanks for "sympathy and offer of timely aid", they went on to say,

1. P.R.O. (Dublin), C.S.O.U.P. (1848), carton 1523 (105/26). Michael Doheny to Mrs Doheny. n.d.

2. Nation, 1 April 1848. "Address of Irish and English Repealers of Manchester and the Surrounding Districts."

Bretheren - We, the united committee of the Repeal and Chartist bodies ... offer you our warmest congratulations for your open defiance of tyranny - your utter disregard of menace and despotic military preparations, intended to overawe and prevent you from asserting those rights which we, in common with you, determine Ireland shall have ...

Pursue your march to liberty, and soon shall Dublin Castle have its barricades removed - soon shall the haughty aristocrat, then, be obliged to sound an ignominious retreat, and your green shore be no longer polluted by highly pampered state paupers.

In conclusion, citizens of Dublin we offer across the sea, the hand of fraternisation. The promise we gave in the presence of Ireland's gifted ambassadors, Mr Meagher and Mr Doheny, we renew to you; and reiterate our unalterable determination to effect a Repeal of the Union for Ireland, and secure the Charter for England, no matter what obstacles impede, what sacrifices we are called on to make."

"For years a cloud of prejudice produced by others has prevented us from entering into a Union with each other, which if once effected would put an end to the oppression under which we in common labour. From this day forth let us understand each other and work harmoniously together for a common end - the elevation, happiness and freedom of our respective countries." 1

The address represented the opinion of a considerable section of the members of Dublin Confederate Clubs. Moreover several of their leaders viewed the new situation with favour. In a letter to William Smith O'Brien, Thomas Halpin wrote,

"if the leaders of the Confederation take up a bold position (regarding the Chartists) and enunciate a policy befitting the time and opportunity, the whole country will be with them." 2

Early in April, Smith O'Brien, addressing the House of Commons during the second reading of the Crown and Government Security Bill, made a defiant speech and referred to the Confederate-Chartist union. He declared:

"I am happy to think that there is amongst the middle and humbler classes of this country a large amount of sympathy with Ireland - that there is amongst them an anxious desire that they should obtain that power of legislature which they wish; and it gives me great satisfaction to think that amongst the Chartists, from whom there has been a petition presented this evening, there is scarce an individual who does not sympathise with the cause of Ireland. They feel that they have been unjustly excluded from all share of

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1. P.R.O. (Dublin), C.S.O.U.P. (1848), carton 1523/105. "The Answer of the Trades and Citizens of Dublin to the Address of the English and Irish Repealers of Manchester and surrounding Districts"; Police Reports of Confederate Clubs (MS S.3.8). Report of the Trades and Citizens Committee, p.31, 21 April 1848.
 2. T.M. Halpin to Smith O'Brien, 9 March 1848, Smith O'Brien papers, vol. 442, no. 2391.

political power; they are resolved that the working classes shall assert their right to a share in the representation of this country; and they know they cannot do it at a better time than when you are embarrassed in your arrangements with Ireland. Therefore, whether from policy or sincere sympathy, I trust that the repealers of Ireland will accept that aid which the Chartists are universally prepared to give them." ¹

At the second joint meeting of Confederates and Chartists held in Dublin at the end of April, the English visitors were received with much greater enthusiasm than in January. John Mitchel took the chair, and the meeting was addressed by Samuel Kydd and James Leach, sent as delegates from the Chartist Convention of April 1848. The Confederate leaders pledged themselves once again to "fraternise" with the Chartists and to build "an alliance, offensive and defensive with them."²

In England the success of the joint meetings in Manchester at the end of March resulted in closer union between the two groups. London Confederates reported that the union between them and the Chartists was complete. Delegates from several London clubs were appointed as representatives to the Metropolitan Council of Chartists, which was responsible for the organisation of the monster demonstration on 10 April. The clubs held nightly meetings which were often addressed by Chartists.³ Excitement in London reached its height in the

1. Hansard, 3rd series, xcvi, cols. 73-80 (10 April 1848).

2. Northern Star, 29 April 1848.

3. Northern Star, 18 April 1848.

early days of April. On the day of the procession to Westminster Irish Confederates marched at the end of the procession, headed

"by a green banner, with gilded edges, in the centre an Irish harp. When it appeared there were cries of Erin go Bragh - Ireland for ever." ¹

The contingent drew up in one corner of Kennington Common, where they assembled to hear the speeches. They were addressed by several Chartist leaders including Ernest Jones and George Julian Harney, who declared that the Irishmen had given their countrymen "an admirable example of discipline and order". Thomas Daly praised his compatriots for taking this first step in "identifying themselves with the body of English democracy". ² The decision of Feargus O'Connor to proceed alone to the House of Commons with the Chartist Petition was praised by the Confederates. They applauded the "admirable conduct of Mr Feargus O'Connor" in preventing an open clash with the police and military stationed round Kennington Common. ³

The failure of the demonstration on 10 April to march to Westminster was not regarded by the Irish as a catastrophe. In the weeks that followed, meetings all over the country demonstrated that "the marriage of Chartists and Repealers"

1. Nation, 15 April 1848.

2. Northern Star, 15 April 1848; Times, 11 April 1848.

3. Northern Star, 22 April 1848.

was now accomplished.¹ The close harmony between them was the most marked feature of the popular agitation from April to July. The visit of Michael Doheny to the northern industrial towns² and of Terence Bellew McManus to London³ strengthened the resolve of these Confederates and Chartists to raise the standard of revolt in Britain if coercive measures were applied to Ireland. Michael Doheny attended the Chartist Assembly in May 1848. Sent as a delegate from the Trades and Citizens Committee, he took his seat amid loud cheers from the Chartists.⁴ John Mitchel had also agreed to attend but was prevented from doing so by his arrest and trial in Dublin. His place was taken by William Bryan, the Chairman of the Trades and Citizens Committee, who had been an ardent supporter of the Confederate-Chartist union for some time. Addressing the Chartists, Bryan declared that many Irishmen were eager to unite with them though there were only a few avowed Chartists in Dublin. Mitchel's arrest was a sign for the oppressed to rally; it indicated that the government was determined to use every means to suppress

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1. Cf. Reports of Confederate-Chartist meetings Northern Star, April-May 1848. Cf. Northern Star, 8 April 1848 for report of meeting at Manchester; Northern Star, 15 April 1848 for reports of meetings at Macclesfield, Oldham, Rochdale, Liverpool and Barnsley; Northern Star, 22 April 1848 for reports of meetings at Whitehaven and Paisely; Northern Star, 6 May 1848, reports of meetings in Middlesborough, Southampton, and Barnsley.
 2. Nation, 6 May 1848.
 3. T. Frost, Forty Years' Recollections (1889), p.148.
 4. Northern Star, 6 May 1848. Doheny took his seat as one of the delegates from the Salford Chartist Association. Cf. Police Reports of Confederate Clubs (MS S.3.8). Reports of Trades and Citizens Committee, p.25. 18 April 1848.

liberty and "destroy the patriots of Ireland".¹

The decision of the Chartist Assembly in May 1848 to encourage the formation of a National Guard, along the lines of those proposed by the Dublin Confederates, had important repercussions on the Confederate-Chartist alliance. Up and down the country joint committees were established to organise groups of armed militia. In London, the Chartists sponsored a plan to co-operate with the Irish Confederates. They proposed that

"a committee of twelve workmen, with power to add to their numbers, be appointed to form a junction between the Repealers and Chartists in this district (Bermondsey) in order to carry out a vigorous agitation for Repeal of the Union and the People's Charter."²

A number of London Confederate clubs adopted this plan and groups began to be formed, called by such names as the "John Mitchel Club", the "Brian Boroihme Club" or the "Robert Emmet Club".³

The results were soon apparent. John Devir writes,

"Towards the end of May, there were some extraordinary demonstrations consisting of marching and counter-marching through the metropolis of large bodies of combined Chartists and Confederates."⁴

At a meeting held at the beginning of June to protest against John Mitchel's arrest, members of various Confederate Clubs agreed to arm themselves for a demonstration. They assembled

1. Northern Star, 6 May 1848.

2. Northern Star, 10 June 1848.

3. *Ibid.*

4. J. Devir, The Irish in Great Britain (1892), p.140.

in Clerkenwell Green, armed it was said "with bludgeons, pitchforks and other dangerous weapons", and made their way in procession to Leicester Square, creating consternation among the onlookers. The demonstrators were addressed by a number of Confederates and Chartists from an upper window of one of the buildings in Leicester Square.¹ Alarmed by the excitement in the city, the Police issued proclamations against any further Confederate-Chartist demonstrations.² Notwithstanding these threats, meetings continued to be held in various parts of London and were in some cases forcibly broken up by the police.³

Elsewhere in the country, steps to form a National Guard never got beyond the paper stage. Unified organisations developed haphazardly and without the expert direction needed for a movement of this kind. In Scotland, plans for arming the people had considerable success.⁴ They were encouraged in their endeavours by the visit of Thomas D'Arcy M'Gee who hoped to induce the Glasgow Irish to rise, seize some of the Clyde steamers and by way of Sligo, Killala or Westport come

1. Northern Star, 3 June 1848; Times 31 May 1848.

2. Northern Star, 10 June 1848.

3. Cf. Northern Star, 10 June 1848 for reports of meetings in Newcastle and Glasgow; Northern Star, 17 June 1848 for reports of meetings in Bootle, Liverpool and Birmingham.

4. In Scotland, Irish Repealers had for many years co-operated with the Chartists. During the Repeal year, joint meetings had been organised in Glasgow and Edinburgh. J.E. Handley, The Irish in Scotland (1945), pp.315-6.

to the assistance of the West of Ireland.¹ Later events showed that elaborate plans had been made for simultaneous risings of the English and Irish people to take place on 15 August. Mass demonstrations were planned to take place during the Whitsun weekend. Joint groups of Confederates and Chartists hoped to organise meetings in many parts of London and in every large town in England and Scotland. James Leach was put in command of operations in "the Emerald Isle".²

Alarmed by the growing excitement in London, the Metropolitan police prohibited the holding of further outdoor meetings and broke up a gathering of Confederates and Chartists on Stepney Common. Those which took place were held indoors and were occupied with the business of forming brigades.

"Each brigade was divided into sections, again subdivided into classes, every ten men having their appointed class leader whom they are expected implicitly to obey."³

These brigades known by such names as "Emmett's Brigade" or "Washington's Brigade" were well organised, secret bodies armed, it was said, with "offensive weapons of some kind" and ready to strike when called upon to do so.⁴ The climax of the agitation came with the monster meeting on Blackstone Edge, Yorkshire, on 12 June. Although the number present was not as large as had been hoped, the Times reporting it as 6,000, The Daily News as

1. J. Handley, The Irish in Scotland, p.316.

2. Nation, 3 June 1848.

3. Nation, 10 June 1848.

4. Nation, 17 June 1848; Northern Star, 17 June 1848.

12,000, the meeting was a success¹, and raised the hopes of the agitators, now disheartened by the repressive measures of the Government. George Archdeacon of Manchester accused the Government of having "violated the constitution in attempting to suppress public opinion".² Plans for a rising on 15 August continued to progress but the Confederates were anxious not to clash with Government forces before their preparations were complete.

Despite the disappointments of the previous weeks, the Confederate-Chartist alliance appeared stronger than before. Late in July, a newspaper, called the English Patriot and Irish Repealer, appeared, edited and published by James Leach.³ This firmly proclaimed that the Irish and English should unite to support "the principles of Democratic Liberty". In the first issue of the paper, Leach maintained that if popular opposition to the government was sufficiently strong, the cry for the People's Charter or Repeal of the Union might be "superseded by the loud thunder of a nation's voice proclaiming the establishment of a FREE REPUBLIC".⁴ George Archdeacon wrote

1. These figures are quoted in Northern Star, 17 June 1848.
2. Northern Star, 17 June 1848.
3. The English Patriot and Irish Repealer, July-September 1848. It was a weekly paper edited by James Leach; it cost 1d. After 9 September 1848, the paper changed its name to The English Patriot and Herald of Labour and Co-operation.
4. The English Patriot and Irish Repealer, 22 July 1848.

several articles in the paper which he addressed to "all Irishmen resident in England". He called on them to proceed with the organisation of the clubs and declared that he hoped to win at least 100,000 adherents to the Irish movement for independence which was being so keenly supported by the English Chartists.¹ Advice was given as to the procedure for forming new clubs to be ready for the nation-wide rising planned in August.²

The British government, alarmed by reports in Ireland, had suspended the Habeas Corpus Act on 22 July; and in Liverpool, the Irish population appeared so threatening that the propertied classes petitioned for their inclusion in its suspension. In England, united organisations were on the increase. But when the day for the rising came on 15 August, the government, well-informed by spies and agents-provocateurs, struck with mass arrests in Liverpool, Oldham, Manchester and Bolton. Only at Ashton-on-Lyne, where the revolutionaries rose a day early and controlled the town for a time, was it necessary to use the military.³

The joint movement, despite its demonstrations, lacked an effective plan of action to be adopted in the face of government

1. The English Patriot and Irish Repealer, 22, 27 July, 5, 12 August 1848.

2. The English Patriot and Irish Repealer, 22 July 1848.

3. A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge (1958), pp.174-5.

action. At the first sign of repressive measures, the popular movement on both sides of the Irish Sea collapsed. In London, William Cuffey, an Irishman who led a secret conspiracy, was surprised with his fellows in the "Orange Tree" public house in Bloomsbury. It was reported that one hundred Irishmen were assembled at the Seven Dials ready and waiting when the news of arrests reached them. When the police arrived only a few remained.¹ In other parts of the country, revolutionary groups were surprised and dispersed. By October 1848 the popular movement was in ruins. In Ireland, Smith O'Brien, Thomas Meagher, Terence Bellew McManus and Patrick O'Donoghue were sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered, but their sentences were commuted to transportation for life. Others like Michael Doheny, T. Devin Reilly and James Stephens escaped to America and Edmund Holywood, the Dublin tradesman, to France.

Only James Fintan Lalor remained; still he was determined to achieve what the Young Irelanders had failed to carry through. With the discontented Confederates in Dublin, he organised a secret confederacy which planned a general insurrection in the autumn of 1849. The movement was commanded by a "Directory of twelve" whose identity remained unknown to all but their closest associates. Links were established with Chartists in London and it was hoped, in addition, to "get plenty of men from Scotland

1. T. Frost, Forty Years' Recollections (1880), p.143 ff.

and Wales".¹ This affair was even less well-organised than Smith O'Brien's rising in 1848 and hardly a memory of it remains.

Yet the name of Fintan Lalor still has for the Irish a vague magic, hinting at some source more splendid than the small events of his career. Perhaps like the repulsion aroused by the word "Chartist" in many English minds, it can be traced, in part at least, to the idea of alliance of Irish nationalists with English working-class radicals. This alliance failed partly from lack of planning and partly from the absence of a real basis for agreement. The differences between the two groups hindered effective co-operation. Much was said but little hard work was done to make this unity a reality. The failure of the Confederate-Chartist union served as a warning for leaders of later Irish national movements. The Fenians, as a whole, did not advocate a union of the Irish nationalists with the English people. It must be noted, however, that some of them who had been involved in the affairs of 1848, for example, James Stephens and George Archdeacon, were in favour of co-operation with British and Continental radicals. This brief union with British working-class radicals in 1848 introduced a new

1. Police Reports of Confederate Clubs (MS S 3.8), p.131, 19 June 1849; (MS S.3.6). Reports of police agents on the Swift Club, p. p. 24, 29 April 1849, p.28 ff. May 1849.

feature into Irish nationalism. For the first time, Irishmen began to realise that in order to create a healthy foundation for their country's future they must appeal to the humblest as well as to the greatest; that a nation should be judged as much by the condition of its artisans and peasants as by the achievement of the ideal of nationality.

1. Almost nothing has been written on this topic apart from studies of the two major Irish figures, Parnell and Devlin, and Jonathan O'Brien. The chief sources are Marxist periodicals, the *Workers' Weekly* and *Workers' Monthly* and the *Observer*. The standard Marxist histories are valuable for details of the activities and the participation of several of the better-known Irish Marxists, especially A. P. Cannon, *History of the Communist Movement in London and Newcastle 1902-1921*, 2 vols. (London 1951) and *Workers' Monthly* (Manchester 1955), and *Workers' Monthly* (London 1951).

Chapter IV. The participation of Irishmen in the British
Chartist movement (1837-1854).¹

In contrast to the comparative insignificance of Chartism in Ireland was the participation of considerable numbers of Irishmen in the British Chartist movement. Feargus O'Connor, the most famous agitator of the movement, was supported by a host of his compatriots who distinguished themselves in local Chartist Associations and in the governing body of the central organisation, the Executive. These Irish Chartists formed a firm body of support for O'Connor's policy to draw Irishmen into the Chartist movement, to unite the British working-class radicals with the Irish nationalists, and for his Land Plan, all of which appealed to their interests as Irishmen. Moreover, Irish journalists, headed by Bronterre O'Brien, were on the staff of several Chartist periodicals especially in the early years. They were the spokesmen of

1. Almost nothing has been written on this topic apart from studies of the two major Irish figures, Feargus O'Connor and Bronterre O'Brien. The chief sources are Chartist periodicals, the Northern Star, the Northern Liberator and the Champion. The standard Chartist histories are valuable for details of the agitation and the participation of several of the better-known Irish Chartists, especially R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (London and Newcastle 1894), M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (Manchester 1925 ed.), and G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits (London 1941).

Irish ideas and illusions among the British workers.

They did not accept the modern industrial system as a reality which had come to stay, but thought of it as an aberration which had to be overcome by a return to the life of the small peasant farmer, the ideal of the Irish ex-peasant in the British industrial towns.

Irishmen distinguished themselves in many different ways in the Chartist movement and played a part out of all proportion to their numerical strength.

Large Irish populations in northern industrial towns obliged the Chartist leaders to develop opinions and policies favourable to the Irish, a factor which elsewhere had been generally absent from radical and working-class politics.

1. The material sources are largely confined to parliamentary papers, in particular, First Issues of the House of Commons of inquiry into the condition of the people of Great Britain, Appendix (11) Report of the Select Committee on the Condition of the People of Great Britain, H.C. 1834 (1837), and the Report of the Select Committee on the Condition of the People of Great Britain, H.C. 1851 (1854), and the Report of the Select Committee on the Condition of the People of Great Britain, H.C. 1851-2 (1854).

Recent works which deal with this subject include G. O'Brien, *The Economic History of Ireland from the Union to the Present* (London 1921), J. G. Simms, *Irish Emigration and the Chartist Movement* (London 1911), especially chapters 11, 12 and 13, and *Irish Emigration into Scotland* by J. G. Simms, *Irish Emigration into Scotland* (1879-1882) (1882-1883).

An interesting contemporary account of the effect of Irish emigration into northern towns appeared in J. G. Simms, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (London 1851), translated and edited by G. O. Gifford and G. S. Gifford (Oxford 1953).

Irish Emigration into Britain in the early Nineteenth Century.¹

One of the most important social facts of the early nineteenth century was the vast influx of Irish immigrants to the industrial centres of England and Scotland. This influx of Irish labourers and tradesmen had far-reaching effects on English working-class life and influenced the growth of working-class radical movements to a greater degree than is usually recognised. Not only did the Irish form the nucleus of the most revolutionary element, but the existence of such a large Irish population in northern industrial towns obliged the Chartist leaders to develop opinions and policies favourable to the Irish, a factor which hitherto had been generally absent from radical and working-class politics.

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1. The material sources are largely confined to parliamentary papers, in particular, First report of the Commissioners of inquiry into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland. Appendix (G): Report on the state of the Irish poor in Great Britain. H.C. 1836 (39), xxxiv, and the Report from the select committee appointed to consider the laws relating to the passing of poor persons born in Ireland to their own country, H.C. 1833 (394), xvi. Cf. also First report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the ... combination of workmen, H.C. 1837-8 (488, 646), viii.

Recent works which deal with this subject include G. O'Brien, The Economic History of Ireland from the Union to the Famine (London 1921), E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (London 1951), especially Chapter XIV, and for Irish emigration into Scotland cf. J.E. Handley, The Irish in Scotland (1798-1845) (Cork 1949).

An interesting contemporary account of the effect of Irish emigration into northern towns appears in F. Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England (London 1892), translated and edited by W.O. Henderson and W.H. Chaloner (Oxford 1958).

The Irish immigrants usually fell into two categories, skilled artisans or dispossessed peasants who had no industrial skill. The first wave of the Irish emigration, set in motion by the brutality and terror suffered by Irish Catholics in Ulster just before the 1798 rebellion, reached the shores of Britain about the time of the Union. These settlers were mainly artisans who found work in Glasgow and Manchester, the centres of the British cotton industry.¹ Although the art of weaving was not restricted to Ulster, it was practised there more than in any other part of Ireland. These Ulstermen distinguished themselves from later immigrants by their ability to adapt themselves quickly to their new environment. The Napoleonic wars interrupted this particular influx which was resumed, however, in the early 1820's. A large number of tradesmen lost their employment in Irish industry after the abolition of the protective Union duties in 1823 and were obliged to seek work abroad.

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1. Report on the state of the Irish poor in Great Britain, H.C. 1836 (39), xxxiv, p.431. The immigration into Scotland coincided with the first attempts to establish power looms in West Scotland to spin cotton. The native population showed a strong resentment of factory work so that master spinners of Paisley and Glasgow were glad to employ Irish workers who were skilled weavers of plain and fancy cloth in their own country. In England, the natives were not opposed to factory work and thus fewer Irishmen were employed, especially in skilled branches of the trade such as cotton spinning. For a period, Irish handloom weavers were employed because the mechanisation of the spinning process had led to an insatiable demand for weavers.

But the majority of Irish immigrants were dispossessed peasants of no industrial skill or experience. They established themselves in Britain by accepting the roughest work, which was more often than not refused by British workmen.¹ They provided the bulk of unskilled labour in the building trades and, indeed, formed a large part of the human raw material for the growth of industrial Britain.² Although the enclosure movement had been making rapid progress in the English countryside, the number of agricultural labourers making their way to the towns was not nearly sufficient for the rapidly developing industries. This was due in part to the old Poor Law which supported country people; the effects of the new Poor Law of 1834 were not felt for many years. Meanwhile English and Scottish industrialists were crying out for a supply of cheap labour. The proximity of Ireland to north-west England and the cheap, regular transport

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1. Report on the state of the Irish poor in Great Britain, H.C. 1836 (39), xxxiv, p.430. "Irish emigration in Britain is an example of a less civilised population spreading themselves as a kind of substratum, beneath a more civilised community; and, without excelling in any branch of industry obtaining possession of all the lowest departments of manual labour."
 2. Report on the state of the Irish poor in Great Britain, H.C. 1836 (39), xxxiv, pp. 429, 431, 434. F. Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England (Oxford 1958), 107. "All occupations which demand little or no skill are open to the Irish. Of course, the dissolute, volatile, and drunken Irish are unfitted for tasks which demand either a regular apprenticeship or that degree of skill which can only be secured by a long period of unremitting application to one's job ... The Irishman, however, is just as capable as the Englishman of undertaking simple tasks involving brute strength rather than skill and precision. So workers in occupations of this kind have to face a flood of Irish competition, for example, handloom weavers, builders' labourers, porters and odd-job men."

favoured the employment of Irish workers. Whereas in Ireland, they had been starved of employment, in England they found work at wages sufficient to pay their rent and provide their fill of potatoes and whisky. Evidence given before parliamentary committees and contemporary writers such as Frederick Engels agree that the Irish resigned themselves to living in most repulsive conditions.¹ One is inclined, however, to think that hostility and prejudice towards the Irish encouraged a degree of exaggeration in these accounts, since, in fact, English working men lived in conditions which were very nearly as bad.

The reaction of English public opinion to the Irish was at first hostile, but the views of representative Englishmen began to change once the financial advantages of Irish immigration began to appear.² Still more illuminating than the opinions of statesmen and journalists were those of the employers of the industrial towns who asserted that without Irish labour they would be unable to carry on their trade at

1. Cf. Report on the state of the Irish poor in Great Britain, H.C. 1836 (39), xxxiv, p.436 ff. Evidence of Rev. Mr. Fisher, Catholic priest of St. Mary's Chapel, Liverpool. "A large portion of the Irish of my flock are in a very low state, living in cellars and garrets; their furniture is very poor, a pallet of straw, a stool, sometimes a table, an iron pot or a frying pan, a jug for water, a few plates, and a leaden or pewter spoon. Persons of this class live on potatoes and a stirabout, now and then, a herring or a piece of bacon. There is a good deal of difference between the living of English and Irish on equal wages; an Irishman will be content with his potatoes and herring, an Englishman will get meat."

F. Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England (1958), pp.105-6. "These Irish workers pay only fourpence passage-money

to get to England and they are often packed like cattle on the deck of the steam-boat. They are to be found everywhere. The worst accommodation is good enough for them; they take no trouble with regard to their clothes which hang in tatters; they go barefoot. They live solely on potatoes and any money left over from the purchase of potatoes goes on drink. Such folk do not need high wages. The slums of all the big towns swarm with Irish ... The Irish have also brought with them filth and intemperance. Dirty habits, which have become second nature to the Irish, do no great harm in the countryside where the population is scattered ... when such habits are practised among the crowded population of big cities, (it) must arouse feelings of apprehension and disgust. Among the nasty habits which the Irish have brought with them is that of emptying all their filth and refuse out of the front door, and this causes filthy puddles and heaps of garbage to accumulate and so a whole district is rapidly polluted. The Irish have brought with them the habit of building pigsties immediately adjacent to their houses. If that is not possible, the Irishman allows his pig to share his own sleeping quarters ... The Irish are not used to furniture: a heap of straw and a few rags too tattered to wear in the daytime suffice for bedding. The Irish need only a bare plank, a broken chair and an old chest for a table. All the Irish woman needs in her kitchen are a teapot, a few saucepans and course dishes. The kitchen also serves as a living room and bedroom. If an Irishman is short of fuel, everything within reach is thrown on the fire - chairs, door posts, skirting boards, shelves, floor boards, if they are still there. Why should an Irishman want anything more than the minimum accommodation? At home, in Ireland, he lived in a mud cabin where a single room sufficed for all purposes. In England, too, his family need no more than one room ... The poor devil must get some pleasure out of life and so he goes and drinks spirits. Society has debarred him from other pleasures."

2. Cf. C.S. Parker, Sir Robert Peel (London 1899, 2nd ed.), vol.ii, p.117. Sir Robert Peel advised the Irish Chief Secretary in 1829 not to "condemn too precipitately the incursion of Irish labourers into England. We must bear in mind the growing increase of manufactures in other parts of the world, and consider well the advantages as well as the disadvantages of cheap labour". See also the change of attitude expressed by the Edinburgh Review, which in 1826 was alarmed at the growth in number of Irish immigrants into the west of Scotland (Edinburgh Review, December 1826, p.54), whereas eight years later it asked "whether the labour of Irish immigration was in all cases a source of evil in Britain" (Edinburgh Review, April 1834, p.248).

the existing rate of wages.¹ The cheapness of Irish labour was regarded by English and Scottish manufacturers as an important factor in their prosperity. They used Irish workers to keep down wages and often imported them to break up strikes.²

1. F. Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in Britain (1958 ed.), p.104. "The rapid expansion of British industry could not have taken place if there had not been available a reserve of labour among the poverty-stricken people of Ireland." Cf. also Report of the state of the Irish poor in Great Britain, H.C. 1836 (39), xxxiv, pp.462-3. See also Appendix, p.600. Evidence of Mr Alexander Carlile, a cotton manufacturer of Paisley. "It would, I think, be most detrimental to this town and neighbourhood were the Irish immigrations stopped or seriously interfered with, either immediately or gradually. Ireland is our market for labour, the supplies from which are regulated on the same principles which regulate the supplies of articles of consumption and commerce. Evidence of Mr David Hodgson, Liverpool (Appendix, p.511), "I think there is no doubt that the Irish labourers have tended to promote the well-being of this country. Labour, by their means, has been cheaper than it could have been obtained without them". See also Appendix, p.554, Evidence of R.H. Greg, Manchester, p.127. Evidence of Mr Lawrence Hill, Glasgow.
2. Report of the state of the Irish poor in Great Britain, H.C. 1836 (39), xxxiv, p.453. "The system of combination which has prevailed among English and Scottish operatives has likewise, in some degree, contributed to increase the immigration of Irish into Britain. The natives have combined, and turned out, and made unreasonable demands on their employers, and this induced capitalists to seek hands where they were most easily found, that is, among the large unemployed population of Ireland. Cf. Evidence of James Taylor, Manchester, Appendix p.542. "The moment I have a turn out, and am fast for hands I send to Ireland for ten, fifteen, or twenty families, as the case may be. I usually send to Connaught and get the children, chiefly girls, of farmers and cottiers. The whole family comes, father, mother and children ... The communications are usually made through the friends of the parties in my employ. I have no agent in Ireland ... I should think that more than 400 have come over to me from Ireland, many of whom left me after they had learnt their trade."

It is not hard to visualise the resentment of British workers to the newcomers who appeared to threaten their wages and conditions of work, and to reduce their material standards of life to the lowest level. Yet, although the Irish workers constituted a grave threat to British working class life, owing their work to their willingness to work for lower wages than Englishmen and Scotsmen, they were the first to organise working-class resistance to the increasing imposition of their employers.

From the beginning, the Irish took a prominent part in all proceedings connected with combinations to raise wages, often appearing as leaders of strikes and lock-outs.¹ Accustomed to

1. Report on the state of the Irish poor in Great Britain, H.C. 1836(39), xxxiv, p.449. See also evidence of Mr Samuel Holmes, a Liverpool builder who employed considerable numbers of Irishmen, p. 502. "In general, Irish labourers are faithful, steady to their work, and almost invariably honest. They are usually very intelligent... but do not look deep into subjects ... They are more given to combination than the English. The late turn-out of mechanics and labourers has been almost entirely organised by the Irish, and, although the Irish were the poorest mechanics, they took the lead in this turn-out. The English submitted in the most singular manner ..." Evidence of Peter Ewart, pp.537-8. "It often happens that when there is discontent, or a disposition to combine, or turn-outs among the work people, the Irish are the leaders; they are the most difficult to reason with, and convince on the subject of wages and regulations in factories. They are so voluble ... They are also very violent in threatening and intimidating others who refuse to turn out with them ... they remember any injury for a long time ..."

Evidence of Mr George Miller, Scottish manager of a cotton mill, p.582. He maintained that the formation of a union among all the spinners in Scotland could not have been formed but for the "Irish, who scrupled at little in accomplishing their ends, even to the destruction of life and property". See also pp. 583, 589.

combination in Ireland, they readily took responsibility in this new situation, drawing upon experiences with the Ribbonmen or trade unions. A number of Irishmen who later became associated with the Chartist movement were first active in the trade union movement.¹

The best-known Irish trade unionist of the period was John Doherty, an Ulsterman, who retains a permanent place in the history of the British labour movement.² In the organisation of his spinners' union there is a noticeable resemblance to that of the United Irishmen³, and he himself declared that his National Association for the Protection of Labour (1829),

"took a good deal of example from Mr O'Connell's proceedings in Ireland; I thought as he had been successful in Ireland, we might be successful in England."⁴

Doherty retired from politics after 1838, although he sympathised with Chartist principles. Irish influence in the trade union movement persisted, however, and in the trial of the Glasgow cotton spinners in 1837, two of the five convicted men were Irish.⁵

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1. Cf. Peter Hoey, native of Drogheda, who became leader of hand-loom weavers in Barnsley, 1836-7, before becoming leading Chartist of the town.
 2. John Doherty was born in Ireland in 1799, and went to work in a cotton mill at Larne, Co. Antrim, at the age of ten. In 1816 he emigrated to Manchester, where he quickly became one of the leading trade unionists, and secretary to the local Cotton-Spinner's Society. He took a prominent part in the agitation against the proposed re-enactment of the Combination Laws in 1825 (cf. EM. Place MSS. 27803-299). It is not certain whether he took part in the Philanthropic Society or General Union of 1818 and 1826, but in 1829, he organised the great

strike of the Hyde spinners against the reduction of rates and became successive General Secretary to the Federation of Spinners' Societies, and to the National Association for the Protection of Labour. He founded and edited a weekly newspaper, the Voice of the People (1831), the object of which was declared to be "to unite the productive classes of the community in one common bond of union". This newspaper paid great attention to Radical politics including Repeal of the Union with Ireland. Cf. S. and B. Webb, History of Trade Unionism (1920), p.122. By the end of the year, the paper had ceased to appear, but in its place Doherty issued from January 1832, the Poor Man's Advocate, a weekly, which survived until January 1833. His articles in these papers show him to have been a man of wide information, great natural shrewdness and far-reaching aims. His idea was that all the local and district Unions were to be federated in a national organisation for the sole purpose of dealing with trade matters, and that they should be federated in a National Association for obtaining political reforms. In 1838, he was a printer and book-seller in Manchester, after retiring from trade unionism. His published work includes a pamphlet, entitled "A Letter to the Members of the National Association for the Protection of Labour (Manchester 1831). See S. and B. Webb, History of Trade Unionism (1920), pp.117-8 (note).

3. First report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the ... combination of workmen, H.C. 1837-8 (488), viii. Evidence of John Doherty (q. 3369). "... formerly every five representative spinners elected one amongst them to hold a certain office, who communicated from that five to another officer; that man was called a constable; when elected, every five constables appointed one of themselves, to be called a warden, and every five wardens appointed a councilman. The committee consisted of councilmen chosen in that way."
4. First report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the ... combination of workmen, H.C. 1837-8 (488), viii. Evidence of J. Doherty (q. 3446).
5. First report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the ... combination of workmen, H.C. 1837-8 (488), viii. Evidence of M.A. Gemmill (q. 2815).

The great contribution of Irish workers in Britain to the development of Chartism was due in part to the fact that great numbers settled in the industrial North, for instance, as handloom weavers, whose trade suffered such appalling depression during the 1830's due to the competition of power weaving.¹ About the same time, the onset of a general industrial depression sharply reduced the demand for labour and intensified competition for jobs between English and Irish labourers.² Thus by 1838, a large number of Irish workers were predisposed to a radical policy along the lines of the Catholic Association with which many were familiar in Ireland; they discovered in the Chartist movement the ideal opportunity of expressing their radical discontent; and they found in Feargus O'Connor the ideal spokesman for their inarticulate yearnings and confused hopes.³

1. Cf. description of groups of handloom weavers near Barnsley, some of whom were Irish, in Sheffield Irish, 15 September 1837, quoted by Annals of Barnsley, vol.ii, pp.68-9. "The group formed, mostly of men, ... looked with very few exceptions emaciated, ragged, and destitute, as they spent all they could; their clothes were dirty, ragged and patched with partly coloured pieces of cloth; they had unshaven faces, red eyes, and every appearance of misery."

2. E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (1951), p.128. Irish navvies, who had been prominent in the construction of roads and canals, were almost excluded from the next great feat of British engineering, the railway system. This competition for jobs led to a very explosive feeling between English and Irish labourers and reports of fights between them become more numerous.

Cf. Annals of Barnsley, vol.ii, p.93 for description of fight among Irish and English railway labourers near Sheffield.

3. E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (1951), p.128.

Irish agitators in the Chartist movement.

The sparsity of detailed reports of local Chartist organisations in Britain has made it difficult to give an accurate picture of Irish participation in the Chartist movement as a whole. It is possible, however, to follow the history of groups of Irish Chartists in Barnsley¹, Manchester and London and trace the careers of a number of individual Irish agitators during the period of the agitation. The reports of the trials for criminal offences arising out of the Chartist agitation, in particular during the year 1848, are important because they give further evidence of the participation of Irishmen in the movement and of the importance of the "Irish question".² In 1843, O'Connor was tried with fifty-eight others on a charge of sedition, conspiracy, tumult and riot.³ Among those charged were several Irishmen, namely, Christopher Doyle, John Campbell, Bernard M'Cartney, James Mooney and Thomas Mahon.⁴ Then in 1848 there was the trial of Francis Looney,

1. The Barnsley Irish Chartists are well-documented in the Annals of Barnsley and its Environs, vol.ii (1831-1854), by John Hugh Burland, a local man who during the early forties was a member of the Chartist Association in Barnsley. This manuscript was never published and is kept in the Public Library, Barnsley, Yorkshire. It formed much of the material of Eli' Hoyle's History of Barnsley, which appeared as a series of newspaper articles in the Barnsley Chronicle, in the years between 1904 and 1907.

2. State Trials, New Series, 8 vols. London 1833-58 esp. vols.3,6,7.

3. R. v. O'Connor et al. (1843) 3 St.Tr.N.S. 935; cf. also Trial of Feargus O'Connor, Esq., and fifty-eight others at Lancaster on a charge of sedition, conspiracy, tumult and riot (Manchester 1843).

4. R. v. O'Connor et al. (1843), *ibid.*

an Irish Chartist¹, for making a seditious speech at a Chartist meeting in Blackfriars. The Cuffey² conspiracy, which may be regarded as the last spark of the physical force movement, led to the trial of the leaders who were William Cuffey, William Dowling, Thomas Fay, William Lacy, all of whom appear to have been Irish.³ The last great mass trial of the Chartist movement was the Queen v. Rankin, in which forty-six people were charged with seditious conspiracy. The list included two Irish Chartists, Daniel Donovan and George White, and several Irish Confederates who had been collaborating with the Chartists in London and elsewhere.⁴ Evidence from these trials revealed that, while the numbers of Irishmen who actually joined the Chartist organisation remained fairly small, many Irishmen in England sympathised with Chartist aims and participated in mass demonstrations organised by the Chartists.

Of all the local groups of Irish Chartists in Britain, the Barnsley Irishmen were the most consistent in their demand for Irish nationality and most loyal in their support of Feargus

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1. R. v. Francis Looney (1848), 6 St.Tr.N.S. 775; Times, 10, 11 July 1848.
 2. His name is spelt variously, Cuffey, Cuffay, and Cuffy.
 3. R. v. Dowling (1848), 7 St.Tr.N.S. 381; R. v. Cuffey, Fay, and Lacy (1848), 7 St.Tr.N.S. 467; Times, 20-30 September 1848.
 4. R. v. Rankin et al. (1848), 7 St.Tr.N.S. 711. The names of the Confederates given were George Archdeacon, Peter Feeney, Laurence Reynolds, Michael M'Donough, John O'Hea, James Dolan, James Flinn, John Joe Finnegan, Samuel Kearns, Michael Carrigan, Patrick Devlin, James Mulligan.

O'Connor, who described Barnsley as the "Right Eye of Yorkshire" on account of the close unity of the English and Irish Chartists. More than once he praised his compatriots in the town for "the perfect union that existed between them and their English bretheren".¹ Between 1838 and 1843, more than one hundred Irish Catholics joined the Barnsley Chartist Association and provided several of the leaders. Chartism flourished in the town from the inauguration of the Charter until 1843. It revived again in 1848 with the general heightening of revolutionary activity during that year but declined again with the imprisonment of Chartist and Confederate leaders. The Irish Chartists formed an integral part of the movement and yet retained their own national interests and by sheer force of numbers were able to impose a consideration of Irish questions upon Barnsley Chartists as a whole. In the early forties, they gave active assistance to Feargus O'Connor's policy of drawing Irishmen into the Chartist movement. From the beginning, these Irish Chartists regarded O'Connor as their champion, "the matchless hero of the people's rights".² When he visited

1. Annals of Barnsley, vol.ii, p.215.

2. Annals of Barnsley, vol.ii, p.99, 22 October 1838; cf. also p.105, 29 April 1839. At a meeting of the Barnsley Irish Chartists a resolution passed that (Northern Star, 4 May 1839) "having viewed with indignation and contempt the efforts made by that wretched apostate, Daniel O'Connell, to prevent the people of Ireland and Irishmen residing in England and Scotland from joining the Chartists...we have the most perfect confidence in the noble-minded Feargus O'Connor ... the Irish Wallace."

Cf. Annals of Barnsley, p.178, 19 June 1841. "Address from the Barnsley Irish Chartists to Feargus O'Connor", signed by over one hundred Irish Catholic Chartists.

Barnsley, he was welcomed by enthusiastic crowds.¹ No hint of criticism of the Irish leader was tolerated.² Battling with ignorance and prejudice in the minds of their countrymen, they appreciated the contribution made by O'Connor in the newspaper, the Northern Star, and on the public platform for the cause of Irish nationalism. In his appeals to his compatriots to join forces with the English Radicals and in his attacks on O'Connell, whom Irish Chartists held responsible for the absence of an extensive radical reform movement in their country, the Barnsley Irishmen believed that O'Connor was fighting the battles of Irish radicals on both sides of the Irish Sea. The activities of the Dublin Chartists excited the interests of their fellows in Barnsley, who welcomed any sign of radical opinion in

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1. Annals of Barnsley, pp.102-4, 7 April 1841, gives a description of the procession and public entry of O'Connor; p.199, 14 May 1842, describes a large public meeting, well attended by Irishmen, which was addressed by O'Connor and Harney; p.214, 12 July 1843, marked the occasion of a public procession and meeting attended by O'Connor.
 2. Cf. Annals of Barnsley, vol.ii, pp.45-7, 14 September 1840, p.169, 15 April 1841, p.197, 18 April 1842, for references to the attacks on O'Connor by William Ashton, an Irish Chartist of Barnsley. He criticised O'Connor for his treatment of Lovett's proposals for educational reform in 1841 and accused O'Connor of a betrayal of John Frost at Newport. At a public meeting held in Barnsley on 18 April 1842, Ashton presented these charges which were strongly refuted by Frank Mirfield, an English Chartist, and the majority at the meeting. Ashton refused to face O'Connor publicly with the charge at a later meeting. He left Barnsley the next day for Liverpool and took no further part in radical politics.

Ireland.¹ On the occasion of the admission to the I.U.S.A. of Reverend Mr Ryan of Donabate in August 1841, many Barnsley Irishmen expressed their admiration for Reverend Mr Ryan, whom they had known when he worked in England.² Peter Hoey, a leading Irish Chartist in Barnsley, on a visit to Ireland in 1841, addressed the I.U.S.A. and attended some of their meetings.³

Up to August 1841, the Barnsley Irish Chartists had acted within the general organisation but now they decided to form a committee to deal with Irish affairs.⁴ In 1843, this group formed a Repeal Association "determined to rally round the

1. Annals of Barnsley, p.110, 1 July 1839. At a public meeting a letter from the Dublin Chartists was read and a resolution passed,
 "that the thanks of this meeting are due, and hereby given to our Irish bretheren in Dublin, who have formed themselves into an association, to carry out the principles of the People's Charter."
 The meeting also called upon "all good Chartists who take radical papers to send them to Mr Clancy, in order that they may be disseminated among our Irish bretheren".
2. Annals of Barnsley, p.180, 2 August 1841. At a meeting they proposed a vote of thanks to Rev. Mr P. Ryan for joining the "ranks of men who were seeking real justice; pp.186-8, "Address of the Barnsley Irish Catholic Chartists to the Rev. Patrick Ryan, parish priest of Donabate."
3. Peter Hoey, who spent much of his time in Drogheda, his native town, to recuperate from a period of imprisonment, excited the attention of O'Connell, as we have seen. On his return to Barnsley he told his compatriots that "the great principles of the Charter were steadily progressing through Ireland. He had stood before a meeting of Chartists in Dublin and he could assure them that, were there no other society but that in all Ireland, it was enough to radicalise all the towns in Ireland. Cf. Northern Star, 2 October 1841.
4. Annals of Barnsley, p.180, 2 August 1841.

green standard of their country".¹ With the growing excitement in Ireland, the Barnsley Repealers awaited anxiously the news of the agitation. On the evening before the great Clontarf meeting in October 1843, they met to learn whether or not O'Connell had defied the government. When they heard that the Irish leader had called off the meeting in the face of government threats, "one burst of denunciation and execration rang through the room".²

The rejection of the Charter in 1842 temporarily retarded the popular demand for effective political rights and Barnsley did not escape the general decline. Several Chartist leaders turned their energies to the trades disputes of the handloom

1. Annals of Barnsley, p.213, 21 May 1841. Irish Chartist leaders, Peter Hoey, Michael Segrave, Aeneas Daly, and John O'Leary were leaders of the Barnsley Repealers until the proclamation of the Clontarf meeting in October 1843, after which the Association closed down. The Repealers were in correspondence with Joseph Hayes, who was a Radical in Cork. Hayes wrote that,

"The people of England and Ireland, I am happy to see, are now about to join hands in friendship and union for attainment of political rights ... Not many in Ireland professing democratic principles deny the right of the English people to the just claims set forth in the People's Charter, and if now the English democratic party will admit the inalienable right of the Irish people to manage their own affairs, we can secure between us such a demonstration of unity of purpose and determination as will secure that no future Parliament of England can refuse all that is beneficial to both countries."

