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Politics, government and society in Edinburgh, 1780-1833

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Summary.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the development and impact of popular political consciousness in Edinburgh during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Particular attention is drawn to the growing political assertiveness of the middling orders in Edinburgh and to the threat which this posed both to the traditional political establishment in the city and to the established political constitution. The first section of the thesis examines some of the mechanisms by which popular political consciousness was nurtured and expressed. The structure, membership and influence of the myriad clubs and societies which flourished in Edinburgh are examined in Chapter Two. The role and influence of the press in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are examined in Chapter Three. The second section of the thesis (Chapter Four) looks at the Town Council of Edinburgh, the lynchpin of government in the city. The third section of the thesis examines the impact which growing popular political consciousness had on the pattern of politics and government in Edinburgh. Chapter Five examines the municipal and parliamentary elections of 1780, in which disputes within the political establishment helped fuel growing politicisation out-of-doors. Chapter Six examines the radical Friends of the People reform movement of the 1790s and the reaction to it within the community. Chapter Seven discusses the origins and development of the Edinburgh Police Commission, which was set up in 1805. The role of the Commission is discussed in depth, as are the social and political themes which the controversies surrounding the Commission helped develop. Chapters Eight and Nine chart the course of reform in Edinburgh between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the coming of the great reforms of the 1830s.

Contents

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Thanks are due to the staff of the Scottish Register Office, the National Library of Scotland, the Edinburgh University Library, the Edinburgh Public Library, the Company of Merchants of Edinburgh and the North Yorkshire County Records Office. I would also like to thank Mr. Arnott Wilson, the City Archivist of Edinburgh.

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A visitor to Edinburgh in the mid-eighteenth century would have found a city still remarkably redolent of the original settlement which had grown up in the shadow of Edinburgh castle. Edinburgh castle itself stands on a two hundred feet high volcanic rock, close to the Forth estuary, and is protected by a sheer drop to the north, south and west. To the east of the castle, however, a narrow ridge slopes away from the rock, running for over a mile (now the 'Royal Mile') down to the plain below. It was on this ridge, under the protection of the castle, that the town of Edinburgh first took shape (see Figure 1, at the end of this chapter). Quite when the first settlement took place remains obscure, but in Y Gododdin, a poem by the sixth century Welsh poet, Aneirin, reference is made to a community at Dineidin or 'fortress of the hill-slope'.[1] The first reference to Edinburgh in a royal charter appears to be in the charter granted in the early twelfth century by King David I to the monks of Holyrood (which is situated at the eastern base of the ridge). The charter makes clear that by this time Edinburgh was a well established market town with its own merchants, traders and craftsmen. By the middle of the fifteenth century Edinburgh castle was one of the main strongholds of the Stewart monarchy. Some of the principal residences of the royal family were in or near Edinburgh and the presence of the royal court and government probably added much to the prosperity of the city. There is certainly no doubt that by this time Edinburgh was being marked with increasing favour by the Crown. In a charter of 1452, for instance, James II conferred on the town the privilege of being the sole seat of the Court of the Four Burghs, a tribunal which regulated the affairs of the leading burghs of Scotland.[2] With royal support and approval the city began to assume a preponderant influence over the surrounding communities. As early as 1329 Robert I granted to the city the port and mills of Leith, which lies on the coast about a mile to the north-east of the centre of Edinburgh (see Figure 1). In 1454 James I gave the city the right to the customs and duties levied on merchandise brought to the port of Leith, and, in 1565, by a charter of Henry and Mary, the town of Leith itself was brought under the authority of the Town Council of Edinburgh.[3] By the middle of the seventeenth/

seventeenth century the Town Council had also gained control of the burghs of Portsburgh and Canongate, which were adjacent to the Royal Burgh of Edinburgh itself. The accession of James VI to the English throne, in 1603, resulted in the removal of the royal court from Edinburgh and, with it, much of the lustre which it had brought to the city. None the less, with the Scottish Parliament continuing to meet in Edinburgh during the following century, the city remained a centre of government in Scotland. Even after the Union of the Parliaments, in 1707, Edinburgh retained much of its former importance. The city continued to be the annual meeting place of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the convocation of the established clergy of Scotland. During the sixteenth century Edinburgh had become the seat of the Scottish high courts. These continued to meet in the city and Edinburgh supported a sizeable legal establishment. The city still remained an administrative centre for government in Scotland. Edinburgh continued to be a magnet for the cream of Scottish society. The journey to London was still a long and difficult one in the mid-eighteenth century. As late as 1763 there was only one stage-coach per month between London and Edinburgh, and the journey took between twelve and sixteen days.[4] Consequently, many of the Scottish nobility and gentry continued to spend their social season in Edinburgh. The city continued to possess much of the glitter and show associated with the amusement of the wealthy. There were dances and balls. The Edinburgh Theatre Royal was licensed in 1767 and Saint Cecilia's Concert Hall opened in 1769.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, moreover, Edinburgh was beginning to be noted for the remarkable intellectual renaissance which was taking place in the city. By the latter part of the century the so-called Scottish Enlightenment was at its zenith and Edinburgh had taken its place as one of the foremost centres of learning in Europe. During this period Edinburgh University reached the height of its fame. In the course of the century the number of students being taught there grew from about 400 to around 2000.[5] They were instructed by many of the most brilliant figures of the age; men such as the chemists, William Cullen and/

and Joseph Black (the latter of whom discovered 'latent heat'), the cleric and historian, William Robertson, and Adam Ferguson, the father of modern sociology. Outside the University other individuals of distinction added to the reputation of the city. The judge, Lord Kames (appointed to the bench in 1752), wrote a number of learned legal, philosophical, and historical works, and his own estate was a model of agricultural improvement.[6] Lord Monboddo, also a Scottish high court judge, was a noted classical scholar. Like Kames, moreover, he was also a noted patron of the Edinburgh intelligentsia. According to Henry Cockburn, Monboddo held fortnightly 'learned suppers' at his Edinburgh home,

> where of an evening would gather as choice a company of intelligentsia as could be found anywhere.[7]

Aided by the patronage of the wealthy and powerful, Edinburgh became a centre of culture and refinement. The philosopher, David Hume, whose studies of human nature established his position as one of the key figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, settled in Edinburgh in 1751 and his connections among the Edinburgh establishment helped him secure the keepership of the Advocate's Library, in 1752. The patronage of the well-to-do in Edinburgh also helped establish the reputation of portrait painters such as Allan Ramsay and Henry Raeburn, men whose work rivals the quality of the likes of Hogarth and Gainsborough.[8] Besides these figures, a host of lesser known individuals helped consolidate the position of Edinburgh as 'the Athens of the North'. The Edinburgh bookseller, William Creech, combined his involvement in municipal politics (he became Lord Provost in 1811) with support of many of the leading intellectuals of the day. He published the work of thinkers such as Kames, Hume and Adam Smith, and his bookshop on the High Street was a fashionable resort. 'Creech's levees', as the gatherings in the breakfast room of his shop were known, became a popular meeting place of the Edinburgh literati.[9]

The Scottish Enlightenment, however, was not the only engine of improvement in Edinburgh in the late eighteenth century. This period is also associated with the emergence, in Britain as a whole, of the so-called 'evangelical revival'. The evangelical revival was nothing short of a vigorous restatement of puritan moral values, in the face of (as its supporters claimed) a rising tide of vice and irreligion. National leaders of the movement, such as William Wilberforce MP, urged their followers to work for the moral regeneration of Britain. There is no doubt that the evangelical message struck a powerful chord among much of the British society, particularly among the middling ranks. Up and down the country organisations were formed in imitation of Wilberforce's Proclamation Society (1787) and the Society for the Suppression of Vice and Immorality (1802). In Edinburgh, the moribund Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (1709) underwent a revival. New organisations, such as the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor (1786) and the Gratis Sabbath School Society (1797), were formed. As we shall see, the moral precepts associated with the evangelical revival had a by no means insignificant impact on the development of Edinburgh society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Despite the pivotal role of Edinburgh in the development of the Scottish Enlightenment, the appearance of the city in the mid-eighteenth century hardly reflected its growing status as a centre of excellence. Even the University buildings (many of which originated in the late sixteenth century) appear to have been in a very dilapidated state.[10] In fact the mediaeval origins of Edinburgh were still very evident in the mid-eighteenth century. The core of the city remained about the aptly named High Street, running along the peak of the ridge from the castle down to Holyrood Palace and Abbey. In appearance the street had probably changed little in the previous two hundred years. At right angles to it numerous narrow lanes or closes plunged down each side of the ridge, between the buldings, making a sort of herring-bone pattern (see Figure 1). Hugo Arnot, in his The History of Edinburgh, published in 1779, likened the city to a turtle,

> of which the castle is the head, the high street the ridge of the back, the *wynds and closes* the shelving sides, and the palace of Holyroodhouse the tail.'[11]

When Edward Topham visited Edinburgh in the mid-1770s he was undoubtedly impressed by the grandeur and proportions of the High Street. This, he believed, however, was spoiled by the filth and overcrowding in the city.

> You have seen the famous street at Lisle, la Rue royale, leading to the port of Tournay, which is said to be the finest in Europe; but which I can assure you is not to be compared either in length or breadth with the High Street of Edinburgh.... Not content, however, with this, they suffer a weekly market to be held, in which the stalls are erected nearly the whole length of it, and make a confusion almost impossible to be conceived. All sorts of iron and copper ware are exposed to sale; here likewise the herb market is held, and the herb women... throw about the roots, stalks, etc, of the bad vegetables, to the great nuisance of the passengers.'[12]

Topham was not the only visitor to Edinburgh to remark on its filth and overcrowdedness. When Daniel Defoe visited the city in the early eighteenth century he remarked that

> Though many cities have more people in them, yet I believe there is none in the world, where so many People live in so little room....'[13]

He was also appalled by the crude sanitary arrangements of its citizens,

> as if the people were not willing to live as sweet and clean as other nations.'[14]

As T.C.Smout has suggested, Edinburgh probably contained more people at

the/

the time of the Union of Parliaments of 1707 than any other British city except London and perhaps Bristol.[15] By the mid-1750s, the central core of the city contained an estimated population of 36,000.[16] There had, however, been relatively little expansion beyond the base of the ridge on which the city had been founded. Rather than build outwards beyond the city walls the inhabitants of Edinburgh had built upwards and the High Street was dominated by huge tenement blocks. In Humphrey Clinker, published in 1771, Tobias Smollett, described the entry of a stranger into Edinburgh.

> What first strikes the eye is the unconscionable height of the houses, which generally rise to five, six, seven and eight stories, and in some places (as I am assured) to twelve. This manner of building, attended with numberless inconveniences, must have been originally owing to want of room. Certain it is, the town appears to be full of people.[17]

These huge buildings were sub-divided into numerous dwellings, each linked by a common stair-case. It would appear that, to a remarkable degree, these tenements were shared by a broad cross-section of the population. In mid-eighteenth century Edinburgh, in contrast to many cities, there seems to have been no clear segregation of social class. Although at one time some parts of the city may have been particularly prestigious, the pressure of population growth appears to have broken down any marked segregation between rich and poor. A mid-fifteenth century commentator remarked that the great houses of the nobility and the chief officers of state were all in the Cowgate, a street which runs along the southern base of the ridge, parallel to the High Street.[18] By the eighteenth century many such buildings appear to have been either sub-divided into smaller dwellings or pulled down to make way for tenement blocks. George Gordon has remarked on the 'apparently diffuse social topography' in the Old Town, prior to the urban expansion of the later eighteenth century.[19] Such social separation as there was appears to have been vertical, with different floors of the tenement blocks being/

being associated with different social groups. Topham, for instance, noted that the lower floors tended to be occupied by shopkeepers whilst the higher floors were the preserve of the more 'genteel'.[20] Overcrowding appears to have made for some very cramped dwellings. Lord Kennet, an eighteenth-century Scottish high court judge, lived in a flat of three rooms. His servant girl slept in the kitchen and his two children had beds in their father's study.[21]