Cf. also Northern Star, 30 October 1841. Letter to the Editor from A. Daly, Barnsley, 25 October 1841, in which he quotes from the letter received from Joseph Hayes, Cork, 24 September 1841.

2. Annals of Barnsley, p.216, 16 October 1843, p.217, 22 October 1843.

weavers and of others¹ and for a time political activity ceased. However, the Irish Chartists still maintained a formal entity and emerged once more in 1847 to participate actively in the newly formed Irish Democratic Confederation which had its centre in London. Barnsley was the first provincial town to organise a branch of this new association of Irishmen pledged to support Chartist principles and repeal of the Union.² Peter Hoey was elected Chairman and during the winter of 1847-8, the Barnsley Irish Chartists were foremost in demanding Irish independence.

The predominance of the Irish in Barnsley public life was largely due to the unusual quality of their leaders. Michael Segrave, for example, who joined the movement in 1840, was a man of culture and education, of whom one contemporary wrote that,

1. e.g. Frank Mirfield, who in 1830 had been transported to Australia for taking part in a turn-out of weavers in 1829, returned to Barnsley in 1840 and immediately joined the Chartist movement. In 1844-5 he again led the weavers and, although an Englishman, was in great sympathy with the Irish in his town. In the Chartist Convention of April 1848, he told the meeting that, if the government let the military loose in Ireland, something else would be let loose here.
2. Michael Segrave and John O'Leary, both prominent Irish Chartists, were elected members of the General Council which held its meeting in London. Segrave and others believed that branches would be formed in other industrial towns; Stockport and Wigan had promised to follow the example of Barnsley but in fact, that apart from Barnsley, the movement never succeeded in getting a hold outside London.

1. *Annals of Barnsley*, p. 76.

2. *Northumbrian*, 10 October 1840; *Annals of Barnsley*, p. 76.

he devoted his life to "the indestructible principles of Irish Nationality".¹ He was particularly concerned to encourage the participation of other Irish groups in the Chartist organisation. He therefore addressed himself to the Irish Catholic Abstainers in 1840, in the following words:

"You know you have been compelled to leave your country through bad government ... You must likewise be aware that the majority of your countrymen at home remain in a state of political ignorance for want of an honest press to be established amongst them; therefore, it remains for you, as honest and sober thinking men ... to embark on the great cause of Chartism, which alone can restore comfort and happiness to the oppressed millions; but some of you will think the Charter cannot be obtained, and that a repeal of the Union will answer the ends of justice in Ireland. To those individuals, I say neither of those countries can carry any great measure when divided; ... (it) can only be accomplished by Irishmen residing in this country ... (but) were the Union accomplished to-morrow, it is my candid opinion it would be of little benefit to the industrious classes, except accompanied by universal suffrage."²

Segrave, together with Aeneas Daly, a weaver, and John O'Leary, a popular agitator, "gifted with the eloquence of a Tom Steele", were three of the most distinguished representatives of the Barnsley Irish.³ The most outstanding leader was Peter Hoey, who joined the Chartists by way of the trade union movement.⁴ He was a stout man with a broad humorous face, "but with the expression of humour there was mixed up much shrewdness and reflection".⁵ Hoey, himself, owned a small public house in the town.⁶ By 1838, he was known in Barnsley

1. Annals of Barnsley, p.276.

2. Northern Star, 10 October 1840; Annals of Barnsley, p.150,

5 October 1840, p.152, 5 November 1840.

3. Michael Segrave and Aeneas Daly were prominent members of the committee of the Association and in 1842 were both elected onto the Barnsley Chartist Council, cf. Annals of Barnsley, p.193, 2 January 1842. Segrave and Daly as well as John O'Leary were active in the Repeal Association. O'Leary spoke at a Repeal meeting in Barnsley with Daly, Northern Star, 17 June 1843, and also at Chelsea, Northern Star, 10 June 1843. O'Connor described O'Leary as "a very eminent agitator and reporter for the 'Southern Reporter'", cf. The National Instructor, vol.i, no.14, 24 August 1850. Segrave and O'Leary were prominent in the Barnsley branch of the Irish Democratic Association, 1847-8. Cf. I.D.C. meeting, Northern Star, 20 November 1847. O'Leary spoke of wrongs committed against his country and bitterly attacked the heartless tyranny of the Irish landlords for turning their tenantry out of their homes.
4. Annals of Barnsley, pp.68-9. In 1836-7, Hoey became the spokesman of the handloom weavers of the district, and was known by many of his followers as "the O'Connell of Barnsley". His determination to aid these poor weavers led him to join the radical organisations of the town.
5. Annals of Barnsley, pp.68-9.
6. Annals of Barnsley, p.152, 5 November 1840.

for his radical views and became prominent in the Northern Union, which later changed its name to the Barnsley Chartist Association. He spoke at meetings and represented his fellows at conferences and Chartist demonstrations.¹ It was not long before the government took notice of his activities. He took the Chair at an important demonstration in Barnsley to support the appeal made by the Chartist Convention, then sitting in Birmingham, for a National Holiday. The Chartists claimed that more than 12,000 attended the meeting which was peaceable and orderly throughout. Resolutions were passed calling the Queen to dismiss her ministers and appoint men who would make "the People's Charter and a Repeal of the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland cabinet measures". A protest was made against the convictions of Chartists in Warwick and Hoey closed the proceedings by rebutting the charges made by Lord John Russell that the Chartists "wanted to change places with them on account of their property". Hoey declared that if such an idea existed among any of those

1. Cf. Annals of Barnsley, p.81, 30 January 1838. Hoey spoke at a public meeting to commemorate Henry Hunt; p.95, 31 December 1838, he spoke to a resolution on the Dorchester Labourers; p.102-4, 7 April 1839, he addressed the monster meeting to welcome O'Connor in favour of the five radical principles later incorporated into the Charter; p.99, Hoey with Aeneas Daly and another Irish Chartist, Arthur Collins, were among those who signed an "Address of the Radicals of Barnsley to the Radicals of West Riding"; p.106, 21 May 1839, he spoke at important West Riding meeting along with O'Connor and O'Brien; cf. also R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.113; Annals of Barnsley, p.111, 18 July 1839, Hoey was elected to represent Barnsley at the Chartist Conference in Birmingham.

assembled he would not continue to be a Chartist for a moment longer. After the meeting a procession made its way through the town but as a result of the efforts of Hoey and his compatriots no incidents of violence were reported. The yeomanry hidden during the demonstration emerged only after the Chartists had departed to their homes.¹

This display of strength and discipline among the Chartists alarmed the authorities who at once charged Hoey along with two companions, Joseph Crabtree and William Ashton, with being guilty of unlawful assembly. They were sentenced to two years imprisonment at Wakefield jail. Conditions during his imprisonment seriously affected Hoey's health and he was released on that account a few months before the termination of his sentence.² While still in prison, Hoey wrote to a friend expressing his hope in the ultimate victory of the English and Irish radicals.

"I have received an account of the state of the country which gives me to understand that panic was not concluded in Barnsley when I left and the system of wholesale robbery was carried on by the very men who raised the war-whoops against the Chartists; but I think the enemies of the Chartists may see by this time that the more they fill the prisons, the more they call forth the moral strength of the working classes. I am glad to see that the persecution cannot break the organisation, which will in despite of every opposition, carry that much deserved measure. Let the people pursue their object peacefully, and the time is not

1. Annals of Barnsley, pp.112-3.

2. Cf. Northern Star, 5, 19 June, 21 August 1841. Hoey lost a leg shortly after coming out of prison.

far distant when their efforts will be crowned with success. I also understand that the Repeal question is making great strides in England. Yes, the English Radicals are for the repeal of all bad laws, and the enactment of good ones ... when the Union is repealed, will the new Parliament be returned on the principle of universal suffrage? If so, hurrah for repeal..."¹

After his release from prison in 1841, Hoey again became active in the Chartist movement. He was in the forefront of the anti-Corn Law agitation in 1842 and of the Repeal agitation the following year.² Hoey's greatest qualities were as a political agitator and public speaker and it is significant that he patterned his life on that of Feargus O'Connor, whom he believed to be the greatest of Chartist leaders. The Barnsley Irish Chartists were praised by at least one English Chartist leader. George Julian Harney spoke warmly of the "band of Erin's exiles who would go to the death for the Charter".³

In Manchester, also, the Irishmen played a considerable part in the local Chartist Association. As early as 1839, a group of Irish Catholics living in the town supported the People's Charter. At a meeting in June, Daniel Donovan, who

1. Annals of Barnsley, p.153.

2. Hoey spoke at several anti-Corn Law meetings. Cf. Annals of Barnsley, p.200, 18 June 1842 ; see Annals of Barnsley, pp.213-7, for his part in the Barnsley Repeal Association; he also took an active part in Barnsley Irish Democratic Confederation in 1847.

3. Annals of Barnsley, p.179, 12 June 1841. Harney came into contact with the radical Irish in London as leader of the London Democratic Association during the years 1838-40. He came to Sheffield in the early 1840's and was impressed with the Irish during the Repeal agitation.

later became a leading Irish Chartist in Manchester, declared that it was necessary to publicly avow Chartist principles, in order to

"give a decided contradiction to certain interested parties who have the effrontery to say that Irishmen will have nothing to do with the People's Charter. Let us lay aside our differences - let union be our motto. Then and then only shall we obtain justice in Ireland, when the charter of British liberty becomes the law of the land." 1

A number of these Irishmen joined the local Chartist Association. In 1841, they formed a separate committee to deal with Irish affairs. After Daniel O'Connell had attacked the newly-formed Chartist Associations in Dublin, Newry, Belfast and other towns in Ireland, the Manchester committee drew up an address, "To the Operative Classes of the town of Newry and Ireland generally", in which they attempted to answer O'Connell's charges, pointing out that British Chartists wished to be "connected with Irish Chartism in a legal and constitutional manner, each advocating the rights of man, in accordance with the laws of this country". They also asserted that, in spite of O'Connell's opinion to the contrary,

"every Irishman can be a Chartist and a Repealer at the same time ... That the Irish Chartists are the true Repealers, in as much, as they are going for a measure which, if carried, would give the people the power of repealing the Union more speedily." 2

1. The Operative, 23 June 1839.

2. Northern Star, 8 May 1841.

This document was followed several weeks later by another, an "Address of the Irish Chartists of Manchester to the Chartists of Newry, and through them, to the People of Ireland".¹ Irish Chartists brought the news of the spread of Chartist principles to Ireland to the notice of their English fellows at a meeting in June 1841.² In September 1841, an Irish Chartist from

1. Northern Star, 29 May 1841. The Irish Chartists in Manchester addressed their fellow-countrymen in the following words:

FELLOW-SLAVES AND COUNTRYMEN,

... We are of the opinion that every evil to which the Irish are subjected arises from the fact that a few concoct and enact the laws under which the whole of the people live ...

... A few noble, daring, and genuinely patriotic spirits conceived the project of making Ireland a really independent nation ... there is need for Universal Suffrage to end all the injustices that Ireland now suffers ... do you not suppose that, if the whole Irish people had the power to choose their own Parliament, they should not compel the Parliament to make good and just laws for all the people ...

Chartists of Newry ... have raised the flag of democracy once more in Ireland's metropolis ...

YOUR SINCERE WELL-WISHERS IN THE HOLY CAUSE OF CHARTISM.

2. Northern Star, 19 June 1841. At the meeting of Manchester Chartists, Charles Connor referred to Chartism in Ireland and declared that O'Connor's letters to "O'Malley of the Dublin Chartist Association" had been the "means of opening the eyes of some of his fellow-countrymen". He urged Chartists to send copies of the Star and other periodicals to Ireland in order that Irish people might understand "what the people of England and Ireland really wanted - that while the British Chartists advocated a vote for themselves, they at the same time extend the same privilege to Irishmen".

Another Irish Chartist, Christopher Doyle, attacked O'Connell for his opposition to trade unionists and his support of the transportation of the Glasgow cotton spinners in 1838. Once Chartism secured a hold in Ireland, Doyle maintained that O'Connell's influence would decline.

Manchester, Christopher Doyle, visited Ireland and met the Dublin Chartists. He attended several meetings of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association of which he became a member.¹ The following spring he visited Belfast and addressed a large public meeting in Newtownards and spoke of the enthusiasm with which the Belfast working men had signed the Second Chartist Petition of 1842.² After he returned, he proposed a resolution at the Chartist Convention (1842) to send more Chartist periodicals to Ireland, and on the same occasion declared that the Irish Chartists had wished him to represent them at the Convention.³

These Irish Chartists of Manchester were ardent supporters of Feargus O'Connor, both because he was their fellow-countryman and because he gave the Irish question such prominence in the columns of his newspaper, the Northern Star. O'Connor, in his turn, was ready to promote any Irish Chartist leader of promise to positions of importance and responsibility in the movement. Several Manchester Irishmen were thus given important positions. The first of these was John Campbell, who was elected along with James Leach and others in 1841 to the first regular elected committee of the National Chartist Association and became Secretary from 1841 until 1842, when he moved to London and

1. Cf. I.U.S.A. report, Northern Star, 25 September 1841.

2. Northern Star, 9 April 1842.

3. Northern Star, 30 April 1842. Report of the National Convention, Friday, 22 April 1842.

took little further part in Chartist activities.¹ He was among the Chartists charged with sedition at Lancaster in 1842 for the part they took in the strikes and lock-outs in Manchester during the summer.² Feargus O'Connor praised John Campbell thus:

"When we reflect upon the opposition that Chartism has met with from the stupidity of some of my own countrymen in Manchester, ... not a little courage was required to induce an Irishman to take a prominent part in the movement, his very life being threatened by doing so; and yet, we find John Campbell occupying above all others the post of danger. Bravery and hospitality are said to be the characteristics of Irishmen; and those virtues Campbell appears to be gifted with. To the industry of Campbell is mainly owing our present position, and the good organisation of the Chartist ranks ... Campbell is universally beloved by the whole society of Chartists."³

Campbell was best-known as the author of a pamphlet which attacked the proposed Repeal of the Corn Laws.⁴ This work had

1. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), p.199. "Campbell, a Manchester man of no great ability or importance acted as Secretary." It is not known when Campbell came to England, although he was a native of Ballbriggan, and his brother Mr Charles Campbell still lived there in the 1840's. (Cf. report of the I.U.S.A., Northern Star, September 18, 1841.) After he went to London in 1842, he started a small newspaper shop with his wife at 180, High Holborn. Cf. Northern Star, 8 October 1842. Later in 1846, he went to America and settled in Philadelphia. Cf. The National Reformer, 10 October 1846.
2. Cf. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.228 ff.; F. O'Connor, The Trial of Feargus O'Connor, Esq., and Fifty-Eight others at Lancaster on the charge of sedition, conspiracy, tumult and riot (Manchester 1841).
3. Northern Star, 2 April 1842.
4. John Campbell, An Examination of the Corn and Provision Laws from the first enactment to the present period (Manchester 1841).

been influenced by articles written by Bronterre O'Brien on the same subject which appeared in radical periodicals during the early 1830's. Campbell's pamphlet was not original but became a useful fund of argument for Chartist lecturers and public speakers to use against their opponents during the anti-Corn Law agitation during 1842. Campbell dealt with the subject in the following sections, the historical background, the original purpose of the Corn Laws, the interests of the parties engaged in securing their repeal, and the effects of repeal on the working people. He argued that those most interested in securing the repeal of the Corn Laws were the commercial interests, "the men who ... now thrive out of the produce of industry". The landed interests, on the other hand, wished to retain the Corn Laws to keep rents high.¹ Campbell was not in favour of repeal of the Corn Laws unless accompanied by extensive radical reforms. He argued that it would result in "wide-spread ruin" among the farmers and agricultural labourers, since the competition of foreign wheat would injure the prosperity of English farmers accustomed to securing high prices for their wheat. Repeal of the Corn Laws would cause a fresh stream of agricultural labourers to flock to the urban centres for work, "to extend wider the curse of the factory system, a system most enslaving and degrading, the most revolting

1. J. Campbell, An Examination of the Corn and Provision Laws (1841), pp.5-13.

and accursed that ever existed".¹ Like his compatriots Feargus O'Connor and Bronterre O'Brien, Campbell hated urban communities, unhealthy factories and mines. His ideal was a healthy and prosperous agricultural community. He wrote,

"I would wish to see the ploughshare passing not only through Manchester and Birmingham, but through London, Liverpool, Newcastle, Glasgow and Edinburgh and other great towns; and to see the people return to where nature and Nature's God intended they would be placed, viz., on the land; every man cultivating his own farm, living free, contented and happy."²

In order to illustrate the ill-effects of Free Trade on the material well-being of the mass of the people, Campbell quoted an instance from his native country. He referred to the steady decline of Irish industry since the Union and the removal of protective duties, and stressed the necessity of restoring Ireland's parliament.

"I contend", he wrote, "that they (the Irish) ought to be allowed to consume their own produce; that they ought not to be forced to send all the good and fat of the land out of the country; but that the Irish people ought to have their own parliament sitting in College Green; and that parliament be based on universal suffrage; then if the people were miserable it would be their own fault and nobody else's."³

He drew on current economic theories, Ricardo's theory of labour and value, in particular, to support his basic arguments. He called the attention of the reader to the role of the

1. J. Campbell, An Examination of the Corn and Provision Laws (1841), p.70.

2. Ibid., p.52.

3. Ibid., pp.36-7.

"middle-man" whom he blamed for many of the misfortunes of his fellow workers.

"Betwixt him who produces the food and him who produces the clothing; betwixt him who produces the instruments and he who uses them, steps in the capitalist who neither makes nor uses them, and appropriates to himself the produce of both." ¹

Campbell argued that the small decrease in the price of the loaf would be offset by the attendant dangers which repeal of the Corn Laws would bring in its wake. The agricultural slump and the possible threat to employment and living standards in the towns as a result of the influx of cheap labour from the countryside could not be averted unless the working people had the power to enact laws in their own interest. Thus he urged the workers to "keep united together and not allow yourselves to be divided" by schemes devised to divert their attention from their true interest, the enactment of the People's Charter.

Manchester became an important centre during the agitation for repeal in 1843. Led by several Irishmen, the local Chartists organised lectures, public meetings and demonstrations in support of the measure.² Christopher Doyle and Daniel Donovan came into prominence at this time. Doyle was already known for his participation in the Chartist Convention in 1842.

1. J. Campbell, An Examination of the Corn and Provision Laws (1841), pp.58-9.
2. Cf. reports of repeal meetings at Stalybridge, Northern Star, 10 June 1843, Oldham, Northern Star, 17 June 1843, Rochdale, Northern Star, 1 July 1843.

He represented South Lancashire at the Convention of the following year, which formally adopted the Land Plan sponsored by O'Connor. Doyle's active support of O'Connor's policy both in launching the Land Plan and encouraging the union of the people of England and Ireland resulted in his election to the Provisional Executive in 1843.¹ He remained a permanent member of the Chartist Executive until 1850, when he resigned along with other members of O'Connor's party when defeated by Ernest Jones and George Julian Harney.² After Doyle's election to the Executive, his place as representative of the Irish Chartists in Manchester at Chartist Conferences was taken by Daniel Donovan. He represented them at the Convention in 1846 and was partly responsible for drafting the "address to the Irish People", which was intended to draw the Young Ireland party into alliance with the Chartists.³

In 1848, Manchester supported the Confederate-Chartist union and was second only in importance to London itself. As we have seen, a leading English Chartist of the town, James Leach,

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1. Northern Star, 30 April 1842, Report of the National Convention, Friday 22 April 1842; R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), pp.249-50.
 2. A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge (1958), pp.195-6; R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, pp.351-2.
 3. Northern Star, 8 August 1846. Donovan at first opposed the proposal for such an address since he feared that O'Connell would use it to discredit the Young Irelanders further in the eyes of their countrymen. He, finally, agreed to sit on the committee appointed to draft the document.

joined his Irish fellows in promoting this union, and represented the Chartists at the first joint meeting held in Dublin in January 1848.¹ The Irish Chartists took the initiative in organising a joint committee of Confederates and Chartists in Manchester which organised two highly successful public meetings in March 1848, at which, as we have seen, Doheny and Meagher represented the Dublin Confederates.² Daniel Donovan, on behalf of the Irish Chartists in Manchester, proposed the following resolution.

"That we believe the legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland was brought about by fraud, bribery, intimidation and corruption; and that it has been the cause of misery, starvation and death; and we are of an opinion that the Union should be repealed, and hereby pledge ourselves to assist our Irish bretheren in the accomplishment of this desirable object."³

Doyle and Donovan featured prominently in the Chartist Convention in April 1848. Donovan represented Manchester at the meeting and Doyle, now Secretary of the National Chartist Association⁴, expressed the views of the Executive to the assembled members. Both men opposed those who desired that the participants in the Convention should be formed into a permanent Assembly. They argued that until the Chartist Petition, due to be presented to Parliament in April, was

1. Nation, 15 January 1848.

2. Nation, 25 March 1848; Northern Star, 25 March 1848.

3. Northern Star, 25 March 1848.

4. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.301.

rejected the Convention should be dissolved. The Charter should be secured by moral persuasion rather than brute force.¹ While the Convention was in progress Donovan addressed a number of public meetings.² Doyle accompanied O'Connor to the House of Commons with the Chartist Petition on 10 April.³

The close union of Irishmen in Manchester accounts for the great number of Chartists and Confederates arrested by the government in July and August, 1848. The town police claimed to have information of secret meetings between the two groups and among those whom the government suspected was Daniel Donovan.⁴ He was arrested along with a number of other Manchester Chartists and Confederates⁵, charged with seditious conspiracy, and sentenced to one year's imprisonment.⁶ Doyle, on the other hand, avoided arrest and continued to work as a member of the Executive up to 1850. When the Chartist forces were re-organised in 1849-50, the Irish Chartists of Manchester remained firm supporters of Feargus O'Connor in his disputes with

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1. Northern Star, 8 April 1848. Report of the National Convention; R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.302.
 2. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.309.
 3. Ibid., p.314.
 4. Ibid., p.337.
 5. Times, 17 August 1848. Manchester men remanded in custody included James Leach, Daniel Donovan, J.J. Finnegan, and Thomas Rankin (these last three were Irish). The police had warrants out against P. Devlin, E. Ellis, M. Carrigan, J.Dolan, and George White, Irishman from Bradford.
 6. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.337.

the rival party led by Harney and Jones; indeed, it would not be too much to say that the town became the stronghold of O'Connorite Chartism up to the time of O'Connor's final disappearance from the movement.¹

Another Irish Chartist of importance was Thomas Clark.² Like his compatriots Doyle and Donovan, he was a partisan of O'Connor who sponsored him and secured Clark's election to the Executive in 1843, which position he held until 1850. Clark first became known as a leading Chartist in Stockport. As early as 1841, he distinguished himself by his attacks on O'Connell and the same year joined the I.U.S.A. and encouraged several Irish Chartists in his locality to follow his example.³ He took part in the repeal agitation⁴ and in 1844, when addressing a meeting on the injustice of O'Connell's imprisonment, took the occasion to declare himself an Irishman.⁵ Up to 1843, Clark

1. Cf. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.351 ff.; A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge, pp.180 ff.

2. The sources are almost entirely confined to the Northern Star, although some mention is made of Clark in the standard Chartist histories. Cf. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, pp.249-50, 254, 275, 280, 283, 292, 296, 309, 316, 344, 347, 349, 350-2; A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge, pp.194-6, which is particularly valuable for the disputes between Clark and Harney in 1849-50; M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), p.298.

3. Cf. Northern Star, 9 October, 6 November, 3 December 1841; Reports of I.U.S.A. meetings, Northern Star, 18 September, 9 October, 20 November 1841.

4. Northern Star, 3, 24 June 1843.

5. Northern Star, 22 June 1844. Clark declared that he had two reasons for addressing the meeting; first, he was an Irishman and consequently felt indignant at the conduct of the English government towards his country; second, he was a Chartist and therefore an enemy to tyranny and a friend to freedom.

was little known outside Stockport, but in September 1843 he was asked to represent Macclesfield at the Chartist Convention held in Birmingham in that year. Since Clark supported O'Connor and his Land Plan, O'Connor supported his nomination to the Provisional Executive, to which he was elected.¹ Clark proved himself to be an excellent organiser and a key member in maintaining the balance of power in O'Connor's favour in the Executive. From 1844, Clark was a permanent member of Chartist Conventions², appeared regularly on Chartist platforms up and down the country³ and was Chartist candidate for Tiverton in 1847.⁴ O'Connor regarded Clark as one of his most loyal supporters and entrusted him, together with Doyle, McGrath and Dixon, with the direction of the Land Company. Clark retained this position until 1849, when the Company was forced to wind up its affairs as a result of a Parliamentary inquiry.⁵

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1. Northern Star, 16 September 1843.
 2. Cf. reports of Chartist Conventions, Northern Star, 27 April 1844, 26 April 1845, 13, 20, 27 December 1845, 8 August 1846, 8 April, 6 May 1848.
 3. Clark was one of the speakers at the ill-famed Chartist meeting versus the Corn Law League in Northampton on 5 August 1844, at which the Chartists failed to answer the case of the Corn Law repealers. Northern Star, 10 August 1844. Cf. also reports of Clark's tours up and down the country, Northern Star, 1 June 1844. He was sent as a missionary to Birmingham. Northern Star, 14 June 1845, he visited Macclesfield. Cf. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, pp.292, 296, 309, for account of Clark's speeches to London crowds in 1848.
 4. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.284.
 5. Six reports from the select committee on the National Land Company, H.C. 1847-8 (398,420,461,503,557,577), xix.

During the eventful months of 1848, Clark remained loyal to O'Connor. He escaped arrest and was therefore able to emerge after 1848 as a dominant personality in the movement. In 1849, he joined forces with O'Connor in an attempt to revive the Chartist movement. At several meetings held in May and June, Clark spoke in favour of alliance with the middle-class reformers.¹ This policy was a retreat from the position hitherto held by Irish Chartists and was attacked by George Julian Harney and his supporters. During the winter, 1849-50, a series of articles appeared in the Northern Star by Clark and Harney. Out of the flood of recrimination which followed, the opposing views emerged sharply. Clark asserted that unless the Chartists were prepared to co-operate with middle-class radicals Chartism was finished; Harney replied that subservience to the Parliamentary Radicals would benefit no one but the latter.² When Harney was elected along with his supporters to positions on a Provisional Executive in January, 1850, Thomas Clark left the Association and founded his own organisation, the National Charter League, which aimed to promote union of Chartists with other bodies "favourable to the extension of the franchise and other progressive reforms".³ At the

1. Northern Star, 26 May, 9 June 1849.

2. Northern Star, 26 January, 2 February 1850; cf. also A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge (1958), p.195.

3. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), pp.351-2.

Manchester Conference of Chartists called by Clark in co-operation with O'Connor in March, 1850, Clark spoke of those who had criticised him but declared that he remained devoted to the Chartist cause. He failed to carry the majority of the conference who voted to send a delegate to the conference of the National Chartist Association to be held the following month. Clark and his supporters had all along acted as if the Chartist Executive did not exist; after the vote to send a delegate to the Convention, they retired from the meeting.

This final defeat led Clark to abandon the Chartist movement and Feargus O'Connor. Clark now poured scorn and bitter recriminations on the man who had given him his position and power among the Chartists. He joined with other Land Company Directors in 1851 and disclaimed all responsibility for the financial difficulties of the Company, declaring that in 1848, O'Connor had assumed the proprietorship of the Land Bank. At a public meeting in Manchester Clark, together with James Leach and Daniel Donovan, accused O'Connor of gross dishonesty and mal-practice.¹ Clark later became a lecturer for the middle-class radicals² and in the last known reference to him he is described as a "thimble-rigger" in a dubious benefit society.³

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1. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, pp.374, 376.
 2. Democratic Review, July 1850, p.45. He earned £2-0-0 a week in this capacity.
 3. People's Paper, 15 October 1853. It quotes an attack on him in the Post Magazine, 1 October 1853, in which it was claimed that Clark's company was using what was ostensibly a mutual benefit society to feather the nests of its officials.

Little is known of Clark's personality beyond what can be gleaned from Chartist periodicals. His political career shows him to be essentially an opportunist; his loyalty to O'Connor lasted only so long as the Irish leader retained his supremacy over the movement. Clark was the author of two pamphlets; the first was called "Reflections on past policy and future prospects of the Chartist party", which was written in 1850.¹ Clark claimed that the events of 1848 had shown that "the Charter cannot be obtained without the union of the majority of the middle and working classes". He criticised the Newport rising in 1839 and "the absurd and wicked conspiracies in Yorkshire the same year which led to the incarceration of so many hundreds of victims". The greatest error of the Chartist leaders, in his opinion, was "the organised and systematic opposition to the Corn Laws".² Finally, he pointed out that

"there is no example of record of the political constitution of a country having been reformed by the efforts of the section of one class against the inclinations of two or more powerful and influential classes."

Therefore, Clark argued, "union with the middle classes is essential".³ His other pamphlet was written to expose an

1. T. Clark, Reflections upon the past policy and future prospects of the Chartist party, also a letter condemnatory of private assassination as recommended by Mr G.W. Harney (London 1850).
2. Ibid., pp.3-4. Cf. also Northern Star, 2 February 1850.
3. Reflections upon the past policy and future prospects (1850), p.5.

opponent G.W.M. Reynolds, whom he described as "an undischarged bankrupt", and "a writer of cheap novels".¹ Clark gave examples of Reynold's "diseased, corrupt and sink-like mind" by quoting several pages of the choicest bits of lubricity with which that voluminous writer had interlarded his social moralising.² He concluded his attack on Reynolds by referring to his interest in Irish radical movements but warned Irishmen to "keep the nuisance out of Ireland".³

Thomas Clark does not emerge as a pleasing personality, but without his support and that of other Irishmen it is doubtful whether O'Connor would have maintained his supremacy over the Chartist movement for so long. During the years between 1843 and 1850, Clark was the leader of a powerful Irish faction within the Executive which supported O'Connor and bitterly resented the English Chartists, George Julian Harney, Ernest

1. T. Clark, A Letter addressed to G.W.M. Reynolds reviewing his conduct as a professed Chartist and also explaining who he is and what he is together with copious extracts from his most indecent writings (London 1850).

2. A Letter addressed to G.W.M. Reynolds (1850), p.20 ff.

3. A Letter addressed to G.W.M. Reynolds (1850), p.34.

"One of the chief aims of the Irish Confederation was to elevate and ennoble the democracy of Ireland. They felt that our hope lies in the purity and virtue of our people, and that Ireland, borne down by many sorrows, had still a recuperative and unconquerable strength while this still remained. But courage or nobleness could no more live in company with this besotting moral filth, than cleanliness on a dunghill. No English invasion was so appalling to Ireland as one that would deliver her over to this pollution ... For, whatever errors our democracy may have committed, they will never consent to wallow in the style of sensuality, or clasp hands with the scavenger of an infamous literature."

Jones and G.W.M. Reynolds. The existence of this faction enabled O'Connor to influence the policies of organisation, impose his Land Plan and forward the cause of radical reform in Ireland. Clark distinguished himself as a public speaker and political organiser but he lacked originality; he merely acted as O'Connor's mouthpiece. Yet with all his faults, he helped to maintain the unity of the movement during the lean years of the mid-forties and it is in this light that he should be judged.

Another Irishman prominent in the northern Chartist movement was George White, a Bradford wool-comber, who was a leading figure in Birmingham. The best description of this energetic and forthright Irishman is to be found in R.G. Gammage's book on the Chartist movement.¹ He described White in the following terms:

"He was noted for his inflexible perseverance, and determination in everything which he undertook to perform. He was ever ready for whatever kind of work fell to his lot; whether it was to address a meeting, write a report, or collect a subscription, he was equally clever in each transaction. In battering the head of a policeman he was quite at home, and if circumstances had favoured he would just as readily have headed an insurrection, quite regardless ... of the danger to himself."

Commenting on his style as a public speaker, Gammage declared:

"George's chief talent as a speaker lay in his ready wit and poignant sarcasms, which were launched forth in

1. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.154.

language anything but classical, and by no means agreeable to polite circles, though exceedingly well relished by men of a similar stamp to himself."

His most outstanding characteristic was his personal courage. It was said that he had been imprisoned no less than ten times in less than twenty years for his radical opinions.¹ As Gammage noted:

"George never did things by halves, but went the whole hog in everything he undertook ... If he committed a wrong, he acknowledged the act, and defended it frankly as though he had performed the most meritorious action."²

White was an ardent supporter of O'Connor.³ In 1842, he rallied the O'Connorite Chartists in Birmingham and the surrounding towns to elect delegates to the forthcoming Chartist-Sturgeite conference held in December. It was largely due to the efforts of White that O'Connor commanded such a large body of support in the conference.⁴ In a short

1. A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge (1958), p.195.

2. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.154.

3. Ibid., p.253. At a meeting in January 1844, White declared that O'Connor was "an honest man and an indomitable patriot. He believed if O'Connor had the wealth of a Rothschild that he would apply it to the happiness of the human family".

4. When the question of co-operation with the Complete Suffrage movement was first raised, White supported O'Connor in his refusal to attend the first Conference in April 1842 and criticised those members of the Executive, which included John Campbell, who supported O'Brien in his desire to attend. Cf. letter from Thomas Cooper to W. Hill, quoted by R. Concklin Thomas Cooper, the Chartist, 1805-1892 (London 1936), p.177. When O'Connor altered his attitude to the question and proposed to attend the joint conference held in December 1842, White attended a meeting in Birmingham to elect candidates for the conference, which was presided over by Joseph Sturge himself. Despite this fact, White proved victorious with the return of four Chartists and two Sturgeites to the conference. A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge, p.119.

pamphlet written while in prison in 1843, White attacked O'Connor's critics who, he maintained, were drawn largely from the middle classes or from "respectable" Chartists who resented O'Connor's efforts to improve the conditions of the lower classes¹. The major cause, he claimed, of O'Connor's unpopularity was his founding of a working class newspaper, the Northern Star, which had given the workers a means of expressing their particular opinions.² White supported the incorporation of Repeal of the Union and the Land Plan into the Chartist programme: any measure designed to bring material benefits to the working people had his full support. Whereas, he said, Liberals desire Church reform, commercial reform or educational reform, the Chartists proposed issues intended to bring about a radical improvement in the economic conditions of the people. Moreover, White was at pains to point out that all Chartists did not favour one policy to the exclusion of all others or subserviently follow one

1. G. White, An Answer to John Humphreys Parry of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-Law, and an Exposure of the Self-Styled Liberals and Free Traders (London 1843). This was a reply to the charges made by J.H. Parry against O'Connor's conduct at the Birmingham Sturgeite and Chartist Conference in December 1842, in his work, A Letter to Feargus O'Connor, Esq., farmer and barrister by J.H. Parry of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-law. On the Plan of Organisation issued by the Birmingham Conference (London 1843).

2. Cf. An Answer to John Humphreys Parry (1843), p.4.
 "His crime was to establish a newspaper, directed to the interests of the working classes and has thus enabled them to give publicity to their thoughts and effect to their proceedings, thereby raising up a host of honest and talented men capable of propagating and defending the sublime doctrines of political and social liberty."

leader, O'Connor. He argued that to describe the Northern Chartists simply as "O'Connorites", "O'Connor's tools" or "Physical Force Chartists" failed to distinguish the various groups within the organisation. It was a crude simplification of a complex movement which White described as being composed of

"all who wish to become cultivators of small farms, as a means of deliverance from the harms and miseries of the competitive system - all who are opposed to the infamous New Poor Law - all who object to the abuses of machinery - and all, who are in favour of Repeal of the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland."¹

From 1842, White was the Birmingham correspondent of the Northern Star, a position which brought him between fifteen and twenty-five shillings a week. However, he spent much of the decade between 1838 and 1848 in prison.² When he emerged in October 1849, he was as firm in his support of Chartist principles as before. Retaining an ingrained distrust of the middle classes, White opposed O'Connor's proposal to ally with the middle-class radicals in 1849 and joined forces with Harney

1. An Answer to John Humphreys Parry, p.11.

2. In May 1840, White was charged with attempting to extort money by means of threats and intimidation and sentenced to several months imprisonment. Cf. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.181; in 1843, he was charged and found guilty of seditious conspiracy and sentenced to eight months imprisonment. Cf. R.G. Gammage, Ibid., p.230; in 1848, he was again charged with seditious conspiracy along with forty-six other Chartists and Confederates and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. R. v. Rankin et al. (1848), 7 St.Tr.N.S. 711.

and Jones¹, although he still remained a loyal friend of O'Connor. After 1850, he went into obscurity only reappearing for a brief period in 1855 as the editor of a radical newspaper, the Democrat and Labour Advocate, described as a working man's paper designed to rouse the working people from the "listless apathy" into which they had fallen.² The paper survived little over a month and after this White sank into obscurity and poverty, dying in 1869.³

A selfless man, George White gave his life to the radical cause and suffered much privation and hardship for his ideals. His belief in O'Connor was inspired by his advocacy of the cause of the working man, unjustly deprived of his rightful position in society through poverty and lack of power. White, an ordinary working man, was willing to follow O'Connor to the ends of the earth to establish the working people in their rightful place. As an Irishman, he supported O'Connor's Irish policy and sent copies of radical journals to Ireland, although

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1. After his release from Kirkdale prison in October 1849, White organised the Bradford Democratic Association evidently in response to a call for social democratic organisations in Harney's Democratic Review, November 1849, p.240. He appears to have then gone to visit Leeds in 1850, as the representative of the Leeds woolcombers. Northern Star, 9 February 1850.
 2. The Democrat and Labour Advocate, edited by G. White and assisted by other friends of working men. It appeared weekly between 3 November and 8 December 1855. White commemorated the death of O'Connor in a poem, "On the Death of O'Connor". Democrat and Labour Advocate, 8 December 1855.
 3. Social Economist, 1 July 1869.

there is no record of his visiting Ireland. White was a fine example of the rank-and-file Chartist; it was men such as he who formed the solid core of the movement and gave it such strength at the height of its power.

The vast majority of Irishmen who participated in the Chartist movement were followers of O'Connor and supported the more militant section of the movement. An important exception to this rule was Arthur O'Neill, who became associated with the Chartist Christian movement. This was in some degree a protest against the exclusiveness and the Toryism of the Established Church and the narrowness of the Dissenting bodies. It was also partly due to the desire to base democratic principles on the strong rock of Christian doctrine. O'Neill, who was a young working man in his early twenties, established a Christian Chartist society in Birmingham in 1841. At first, the Society encountered considerable opposition but in the words of Henry Solly, an English radical,

"they worked quietly on ... always abounding in good works, and careful to give no offence. If a neighbour or a neighbour's child was ill, a "Christian Chartist" was sure to be ready to run for a doctor or sit up to nurse all night long. If help was wanted at a burial, half a dozen Christian Chartists would volunteer to carry the coffin. If a fight had to be stopped or a quarrel prevented, there were Christian Chartists ready to do it." ¹

A Government Commissioner sent to inquire into the causes of the

1. H. Solly, James Woodford, Carpenter and Chartist (London 1881), vol.ii, p.89 ff.

industrial disturbances in 1842 actually attended a Christian Chartist Tea Party, where O'Neill was the chief speaker and gave his reasons for being a Christian Chartist. He declared:

"The true Christian Church could not remain aloof but must enter into the struggle of the people and guide them. The characteristic of members of a real church was on the first day of the week to worship at their altar, on the next to go out and mingle with the masses, on the third to stand at the bar of judgement, and on the fourth, perhaps, to be in a dungeon. This was the case of the primitive church and it ought to be now." ¹

The Christian Chartist movement was opposed by the vast majority of Irish Chartists, who were professed Catholics for the most part. O'Connor denounced the efforts of O'Neill and his followers from its inception. O'Neill was in closer sympathy with the "moral force" Chartists led by Lovett and was generally found among those who opposed O'Connor.² In 1842, O'Neill was charged with sedition for something he had said in a speech and sentenced in the summer of 1842 to twelve months imprisonment in Stafford Gaol.³ After his release O'Neill took little further part in the Chartist movement and became a minister in a Baptist Chapel.⁴

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1. First Report of the Midland Mining Commission, H.C. 1843 (508), xiii. Cf. paragraphs 608 ff.
 2. In 1841, O'Neill supported Lovett's National Association against O'Connor's National Charter Association; in 1842, he attended the first joint conference of the Complete Suffrage movement and the Chartists in April 1842. Cf. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), pp.200-203, 236, 240, 245.
 3. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.196.
 4. H. Solly, James Woodford, Carpenter and Chartist, vol.ii,p.92.

Although Irish influence was especially strong in the north, London attracted large numbers of Irish immigrants. As we have seen, some joined Harney's London Democratic Association in 1839. Still more flocked to the standard of Repeal when it was raised in 1843. They exhibited a marked sympathy for Irishmen working in the Chartist movement and welcomed the alliance of Confederates and Chartists in 1848. A small group of Irish Repealers with Chartist sympathies formed a distinct organisation, the Irish Democratic Confederation. At the first meeting held on 27 June 1847, it was alleged that the majority of those present came from London Confederate Clubs.¹ The Secretary, L.T. Clancy, had been a leading member of the Dublin Chartist Association in 1839 and 1840.²

1. Northern Star, 3 July 1847.

2. Little is known of Clancy's activities after he left Dublin in 1840, travelled to Norwich and then settled in London. He wrote articles in the Northern Star between 1839 and 1841, cf. Northern Star, 3 August 1839, 12, 26 December 1840, 1 October 1841. He also wrote poetry. Cf. Y.V. Kovalov, An Anthology of Chartist Literature (Moscow 1956), p.380, note, p.l11, which quotes a poem by Clancy written soon after the joint conference of the Chartists and Complete Suffragists in Birmingham in December 1842. It is called "Impromptu".

Two Quakers once in Conference elate
 One wore his hat the other sat without it
 To prove the hypocrite, sham friend, complete :
 What two could go a better way about it?

One loved his spotless tile, and would not doff
 The emblem of his creed; he feigned no barter;
 The other less politely scampered off-;
 Lest his broad brim should cradle up the Charter!

Northern Star, 25 March 1843.

The aims and objects of the London Democratic Association were clearly stated in their Manifesto published in July.¹

1. Declaration and Objects of the Irish Confederates (Northern Star, 3 July 1847).

1. We hail all men as bretheren, and hold them equals, by inherent right to the citizenship of the world.
2. We recognise the right of all nations and peoples to govern themselves by the will of the majority of their own inhabitants.
3. We deprecate all restraint upon thought, matters of opinion, free discussion, and the rational will of the subject.
4. We hold the right of property as inviolable in the just discharge of its duties with the rest of the community.
5. We hold taxation without representation, as the exercise of an usurped power, alike subversive of honour, honesty, and justice.
6. We recognise merit alone, as the standard of political ascendancy, and the cultivation of virtue and knowledge, as a surer guarantee for the future happiness of mankind than the bristling bayonets of mercenary hordes.
7. We hold every wanton and causeless restraint on the will of the subject, whether practised by a monarch, a nobility, or a popular assembly, a degree of tyranny.

Objects.

1. To use our best exertions to obtain Repeal of the Act of Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland, and establish a Parliament in Ireland, based on the full, free, and fair representation of the whole people of our country.
2. To cultivate a better understanding among all grades of the toiling community.
3. To assist in dispelling the gloom of the past by shadowing forth the hopes of the future.
4. To assist in the downfall of the hydra-headed monster "Prejudice", too often held up as a dread Baal, for the worship of the uneducated, by designing men, for the advancement of their own base and perfidious purposes.
5. To collect, as it were, in one manageable reservoir, a torrent of light and truth, and direct, by other auxiliary means, a variety of useful information.
6. To impress upon our countrymen in England, by all urgent means in our power, the necessity of establishing an Irish Conference, to assemble, at least once a year in London, in order to watch Parliamentary proceedings, and otherwise aid and assist in giving due effect to the legitimate struggle of the Irish people for Repeal.

One important object was to urge the London Irish to establish a body which should observe the proceedings of Parliament and all matters relating to Ireland. This Irish Conference should use its influence to aid the struggle for Repeal. Clancy and his fellows had long ago recognised that both Chartists and Repealers would double their strength and power if they united; "a moral confederacy is the terror of evil government".¹ At the same time, they held that Repeal of the Union unaccompanied by extensive political reform would result in little benefit to the mass of the Irish people; their interests would be subordinate to those of Irish nationalists, drawn largely from the middle classes.² By forming an Irish Chartist Association, independent of the English Chartists, it was hoped to induce larger numbers of Irishmen to join and before it had been in existence a month the Confederation claimed over a hundred members.³

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1. Northern Star, 18 September 1847. "Address of the 'Irish Democratic Confederation of London' to the Toiling Community of Great Britain and Ireland."
 2. Ibid. "The people have rights or they have no rights; if they have rights, as we maintain they have, it is the bounden duty of those who pretend to lead the people to keep those rights steadily and perseveringly always in view of the people, otherwise they make expediency subservient of principle and practice delusion which must end in disappointment."
 3. Northern Star, 31 July 1847. It became the practice of IDC members to address Confederate gatherings in order to win converts to Chartist principles; Confederate leaders such as Thomas Daly were friendly to O'Connor and the Confederation. They claimed to have 109 Irish Confederates on their books including Thomas Daly.

From the beginning, the close affiliation between members of the Confederation and the Chartists was affirmed¹, yet it never became incorporated into the British Chartist movement. By April 1848, however, the Confederation had come to identify itself with the struggle for the Charter and sent one of its members, Charles McCarthy, to the Chartist Convention held in that month. At first his nomination was opposed by several Chartist delegates, but after some discussion he was permitted to stay, since it was pointed out by Ernest Jones that,

"now that the Confederation had by recent events become an organ of democracy in this country, he thought they would do well to admit Mr McCarthy; the Chartists of England hold out the hand of friendship to the Irish Repealers."²

McCarthy attended the Chartist Assembly in May as the delegate from Finsbury.³ Members of the Confederation were fervent admirers of Feargus O'Connor and elected him their President.⁴

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1. Cf. Charles McCarthy, who claimed to be a member of the Chartist Land Society; L.T. Clancy was well-known for his Chartist connections. On one occasion, a Mr Dwain declared that the reason why Clancy was unknown to London Irishmen was "because he would not renounce Chartism and become a good Repealer". Some years before he had been "amongst those men in Golden Lane, and nobly defended the character of O'Connor (cf. Northern Star, 7 August 1847, Northern Star, 31 July 1847).
 2. Northern Star, 8 April 1848. Report of Chartist Convention, 4 April 1848.
 3. Northern Star, 6 May 1848. Report of the National Assembly, 2 May 1848. There was again a dispute over McCarthy's admission. Ernest Jones again proposed that he stay; another English Chartist, T. Wheeler, suggested that he withdraw and be elected at the meeting to be held at Finsbury and McCarthy agreed to do this.
 4. Cf. I.D.C. meetings, Northern Star, 7 August 1847, 8 January, 8 April 1848.

On the evening before the Chartist demonstration on 10 April 1848, O'Connor and Jones addressed the Irish Democratic Confederation and asked for its co-operation on this great occasion. They were supported by the secretary of the Confederation, L.T. Clancy, who declared that every member was duty bound to attend the meeting.¹

The success of the Confederation in London gave rise to hopes that branches might be established in the midlands and the north. In fact, Barnsley was the only town known to have established a branch of the Confederation. The decline of O'Connor's prestige and power within the Chartist organisation in the latter half of 1848, following the presentation of the Chartist petition, affected the fortunes of Irish Chartists. The Confederation ceased to report its meetings in the Northern Star. After 1848, Irish Chartists began to look towards the radical movements in Ireland, such as the Irish Democratic Association, rather than return to the now discredited Chartist movement. Apart from Clark and his Irish associates on the Executive, Irish Chartists took little part in the Chartist agitation after 1848.

1. Northern Star, 8 April 1848.

Feargus O'Connor¹, the outstanding figure of the Chartist movement, was by origin an Irish landowner, whose mind was

1. No full length biography of O'Connor exists but G.D.H. Cole has written an excellent short study in Chartist Portraits (London 1941). Other works which deal with O'Connor include: R.G. Gammage, The History of the Chartist Movement (Newcastle and London 1894), M. Beer, A History of British Socialism, 2 vols. (London 1953 ed.), M. Novell, The Chartist Movement (Manchester 1925), E. Dolléans, Le Chartisme 1830-1848 (Paris 1912-3), F. Rosenblatt, The Chartist movement in its social and economic aspects (New York 1916), P. Slossen, The decline of the Chartist movement (New York 1916), E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (London 1951).

Several contemporary works include references to O'Connor. See T. Frost, Forty Years' Recollections (London 1880), D. Owen Madden, Ireland and its rulers since 1829, 3 vols. (London 1843-5), W.J. O'Neill Daunt, Personal recollections of the late Daniel O'Connell (London 1848). See W.J. O'Neill Daunt's Memoirs (MS 3040-42) in the National Library Dublin for some interesting stories about O'Connor during his early years. O'Connor makes his appearance in literature, notably in C. Kingsley, Alton Locke, tailor and poet (London 1850 ed.), as the editor and journalist, O'Flynn.

O'Connor's principal works include several pamphlets and numerous newspaper articles which appeared in the Northern Star, The Labourer (1847-8) and The National Instructor (1850-51) and other Chartist periodicals.

O'Connor's pamphlets include:

A State of Ireland showing the rise and progress of the present disaffection, with an address to the Irish people (Cork 1820).
A letter ... to his Excellency the Marquis of Anglesea (Cork 1832).
A series of letters to Daniel O'Connell, Esq. M.P., containing a review of Mr O'Connell's conduct during the agitation of the question of Catholic Emancipation together with an analysis of motives and actions, since he became a member of Parliament (London 1836).

The remedy for National Poverty and the impending National Ruin; or the only safe way of repealing the Corn Laws by enabling each working family to produce a "Big Loaf" and a "Cheap Loaf" for themselves at home. Addressed to the Landlords of Ireland (Leeds 1841).

The trial of Feargus O'Connor, Esq. and fifty-eight others, at Lancaster, on a charge of sedition, conspiracy, tumult, and riot. Edited by himself (Manchester 1843).

Reply to Mr Hill's "Scabbard" and Mr Watkin's charges (London 1843)

A Practical Work for the Management of small farms (Manchester 1843).

Authentic report of the Trial of the Great Libel case, O'Connor v. Bradshaw (Nottingham 1850).

coloured by the traditions of the Irish national struggle. He was both the best-loved and the most hated man in the movement and as a consequence it is more difficult to estimate the value of his contribution, and the extent to which it was influenced by his Irish background. Historians have almost universally condemned him in tones of acrimonious dislike. Mark Hovell, in his work The Chartist Movement, believed O'Connor to be an unprincipled demagogue, who used his influence over the masses to secure the leadership of the movement for his own self-gratification.¹ R.G. Gammage made no attempt to conceal his contempt for the man who from the beginning gave every evidence

1. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement, pp.92-7. "O'Connor was a big, rather handsome-looking man endowed with great physical strength and animal feelings ... He was well versed in all the arts of popularity, and could be all things to all men. With rough working men he was hail-fellow-well-met, but he could be dignified when it was necessary to make a more serious impression ... O'Connor could tune his song to suit any ear ... As a political thinker, O'Connor was quite negligible. He was totally without originality in this respect and borrowed all his ideas ... O'Connor had, in fact, all the instincts and certain of the qualities requisite for domination ... For such a man, conceited even to megalomania, ambitious, energetic, to a certain degree disinterested and sincere, an agitator and demagogue to his finger tips, the North of England presented an ideal field for his operations."

See also pp.220-9.

of his "recklessness and want of taste".¹ Max Beer, in A History of British Socialism, made the point that O'Connor's mental abilities rose little above those of the inarticulate masses in the factory towns with whom he came to identify himself.² Alone of Chartist historians, G.D.H. Cole in his work "Chartist Portraits" is prepared to suspend judgment of O'Connor. Those harsh verdicts might have been different, Cole writes, had O'Connor been the leader of "a winning instead of a losing cause".³

These opinions of O'Connor's character were drawn almost entirely from contemporary sources, and were coloured by a hatred

1. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, pp.44-45. "To assert that he possessed a mind solid and steady were to say too much, no man with an equal amount of intellect was ever more erratic. Had the solidity of his judgement been equal to the quickness of his perception he would intellectually have been a great man, but this essential quality of greatness he lacked, hence his life presents a series of mistakes and contradictions, which, as men reflected more, lowered him in their estimation. No man in the movement was so certain of popularity as O'Connor. No man was so certain to lose it after its attainment."
2. M. Beer, A History of British Socialism (1953 ed.), vol.ii, p.11. "His mental culture was surprisingly limited, his legal education was neither comprehensive nor profound enough to separate him from the masses. There was no need for him to descend from any scientific height to the madding crowd, nor was it necessary for them to make any effort to understand him."
3. G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits (1941), pp.304-5. "If the Chartist movement had been a winning instead of a losing cause, posterity might well have judged O'Connor very differently. He was a genial, jovial, friendly, sympathetic person when things were going well ... O'Connor was in the position of leading ... a movement which could not possibly succeed in getting the Charter or, what was more important, in enforcing the social changes of which the Charter was only a symbol to the main mass of its supporters. Many of these changes were to come, gradually and slowly, but not at the hands of the Chartists."

of radicalism and a failure to understand the outlook of an Irishman who exhibited all the characteristics of the native Irish. O'Connor was an Irishman fighting the cause of his country on foreign soil. He knew that no measure of Irish independence could be secured from a hostile English Parliament without support from some body of opinion in England. He believed the natural allies of the oppressed Irish were the English lower classes, for whom he had a natural compassion. The inborn sympathy with the oppressed gleams through the modest statement he made in 1822, at the time of the disturbances in County Cork. "Though I was young I was aware of the people's sufferings".¹ He devoted his life and fortune to the people's interests which, he believed, were best served by radical reform.

William Lovett described O'Connor as the "great I am" of Chartism² who

"by his personal conduct, joined to the malignant influence of the 'Northern Star', has been the blight of democracy from the first moment he opened his mouth as its professed advocate."³

Lovett's charges are instructive. In his time, one of the agents most effective in educating British workers in the political ideas which Lovett desired them to learn was O'Connor, and his chief instrument was the Northern Star. That Lovett

1. The National Instructor, no.6, 29 June 1850.

2. W. Lovett, Letter to Messrs Donaldson and Mason containing his reasons for refusing to be nominated Secretary of the National Charter Association (London 1843).

3. W. Lovett, Letter to O'Connor on the Land Scheme (1843), quoted in W. Lovett, Life and Struggles (1876), p.294.

nevertheless called O'Connor "the blight of democracy" and the influence of the Northern Star "malignant" needs some explanation. Charges of violence of speech and action were frequently made against O'Connor, without any discrimination between speech which involved only risk to himself and violent policies which must, even if successful, be disastrous to many of his followers. In urging the latter, it will, I hope, be manifest from this study that O'Connor was no less cautious than Lovett. But the loaded provocations which are addressed personally to public men, in presence of which gentility may impose on an Englishman a polite charm of silence, will evoke a deliberately uncurbed expression of hostility from the Irishman who has been trained in a different tradition and by different historical experience. Both traditions can destroy the intelligent either through self-destructive compliance or self-destructive aggressiveness. The Irish traditions in which Feargus O'Connor was brought up can be extracted in ample detail from his father's book, the Chronicles of Eri.¹ They taught scorn for "that species of wisdom which the base and vile call worldly prudence", they held "in sovereign contempt all, and they are not few, who think one thing and say another".² Nor can one be fair to O'Connor's irritating eulogies of his relatives and forefathers, unless one recognises the moral function which praise of ancestors had in Irish

1. R. O'Connor, Chronicles of Eri (London 1822).

2. Ibid.

tradition. It was at once an exhortation by example to heroic action and an encouragement, because the blood you derived from your forefathers was a guarantee that you could equal their achievements. It may be that Feargus was too much his own bard, but before dismissing his manifest self-regard as idle folly, two facts should be considered. There survived in him as in many others of his origin that socially useful assurance about personal worthiness, which is common in men belonging to a tribal society. Further it was essential to the work Feargus wanted to do in Britain to convince British workers that the current report of Irish character was untrue. What that report was, how much it hindered O'Connor's purpose, may be gathered from the portrait of himself by Charles Kingsley. O'Flynn is a stereotype of the prevalent opinion of Irish character.¹

More judicious in appearance are the charges that O'Connor did not differ intellectually from the British workers with whom he came to identify himself, and that all his ideas were borrowed. Certainly, the ideas he communicated in the Northern Star were far from new. The rôle of a publicist is not to discover ideas, but to bring into the realm of practical politics ideas already familiar and well debated in the theoretical writings of thinkers more remote from political actuality. As for the class status attributed to O'Connor's mentality, let us detach ourselves from

1. C. Kingsley, Alton Locke, tailor and poet (London 1850).

the implied contempt for the intellect of a class, which may well have included some mute inglorious Milton. It would be equally unjust to deny that Feargus O'Connor had advantages which were not available to an intellectual or poet born into the English working class.

It may suffice to recall the background of his boyhood: a family cultured and intelligent, an easy country life, a genial father who delighted in scholarly pursuits. The wider social and cultural environment in which Roger O'Connor's family moved may be easily grasped: it was much the same as that of the family of Maria Edgeworth who was born five years after Roger. Their social sphere was the landlord class. Their cultural sphere was represented by the philosophers Locke and Berkeley, Descartes, who epitomised the anti-scholasticism of early modern philosophy, and also the ideas of the French philosophers of the eighteenth century. Then there was Richard Brinsley Sheridan who represented Ireland's native contribution to the sphere, a leaven of natural gaiety, style, and the greatly sharpened wit of a people whose world had been shattered by catastrophe.

Roger O'Connor¹ enlarged the intellectual light he derived

1. See R.R.Madden, The United Irishmen, their lives and times (second series, second edition, London 1858), pp.590-612 for an interesting but hostile essay on Roger O'Connor. This essay is not included in the first edition. O'Connor's published works include: Chronicles of Eri: being the history of the...Irish people; translated from the original manuscript in the Phoenician dialect of the Scythian language (London 1822). He also wrote the following pamphlets: An Address to the People of Ireland showing why they ought to submit to a Union (Dublin 1799). To the people of Great Britain and Ireland (Dublin 1799). A view of the system of Anglo-Irish Jurisprudence and of the effects of Trial by Jury (London 1811).

from this general Anglo-Irish background by his legal and classical studies at Trinity College, Dublin, and by his solitary study of the foundations of the ancient world of his forefathers. From this combination he acquired the comparative viewpoint from which he meditated the history of ideas and nations. Roger O'Connor's endowment was of astonishing richness: an excellent intellect, complete fearlessness, a chivalrous humanity, uncompromising resolution in politics, persistence in exploring a chosen intellectual field, a visionary faculty like that which some painters are known to have, a gift for storytelling, notable enough to be remembered by his fellow-countrymen, persuasive eloquence, and a perfect comprehension of the ways of worldlings which he distained to utilise for profit. Roger looked on the education of the young as a very sacred trust, and while exceedingly indulgent to youth's need for recreation, he was resolved that his sons and daughters should be taught to guard against the impostures of superstition and of intellectual hirelings by developing their own critical powers through philosophical discussions. It is clear that Feargus O'Connor was very much influenced by the stimulating atmosphere of his early years.

The work to which Feargus O'Connor resolved about the year 1822 to devote his life presented enormous difficulties, but everybody in Ireland who desired Irish independence knew it was the immediate necessary preliminary, repeal of the Union. To

remove the obstacles to the regeneration of Ireland, honesty and the skill were needed to recognise and use such practical opportunities as presented themselves. O'Connor recognised the possibilities which the English radical movement gave him to forward his objectives among the Irish and English workers in Britain. Despite extraordinary difficulties, he succeeded in uniting from 1841 until 1848 many different Chartist groups into one united force, the National Chartist Association. During this period O'Connor was faced with internal dissensions as well as pressure from without. Lovett had been antagonistic to him from the beginning and left the movement after 1841 but persisted in his attacks on O'Connor until 1848. Bronterre O'Brien also left the National Charter Association at much the same time over differences of policy. Thomas Cooper, an enthusiastic supporter for many years, attacked O'Connor, as did many others, for introducing the Land Plan.¹ Even Ernest Jones who was a loyal follower between 1845 and 1848 became restive under his leadership and finally headed the group which opposed O'Connor in 1850. However, O'Connor remained undeterred by the bitter hostility to working-class radicals by every medium of public opinion in Britain and Ireland, such was his determination to introduce a measure of reform which he believed would result in a marked improvement in the conditions of the poor in both countries.

1. B. Conklin, Thomas Cooper, the Chartist, 1805-1892 (Manila 1935), p.260 ff.; cf. also Northern Star, 13 June 1846.

At the same time, O'Connor was a troublesome colleague and found difficulty in collaborating with men whose views differed from his own. Yet, as we have seen, Irishmen in the British Chartist movement were almost without exception devoted admirers of O'Connor as a man and as a leader. Among the Chartist masses, O'Connor never lost his popularity. Even when Chartism became less popular and O'Connor's Land scheme, in which many thousands lost their money, failed miserably, he never lost his hold over the people. His death in 1855, after some years of mental disorder, was marked by a funeral at which thousands followed his body to the grave and all over England people mourned a lost leader.¹

O'Connor's pre-eminence in the Chartist movement resulted from his popularity among the rank-and-file. No other leader in the movement received from them such enthusiastic support. His sincerity² impressed itself forcibly on his Chartist supporters who believed with some truth that he had given up his position in society and dissipated his fortune in the people's interest.³ Moreover, men who knew him well agreed

1. Cf. the poem, printed by George White in his paper, The Democrat and Labour Advocate, written by an unknown admirer of O'Connor on the occasion of his death, in which he expressed the thoughts of thousands on that day.

Lines on the Death of O'Connor.

"And he is dead who long and bravely fought
The battle of the oprest 'gainst the oppressor;
Who with a free hand and untiring zeal,
Did Fortune, time, and talents rare expend,
To lift the burdens from the sons of toil,
And from the despot wrest their lawful rights,
Mids't persecutions bitter rage he kept

His true undeviating course, and spent
 His noble soul in freedom's holiest cause,
 Though false aspersions breath did utter forth
 Full oft the foul malignant lie, that he
 Was traiterous to the people's cause, and sought
 In strife politic his aggrandizement,
 With the hard earnings of the plundered poor,
 Until that mighty mind, which neither bribes
 Nor threats could turn from rectitude and truth,
 But held its course, until ingratitude
 Did fall with crushing weight upon his head,
 Dethroning intellect.
 But he is gone,
 And never more can cold detractious tongue
 Wound his great soul, or envious scorn malign.
 Or dim the lustre of his great renown;
 He is dead, and yet he lives - in recollections
 Fondest memory lives, and while a heart still beats
 That loves the cause of freedom and of truth,
 Shall poor O'Connor's fate demand a tear."

The Democrat and Labour Advocate, 3 November 1855.

2. Charles Kingsley, in his novel, Alton Locke, gives a description of O'Connor in his character, O'Flynn, the editor of the Weekly Warwhoop, cf. pp.280 ff.

Despite his many shortcomings O'Flynn

"believed in his own radicalism with his whole soul. There was a ribald sincerity, a frantic courage in the man. He always spoke the truth when it suited him, and often when it did not. He did see, which is more than all do, that oppression is oppression and humbug, humbug." (p.282)

3. Cf. Times, 11 September 1855. The report of the funeral oration given by a working man, Mr Jones of Liverpool. He said "Feargus O'Connor had been a great champion of democracy...that in consequence of his efforts he had not only been persecuted by the Government and misrepresented by a portion of the press, but even betrayed and slandered by many of those whom he had lifted into political importance (cf. Thomas Clark), who had fattened upon his bounty in the days of his prosperity ... Tyrants might call him demagogue - slaves might call him madman - the rich term him fool, while the indifferent multitude left him to his poverty - yet...his memory would be enshrined in the hearts of thousands...though his virtues were not sufficiently appreciated, his errors were greatly exaggerated. It was true that he was unguarded in his confidences, and often deceived; that he was indiscriminating in his generosity, and often imposed upon; that his efforts were intended to promote the public weal, but that he often miscalculated the chances of success...Though his enemies had pried into every act of his private life as well as his public career, they had failed to point out any one act which was not in accordance with moral rectitude and political integrity...he was more sinned against than sinning."

that Feargus was a pleasant companion, able to crack a good joke and tell a good story.¹ His sincerity and bonhomie were exhibited to perfection on the public platform. O'Neill Daunt described him as

"King of the platform, with his voluble tongue, his powerful well-toned voice, his brazen audacity, his fiery professions of patriotism, his bits of fun and his comical sarcasm."²

R.G. Gammage described his imposing presence on the platform, invested as it was "with a sort of aristocratic bearing".³

D. Owen Madden, who also knew O'Connor in the early years, declared that he had

"a frank ingratiating demeanour, very popular manners, high spirits and a reckless nature of an adventurous turn. His face was ugly, its features were haggard and care-worn, the forehead retreated sharply from the brow - his hair was foxy, but his stature was large with massive shoulders, and his action in public speaking was peculiarly easy and graceful."⁴

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1. W.J. O'Neill Daunt's Memoirs (MS 3041), vol.ii, p.545. O'Neill, who knew O'Connor when as a young man he was living in Cork, wrote, "Feargus's strong point is his colloquial agreeability. He is on the whole the best raconteur I ever met. He is an entertaining mimic; a mimic not only of the voices of his friends but also of their peculiarity of thought and sentiment".
 2. W.J. O'Neill Daunt's Memoirs (MS 3041), vol.ii, p.643. 17 November 1843.
 3. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.45. "Upwards of six feet in height, stout and athletic, and in spite of his opinions invested with a sort of aristocratic bearing, the sight of his person was calculated to inspire the masses with a solemn awe ... O'Connor's short neck...the only defect in his physical appearance...rather enhanced than detracted from the idea which the public entertained of the great strength of his iron frame."
 4. D. Owen Madden, Ireland and its Rulers since 1829 (1843-5), vol.i, Chapters XIV-XVI. The Rig of O'Connor, p.179. Owen Madden gives a rather unsympathetic account of O'Connor's early political life in Ireland, 1832-1835.

His fine resonant voice was admirably suited to large gatherings, and at open air meetings he could be heard at the back of any crowd.

O'Connor's position in the movement was greatly strengthened by his control of the leading Chartist newspaper, the Northern Star¹, which he founded in Leeds in November 1837. He had little journalistic skill himself, but gathered around him an able team of journalists and reporters. The most notable of these was Bronterre O'Brien, who became his chief leader writer in 1839-40. The editor was Reverend William Hill, a former Swedenborgian minister, who was ably assisted by Joshua Hill as printer. The Star began not so much as a Chartist organ as an expression of the protests of the working classes against the Poor Law and of their demands for factory reform. By far the most popular of the Chartist newspapers, the Star served a double purpose. It unified the movement into one powerful combination² and became the most complete record of the

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1. The Northern Star was a weekly, costing 4½d. It first appeared on 18 November 1837 and continued to appear regularly under O'Connor's ownership until he sold it in 1852. In 1842, Hill quarrelled with O'Connor and his place as editor was taken by George Julian Harney. In November 1844 the paper was moved from Leeds to London and its name was changed to The Northern Star and National Trades Journal. In 1841, the Star reached a total sale of 45,000 copies each week but each number was read by at least ten people.
 2. The Star helped to overcome the difficulties encountered by the Chartist movement which owing to the Corresponding Act (1817) was forbidden to create a national political party with local branches.

organisation. Not a meeting in the most remote part of England or Ireland failed to find a place in its columns.¹ Moreover, it was used by O'Connor to propagate his own ideas and policies. Thomas Cooper, who was for many years his fervent admirer, wrote that O'Connor's writings in the Star

"could not fail to produce a strong impression on the mind of every genuine Chartist ... they know there is no mistake about him ... in no one name did they discern a combination of qualities so commanding in their influence, so magnetic in attracting a wavering attachment as in their brave O'Connor."²

O'Connor's opponents were far less complimentary about the use he made of his paper. Francis Place, the radical, declared that the Northern Star had degraded the whole radical press.³ Daniel O'Connell described the Star as a "literary curiosity" which devoted its pages to the adulation of its owner.⁴ Yet, without the Star the Chartist movement would have disintegrated for want of a focal point to concentrate its agitation.

1. Cf. the reports of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association which were printed regularly in the Northern Star between the years 1841 and 1844 and provided the only means of publicity for the Irish Chartists.

2. Midlands Counties Illuminator, 18 April 1842.

3. The Place Manuscripts (Ad. MS. 27, 820), p.154.

4. W.J. O'Neill Daunt's Memoirs (MS 3040), p. 49, 6 January 1843. O'Neill Daunt quotes a comment by O'Connell on the Northern Star.

"Upon my word, this paper of Feargus's is a literary curiosity. The first page is filled with praise of Feargus; the second page, praise of Feargus; the third page, ditto; the fourth page, ditto; and so on through till we come to the printer's name. What a notion of a fellow to set up a newspaper praising himself. Poetry, prose editorial articles, letters to the editor, eulogistic odes and sonnets are all employed to swell the praise of the proprietor of the Northern Star to the echoing firmament. The multitudes and variety of these puffs are astonishing."

Feargus O'Connor came of a family associated with radical, nationalist politics in Ireland; both his father, Roger, and his uncle Arthur were leaders of the United Irishmen. The O'Connor family, which claimed to be one of the oldest in Ireland, lived in imposing style in Connorville, an ancient mansion in County Cork. Arthur O'Connor was member of the Irish Parliament and distinguished himself by his eloquence and advanced principles. He sympathised with the revolutionary doctrines of France and was foremost in the movement of the United Irishmen in working for an alliance with the French government and with the London Corresponding Society of England for the purpose of freeing the Irish people from British rule. When the '98 rising failed, Arthur quitted the country and finally arrived in France where he joined the French army and ultimately became a general. He wrote a number of pamphlets and tracts.¹ In his "State of

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1. A. O'Connor, A State of Ireland. To which are added his Addresses to the Electors of Antrim. 2nd Edition. London 1798; Letter to Lord Castlereagh (Dublin 1799) in which he upbraids the government for the treatment of himself and other United Irishmen, held without trial for several months in jail. Works written while in France include Description of Irish Priests (London 1852) which contrasts the simple lives of the Catholic clergy in the past with the present day when "the priests vie with the gentlemen" and moreover use their influence to prevent "the people acquiring any other institution than what is their intention to give them". A letter to General Lafayette, on the causes which have deprived France of the Revolution of 1830 (London 1831). Monopoly the cause of all evil, 3 vols. (Paris 1848).

Ireland"¹ he argued the necessity of Universal Suffrage in order that the people alter the rights of property in accordance with the wishes of the majority. Feargus revered his uncle and in June 1843 brought out a new edition of this essay and commended it to the Chartists as the quintessence of all political and economic wisdom.² Moreover, he called his newspaper after that of the United Irishmen, the Northern Star.

Feargus O'Connor was born at Dangan Castle, County Meath on 18 July 1794, and educated at Portarlinton Grammar School, Dublin University and the King's Inns, Dublin. He became a barrister in the early 1820's but did not attain success in his profession. With the help of his uncle, Sir Francis Burdett, he bought a small farm at Fortrobert, County Cork, where it was said, "he led the life of a country gentleman - hunted - coursed - farmed - and drank whiskey punch".³ William O'Neill Daunt, who

1. A State of Ireland (London 1798) discusses the causes of Ireland's condition and proposes remedies. The writer maintained that it was wrong to "confuse the state of the country with the state of faction" but nevertheless he considered that the manifold evils suffered by Ireland were caused by monopoly. "Property is the machine by which self-interest is worked ... The laws which monopolise property, monopolise power also ... Hence by establishing the monopolising laws of primogeniture, entails and settlements, in favour of a few proprietors, all power became confined to these few ... The direct and obvious tendency of these laws is to support a monopoly of land... They have exhibited their baneful influence in every branch of political economy (pp.45-47).

"To remedy these manifold evils ... Catholic Emancipation and the restoration of Popular representation are the only efficient expedients" (p.42).

2. M. Beer, A History of British Socialism (1953), vol.ii, pp.10-11.

3. D. Owen Madden, Ireland and its rulers (1843-5), vol.i, p.178.

was acquainted with Feargus at this time, said that he farmed his land with considerable success and was "considerately kind to his labourers; gave them comfortable cottages, and paid them in cash (not at that time a usual practice) every Saturday night".¹

While still a student in Dublin, O'Connor was deeply moved by the disturbances in County Cork and Limerick in 1822.² He wrote later that "the people were driven to madness by the oppression of their landlords and the tyranny of the parsons."³ He wrote a short pamphlet published in Cork in 1822, entitled "A State of Ireland"⁴, in which he pledged his devotion to the cause of the Catholic peasantry and made his first proposals for extensive reform. He attacked the relations between landlord and tenant, the imposition of tithes by the Protestant clergy

1. W.J. O'Neill Daunt's Memoirs (MS 3041), vol.ii, p.545, 31 December 1855.
2. Cf. The National Instructor, vol.1, no.6, 29 June 1850, p.89 ff. O'Connor relates that a number of priests in County Cork had met together and drawn up a series of resolutions to the effect that the late disturbances had been caused by the tyranny of parsons and landlords. O'Connor addressed the meeting in violent language which alarmed them. They were very much more concerned to see their proceedings published in a Cork paper, the Southern Reporter. O'Connor himself was told to flee the country as an informer was prepared to swear he was the C-in-C of the Whiteboys. This perhaps is the origin of the allegation that O'Connor belonged to the organisation of the Whiteboys. Cf. Thomas Frost, Forty Years' Recollections (1880), p.137 ff.
3. The National Instructor, vol.1, no.6, 29 June 1850, p.89 ff.
4. A State of Ireland showing the rise and progress of the present disaffection, with an address to the Irish people (Cork 1822).

and the corruption of grand jurors and magistrates, all too often the paid agents of the landlords and clergy.¹

Incensed by the appalling conditions of the Irish peasantry, O'Connor resolved to devote his life to the advocacy of extensive land reform and the reduction of the powers of the Established Church especially in respect of tithes. His solution to the land problem was a conservative one. He visualised the break-up of large estates which would be replaced by individual peasant ownership of small farms, sufficient to supply the needs of the farmer and his family. As early as 1835, he was intending to introduce a Bill into Parliament to protect the tenant against the impositions of the landlord as the first step towards his ideal.² After he left Ireland in 1836 and entered the working-class radical movement in England he continued to cherish this

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1. A State of Ireland (1820), p.9 ff. "I belong to a family many of whom have lost their all from devotion to your cause, and some of whom are at this moment exiled from their country, ... the only claim I have to your affection is that I love my country better than my life..." He addressed himself to the Landlords, Clergy, Grand Jurors and Magistrates of Ireland, the promoters of the rebellion, who "have at length driven the people of this country to desperation".
 2. The English Chartist Circular, vol.ii, no.67. It was necessary "to compel landlords to make leases of their land in perpetuity ... to take away the power of distraining for rent; and in all cases where land was held upon lease and was too dear, that the tenants in such cases should have the power of empanelling a jury to assess the real value in the same manner as the Crown has the power of making an individual sell property required for what is called public works or conveniences according to the valuation of a jury ..."

ideal of peasant ownership which became the basis of his Land Plan. O'Connor's experiences in Parliament between the years 1833 and 1835 and as leader of the mass movement in England convinced him that no immediate land reform could be secured from the House of Commons as then constituted. He thus adopted the policy of Robert Owen in 1845 of establishing independently-run land colonies. The colonies that Feargus proposed differed considerably from those of Owen. In Owen's scheme, the whole community cultivated the land in common and shared the produce, whereas under O'Connor's scheme each settler had his own individual holding. Like many of his countrymen, O'Connor believed the land to be the major source of wealth. He never understood or accepted the new possibilities industrialism could open up for the working classes. He ignored the great technical advances which would ultimately bring enormous material improvements to all classes in the community.¹ Furthermore, he was a vigorous opponent of socialist theories and only supported the idea of co-operation, as proposed by Robert Owen, in so far as it would assist the individual peasant to market his produce.² As a representative of a peasant community, O'Connor never fully understood the needs of an industrial community, he proposed no policy other than to entice the workers from their cities back to the land.

1. As land was, in his opinion, the only source of all wealth so was the unrestricted use of machinery the chief source of social evil. Cf. The English Chartist Circular, no.62.

"It opens a fictitious, unsettled, and unwholesome market for labour, leaving to the employer complete and entire control over wages and employment. As machinery becomes improved, manual labour is dispensed with, and the dismissed constitute a surplus population of unemployed, system-made paupers, which makes a reserve for the masters to fall back upon, as a means of reducing the price of labour. It makes character valueless. By the application of fictitious money, it overruns the world with produce and makes labour a drug. It entices the agricultural labourer, under false pretences, from the natural and wholesome market, and locates him in an unhealthy atmosphere, where human beings herd like swine. It destroys the value of real capital in the market, and is capable of affecting every trade business and interest, though apparently wholly unconnected with its ramifications. It creates a class of all the moneyed interests in the country, gives to it an unjust, injurious, anomalous, and direct influence over the government of the country."

2. The Labourer (1847), vol.1, p.149. "I have ever been, and I think I ever shall be, opposed to the principles of Communism, as advocated by several theorists. I am nevertheless a strong advocate of co-operation, which means legitimate exchange, and which circumstances should compel individuals to adopt, to the extent that communism would be beneficial. I have generally found that the strongest advocates of communism are the most lazy members of society - a class who would make a division of labour, adjudging and contending that their natural implement was the brain, whilst that of the credulous was the spade, the plough, the sledge and the pickaxe. Communism either destroys wholesome emulation and competition, or else it fixes too high a price upon distinction and must eventually end in the worst kind of despotism ... whilst, on the other hand, individual possession and co-operation of labour creates a wholesome bond between all classes of society."

Feergus O'Connor made his debut in English politics at the age of thirty-seven during the summer after the passing of the Reform Bill. Obligated to flee to England after the disturbances in 1822, O'Connor had spent a year in England¹ before returning once more to Ireland to take up his practice at the Bar.² He took no part in the agitation for Catholic emancipation which he held would go no further than remove the personal disabilities of middle-class Catholics.³ The inadequacies of the Emancipation Bill and the Reform Bill had given rise to increasing unrest amongst the peasantry. O'Connor's first appearance on a public platform took place during the period of the growing anti-tithe agitation and was as dramatic as his later career proved to be. At a meeting of the leading Whig magnates in Cork, O'Connor, then entirely unknown, forced himself upon the meeting and declared to the astonished assembly that "he would open up the rotten

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1. The National Instructor, vol.i, no.6, 29 June 1850, p.89, no.7, 6 July 1850, p.104 ff. O'Connor lived for over a year in London in the house of a Major O'Flaherty, No.4 Northumberland Street. Much of his time was spent in writing, and he completed a novel, "The White Boy", which he maintained gave a "fair and critical and not overdrawn character of English law, English parliament, Irish landlords, magistrates, judges, barristers, jurors and Catholic peasants". He also wrote two tragedies, and a comedy supposed to illustrate Irish manners and customs, called "Bull and O'Bull", though none of these works are known to be extant.
 2. The National Instructor, vol.i, no.8, 13 July 1850, p.121 ff. His experiences as a lawyer barely extended beyond the Petty Sessions where more than half the cases he was asked to deal with were concerned with tenants' complaints of injustices suffered at the hands of their landlords. His legal experience, however, gave him a knowledge of the actual working of the Irish land system.
 3. Northern Star, 9 November 1839.

borough of Cork".¹ Almost entirely unaided, he canvassed the whole county and after several months of tireless work was elected Member of Parliament for County Cork.²

As a public speaker, O'Connor was regarded by some as superior to Daniel O'Connell³, who once hailed O'Connor as a

1. D. Owen Madden, Ireland and its rulers since 1829 (1843-5), vol.i, Chapters XIV-XVI. Cf. pp.174-6. "Towards the end of the day, a gentleman, whom no one knew, claimed a hearing from the High Sheriff. He appeared to be about thirty years of age, had red hair and a fierce countenance, with an indescribable 'dare-devil' demeanour ... (he) literally electrified the meeting with one of the most inflammatory harangues that every Irish ears had heard. 'Who is he' was eagerly asked, but no one could tell the orator's name ... The Whigs wished him far away, but the mass of the meeting were delighted with his dashing and rattling style... 'Away with this canting Whiggery', he cried, 'Repeal and nothing but Repeal will do for Ireland.' Cheers greeted the unknown speaker as he flung forth a torrent of vituperation against the Whig ministry, the Lord Lieutenant and 'the tyrant Stanley'... Many were heard to say that this new public speaker was 'finer' than O'Connell ... Clenching his fist, he suddenly told the astonished meeting that he would open up the rotten borough of Cork."
2. D. Owen Madden, Ireland and its rulers since 1829, vol.i, pp.182-5. In the progress of his campaign for election, he was treated with derision by the gentry and the City Radicals. He printed a very bombastic address to the electors, canvassed farmers and made acquaintances among the priests. He also by infinite pains got a great many farmers to register their votes. The public of the County looked on tranquilly. They "could hardly believe that a man of so little social influence would have the audacity to 'oust' the great aristocratic families". He was thought "very amusing" by the Tories, "very impudent" by the Whigs and "very absurd" by the Radicals and Repealers. Nevertheless, after three months he was the "favourite" candidate and subsequently elected.
3. D. Owen Madden, Ireland and its rulers since 1829, vol.i, p.180. "There was a wild Ossianic spirit about O'Connor's spirit-stirring effusions that was altogether different from O'Connell's wearisome blarney ... but when he ceased to talk his influence was at an end."

"boy after my own heart".¹ It was not long before he was showing signs of becoming his rival.² Unlike the Liberator, O'Connor never became accustomed to the atmosphere of the House of Commons. Bewildered by the cross-play of prejudice and interests and the manifest indifference of the majority of the Members for the interests of the ordinary people, he declared that "politics was the madness of the many for the gain of the few".³ He also discovered that O'Connell was one of the most adept politicians of the time and was convinced that arts and subterfuges like his concealed from the masses his selfish interests and limited aims. Having entered Parliament, pledged to oppose all coercive measure for Ireland to support nothing less than repeal, O'Connor announced his intention to introduce a motion on repeal in the House and received a certain amount of support from the Irish press.⁴ Early in June, the Irish repeal M.P.s met to discuss their immediate policy and decided by twelve votes to ten in favour of postponement. O'Connor was dissatisfied and summoned another meeting which confirmed the previous

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1. R.B. McDowell, Public opinion and government policy in Ireland, 1801-1846 (1952), p.158.
 2. *Ibid.*, p.158.
 3. Northern Star, 27 November 1847.
 4. Pilot, 21 January 1833; W.J. Fitzpatrick, Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell, vol.1, pp.370-71; Freemans Journal, 3 June 1833. Newspapers in Cork, Tipperary and Waterford are quoted by the Freemans Journal during May and June as being in favour of an immediate discussion of the repeal question. Cf. R.B. McDowell, Public opinion and government policy in Ireland, p.158.

decision by seventeen votes to seven.¹ O'Connor declared, when O'Connell did finally introduce the measure in April 1834, that his speech was the worst he had heard him make and he blamed O'Connell for the failure to secure even the votes of the English radicals.²

Undeterred by the censure of his leader and the hostility shown by the English M.P.s, O'Connor spoke on repeal whenever the opportunity arose.³ He associated repeal with the introduction of a number of radical measures. To bring peace and contentment to Ireland, he implored the House, "rather than coerce the people of Ireland, to redress their grievances". He proposed that vote by ballot and triennial parliaments be established and that assessed taxes be repealed as an immediate step.⁴ To these reforms he added total abolition of tithes

1. R.B. McDowell, Public opinion and government policy in Ireland, p.158.
2. Hansard, 3rd series, xxii, cols.1092 ff (22 April 1834); A series of letters from Feargus O'Connor ... to Daniel O'Connell (1836), p.57. The speech lasted for six hours and "its chief aim seemed to be a preparation for retreat".
3. Hansard, 3rd series, xxii, cols.1333-1352 (24 April 1834). See especially col.1348. "If it was not my conviction that the Repeal of the Union would be beneficial to Ireland I would not court an ignominious popularity by advocating it." See also Hansard, 3rd series, xix, cols.417 ff. (10 June 1833). O'Connor, who was presenting a petition from New Ross, said: "The Repeal of the Union was the only thing that would set matters right. The Union has done all for England and nothing or worse than nothing for Ireland... The English robbed the Irish of all their domestic trade to support their own interest; and the Irish, instead of furnishing themselves, were compelled to buy of the English at double the natural price." See also Hansard, 3rd series, xxi, cols.453-4 (18 February 1834).
4. Hansard, 3rd series, xv, cols.452-4 (8 February 1833).

which he regarded as a monstrous imposition on the Catholic peasantry.¹ O'Connor opposed the repeal of the Corn Laws; he saw the measure as a threat to the agricultural interests which would result in widespread employment in country districts and provide little relief to the industrial population in the towns.²

Many of O'Connell's supporters resented O'Connor's radicalism and outspoken criticism, although he voted with O'Connell on most Irish questions. Some thought that he had conceived the idea of "surplanting O'Connell in the leadership of the Irish people".³ Whether or not he entertained this idea, there was no room in the same party for two men of such volatile, energetic and outspoken temperaments. O'Connor refused to be ruled and O'Connell to have his authority questioned. When O'Connor was returned for Cork County in the election in 1835, he was disqualified for want of a property qualification, though he seems to have been in possession of an estate worth £300 a year. He was convinced that O'Connell was responsible for this action⁴ and whatever the truth of the matter, it must have been

1. Northern Star, 20 March 1841.

2. Hansard, 3rd series, xxi, cols.1246-7 (6 March 1834).

3. W.J. O'Neill Daunt, Ireland and her agitators (Dublin 1845), p.160.

4. Northern Star, 27 November 1847. O'Connor wrote,

"I was ousted by the most hellish and unscrupulous machinations ... Mr O'Connell stood by the door of the house for my committee and prevented ... members from going in, telling them I would be better out than in. Mr Maurice O'Connell, Mr Morgan O'Connell and Mr John O'Connell... handed me over to the tender mercies of the most rabid Tory committee that ever tried an election petition."

a considerable relief to the leader to see the last of O'Connor.