By the middle of the eighteenth century such conditions were becoming intolerable to the middle and upper classes at least. Developing standards of cleanliness and hygiene made the squalid and insanitary Old Town increasingly unacceptable to many of its inhabitants. Changing social assumptions ensured that by the end of the century no high court judge would have considered living in a cramped flat in the centre of the old city. This change in attitudes was encouraged by the spirit of 'improvement' which played such a central part in the age of Enlightenment. The desire for improvement was not limited simply to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Improvement of the environment in which people (or at least the more privileged members of society) lived and worked became an ideal of the highest civic importance in eighteenth-century Edinburgh. Undoubtedly the most important expression of this ideal came in a pamphlet published in Edinburgh in 1752 under the auspices of a committee of the Convention of the Royal Burghs of Scotland. Entitled Proposals for Carrying on Certain Public Works in Edinburgh, this work stressed the importance which a capital city played in promoting the progress of a nation.

> Among the several causes to which the prosperity of a nation may be ascribed, the situation, conveniency, the beauty of is capital, are surely not the least considerable. A capital where these circumstances happen fortunately to concur, should naturally become the centre of trade and commerce, of learning and the arts, of politeness, and of refinement of every kind. No sooner will the advantages which these necessarily produce, be felt and experienced in the chief city, than they will diffuse themselves through the nation, and universally promote the same spirit of industry and improvement.[22]

One needed to look no further, claimed the authors of the pamphlet, than London, which was diffusing a spirit of industry and improvement throughout England. Its beauty and magnificence, its great buildings and bridges, its beautiful parks and walks, were a spur to progress.[23] Edinburgh, however, little resembled its southern counterpart. Indeed, no city was less likely to encourage a spirit of improvement. The time was ripe, claimed the authors of the Proposals, for a concerted effort to transform Edinburgh into a city which could be favourably compared with London.

> At no period surely did there ever appear a more general, or a better directed zeal for the improvement and prosperity of the country. Persons of every rank and denomination seem at length to be actuated by a truly public and national spirit. Private men who adventure to propose schemes for the public good, are no longer ridiculed as vain projectors; nor are the more extensive undertakings of societies and companies condemned without examination, as the engines merely of the factious and designing.[24]

The first two proposals concerned the erection of a 'forum and exchange' building where the merchants of the city could meet and the construction of chambers where the law courts, the Town Council and other public bodies could assemble.[25] The most important proposal, however, was that to secure an Act of Parliament extending the Royalty of the city (ie the area under the jurisdiction of the Town Council) in order that new streets and squares could be constructed. There is no doubt that these ideas, and the theme of urban improvement and regeneration in general, met with considerable enthusiasm in the city. Within a year of the publication of the Proposals an Act of Parliament was passed setting up a board of trustees who were charged with the construction of new public buildings in the city and widening of the streets.[27] In 1761 James Brown, an Edinburgh builder, bought a plot of land on the south side of the city and in 1763-4 Brown's Square was built. In 1766, slightly further to the south, Brown constructed George Square, a spacious quadrangle/

quadrangle bounded by elegant town houses. The houses in George Square were in stark contrast to the cramped tenements of the Old Town and the Square quickly became the most fashionable quarter in the city. Its elegance, however, was soon overshadowed by developments which were taking place on the north side of Edinburgh. In 1767 the Town Council secured an Act of Parliament expanding the royalty of the city northward, as had been envisaged in the Proposals of 1752. The Council also approved James Craig's now famous plan for the construction of a 'New Town' in the 'Extended Royalty' (as the area became known). The city envisaged by Craig's plan differed markedly from the Old Town. Where the older part of the city was a warren of narrow wynds and closes which had developed haphazardly during the preceding centuries, the New Town was to be a model of planned spaciousness and regularity. The two cities were to be linked by a bridge across the North Loch, an ancient defensive work which cut off the city from the land to the north. The New Town would consist of three broad thoroughfares each about a mile in length, running parallel to each other, east to west (which George III named Princes Street, George Street and Queen Street). There would be two squares, one at each end of the thoroughfares, and connecting streets would run at right angles to the main avenues (see Figure 2). Despite its apparent advantages over the Old Town, enthusiasm for the new development was muted and many of the building plots remained untaken. When Captain Topham visited Edinburgh in the mid-1770s he noted the reluctance of Edinburgh citizens to leave the familiar surroundings and environment of the Old Town.

> The greatest part of the New Town is built after the manner of the English, and the houses are what they call here 'houses to themselves'. Tho' this manner of living, one would imagine, is much preferable...yet such is the force of prejudice, that there are many people who prefer a little dark confined tenement on a sixth story, to the convenience of a whole house.[28]

Soon, however, this initial conservatism declined. Increasingly those who/

who could afford to do so deserted the filth and overcrowding of the Old Town for the elegance and order of the New, and the suburbs continued to grow. One nineteenth century commentator noted, with evident distaste, the extent to which the Old Town had become a preserve of the poor:

> in our city, an entire town, once occupied to a great extent by the proudest men of the land, has been vacated and deserted by the old tenants, so that we have presented to us in Edinburgh that singular feature of the poor down to the... blood-sucking parasites, taking possession of the halls and dining rooms and sacred nuptial bed-rooms of their lordly masters.[29]

The process, however, was a relatively slow one. There is no doubt that by the turn of the nineteenth century many parts of the Old Town had become virtual ghettos, the preserve of the poor.[30] The High Street, however, retained much of its former dignity. The Royal Exchange building was on the High Street and it was there that the Town Council met. The high court buildings were in Parliament Square, off the High Street, as was Saint Giles, the High Kirk of Edinburgh. The High Street, moreover, remained a business centre. When, in 1818, it was proposed to transfer the Post Office from the Old Town to the New, the Company of Merchants of Edinburgh petitioned the government that such a move would 'occasion much inconvenience to the whole trading Interest in the City'.[31] When a survey was made of the Old Town in 1821-2, for the purposes of the House Duty Assessment, many individuals of a middling status lived or worked there. Bank Street, for instance, contained two solicitors, one a Writer to the Signet, (a particularly prestigious group within the profession), who rubbed shoulders with, amongst others, a haberdasher, a grocer and a stationer. A police sergeant lived in Coull's Close.[32] None the less, many of the lesser streets and closes of the Old Town began to acquire an increasingly unsavoury reputation. As we shall see, in the chapter on the Edinburgh Police Commission, many of the shopkeepers and merchants who had their premises on the High Street became increasingly hostile to the inhabitants of the slum districts of the Old Town.

Although the Old Town may have clung on to some of its former status the New Town was the undoubted fashionable quarter of the city by the turn of the nineteenth century. The Earl of Kinnoul, for instance, had a house on Princes Street in the early 1800s.[33] The New Town, however, was by no means dominated by the gentry and aristocracy. In fact, if any one group dominated the New Town it was the legal profession. The New Town, like the old, was also surveyed for the purposes of the House Duty Assessment in 1821-2. Members of the legal profession figure prominently in the survey and the information collected demonstrates the extent to which lawyers had reached the highest echelons of Edinburgh society.[34] Many lawyers, of course, were themselves members of noble and gentle families. There seems little doubt, however, that the most prestigious members of the legal body in Edinburgh were accorded a status which more than matched that of many of the members of the aristocracy who resided in the city. Robert Mudie, in his guide to Edinburgh, or 'The Modern Athens' as he called it, published in 1825, testified to the enormous prestige of the legal profession:

> the profession of advocate is the only one in Scotland which makes the professor of it a gentleman; and among the people of Athens, of all the classes, the special pleaders before the Court of Session and Justiciary, - the supreme civil and criminal courts of Scotland, take a deeper hold of the public mind in the Athens, and engross a greater share of the public attention than the orators of St. Stephen's [the House of Commons] do in the British Metropolis.[35]

As David Daiches has pointed out, the social directories produced in Edinburgh in the late eighteenth century ranked the leading luminaries of the legal profession as the most prestigious members of Edinburgh society. In Peter Williamson's Edinburgh Directory for 1773-4, Lords of Session (Court of Session judges), Advocates, Writers to the Signet and Lord's and Advocate's Clerks, are listed first, followed by physicians, Noblemen and Gentlemen, Merchants, Grocers, Ship-Masters and the various trades/

trades.[36] Legal luminaries contributed to the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment. Lawyers, as we shall see, played a prominent role in many of Edinburgh's social and cultural societies. They also played an important part in its political life. From the early 1780s until the great reforms of the 1830s, the Town Council of Edinburgh was under the tutelage of the Dundases of Arniston, one of Scotland's greatest legal dynasties. At the opposite end of the political spectrum, lawyers figure prominently in the proceedings of the Friends of the People reform society, which flourished in the city in the early 1790s. Representatives of the legal profession were appointed to many official bodies in the city, such as the Edinburgh Police Commission (see Chapter 7). At the same time the profession clung to its historic immunity from many of the city's taxes. Not surprisingly, many people came to resent the pre-eminent position of the legal profession in Edinburgh. In August 1818, The Scotsman newspaper, which was produced in Edinburgh, carried an editorial entitled 'Prejudices of Lawyers. 'It would not be difficult', claimed The Scotsman,

> to show that the atmosphere of the bar generates prejudices as certainly as tainted air generates diseases; and that a lawyer who retains his sympathies with and for the rest of society is a phenomenon as rare as an Esquimaux....[37]

The influence of the legal profession became an issue in the 1780 burgh and parliamentary elections in Edinburgh, and, as we shall see, this was not the last occasion on which the issue played a part in politics in the city.

Lawyers, however, were by no means the only people who mattered in Edinburgh. The merchant community, although not as wealthy or as prestigious as the legal fraternity, was still a force to be reckoned with. The Company of Merchants of Edinburgh was one of the oldest and most respected societies in the city. Merchants dominated the Town Council/

Council of Edinburgh, although, as we shall see, they were not able to resist the influence of the lawyers. The archaic 'sett' or constitution of the city had been fixed in the fifteenth century, long before the emergence of the legal profession. According to the sett only merchant burgesses (or freemen) of the city and members of the fourteen tradesmen's Incorporations of Edinburgh were entitled to become councillors. Mercantile wealth and enterprise was an important part of the city's economy. Leith, the seaport of Edinburgh, was one of the major ports of Scotland and its trade expanded rapidly during the latter part of the eighteenth century.[38] The tonnage of shipping registered in Leith grew, according to William Creech, by 42,234 tons, between 1763 and 1783. In 1791 the registered tonnage had reached 130,000 tons.[39] Many craft industries flourished in the port. Nearly 700 people were employed in the manufacture of rope, sail-cloth and cordage, in the 1770s.[40] There was a glass factory employing around eighty individuals and several firms manufacturing soap and candles.[41]