While still in parliament, O'Connor had begun to establish links with English working-class radicals. In 1833, he delivered to the National Union of Working Classes, which was then the leading political society among the London workmen, an address strongly attacking the Whigs and expressing radical opinions.¹ After the loss of his parliamentary seat and his quarrel with Daniel O'Connell, he was virtually excluded from Irish politics. He came to England and almost immediately offered himself for the seat in Oldham, which had become vacant on the death of William Cobbett in April 1835.² O'Connor failed to win more than a handful of votes but undaunted made his way to London. He was soon busy organising the London Central National Association, designed to unite all the radical associations in the country upon a programme based on what O'Connor termed the "five cardinal points of Radicalism".³

1. G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits (1941), p.310.

2. He opposed Cobbett's son, John Morgan and though he got but a handful of votes was successful in causing Cobbett's defeat by a majority of thirteen. William Cobbett's last days had been devoted largely to urging the working classes to offer united opposition to the Whig Poor Law Act of 1834 and it was on this issue that O'Connor claimed his right to contest the Oldham seat as his successor. G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits (1941), p.310.

3. These were Universal Suffrage, Vote by Ballot, Annual Parliaments, payment of Members of Parliament and equal electoral districts. In his Central National Association, O'Connor co-operated with a number of leading radicals, such as Thomas Attwood of Birmingham, George Julian Harney and Bronterre O'Brien, and J.B. Bernard, a Cambridgeshire radical farmer, who like Attwood wanted to combine Chartism with currency reform and provided most of the financial backing of the movement but withdrew in 1837.

But he made little progress and never succeeded in winning the confidence of the metropolitan artisans, who distrusted the "blustering demagogue".¹ He decided that the true centre of popular agitation was not in London but in the factory districts of the North. He therefore moved to Leeds, and in November, 1837, issued the first number of the Northern Star, which more than any other single factor assured him a predominant part in the leadership of the Chartist movement.

By 1838, O'Connor had become the spokesman of the unenfranchised factory workers and the vast mass of hand-workers of northern England. Although willing to adopt the Charter as an immediate political objective, O'Connor and writers in the Northern Star resented the move by William Lovett and the London artisans to take control of the movement of which they were only a small part. In contrast to Lovett, O'Connor addressed meetings all over the country in the course of the agitation against the Poor Law and factory reform which was exciting the northern industrial areas in the months before

1. M. Beer, A History of British Socialism (1953 ed.), vol.ii, p.11. "To the thinking workmen of London, he was a blustering demagogue, a backwoodsman with plenty of ready made phrases at his command. When they came into open conflict with him and told him their opinion of him, O'Connor replied, 'You must fight it out; you shall either crush me or I will annihilate your association.' The highly skilled artisans of the large towns only aroused O'Connor's derision: he did not regard them as working men at all, and declared, 'Let those with unshorn chins, blistered hands and fusian jackets read the occupations of some of the subscribers to the document, and the bubble bursts'. (Northern Star, 10, 24 February 1838, 3 March 1835)

the Charter was published. He knew that the industrial workers wished to hear more than the programme of political education propounded by Lovett and his friends. Nor did he agree with Lovett's view that the masses ought to be fitted for the rational exercise of political power by education in order to reinforce the claim to its possession. In association with Bronterre O'Brien, O'Connor argued that the only way in which the masses could be fitted for political power was by its exercise. Both parties claimed the vote as a right, "but whereas for Lovett a right implied a corresponding obligation, for O'Connor and O'Brien the entire question was one of power".¹

In the years between 1838 and 1840, O'Connor emerged as the leading figure of northern Chartism; after 1841, he dominated the whole movement. Until 1848, when his supremacy was challenged, he dictated the general policy which was followed by the vast majority of rank-and-file Chartists. O'Connor's policy was influenced by his conception of his own rôle. He saw himself as a clan chief and father and the ideal clan chief was required by the Irish to be a selfless agent of the will of the clan. O'Connor expressed this conception clearly on 10 April 1848 in his address to the crowds on Kennington Common, who had massed together to march to the House of Commons with the Chartist petition. Urging his followers to act with restraint

1. G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits (1941), p.313.

and caution, he declared,

"My children ... Yes, you are my children. These are your horses not mine. The car is yours, made of your timber. I am only your father and your bailiff, but your honest father and your unpaid bailiff." ¹

O'Connor felt a deep sense of responsibility towards the masses who depended upon him for leadership. When faced with the prospect of armed insurrection or surrender, he retreated rather than bear the responsibility of causing civil war and bloodshed. He was capable of great personal courage in the face of danger. On the public platform, he was known for his violent pronouncements and on more than one occasion defied the military who threatened Chartist meetings.² Yet he opposed those who advocated armed insurrection. He expressed his views on this subject in 1842 in the following passage:

"I have always been a man of peace. I have always denounced the man who strove to tamper with an oppressed people by any appeal to physical force. I have always said that moral force was the degree of deliberation in each man's mind which told him when submission was a duty or resistance not a crime; and that the true application of moral force would effect every change, but that in case it should fail, physical force would come to its aid like an electric shock - and no man could prevent it; but that he who advised or attempted to marshal it would be the first to desert it at the moment of danger. God

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1. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.315.
 2. Northern Star, 30 June 1838; cf. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), pp.26-7. At this meeting in Newcastle in June 1838, O'Connor defied the military which made its appearance among the crowd. Unarmed as the crowd were, they received the troops with a shout of defiance when O'Connor said: "He was deeply indignant at this daring and contemptible display... Let the brats of Aristocracy take care ... they would find there were gallant hearts and virtuous arms under a black coat as well as under a red one."

forbid that I should wish to see my country plunged into the horrors of physical revolution. I wish to win her liberties by peaceful means alone."¹

O'Connor believed that "the true application of moral force" could be achieved only if public opinion was sufficiently well mobilised and concentrated in a political organisation such as the National Charter Association. He was opposed equally to the extremists who were ready to stake everything on armed insurrection and to the "moral-force" Chartists who shrank from any policy which they feared might lead ultimately to violent conflict with the authorities. At moments of crisis, O'Connor retreated in the belief that the position in which the use of revolutionary measures was justified had not yet been reached. He over-estimated the influence which the Chartists had on public opinion and he grossly under-estimated the strength and determination of their opponents, the British government, which was prepared to use every means to crush this new and monstrous manifestation which threatened their lives and property.

On more than one occasion, O'Connor was faced with the possible alternatives of resort to forceful measures or retreat in the face of government repression. In every case, he chose to retreat much to the dismay of his colleagues. The first occasion came in 1839 after Parliament had rejected the first Chartist petition. After touring much of northern England and

1. The Nonconformist, 8 June 1842.

Scotland, O'Connor came to the conclusion that the industrial areas, which he regarded as the core of the political agitation, were not in a position to support the "sacred month" which had been proposed by a number of Chartist delegates at the Convention in July. If the strike was not solid, as he feared it would not be, the employers would starve the working people into submission and use it as a weapon against those who hoped to win universal suffrage. The riots in Birmingham which broke out on 15 July 1839 only confirmed his fears of bloodshed and violence, which he predicted would follow once the Convention allowed their followers to get out of hand. He attacked in the Convention itself "the men of Birmingham and other traitors" who had given the masses a false impression of their strength.¹ He entirely concurred with the proposal made by O'Brien to the Convention on 16 July that the "sacred month" be abandoned and he used all his influence to counsel a policy of peace and moderation.

O'Connor's violent pronouncements on the public platform led many to think that he would support an armed rising. In the autumn of 1839, small groups of Chartists in several parts of the country began to plan an armed insurrection. O'Connor denied any knowledge of the rising and was indeed in Ireland²

1. E. Dolléans, Le Chartisme (1830-48) (1912-3), p.386 ff.; M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), pp.164-6.

2. Northern Star, 5 December 1839, 3 May 1846. O'Connor left England on 4 October 1839 and journeyed to Cork with the purpose, he maintained, of rousing the people of Cork against the aristocracy at the forthcoming election, although later he added that he also attended to his Irish property in the hope of raising some money on it.

when the Newport march took place on 4 November 1839. His enemies accused him of cowardice since it appeared to many that, although he was prepared to make violent speeches, he was unwilling to carry them out. Both Bronterre O'Brien¹ and William Lovett claimed that O'Connor had knowledge of the intended rising in Newport and elsewhere. Lovett told a story that a delegate was sent from "some of the towns" in Yorkshire to ask O'Connor to lead them in the rising they planned and having assured the delegate that he would lead them at once took steps to make the rising ineffectual.² The evidence of Lovett's informant can at best have little weight, nor does the style in which this interview with O'Connor is reported add to the verisimilitude of his story. Nevertheless Lovett's account illustrates the dilemma in which the Irish leader found himself at the time of the Newport rising. He genuinely believed that armed insurrection, unless it was the product of a genuine "moral force" movement, was the means by which the government hoped to destroy the Chartist agitation.

A similar difficulty arose in 1842 after the second Chartist petition had been rejected by the House of Commons in June 1842. At the time when strikes broke out in many parts of northern England and Scotland, Dr. McDowall, supported by the majority of the Executive, argued that the Chartists should support the

1. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.264 ff. O'Brien affirmed that O'Connor was well aware of the intended rising in Newport; that it had been the subject of conversation

between themselves; that he (O'Brien) had implored O'Connor to use his influence to stop it ... O'Connor solemnly promised to undertake the task on account of his greater influence ... When, however, these statements came before the public, O'Connor denied them in toto."

2. W. Lovett, Life and Struggles (1876), pp.239-40. A meeting was convened at Heckmondwick ... where they were informed of the intended rising in Wales ... a person was delegated from some of the towns to go to Feargus O'Connor, to request him to lead them on, as he had so often declared he would. Collins' informant was present at the interview and described the following conversation that took place:

Delegate - Mr O'Connor, we are going to have a rising for the Charter in Yorkshire, and I am sent from - to ask if you would lead us on, as you have often said you would when we are prepared.

Feargus - Well, when is this rising to take place?

Delegate - Why, we have resolved it shall begin on Saturday next.

Feargus - Are you all well provided with arms, then?

Delegate - Yes, all of us.

Feargus - Well, that is all right, my man.

Delegate - Now, Mr O'Connor, shall I tell our lads that you will come and lead us on.

Feargus - now indignantly replied, 'Why man! when did you ever hear of me, or any one of my family, ever deserting the cause of the people? Have they not always been found at their post in the hour of danger.'

In this bouncing manner did Feargus induce the poor fellow that he was quite ready to head the people. But the man subsequently lost caste with his fellow-townsmen, for bringing them a false report - Feargus having solemnly assured them that he never promised them anything.

No sooner, however, did he (O'Connor) find out that they were so far in earnest ... that he set about to render the outbreak ineffectual ... he is said to have engaged George White to go to Yorkshire and Lancashire, to assure the people that no rising would take place in Wales; and Charles Jones he sent to Wales to assure the Welsh that there would be no rising in Yorkshire, and that it was a government plot. When Mr Jones arrived in Mr Frost's house ... he was informed that Mr O'Connor's message had come too late."

idea of a general strike which would continue until the Charter was made law.¹ At no other period was the Chartist agitation so strongly supported by the trade union movement, but still O'Connor opposed the resort to force. In a public letter he declared, "Let us set an example to the world of what moral power is capable of effecting".² He upbraided McDowell for "breathing a wild strain of recklessness most dangerous to the cause".³ His violent pacifism was largely attributed to lack of personal courage. It resulted from his failure to assess the strength of the trade union and strike movement at this time: he feared it would be dispersed at the first show of government force.

It is not surprising to learn that when O'Connor was faced with a far less favourable situation at Kennington Common on 10 April 1848, he agreed to yield to the proposal made by Mr Mayne, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, and proceed alone to the House of Commons with the Chartist petition, rather than risk bloodshed and violence which would certainly have resulted from the decision to march to the House in procession over Westminster Bridge. The Government, which had associated Chartism in the minds of the middle and upper classes with riot and foreign revolution, professed to believe that a

1. The Times, 15 August 1842.

2. Quoted by M. Novell, The Chartist Movement (1925), p.262.

3. Northern Star, 27 August 1842.

revolutionary coup was planned by the Chartists on 10 April. They massed about nine thousand troops and police all round the proposed meeting place on Kennington Common and posted military and specials on all the approaches of the bridges across the Thames. With these overwhelming forces surrounding them, O'Connor and other Chartist leaders were forced to call off the march to prevent the massacre that was certain to follow.¹ The demonstration of 10 April is usually regarded as a failure by Chartist historians and indeed it provided an anticlimax to the popular discontent then reaching its peak in England and Ireland. Yet, Chartism was not destroyed after the demonstration as it would certainly have been had a massacre of the Chartists taken place. O'Connor's caution in 1848 was well justified.

A grave weakness of O'Connor's leadership was his failure to provide an adequate alternative to the policy of armed insurrection. His opposition to the party which desired to win the Charter by a resort to force created internal dissensions which weakened the movement as a whole and made it less resistant to government pressure. It was the policy of the government to weaken the movement by mass arrests of the leaders. O'Connor, himself, was tried for seditious libel in March 1840 and

1. P.R.O. (London) H.O. 41/26; The Times, 11 April 1848; R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), pp.312-3.

sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment in York Castle.¹
 He was later tried in 1842 together with fifty-eight other Chartists for the part they were supposed to have taken in the strike movement but they were acquitted amid great popular rejoicing.²

1. Northern Star, 9, 16 May 1840. Cf. also R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.176. The indictment charged O'Connor with seditious libel. The offence was that of publishing certain speeches in the Northern Star. The first was one of his own, delivered at Rochdale, on behalf of the defence fund. The second was delivered by William Dean Taylor at Manchester; the third was reported to have been delivered by O'Brien at Stockport. O'Connor was also charged with publishing a report of the proceedings of the Newcastle meeting. In the course of the trial, he conducted his own defence, alluded to the torch-light meetings, and censured the government for suppressing them. He referred to the sacrifices and the money he had spent on the Chartist movement ... that so far from advocating physical force, he had always reprobated it, though at the expense of fleeting popularity. Despite his impassioned plea, O'Connor was found guilty.
2. F. O'Connor, The Trial of Feargus O'Connor, Esq., and fifty-eight others at Lancaster on a charge of sedition, conspiracy, tumult and riot (1843). Cf. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.232 ff. All the prisoners were indicted in what was called a "Monster Indictment" containing nine counts ... the gist of them was that the said fifty-nine "did unlawfully aid, abet, assist, comfort, support and encourage certain evil-disposed persons to continue and persist in unlawful assemblings, threats, intimidation, and violence; and in impeding and stopping of the labour employed in certain trades, manufactories, and businesses with intent thereby to cause terror and alarm in the minds of the peaceable subjects of this realm, and by the means of such terror and alarm, violently and unlawfully to cause and procure certain great changes to be made in the constitution of the realm, as by law established." Feargus O'Connor addressed the jury ... dwelt upon a variety of topics of a political nature, illustrated his case by numerous anecdotes. Sixteen were found guilty of the fourth count, fifteen on the fifth, but sentence was deferred, and counsel for the prisoners sued for a Writ of Error. The Government never evinced a desire to follow up the prosecutions, "although they, of course, went through the necessary forms".

O'Connor concentrated his energies on building a united mass movement, modelled on the type of political association which had been so successfully organised by Daniel O'Connell in Ireland in the twenties and thirties. He was convinced of the necessity of such an organisation in Britain if the working classes desired to achieve the reforms envisaged in the Charter. As early as 1836, he attempted to form such a body in the Central National Association in London; this was designed to unite all the Radical bodies in the country in a programme of further reform. His conflict with William Lovett and the London Working Men's Association obliged him to turn north for support. From 1837, O'Connor became the acknowledged leader of the northern Chartist Associations. It was not until 1841, however, that he succeeded in creating a large-scale organisation, the National Charter Association, which became the instrument of his policy.

Events in 1839 further convinced O'Connor that, without such an organisation, the working-class radicals could have little hope of securing the enactment of the Charter. He was convinced equally of the necessity to concentrate the leadership in the hands of a small but dedicated body of men headed by himself. While still in prison in 1840, by means of articles and letters in the Northern Star, in which he made capital out of his sufferings in prison, he enhanced his own reputation and

"the O'Connor legend grew".¹ At the same time, he carried out a vigorous campaign against all rival and parallel organisations within the Chartist movement. He turned his attention first to William Lovett and his newly-formed "National Association for promoting the Improvement of the People", and after a series of violent attacks had appeared on him and his policy, Lovett found himself with no general support among the Chartist ranks and was therefore compelled more and more to seek middle-class support.² Bronterre O'Brien disagreed with O'Connor on the

1. Hansard, 3rd series, lix, cols.908-911 (2 June 1840), cols.917-922 (4 June 1840); The National Instructor, vol.1, no.16, 7 September 1850. O'Connor describes the conditions in prison. After O'Connor had made protests and gone on hunger strike, the governor, whom O'Connor described as "a kind-hearted, intellectual, and humane man" finally granted him special privileges. In fact, O'Connor appears to have suffered rather less than many of his fellow Chartists.

2. Cf. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), p.230 ff. Lovett's plan was to found an organisation subordinate to the National Charter Association, for the purpose of diffusing knowledge and of imparting education to the working classes. His ideas were explained in a pamphlet, called Chartism, which he wrote in prison with John Collins. It was the agitation itself and not the attainment of the Charter which would bring freedom. This agitation must be based upon education and self-sacrifice rather than insurrection, arms and violence. In Lovett's mind, the Charter had become a democratic ideal which would realise itself through the strivings of the people for self-culture rather than a bill to be introduced into Parliament.

To propagate his new scheme, Lovett sent copies of the address with a request to them to sign it if they approved its aims. He thereupon published the address with the signatures he had obtained under the title of the National Association. Many members of the National Charter Association now found themselves approving another body which was pronounced by O'Connor to be a secret Whig-radical dodge to smash the Chartist body. Lovett had acted unwisely and O'Connor attacked him in violent and abusive language. Not all those who signed the address deserted Lovett. Vincent and Philp, the Bath Chartists and Arthur O'Neill, the Christian Chartist, supported Lovett. But outside London, the majority followed O'Connor.

policy to be followed by Chartists in the election of 1841¹ and in the disputes which followed O'Connor emerged the victor. His hostility to Lovett and O'Brien, whom he bitterly attacked in the *Northern Star*, arose primarily from his desire to establish one policy to be followed by all the Chartists. Dissension among the leaders had weakened the movement in 1839, and O'Connor was determined in future to present a strong and unified movement to their opponents. With this purpose in view, he supported the election to the Executive of Chartists, several of whom were Irishmen, who were loyal both to O'Connor and to the policies which he advocated. He was successful in creating a compliant body, which was ready to implement the various schemes proposed by O'Connor during the years between 1841 and 1848.

In his desire to strengthen the working-class party, O'Connor attacked organisations as well as individuals whose object it was to draw the support of the masses away from the National Charter Association. He opposed the anti-Corn Law League on these grounds. Not only did he believe that the abolition of duties on corn would result in distress and unemployment in the countryside, but he feared that the Free Traders would draw off members of the lower classes whom he hoped to win to the National Charter Association. He also

1. Northern Star, 26 June, 3, 10 July 1841.

led the attack against the middle-class radicals who formed the Complete Suffrage Union late in 1841. The appeal by this new organisation to the working classes got a response from Chartists who opposed O'Connor¹ and the Irish leader was quick to sense the threat to his own position. His first steps were taken against members of his own Association who were suspected of being sympathetic to the Complete Suffrage Union.² He then attacked the movement itself, calling it a dodge of the Anti-Corn League, and he followed this with an attack on the leader Joseph Sturge who, being a banker and corn-merchant, was striving, O'Connor believed, for interested reasons to draw the Chartists into his organisation.³ Unable to prevent certain numbers of Chartists from attending the joint conference in Birmingham in April 1842, O'Connor organised a rival conference of his own

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1. Cf. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), p.245. e.g. William Lovett, who saw in the Declaration of the Complete Suffrage Union an opportunity for the co-operation of all classes, O'Brien, the Bath Chartists led by R.K. Philp and Henry Vincent, and the Christian Chartists led by Arthur O'Neill, John Collins, Robert Lowery, R.J. Richardson and Patrick Brewster.
 2. R.K. Philp, a member of the Executive, and James Williams of Sunderland were the chief objects of attack. O'Connor spared no effort in articles in the Northern Star to make Philp appear a traitor, who was promoting schism within the movement. He hoped by this means to ensure that he would not be re-elected to the Chartist Executive. Philp's excommunication following his defence was much resented in the Bath district (see R.K. Philp, Vindication of his Political Conduct (London 1842)). Williams showed considerable spirit in his defence and declared that he signed Sturge's Declaration because he approved of it and was ready to challenge O'Connor on it. Northern Star, 9 April 1842.
 3. Northern Star, 26 March 1842.

followers which took place simultaneously.¹ The decline in Chartist fortunes in the latter half of 1842 led O'Connor to reconsider his position. He decided to support the second joint conference of Complete Suffragists and Chartists, which was held in Birmingham the following December. With the help of George White and others, O'Connor secured the return of a large majority of his supporters to delegates to the conference that Joseph Sturge failed to win the meeting's approval for his Bill of Rights and departed. O'Connor's name was once more hailed by the Chartists.

During the years between 1841 and 1848, when O'Connor was the predominant figure in the Chartist movement, it is significant that the "Irish question" loomed larger in the policies of the movement than hitherto. O'Connor, through the columns of the Northern Star, strove persistently to create a unity of interest between the English and Irish working people. He secured the inclusion of repeal in the Second Chartist Petition of 1842, despite opposition from Lovett and the Scottish Chartists.² When agitation for repeal was intensified in Ireland, the Northern Star was filled with articles on many aspects of the "Irish question" and Chartist demonstrations and meetings were held in favour of the measure, organised for the most part by Irishmen in the movement.

1. Northern Star, 30 April 1842.

2. W. Lovett, Life and Struggles (1876), p.254; L. Wright, Scottish Chartism (1953), pp.135-6.

The failure of the repeal agitation and the decline in Chartist popularity after 1843 led O'Connor to introduce new policies designed to stimulate the movement and prevent a further decline. O'Connor's preoccupation with the agrarian problems, which arose from his Irish background, led him to seek "the key to social reconstruction in a thorough solution of the land question".¹ By the strength of his personal influence O'Connor was able to swing the entire Chartist following over from agitation to the Charter to the support of a large-scale plan to cover England with peasant holdings. They were to be acquired by purchase through a Chartist Co-operative Land Society, to be tilled by spade husbandry by regenerated factory operatives, who would thus be rescued from the dark, unhealthy factories and mills in the new industrial towns, and thereby changed into "dauntless, self-dependent champions of the rights of the people".² The scheme was launched at the Chartist Convention held in Birmingham in September 1843. During previous months, O'Connor had given much thought to plans stimulating the now declining Chartist movement. Accordingly, the object of the Convention was to

"consider and devise a PLAN for the organisation of a society to enforce upon the public attention the principles of the People's Charter and to devise means for their practical accomplishment." 3

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1. E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (1951), p.129.
 2. G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits (1941), p.324.
 3. Northern Star, 26 August 1843.

Two schemes were laid before the meeting, one the improvement of the central organisation of the National Charter Association and the other a proposed Land Reform policy. The centre of interest was once more shifted to the south; O'Connor decided to remove the Chartist Executive from Manchester to London.¹

In organising his land scheme O'Connor drew on his experiences as a farmer in Fortrobert and a knowledge of the iniquities of the Irish land system in the 1820's, which he acquired while working as a barrister in Dublin. His plan grew out of his proposed reforms for the Irish land system, first tentatively stated in his pamphlet, "A State of Ireland"² and later developed in the "Letters to Irish Landlords", which he wrote in York prison and published in the Northern Star in

1. Cf. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), pp.268-9. O'Connor's motives for the change are not clear. Perhaps one object was to get away from the Anti-Corn Law League, whose offices were in Manchester. Harney voiced one argument for the change when he declared that transference to London would help to "regenerate" the capital. The result was to cut O'Connor off from his supporters in Lancashire and Yorkshire which hitherto had been the nucleus of his movement.
2. A State of Ireland showing the rise and progress of the Present Disaffection, with an address to the Irish people (Cork 1820). The author criticised the high rate of absenteeism which leaves the unfortunate peasant in the power of the agent, concerned to secure the maximum rent at the minimum trouble to himself, with no concern for the miserable condition of the unfortunate tenant.

the summer of 1841.¹ To launch his plan in England, O'Connor wrote "A Practical Work on the Management of small farms" which was issued in parts in 1843.² This included accounts of his experiences as a practical farmer, detailed instructions for the preparation and care of land for certain crops, and for the management of these small holdings of from one to four acres. One argument in favour of his plan was that, if surplus labour could be made unavailable to the manufacturer, wages would rise. A free land system, which would make land available to the working man would enable him to bargain on equal terms with his employer. This last argument was based on the assumption that peasants on a small-holding would achieve a standard of living comparable to that of the factory worker. O'Connor's

1. Northern Star, July-August 1841. He promised that if the landlords let out their lands in small plots to peasant holders, with security of tenure, and assistance for land improvements, their rents would be raised to hitherto unforetold heights; if on the other hand they resisted the demands of the tenantry, the monied classes, the commercial magnates would finally oust the landed aristocracy by forcing the now bankrupt landlords to sell out their land. In the adaption of this plan to new land colonies, the landlord is replaced by a society; the workmen themselves should club together and purchase land in the open market.
2. F. O'Connor, A Practical Work on the Management of small farms (London 1843). Cf. also an article in the Northern Star, i.e. Northern Star, 15 May 1843, argued that a man with four acres under potatoes, cabbage and turnips could clear £100 a year at a moderate estimate by spade cultivation. The Leeds Mercury replied that at this rate landlords would be quick to raise their rents. O'Connor's answer, Northern Star, 3 June 1843, was simply that the Mercury left out the magic effects of the Charter.

own estimates left him in little doubt that this assumption would be realised. It was for practical experiment to prove him correct.

Although O'Connor hoped that his plan might be made general by legislation, he wished to prove it first by practical demonstration. He maintained that, while the Charter remained the ultimate aim, the immediate project should be the founding of Chartist land colonies to provide a convincing demonstration of their excellence. The Land Plan was received with a storm of abuse from every side. O'Brien believed O'Connor's calculations were unrealistic and optimistic. The creation of a class of independent, peasant owners would create a solid conservative block, which would impede all radical change.¹ Thomas Cooper attacked the plan and its originator at the Chartist Convention in 1846 and was expelled from the National Charter Association in consequence.² Despite these and similar warnings, O'Connor proceeded with the plan and now began to work out details, together with W.P. Roberts the other lawyer in the movement. At the Convention held in April 1845 there was more feeling in favour of the plan and a committee was appointed to draw up a scheme for a "Chartist Land Co-operative Society".³ At first progress was slow and by the end of the year less than £2700 had been collected for the purchase of land.⁴ Despite continual

1. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), pp.268-9.

2. *Ibid.*, p.274 ff. At the Convention Cooper represented the City of London Chartists. He announced his intention to

propose a number of resolutions which included 3rd: That the Executive Committee of the National Charter Association be chosen from members of the Association who are not directors of the Land Society.

8th: That this Convention regards Feargus O'Connor as unworthy of the confidence of Chartists, and hereby earnestly warns British working men of the folly and danger of union with him.

Thomas Clark had an interview with Cooper who was reputed to have said that they "were all deceived, that (O'Connor) was not fit to be trusted with the funds, or the management of affairs".

Cooper's charges were answered by two long letters in the Star of 21 June 1845. Cooper was refused space in the Star to print his criticism and resorted to Lloyd's Newspaper.

At the Conference held in Leeds on 3 August 1846, O'Connor tried to persuade Cooper to give up but to no avail and Ernest Jones, who only recently joined the society, said he would move Cooper's expulsion on the "grounds of contumely ... not a man had the courage to vote against it, though more than one had been bitterly hostile to Feargus O'Connor" and the Chairman declared Cooper to be expelled.

3. Northern Star, 26 April and 3 May 1845. The shares were £2.10s. each and could be purchased in weekly instalments of 3d. and upwards, and the object of the Land Plan was to "show the working classes the value of land as a means of making them independent of the grinding capitalist", and "the necessity of securing the speedy enactment of the People's Charter, which would do for them nationally what the society proposes to do for them sectionally".
4. Northern Star, 13, 20, 27 December 1845.

criticism, O'Connor registered the Land Company provisionally in October 1846. Early in 1847, the company reached its final status as the Land Company. Its capital was to be £130,000 in 100,000 shares, and branches were to be formed all over the country. O'Connor had absolute control over the operations of the Company.¹ He proved a first-class company promoter, his powers of persuasion, energy and influence over his fellows secured most of the money asked for. Several small estates were purchased in the open market and broken up into small allotments. The first, at Rickmansworth, was called O'Connorville. Four other estates were acquired in southern England, although the

1. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), p.277; Northern Star, 26 April, 3 May 1845.

The object of the company was to buy estates in the open market and divide them up into small holdings. A low minimum weekly subscription for shares was fixed, and a single share could be purchased for 26s. The proprietor of two shares might hope to receive a house, two acres of land, and an advance of £15 to stock it. The holder of one share had a claim to one acre and an advance of £7.10s. The order in which the shareholder was to participate in these benefits was by ballot. As soon as the fortune of the lottery gave the lucky investor his chance, it was the company's business to find the land, prepare it for cultivation, erect a suitable cottage, and advance the loans which would start the new proprietor in his enterprise. In return the tenant had simply to pay the Company a rent of 5% per annum. With this rent, the Company was to go on buying and equipping more land until every subscriber to its capital was happily established on his little farm.

subscribers were drawn mainly from northern industrial towns.¹

O'Connor was ably assisted by Ernest Jones and together they edited The Labourer, which was devoted to furthering the work of the Land Company. For a period, the Company flourished although its legal position was insecure.² O'Connor established a Land Bank in 1847 of which he had unquestioned control. Contributions continued to roll in and by November 1847 the total sum invested exceeded £80,000. Owing to the uncertain legal status and the numerous critics of the plan, a special committee of the House of Commons was ordered to enquire on its behalf into the Land Company's affairs. In its report, the committee stated that, although the financial affairs of the

1. At the ceremonial opening of O'Connorville where there is still an inn, called "The Land of Liberty", Ernest Jones composed the following poem, which was published in the Northern Star, 22 August 1846.

"See there the cottage, labour's own abode,
The pleasant doorway on the cheerful road,
The airy floor, the roof from storms secure.
The merry fireside and the shelter sure,
And, dearest charm of all, the grateful soil,
That bears its produce for the hands that toil."

Of the other four sites purchased, two were near Gloucester, one at Minster Lovel near Witney, and the other at Dodford near Bromsgrove.

2. M. Beer, A History of British Socialism (1953), vol.ii, p.157. At first O'Connor attempted to register the Land Society as a friendly society... but the registrar absolutely refused to register it on the grounds that the Land Society possessed the characteristics of a political society. O'Connor then attempted to bring his society within the range of the Joint Stock Company law, but the cost of registration was relatively high, for the fees for stamps and registering amounted to about £4 for every 100 shareholders, and the enrolment of members in O'Connor's colonising society was surprisingly rapid. But because it was only provisionally registered, the Land Company possessed no legal status.

Land Company had "not been kept with strict regularity, yet the irregularity had been against O'Connor's interests, instead of in his favour".¹ The committee advised that the Company, owing to the unsatisfactory state of its finances, and the undetermined legal status, should be closed down.

In the course of the disclosures about the Land Plan, many of its defects were made public. O'Connor failed to take into account the difficulties which townsmen, many of whom had never lived in the country, would have in learning to become farmers. Moreover, in his calculations as to the cost, O'Connor never allowed for the possible rise in the price of land or the practical difficulties of building pleasant cottages and buying

1. Six reports from the select committee on the National Land Company, H.C. 1847-8, xix. The committee adopted the following resolution as its final finding:

"The books of proceedings of the National Land Company as well as the accounts of the company have been most imperfectly kept, and the original balance-sheets have been destroyed, and only three of them (from the end of September, 1847, to the end of March, 1848) have been produced; but Mr Feargus O'Connor, having expressed an opinion that an impression had gone abroad that the moneys subscribed by the National Land Company had been applied to his own benefit, this committee are clearly of the opinion that, although the accounts have not been kept with strict regularity, yet the irregularity has been against Mr O'Connor's interests, instead of in his favour, and that it appears there is due to Mr O'Connor the sum of between £3,298 and £3,400. Considering that the company appears to have been carried on bona fide, it is the opinion of the committee that powers might be granted to the parties concerned to wind up the concern and to relieve themselves from the penalties to which they might have incautiously exposed themselves."

fertile land at reasonable cost.¹ O'Connor lacked precision in monetary affairs with the result that the financial position of the Land Company was complicated by the lack of proper accounts. O'Connor lost heavily on the venture and was much discredited by the failure of his Land scheme; it involved him in at least one libel case.²

For some time previous to the failure of the Land Plan, O'Connor's fortunes had risen. One of the surprises of the election of 1847 was his return as member for Nottingham.³ In his election address, he supported the separation of Church and State, a graduated property tax, and, rather surprisingly,

1. Cf. Authentic Report of the Trial of the Great Libel Case, O'Connor v. Bradshaw (Nottingham 1850).

Reports by witnesses brought against O'Connor, pp.9-11. They included several former inhabitants of Snigs End, a land settlement near Gloucester. Cf. John Hudson, formerly of Leicester where he worked as a framework knitter for 12-14s. a week. He left town on 12 June 1848 for Snigs End. At first he was delighted but then he found he was unable to get a livelihood on the land. Alexander Clehand, a handloom weaver of Glasgow, who earned £1.1s. a week with two sons earning nearly as much, took a small holding at Snigs End although he knew nothing about farming. In his three acres he sowed potatoes but they took blight and he and his family had a bad time. He did not pay any rent because he believed that he did not have to pay anything beyond a 4% per annum on outlay but even so he failed to make a living on his small holding.

2. Authentic Report of the Trial of the Great Libel case, O'Connor v. Bradshaw. (1850). O'Connor brought an action against the editor of the Nottingham Journal, Mr Bradshaw, whom he charged with having injured "his good name and reputation", and having brought him into "public scandal and disgrace". The verdict was in favour of the Nottingham Journal, but in giving it, the jury begged to accompany it "with the unanimous opinion that the plaintiff's character stands unimpeached as regards his personal honesty".
3. Northern Star, 31 July 1847. The numbers given were Walter (of the Times) 1830; O'Connor 1340, elected; Gisborne 1089; Hobhouse 974, not elected.

free trade.¹ He appealed for support for his Land Plan.² O'Connor's return to the House of Commons created considerable consternation among the Irish members, since he insisted on raising the question of repeal and on attacking coercive measures for Ireland just as he had done fourteen years before.³

Excited by the prospects of an alliance with the Irish Confederates, O'Connor spoke at several Confederate-Chartist meetings in the early months of 1848.⁴ In order to rally the Chartists, a new petition to Parliament to grant the Charter and Repeal of the Union was drawn up, and on 1 April, 1848, O'Connor published an appeal to the Chartists calling upon them to sign the petition.⁵ It was almost his last manifesto as their acclaimed leader. For a brief period, O'Connor's hopes appeared to be realised; the union of the English and Irish peoples was a reality at last. However, the failure of the Chartist demonstration on 10 April, and the disgrace which now clung to the Petition⁶, was a bitter blow. To O'Connor it

1. Nottingham Journal, 29 July 1847; Northern Star, 7 August 1847.
2. Nottingham Journal, 29 July 1847. O'Connor is reported to have stated that "only conceive the area around Nottingham of 100,000 acres divided into 10,000 farms of 10 acres each. Would not the holders and their wives and families come into this town on Saturday morning to purchase goods and so benefit the shopkeepers?"
3. Hansard, 3rd series, xcv, col. 722 ff. (6 December 1847).
4. Northern Star, 25 March 1848.
5. Northern Star, 1 April 1848.
 "Onwards, and we conquer.
 Backwards, and we fall!
 The People's Charter and No Surrender!"

"Old Guards! As I believe in my soul that the time has now arrived when we are entitled to the fruits of our thirteen years' labour, I call upon you to perform that duty which your own order, 'the fustian jackets, the blistered hands and unshorn chins', expect from your hands. It is impossible, as it would be immoral, that the labouring classes of England, the most oppressed of any country in the world, should allow the present manifestation of their order throughout the world to pass unnoticed or unimproved by them ... I would rather die than give up one particle of the Charter. Still remember that our movement is a labour movement, originated in the first instance by the fustian jackets, the blistered hands and the unshorn chins. Further, I would not give a fig for the Charter, if we were not prepared with a solid, social system to take the place of the artificial one we mean to destroy ... But in addition to the Charter we have land reform, which will give bread to the working men when the Charter is carried. The Charter and the Land. Those are our objects. Protect us in our work, People of England! Sign our petition."

6. After the terror came satire. Cf. M. Beer, A History of British Socialism, vol.ii, pp.170-2. "The Chartists are coming."

"What a row, and a rumpus there is I declare,
Tens of thousands are flocking from everywhere,
To petition the parliament onwards they steer,
The Chartists are coming, oh dear, oh dear,
To demand equal justice, their freedom and right,
Pump-handles and broom-sticks, lawk, how they can fight,
The nation, they say, is overwhelmed with grief,
A peck loaf for twopence and four pounds of beef!

Chorus:

Hurrah for old England and liberty sweet,
The land that we live in and plenty to eat;
We shall ever remember this wonderful day,
See the Chartists are coming, get out of the way.

meant the virtual end of his hopes of a great moral force movement of the working classes; to the rank-and-file, O'Connor no longer appeared as the leader which they had hitherto thought him. The revolt against his leadership became general. O'Connor took no part in the Confederate-Chartist meetings which were a feature of the summer months of 1848. They savoured of civil discord and revolution which he had striven so hard to avoid. During the period of the Chartist trials he was active in seeking out the best counsels for the prisoners and had to pay much of the expense himself. He still remained a Member of Parliament but took little part in the debates.¹

He escaped arrest and for a few months endeavoured to regain his position as leader of the Chartists. Bitter experience had shown him the weakness of the working-class radical movement and at last he began to consider the possibilities of an alliance with middle-class radicals. Ernest Jones and George Julian Harney were as indignant with the proposals for such an alliance made by O'Connor and Clark at a series of meetings held in London during the summer of 1849 as O'Connor had been with O'Brien's proposals of a similar nature in 1841. Increasing disillusionment with the English Chartists led O'Connor to turn his attention more and more to the Irish Democratic Confederation of Ireland. In the winter of 1849-50, he addressed a series of

1. In 1849 he was indignant at the treatment of Ernest Jones then serving a prison sentence for his part in the events of 1848. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement, p.295.

letters to the Association¹ and spoke at its two public meetings.² Early in 1852, he sold the Northern Star, which was now losing circulation and money, and in the same year he paid a visit to the United States. Shortly after his return, he alleged to have insulted a fellow-member of the House of Commons and was committed to the custody of the serjeant-of-arms. The next day he was pronounced insane and committed to the private asylum of a Dr. Tuke where he remained until 1854 when, against his doctor's advice, he was removed to his sister's house in Notting Hill Gate, where on 30 August 1855 he died.³ At the news of his death old enmities were forgotten, and he was given a public funeral attended by not less than 15,000 people. A vast procession made its way from Smithfield to Notting Hill Gate, where his body lay, and thence to Kensal Green where after a simple but dignified ceremony he was buried.⁴

From what has already been said, it is clear that without Feargus O'Connor the movement would have taken on a very different character and occupied a much less prominent position in the history of British working-class radicalism. No other leader of his time, perhaps in the history of British working-

1. Irishman, November 1849 - February 1850.

2. Irishman, 27 November 1849, 9 March 1850.

3. Cf. W.J. O'Neill Daunt's Memoirs (MS 3041), vol.ii, pp.539, 545, for descriptions of his last years.

4. Times, 11 September 1855.

class movements, took such a hold of the imagination or the loyalty of the masses. His ideas helped to mould the shape of the movement and his perseverance helped to keep it alive through many difficult years. Above all, his pride in his Irish origins contributed to giving the "Irish question" a prominent place in the Chartist programme and helped to secure the participation of many of his fellow-countrymen in the British Chartist movement.

Irish journalists in the British Chartist Movement.

In addition to these political agitators, a number of Irishmen distinguished themselves as radical journalists. James Bronterre O'Brien, often known as the "Chartist schoolmaster", was the best-known Chartist journalist and was regarded as the leading theoretician of the movement. Less well-known were James Whittle, working editor of the Champion, and Thomas Ainge Devyr, sub-editor of the Northern Liberator. All three men approached the basic evils of society from an Irish viewpoint. Whittle and Devyr, no less than O'Brien believed that a settlement of the land question should precede all other fundamental reform. Unlike later Continental socialist writers, these Irish journalists never came to terms with the new industrial and commercial developments which were already transforming the social pattern in England in the early half of the nineteenth century. They never accepted the industrial worker as the true representative of the new social system, but rather as an ex-peasant whose best interest and greatest desire was to return to the land from which he had been driven through the iniquitous powers of landlord and money lender. They publicised Irish ideas and helped to make O'Connor's Irish policy more palatable to the English worker.

James Whittle, who lived in Manchester, was already known in Manchester for his radical views when he went to Dublin at the invitation of Patrick O'Higgins, the Dublin Chartist leader,

to edit The Tribune in 1834. After its failure, Whittle returned to Manchester and was soon appointed editor of a new radical paper, the Champion.¹ His experiences in Ireland remained fresh in his mind and references to that country recur frequently in the Champion. He supported the efforts of his associate, O'Higgins, in the movement for an Irish poor law², and he published contributions and documents from the Dublin Chartists.³ While living in Dublin he had witnessed the extent of O'Connell's power over the minds of his fellow-countrymen. "We pity the nation led by him and therefore warn the people of England against giving him support."⁴ He agreed

1. The Champion, owned by the sons of William Cobbett, was launched in 1836 and lasted until April 1840 when it was announced that the paper would be amalgamated with the Northern Liberator. It was felt that it would be impossible to continue two radical papers in northern England in addition to the Northern Star, which was rapidly gaining in popularity at the expense of these other two papers. In fact, the Northern Liberator was obliged to close down in December 1840.
2. Cf. the Champion, 18, 25 December 1836, 1, 22, 29 January 1837. Champion, 15 January 1837. "Justice to Ireland" (an article addressed to the Editors of the Champion from P. O'Higgins). This attacked the proposed Poor Laws for Ireland.
3. Champion, 25 August 1839. "An Address to the Industrious Classes of Dublin", signed by Patrick Rafter, Chairman, and L.F. Clancy, Secretary of the Dublin Chartists.
4. Champion, 30 August 1837. Cf. also Champion, 9 October, 18 December 1836, 22 January, 12 February 1837, for Whittle's references to O'Connell. He made strenuous efforts to counteract by his articles the influence of O'Connell on Irishmen in England by exposing his policy as regards the Dublin trades, O'Connell's opposition to an improved Poor law for Ireland, etc. He was particularly hostile to O'Connell's alliance with the Whigs. Cf. the Champion, 1 January 1837.

with O'Connor's proposals, made to the Chartist Convention in 1839, to seek co-operation with the Irish people but, on account of O'Connell's influence, held out little hope that it would succeed.¹

Although primarily a journalist, Whittle made an occasional appearance on Chartist platforms. The first, characteristically enough, was at a meeting in Preston in November, 1838, where he made a violent attack upon the Poor Law and its initiators.² He was elected to represent Liverpool at the National Chartist Convention which met in London on 4 February 1839. In the course of the discussions, he allied himself with O'Brien and O'Connor against the extreme elements headed by George Julian Harney, Ryder and Marsden.³ He strongly opposed suggestions for "ulterior measures" proposed by the Convention in May, after its removal to Birmingham, and he retired from the Conference.⁴

1. Champion, 24 February 1839.

2. The Place Manuscripts, Ad. MS 27,820. Quoted by M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), p.111.

3. Whittle proposed the resolution expelling Harney, Ryder and Marsden from the Chartist movement on account of the disputes between Harney and Lovett and the formation of the revolutionary London Democratic Association in 1838. Cf. The Charter, 9 March 1839. He also proposed a resolution pertaining to Ireland which was seconded by O'Connor, that the Convention should consider Lord John Russell's policy of governing Ireland as "unworthy of public confidence". Charter, 21 April 1839.

4. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement, p.150. The "ulterior measures", which included the proposition of a "sacred month" were to be carried out if Parliament rejected the People's Charter.

This policy of caution was favoured by neither Harney or O'Connor, with whom Whittle came into conflict the following year.¹ When the Champion was closed down in 1840, Whittle retired from radical politics.

Thomas Ainge Devyr² was born in Donegal in 1809. He was the son of an impoverished business man and received little formal education.³ By the age of sixteen he was at work in Donegal where he secured employment as a clerk in a local business. In the course of his work, young Devyr travelled about the country and saw much of the poverty and privation suffered by the Irish peasantry. He came to the conclusion that the evils of society could be traced to the "monopoly of the soil by a few, and the exclusion from it of the many".⁴ It became his avowed purpose to devote his life to defeating this monster, "Land Monopoly".

1. Cf. Whittle's attack on Harney, Champion, 5 April 1840 and reply by Harney, Northern Star, 25 April 1840 and O'Connor, Northern Star, 16 May 1840.

2. The sources for Devyr are confined to an autobiographical work, The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century or "Chivalry" in the modern days. Land reform for the last fifty years, which was published by T. Devyr in New York in 1882.

He also wrote articles in several radical papers, notably the Constitutional during 1836 and 1837, which was edited by Lamon Blanchard and supported by parliamentary radicals; he edited the Greenwich Patriot in 1837 for a few weeks. In 1838 he was invited to join the staff of the Northern Liberator.

3. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century (1882), pp.34-44. Devyr's mother was an English Methodist and his father an Irish Catholic, who though "sober, honest and truthful" was very "careless and improvident", which Devyr believed was the cause of his family's poverty.

4. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century (1882), p.108.

While still in his early twenties, Devyr wrote a pamphlet, "Our Natural Rights", and published it in Derry at his own expense.¹ He attacked the "baneful influence of the landed aristocracy and their base and unprincipled mercenaries"² that he deemed responsible for the pitiful condition of the Irish peasantry. The predominance of the Whig and Tory parties over the Radicals, the elected representatives of the lower classes, increased the strength of the aristocracy in the legislature. Yet the aristocracy used their power only to fling "hundreds on the harlots lap, and thousands on the gamester's table".³ He attacked the system of taxation because it raised the prices of commodities beyond the reach of the ordinary people, and its administration which was duly inflated by the employment of large numbers of tax collectors and coastguards; the National Debt, though raised by the consent of parliament, was, in the opinion of Devyr, "a debt of the aristocracy" which the people

1. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century (1882), p.112 ff. In the introduction he declared that there was "not an evil in society which has not its root in absolute ownership of land.
2. The Northern Liberator, 19 June 1838. "In England the influence of the aristocracy ... is bad enough, but in Ireland it is ten times more baneful and ruinous - there barrenness and desolation - hunger and wretchedness - ignorance and vice, all abound through the baneful influence of the landed aristocracy and their base and unprincipled mercenaries."
3. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, p.117.

were being forced to pay.¹ Writing in the Constitutional in September 1836, he reiterated his view that the landed aristocracy "have interests directly opposed to those of the mass of the people, and the former being legislators legislate so as to appropriate wealth to themselves and want to the people".² He criticised the preponderance of small farms coupled with the absence of laws to protect the tenant against the exactions of his landlord, which gave rise to Irish pauperism.³

Since Devyr held the evils of existing society were ultimately traceable to the system of land ownership, he proposed as a solution a system of land reform, which he called

1. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, p.187. Cf. Devyr's lecture on National Debt delivered in Newcastle September 1839. He gave reasons why the National Debt could be repudiated by the people.

1st. It was contracted under the Rotten Borough system, when the landed aristocracy owned both Houses and dictated the vote in both Lords and Commons.

2nd. It was contracted to combat liberty first in America and then in France.

3rd. These were purposes which the people of England did not approve.

4th. As it was a debt contracted by the aristocracy ... it should be borne by the aristocracy out of their estates.

2. Constitutional, 16 September 1836.

3. Northern Liberator, 19 June 1838. "If an Irish peasant reclaims a field from the moor ... his holding is pronounced to be more than it is and he is ordered to pay an advance rent regulated in exact proportion to his improvements ... the landlord steps in and in violation of every principle of justice and common honesty seizes the whole advantage to himself ... His (the farmer's) waste of toil and capital had effected no virtual change in his wretched condition."

"limited ownership".¹ Only by imposing terms on landlord and tenant were far-reaching improvements to be secured for the mass of the people. Unlike his fellow countryman O'Brien, Devyr did not believe that universal suffrage alone would bring about the desired social changes, yet he perceived that until the people deprived the landed aristocracy of their legislative advantage over them they could not "achieve any substantial good". He therefore supported the radical reformers as the only party prepared to unseat the Irish landed aristocracy from their uneasy thrones. Vote by ballot would provide a weapon in the hands of the people against Whig and Tory combinations, united in their desire to oppose the people's will; corporate reform might bring a destruction of existing interests in the Irish boroughs, but on the question of tithes he wrote, "I cannot perceive how that can be settled whilst the landlord retains absolute ownership of the land".²

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1. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, p.112. "Limited ownership would not deprive the landlord of moral influence but take from him the power of coercing tenants' vote. Thus the 'Ballot' a skulking expedient would be unnecessary. Limited ownership by giving the occupier a perpetual property in the soil, by securing to him a large portion of the fruits of his industry and by keeping him to his duty would fertilize our land, reclaim our wastes and treble the agricultural products of the land. We would then require no Poor Laws. Limited ownership, by exacting a duty of the landlord, would destroy the bad effects of Absenteeism, the worst - perhaps the only bad effect of the Union. Under Limited ownership, the Tithe question could be settled to the benefit of the farmer, now it cannot."
 2. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, p.122 ff., quoted from "Our Natural Rights", Ch. IV.

Devyr judged politicians by their attitude to the Irish land question.¹ At first he believed that Daniel O'Connell was the one man who could defeat the Irish landlords and that he would maintain the same enthusiasm and purpose which he had shown as leader of the "oppressed Catholics of Ireland - that bore him up ... until he was hailed as the liberator of his creed".² However, when it was evident that the Emancipation Bill merely "let a few Catholic lords and lawyers into Parliament"³, Devyr began to inquire more closely into O'Connell's policy. He was particularly hostile to O'Connell's opposition to the new Poor Law, which, Devyr believed, would alleviate the sufferings of the Irish peasantry to some small degree and was doubly welcome since it would impose on the landlords the obligation of supporting their own poverty-tenantry.⁴ Devyr modified his criticism of O'Connell before joining the staff of the Northern Liberator in July 1838, but

1. Cf. Constitutional, 16, 19, 27, 29 September, 5, 17, October, 12, 15, 19 November, 21 December 1836, 17, 26 January, 19 June 1837; The Northern Liberator, 14 July, 11, August, 29 September, 3 November 1838, 27 April, 20, 28 December 1838.
2. Constitutional, 3 October 1836.
3. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, p.66.
4. Constitutional, 5 October 1836. "A system of poor laws was one, if not the most essential of the fruits of emancipation ... A poor law, securing the people from famine by giving them a claim upon the land was absolutely necessary." Cf. also Constitutional, 29 September 1836. "Requisite relief would imply sacrifice on the part of the landlords of Ireland but since the aristocracy controlled the legislature this would be resisted."

once he openly allied himself with the English radicals, he unleashed bitter attacks upon the *Liberator*. During his stay in England, Devyr had become convinced that the only party willing to support reforms for Ireland was that of the English radicals, and he constantly urged the union of the Irish people with this party. He was not surprised at O'Connell's rejection of William Lovett's address in 1838¹, and he criticised O'Connell's reasons for his decision.² He concludes his article on this subject with a stinging attack upon O'Connell's conduct as a national leader, which he maintained was "most heartless and profligate".³ Much of O'Connell's popularity

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1. "Address to the Irish People from the Working Men's and Radical Associations", August 1838. Quoted in W. Lovett, Life and Struggles (London 1876), p.186 ff.
 2. Northern Liberator, 29 September 1838. "If the Irish have not yet succeeded in getting so large a share of civil principles as the English then it becomes more urgent that they should not be fastidious as to the means to be employed in obtaining their just share of freedom. The second alleged reason is contrary to the first. There never was a time in the reform agitation when the masses of the labouring men were more closely combined and their energies more firmly and more decidedly concentrated ... What would seem to please O'Connell would be to see all the working men led by one person or persons just as he does the ragged, hoseless, lifeless, miserable creatures in Ireland..."
 3. Ibid. "We are afraid the English radicals will have to allow the third reason, that they have no well-trained leaders among them. None certainly, so well trained as Daniel himself, in 'flicking the last halfpenny' from the pockets of his starving and denuded followers. In this respect he stands without a rival ... What a pretty fellow this is to talk about having confidence in public men. What has he done to inspire confidence? He boasts of having, for several years, sixty members of Parliament under his thumb; and what has he done with the mass of influence, either for the benefit of England or his own famished country."

in England during the mid-1830's was according to Devyr due to his references to universal suffrage but "in all his programmes and speeches to the Irish people 'Universal Suffrage' did not pass his lips. By its use he kept English Democracy on his side".¹

Devyr was a fervent admirer of Sharman Crawford, the "best aristocrat in Ireland".² It was to Crawford that Devyr first went when he arrived in London in 1836. He sent him a copy of his pamphlet, "Our Natural Rights", and later called upon him to learn his opinion of it. At first Crawford discouraged him from staying in London but afterwards relented³ and through his influence Devyr was offered a position as Irish editor to a new radical journal, the Constitutional.⁴ After three months, he quarrelled with Lamon Blanchard, the editor, and left the office⁵

1. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, p.68.
2. Ibid., p.74. Devyr supported Crawford in his attempts in Parliament to legalise "Tenant Right" as it existed in practice in the Northern counties.
3. Ibid., p.136. Describing his interview with Sharman Crawford, Devyr said, "he discouraged my thought of remaining in London. 'Well, sir, if I can't be useful here - useful to Ireland - my path is straight to the United States. Good Morning.' He followed me on the stair. 'Hold! Don't go to America. Ireland can't afford to lose such good men as you.' 'Then Ireland shall not lose me. I shall return to London and enter on the war.'" (against Land monopoly)
4. It was his duty to "collate and comment upon current affairs and current news of Ireland". Cf. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, p.137.
5. He quarrelled with Lamon Blanchard, the editor, about the contents of an article on poor laws for Ireland. He refused to eradicate certain lines from the article, "these lines are the soul; without them the article would be a dead carcass". (The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, p.140.)

and was for several months without work. At the end of his resources he returned to the offices of the paper and was at once given back his old job. Unfortunately, the Constitutional lasted only a few more weeks before it was obliged to close down for reasons of debt. Devyr once more found himself out of work but after a few weeks he was offered the job of editing a newspaper, the Greenwich Patriot. His extreme views offended the Whig interests controlling the paper and their financial support was withdrawn with the result that it failed. He advertised for a job and received a reply from Robert Blakney of the Northern Liberator offering him a position on the paper. He now found himself among a body of "reformers, remarkable indeed for their zeal, activity and singleness of purpose".¹ He was responsible for writing articles on Irish affairs, received numerous reports and delegates from Chartist organisations, and supervised the sales of the paper in the local public houses.

Very soon after his arrival in Newcastle, Devyr was elected Correspondence Secretary of the Northern Political Union, and took part in many meetings and demonstrations.² He was

1. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, pp.152-4.

2. Northern Liberator, 13 October 1838. Devyr acknowledged the thanks of the meeting for his part on the paper; 8 December 1838. Devyr addressed a public meeting at Wharburton; 13 April 1839, Devyr denounced the cold-blooded policy of the Whigs in Ireland, especially in reviving the Coercion Bill. Northern Star, 2 February 1839. Addressing a Chartist meeting, Devyr declared:
 "The question at issue was simply this, whether the people were to bow the knee and ask a small modicum of bread from the present corrupt and usurping parliament, or rise up with dignity of men and demand once and for all the removal of all their grievances."

responsible for two addresses issued by this body. The first, "An Address of the Northern Political Union to their oppressed Brothers in Ireland", appeared in November 1838. It appealed to the Irish to "accept the hand of friendship" which the English radicals offered. "Your union with England will become your blessing not your curse".¹ Devyr made his Irish nationality plain in this address when he referred to the "glorious era of the Volunteers", and to the existing rulers of Ireland who failed to protect the people "from the visits of the Tithe ruffians ... or the exterminating power of the landlord, when he wants to manufacture a breed of voters who will 'drive kindly' to the hustings". He claimed that an alliance with British radicals would once and for all free the Irish people "from the fangs of an aristocracy which has rendered your beautiful land into a comparative desert". It would enable them to develop the resources of the country and the industry of its inhabitants and maintain its people "in plenty and happiness".²

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1. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, pp.164-8. "Address of the Northern Political Union of Newcastle-on-Tyne to their Oppressed Brothers in Ireland." "A glorious opportunity now offers for the achievement of your independence. Join us in asserting the rights of citizenship. Those once established, your fellow workmen in England will have power to do you justice ... three years shall not roll over till you have your Parliament; not a corrupt oligarchy of landlords and place hunters, but a purely Representative Parliament in College Green."
 2. *Ibid.*, p.168. Devyr relates that when O'Connell read the address, "he summoned a meeting of his henchmen and read the Address, commenting upon its atrocity paragraph by paragraph, and concluded by giving his opinion thus: 'If her Majesty's Attorney-General does his duty the heads of these three men (T. Devyr, W. Thomason and T. Horn) who signed this paper will roll upon the scaffold!'"

The second manifesto, an "Address to the Middle Classes of the North of England", the violent language of which led to the government prosecutions of a number of Chartist leaders in Newcastle.¹ The Address appealed to the middle classes "trampled and spat upon by the aristocracy" to make common cause with the working classes, who were about to cast off the intolerable burdens which oppressed them, or be sacrificed in violence and civil strife.² Devyr took part in the monster meetings

1. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, pp.182-4. "Address to the Middle Classes." Robert Blakely, the proprietor, and John Bell, the printer of the Northern Liberator, were arrested for the publication of the address which appeared on 3 August 1839. The author was not known at the time since Devyr did not sign his name to it.
 2. "Address to the Middle Classes", quoted in The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, pp.182-4. "Will the Aristocracy associate with you ... Do they not, in one word, despise and oppress you as much as they do the working men, the only difference being that you are able, and would appear willing, to bear the yoke, whilst we are unable and, thank God, neither are we willing to bear it ... It is not a question of courage we are discussing now, it is a question of necessity; watch your own child as with tears it implores for a morsel; see the eye of your own wife and sister grow dim with famine; feel hunger tearing at your own vitals; then hear the shot-peal calling you to death or freedom; opening to you a chance of escape from the hell you endure, or you will rush to the shock of battle with a joy bordering on madness.
- And what will be the result of that strife of blood which you alone can avert? If successful, the people will look on their fallen brothers and apostrophize their mangled remains thus: 'Well you were sacrificed by the middle classes; they could have saved you, but they would not; they assisted and encouraged the Aristocracy to murder you! Let desolation dwell in the homes that made your homes desolate!' Middle classes: vengeance, swift and terrible, will then overtake you.
- ... should the people of England be put down...they (the aristocracy) will 'DISPERSE IN A MILLION OF INCENDIARIES' your warehouses, your homes, will be given to black flames..."

held in Newcastle at this time. On 7 July 1839, he headed a procession which was broken up by the police. Describing the incident he wrote,

"Our people had been well taught that it was not riot we wanted but revolution. So not a stone was thrown. Fifteen or twenty prisoners were taken. But the police acted with cool judgement, not touching the leaders who were in front of the procession, expostulating and striving to drive them back." ¹

The authorities of Newcastle were prepared to strike at the right of public meeting. When the Assizes were held, the grand jury, without any previous notice, found true bills against a number of the Northumberland Chartists, including Thomas Devyr and Bronterre O'Brien, for speeches delivered by them on 7 July 1839.² The case was bound over until the next assizes. Devyr, who was arrested, spent an uncomfortable night in the cells, and was then allowed to return home.

Only a few weeks later, the Newport rising took place and Devyr received the news of the event with "a combination of sharpness and coldness, as if a quick incision were made into it (his heart) by an exceedingly sharp instrument made of ice".³ After the conviction of the Welsh Chartists, the Newcastle men

1. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, p.196.

2. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.149. Those charged were Bronterre O'Brien, William Thomason, John Mason, James Ayr, and Thomas Devyr. See also Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.135 ff. for a report of the meeting in question.

3. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, p.196.

organised themselves into small secret societies of twelve men each, bound by oath and sworn to secrecy, and ordered to "hold their lives to no account in the attainment of their object and execute death on anyone who betrayed information".¹ Devyr was implicated in plans for a rising, and he believed that since many of the infantry were Irishmen, they would join the insurgents. The plan came to nothing. Devyr was charged with sedition, but he escaped on a sailing boat to America before the police were able to catch up with him and never returned again to Europe.

We know remarkable little about Devyr apart from his own autobiographical study and the newspaper articles he wrote between 1836 and 1840. He might be called the "Harney of the North"; his fiery utterances were worthy of the Chartist revolutionary. Devyr emigrated to America at the age of thirty-one; he left the British working-class radical movement before he had time to develop into a journalist of O'Brien's quality or even play a significant rôle in the northern Chartist movement. However, his association with the Northern Liberator raised the quality of the paper and it declined rapidly after he left the country. Devyr was an admirer of Bronterre O'Brien

1. The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, p.200. Secret societies were established, one in Bradford by Peter Bussey. It is hard to know the extent of Devyr's influence in the matter, though the Northumberland society corresponded closely to the type of organisation familiar in Ireland in the United Irishmen and the Ribbon movements.

and his writings. He was a firm supporter of the "physical force" Chartists and had an inclination towards conspiracy and armed insurrection. After Devyr's departure to America, the Newcastle Chartists lost much of their prominence in the movement: one is tempted to think that this fiery Irishman imbued them with his own revolutionary nationalist and defiant spirit.

By far the most distinguished of the Irish radical journalists was James Bronterre O'Brien, who abandoned law to devote his life to the working class movement.¹ He brought to the movement an ideology which it otherwise lacked.² His trenchant articles, often signed "Bronterre", were concerned with land reform, currency reform, and the conflict between capital and labour.³ His writings, the greater part of which was done in the thirties, had a profound influence on the young Chartist leaders such as George Julian Harney who referred to him as his "guide, philosopher and friend".⁴ O'Brien was not an original thinker; he drew upon the ideas of former political

1. There is no full-length biography of James Bronterre O'Brien. G.D.H. Cole, in his "Chartist Portraits" (London 1941), has written a short biographical study of O'Brien, which is very useful. There are also references in the standard works on the Chartist movement. Cf. R.G. Gammage, The History of the Chartist Movement (Newcastle and London 1894); M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (Manchester 1925); E. Dolléans, Le Chartisme (Paris 1912-13); M. Beer, A History of British Socialism, 2 vols. (London 1953 ed.); A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge (London 1958); F. Rosenblatt, The Chartist movement in its social and economic aspects (New York 1916); P. Slossen, The decline of the Chartist movement (New York 1916); E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (London 1951).

O'Brien's principal writings are a translation of Buonarotti's History of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality (London 1836), his Life of Robespierre (London 1838), only the first volume was ever published, and his verse odes and elegies - Ode to Palmerston (London 1856), Ode to Bonaparte (London 1856), Elegy on the Death of Robespierre, with a Historical Sketch (London 1857), and A Vision of Hell (London 1859). O'Brien wrote several pamphlets, one was Mr O'Brien's Vindication of his conduct at the late Birmingham Conference, containing his "Blackguard" letter to the Editor of the "Star" which that person suppressed (Birmingham 1842).

His periodical writings are more important and contain most of his ideas which were later taken up by the Chartists. He contributed to Carpenter's Political Letters (1831) and The True Sun (1832), edited The Midland Representative (1831-2), The Poor Man's Guardian (1832-5), The Destructive, and Poor Man's Conservative (1833-4), The London Dispatch, later Hetherington's Twopenny Dispatch (1836-9), Bronterre National Reformer (1836-7), Bell's London Mercury (1837), The Operative (1838-9) and, with Carpenter, the Southern Star (1840). In 1838, he began to write regularly for the Northern Star, and continued to do so until 1842, except while he was in prison. In 1842, he bought and ran for a few months The British Statesman, and in 1844 he started The National Reformer, and Manx Weekly Review (1844-7), published in the Isle of Man. In 1849, he wrote for Reynolds Political Instructor the articles published after his death as The Rise, Progress, and Phases of Human Slavery (1885).

2. M. Beer, A History of British Socialism, vol.ii, p.17.
"Among all the Chartist leaders there is not one who so thoroughly embodied the movement ... O'Brien held the same position to the thinkers in the Chartist movement as O'Connor to the masses."
3. M. Beer, A History of British Socialism (1953), vol.ii, p.18.
4. A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge (1958), p.12.

writers, in particular, Robert Owen, William Ogilvie¹ and John Gray², whose theories he reproduced in a form readily intelligible to the radical working-class movement. O'Brien was not a socialist in the modern sense of the term. Like Spence before him, he did not advocate the nationalisation of the means of industrial production, although he did oppose the development of capitalism in industry. He supported the ideal of the small-scale "independent" producer. As an Irishman, he regarded land as distinct from industrial wealth. All other forms of property could be held by individuals in perfect compatibility with public happiness and social justice, but land, minerals and other forms of natural wealth were of "God's and not man's creation"³, and should therefore form the monopoly

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1. William Ogilvie (1736-1813) was a land reformer. He regarded private property in land as the source of all evil. Cf. Ogilvie's Essay on the Right of Property in Land (London 1781). He based his theories on natural law, that the first maxim of natural law was that every man had an equal share in the land. Ogilvie's essay was reprinted in 1838 for the instruction of the Chartists. See M. Beer, A History of British Socialism (1953), vol.i, pp.109-113.
 2. John Gray (1799-1850) was an Owenite who was also influenced by other writers on social and economic reform. Gray asked what is the reason for the misery occasioned by society since society was a natural human development. He believed that the principle of barter, on which the association of man with man was based, had been misapplied. The correct application of this principle is giving and taking equal quantities of labour; under existing conditions the labourers are robbed of four-fifths of their produce, which is distributed among the non-producers, thereby falsifying the whole basis of society. These evils were aggravated by competition, which puts an unnatural limit upon production. Cf. Lecture in Human Happiness (London 1825). See M. Beer, A History of British Socialism (1953), vol.i, p.211 ff.
 3. Power of the Pence, 27 January 1849.

of no one class. The importance of the land question loomed large in his mind; his advocacy of State ownership of land was perhaps the most significant aspect of his political philosophy. He believed that the path lay by way of political reforms as envisaged in the Charter, "nationalisation" of the land and reform of credit and currency according to Gray and Bray.¹

Bronterre O'Brien was born in 1805, the son of a wine and spirit merchant in County Longford. His father died before he reached the age of ten, and he was left in the care of his mother who, however, was determined to educate him for one of the learned professions. As a child he showed remarkable intellectual gifts, and at Edgeworthstown school and Trinity College Dublin he reaped high academic honours, took the B.A. and then

1. National Reformer and Manx Weekly Review, 30 January 1847. With the Charter, national ownership of land, currency and credit, people "would soon discover what wonders of production ... might be achieved by Associative labour, in comparison with the exertions of isolated individual labour. Thence would gradually arise the true social state, the reality of socialism, as contra-distinguished from the present dreams about it. And doubtless, the ultimate consequences would be the universal prevalence of a state of society not essentially different from that conceived by Owen and other benevolent dreamers of that same stamp. But the idea of jumping at once from our present iniquitous and corrupt state of society, into Owen's social paradise, without any previous recognition of human rights, and without establishing a single law or institution to rescue the people from their present brutalised condition of ignorance and vassalage, is a most perfect chimera."

became a student of the Kings Inn, Dublin.¹ Intending to complete his course of study and become a barrister in the Gray's Inn, he arrived in London early in 1830. Almost at once he met William Cobbett, Henry Hunt and other radicals, and soon abandoned the law for the hurly-burly of radical politics.²

The Chartist historian, R.G. Gammage, described O'Brien as

"considerably above middle size, of fine figure, though rather inclined to the stooping posture of the profound student. His general features were often judged to be handsome ... Viewed while unpleasant thoughts were agitating his mind, he was certainly not the most

1. Cf. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p. 71. "The genius of O'Brien manifested itself in very early life. Before completing his tenth year he had made a study of several languages, in which he attained considerable proficiency ... Naturally inclined to study, and applying himself incessantly to the acquisition of knowledge, he mastered with great rapidity the Latin, Greek, French, and Italian languages, and conquered with brilliant success the mathematical and other sciences. He also exhibited great aptitude for composition in poetry and prose ... Sir Walter Scott, on the occasion of a visit to (Edgeworthstown) school, was so struck by his singular talents and acquirements, that he presented him with a silver pencil case as a mark of his admiration, and he received from the same consideration, subsequent presents from other eminent persons.
2. Cf. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.72. "It was by Mr Hunt that O'Brien was first introduced to the British public ... in the year 1830. Mr Hunt informed the meeting that it was his great pleasure that day to introduce to them a young gentleman of great abilities whose sympathies were entirely with the people." In an account he gave of himself some years later, Bronterre wrote, "When I found the law was all fiction and rascality, and that radical reform was all truth and matter of dire necessity ... I soon got sick of the law and gave my soul to radical reform." National Reformer, 7 January 1837.

prepossessing of men but under the influence of pleasant sensations, there was no man more fascinating than O'Brien."¹

In addition to his skill as a journalist, O'Brien was renowned for his powers of oratory. R.G. Gammage is enthusiastic in praise of his satire, his lucidity, his native wit, and his logical approach to his subject. He was able to hold the attention of vast audiences for hours on end, expounding Chartist doctrines. Gammage remarked that, "a man who was possessed of such capabilities, was an orator of no ordinary power, and that he must have been master, not only of words, but of ideas".² Intellectually the most able of the Chartists, O'Brien set out to provide the working-class movement with a philosophy with which to guide its actions in the struggle with the ruling classes.

In January and February 1831, O'Brien published several articles in Carpenter's Political Letters, including one on the Repeal of the Legislative Union.³ They attracted the attention of Henry Hetherington who was then looking out for a capable

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1. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.76. Cf. also, Brief Sketches of the Birmingham Conference (London 1842), p.18. O'Brien was "above middle-stature, and in personal appearance handsome and gentleman-like. Mr O'Brien has a most expressive countenance, though 'sicklied o'er with a pale cast of thought', and telling its tale of blighted hope, and bearing melancholy evidence of the rough tear and wear consequent on a course of political agitation.
 2. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.77.
 3. Carpenter's Political Letters, 7 January, 21 January, 12 February, 18 February 1831.

editor. He appointed O'Brien first to be editor of the Midland Representative, and then in 1832, of the Poor Man's Guardian. In these and his later papers one can follow O'Brien's political evolution up to the birth of the Chartist movement. In 1831 he was still an Owenite and Radical, but he soon became critical of Owen's system of socialism.¹ He deprecated the tendency of both the Co-operative movement and the Trade Unionists to ignore the need for Universal Suffrage as a means of securing their economic rights. He believed that to achieve social equality - the ideal of state policy - the people must win political equality; political supremacy was the foundation of the whole economic structure. Thus by 1838, O'Brien had rejected Owen's social theories in favour of political enfranchisement of the working classes. He argued that "a parliament which represents only those who thrive by labour's wrongs will never represent labour's rights, nor legislate for labour's emancipation".² The keystone to the regeneration of society was Universal Suffrage.³

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1. i.e. the withdrawal of individuals from capitalist society by constructing communities based upon co-operative effort and sharing.
 2. The Rise, Progress and Phases of Human Slavery (1885), p.119.
 3. National Reformer, 15 January 1837. "Without the franchise you can have nothing but what others choose to give you, and those who give to-day, only choose to take away tomorrow. Every industrious man who produces more (in value) of the goods of life than he needs for his own or his family's use, ought to own the difference as property ... Why are you not master of the difference? Because certain laws and institutions which other people make take it away from you, and give it to the law makers. But if you were represented as well as they you would have quite other laws and institutions, which would give the wealth to those who earned it."

From 1833 onwards O'Brien took a deep interest in social reform and was concerned to discover the factors which caused the miserable conditions of the producers of wealth. He claimed that their misery was due to the expropriation by the middle classes of the fruits of labour and he supported his arguments by referring to events in France in 1791 and in England in 1832. In 1836, he published a translation of Buonarotti's History of Babeuf's Conspiracy, believing that the English working class movement could learn many lessons from the revolutionary period in France, pointing out at the same time the similarities between the theories of Babeuf and Robert Owen.¹ He also devoted much time to reassessing the part played by Robespierre in the French revolution. He hoped in his Life of Robespierre to create a model for English radical leaders, since he claimed that he was the one French revolutionary who dedicated himself to the ideal of true democracy, and who made a sincere effort to turn the revolution to the advantage of the mass of the people, and to transform society by creating social institutions based upon equal rights before the law.² O'Brien compared events in revolutionary France with events in England in 1832. In both

1. It was Babeuf's contention that present day society should work on the principle applied in savage society; since a savage wandering had no claim on his neighbour's labour: he did sometimes use force to secure the benefit of it. Bronterre argued that such force was used in civilised societies. But in them state institutions maintained the usurpation by force of a few over the many.

2. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, pp.73-5.

cases, the middle class had enlisted the support of the people to overthrow the privileged class, the landed aristocracy. Once its interests were represented in the legislature, the middle classes abandoned its one-time ally and opposed any further extension of the franchise lest it might jeopardise its own position in the state.¹ O'Brien believed that by 1837 in England the aristocracy controlled the land and the middle class the credit; any man without land or capital was completely at the mercy of these "usurpers".

In his search for the basic evils of society, he considered the Land question, which he regarded as the main source of the misery and degradation of the labouring masses. When the first came to London in 1831, he adopted the outlook of the London Radicals, in particular their hatred of the aristocratic system of government.² He opposed a sudden and sweeping confiscation of landed property, proposing that the operation should be carried out over a period of years and with due compensation to the

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1. Writing of the Reformed Parliament in 1833, he declared, "What was the first act of the reformed Parliament? The Coercion Bill for Ireland. What was the last act of the first session, the New Poor Law for England. Why did that base Parliament pass both these acts? To place the labouring classes of both countries at the feet of the rich assassins, who rob, brutalise, and enslave the populations of both. It is in the nature of things that the middle classes must be worse than any other part of the community." McDouall's Chartist and Republican Journal, 31 July 1841.
 2. Carpenter's Political Letters, 21 January 1831. "No plan of parliamentary reform will produce substantial advantage to the community at large, which will not lay the foundation of a gradual extinction of aristocracy ..."

former owners.¹ Nevertheless, he argued that, since the State held dominion over the land in former times, it was wrong to allow it to remain the monopoly of any one class. The land should be "nationalised" and then let out on fair terms to those who wanted it. The establishment of a comprehensive system of national credit would enable every one "to rent and cultivate land on his own account instead of being subjected, as now, to the injustice and tyranny of wage slavery".² He estimated that the rent obtained from these "small allotments" would bring in £120 millions yearly, out of which £20 millions would provide for all government expenses and for national education, leaving £100 millions per annum to pay off the National Debt.³

Writing at the time of the famine in Ireland, he said:

"What God made he made for all, and should be the common property of all, to be used and enjoyed under regulations made with the consent of all, expressed by the vote of the majority.

"What man makes is the private property of man, and should be secured to his exclusive use, till he chooses to give, sell or otherwise dispose of it." 4

O'Brien also held that the monetary and credit system had much need of reform, controlled as it was by the "money monster", the middle classes, for the benefit of themselves and the aristocracy. In the past, coin money had been created to

1. Northern Star, 13, 20 November 1841. "I would not take an inch of land from the present proprietors; this would produce civil war ... I would leave them in undisturbed possession of their estates until their death, when they should be purchased by the nation, and proceeds divided among the heirs."

2. National Reformer, 25 February 1837.

3. Northern Star, 20 November 1841.

4. National Reformer, 3 October 1846.

serve the purpose of exchange. The production of precious metals was limited and insufficient for the needs of circulation, and thereby the price, production and consumption of goods was seriously affected. Economic crises were the result of monetary inflation; currency could not increase or diminish in accordance with the fluctuations of real wealth. Moreover, O'Brien held that it was wrong to associate precious metals such as gold and silver with political power, since originally their financial importance had been merely as a means of exchange. By the introduction of paper money, Bronterre believed, many of the illusions associated with financial wealth would disappear and the original purpose of money, that of barter, would reassert itself.¹

By 1837, O'Brien had established himself as the leading theoretician of the working-class movement. His ideas of class warfare had an especial appeal to the industrial workers of northern England. O'Brien was the foremost opponent of any alliance of the labouring classes with the middle class, a policy generally adopted by the Irish contingent of the movement. He argued that, faced with a strong, united and determined working-class movement, the ruling powers would capitulate as they had done in France in 1791. His extreme views brought him into conflict with the London Working Men's Association in

1. E. Dolléans, Le Chartisme (1912-3), p.105 ff.

1837¹ and he associated himself more closely with Feargus O'Connor. He began to write regular articles for the Northern Star, which greatly improved the standard of the paper. O'Brien was content in the belief that he was assisting the great proletarian upsurge led by O'Connor.²

Bronterre O'Brien was an important Chartist leader between the years 1838 and 1841. He was closely associated with Feargus O'Connor and was suspicious of Lovett and the London

1. Up to 1837, O'Brien collaborated with the London Working Men's Association of which he had been invited to become an honorary member in 1836. He published the first draft of the People's Charter and the manifestos of the L.W.M.A. in his National Reformer. In 1837, a quarrel developed between D. O'Connell and the L.W.M.A. in connection with the case of the Glasgow cotton spinners. O'Brien, who supported trade unionism in the 1830's, attacked O'Connell for his opposition to trade unionism in Dublin and elsewhere and for his temporising Irish policy. (Cf. Northern Star, 10 February 1838.) At that time, William Lovett was attempting to secure the co-operation of O'Connell and other M.P.s in support of a draft Bill for the Charter and censured O'Brien together with George Julian Harney for introducing the name of the L.W.M.A. without authority. This episode led to the severance of his relations with the L.W.M.A. and with Henry Hetherington's newspaper.

O'Brien now strengthened his connection with John Bell's London Mercury of which he became joint editor. The Mercury was the organ of the movement which aimed at linking up the various bodies working for radical reform under the auspices of the Central National Association. This was run by Feargus O'Connor and J.B. Bernard, an eccentric landowner with a devotion to currency reforms, who bought the London Mercury and appointed O'Brien its editor. He sold it later and O'Brien ceased to be its editor. Cf. G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits, pp.247-8.

2. O'Brien's first association with O'Connor was through the Central National Association. By the end of 1837 this had collapsed but O'Brien maintained his connection with O'Connor through the Northern Star. In addition to this O'Brien became the editor of The Operative, a paper owned and controlled by representatives of the metropolitan trade unions.

artisans. This was evident during the first Chartist Convention in 1839 which O'Brien attended as a delegate. He opposed the nomination of Lovett as secretary of the Convention because, he declared,

"It was notorious that the Working Men's Association to which Mr Lovett belonged differed very considerably from the large masses in the north, as to the means by which the Convention should be carried out." ¹

Despite their difference in temperament, O'Brien supported O'Connor in the Convention, for instance in opposing the idea of a general strike.² He proposed and O'Connor seconded the

1. Charter, 10 February 1839.

2. Charter, 27 July 1839; Northern Star, 27 July 1848. O'Brien gave his reasons for opposing the strike in the following passage:

(i) because our numbers have been greatly reduced by desertion, absence, and arbitrary arrest of a large proportion of our number.

(ii) Because great diversity of opinion prevails amongst the remaining members as to the practicability of a general strike in the present state of trade in the manufacturing districts.

(iii) Because a similar diversity of opinion seems to prevail out of doors, amongst our constituents and the working class generally.

(iv) Because under these circumstances it is more than doubtful whether an order from the Convention for a general holiday would be generally obeyed; or whether a strike would not be a failure.

(v) Because, while we firmly believe that a universal strike would prove the salvation of the country, we are at the same time equally convinced that a partial strike would only entail the bitterest privations and sufferings, on all classes who took part in it, and in the present exasperated state of public feeling, not improbably lead to confusion and anarchy.

(vi) Because, although it is the duty of the Convention to participate in the people's dangers, it is no part of our duty to create dangers unnecessarily.

(vii) Because we believe that the working men themselves are the only fit judges of their right and readiness to strike work, as also of their own resources and capabilities of meeting the emergencies, which such an event would entail."

motion which put a stop to the national holiday.¹ O'Brien proposed that the Convention be dissolved on 6 September 1839, although no definite policy had been put forward to answer to government repression. His caution was applauded by many Chartists at the time², though historians appear to regard it as an act of cowardice on his part.³ In fact, O'Brien refused to follow a policy which he was convinced could only end in failure. But he never abandoned his view that the people had a right to arm to defend themselves against "an unconstitutional attempt to suppress peaceable agitation".⁴ His desire for a victory for the popular party did not blind him to the strength of their opponents, nor did he wish to plunge the country into a civil war which he believed would result in the victory of the ruling powers.

O'Brien believed that the surest way to achieve the Charter was by the election of a People's parliament. As early as 1837, during his association with O'Connor's Central National Association, O'Brien proposed that the advocates of Universal Suffrage should, in as many constituencies as possible, nominate people's candidates at the hustings, and get them elected by show of hands.

1. Charter, 11 August 1839.

2. Cf. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.157. "The untiring perseverance of O'Brien and a few others, saved the country from a horrible carnage, which must inevitably have followed any attempt to carry out the sacred month (general strike)."

3. Cf. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), p.150 ff.

4. Charter, 12 May 1839.

The persons thus chosen were to present themselves at Westminster at the opening of Parliament without proceeding to the polls, since they were certain to be defeated by the limited franchise. With the support of perhaps 200,000 working men they would have little difficulty in legalising the proceedings. A half-hearted attempt was made to carry out O'Brien's proposal at the General Election of 1837, but the radical candidates found a poor response, Stephens and Oestler being the most successful. This failure leads us to conclude that it was the New Poor Law, and not Universal Suffrage, which was the foremost issue in 1837.¹

O'Brien persisted in his idea of proposing Chartist candidates for every Parliamentary election, regardless of their lack of qualification and other disabilities, although he abandoned the idea of establishing a rival Parliament. In 1841, O'Brien, when he was in prison for sedition², proposed

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1. There was nothing new in this proposal which was based on a scheme for the election of "legislatorial attorneys" which had been attempted by the Reformers just after the Napoleonic Wars.
 2. Cf. Northern Liberator, 28 March 1840; R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894), p.149, p.174. O'Brien was first tried for sedition in Newcastle with several other Newcastle Chartists including Thomas Devyr, William Thomason, and John Mason. They were charged with having on 7 July 1839, together with divers other persons "met together to disturb the peace... by inflammatory speeches intended to excite, and persuade other persons to hatred and contempt of the government". O'Brien's address to the jury largely contributed to their acquittal. He was however tried in Liverpool on a similar charge of "maliciously conspiring and inciting the people of this country (England) to make riots, to arm with weapons of offence and other acts designed to promote rebellion". Cf. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p.178. This time O'Brien was less fortunate and sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment.

that in future the Chartists should concentrate their energies on the return of Chartists to Parliament. He advocated the formation of electoral associations for this purpose. The men thus elected at the hustings by show of hands could be thereby regarded by their Chartist associates as their true representatives.¹ In the summer of 1841, O'Brien clashed with O'Connor on electoral policy. He opposed O'Connor's proposal to support the Tories at the forthcoming elections, on the grounds that the Tories were as much the enemy of the working people as their opponents, the Whigs. If the Tories were returned, O'Brien believed that it would lead to the annihilation of the Chartist movement.²

This difference between O'Brien and O'Connor over electoral policy was the beginning of a dispute which resulted in victory for O'Connor and the virtual exclusion from the Chartist movement of his compatriot, O'Brien. Fundamental disagreements over policy were heightened by personal differences. O'Connor's overbearing manner was made more intolerable to O'Brien because he was financially dependent upon him. Mark Hovell writes,

"O'Brien seems to have been as devoid of business acumen as O'Connor was rich in it. None of his independent journalist ventures were successful ... Financial difficulties seem to have put him into O'Connor's hands. While in prison O'Connor arranged that £1 a

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1. Cf. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement, p.197. O'Brien's exact intentions were not made clear though he suggested that he hoped to constitute a rival Parliament and even uphold it by force. Cf. Southern Star, 23 February 1840.
 2. Northern Star, 19 June 1840.

week be sent to his family, and when O'Brien heard of the arrangement he agreed to write an article a week, whereupon O'Connor retorted that O'Brien was ungrateful in his refusal to accept his generous assistance." ¹

O'Brien, himself, was extremely poor and troubled by family sorrows; his eldest daughter lost her life in a fire in 1839. His health was affected by his imprisonment and it was said that towards the end of his life he drank increasingly.

The differences between the two Irishmen increased when in 1841 the views of O'Brien began to undergo a significant change. The experiences of the 1839 Convention convinced him that without the co-operation of the middle-class radicals the struggle for universal suffrage would fail, so powerful were the interests opposed to the working classes. Up to now, he had taught that the power of legislation was the basis of social power and the instrument of social improvement. In April 1841, an article appeared in which he put forward the thesis that the enormous political power of the middle class is as nothing compared to its social power; that in fact political power was the consequence of social power, which was derived from wealth, position and social functions.² At the election in 1841, O'Brien stood for Newcastle-on-Tyne, although he was still in prison. In his electoral address, he described himself as "a Conservative Radical Reformer in the just and obvious meaning of these words".

1. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), p.236-7. Cf. also Northern Star, 30 May 1840.

2. Northern Star, 17 April 1841.

He advocated the enactment of the People's Charter and then went on to define his economic programme which emphasised general radical rather than specifically Chartist principles. He supported private property except in such cases as conflicted with the public interest; he opposed monopoly of all kinds.¹ He was against corn laws, money laws which conferred the exclusive privileges of corporations of bankers, and against restrictions on trade and industry, especially when "imposed to create monopolies for particular interests". Moreover, he advocated a reduction of the National Debt, a publicly owned bank, a drastic revision of the tax system and the abolition of all connections between Church and State.²

This programme was a fair exposition of the political policy which Bronterre O'Brien advocated consistently to the end of his life. His experiences in 1839 led him to abandon the ultimate

1. Northern Star, 10 July 1841. "I am also for the perfect inviolability of private property. I consider the public has no more right to invade or appropriate the property of individuals (without their consent) than individuals or fractions of the people have to invade the property of the public. I shall therefore oppose all schemes of confiscation or agrarianism, and resist everything in the shape of sumptuary laws ... Any attempt to do away with the monstrous inequalities of wealth and condition, otherwise than by the natural effects of just legislation, would but injure the right without benefiting the poor ... At the same time I hold it to be perfectly just and competent for the legislature to interfere with any and every species of private property, where such interference is required in the public interest, provided always that the parties interfered with be fully indemnified by compensation. ... I am opposed to every species of monopoly, whether of wealth, power, or knowledge."