Edinburgh had a strong craft tradition and this was reflected in the history of its craftsmens Incorporations. Fourteen Incorporations were represented at the Town Council board (see Appendix 1) and craftsmen had fought hard over the centuries to secure their position in the local government of the city. Given that the city supported the cream of Scottish society it was hardly surprising that artistic and luxury crafts flourished in Edinburgh. Goldsmiths, jewellers, cabinet-makers and so on helped cater for the tastes of the rich. Such occupations had a history of fierce independence and they made a rich breeding ground for the political radicalism which flourished in the 1790s. Edinburgh had few large scale industries, however. Breweries flourished in and around the city. According to the Third Statistical Account of Scotland (1967) brewing originated as least as early as the twelfth century, when the monks of Holyrood used the local springs to brew beer.[42] Not surprisingly, given its reputation as an ecclesiastical, administrative, legal and literary centre, Edinburgh supported a flourishing printing industry. Between 1763 and 1793 the number of paper mills grew from three/

three to twelve.[43] During the same period the number of printing houses grew from six to sixteen.[44] By the early nineteenth century, as William Ferguson has noted, more printing was being done in Edinburgh than in all the other cities in Britain put together, London excepted.[45] Printing, however, remained very much a 'craft' industry with distinct trades within it, such as those of the compositor and pressman. In fact, Edinburgh was not touched by the industrial revolution to nearly the same extent as cities such as Glasgow. T.C.Smout has suggested that as late as 1831 the machinists who worked in the Glasgow textile mills were still outnumbered by handloom weavers and others who lived at home.[46] None the less, Glasgow and other towns in the west of Scotland, such as Greenock and Paisley, were developing an industrial labour force on a scale unparalleled in Edinburgh. It is arguable, therefore, that the conditions were much more ripe for the emergence of a working-class consciousness in the more industrialised parts of Scotland than in Edinburgh. Edinburgh did have a large population of semi-skilled and un-skilled labourers employed in road-making and the construction of the new docks. Many of them, however, were Irish and, as such, were regarded with deep hostility by much of the population, rather than as potential allies in any class war. Many un-skilled men and women were also employed in domestic service. Being separated in small groups serving a large number of employers, however, and with relatively little independence (or, presumably, education), the opportunities for common action or organisation were slim. Unlike the west of Scotland, Edinburgh did not have any major trades in decline. Historians such as E.P.Thompson have suggested that the bitterness and disillusionment suffered by many skilled craftsmen (many of whom were well educated) encouraged them to articulate many of the ideas associated with collective class consciousness. The collapse of the handloom weavers trade certainly resulted in poverty and destitution for countless families in the west of Scotland, during the early nineteenth century. The major Edinburgh trades, however, including the building trades and the 'luxury' crafts, cabinet-makers, goldsmiths and so on, suffered no such decline. Many of the trades Incorporations, as we shall see, fell upon/

upon hard times in the early nineteenth century. To a large extent, however, this was due to the pace of economic expansion and the impact of 'laissez-faire' ideas, both of which made it increasingly difficult for the Incorporations to maintain any control over their own trades.

Edinburgh, therefore, did not experience such dramatic expansion during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as Glasgow and other towns in the west of Scotland, although its population did expand considerably during this period. In 1755 the population of Edinburgh was approximately 57,000 to Glasgow's 31,700. By 1801 the figures had become 81,600 and 83,700, respectively, and, by 1831, 138,000 and 147,000.[47] Edinburgh, of course, did experience many of the problems associated with rapid population growth. The Old Town slums became notorious for poverty, disease and crime. Mounting criticism of the political irresponsibility of Edinburgh's rulers was linked, as we shall see, to a re-assessment of the role and duties of local government. Moreover, whilst it would be wrong to say that Edinburgh experienced the emergence of 'new wealth' in the way in which industrialising Glasgow did, there is no doubt that social and economic change was resulting in challenges to the traditional leaders of Edinburgh society. A new 'middle class' was emerging in the city. As a class it was very diverse in composition. It included many old established (but still expanding and prospering) groups in the city, such as merchants, shopkeepers and skilled craftsmen, plus the growing 'new' professions, such as accountancy, architecture and teaching. All these were linked, however, by a common jealousy of the power of the Edinburgh establishment and a desire to establish or strengthen their influence in the community. This desire underscored all the reform movements which emerged in Edinburgh in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and it went hand-in-hand with the rising tide of civic pride in the city.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the growing political assertiveness of the middling orders in Edinburgh and to discuss the impact which it had on the framework of government in the city. Central to/

to the politicisation of the middling orders was the development of the press in Edinburgh. It provided a fund of ideas which could be used to create an ideological focus for political activism and provide an inspiration to action. Another key element was the growth of clubs and societies. Involvement in clubs helped give many people organisational experience and increasing confidence in their own fitness for responsibility. Existing clubs provided an institutional framework which could be used to put pressure on those in authority. They were also a good example of the importance of orgnisation. Many members of social, economic and cultural organisations (which is not to say that such societies were not involved in politics) put their experience to good use in the development of ostensibly political societies. The next section of this thesis, therefore, will look at the development of clubs and the growth of the press, as key elements in the emergence of an assertive 'public opinion' in Edinburgh. The section following that will examine the structure of government in Edinburgh, focussing on the Town Council, an organisation the constitution and activities of which very inadequately catered for the aspirations of the Edinburgh public. The final section will examine the consequences of this inadequacy, looking at the political reform movements which emerged in Edinburgh between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, and the impact which the climate of dissatisfaction had on the structure of government in the city. As we shall see, the diverse middling groups which agitated in favour of reform gradually overcame the rivalries which had divided them in the past. United in their desire for constitutional change and, as we shall see, by their shared mores, these groups coalesced into the nineteenth-century Edinburgh middle-class.

Overleaf: Figure 1: detail from 'A Plan of the City of Edinburgh' (from the Scots Magazine, XIX, 1759).

Figure 2: detail from 'Ainslie's Map of Edinburgh and Leith' (1804).

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Please refer to original text to see this material.