2. Northern Star, 10 July 1841.

resort to violent measures to force the hand of the government; he now sought to win socialism by measures of extensive reform within the existing political system. His belief in the primary importance of land and the necessity for land nationalisation was combined with an insistence on the rights of property. Though he argued that the State ought to own the land, as the natural birthright of all men, he wished the State, not to farm it, but to let it out to those who offered the highest rents for its use and he was quite ready to support compensation even to the landlord provided that the State retained the unlimited right of taxing what he had received. He did not favour the seizure of private property as such, but rather its conversion in certain cases into public property under the rule of law.¹ O'Brien was not a socialist in the manner of Harney and Jones; he vouchsafed no hope for the working classes through violence and revolution. He was a Radical social reformer who directed his shafts at monopoly in all its forms.

Feargus O'Connor did not make an immediate break with O'Brien on account of their differences. In September 1841, the Northern Star appealed for funds to buy O'Brien a printing press to establish a newspaper of his own. A national fund was in fact instituted, and although little money came in, O'Brien became part owner and editor of the British Statesman. This

1. G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits (1941), pp.256-7.

originated as an Anti-Corn Law journal, but under O'Brien it was devoted equally to the advocacy of Chartist principles and to attacks on O'Connor and his party. It was criticised by O'Connor and writers in the Northern Star, and lacking widespread support it failed in a few months. O'Brien resumed lecturing and writing but, suffering in health from his prison experiences, he did not have his former success. He was one of the first Chartists to support the Complete Suffrage Movement in 1842. Explaining his reasons for attending the first joint Conference in April, 1842, in Birmingham he declared:

"There is a growing minority of the middle classes with whom I deem a union not only possible but probable, though the time has not yet come for it ... love of justice raises them above class prejudices." ¹

O'Brien was confident that the joint Conference of Sturgeites and Chartists was the first step towards such a union. He claimed that he did his utmost to persuade the meeting to support the "Six Points". His participation created a good impression among a number of middle class reformers

1. J.B. O'Brien, Vindication of his conduct at the late Birmingham Conference (Birmingham 1842), p.21.

present.¹ But, in fact, at the second joint conference in December, Joseph Sturge and his party left the meeting rather than accept the People's Charter. The event brought to an end all friendly relations between himself and O'Connor. From now on, O'Brien conducted a violent campaign against the National Charter Association and its leader. When the Land Plan was launched in 1843, he exposed the fallacy of O'Connor's calculations.² Shortly after O'Brien went on a tour at the invitation of his friends of Birmingham, Sheffield, Rochdale and other places, but was rudely attacked by the O'Connorites wherever he went.³ Since the collapse of the Statesman he had been in considerable financial difficulty but he managed to save enough to move to Douglas, in the Isle of Man, in October 1844, where he set up as a printer and stationer, and also ran a circulating library. His reason for choosing the Isle of Man was that the stamp duty did not operate and he hoped to establish a newspaper, free of tax and make use of the distributing facilities of the Post office, which were not available in England to unstamped newspapers.⁴

1. Brief Sketches of the Birmingham Conference by a Member (London 1842), p.17 ff. "We have not the slightest doubt or difficulty in believing that the great majority of the delegates took their seats with a strong feeling against him ... He was a warm excitable temperament, although in the Conference, he was one of the most placid and unruffled, which is the more strange, seeing that he had all along been the most vehement in denouncing the middle classes ... He declared now that the middle classes were showing a better spirit ... However much we may differ from O'Brien in many respects we admire his good taste and honourable feeling, and above all his abhorrence of fulsome adulation and grovelling selfishness ... the scorn and

detestation of which, in Mr O'Brien, is the best evidence and proof of his enlightened mind, patriotic worth and right appreciation of the genuine spirit of democratic liberty."

2. R. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, pp. 268-9.

Commenting upon these calculations, O'Brien said:

"In these calculations it is taken for granted that estates may be bought at the rate of £18.15s. per acre; that land at that price will be worth 15s. an acre per annum; that cottages can be erected on it at the average cost of £30; that working men bred in towns (for hardly any other are subscribers) will be able to pay £5 a year for their cottage and two acres, and yet continue to flourish on their bargain that every man's holding will be more than double in value in three years; that as fast as fifty occupants can be located, monied men will be found to lend on mortgage nearly as much as the land and buildings cost; that fresh land may be purchased, and fifty more occupants be located in the same way; that there is no expense connected with the management of the society but what two shillings annually will pay; that all the purchases of land, and the mortgages effected upon it, will cost nothing for proving title, conveyancing stamps etc.; that the treasurer, secretary, directors etc. of this society will be all honest men, and charge nothing for their labour (which it seems will be no sinecure); and above all, that landlords will never be wanting to sell land to the members, nor capitalists to advance them money upon pawning their title deeds. Such are a few of the very many strange things assumed in this curious table of calculations... But the strangest of all is, that philanthropic Feargus should have dragged millions of people after him to torch-light meetings, demonstrations, etc., all attended with great sacrifice of time and money, and caused the actual ruin of thousands through imprisonments, loss of employment, and expatriation, when all the while he had only to establish a "National Chartist Co-operative Land Society" to ensure social happiness for us all, and when to use his own words in last week's Star, he had discerned that 'political equality can only spring from social happiness'. Formerly, he taught us that social happiness was to proceed from political equality; but doubtless when his land-bubble has burst, he will have the old or some other new creed for us."

3. R. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, p. 269.

4. G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits, p. 260.

The National Reformer and Manx Weekly Review lasted for two and a half years, although O'Brien was forced to make it pay its way. It was devoted to attacks against O'Connor, and presented a forum for disgruntled elements in the Chartist movement, now weary of O'Connor's dictation. They did not make up a coherent group; nor did O'Brien succeed in rallying them under his own leadership. After 1846, the paper was reduced in size, and O'Brien returned to England early in 1847 to give a lecture tour in order to boost its circulation. The results were disappointing, and so O'Brien again returned to England, probably influenced by the heightening revolutionary activity in Ireland and England.¹

He was still sufficiently popular to secure election at the Chartist Convention in April 1848 when he represented London. He found himself out of sympathy with the general tone of the speeches, believing that the distress of the mass of the people was such that the Chartists might be tempted to proceed faster than prudence warranted. Finding himself unable to agree with the majority, O'Brien thought it better to retire rather than weaken the meeting by dissension and disagreement.² He

1. Cf. G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits (1941), pp.260-1.

2. Cf. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), pp.288-9. On 4 April 1848, Bronterre O'Brien...poured abundant cold water on the ardent schemes of the executive. Bronterre upheld the view that as the Convention only represented a small fraction of the nation, it should limit its action to presenting the new petition, and that a larger assembly be summoned to consider ulterior measures, a view generally accepted by the majority of the delegates. (Cf. Northern Star, 1, 8 April 1848.)

disappeared from politics until the end of 1849, when he wrote a series of articles in Reynolds Political Instructor, subsequently republished in book form after his death as "The Rise, Progress, and Phases of Human Slavery".¹

The interest of these articles lies in O'Brien's attempt to draw parallels between the chattle-slavery of former times and the wage-slavery of modern capitalist civilisations. "The only difference is, it is in the one case slavery direct and avowed; in the other, slavery hypocritically masked under legal forms..."² On this argument O'Brien went on to base an account of the perversion of Christianity, whose mission was to abolish human slavery, into an instrument for sustaining wage

1. J.B. O'Brien, The Rise, Progress, and Phases of Human Slavery (London 1885).

2. Ibid., p. 2. "What are called the 'Working Classes' are the slave populations of civilised countries. These classes constitute the basis of European society in particular and of all civilised societies in general ... The working classes, however general and extensive an element they constitute in modern society, are nevertheless, but from another element, much more extensive and general, bequeathed to us by the ancient world under the name of Proletarians. By the term Proletarians is to be understood, every description of persons of both sexes who, having no masters to own them as slaves, and consequently to be chargeable with their maintenance, and who, being without fortune or friends, were obliged to procure their subsistence as they best could - by labour, by mendicity, by theft, or by prostitution ... We use the term ... to denote every description of persons who are dependent upon others for the means of earning their daily bread without being actual slaves."

slavery instead.¹ The logical result of this perversion, O'Brien maintained, must be social revolution or as he called it social reformation.² He therefore founded early in 1850, the National Reform League, which he regarded as a complement, rather than a rival, to the National Charter Association.

1. The Rise, Progress, and Phases of Human Slavery, p.6. "For what did these Christian emancipations operate; and what have been their consequences to humanity? They turned well-fed, well-housed comfortable slaves into ragged, starving paupers; and their consequences have been to fill Europe with a race of Proletarians by far more numerous and miserable than the human chattels of the ancients, whose place they occupy in modern civilisation."

2. Ibid. "Whether this reconstruction shall be effected peaceably in the way of social reformation, or emerge like order out of chaos, from the throes of a violent convulsion, is a secret of the future, which time alone can disclose. It ought to be, it may be, and we trust, will be a peaceful reformation. The times are favourable for such a change. The amazing revolution which has lately taken place in the arts and sciences, as applicable to the purposes of human economy, ought naturally to give birth to another revolution of kindred quality in the political and social mechanism of society. This second social revolution - the transition from proletarianism and wages-slavery to real and universal emancipation - may be effected without the loss of a single life, or the sacrifice of a shilling's worth of his possessions by any man of any class."

Although it attracted few in numbers, it remained an influential body in the field of ideas.¹ O'Brien began to write regular articles for Reynolds Political Newspaper, but in 1851 he ceased to contribute. Giving up journalism, he founded the Eclectic Institute and Club in Soho - an educational and cultural centre which survived only a few months. In 1852, there was an abortive attempt to run him as Radical candidate for Westminster. His friends who included Ernest Jones attempted to raise a

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1. Propositions of the National Reform League for the peaceful Regeneration of Society (London 1850). Cf. G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits, pp.263-4. The seven (or sometimes eight) Propositions of the National Reform League, drafted by O'Brien, received wide publicity in pamphlet form, and were endorsed at meetings of both the Fraternal Democrats and the National Charter Association ... they included the following:
- a new Poor Law, based on a uniform, centralised rating system, and designed to provide employment wherever possible, or decent maintenance, without degrading conditions, where work could not be found;
 - State purchase of land, and the location thereon of the unemployed poor;
 - a scaling-down of the National Debt in correspondence with the fall in prices since the wars during which it was mainly incurred, and the extinction of the remainder by means of taxes levied on property;
 - the gradual resumption by the State of ownership of land, mines, minerals, and the use of the revenues accruing therefrom to the State to pay the cost of public services, to "execute all needful public works, and to educate the population";
 - the initiation of a State system of public credit in order to encourage small-scale enterprise, and of a new National Currency "based on real consumable wealth and not upon the variable and uncertain amount of scarce metals";
 - and the setting-up by the State everywhere of "public marts, or stores, for the reception of all kinds of exchangeable goods, to be valued by the disinterested officers appointed for the purpose either upon a corn or a labour standard ... thereby gradually displacing the reckless system of competitive trading and shopkeeping."

permanent endowment fund on his behalf. In the same year a proposal to make him joint editor with Ernest Jones of the People's Paper led to a breach with Jones. In poverty and retirement he began to write political poetry which was devoid of literary merit, the work of a man whose day was clearly over. Although he was only fifty-four, O'Brien now prematurely aged, died on 23 December 1864.

O'Brien's influence was derived mainly from his writings, but it was of considerable importance since it provided the Chartist movement with a philosophy. He believed that the English working-class movement would follow the pattern of social change first successfully demonstrated by the French Revolution. He welcomed the participation of his fellow-countrymen in this movement but was less optimistic of the chances of persuading Irish nationalists to join with the British Chartists on account of Daniel O'Connell. He expressed the view, generally held by Irish Chartists, that land rather than the growing industrial power was the key to social reconstruction. O'Brien, even more than O'Connor, spread Irish ideas and illusions among the British working classes and made them less ready to accept the theories, which were developed by Continental Socialists, that in the ownership of means of industrial production lay the ultimate solution to social change.

Chapter V. The Chartist view of the "Irish Question".¹

The existence of a large and articulate Irish contingent in the British Chartist movement reflected itself in its policy. From the beginning, Ireland loomed large in the Chartist programme. Chartist periodicals were filled with articles and letters on various aspects of the "Irish question". The predominance of O'Connor in the forties led, as we have seen, to a greater emphasis on the need to establish the bond of common interest between nationalist Ireland and working-class Britain. Considerable difficulties impeded the successful enactment of such a policy. In the first place, in Ireland the hostility towards "everything English", which historical events had implanted in the Irish nation, was utilised by Irish defenders

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1. General histories on the Chartist movement make only passing references to Ireland and there has been no study of this particular aspect of Chartist policy. The sources for this subject are mainly confined to Chartist periodicals, the Northern Star, the Northern Liberator, the Champion, Ernest Jones' the People's Paper, and those papers edited by James Bronterre O'Brien, in particular, London Mercury, Midland Representative, The Operative, and The National Reformer and Manx Weekly Review.

See also W. Lovett, Life and Struggles (London 1876).

Reference is made to several modern works which include M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (Manchester 1925), G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits (London 1941), S. Maccoby, English Radicalism, 1832-52 (London 1935), J. Saville, Ernest Jones: Chartist (London 1952), A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge (London 1958), E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (London 1951).

of sectional interests as a favourable soil of agitation designed

"to leave upon the Irish mind a great, indeed greater, prejudice against the 'lower' than the 'higher' orders of Englishmen." 1

Moreover, as we have seen, most Irish national leaders were bitterly opposed to the Chartists. In England, the working people resented and feared the "wild Milesians" who flocked in their thousands to the industrial towns. Many would have agreed with Thomas Carlyle when he described the Irish worker in England as,

"The sorest evil this country has to strive with. In his rags and laughing savagery, he is there to undertake all work that can be done by mere strength of hand and back; for wages that will purchase him potatoes. He needs only salt for condiment; he lodges to his mind in any pighutch or doghutch, roosts in outhouses; and wears a suit of tatters, the getting off and on of which is said to be a difficult operation, transacted only in festivals and the hightides of the calendar ... the uncivilised Irishman, not by his strength but by the opposite of strength, drives out the Saxon native, takes possession of his room. There abides he, in his squalor and unreason, in his falsity and drunken violence, as the ready made nucleus of degradation and disorder." 2

Such was the ignorance and misunderstanding which the Chartists hoped to destroy. The Confederate-Chartist union of 1848 demonstrated the extent to which they succeeded in overcoming this initial prejudice and distrust.

1. Northern Star, 14 November 1840.

2. T. Carlyle, Chartism (London 1840), p.28.

The Chartists and Ireland (1837-1848).

From the beginning of the agitation for the Charter, English radicals realised the important part Ireland might play in the movement. The "moral-force" group led by the Birmingham radicals and William Lovett were anxious in the early years to enlist the support of the Irish people. In December 1837, the Birmingham Union addressed an appeal to the Reformers of Great Britain and Ireland in which its author, Thomas Attwood, passed beyond denunciation of Whiggery, openly declared for Universal Suffrage, and angrily attacked the species of radicalism affected by the majority of Radical Members of Parliament. Attwood's attitude to Ireland was, however, coloured by his dislike for O'Connell's political management in Ireland and he exhibited a profound distrust of Irish Catholicism. In 1839, he opposed the Chartist demand for equal representation, or in modern phraseology, equal electoral divisions, since this would result in the doubling of Irish parliamentary strength.¹ After 1838, the Birmingham Union paid little further attention to Irish affairs.

In London, William Lovett, secretary of the London Working Men's Association, made several appeals to the Irish people to unite with the working class Radicals of England to defeat that "which plunders, oppresses and blights the happiness of both

1. S. Maccoby, English Radicalism (1832-1852) (1935), pp.165-168.

countries - exclusive legislation".¹ In August 1838, shortly after the publication of the People's Charter, Lovett drafted an "Address to the Irish People", on behalf of "one hundred and thirty six Working Men's and Radical Associations" in England and Wales, and sent it to all the political associations and groups in Ireland to which he could get access.² As we have seen, it was answered by Daniel O'Connell, on behalf of all the Irish people. He rejected any alliance of his compatriots with the London Working Men's Association or any other section of the Chartist movement.³ Lovett replied to O'Connell's charges against the Radicals in December 1838⁴ and appealed again in 1843 for unity.⁵ Both these documents failed to reach the Irish public in any recognisable form since they were bitterly attacked by O'Connell, who was now determined to prevent any co-operation between the Irish people and the English Radicals. Lovett made no further appeals to the Irish people, but the Great Famine moved him to address the "People of the United Kingdom on the

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1. "Address to the Irish People" from Working Men's and Radical Associations, quoted by W. Lovett, Life and Struggles (1876), pp.185-190.
 2. W. Lovett, Life and Struggles (1876), p.185.
 3. Pilot, 19 September, 30 November 1838.
 4. "The Working Men's Association to the Irish People in reply to an Address on their behalf by persons styling themselves Precursors". Quoted in W. Lovett, Life and Struggles (1876), pp.191-199.
 5. Nation, 5 August 1843. "Address of the National Association London to the People of Ireland."

State and Condition of Ireland"¹ in the hope of rallying British public opinion to support measures of extensive reform in Ireland.

The Northern Chartists were assured of a larger audience through their periodicals, the Northern Star, the Northern Liberator and the Champion, which were filled with articles on Ireland, written for the most part by Irishmen, well acquainted with conditions in their country. In these articles, Chartist writers described the appalling conditions existing among the Irish peasantry, which led so many to seek work in Britain. The absence of any effective policy to deal with these deep-seated problems was stressed; neither the Whig nor the Tory party was prepared to introduce extensive land reform nor curb the power of the aristocracy. Daniel O'Connell was criticised for allying his party with the "perfidious" Whigs and refusing to unite with the Chartists, which formed the one English party willing to assist the Irish people.²

Discussion of the "Irish question" was a feature of several Chartist Conventions. At the first National Convention held in London in 1839, O'Connor moved that a committee be formed

"to take into consideration the best means of enlisting the support of the Irish people in the furtherance of the People's Charter and the National Petition; and also that the Committee should be empowered to draw up a document embodying what they conceive to be substantial 'justice to Ireland'."³

1. "Address to the People of the United Kingdom on the State and Condition of Ireland", quoted in W. Lovett, Life and Struggles (1876), pp.351-357.

2. Cf. articles on Ireland in the Northern Liberator, written by Thomas Devyr. Northern Liberator, 24 March 1838, "To Daniel O'Connell"; 31 March 1838, "On Combinations in Ireland"; 2 June 1838, "The Irish Poor Law Bill"; 14 July 1838, "The State of Ireland"; 4 August 1838, "The Irish Tithe Bill"; 11 August 1838, "Lord Brougham and the Irish Church" and "The Irish Municipal Bill"; 29 September 1838, "Daniel O'Connell's last kick", which refers to O'Connell's attack on Lovett and the London artisans; 6 October 1838, "The state of Ireland"; 3 November 1838, "The Irish Tithe Bill"; 27 April 1839, "'Rich' and 'Intense' Irish Gratitude", which criticised the "recent display in Dublin in support of the Liberal government and the subsequent conduct of the Irish members" despite the fact that Ireland is the "worst governed kingdom"; 3 January 1840, "The 'Irish Beast' and the 'Popish Priests'", which refers to hostility of priests to Chartism and references made by O'Connell to Irishmen in Newcastle joining the Chartists.

Cf. articles in Champion, written by James Whittle. Champion, 26 September 1836, 9 October 1836, on "Ireland"; 4, 11 December 1836, "Irish Banking"; 18 December 1836, "O'Connell and the Poor Laws"; 25 December 1836, 1, 27 January, 19 February 1837, "Poor Laws for Ireland"; 26 February 1837, "Irish Corporate Reform"; 13 January 1838, "O'Connell and the Dublin Trades"; 19 May 1838, "Irish Mendicity".

Articles on Ireland appeared regularly in the Northern Star, beginning in 1838 with articles by Bronterre O'Brien. After 1841, articles on Ireland were usually written by O'Connor or under his direction.

3. Northern Star, 9 February 1839; Champion, 24 February 1839.

In the discussion which followed, a number of Irishmen thanked O'Connor for bringing forward the motion to present an Address to the Irish people: it gave the Convention "the opportunity of displaying, through their representatives, their goodwill towards Ireland".¹ James Whittle expressed the opinion that the Convention should not

"anticipate much immediate good, or any very decided impression at first; but such an address ... would be another and strong proof of your sympathy for my poor country. When O'Connell says that the English have no sympathy for the Irish people, he states what is false."²

The committee appointed to draw up an Address included James Whittle. This was presented to the Convention at the beginning of March. It declared that, although the Chartists were once ignorant of the "Irish conditions of oppression", they now understood that Ireland's "grievances spring, as ours do, from want of the power of self-defence". They claimed that the working class radicals opposed the Whig Coercion Bill (1835), supported the abolition of tithes and attacked O'Connell when "the vague term 'justice for Ireland' was substituted for the practical measure of 'Repeal'". In conclusion, the address appealed to the Irish people to unite with the Chartists.³

Reorganisation of the National Charter Association and the Land Plan absorbed the energies of delegates at Chartist

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1. Irish delegates included Mr Sankey, delegate from Edinburgh and son of a United Irishman, and Mr Deegan from Manchester. Northern Star, 9 February 1839.
 2. Northern Star, 9 February 1839.
 3. Northern Star, 2 March 1839.

Conventions during the next few years. It was not until 1846 that Thomas Clark proposed that a new appeal to the Irish people should be made, and directed especially to the Young Ireland party. In the address which was finally drawn up, the Chartists again appealed for unity,

"since co-operation strengthens the hand of labour, and enables us to make a stand against the power of monopoly; to increase the bond of fellowship between yourselves and us is the only means by which you can speedily obtain Repeal of the Union." ¹

Following the blunt refusal of the Young Irelanders to associate with the Chartists, no further effort was made to co-operate with the Irish national movement until 1848. However, the Chartists welcomed any sign of friendship from members of Repeal Associations in England and, as we have seen, links between the two groups began to be established after 1843.

After the failure of the Champion and the Northern Liberator in 1840, the Northern Star was the only Chartist periodical of any importance that remained and, between 1840 and 1848, it was the major source of information for working-class radicals in Britain and Ireland. It is important therefore to realise the emphasis writers in the Star, particularly O'Connor, laid on "the identity of interest between the Chartists of England and serfs of Ireland".² During the repeal agitation in Ireland every opportunity was taken to encourage the participation of

1. Northern Star, 8 August 1846.

2. Northern Star, 27 May 1843.

British Chartists in the Irish movement. Articles on repeal appeared frequently in 1843 and 1844, many of which were written by O'Connor himself.¹ In order to conciliate the Irish repealers in England and Ireland, the Star adopted a less hostile view of O'Connell in the early months of the agitation. At the same time, after the proclamation of the Clontarf meeting, the Star blamed O'Connell for the failure of the agitation to achieve its object. Once again the working people had been abandoned by their middle-class leaders, as in the case of the Reform Bill of 1832. "Repeal that is to benefit the working classes must be carried by the working classes", thundered the Star.² Yet Feargus O'Connor and his supporters realised very clearly that this was a situation which O'Connell wished at all costs to avoid. The substitution for repeal of a proposed federal government was described in the Star as a "middle-class scheme got up as an extinguisher of public opinion".³ This, in the opinion of the writer, would transfer power from the old landed aristocracy to the middle classes without introducing any

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1. Cf. Northern Star, 26 September, 3 October 1840, "The Weekly Despatch and Repeal of the Union"; 21 October 1843, "The Repeal Prosecutions. The Base Compromise"; 11 November 1843, "Rebellion in Ireland"; 6 January 1844, "Repeal versus Repealers"; 13 January 1844, "Protestantism versus Catholicism" which deals with the State prosecution of repeal leaders. Cf. also 20 January, 17 February, 29 June 1844, "England and Repeal"; 20 July 1844, "England and Ireland". See also O'Connor's articles on "Repeal of the Union", Northern Star, May-June 1843.
 2. Northern Star, 21 September 1844.
 3. Northern Star, 27 July 1844.

extensive reforms. Addressing the English Chartists, a writer in the Star predicted that the abandonment of the repeal agitation by O'Connell would result in "another ten years' rule of the 'base, bloody, and brutal Whigs'".¹

Another subject which engaged the attention of the Northern Star was the question of relations between Church and State. The Star supported the idea of secular states; the separation of Church and State was one of its most vital objects. O'Connell's efforts to prevent the attempts, which certain Catholic prelates of Ireland made at that time to establish a secret liaison with the See of Rome, were praised in the Star because such a liaison constituted a threat to civil liberty in Ireland.² In the following year, the Star greeted the proposal that the financial grant to Maynooth be increased with disapproval. It shared the opinion expressed by the Parliamentary Radical, John Bright, that the purpose of the Maynooth grant was to tame the agitators, to throw a sop to the priests and separate the clergy from the people³, and maintained in addition that, if the Catholic Church in Ireland were made dependent upon government patronage, it would be turned into another Established

1. Northern Star, 24 June 1843.

2. Northern Star, 18, 25 January, 1 February 1845, "O'Connell, the Pope, and Civil Liberties"; cf. R.B. McDowell, Public opinion and government policy in Ireland, pp.216-218.

3. S. Maccoby, English Radicalism, p.259.

Church.¹ "We object to the proposed grant to Maynooth because it is really a bribe to the Catholic priesthood."²

The Great Famine aroused a stream of denunciation in the Chartist press.³ Famine, like a malignant disease, was feared by rich as well as poor, since it was no respecter of persons. The Star attributed the famine to the selfish policy of the landlords who had forgotten their duties, and thought only of the rents they extorted from their miserable tenants. The government did not prevent the landlord from giving compensation to their tenants or compel them to reside away from their estates and therefore to employ agents and middlemen. It was the duty of the government on this occasion to legislate for "an alteration in the law of tenure, whereby the producer may be secured in the uninterrupted possession and enjoyment of his own industry".⁴ By the enactment of a Poor Law, the reclamation of waste lands and "the creation of a small body of proprietors, and independent occupiers of the soil, conditions in the Irish countryside would be sufficiently improved to prevent the recurrence of another such catastrophe".⁵

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1. Northern Star, 12, 19 April, 10, 17 May 1845, "Maynooth - Another State Church".
 2. Northern Star, 12 April 1845.
 3. Cf. Northern Star, 1, 8, 15 November 1845, 23 January 1847, "The Famine"; 16 January 1847, "The Great Difficulty"; 23, 30 January 1847, "The Irish Banditti"; 13 March 1847, "The Famine and the Fast". Cf. also the writings of Bronterre O'Brien and Feargus O'Connor on the famine.
 4. Northern Star, 23 January 1847.
 5. Northern Star, 6 February 1847.

A number of Irishmen made regular contributions to the Star, often dealing with topics relating to Ireland. They were encouraged by O'Connor who believed that, provided they were sympathetic to his own policies, such Irish writers would stimulate the mass of the Chartists to adopt a sympathetic attitude towards Ireland. These contributors included two leaders of the Irish Chartist movement, L.T. Clancy¹ and Patrick O'Higgins and several Irish exiles in England² including William Clifton, who lived in Bristol.³ Clifton, who is unknown except for his articles in the Northern Star, hoped by his writings to encourage the participation of other Irishmen in the radical movement.

William Clifton attempted in the Star to explain the reasons

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1. L.T. Clancy's articles include Northern Star, 3 August 1839, "To the Radicals of England, Scotland and Wales"; 7 December 1839, "Address to the Men of Ireland in England, Scotland and Wales"; 6 June 1840, "To the Men of Great Britain"; 12, 26 December 1840, "Letters to Daniel O'Connell".
 2. Cf. Con Murray, an Irishman living in Lancashire who became a member of the I.U.S.A. (See Northern Star, 20 November 1841) and made occasional contributions to the Star. Cf. Northern Star, 25 April 1843, "To Daniel O'Connell, Esq. M.P.". See also William Tillman, Northern Star, 30 October 1841, "To the Exiles of Erin".
 3. Cf. Northern Star, 22 January, 5, 12 February 1842, "To the People of Ireland"; 29 January 1842, "To the Right Honourable Lord Mayor of Dublin"; 17 December 1842, 25 March, 22, 29 April 1843, "To the Members of the Repeal Association of Ireland" (these articles are signed by Clifton's pseudonym, 'Veritas'); 27 May 1843, "To the Duke of Wellington" (also signed 'Veritas'); 1, 8 July, 19 August, 2 September 1843, "To the People of Ireland"; 19 December 1846, 2, 9 January 1847, "To the Roman Catholic Hierarchy of Ireland"; 8 July 1848, "The Middle Classes".

why the Irish and English people should unite against the two factions, Whig and Tory. He maintained that, despite O'Connell's assertions to the contrary, the Whigs were as opposed to the interests of the Irish people as were the Tories, only they were more dangerous since they "pretended to be the friends of the people".¹ By "moral pressure" Catholic Emancipation was obtained; if the Irish people united with the British Chartists, their "moral might" would be doubly strengthened, and they would be enabled to secure the justice for ever denied to them by the two factions. For justice will never be granted to the mass of the people "until they obtain that political power which will enable them to legislate for themselves".² His arguments for

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1. Northern Star, 22 January 1842, "To the People of Ireland". "...the prejudices which have so long existed betwixt you and the people of England were not to be traced to them, but to an interested portion of them...the aristocracy...whether Whig or Tory, you may rest assured that they have no sympathy for you and are equally opposed to your interest...you allow yourselves to be guided by prejudice, and made the tools of a faction who have ever deceived and insulted you, although their political existence depended upon your support...it is as much the interest of the Whigs to persecute the Catholics as it is that of the Tories...The Chartists did not help the Tories for the love of them, but from the love of fair play...Only contrast the conduct of the two classes for a moment and you will easily see how much you ought to love them. They have both flattered you and tortured you in turn and would equally deprive you of your natural and political rights..."
 2. Northern Star, 22 January 1842, "To the People of Ireland". "It is vain to seek justice from any class of the aristocracy, so long as the present system of legislation exists in these countries. There is no confidence to be placed in the promises of either Whig or Tory, nor is there any friendship in the advice which tells you to temporise with either party. Justice will never be granted to the people until they obtain that political power which will enable them to legislate for themselves; for it is a constitutional right that you have a voice in the making of the laws which govern you."

the establishment of a "legislative body from among the people" were reinforced by reference to the natural law theory¹ by which he claimed the people had the right to "make, alter or change the laws whenever the interests of society required".² During the agitation for repeal, Clifton wrote numerous articles exposing the "futility" of the "present mode of agitation" until the root cause of distress in Ireland and England, "class legislation", was eradicated by the enactment of the People's Charter.³ He attacked O'Connell for his attempts to suppress the Irish Universal Suffrage Association.⁴ He took the Catholic clergy to task for supporting this man "who has brought false

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1. Northern Star, 5 February 1842, "To the People of Ireland". "...all men are equal by nature, and...laws and governments were first instituted for the mutual benefit and protection of all; and consequently, the people were originally the law makers and those whom they appointed...were responsible to them."
 2. Northern Star, 5 February 1842.
 3. Northern Star, 22 April 1843. "To the Members of the Repeal Association of Ireland." "The aristocracy and class interests are leagued against the rights of labour"; Northern Star, 29 April 1843. "It cannot be a free country where the producers of wealth are denied a just protection for their labour...if labour produces the wealth, labour is the principal, and if that wealth be again employed to produce labour it ought to strengthen the material dependence of labour and capital upon each other. Where this protection is denied to labour, and when the laws are made for the protection of capital only, the working classes must naturally be oppressed... It is to remedy this abuse and obtain equal representation, that people have adopted the principle of the Charter... If the Constitution were perfect, labour would have its protection, and the working class would have a voice in making the laws." Cf. Thomas Hodgskin, Labour Defended against the Claims of Capital, or the Unproductiveness of Capital proved (London 1825).
 4. Northern Star, 29 January 1842. "To the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of Dublin."

witness against every man or set of men who dared to differ with him on Irish affairs".¹ He was opposed to the connection between Church and State and attacked the Protestant Establishment on this ground.²

Partly as a consequence of these articles on Ireland in the Northern Star, a considerable body of opinion, favourable to a union with the Irish, grew up among the Chartist rank-and-file. The understanding of Irish problems and difficulties was very much more extensive among English Chartists in 1848 than it had been ten years before. George Julian Harney, for example, admitted that at one time he had been filled with disgust at what he considered to be the ignorance and wickedness of Irishmen in representing "England as the natural oppressor of

1. Northern Star, 19 December 1846. "To the Roman Catholic Hierarchy of Ireland."
2. Northern Star, 12 February 1842. "To the People of Ireland." "... Of what benefit to religion or society is the connection of the Church with the State? ... If we are to have liberty of conscience, let us have it as we ought to have it - let every Church support its own ministers ... the working classes have been, and are, the victims of the most avaricious graspings of the most hypocritical system of Christian charity ... you have seen a State Church rearing its head in districts where the parson, his clerk, and one or two families comprised the congregation ... although you never entered it, had to pay your tithe for its support ... The Charter would remove (this evil); and if it did not other good than to purge the nation of this monstrous incumbrance, it would be worth struggling for... they have ever made it their study to keep you beneath their feet, and for that purpose the saints of the State Church have kept the people in ignorance; for they well know that were they educated, they would become politically wise and that having knowledge they would soon obtain power, and that the exercise of that power would quickly produce the political prostration of the State Church."

Ireland, and Englishmen as the enemy of the Irish people"¹, but, by 1848, he had realised the truth of the assertion that "hatred, contempt and indifference towards the Irish people abound in English society".

1. Northern Star, 5 August 1848.

The writings of Chartist leaders on Ireland.

Nearly all the Chartist leaders had something to say about Ireland, not only the Irish, O'Brien and O'Connor, but the British, William Lovett, George Julian Harney and Ernest Jones. However, their approach was different. British Chartists regarded Ireland as one of many aspects of the struggle for the political emancipation of the masses. The "Irish question", while it might be useful, was still merely incidental to the larger issues confronting the working-class radicals. Irish Chartists believed the Irish national struggle was as important as the English movement for radical reform. O'Connor, in particular, was aware that in assisting the struggle for the enfranchisement of the British worker he was fighting the battle of the Irish peasant to free himself from the power of despotic landlords and an alien Church. The predominance of O'Connell in Irish political life during the Chartist period made it impossible to discuss any aspect of Irish affairs without reference to the Liberator. All Chartist leaders were united in their opposition to O'Connell. The Liberator, who above all others might have been able to bridge the gap in outlook of British radicals and Irish nationalists, failed to do so because ultimately he opposed an alliance with a party which threatened the values which he believed essential to an ordered society. In spite of much that they had in common, O'Connell alienated the Chartists by his hostility to this alliance, his obvious

distrust of working-class movements such as the trade unions unless led by men of property, by what appeared to them to be his political opportunism, and by his somewhat overbearing if not dictatorial method of dealing with his friends and supporters.

William Lovett.¹

William Lovett, the Secretary of the London Working Men's Association, was generally considered to be the leader of the "moral force" as opposed to the "physical force" Chartists led by O'Connor and O'Brien. Despite his antagonism to the Irish Chartist leaders, Lovett showed considerable interest in the Irish people, whom he hoped to educate in an understanding of Chartist principles. He desired that the Irish share in the social and political improvements which would result, he believed, from the enactment of the People's Charter. He refused to concede that conditions in Ireland were fundamentally different from those in England; this led Lovett to suggest remedies for Irish problems similar to those being advocated in England for English problems. He perceived that the people of both countries were oppressed by a privileged minority and argued that the basic need for both peoples was to unite against

1. Lovett's writings on Ireland consist of a series of addresses to the Irish people which he published in his autobiography, Life and Struggles of William Lovett (1876), with the exception of one, the "Address of the National Association, London, to the People of Ireland", signed on behalf of the Association by William Lovett, which was printed in the Nation, 5 August 1843.

"exclusive legislation". He believed that by the enactment of the People's Charter the mass of the people in both countries, armed with the vote, would be equipped to protect themselves against the unjust impositions of their rulers and that poverty and misery would disappear.

In his first address, published in August 1838¹, Lovett showed that he was not unaware of many of the manifest evils of Irish life. The Irish people were, he wrote, "the worst housed, fed and clothed of any people in Europe", nor did he overlook "the long series of injustices, insults and neglect to which the Irish peasantry have been exposed". The poverty of the peasantry and the absence of trade and industry in the towns had resulted in a dependence upon agriculture which

"has forced up nominal rents beyond the power of payment, joined to which, the rapacity of the tithe-proctors, collectors, and bailiffs have further paralysed the hand of industry, and prevented those improvements the owner and cultivator might otherwise enjoy."

He was ready to admit "the great injustice of compelling the Catholics to support a Protestant Church Establishment" and lamented the "crooked policy which has prevented the settlement of that question". All these evils had been accentuated by the absence of enlightened government.

"Faction has been arrayed against faction, creed against creed, man against his brother man, not so much from their own conscientious opinions, as from pernicious counsel and malignant influences of corrupt legislators,

1. "Address to the Irish People from Working Men's and Radical Associations", quoted by W. Lovett, Life and Struggle (1876), pp.182-190.

who find their own selfish supremacy strengthened by the divisions ... of the multitude."

Yet to support "an exclusive agitation" against one or other of these evils was useless, in the opinion of Lovett, until the "united despotism of Whig and Tory" governments had been replaced by a

"Parliament composed of the wise and good of all classes (which) would devise a means of improving the condition of millions without injury to the just interests of the few."

One purpose of Lovett's address was to counteract the influence of Daniel O'Connell, who, since he had disagreed with Lovett and the London artisans at the joint meeting of Radical M.P.s and the London Working Men's Association held in May 1837, had used all his influence to persuade the Irish that the English radicals were their especial enemies. O'Connell attacked this first address but was answered by Lovett in a second appeal.¹ to the Irish people to repudiate those "resolved to unite to keep (them) in the reins of Whiggery for their own especial advantage". Lovett, himself, had little faith in O'Connell's political honesty. Not only did O'Connell withdraw his support from the Charter, but it was largely owing to his influence that the parliamentary committee of 1837-8² to inquire into the state

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1. "The Working Men's Association to the Irish people in reply to an Address on their behalf by persons styling themselves Precursors". Quoted by W. Lovett, Life and Struggles, pp.191-199.
 2. Two reports from the select committee appointed to inquire into ... combinations of workmen, H.C. 1837-8 (488 and 646), viii.

of trades' unions was extended to Dublin. Lovett was elected secretary of a committee established by the London trades to ensure that they should get a fair hearing from the select committee. In a letter to the Northern Star, Lovett exposed the devices of those who had promoted the inquiry, and accused O'Connell of attempting to prevent trade union evidence from being heard.¹ In his reply to O'Connell's attack on the English Radicals², Lovett upbraids the Irish people for allowing themselves to be represented by leaders "steeped in the opiate of Whiggery". He claimed that it was O'Connell's intention "to prevent union between the English and Irish Radicals", by identifying Lovett and his London artisans with the Northern Chartists in the minds of the Irish people, although Lovett had dissociated himself from this section of the Chartist movement.

It was not until 1843 that Lovett, then secretary of the National Association for Promoting the Improvement of the People, addressed the Irish people again. Since he traced all evils in Irish society to one basic cause, "the curse of class legislation", Lovett argued that agitation for repeal was misdirected and certain to fail. Such was the strength of the ruling classes

1. W. Lovett, Life and Struggles, p.158. Cf. also Combinations defended, being a commentary upon and analysis of the evidence given before the parliamentary committee of inquiry into combinations of employers and workmen. By the London Trades Combination Committee. London 1839.

2. "Address of the Working Men's Association to the Irish people in reply to an Address on their behalf by persons styling themselves Precursors". W. Lovett, Life and Struggles, pp.191-9.

that "it will require our most strenuous mutual efforts to dislodge them from their strongholds". He went on to ask:

"Would it not be more to the advantage of Ireland, and would there not be a greater probability of success, if a cordial and firm union could be brought about of the honest and well-disposed Radical Reformers of the whole kingdom? of men pledged to the advocacy of those great democratic principles - equal rights and equal laws - the establishment of which would result in making the union of the two countries not one of waste paper, but a real living union; giving to Ireland her full share of political power, securing redress of her manifold wrongs, and perfecting and rearing up such a fabric of liberty, based upon secure and solid foundations, as would bid defiance alike to open attacks and secret artifices." ¹

Lovett's plea for unity was disregarded and it was the failure on the part of the Irish to respond which led him to abandon his attempts at unity. With the onset of the famine, however, he was moved by the wretchedness of Ireland to appeal to his compatriots to protest to the government and urge that relief should be provided for the starving people.² He declared that he believed

"justice is about to be withheld, and wrong perpetrated towards the millions of both countries, unless the voice of England shall unite with that of Ireland in a demand for Justice and not Charity."

The time had now come for the peoples of both countries

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1. Nation, 5 August 1843. "Address of the National Association, London, to the People of Ireland." Signed on behalf of the Association by William Lovett, Secretary.
 2. "Address to the People of the United Kingdom on the State and Condition of Ireland", which was first published in Howitt's Journal (1846) and later reprinted in W. Lovett, Life and Struggles, pp.351-7.

"to demand from (their) rulers that those annual legislative tinkering for the evils of Ireland shall be speedily put and end to, by a measure that shall at once be just and comprehensive - a reform aiming at the elevation and enlightenment of the people, and the prosperity and happiness of the country, instead of permitting the unjust privileges of individuals to stand in the way of just reformation and to retard the improvement of a nation."

Lovett indicated the most urgent needs of the Irish people. First, it was necessary to provide "for the pressing and immediate wants of the destitute, aged and infirm". Secondly, it was necessary that laws be passed to check the process by which farmers are gradually forced to give up their holdings as a result of high rents and taxes and become beggars or starve. Third, that sources of employment other than agriculture be provided "so as to prevent those contentions and crimes, which have their origin for the most part in the present competition for the land". Finally, that the government provide for the "general education and improvement of the people" and thereby remove "the chief cause of religious strife and contention".

Like William Cobbett and other radical reformers before him, Lovett believed that a "just and comprehensive Poor Law" would alleviate much of the immediate distress amongst the peasantry. To improve the state of agriculture, he suggested reforms to abolish the "present subletting system", to compel landlords to grant leases of not less than fourteen years and to secure to the tenant fair compensation for any improvements which he had made during his period of tenure. He proposed

that waste lands should be appropriated by the Government with a view to employing labourers at present unemployed or dependent on casual labour. Lovett called for the removal of "the superfluous, wealthy, Established Church", and suggested that its property and income be used in such national schemes as the improvement of roads, the establishing of mines and fisheries and in other projects aimed at increasing the wealth of the country. If these extensive reforms were carried out, Lovett prophesied:

"The English labour market would soon have fewer competitors, our present expensive establishment of soldiers and police for the ruling of Ireland might be dispensed with, and all classes peacefully bent on the improvement of their country, would soon cause capital, trades and manufacture to take root there." ¹

Many of Lovett's suggestions, particularly those dealing with the land question, are reminiscent of proposals put forward by Irish reformers such as William Sharman Crawford and James Lalor; but they were too optimistic to be fulfilled in 1846. Lovett's writings reveal his sympathy with Ireland and had he been able to agree with O'Connor, he might well have proved himself a staunch friend to the Irish people.

1. "Address to the People of the United Kingdom on ... Ireland", W. Lovett, Life and Struggles, pp.351-7.