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43. Creech, Letters, p. 19.
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By the end of the eighteenth century there were a myriad clubs and societies in Edinburgh. Some, such as the Faculty of Advocates, the Merchant Company or the tradesmen's Incorporations, were long-established organisations which protected and promoted the concerns of powerful interest groups within the community. Through their history, reputation and prestige, such bodies had become a familiar and influential aspect of the fabric of the burgh (although, as we shall see, this by no means made them immune from threat). Others tried to protect and improve the lot of groups which fell outwith the pale of these relative giants of burgh organisation. These included combinations among the tradesmen whose interests were not protected by the ancient incorporations, box clubs and benefit societies which aimed to improve the security of individuals or families whose well-being could be destroyed by accident, illness and unemployment. In fact, by the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a wide range of organisations in Edinburgh committed to 'improvement' in its many forms. There were clubs dedicated to improvement of trade and commerce, to improvement in the art of public speaking and to a reformation in manners and morals. Others aimed to improve the quality of life of their members through mirth, merriment and conviviality. The aim of this chapter is to examine the role which such organisations played in the life of the community: the impact they made on the course of events and the way in which they affected the lives of those who were involved in them. The first section will look at the old Burgess organisations of Edinburgh; the Company of Merchants and the ancient tradesmen's Incorporations. The second will discuss more recent craft combinations and friendly societies. The third section will look at the many organisations, from professional to charitable, which were committed to the ideal of improvement. The fourth will examine social and convivial clubs and the final section will discuss politics and the clubs of Edinburgh.

1) Incorporations, Trades Combinations, Friendly Societies and Benevolent Institutions.

In a sense the oldest club in Edinburgh was the Burgh itself. Burgess-ship, or freedom of the city, although it no longer conferred any active political rights, possessed considerable prestige, and it was still, formally at least, a *sine qua non* for any individual who wished to buy and sell or carry on a trade within the city. In fact, Burgess-ship was traditionally reserved for merchants and tradesmen; the groups who had dominated life in the early Burgh. The term 'merchant', however, had a wide usage in Scotland' and virtually the only powerful group in Edinburgh society that could not be accommodated by the archaic qualifications of Burgess-ship, was the legal profession. Possession of a Burgess Ticket entitled the Burgess and his family to use of the Burgh 'hospitals' (or residential institutions for the orphaned and needy). These included the Trades Maiden Hospital, the Merchant Maiden Hospital and others which bore the name of those who had endowed them, such as Heriot's Hospital (founded with money bequeathed by George Heriot, banker and goldsmith to James VI) and the more recent George Watson's Hospital. Burgess-ship was also a prerequisite of membership of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh, founded in 1681, and of the fourteen Incorporations (or tradesmen's guilds) represented in the Trades Convenery of Edinburgh.[2] These organisations had all been originally set up to protect their membership from threats and competition, and cushion them against the uncertainties of the economy. With the sanction of the Town Council (or in the case of the Merchant Company, the Crown), from which their charters were derived, they collected welfare funds for members in distress, attempted to regulate the trade and commerce of the burgh and, most importantly, tried to ensure a monopoly of trade for their own members. Under the terms of its original charter the Company of Merchants assumed a monopoly of mercantile trade in the burgh. As the city and its trade continued to expand this must have been increasingly difficult to enforce, and, by the middle of the eighteenth century, attempts to maintain this monopoly had declined to little more than resolutions in the Company against unfreemen merchants.[3] The trades Incorporations were more tenacious, and during the eighteenth century there were still proceedings against individuals not of the Incorporations/

Incorporations and other Incorporations themselves.[4] In particular, bitter conflicts sometimes arose between the Edinburgh Incorporations and those in the adjacent burghs of which the Town Council of Edinburgh had acquired the superiority. The Edinburgh Incorporations claimed that their chartered rights had precedence over those of their counterparts in Leith, Canongate and Portsburgh. In some cases the latter agreed to a measure of control by the Edinburgh Incorporations. The Cordiners of Edinburgh, for instance, chose the deacon (or chairman) of shoemakers in Portsburgh.[5] In other cases, however, relations were more strained. There were long running attempts by a number of the Edinburgh Incorporations to curb the activities of those who carried on a trade under the auspices of Incorporations in the burgh of Leith.[6]

Aside from the role which such organisations played in regulating the trade and commerce of the city (which, as we shall see, was of diminishing consequence by the end of the eighteenth century), these bodies made an important contribution to the life of the community in a number of ways. Firstly, involvement in the work of the Merchant Company and of the trades Incorporations could be a spring-board to political activism. As we shall see, many local politicians began their careers in these organisations. Secondly, these societies gave their members a collective independence, weight and authority in the city which they could not have assumed as unorganised individuals. Their structure and activities afforded members an opportunity for projecting their ideas to a much wider audience than they might otherwise have reached.

In organisation and structure the Merchant Company and the Incorporations were not unlike the Town Council itself, and it is thus hardly surprising that many used the experience they gained in them to project themselves into a career in local government. There was a marked overlap of personnel between the leaders of the Merchant Company and their counterparts on the Council board. Many of the Town Council's leading members first came to prominence as officials with the Company. Thomas Elder, Master of the Company in 1778, went on to become Lord Provost/

Provost in the same year, serving as first magistrate in 1778-9, 1792-3 and 1796-7. Elder was succeeded as Master by James Stoddart, who had himself been Provost in 1774-6. Stoddart's successor at the Company was James Stirling, who went on to sit in the civic chair in 1790-91, 1794-5 and 1798-9. Similar patterns were repeated in the early part of the following century. Individuals such as William Fettes, William Creech and William Trotter, following their Mastership of the Merchant Company with a period at the head of the Council board.[7] Ties between the Incorporated trades and the Town Council were even more close: the leaders, or Deacons of the fourteen Incorporations sat on the Council ex-officio. As we shall see in the chapter on local government in Edinburgh, the Incorporations traditionally played an important role in local politics. The links between the Council and the Incorporations often gave their proceedings a very charged political content. Elections could be hotly contested, with divisions in the Incorporations reflecting splits within the Town Council and the wider community. In 1780, a general election year, the election of the Deacon of the Goldsmiths revealed bitter enmity within the Incorporation, between the supporters of Sir Lawrence Dundas, the MP for Edinburgh, and his opponent, William Miller. As a member of the city Corporation, the Deacon of the Goldsmiths took part in the election of the burgh MP (who was chosen solely by the Council). Both parties proposed 'leets' or list of candidates for Deacon and there were attempts by Sir Lawrence's supporters to disqualify their opponents from voting in the Incorporation elections.[8] A leading protagonist in this episode was Alexander Aitchison, who was prominent among those who tried, without success, to secure the election of a Deacon sympathetic to Sir Lawrence Dundas. Aitchison's overtures to James Hunter-Blair, who eventually succeeded Sir Lawrence as MP,[9] do not appear to have improved his standing in the society, although he continued to be active in the Goldsmiths' Incorporation until the late 1780s. By this time he had fallen on hard times and the Incorporation agreed to pay James McKenzie, another member of the society, to take in Aitchison's daughter.[10] Although a few payments were made to Alexander Aitchison himself, in response/