George Julian Harney.¹

George Julian Harney, one of the most ardent supporters of "physical force" Chartism, was in close contact with Irishmen in the Chartist movement for a great part of his life. He had his first experience of Irish affairs in 1838 when, as a result of a controversy with Daniel O'Connell², he was expelled from the London Working Men's Association. Harney then founded the London Democratic Association, which drew many supporters from the Spitalfield weavers, many of whom were Irish.³ Later, in 1843, Harney moved to Sheffield and devoted himself to establishing a unity of interest between the Chartists and Repealers in

1. Harney's writings on Ireland are confined to two articles in the Northern Star, 5 August 1848, "Ireland and the English Press", and Northern Star, 12 August 1848, "Order reigns in Ireland - to the Working Classes"; see also reference to Ireland in his "Address to the Electors of and Non-Electors of Tiverton", Northern Star, 4 December 1847.
2. Cf. A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge (1958), pp.24-6, for a detailed account of the affair. Harney outraged by O'Connell's attack on the trade unions, urged the L.W.M.A. to disavow this notorious opponent of the working classes. But the L.W.M.A. feared that their carefully planned policy of conditional co-operation might be jeopardised if they openly attacked O'Connell and so did nothing. Harney announced that he would bring a motion of censure before the Association and then wrote a furious letter to O'Connell. O'Connell was outraged and wrote a letter to the Association who refused to publish it. Harney's motion of censure was buried in committee and the correspondence was in effect suppressed. On 13 February 1838, The Times published Harney's correspondence with O'Connell, with a postscript by Harney denouncing the Association for shielding an enemy of the working class. He was consequently expelled from the L.W.M.A.
3. E. Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy (1951), p.127.

Sheffield. He was the first Englishman to join a Repeal Association, although O'Connell got him expelled.¹ Harney joined the Irish Universal Suffrage Association about the same time² and was an enthusiastic supporter of the Barnsley Irish Chartists as we have seen.³ From 1843 until 1850, he was in effect editor of the Northern Star and his fortunes became closely linked with those of O'Connor.

Harney knew many Irish exiles, but he had little knowledge of conditions in Ireland itself. For many years he despaired of the people of Ireland, who depended for their leaders on Daniel O'Connell and his supporters and who showed little desire to establish links with the English radicals. His contacts with the Irish in Sheffield and his later acquaintance with O'Connor produced a marked change in his attitude towards the Irish. In an address "to the Electors and Non-Electors of Tiverton", he referred to "the frightful assassinations and outrages in Ireland" which he attributed not to the depravity of the Irish people but to the landlords who, he declared, "have, and always had, the army, the police, and the physical force of the government on their side". There was a war in Ireland, a "war of the rich against the poor", which would be terminated only with the enactment of the People's Charter.⁴ Writing in

1. A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge (1958), p.124.

2. Northern Star, 8 July 1843.

3. Annals of Barnsley, p.179, 12 June 1841.

4. Northern Star, 4 December 1847.

the summer of 1848, Harney expressed his horror of English misrule in Ireland.¹ The aristocracy and middle classes were "activated by pledges of hatred for Ireland". Only the Chartists were sympathetic to the Irish. The English working class, in general, were "still blindly ignorant of their sufferings". Harney lamented the failure of the Irish rising in 1848.

"Either priestly persuasion, the want of proper leaders, or the decline of popular courage - the consequence of famine and long-continued misery in every frightful form - one, or all of these influences may have served to stifle the 'late rebellion' and may serve to prevent any formidable rebellion in the future."²

After 1848, he became more interested in the Continental Socialists, especially Marx and Engels, and lost interest in Ireland. Yet, he established close friendships with Irish Chartists in England, for whom he had a great regard, and these gave him greater understanding of Ireland and her problems.

1. Northern Star, 12 August 1848.

2. Ibid.

Ernest Jones.¹

Ernest Jones, who like his wife belonged to the landed gentry, was a valuable addition to the Chartist movement.² He first became interested in radical politics through the Irish national movement. In the autumn of 1845 he became acquainted with a number of Irish Repealers in London³ and, it was said, wrote a number of poems for the Nation signed "Carl".⁴ His first public avowal of Chartist principles was made in May 1846, in a statement which revealed him as an

1. Ernest Jones' writings on Ireland are confined to an article "To the Men of Ireland", People's Paper, 8 March 1856. He made a number of speeches in 1848, reprinted in the Northern Star, in which he encouraged the Confederate-Chartist union, cf. Northern Star, 1 January 1848, "Address to the Electors and Non-Electors of Halifax"; 2 February 1848 (also reprinted in United Irishman, 12 February 1848), speech on Confederate-Chartist union; Northern Star, 15 April 1848, speech to Confederate and Chartists on Kennington Common.
2. Ernest Jones was born in Berlin on 25 January 1819. His father Major Charles Jones was a veteran of the Peninsular campaign who fought at Waterloo, his mother the daughter of Alexander Annesley, a large Kent landowner. He was educated in Germany and came to England in 1838 and until his entry into Chartist politics in 1846 occupied himself with the usual activities of a young man about town with literary and artistic tastes. He entered the Middle temple in March 1841 and was called to the bar in 1844. He married Jane Atherley, who belonged to an old Cumberland family, in June 1841. Cf. J. Saville, Ernest Jones: Chartist (London 1952) for an interesting account of Jones.
3. Ernest Jones Diary (1844-7) (MS 923.2.J.18), 25 November 1845. "Called at the Irish Society ... I sat and read the Nation and other papers"; cf. also 10 December 1845, 2 January 1846.
4. George Howell's MS biography of Ernest Jones, Chapter X.

extreme radical rather than the socialist he was to become.¹ Feargus O'Connor welcomed this new recruit to the movement; he flattered and encouraged him and Jones, in return, accepted O'Connor's political leadership. He attended the Chartist Convention in 1846 and supported O'Connor's Land Plan. In 1847, he became joint editor, with O'Connor, of a new monthly, The Labourer, a large part of which was taken up with the discussion of the Land Plan. By 1848, Jones was acknowledged as a leading figure in the movement.

Jones was a keen supporter of the Confederate-Chartist union. Addressing a meeting at the end of January 1848, he declared:

"The government is trying to foster animosity between you and a newer land - between two twin sisters of the sea - the two pearls in the ocean diadem - between England and Ireland. Mark how skilfully they do it; first they take the food from Ireland at the point of a bayonet. Well, the Irish naturally come over to see what becomes of their food. The government have never seriously prevented this, for by it they gain a double object. They produce a fresh competition reserve to

1. Northern Star, 9 May 1846. He wrote,

"It is because I wish to see a government that governs for the general good, instead of individual interest - a House of Commons that shall represent a people instead of a party - a church that shall be something more than a portion for the younger sons of titled houses - in fine a liberal democracy instead of a tyrannical oligarchy, and it is because I believe the people's charter alone is calculated to ensure these results, that I am desirous of becoming one of your delegates; and thus giving one more example to those classes, with whom early associations have connected me, of how unworthy one of their own order thinks them of the privileges they enjoy, and of the powers they arrogate; feeling as I do, that as an honest man I cannot support a system by which the poor are robbed of their labour for the benefit of the rich, and slaves are still further insulted by being told they are free."

bring down English wages, and this ferments feelings of hatred between the two nations."

Appealing for the unity of the two peoples, Jones concluded his speech with these words:

"My friends, the blue waters flow between England and Ireland and tyranny has not been able to bridge the channel over with blood and steel - it cannot tie the two hands together with a halter, and unite them under a yoke. But fraternity in which both nations shall meet halfway, mingling their cries of 'England for the English' and 'Ireland for the Irish'. For the tyrants of one are the oppressors of the other; and the wrongs of either are the wrongs of both." ¹

Ernest Jones welcomed the Irish Confederates who participated in monster Chartist demonstration on 10 April 1848.² Writing in 1856, Jones recalled the growth of the alliance between the Chartists and a section of the Irish nationalists.

"Throughout British Democracy, from pen and platform, came one continued advocacy of the rights of Ireland ... Yet O'Connell offered the British Government Irish bayonets to put down British Chartists, and said he desired to widen the breach between the Chartists and Repealers." ³

It was O'Connell's deliberate policy of creating dissension between the two bodies which, in Jones' opinion, was the cause of the failure of the popular agitation in both countries.

"Had he not made that fatal mistake Ireland would have been free, and the English people have obtained their rights long - long ere this".⁴ This was a view which was held by a number

1. Northern Star, 5 February 1848.
2. Northern Star, 15 April 1848.
3. People's Paper, 8 March 1856.
4. Ibid.

of the leading Chartists including O'Connor but it failed to take into account the enormous difficulties which impeded the progress of popular movements. Jones also referred to the Confederate-Chartist union. He declared:

"In 1848, a change occurred - the Democracy of both countries began to see their error - Mitchel and his co-workers began to draw close links of friendship with their English Bretheren - T.F. Meagher came over and addressed the Chartists of Manchester - a delegate was sent by the Irish patriots to the Chartist National Convention."¹

He claimed that it was the "division in the councils of each party among themselves" which caused the union to fail and in a sense he was right. Lack of planning, combined with the disputes among the leaders, left the popular movements drifting while the captains fought. Jones hoped to revive the union in the middle fifties, but the popular agitation had waned. Jones, however, never entirely lost faith in Irish revolutionary movements.²

1. People's Paper, 8 March 1856.

2. He defended several Irish Fenians, Allen, Larkin, Gould and others in Manchester in 1867. Cf. J. Seville, Ernest Jones: Chartist (1952), p.77.

Bronterre O'Brien.¹

O'Brien wrote less extensively than O'Connor on Irish topics, during the years in which he worked with English radicals, but he was equally concerned that the Irish people should enjoy the political and social advantages which, he hoped, would be derived from the enactment of the People's Charter. Unlike O'Connor, however, who believed the problems confronting England and Ireland were essentially different, O'Brien viewed them as a unity. The labouring masses of both countries were

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1. O'Brien's articles on Ireland appeared in various periodicals to which he contributed or which, in several cases, he edited. Cf. Carpenter's Political Letters, 21 January 1831, "Bronterre The Times and Repeal of the Union"; "Bronterre's Letters", no.4 (in British Museum); Midland Representative, 15 November 1831, "O'Connell and Ireland"; London Mercury, 18 December 1836, "O'Connell's Dublin Association"; 1 January 1837, "Irish Poor Law"; 30 April 1837, "Irish Municipal Corporation Bill"; The Operative, 16 December 1838, "Radicals and 'Sham-Radicals'"; 6 January 1839, "'Sham-Radicals' and O'Connell"; Northern Star, 10 February 1838, "To the Trade Unionists of Great Britain and Ireland"; 12 May 1838, "Debate on the Third Reading of the Poor Law Bill"; 8 September 1838, "To the Unrepresented People of Great Britain and Ireland"; Chartist Circular, 26 December 1840, "Daniel O'Connell"; The National Reformer, 3 October 1846, "The Fearful Condition of Ireland"; 7 November 1846, "The Political State and Prospects of Ireland"; 21 November, 5 December 1846, "The Old and Young Ireland Parties in the 'Sister Country'"; 19 December 1846, "Repeal Politics in Ireland - O'Connell, the Catholic Clergy and the Middle Classes"; 23 January 1847, "Why is Death the Order of the Day in Ireland"; 28 January 1847, "The Times newspaper and 'The Land of Beggars' - Truth and Falsehood"; 17 April 1847, "Health of O'Connell"; 22 May 1847, "State of the Country"; The Social Reformer, 11 August 1849, "Queen's visit to Ireland"; 15 September 1849, "Mr Duffy and the Irish Repealers". This is by no means a complete list of O'Brien's articles on Ireland but they contain many of his ideas relating to Ireland.

struggling to assert their "equality of rights" against a powerful and selfish landed aristocracy and the growing power of the commercial and industrial classes. O'Brien recognised, it is true, that the Irish people laboured under conditions of especial hardship which retarded the movement for political emancipation. The poverty and degradation of the peasantry was accentuated by the selfishness and neglect of the absentee landlords, the absence of any form of Poor Law for Ireland, and the factional policy of the British government in Ireland, which encouraged Daniel O'Connell whom O'Brien once described as the "arch-enemy" of the Irish people.

O'Brien agreed with O'Connor that the key to social reconstruction lay in a thorough solution of the land question. In Ireland, where the majority of the population depended upon the land for their livelihood, this was especially true. Yet, he believed that economic and social reforms would result only from the political emancipation of the people. He, therefore, stressed the necessity for the development in Ireland of a movement for radical reform which would be independent of the Catholic middle classes. One of the major factors in retarding the growth of a movement in favour of universal suffrage, in O'Brien's opinion, was the dependence of the Irish masses on middle-class Catholic leaders who exploited popular discontent to forward measures calculated to benefit their own class rather than alleviate the misery of the masses. Catholic Emancipation

had "conferred neither education nor representation on the multitudes in Ireland who care very little for it".¹ In fact, it had deprived hundreds and thousands of people of the right of choosing representatives in Parliament. He warned radicals in England and Ireland in 1836 against supporting O'Connell and his Dublin Association, which he claimed was in fact,

"a mere combination of Irish middle classes with a small proportion of the Irish upper classes ... having as its object the overthrow of the (Irish) aristocracy and church, but by no means having for its object the political emancipation of the masses of the people."²

It was his contention that the Irish middle classes hoped that, once they had seized the property of the Established Church and destroyed the power of the Protestant Ascendancy, they would be able to build

"a municipal domination of their own on the ruins of that feudal oligarchy and to end (as all middle-class despotisms end) by a re-parcelling of the land amongst upstart adventurers and profit mongers."

This would result in

"the complete subjugation and degradation of the working classes, till a new revolution comes to punish the usurpers and set all to rights again."³

Although in the thirties O'Brien bitterly attacked Daniel O'Connell for being merely "a tool for promoting the selfish and

1. Midland Representative, 5 November 1831. "O'Connell and Ireland."

2. London Mercury, 18 December 1836. "O'Connell's Dublin Association."

3. London Mercury, 18 December 1836.

ambitious projects of the Irish middle classes",¹ he declared later:

"With all his faults, we do not believe O'Connell was a naturally bad man. We regard him as a man of naturally good parts, moral and mental, but spoiled and corrupted by factious influences from early life ..."

O'Brien regretted that O'Connell had not

"enacted the noble and more enduring part of espousing the rights and warring against the wrongs of all classes, and devoting his fine faculties to the redemption of Ireland from ignorance and superstition, with its attendants, poverty, crime and misery."

But O'Brien recognised that, if O'Connell had attempted to play such a rôle, he would have lost his power which rested on the support of the Catholic clergy and the rising middle classes.

"But that power would have vanished from him had he attempted the enlightenment and emancipation of the Irish peasantry. O'Connell was shrewd enough to know this ... Had the priests and middle orders declared against class legislation and taken the working classes by the hands as brothers, O'Connell would have been liberty's most ardent apostle." 2

O'Brien deplored the slavish dependence of the mass of the Irish people on Irish leaders like O'Connell. He welcomed radical reform movements in Ireland which attempted to promote the political enfranchisement of the people. Referring to the appearance of the Dublin Comet in 1831, he declared

"This paper is the only one in Ireland honest enough to disenthral itself of party politics ... To enlighten

1. The National Reformer, 17 April 1847. "Health of O'Connell".

2. The National Reformer, 17 April 1847, *ibid.*

the Irish mind that is their chief object. The bulk of the Irish people once they are intelligent will take the management of their own affairs into their own hands . . . The agitator as well as the parson will be gone." ¹

The decline in Irish radicalism after 1835 and the overwhelming support O'Connell continued to receive led O'Brien to make a series of appeals to the Irish people in which he urged them to judge their leaders by their achievement rather than by their reputation. By 1838, he believed it was clear to all that O'Connell forwarded the interests of the Irish middle classes only. He had opposed the introduction of Poor Laws into Ireland merely to conciliate the middle classes, who were hostile to such measures because they tended to keep wages up.² Moreover, in attacking the trade unions in 1837, O'Connell had shown himself to be the representative of

"consumers generally, more especially the owners of money property, whose interest it is to make money dear and labour cheap." ³

Addressing himself to the Dublin trades, O'Brien urged them to resist the efforts of O'Connell and of others to secure a Parliamentary inquiry into the trade unions. In his opinion, it was a device to secure information from the tradesmen which might be used against them afterwards.⁴

1. Midland Representative, 5 November 1831.

2. London Mercury, 1 January 1837; Northern Star, 12 May 1838.

3. Northern Star, 10 February 1838, "To the Trade Unionists of Great Britain and Ireland".

4. Northern Star, 10 February 1838.

O'Brien stressed the conflict of interest between the different classes in Irish society. He was particularly anxious to show that the middle classes constituted the most dangerous enemy to the working people now that they were assuming the power of the landed aristocracy. It was in the light of this development that O'Brien judged repeal. He believed that "a good local government in Ireland would remove nine-tenths of the evils complained of in that country"¹, provided that the new Irish Parliament would not correspond to that constituted in 1782, and that "the ballot be insisted upon to defeat the corrupt influences of the great landed proprietors".² Opposition to repeal was not, in O'Brien's opinion, based on the desire to keep the two countries united but rather on the determination of the British government to preserve its power to exploit the Irish people.³ Moreover, in Ireland itself, the parties in favour of repeal were divided.

"The vast majority are in favour of repeal, if it could be got quickly, and without the working classes getting any share in it - that is, any power or influence in constituting the Irish Parliament ... sooner than wish a class of working men obtaining any share of the government, they would bid adieu to repeal for ever."⁴

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1. The National Reformer, 5 December 1846.
 2. Carpenter's Political Letters, 7 January 1831.
 3. Ibid.
 4. The National Reformer, 19 December 1846.

O'Brien welcomed the rise of the Young Ireland party, which although far from being a national party, since it "was too aristocratic and middle class in composition", had taken the first essential step in that direction by declaring for freedom of opinion.¹ In Ireland one of the major disadvantages, in O'Brien's view, was the absence of any newspaper press which did not support either Dublin Castle or O'Connell. If new media for the expression of opinion were made available, the working people would have the opportunity to express their views which hitherto had been denied them.

The Great Famine roused O'Brien to a storm of indignation, since he believed many of the Irish landlords looked on it as means to rid themselves of unwanted Catholic tenantry. O'Brien inquired why, if this was not at the back of their minds, they did not insist upon the closing of Irish ports to prevent the export of Irish provisions.

"And when the people's food - the food raised by their own hands - was forcibly taken away from them, to pay the rent of the Irish absentee landlords, and to yield usury to English mortgages, why did not the Irish landlords and capitalists, even then, take some step to provision the country from other sources." ²

Yet O'Brien hoped that some positive good would emerge from the famine, that its alarming extent would force the Irish people to inquire into the causes of the catastrophe. He wrote:

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1. The National Reformer, 7 November 1846.
 2. The National Reformer, 23 January 1847.

"In Ireland, the failure of the potato crop has made millions of people inquire ... if I am not mistaken, eventually (it) may prove the greatest blessing Ireland has ever known. It will stop humbug agitators, put an end to the 'religious' squabbles, and set the great mass of the useful classes a-thinking how they may best emancipate their industry from the grasp of landlords and usury changers, and of their tools, the lawyers, land agents, priests and parsons." ¹

Yet he was forced to admit in the summer of 1847, that there was little improvement in the state of the country and that crisis after crisis would continue at intervals, "till either some frightful convulsion occurs to break up the system ... or till our rulers begin to reform our landed tenures, currency and exchange".² O'Brien was disappointed by the absence of political understanding among the vast majority of Irish people and turned his attention increasingly to schemes for educational reform in Britain.

1. The National Reformer, 3 October 1846.

2. The National Reformer, 22 May 1847.

Feargus O'Connor.¹

During the years in which he worked with the English Radicals the one consistent feature of O'Connor's policy was his desire to see the union of the English working classes with

1. During the years between 1839 and 1850, O'Connor wrote innumerable articles in the Star, many of which were on Irish topics. Cf. Northern Star, 9 November 1839, "Tour of Feargus O'Connor together with remarks on the present state of Ireland"; 9 May 1840, "Feargus O'Connor. To Daniel O'Connell, M.P."; 14 November 1840, "Ireland"; 21 November, 5 December 1840, "Irish Absenteeism"; 16 January 1841, "O'Connor to the English People"; 15 May 1841, "Feargus O'Connor - To all those who live by Labour"; 5 June 1841, "To Daniel O'Connell, M.P."; 20, 27 March, 10, 17 April, 1 May 1841, "Letters to O'Malley of the Dublin Chartist Association"; 10, 17, 24, 31 July, 7 September 1841, "To the Landlords of Ireland"; 20 November 1841. "To the Magnanimous Irishmen resident in Glasgow"; 4 December 1841, 1 January, 5 February, 12 March, 14 May 1842, "To the Imperial Chartists"; 20, 27 May, 3, 10, 17, 24 June, 14, 19, 21 October 1843, 27 July 1844, "Repeal of the Union"; 24 June, 8, 22 July 1843, "To the Imperial Chartists"; 10 June, 18 November 1843, "Addresses to Irishmen in England"; 30 July, 30 September, 11, 25 November, 2 December 1843, 30 March, 5 October 1844, 1 November 1845, "Letters to Daniel O'Connell"; 10 June 1846, "To the English People" (O'C. appeals for help for Patrick O'Higgins); 11 April 1846, "To the Imperial Chartists" (in opposition to the Coercion Bill); 16 May 1846, "Heart of Erin"; 4 July 1846, "To the Imperial Chartists" (opposing the abandonment of Repeal); 27 November 1847, "To W. Bryan and Patrick O'Higgins, Esqs. from Feargus O'Connor"; 4, 18 December 1847, "To the Irish People" (O'C. attacks the Coercion Bill then being debated in Parliament); 1, 15 January 1848, "To the Irish People"; 18 March 1848, "To the Imperial Chartists"; 15 July, 12, 19 August, 9, 23 September, "Ireland"; 9, 16 September, 14 October 1848, "To the Imperial Chartists"; 28 October 1848, "Endowment of Catholic Priests in Ireland"; 25 November 1848, "The Labour Question"; 31 November, 8, 15, 29 December 1849, 5 January, 2, 23 February 1850, "To the Irish People" (also printed in the Irishman). (N.B. This is not an exhaustive list of O'Connor's articles on Ireland but it includes the most important ones.

Cf. also articles by O'Connor on Ireland in The Labourer, vol.i, nos.i, ii, iii, "The Phase of Political Parties".

the Irish peasantry. It was the avowed policy of his newspaper, the Northern Star, "to present Irish society to the most anti-Irish readers"¹ and thereby create a climate of opinion favourable to Ireland. At the same time, he hoped by thus presenting their grievances to the English people, that he would rally the Irish in support of the Charter.

As we have seen, O'Connor believed that the major evil of Irish society was the land system which subordinated the lives of the peasants to the selfish demands of their landlords. Since he held the Irish landlords largely responsible for the iniquities of the system, it was to their class that O'Connor first addressed himself. Since the Union the country had suffered from the "curse of absenteeism".² Estates were left in the charge of agents, whose prime aim was to secure as much profit as possible from the estates they controlled with as

1. Northern Star, 14 November 1840.

2. F. O'Connor, A State of Ireland (Cork 1820), pp.13-4. "These gentlemen became enamoured of English pomp and English splendour." Northern Star, 21 November 1840. "The 'Union' between England and Ireland is the cause of Irish absenteeism. Antecedently to the year 1800, few Irish landlords, if any, were absentees; the Union ... sent one hundred Irish members to the English House of Commons ... and led to a distinction between these and the stay-at-homes ..."

little cost as possible to themselves.¹ The agent's work was largely carried out by his "trustee", whose job it was to watch every tenant, to report any sale of stock or improvements made on the land in order to exact an increased rent.² The "trustee" wrote letters to the agent describing the impossibility of collecting the rent because of the "excited state of the country". Such letters were read in the House of Commons and used as "irrefutable evidence against Ireland". Moreover, the agent and his man saw to it that the tenant remained in a state

1. Northern Star, 21 November 1840. Many Irish landlords were "actually routed out by agents, solicitors, and middlemen, who operated upon their fears to lay hold of their estates ... The landlord now gone, having left a short injunction with Colonel Drive-all, his agent, to give no quarter to the rascally papists ... The Colonel takes his Lordship's place in the grand jury room, where he represents himself, and procures all the pickings to be had from road-jobbing, police, and other appointments; at petty sessions he is the chairman of the magistrates; at quarter sessions he is on the bench. In one capacity he sits as judge between himself and his 'rascally papists', undertenants, and in the other, he officiates as wholesale characterman for those who require licences for public houses etc. ...

The other middle men, in their respective districts, holding from one to three thousand acres, are magistrates, who, together with two or three of the neighbouring parsons, do the petty and quarter sessions' business between them..."

2. Northern Star, 21 November 1840. The job of the trustee was to "watch every beast and every crop upon every farm ... attend all fairs and markets - to carry prompt intelligence of all stock bought and sold - to watch the improvements upon every spot, if any should be made enough to make such; and to be continually on the look-out for every poor fellow who has saved ten ... pounds ... in order to secure him and his little capital ... at an increased rent."

of perpetual debt¹ only to be escaped if the poor man emigrated to England.

O'Connor argued that one immediate solution to the problem was the return of the landlord to his estates, in order that he might collect his own rent and see the state of the country for himself.² O'Connor was of the opinion that the landlords, by their own extravagance and thoughtlessness, were threatened first with bankruptcy and later with extinction as a class. The rapid growth of the economic and political power of the industrial and commercial classes had resulted in the first Reform Bill, which transferred most of the "legislative powers from the landed to the manufacturing interest". It was the refusal of Irish landlords to move with the times which constituted the greatest threat to their future existence. O'Connor warned:

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1. Northern Star, 21 November 1840. "... the tenant is stripped of capital, which should have been applied to the stocking of his farm, buys everything he requires of the very worst description at double its value; he gives twice the quantity of corn at harvest time for that which he borrows in spring to sow. For all these things he gives promissory notes, and it is part of the duty of the 'trusty' to know the amount and the date of these notes, to watch the degree and progress and mark off the stock, potatoes and manure ... and preserve the distress for rent, whether any is due or not."
 2. A State of Ireland (1820), p.14. "As far as concerns the landlord ... (his) true place would be ... residing among his tenantry ... or at least (he should) come amongst his tenantry once or twice a year, to collect his own rent, which would make him see the real state of the country - give him some IDEA of the value of the land, and save his tenant what has been EXTRACTED from him by the merciless agent; thus enriching himself, making his tenantry comfortable, and restoring peace."

"Your monopoly consists in the law of primogeniture, which morally, socially, and physically does you much damage. Your mode of leasing your estates in large allotments (is) unsuited to the capital of the country and destructive of the industry of the country..."

But the chief danger to the Irish landlords lay in their own persistence

"in that antediluvian system of making serfs of (their) tenants by short leases or no leases, and the practice of exacting one settled invariable rent for a period, no matter how long or how short, without reference to the price of the commodity (they) let." ¹

If they continued to cling to their high rents and expensive mode of living, a sudden shock might hurl them down and their former eminence would be gone for ever.

Of equal importance in the land question was the need for a "new deal" for the Catholic tenantry. The agrarian disturbances were only a symptom of the existence of deep-seated grievances which had to be remedied. If the landlords were unwilling or unable to cope with the situation, then it was the task of Parliament to pass laws to protect the tenantry. O'Connor listed three existing evils, the uncertainty of tenure, the legal expense of establishing title, even under lease, and the want of capital as the evils which must be "boldly met and instantly destroyed".² To introduce security of tenure, he proposed that the government give "immunities to the tenants-at-will, which would render the practice

1. Northern Star, 10 July 1840. "To the Landlords of Ireland."

2. Northern Star, 25 November 1843.

disadvantageous to the landlords".¹ He suggested also that the tenant pay a corn rent in place of a money rent and that this should be estimated in accordance with the annual value of the land. The want of capital to buy farm buildings, equipment, and so on, needed urgently to be reviewed. Moreover, in order to establish title, the law must be made more accessible and less expensive, and it would be necessary to appoint assistant barristers of known character to act at the Quarter sessions which dealt with such cases.² Thus O'Connor's solution to the land question lay in extensive reform of the law regarding tenants combined with a modification by the landlords of their present mode of living. He believed that, once the landlords were prepared to let their lands at economic rents, farmers and small peasant owners would be able not only to pay their rents but prosper.³

The Great Famine appeared to O'Connor as an indictment of the selfish policy of the landlords. It was the direct consequence of their obstinate refusal to agree to even limited reforms in the law of tenant right and the unwillingness of the British government to force their hand. O'Connor blamed the landlords for every death, although they could not check the potato rot, they could have prevented "potatoes being the

1. Northern Star, 25 November 1843.

2. Northern Star, 28 March 1846.

3. Cf. O'Connor's "Letters to the Landlords of Ireland", Northern Star, 17, 24, 31 July 1841.

staple food of millions". Instead,

"Corn and livestock raised on the farms and small-holdings of the peasants were exported in order that they might pay the rent, while they kept themselves alive on potatoes." ¹

It was only right that relief for the suffering people should come from the pockets of those responsible. In a series of letters to the leader of the Whig party, Lord John Russell, O'Connor urged the minister to use the opportunity to pass legislation imposing duties and conditions on the owners of landed property. Moreover, to avoid famines in the future, it was essential for the Government to introduce a reform of tenant right along the lines he had outlined in previous years.² "Ireland is styled your great difficulty. It is in your power to turn it into a great and glorious opportunity."³

O'Connor's fury knew no bounds when he discovered that Lord John Russell had been "governed by the old debasing policy of catering for party support" and had endeavoured "to turn the famine to Whig purposes". Instead of introducing far-reaching land reform, Lord John Russell had allowed the creators of the famine, the Irish landlords, "to all but dictate their own terms". Instead of limiting their powers, the Whigs had granted £50,000 for the purchase of seed to the landlords who had

1. Northern Star, 13 March 1847.

2. The Labourer (1847), vol.i, no.1, pp.19-23.

3. The Labourer (1847), vol.i, no.1, p.40.

"created the famine".¹ Road works and soup kitchens had been set up to alleviate the sufferings of a starving people.

O'Connor demanded that relief come from those who perpetuated the conditions from which famine sprang, and argued that if relief came from England, "Irish abuses would be increased".²

Turning to the Irish people, O'Connor implored them not "to let famine play the game of monopoly". He maintained:

"In Ireland, in Scotland, even in England, it (monopoly) is weakening the cause of liberty - the people are becoming powerless and languid from hunger ... famine is doing that which Tyranny wishes; it is DEPOPULATING THE COUNTRY OF ITS ENEMIES."³

O'Connor feared that the famine would prove the most effective means at the disposal of the landlords to clear their lands of redundant tenantry. To him, the most tragic aspect of the famine was the failure of the government to introduce the wide-scale reforms which were essential to remedy "the several abuses, from which the manifold grievances had arisen". The Whigs had sacrificed the Irish peasantry to the dictates of party and class. Concluding his letters to the Whig leader, O'Connor declared:

"My Lord, as we predicted, you have lost a great opportunity. In the littleness of your nature, you have looked upon the few Irish landlords as Ireland, and your time-serving supporters in the House of Commons as Europe; but believe us that the tide of

1. The Labourer (1847), vol.1, no.2.

2. Northern Star, 23 January 1847.

3. Northern Star, 13 March 1847.

ungovernable and irresistible force, which if not met and directed into suitable channels, will overwhelm you and the system you advocate." ¹

When discussing laws passed for Ireland in the Houses of Parliament, O'Connor tended to judge their merit by the extent to which they struck at the root evils of the land system. In 1841, he drew the attention of his Chartist readers to several bills, passed by the English Parliament in the 1830's, which had mitigated a few outstanding abuses.² But attempts had failed to abolish the payment of tithes, to establish a Poor Law in Ireland, or even to introduce a limited degree of legal protection for the Catholic tenantry. O'Connor argued that neither Catholic Emancipation nor the Reform Bill of 1832 had improved their conditions of life. After a visit to Ireland in 1839, he wrote that Emancipation had left every burden upon the Catholic people to which they had been liable before.

"Protestant landlords more than ever oust beggars and destroy their Catholic tenantry; Protestant Magistrates more than ever oppress the Catholic poor; Protestant parsons, more than ever, damn, and get paid for damning, the Catholic religion; Protestant jurors, more than ever,

1. The Labourer (1847), vol.1, no.3.

2. Northern Star, 10 July 1841. Cf. The Irish Constabulary Bill (1830), which had removed the power to appoint the police from the sole jurisdiction of the local magistrates, the Subletting Act (1831-2) which had "merely nibbled at the abuse of the system but stopped short of interference just where it should have commenced"; and the Grand Jury Bill (1833) which had corrected to some extent the practice of jobbing.

O'Connor points out that he had outlined several of these abuses in his pamphlet, "A State of Ireland" (1820).

perjure themselves to convict Catholic prisoners; the Catholic people almost exclusively support the Protestant establishment; and yet they impudently boast of Emancipation." 1

The effects of the Reform Bill had been hardly more spectacular.

Indeed, the extension of the franchise had, as a result of manipulation by the landlords, become a "Tory franchise".

After the passing of the Reform Bill, the landlords discovered that a Catholic constituent

"would sacrifice house and home, and life if necessary to beat down the Protestant church and Protestant institutions."

Distraining and evictions followed the first acts of disobedience but as neither persuasion nor intimidation had much effect, many landlords resolved to get rid of their Catholic tenantry.

O'Connor described some of the measures to which they had resorted. He said:

"Some clear their estates of the old tenants and put Protestant paupers, without character or capital upon the land, at reduced rents; the vote being the one great thing required. The new Tithe Bill has added tithe to the rent, and the landlord has now the power of both landlord and parsons; he can distrain and eject for non-payment of tithe. The Reform Bill requires that a voter should have a £10 beneficial interest in his land, over and above the rent reserved in the lease; and when a poor tenant pleads poverty, the answer is - 'You rascal! didn't you swear to a £10 interest before my face? Aye, and you shall pay £10 more, for I can break your lease at any time.' This circumstance has prevented many from registering." 2

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1. Northern Star, 9 November 1839, "Tour of Feargus O'Connor together with remarks on the present state of Ireland".
 2. Ibid.

The total result of these developments was to create a strong body of Tory voters. "The Reform franchise has become a curse instead of a blessing - a dagger instead of a shield." ¹

The inadequacy of Parliamentary legislation for Ireland only served to strengthen O'Connor's belief in the need for the restoration of an Irish parliament in College Green. Addressing the House of Commons in 1834, he declared that Ireland had never been more prosperous than in the years from 1782 to 1797 when it had enjoyed at least a degree of legislative independence. Despite the fact that during that time Catholics were excluded from electing members of Parliament, and despite religious difficulties and political animosity, considerable progress had been made. For, O'Connor declared,

"such was the force of public opinion and self-interest, that more service was rendered to Ireland in a few subsequent years, than had been for centuries before ... We find revenues and resources of the country steadily increasing ... works executed for the benefit of trade, commerce and agriculture, bounties upon internal navigation ... we were rapidly hurrying on to the goal of national prosperity." ²

The Union transformed Ireland from a state of "national independence to provincial degradation".³ It was responsible for "all the elements of hate on one side, and of bitter suffering on the other"⁴, and it had been followed by coercive measures,

1. Northern Star, 9 November 1839.

2. Hansard, 3rd series, xxii, cols.1333-52 (24 April 1834).

3. Ibid., xxii, col.1343.

4. Northern Star, 20 May 1843.

insurrection acts, the suspension of Habeas Corpus, and martial law, all in quick succession.¹ The greatest single evil arising from Union was, in O'Connor's view, absenteeism. Addressing the House of Commons, he declared:

"Every Member sent to this House is an absentee. The members of the legal profession are obliged to come over to your inns of court; our artists are compelled to resort to this country; and our publishers must come hither too, because they cannot publish at home. All this takes place because our gentry reside away from their estates."²

His belief in the need for repeal coloured O'Connor's writings on Ireland and influenced his attitude to Irish political leaders. He was ready to admit that the restitution of the Irish parliament elected by the limited franchise which existed in 1782 was unlikely to bring extensive improvements to the mass of the Irish people. Yet he was convinced that until Ireland secured repeal, it "must be a slave to misery."³

When writing on Irish affairs O'Connor lost no opportunity to attack his political opponent, Daniel O'Connell. His dislike of O'Connell was not motivated entirely by his public acts, and not either by the fact that O'Connell was largely responsible for bringing to an end O'Connor's political career in Ireland, but rather by the thought that the leader of the middle-class Catholics had driven him from Ireland because he was stirred to

1. Northern Star, 26 October 1839.

2. Hansard, 3rd series, xxii, col. 1346.

3. Northern Star, 20 November 1840.

act by the misery of the poorer Irish. O'Connor possessed a deeply ingrained hatred of falsehood and deceit and often spoke the truth when it did not suit him. His major charge against O'Connell was his duplicity. Despite repeated promises to the contrary, O'Connell had not, in O'Connor's opinion, "accomplished one single benefit for Ireland".¹ Addressing O'Connell, O'Connor had these things to say about his political qualities:

"You have become so complete a political mechanic that your mind is an index of your words rather than your feelings ... You have the advantage over most men, of hastily abandoning a weak or unpalatable argument and flying at once to another ... In addressing an assembly, your first object is to feel the pulse of your audience, and then with amazing tact and the rapidity of lightning, you suit your speech to your hearers." ²

O'Connell's sophistication was quite alien to O'Connor. He distrusted the man who could be so adroit in adapting himself to different occasions. O'Connor himself was blunt and uncompromising. His lack of O'Connell's kind of tact often led to disagreement between himself and his fellow Chartists.

O'Connor took it upon himself to expose the Liberator, whose object it was "to accumulate power" even at the expense of the mass of the Irish people. He had, in O'Connor's opinion, attained his position as leader of the Irish people by being the ultimately successful advocate of a reform for which public opinion was ripe. During the agitation for Catholic

1. F. O'Connor, A series of letters to Daniel O'Connell (London 1836), p.14.

2. Ibid., pp.13-4.

Emancipation, his name was kept prominently in the minds of the Irish people. By securing the support of the Catholic clergy and by the "demolition of some of the leading characters, who ventured to stand in the foreground"¹, he received the greatest proportion of thanks for the enactment of the Bill. Yet, Emancipation made little immediate difference to the lives of the vast majority of Catholic peasantry and artisans, who, in consequence, began to agitate for further reform. Yet, O'Connell maintained his position as leader by a deliberate policy of keeping the Irish people "in a state of miserable destitution, in order that their minds may be held in a state of still more servile prostitution".² He was assisted by "the most servile press that ever disgraced a country".³ In the 1830's, he took control of all the major political organisations representing middle and working class interests such as the Trades Political Union. In England, the Emancipation Bill was welcomed by Catholics who suffered from fewer legal disabilities than Irish Catholics. O'Connell "flattering the English aristocrat with the civil equality which he has acquired", while at the same time he allowed the Irish people "to remain in that state of civil and religious inferiority" which the bill intended to remove.⁴ The Reform Bill of 1832 liberalised

1. A series of letters to Daniel O'Connell (1836), p.15.

2. Ibid., p.13.

3. Northern Star, 9 November 1839.

4. A series of letters to Daniel O'Connell (1836), p.16.

the Irish constituencies sufficiently to strengthen O'Connell's political power. Thereafter, his policy was, in O'Connor's opinion, to retain popular support while impeding any further extensive reforms in Ireland. He now sought to "show the value but prevent the accomplishment" of further radical reform.¹

It was on the question of repeal that the differences between the two men were most clearly defined. As we have seen, O'Connor, as M.P. for Cork, opposed O'Connell on this issue. Recalling the discussion which took place, O'Connor said,

"upon our first debate you completely lost your temper ... You said you withdrew all confidence from Mr O'Connor ... you said my family ruined Ireland before, and that I wished to ruin it again."²

O'Connell argued that it was inopportune to introduce the measure because of "the prejudice of Parliament and that of the people of England".³ O'Connor believed that a motion for repeal should be introduced on every possible occasion: such action would be a source of irritation to the British government and a source of hope to those who were in favour of repeal.

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1. A series of letters to Daniel O'Connell, p.5. O'Connor quotes examples of this policy during the parliamentary session, 1833-4. e.g. O'Connell opposed Poor Law legislation for Ireland and agreed to compromise on the tithe question. Cf. A series of letters to Daniel O'Connell, pp. 39, 58; see also S. Maccoby, English Radicalism, 1832-52, p.115 ff.
 2. A series of letters to Daniel O'Connell, p.27. This refers to the participation of Roger and Arthur O'Connor in 1795 in the movement of the United Irishmen.
 3. A series of letters to Daniel O'Connell, p.32.

O'Connell's abandonment of the repeal agitation and his alliance with the Whig party in 1835 moved O'Connor to a series of fresh attacks. Commenting on the effects of several years of the Whig policy of "justice to Ireland", O'Connor, at a public meeting in Oldham in 1839, declared:

"The Whigs talk about the improvement and the tranquillity they have introduced into Ireland; so far from Ireland being improved by the Whigs, I saw none; but I saw great reasons for their boasted tranquillity. Literally every town is garrisoned; they have police, who are spies and panders to the Government in every village ... their tranquillity arises from the fact of their having four magistrates, with a stipendiary at their head where they only had one before ...

But the peasantry are poorer than ever. Ireland is exactly like a flash shop, which displays all sorts of gaudy wares in its windows, but within the shelves are all bare." ¹

At the commencement of each session O'Connell told the Irish people that we would "give the Whigs one more trial; he has now given them seven, and they have gone from bad to worse".²

O'Connor believed that only by the return of a Tory government would the Irish people be roused out of their false belief that their lot would be improved. O'Connor, himself, urged the Chartists to support the Tories in the election of 1841 with the dual purpose of exposing the hostility of the existing political parties towards the masses in England and Ireland and at the same time forcing O'Connell to reconsider his

1. Northern Star, 9 November 1839. Report of a speech made by O'Connor at Oldham on his return from Ireland.
2. Northern Star, 9 November 1839, "Tour of Feargus O'Connor together with remarks on the present state of Ireland".

political position. In the 1830's O'Connor had feared a "Tory domination in Ireland", since he believed that it would strengthen the Orange faction in the country.

"The power of the judge, the power of the magistrates, the power of the landlord, the power of the parson, and the power of corporate officers, receives an increased direction to despotism when backed by their allies in office."¹

Although the Whig party carefully concealed their hostility, years of their rule in Ireland had proved no less disastrous.

An immediate consequence of the return to power of Peel and his party was a renewal of the repeal agitation in Ireland. O'Connor welcomed this development and determined to use his position as leader of the English Chartists to assist the agitation in every way which lay open to him. As we have seen, the English Chartists, led by the Irish contingent, agitated for the measure, and the Northern Star was filled with articles urging them to support the demonstrations of Irish repealers in England. O'Connor addressing the Chartists maintained that the determination of the Irish people was such that, with or without O'Connell, repeal would be won.² He pointed out that "Ireland and England combined will make Daniel keep his post".³ The course of the agitation was followed with great interest by English Chartists. When the Clontarf meeting was proclaimed in October 1843, O'Connor praised O'Connell for

1. A series of letters to Daniel O'Connell, p.67.

2. Northern Star, 24 June 1843.

3. Northern Star, 27 May 1843.

preventing a bloody encounter, but nevertheless thought he should have been prepared for such an event. Yet, O'Connor still hoped that the Irish people would continue their agitation. "O'Connell has little to expect from the English people but the Irish people ever have their sympathy and support".¹ It was not long before O'Connor viewed the Clontarf affair in a different light. Writing at the end of October, 1843, he proclaimed that his nation's freedom had "been treacherously sold by its leaders"; that for the sake of the personal freedom of O'Connell and his son, John, the Irish nation had been placed once again in the "hands of rampant despotism".² The people obeyed the instructions of their leader at Clontarf only to find that he had betrayed them. O'Connell was again moving towards an alliance with the Whig party and showed himself ready to accept compromise in the form of a Federal Parliament. O'Connor had opposed the idea of federalism in 1841, since he believed the system would accentuate "the very feuds, contention and strife" that it set out to avoid and would create "a vast amount of government patronage, without returning one single advantage to Ireland".³ He lamented that in 1843 only one newspaper in Ireland was prepared to criticise the proposal; even the Nation expressed in subdued tones its compliance.⁴

1. Northern Star, 24 October 1843.

2. Northern Star, 21 October 1843.

3. Northern Star, 20 November 1841.

4. Northern Star, 28 October 1843. The paper which he referred to was the Dublin World.

The issue of repeal roused O'Connor in the autumn of 1843 to address a series of letters to O'Connell. Their object was "not to enlighten O'Connell but to instruct the public mind as to (his) present position" in connection with repeal.¹ O'Connor was convinced by O'Connell's persistent attacks on the British Chartists that he did not seek to win repeal for Ireland; "that personal safety, coupled with personal aggrandisement has absorbed all thought of repeal of the Union".² O'Connor, drawing attention to his own part in building up a union of sympathy between the Chartists and the Irish repealers, thus addressed O'Connell:

"I have engaged in double warfare, against Ireland's enemies, and your oppressors ... During the progress of this the hottest year of your agitation, the rejection of our proffered aid, the abuse of our party, and your reiterated personal invectives against the Chartist body and myself were met by a determination upon our part to prove the injustice of your charges by increased activity on behalf of Ireland ... The Chartists asked nothing from you in return for their co-operation on behalf of Ireland because they doubted your sincerity. From the announcement of your agitation for Repeal in the Northern Star newspaper and the English Chartists have linked themselves to the cause of Ireland." ³

O'Connor claimed that since he left Ireland and joined the English radicals he had pursued a conscious policy of attempting to heal the differences, which were inflamed by O'Connell, between the English and Irish. He continued:

1. Northern Star, 11 November 1843. "To Daniel O'Connell."

2. Northern Star, 30 March 1844. "To Daniel O'Connell."

3. Ibid.

"I have taught the Irish to distinguish between the English oligarchy and the English people. I have shown that the people of England suffered as much injustice from that oligarchy as the people of Ireland suffered."¹

O'Connell, on the other hand, by his persistent rejection of Chartist aid, effectively destroyed his chances of securing repeal.