response to his appeals, his name was eventually removed from the roll of members in 1790.[11] This misfortune, however, did not prevent him from becoming a radical political activist in the early 1790s. Aitchison became a leading member of the radical Friends of the People organisation (which will be discussed in chapter 6) and was a delegate at the reform Conventions which met in Edinburgh in 1792 and 1793.[12] Another goldsmith who played a prominent part in the Friends of the People was David Downie. He attended the third radical Convention and was later implicated in the so-called Pike Plot.[13] He also had long experience of involvement in the affairs of the Incorporation. In fact, he had supported Aitchison and his associates in their unsuccessful campaign in the Deacon's election of 1780;[14] though this did not prevent Downie himself going on to become Treasurer of the Incorporation, in 1786.[15] Clearly, Downie and Aitchison did not join the radical reform movement of the 1790s as political novices. Both brought to bear the experience they had gained in involvement in the Goldsmiths Incorporation. Both, moreover, through the links between the Incorporation and the Town Council, had first hand and arguably bitter knowledge of how the machinery of the unreformed political system operated. Involvement in the Merchant Company and the trades Incorporations, therefore, could be, in itself, a political apprenticeship. The abilities it nurtured and the contacts which it allowed a relatively broad range of people to make, probably helped many to take their first steps in local politics. The experience which individuals so gained, however, could be the prelude to anti-establishment radicalism as well as a career as a political insider.

The connections which the Merchant Company and the Incorporations made within the political apparatus of the Burgh were not the only way in which they could try to influence the course of events. The meetings of these organisations afforded their membership the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues and to bring their collective weight to bear on the authorities. At a General Meeting of April 1805, for instance, the Merchant Company concluded that the regulations governing the importation/

importation of corn would

> materially affect the prosperity of the Manufactures of this Country and lessen the Comforts of many of the Inhabitants of this city.'[16]

The Company suggested various alterations to the regulations, in order to reduce the price of imported corn. These it communicated to the MPs for the city and county of Edinburgh, expressing the hope that they would lend their support to amendment of the existing corn laws.[17] On a multitude of issues, from public disorder to the ale and beer tax, the Company publicised its views and remonstrated with the relevant authorities.[18] By such efforts the Merchant Company came to be seen as an organisation of some consequence, whose views carried both weight and authority. Its Master was invited to sit on the boards and committees of public institutions in the city, such as the Edinburgh Police Commission, created in 1805, and the 1826 Leith Docks Commission. Meetings of the Company of Merchants were frequently reported in the Edinburgh press and its affairs were followed closely. When the election of Master and Assistants took place in 1829, The Scotsman newspaper not only reported the proceedings of the meeting; it also printed lists of how each member had voted.[19] Similarly, the affairs of the tradesmens incorporations were considered worthy of note. In 1785 the Caledonian Mercury followed with relish the 'great struggle' between competing factions within the Barbers incorporation.[20] When a number of Incorporations in Edinburgh and Leith held meetings in favour of parliamentary reform, in the late 1820s, their resolutions were publicised by The Scotsman, which was itself in favour of reform.[21] The views of the Merchant Company and of the tradesmen's Incorporations were treated as a barometer of public opinion in a city where the public had little opportunity to express its views through any official channel. These organisations provided a mechanism for Edinburgh society, or at least particular interest groups within it, to develop a considered opinion/

opinion and attempt to influence the activities of government. They represented one of the few ways in which the views of the community could be represented within a political system over which the citizenry of Edinburgh had no formal control. In fact, the weight and authority which the Incorporations continued to possess probably owed more to this aspect of their role than to any part they played in the economy of Edinburgh, or even the number of people they actually represented.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the economic functions of the tradesmen's Incorporations in Edinburgh, as throughout Britain, were coming under hostile scrutiny. Although, as we have seen, the Incorporations had come to assume a number of functions within the political and social fabric of the burgh, many still clung to monopolistic economic privileges as a key to their existence. Adam Smith, whose The Wealth of Nations had been published in 1776, argued that the economy needed to be free of such restrictive practices in order to develop fully and, by the turn of the century, such privileges were being viewed in an increasingly unfavourable light. One Edinburgh pamphleteer, writing in 1800, warned that

> An incorporation is a species of monopoly, hurtful to the public; for in a manufacturing and commercial country, the capital, the knowledge, the talents, and even the very time of every individual, is a part of the public stock and a a source of the general prosperity...neither the higher nor the lower incorporations ought to be allowed to oppress the people or infringe their rights.[22]

The courts were becoming less inclined to support the Incorporations in enforcing their privileges and, by the turn of the century, prosecutions by the Incorporations appear to have all but ceased.[23] In any case, the rapid expansion of the city and the influx of outside labour was making such privileges all but impossible to enforce. The large numbers who migrated to Edinburgh in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries probably included many skilled tradesmen. Moreover, even if the/

the authorities had been sympathetic to the privileges of the Incorporations, the physical expansion of Edinburgh was taking the city far beyond the traditional boundaries of the city; outside it the Incorporations had no jurisdiction. As early as 1776 the United Incorporations of Mary's Chapel (which represented the interests of wrights, masons and the building trades) complained that the Town Council was employing un-freemen in its public works, an example which the Incorporations warned was

> pregnant with the most fatal consequences to the very existence of the Incorporations...and...the other Societies of their fellow citizens, who may be said to be so much connected with them.[24]