O'Connor sought every means to undermine the Liberator's influence. He was the first to welcome the appearance of a Chartist body in Dublin. In a series of letters addressed to "O'Malley of the Dublin Chartist Association", O'Connor encouraged the Irish Chartists to support the reforms advocated by radical and repeal Members of Parliament in 1833 which included universal suffrage, annual parliaments, vote by ballot, together with repeal of the Union and abolition of tithes. He claimed that since then O'Connell and his party had forgotten their earlier promises.

"Universal Suffrage has dwindled to practical extension; Annual parliaments to Triennial parliaments, Reform of the Union to 'justice to Ireland'; the total abolition of tithes to 'the appropriation point'."²

O'Connor hoped and believed that the Irish Chartist movement would agitate for the reform measures which he, himself, had advocated when Member of Parliament for County Cork. He urged the Chartists in Ireland to support the return of members pledged to support repeal, as O'Higgins had done in the

1. Northern Star, 30 March 1844. "To Daniel O'Connell."

2. Northern Star, 20 March 1841.

elections of 1837 and 1841 when he refused to vote for O'Connell unless he undertook to pledge himself to support the People's Charter and repeal of the Union.¹ O'Connor pointed to the fact that the Liberator had weakened the repeal party in the House of Commons since the first Reformed Parliament in 1833.² Although the Irish Chartists had to contend against the mighty influence of O'Connell, O'Connor hoped they would use every constitutional means at their disposal to win Ireland to the support of the People's Charter as the surest means to win their legislative independence.³ In 1846, when O'Higgins was charged with seditious libel, O'Connor called on his English followers to support the man who had been largely responsible for introducing Chartist principles into Ireland.⁴

After 1843, O'Connor was deeply involved in English affairs, in particular in his Land Plan. His interest in Ireland never wavered, however, and in 1846, he was largely responsible for drawing up a Chartist petition opposing the Tory coercion bill.⁴ O'Connor was equally critical of the alliance of O'Connell with the Whigs when they returned to power in 1846. He argued that

1. Northern Star, 18 December 1841.
2. Northern Star, 27 March 1841.
3. Northern Star, 10 April, 17 April 1841.
4. Northern Star, 11 April 1846; cf. Hansard, 3rd series, lxxxv, cols. 333-360 for account of debates on the Protection of Life (Ireland) Bill, under which additional police could be drafted into proclaimed areas, a rigid curfew could be imposed, and collective fines levied to compensate victims of outrages. The most severe provision was the punishment of fifteen years transportation for breach of the curfew.

O'Connell's demand, that the Irish people should enjoy social and moral equality with the English people, was both dangerous and cunning, since it removed the attention of the Irish masses from grievances which they had readily resisted in the past. These grievances included "a meagre and limited franchise", the Church Establishment, an unsatisfactory municipal franchise, "which enables you to return the odd member to be laughed at by the two factions, and to be used by one of them".¹ He claimed that Irish magistrates were chosen from those who were hostile to the poor and always "from the oppressors' ranks". Despite the increased prosperity of Ireland,

"there are always four millions of paupers out of employment; and always constituting a competitive reserve for the owners of the new producing power to fall back upon as the means of reducing wages."²

Absenteeism drained millions of pounds from Ireland and gave nothing in return. These were some of the abuses to which Irish Members should give their attention. Finally, according to O'Connor

"the English people, are, for the most part, governed by an Irish faction, no matter who is Minister. If a Tory, by an Irish Tory faction; if a Whig, by an Irish patronage faction."³

The development of the Confederate-Chartist union in 1848 appeared to O'Connor as a vindication of all his hopes. Addressing his readers in the Northern Star in March 1848,

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1. Northern Star, 4 July 1846.
 2. Northern Star, 4 July 1846.
 3. Northern Star, 4 July 1846.

he declared:

"Many laughed at the extravagant notion of a union being formed between the English and Irish working classes, and the hope of severance and dissatisfaction of that class was based on the slavish, the corrupt, the prostitute Irish leaders, who, from the origin of the (repeal) agitation to the present have systematically sought their own aggrandisement at the expense of their country, which they have ruined, debased and destroyed."¹

As we have seen, these hopes were short-lived. Yet, despite the failure of the Confederate-Chartist union in 1848, O'Connor was convinced that some progress towards a better understanding had been made. He encouraged the British Chartists to establish links with the Irish Democratic Association. He addressed a public meeting of the Association in Dublin in November 1849, in which he appealed to the Irish to unite with the British working-class radicals; that "if he was not convinced by the truth and sincerity of this alliance", he would not have made himself look foolish by attending their meetings.² With the collapse of the Association, O'Connor's failing health and his declining influence on Chartist policies after 1850, hopes of the alliance faded. O'Connor's ill-health forced him to retire from the Chartist movement in 1852 and so the Irish contingent lost its most faithful advocate. During the final years of the movement, the "Irish question" lost its prominence in the Chartist programme.

1. Northern Star, 18 March 1848.

2. Irishman, 17 November 1849.

This thesis attempts to show the influence of Irishmen and the "Irish Question" on the Chartist movement as a whole. Although in Ireland Chartism was never widespread, the Irish element in England played a decisive part in influencing the policies and dictating the actions of the movement for many years, until its virtual disappearance during the 1850's. The ideals of leading Irish Chartists did not die with them. From now on, the British working-class radicals understood the unity of interest between themselves and the Irish. For example, they showed an increasing desire to unite with the Irish Fenians. At the end of the seventies, there was a strong bond of sympathy between the Irish nationalists, led by Michael Davitt and his Irish Land League, and the British working-class radicals who, side-by-side with Irish workers in England, demonstrated for Ireland's national independence. In the eighties and nineties the Social Democratic Federation organised demonstrations in protest against coercion in Ireland. In Ireland, the policy of union with the British working-class radicals was adopted by a section of the national movement. It was advocated by some members of the Fenian movement. When Michael Davitt founded the Irish Democratic ^{Labour} Federation in 1890, one of its demands was co-operation between the workers of the two countries. It was expressed most clearly by James Connolly, who believed that the Irish fight for national independence was inseparably linked with the struggle of the working class for political emancipation.

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Appendix I.Declaration of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association

(as reprinted in the United Irishman, 4 March 1848).

THE IRISH UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION is founded upon the pure and genuine principles of radical reform; its motto is "Peace - Law - Order"; and its object is to secure a full, free, and fair representation of the people in the Commons house of Parliament.

PRINCIPLES.

1. That the power of making the laws for this realm is, by the constitution, lodged in the hands of the Sovereign, the lords of Parliament, and the representatives of the Commons.
2. That it is required by the principles of the constitution that the whole body of the people should be really represented in the House of Commons.
3. That the present system of virtual representation is not real representation, and is, therefore, no representation at all.
4. That those who have no votes for electing representatives are the slaves of the representatives of those who have votes.
5. That where there is no representation, there can be no constitutional power of taxation.

6. That the rich and poor, being of the same species, are under the same laws of nature; and being alike capable of benefit or injury from their legislators, necessarily have, in the election of those legislators, the same right; but the rich, in defence of their liberty and property, have every advantage which wealth, knowledge, and the purchased power of others afford them; while the poor, destitute of these have no security but in the purity of legislation, nor any means of self-defence but in the re-possession of the elective power. The poor, then, have an equal right, but more need, to elect representatives than the rich.

THE PEOPLE'S RIGHTS.

1. That every male inhabitant of Great Britain and Ireland (infants, insane persons, and criminals only excepted,) is of common right, and by the laws of God, a free man and entitled to the full enjoyment of political liberty.

2. That it is essential to a man's political liberty that he have a share either in legislation itself, or in the electing of those who are to frame the laws, which, although they ought to protect him in the full enjoyment of those absolute rights which are vested in him by the immutable laws of nature, may yet be fabricated to the destruction of his person, his property, his religious freedom, his family, and his fame; that, therefore, the right to UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE is an inherent right.

3. That it is a natural right of the people of this empire, and required by the principles of the constitution, that they elect a new house of representatives once, at least, in every year; because whenever a parliament continues in being for a longer term than one session, then thousands who since it was chosen have attained to man's estate (that is to say, the age of twenty-one years), and are, therefore, entitled to enter into the immediate possession of that elective power which is their best and most sacred inheritance, are, in that case, unjustly denied their right, and excluded from the enjoyment of political liberty.

4. That it is, therefore, right and just that all the male inhabitants of this kingdom (infants, insane persons, and criminals excepted,) shall fully, fairly, and completely enjoy the elective franchise, that is to say, Universal Suffrage. That, in order to protect the poor elector against tyranny, the voting shall be by ballot; that the parliaments shall be annual; that the property qualification shall be abolished; that the whole empire shall be divided into equal electoral districts; and that the representatives of the people shall be paid.

MEANS TO ACHIEVE THOSE RIGHTS.

1. By creating a public opinion in favour of those rights and principles, through the medium of public meetings, petitions

to parliament, discussions, lectures, cheap publications, and the newspaper press; and also by securing the return of members to parliament, pledged to support the object of the Association.

2. By raising the requisite funds, by subscriptions and voluntary donations, to defray the expenses of the Association.

PATRICK O'HIGGINS (President)

WM.H. DYOTT (Secretary)

August 1841.

Objects and Rules of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association.
(as reprinted in Northern Star, 7 August 1841).

Objects.

1. UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, that is to say, for every male inhabitant of Great Britain and Ireland of sane mind, and not convicted by a jury of any felonious offence, to have the right to vote at the election of a candidate for a seat in parliament; the obvious effect of which will be to cause the upper classes of society to set a higher value upon the labourer and the artizan than they have hitherto done; and to consider the happiness and prosperity of the working classes as the surest test of the landlords' and the employers' respectability.

2. VOTE BY BALLOT.

3. ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS.

4. FOR EQUAL REPRESENTATION; that is to say, that Great Britain and Ireland shall be divided into electoral districts, each district to contain an equal number of votes, and each to send an equal number of members to Parliament.

5. For the ABOLITION OF THE PROPERTY QUALIFICATION for Members of Parliament; which will have the effect of putting a stop to the open and palpable perjury of those who are obliged to qualify out of a real estate of £300 or £600 a year, as the

case may be, before they can sit in Parliament; although such persons are known to have neither right or title, nor interest of any nature or kind whatsoever in the property out of which they qualified.

6. For each constituency to have the right to pay their representatives for their time and services if they deem it necessary to do so.

7. For a REPEAL OF THE LEGISLATIVE UNION between Great Britain and Ireland, which cannot be achieved, without the aid and co-operation of the British Chartists, by bringing their moral power to bear upon the five hundred and fifty-three British Members of Parliament, in favour of that measure, and which would be no benefit to Ireland, unless preceded by Universal Suffrage, Vote by Ballot, Annual Parliaments, Equal Representation and No Property Qualification; and because the enemies of public liberty would have a preponderating majority in both Houses of an Irish Parliament, with the present constituency of Ireland.

Rules.

Rule 1. That a Standing Committee of thirteen members, seven of whom must be working men, be chosen by ballot at a general meeting of this Association, out of which Committee the officers shall be selected; and that these officers do

consist of a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Chief and Assistant Secretary, a Treasurer, and a Finance Committee of three or more members, as the General Committee may deem necessary; and that five members of the Committee, three of whom must be working men, do form a quorum; and that at the expiration of three months from the appointment of that Committee, as well as every succeeding Committee, the six members whose names are last in the list shall retire, but be eligible to be re-elected. Provided, however, that no person shall hereafter be eligible as a member of the Committee, who shall not have been duly enrolled a member of this Association, and have paid his subscription, thereto for a period of a month previously to such election or appointment of a new Committee.

Rule 2. That it shall be the duty of the President, or the Chairman for the time being of this Association, to preserve order and regularity in the proceedings therefor; and in the event of any member being called to order, that the decision of the President or Chairman shall be final and conclusive.

Rule 3. That no person shall be admitted a member of this Association, except upon having given one week's notice to the Secretary, and being proposed at a general meeting by one member, seconded by another, and approved of by a majority of the meeting at large; and that every member upon being admitted shall pay a fee of twopence, and shall continue to pay one penny weekly as

his subscription. Provided, however, that clergymen of all religious denominations shall be admitted members of this Association gratis, upon being proposed and seconded as above mentioned.

Rule 4. That no religious or sectarian discussion shall be permitted at any of the meetings of this Association.

Rule 5. That it shall be the duty of the Secretary to keep a book containing the names of the persons admitted as members of this Association, with the dates of their admission, and the name of proposer and seconder of each respectively; and that upon any person having been duly admitted a member, and paid his entrance fee, the Secretary shall deliver such person a card of admission, signed by him; and the Secretary shall also keep a book, containing the minutes of the proceedings of this Association.

Rule 6. That it shall be the duty of the Treasurer to keep a book containing an account of the sums received by him for entrance money of members, with the names of the members, and the date of their admission; and of the sums received by him for the weekly subscription of members, with the names of subscribers; and of all other monies received by him for or on account of this Association; and of all disbursements made by him on account of and out of the funds of this Association; and that he shall not make any payment on account of the funds of

this Association, except upon an order signed by at least three members of the Finance Committee; and that it shall be his duty to submit his accounts to be audited whenever required to do so.

Rule 7. That in the case of a member omitting for four weeks successively to pay his subscription to this Association, it shall be the duty of the Committee, upon being apprised thereof by the Treasurer or otherwise, to consider whether or not such person shall be continued a member and to report accordingly.

Rule 8. That all books, papers, writings of or belonging to this Association, shall at all times be open to the inspection of the authorities and to every member of the Association, upon giving reasonable notice to the Secretary.

Rule 9. That no member shall be at liberty to move a motion at a meeting of this Association, without having given a week's notice thereof in writing; and after a motion has been proposed and spoken to, the proposer shall have the right to reply, and that such reply shall close the debate.

Rule 10. That the Committee of this Association do meet upon the second Monday of every month, or oftener, should the President or Secretary require it, at seven o'clock in the evening, to transact the business of the Association.

Rule 11. That the funds of this Association shall, after the purchase of stationery, be applied for the purpose of promoting its objects.

Rule 12. That all members, in addressing the chair, shall do so standing and uncovered.

Rule 13. That no member of this Association shall act in the capacity of delegate or representative; and if any person shall assume or presume to act in any such capacity, he shall be forthwith expelled from the Irish Universal Suffrage Association and that no person what so ever shall be a delegate from any other association.

Patrick O'Higgins, Chairman of Committee.

P.M. Brophy, Secretary.

July 1841.

Appendix II.

PETITION FOR THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER

(printed in Northern Star, 9 March 1844).

To the Right Honorable the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses,
in Parliament assembled, the Petition of the
undersigned Members of the Irish Universal Suffrage
Association, and other inhabitants of Ireland.

HUMBLY SHEWETH, - That the right of making laws for this
realm is by the constitution lodged in the hands of the
Sovereign, the Lords of Parliament, and the Representatives
of the Commons.

That every man (infants, insane persons, and criminals
alone excepted) is of common right, and by the laws of God, a
free man, and entitled to the full enjoyment of political
liberty.

That it is essential to a man's political liberty that he
have an actual share either in legislation itself, or in the
electing of those who are to frame the laws, which, although
they ought to protect him in the full enjoyment of those
absolute rights which are vested in him by the immutable laws
of nature, may yet be fabricated to the destruction of his
person, his property, his religious freedom, his family, and
his fame.

That it is a natural right of the people of this empire,
and required by the principles of the Constitution, that they
elect a new House of representatives once at least every year;

because whenever a Parliament continues in being for a longer term than one session, then thousands who since it was chosen have attained to man's estate, and are therefore entitled to enter into immediate possession of that elective power which is the best and most sacred inheritance, are in that case unjustly denied their right and excluded from the enjoyment of political liberty.

That the rich and the poor, being of the same species, are under the same laws of nature, and being alike capable of benefit or injury from their legislators, they necessarily have in the election of those legislators the same right; but the rich, in defence of their liberty and property have every advantage which wealth, knowledge, and the purchased power of others can afford them; while the poor, destitute of all these, have no security but in the purity of legislation, nor any means of self-defence but in reclaiming their share of elective power. The poor then have an equal right, but more need to elect representatives than the rich. He that is free possesses that which is more to be valued than riches, but robbed of liberty he is denuded of all which renders life valuable.

That all who talk of a virtual representation admit that it is not a real representation; consequently it is no representation at all. All electors share in a real representation; because the chosen person represents the

body of which they are severally the members. Beyond the limits of election there can be no representation whatever, and where there is no representation there can be no constitutional power of taxation or legislation.

That those who have no votes for electing representatives are not free men, as the rights of nature and the principles of the constitution require; but are enslaved to the representatives of those who have votes; for to be enslaved is to have no will of our own in the choice of lawmakers, but to be governed by legislators whom other men have set over us.

That by the operation of one unconstitutional and wretched law (the disenfranchising statute of Henry VI), about nine-tenths of the people are to this day totally debarred from their birthright of voting for Members of Parliament; which sacred inheritance and right of nature was enjoyed by their free ancestors until the enacting of that statute. And by the operation of another iniquitous law (the Septennial Act) the remaining tenth are also debarred six years out of every seven.

That the existing state of representation is not only thus limited and unjust, but unequally divided, giving preponderating influence to landed and monied interests to the utter ruin of the small-trading and labouring classes: an instance of this grossly unequal representation is found in the astounding fact that while the principality of Wales sends twenty-four members

to Parliament, the County of Cork, with a greater population returns but two!

That your petitioners further complain that possession of property is made the test of men's qualification to sit in Parliament: that your petitioners can prove such qualification irrational, unjust, and absurd, and not in accordance with the ancient usages of England. It is irrational, because intellectual power, personal honesty, and political integrity are not always - perhaps it might be affirmed not frequently - found co-existent with hereditary distinction or individual wealth; it is absurd, because such qualification, though required in one part of the empire is not insisted upon in all, it being clear to the meanest comprehension that if it is a necessary constitutional safeguard in England and Ireland, it is equally necessary in Scotland; and if it be not necessary, then is Scotland invidiously favoured, and England and Ireland wantonly and without purpose, insulted and degraded. Its injustice is still further enhanced by the fact that the sons of peers are allowed to intrude themselves into the people's House on remote and barren expectancies, while all others are shut out (save and except Scotchmen), who will not swear they possess landed property to a large extent. It is inexpedient because unendowed talent is excluded; and it is immoral because it leads to corruption, and incites to perjury, as recent appalling disclosures in your Honourable House do most fully confirm.

That your petitioners complain that by influence, patronage, and intimidation there is at present no purity of election, and your petitioners contend for the right of voting by Ballot.

That your petitioners complain that seats in your honourable House are sought for at a most extravagant rate of expense, which proves an enormous degree of fraud and usurpation.

That your petitioners therefore contend that to put an end to secret political traffic, a power to remunerate their representatives for their services should be vested in the constituencies.

That your petitioners therefore exercising their constitutional right demand of your honourable House, in order to remedy the many gross and manifest evils of which your petitioners complain, that you will immediately pass into a law the document entitled "The People's Charter", which embraces the Representation of Male Adults Vote by Ballot, Annual Parliaments, Abolition of the Property Qualification, Payment of Members, and Equal Electoral Districts.

And that your petitioners desiring to promote the peace of Great Britain and Ireland, security of property, and prosperity of commerce, seriously and earnestly press this their petition on the attention of your Honourable House,

And your petitioners will ever pray.

Appendix III.

PETITION FOR REPEAL OF THE UNION

(printed in Northern Star, 2 March 1844)

To the Right Honourable the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses,
in Parliament assembled, the Petition of the under-
signed members of the Irish Universal Suffrage
Association, and other inhabitants of Ireland.

HUMBLY SHEWETH - That the experience of the past year
demonstrates that the privilege of petitioning, and of thus
making known their grievances to your Honourable House, is
exercised by the people of Ireland no longer as a right, but
as a concession made to them by the tolerance of the Irish
Executive.

That complaint and remonstrance have been met by violence,
and argument by military force; the right to meet and petition
Parliament has been trampled upon; public meetings legally
convened, and peaceably and constitutionally assembled, have
been suppressed at the point of the bayonet and the mouth of
the cannon.

That your petitioners humbly address your Honourable House
for the purpose of making known a few of the reasons which
influence them in demanding a Repeal of the Act of Union
between Great Britain and Ireland; and they entreat the
patience of your Honourable House while they state the grounds
upon which they rely for restoring to Ireland the domestic

legislature, and of that self-government, the right of which is inherent in every people, and the want of which is nothing less than slavery.

That referring to experience, the best guide in such matters, your petitioners find only one period in the history of centuries in which their country could be said to flourish, in which its peace was secured, its agriculture was improved, its manufactures prospered, its commerce was increased, and its liberties enlarged to wider bounds and fenced by better securities; and that this period was the one in which the Irish Parliament was engaged in vindicating its independence of the control of English Parliament.

That during this period the Irish Parliament, though corruptly constituted - though composed of but a portion of the people, did shorten the duration of their sittings, a concession to public liberty, which your Honourable House still refuses to make; that they established for their country the right of free trade, of which it had been deprived by English Parliament; that they declared and established their own future independence of English Parliaments; and that they gave to the forty-shilling freeholders those franchises of which the profligate tyranny of a corruptly constituted English Parliament has since deprived them.

That the Irish Parliament, as your petitioners beg leave respectfully to submit, notwithstanding the defects in its

constitution, did, during the short period of its independence, display more public virtue - more generous patriotism, than has been found in any English Parliament since the Revolution of 1688; and that it was the virtues of the Parliament of Ireland that incited the English aristocracy - the common enemies of liberty in every region of the earth - "to murder her independence", as was truly said by a Member of Parliament of that period.

That the means resorted to were suitable to the ends in view; that to prepare the way for the discussion of the Union civil discord was fomented; a rebellion secretly set on foot and encouraged; a reign of terror established; titles, offices, and money were profusely distributed; and, in the language of the protest of the Irish Lords, the Bill was introduced as "a measure of bargain and sale between the Minister and the individual proprietors of boroughs".

That the Act of Union was not a union of the people of England and Ireland, but a submitting of Ireland to the domination of the English aristocracy - a domination which has precipitated the career of wasteful expenditure - has aided in the accumulation of irredeemable debt, and exercised a fatal influence on the welfare of both kingdoms.

That if the act of union had effected a union of perfect equality; if, instead of having degraded a portion of the Irish Peers, it had admitted them all to the full enjoyment of the

privileges of the English peerage; if it had given to Ireland a representation in the Commons of the United Kingdom proportioned to the extent of her population; if it had extended to both kingdoms the benefit of the same laws; still, as was wisely seen, and honestly stated, by the then Mr Gray, afterwards Lord Gray, a just union "was impracticable; because of the great debts of England; because Ireland can have no security that she will not be oppressed, unless she pays the very same taxes with England" - because to make her pay such taxes is in itself oppression; and because on account of the geographical situation of the countries, a complete identification of their people is impossible, or, as Lord Lyndhurst more emphatically expressed it, "the Irish are aliens in blood, aliens in religion, and aliens in language".

That the Act of Union, originating in hostility to public liberty, and passed by the means of bribery and intimidation, has been followed by results suitable to the wickedness of the purpose and the iniquity of its accomplishment. That in all the provisions favourable to Ireland, it has been violated; that it has increased enormously absenteeism, the plague of Ireland; that it has diminished almost every description of manufacture, and has wholly annihilated many; that it has nearly put an end to our foreign commerce, except what consists in the export for the use and benefit of others of those necessaries of life, for the want of which our own people

are perishing; that in this very parish, Saint Michan's the centre of the linen trade in Ireland, the Inns of Court, the Queen's Inns, the Consistorial and Registry Court, it has caused a return of nine hundred and eighty-six insolvent houses out of one thousand four hundred and sixty-four, which the parish contains; and throughout the country it has been followed by a perpetual succession of scenes of famine, pestilence, tumult, and then summary execution.

That for meeting together in a peaceable and constitutional manner for the purpose of petitioning Parliament for the redress of those grievances, your petitioners are aware that in the present uncertain and undefined state of the law, they subject themselves to a criminal prosecution for what the law officers of the crown are pleased to designate a conspiracy, sedition, and misdemeanour.

Your petitioners, on those grounds, and facts and reasons herein stated, beg leave to lay before your Honourable House their humble remonstrance against the continuance of a nominal Union, which implies the degradation, and is the scourge, of their native country; and which, without conferring any benefit upon England, detracts from her real wealth and strength, by spreading poverty, ruin, and discontent through a country, which, free and independent, would be the right arm of her defence; and they heartily pray that the Act

by which the said Union was effected may be immediately repealed.

And your petitioners, in compliance with the rules and usages of your Honourable House, will ever pray.

Appendix IV.Objects and Rules of the Irish Democratic Association
(reprinted in The Irishman, 12 January 1850).Objects.

1st. The elevation of the character and condition of the working classes, so that our artisans may understand their true value; and the tiller of the soil, on whom all are dependent, his just and indefeasible claim to live happily on the land he has made productive by the sweat of his brow.

2nd. To inculcate the necessity of every Irishman encouraging Native Manufacture, and to lay down a plan for the revival of Irish trade.

3rd. Convinced from past experience that the rights and interests of the people have been totally neglected by our representatives, we deem it an imperative duty to train the Democracy of this country into a full and complete knowledge of their power, the position they occupy, and the position they are entitled to occupy; and to impress upon them the necessity of untiring exertion for the complete and entire restoration of those social and political privileges they have been unjustly deprived of.

4th. That in consequence of the great discouragement given to Irish genius in arts and sciences, the development of Irish talent, and the diffusion of a national literature, will be a

primary object of this Association.

5th. To secure the earnest and powerful co-operation of all other existing Democratic Institutions, whose aims and intentions may be identical with those of this Association - namely, the recognition and just appreciation of the rights of labour, and the overthrow of a heartless and useless oligarchy.

6th. The Union of the Democracy of every creed - to do which we deem it of vital importance to protect every denomination of Christian worship - to respect every man for his conscientious opinions, and the free expression of the faith that is within him; and owing to the enmity hitherto subsisting between the Catholic and Protestant Democracies of Ireland, which has been engendered and encouraged by our rulers, for the maintenance of English dominion in this country, it will be the particular object of this Association to encourage and establish a good feeling between, and to hold out the right hand of fellowship to the Protestant Democracy of Ireland; and as this Association will labour to break down the barriers of religious prejudice - to uproot sectarian animosity, and scout and overthrow all ascendancy of creed - it will ask for co-operation of every Irish-born man in establishing the independence of his native land.

7th. Fully sympathising with the sufferings of our Irish martyrs, we deem it of importance to hold them in grateful remembrance so long as they are expatriated under British law.

Rules.

1st. That the Society be styled "The Irish Democratic Association".

2nd. That the business of this Association shall be conducted by a General Committee, with power to make bye-laws, consisting of 21 Members (exclusive of Treasurer and Secretary), 5 to form a quorum, to be chosen by Ballot at a Public Meeting of the Members, which Committee shall hold Office for Three Months, at the end of which time 10 of the above will retire, to be replaced by Ballot.

3rd. The Association shall be open to men of sterling and manly Democratic principles; the proposer and seconder of each new Member must pledge themselves for his integrity, resolution, and devotion to fatherland.

4th. No person shall be admitted a Member of the Association, save by a vote of a weekly meeting, and no Member can be expelled therefrom save by a similar vote, taken on the proposition of the General Committee, who shall give the individual concerned a fortnight's notice of their intention to propose his expulsion, and their reasons therefor.

5th. The Association will hold weekly meetings for the transaction of its business - viz., the enrolment of Members, receiving Reports from Committees, Sub-Committees, etc., and attending to such matters as may, from time to time, be brought before their notice.

6th. The Rooms of the Association will be open every evening during the week, from Seven O'Clock, p.m., to Eleven O'Clock, p.m., and will be supplied with such Books, Pamphlets, and Newspapers, as the Committee may deem advisable.

7th. A Quarterly Meeting shall be held for the purpose of receiving the Report of the outgoing General Committee, of electing their successors, and of making any alterations that may be required in the fundamental rules.

8th. None but actual Members of the Association, or persons introduced for enrolment, shall be admitted to any Lecture, or Meeting, or to the Reading-Room, upon any pretext whatsoever, save such persons as may claim a legal right to intrude themselves.

9th. Subscriptions to defray the expenses of the Association, Reading-Rooms, etc., and other incidental charges, will be expected from each Member - payments not to be less than one penny weekly.

10th. Lectures on General Literature, History, Politics, and scientific subjects, shall be delivered by such of the Members, and others, as may be competent for that task, as frequently as shall be found convenient, the Lecturer to be chosen by the General Committee of the Association.

11th. A Chairman shall be provided for each night of Weekly and Quarterly Meetings by the General Committee;

all votes at these Meetings to be taken by tellers appointed by the Chairman.

12th. That the Finances of this Association shall be managed by a Committee appointed for that purpose; no payments to be made by the Treasurer without an order from the Committee, signed by the Chairman and two members of the same; the accounts to be audited and laid before the Members at the first Public Meeting in each Month.

only touch incidentally upon the Irish contribution to the British Chartist movement in their studies of the two leading Irish figures, James Donohoe O'Connell and Feargus O'Connor.

It has been necessary in the first part dealing with working-class and Chartist organisations in Ireland to piece together evidence from widely-scattered sources. These include Irish police reports in the State Paper Office and Public Record Office, Dublin; Major M. J. Barr's papers and Police Reports of Confederate Clubs in Dublin (1845-9) in Trinity College, Dublin; the last-mentioned has not been drawn upon before. I have made abundant use of Irish periodicals for the period. These include a number of working-class and Chartist periodicals which have not been used before, notably the Irish National Guard (1845) in the National Library, Dublin; the Labourer's Advocate (1847) and The Belfast Guard (1850) in the British Museum Newspaper Library, Colindale; The Belfast Co-operative Advocate (1850) and The Belfast Power Lough (1847-50).

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

There is no published work which deals with any of the specific topics covered in this thesis with the exception of Chapter I. Nothing has been written on the subject of Chartism in Ireland itself, and the standard works on the Chartist movement, such as R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894) and M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (1925), only touch incidentally upon the Irish contribution to the British Chartist movement in their studies of the two leading Irish figures, James Bronterre O'Brien and Feargus O'Connor.

It has been necessary in the first part dealing with working-class and Chartist organisations in Ireland to piece together evidence from widely-scattered sources. These include Irish police reports in the State Paper Office and Public Record Office, Dublin, Major H.C. Sirr's papers and Police Reports of Confederate Clubs in Dublin (1848-9) in Trinity College, Dublin; the last-mentioned has not been drawn upon before. I have made abundant use of Irish periodicals for the period. These include a number of working-class and Chartist periodicals which have not been used before, notably the Irish National Guard (1848) in the National Library, Dublin, the Labourer's Advocate (1847) and The Belfast Comet (1850) in the British Museum Newspaper Library, Colindale, The Belfast Co-operative Advocate (1830) and The Belfast Penny Punch (1847-8)

in the Linen Hall Library, Belfast. In Chapter II, use is made of Chartist periodicals, in particular, the Northern Star for information about Chartist activities in Ireland. Irish papers of the same period only make occasional references to the movement in Ireland. The Irish pamphlets are nearly all available in the National Library or the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

The material for the second part, the Irish contribution to the British Chartist movement, is drawn mainly from Chartist periodicals and pamphlets, most of which are to be found either in the British Museum Newspaper Library, Colindale, the Manchester Reference Library, or the Goldsmiths Library of the University of London. An English Chartist periodical not hitherto used is The English Patriot and Irish Repealer (1848), which is in the Goldsmiths Library. One manuscript source of especial interest is the Annals of Barnsley in Barnsley Public Library, which is an unpublished MS containing information of local radical and Chartist organisations.

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Howell Collection (Bishopsgate Institute)

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George Howell's MS. biography of Ernest Jones; clippings, pamphlets on Jones.

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Reference Library

Ernest Jones Diary (1844-7) (MS. 923. 2.J.18)
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- 1841 Carton 1043 Outrage Reports.
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II. Printed Material

1. NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

Irish Radical, Chartist and Working-class Newspapers (1827-1850)

DUBLIN

- The Patriot: 1827-8 Supported Castle Catholics and Catholic Emancipation.
- The Comet: 1831-33. Owned by Thomas Browne and John Sheenan. Supported Radical Reformers and opposed the Established Church, tithes and spoke in favour of repeal of the Legislative Union.
- Express: 1832-2 This was a daily evening paper, which supported O'Connell but also reflected radical opinions in Ireland.
- The Plain Dealer: 1832 Radical, in favour of the Reform Bill, Irish municipal reform, etc.
- The Press: 1833 Supported repeal, church reform, shorter parliaments, vote by ballot, and an extended franchise.
- The Repealer and Tradesmen's Journal: 1833 This paper was devoted to the interest of Dublin tradesmen. It favoured repeal of the Union, abolition of tithes, etc.
- The People: Feb.-Sept. 1833 Organ of the Trades Political Union, it represented the views of the Dublin trades.
- The Tribune: 1834-5 Owned by Patrick O'Higgins and edited by James Whittle. This paper was ultra-Radical. It supported repeal of the Union, abolition of tithes, and poor law for Ireland. It established close links with William Cobbett in England.
- The Guardian and Tradesman's Advocate: 1846-7 Edited by Cornelius R. Mahoney. It was a weekly literary and industrial journal especially directed towards the Dublin trades.

Irish National Guard: April-June 1848 Edited by James M'Cormick, an Irish Chartist. It was an Irish Chartist paper, with strong republican views.

United Irishman: Feb.-June 1848 Edited by John Mitchel. Ardent nationalist paper and firm supporter of Confederate-Chartist union.

Felon: June-July 1848 Successor to United Irishman. It continued to promote its policy.

The Irishman: 1849-50 Edited by Bertram Fullam. It was the organ of the Irish Democratic Association and advocated socialist views. It favoured union with the English Chartists.

CORK

People's Press and Cork Weekly Register: Sept.-Dec. 1834
It was a radical newspaper and supported repeal of the Union, abolition of tithes, etc.

BELFAST

The Belfast Co-operative Advocate: 1830 A monthly periodical, this paper was founded to support and extend co-operative principles in Northern Ireland. It was the organ of the Co-operative society in Belfast.

Labourers Advocate: April-May 1847 Edited James O'Neill. Supports rights of operatives, land reform, etc.

The Belfast Penny Punch: 1847-8 Edited by James O'Neill. Radical and satirical in approach.

The Belfast Comet: Jan.-June 1850 Edited by James O'Neill. It was a magazine of poetry, prose, etc. but with political articles in favour of land reform, etc.

Other Irish Periodicals and Newspapers
(years are given of which use was made)

- Freemans Journal: 1820-50 Edited by Lavelle. It backed Catholic Emancipation and repeal of the Union.
- Pilot: 1829-50 Edited by Richard Barrett. It was brought out with the object of providing O'Connell with a platform. It remained firmly behind him during the whole period.
- Dublin Evening Post: 1823-50 A Liberal organ which backed Whigs during the 1830's.
- Nation: 1842-48 Edited by Charles Gavan Duffy. It was the organ of Young Irelanders.
- Belfast Vindicator: 1841-2 It supported O'Connell and the Whigs and was very hostile to the Chartist movement.
- Northern Whig: 1841-2 It was very hostile to radical opinion.

English Radical and Chartist Newspapers and Periodicals
(1824-1870)

- Political Register: 1824-1835 Edited by William Cobbett. Reference is made to those years during which Cobbett took an active interest in Irish affairs.
- Political Letters: 1831 Edited by William Carpenter.
- Midland Representative: 1831-2 Edited by James Bronterre O'Brien.
- Voice of the People: 1831 Edited by John Doherty, an Irish trade union leader. It advocated Radical policies, including repeal of the Union.
- True Sun: 1832
- Poor Man's Guardian: 1832-5 Edited by J.B. O'Brien and owned by Henry Hetherington

- Poor Man's Advocate: 1833 Printed and published by J. Doherty. It hoped to expose the iniquities of the factory system in Britain. It also supported Irish land reform.
- The Destructive and Poor Man's Conservative: 1833-4. Edited by J.B. O'Brien.
- London Despatch, later Hetherington's Twopenny Despatch: 1836-9. Edited by J.B. O'Brien.
- National Reformer: 1836-7 Edited by J.B. O'Brien.
- Constitutional: 1836-7 Edited by Lamont Blanchard. The paper was supported by the parliamentary radicals. Thomas Ainge Devyr, an Irish journalist, was connected with this paper.
- Champion and Weekly Herald: 1836-40 Owned by the sons of William Cobbett. Edited by J. Whittle, an Irish journalist. In favour of radical programme for Ireland and hostile to O'Connell.
- London Mercury: 1837 Edited jointly by John Bell and J.B. O'Brien, April-August 1837. Merged with London Despatch, September 1837.
- Northern Liberator: 1837-40 Owned and edited by Augustus Harding Beaumont until 1839. Thomas Devyr then became editor until the paper failed in 1840. It advocated a policy of co-operation with Irish nationalists and was hostile to O'Connell.
- Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser: 1837-44, changed its name to Northern Star and National Trades Journal in 1844; to Star of Freedom in May 1852; ceased publication in 1852. Owned by Feargus O'Connor, it was the principal organ of the Chartist movement.
- Operative: 1838-9 Edited by J.B. O'Brien.
- English Chartist Circular: 1839-41 Edited by William Carpenter. Non-controversial and valuable for theoretical Chartist discussion.

- Charter: 1839 Edited by William Carpenter. It presented the viewpoint of the London Working Men's Association.
- Chartist Circular: 1839-42 Edited by William Thompson and published in Glasgow under the supervision of the Universal Central Committee for Scotland.
- Southern Star: 1840 Edited by William Carpenter; jointly for a brief period with J.B. O'Brien. Moderate Chartist.
- Chartist and Republican Journal: 1841 Edited by P. McDouall.
- Sheffield Working Man's Advocate: March-April 1841 Local Chartist paper.
- British Statesman: 1842-3 Edited briefly in 1842 by J.B. O'Brien.
- The Nonconformist: 1842 Edited by Edward Miall. It is very useful for Sturgeite viewpoint and attempts at Chartist-Sturgeite viewpoint.
- Midland Counties Illuminator: 1842 A radical newspaper which printed articles by local Chartists.
- The National Reformer and Manx Weekly Review: 1844-7 Edited by J.B. O'Brien. It contained a number of interesting articles on Ireland by J.B. O'Brien.
- The Labourer: 1847-8 A monthly magazine edited jointly by Feargus O'Connor and Ernest Jones. It was the organ of the Land Plan.
- Cause of the People: May-June 1848 Edited by W.J. Linton and George Holyoak. It was sympathetic to Mitchel and the Irish national movement.
- The English Patriot and Irish Repealer: July-September 1848,
changed its name to The English Patriot and Herald of Labour and Co-operation,
September-December 1848. Owned and edited by James Leach, it strongly advocated the Confederate-Chartist alliance.

- The Social Reformer: 1849 Edited by J.B. O'Brien.
- Power of the Peace: 1849 Edited by J.B. O'Brien.
- Democratic Review: June 1849-1850 Owned and edited by George Julian Harney.
- Reynolds Political Instructor: 1849-50 Editor G.W.M. Reynolds. It contained sketches of Chartist leaders. Merged with:
- Reynolds' Weekly Paper: 1850 Very valuable for ultra-radical activities of 1850's.
- National Instructor: 1850 Edited by Feargus O'Connor. It includes a series of articles of O'Connor's early life written by himself; see May-October 1850, "The Life and Adventures of F. O'Connor", written by himself.
- People's Paper: 1852-58 Edited by Ernest Jones. The essential source for the 1850's, the period of the Chartist decline.
- The Democrat and Labour Advocate: November-December 1855 Edited by George White, an Irish Chartist, who was a supporter of O'Connor.
- Social Economist: 1868-9 Contains references to Chartist leaders' deaths: e.g. George White.
- Other English Periodicals and Newspapers.
(years given are those of which use was made)
- The Times: 1838-50 An invaluable source of "respectable" opinion. It is also useful for information of Chartist demonstrations, trials, etc.
- Edinburgh Review: 1821-2
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act, with minutes of evidence, appendix, etc. H.C. 1835
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part of the United Kingdom, together with minutes of
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Minutes of evidence taken before the Lords' select committee
appointed to examine into the state of the disturbed
counties of Ireland more particularly with reference to
the circumstances which may have led to disturbances in
that part of the United Kingdom, with index. H.L. 1835
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Report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the
state of the disturbed counties in Ireland, into the
immediate causes which have produced the same, and into
the efficiency of the laws for the suppression of outbreaks
against the public peace, together with minutes of evidence,
appendix and index. H.C. 1835-36 (187), xix.

Report from the select committee appointed to consider the laws
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their own country, with a view to the abolition and amend-
ment of the said laws, with minutes of evidence.
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4. PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS

- Report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the Corn trade of the United Kingdom, with minutes of evidence, appendix, etc. H.C. 1812-13 (184), iii.
- Six reports from the select committee appointed to inquire into the state of the law respecting artisans leaving the kingdom and residing abroad; the exportation of tools and machinery, and the combination of workmen and others to raise wages, and regulate wages and hours of working, together with minutes of evidence, index, etc. H.C. 1824 (51), v.
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- Minutes of evidence taken before the Lords' select committee appointed to examine into the state of the disturbed counties of Ireland more particularly with reference to the circumstances which may have led to disturbances in that part of the United Kingdom, with index. H.L. 1825 (181), ix.
- Report from the select committee appointed to examine into the state of the disturbed counties in Ireland, into the immediate causes which have produced the same, and into the efficiency of the laws for the suppression of outrages against the public peace, together with minutes of evidence, appendix and index. H.C. 1831-32 (677), xvi.
- Report from the select committee appointed to consider the laws relating to the passing of poor persons born in Ireland to their own country, with a view to the alteration and amendment of the said laws, with minutes of evidence. H.C. 1833 (394), xvi.

- Report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the extent, the causes and consequences of the prevailing vice of intoxication among the labouring classes of the United Kingdom, and what measures can be carried into execution for the purpose of altering the practice, with minutes of evidence and appendix. H.C. 1834 (559), viii. 315.
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Combination defeated, being a summary report and an analysis
of the evidence given before the parliamentary committee
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6. CONTEMPORARY PAMPHLETS

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Prospects of the Chartist Party; also a Letter Condemnatory
of Private Assassination, as Recommended by Mr George
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