Increasingly the Incorporations found that their ability to enforce their privileges was ebbing away. Old Incorporated trades such as weaving and bonnet-making were going into decline,[25] while other trades and occupations were taking their place. Printing and bookbinding, for instance, were major growth areas in Edinburgh in the nineteenth century, [26] and came to dwarf the occupations represented in the old established Incorporations. By the beginning of the nineteenth century many of the Incorporated trades had gone into terminal decline. In 1825 only two of the 14 Incorporations represented in the Edinburgh Trades Convenery retained a membership of over fifty and one had only two members.[27]

The tradesmen's Incorporations also suffered from the fact that their structure assumed that each trade had interests and a unity which encompassed all its members no matter their status and role, although in reality such organisations tended to be dominated by the wealthiest master craftsmen. Differences between masters and men were probably least in trades which maintained a 'craft administration', with small masters working closely with their employees, such as the building trades. Here the old structure of the incorporations still had some relevance/

relevance. In fact, the United Incorporations of Mary's Chapel (originally the Wrights and Masons), which had come to include members from the building trades as a whole, were by far the healthiest of the trades guilds in the early nineteenth century, with a combined membership of 194 and 408 apprentices in 1833.[28] In some trades, however, there was little unity between masters and men. The changing techniques and expanding scale of business were lessening the bonds which still existed between masters and men in the small craft economy. Changing skills and manufacturing needs were undermining the position of many skilled workers and making it more difficult for journeymen to progress to becoming masters.[29] Increasingly, some skilled workers were beginning to perceive interests among themselves which were at variance with those of their employers. This belief struck at the root of the Incorporations, which were built on the ideal of a trade unity encompassing both masters and men. In the tailors' trade, for instance, a journeymen tailors union had came into being in the 1770s,[30] despite the existence of the Incorporation of Tailors. A similar union was formed among the journeymen shoemakers in the 1790s.[31] This union tried to free its member from dependence on the masters by hiring premises, purchasing materials and employing two of its members as managers.[32] The Edinburgh Union Society of Journeymen Bookbinders was formed. This society aimed to promote

> a good understanding, harmony and unanimity amongst the Journeymen Bookbinders of Edinburgh, and to prevent any of their rights being encroached upon.[33]

Ninety-one members signed the articles of the society when it held its first general meeting in March 1822. In many ways this organisation functioned in the same way as a trades incorporation, except that it aimed to protect the traditions and skills of the trade against the masters themselves. Only bookbinders who had served a 'regular apprenticeship' were permitted to join the society and the Bookbinders warned/

warned the masters against employing individuals who had not served a full training. They claimed that the master bookbinders were employing 'young men from the country' at the expence of apprenticed journeymen, a practice which 'has been growing to an extent unparalleled in the annals of our trade' and 'if not put a stop to, will soon be the the means of undermining all regular journeymen'.

None the less, some individuals found it difficult to accept that the interests of masters and men were in opposition to each other. The founders of the Society of Bookbinders in Edinburgh, for instance, sought to remain clear from the disputes in which their fellow tradesmen in the Edinburgh Union Society of Journeymen Bookbinders had become involved. In its 'Articles of Agreement' of 1825, the former organisation stipulated that membership was open to both master and journeymen bookbinders and printers. The Articles warned that

> Nothing concerning the affairs of either trades [is] to be introduced into the society on any pretence; and if any member proposes anything to the prejudice of the booksellers or master printers, he shall forfeit FIVE SHILLINGS...'.[34]

The principal aim of the Society of Bookbinders was to form a fund for the support of the 'distressed members' of the printing and bookbinding trades and their 'indigent widows and children'. It aimed to offer the sorts of welfare benefits which were provided by the Incorporations and many of the trades combinations. In common with the Incorporations it wished to provide benefits without any principle of division between masters and men, and it hoped to distance itself from trades disputes in which combinations such as the Union of Journeymen Bookbinders were becoming involved. In fact, although its title and membership gave the Society of Bookbinders the appearance of a trades combination, it was in reality a benefit club of a type increasingly common by the end of the eighteenth century.

Despite their differences, the old Incorporations, the more recent trades combinations, and benefit societies such as the Society of Bookbinders, all had one thing in common: they were committed to the principle of independence. The Incorporations had sought to protect what they defined as the rights and privileges of their particular trade, which were of common interest to both masters and men. Combinations such as that of the journeymen shoemakers sought to secure the independence of craftsmen from masters who they believed were undermining the skills and traditions of the trade. Friendly societies sought to protect their members from dependence on charity as the only alternative to destitution. Friendly societies were becoming increasingly popular in Edinburgh, as in Britain as a whole, by the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1820 the Edinburgh Review suggested that one-eighth of the whole population of Britain was involved in such societies, which annually distributed £1½ million.[35] A typical example was the Edinburgh Nicolson Street Society of Mechanics and Others, set up in 1799.[36] The society was open to any individual in 'lawful employment', between the ages of eighteen and thirty-six. In return for an entrance fee of between ten and thirty shillings (dependent on age) and quarterly payments of three shillings, each member was entitled to an allowance during sickness, old age and permanent infirmity and a payment to his widow to cover funeral expences. The society was administered by a chairman, treasurer, old preses and twelve stewards By 1832 it had a stock of between £800 and £900.[37] The theme of independence was central to John Brewer's work on such clubs and societies.[38] Brewer has emphasised the importance of tradesmen's societies, 'box clubs', 'free and easys' and friendly societies, in freeing working men from dependence on the patronage and charity of their betters. Brewer suggests that the very structure and organisation of these societies re-inforced the importance of freedom and equality.[39] This can be clearly seen in some of the benefit societies which emerged in Edinburgh during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The laws of the Edinburgh Goldsmiths Equitable Society, for instance (which emphasised that its funds would be used for no other purpose than welfare benefits for/

for its members), declared that

> As this institution disdains everything that bears the name *charity*, all the members shall be placed on an *equal footing*, and all shall be entitled and considered to demand as their *right*, the stipulated allowance.[40]

A similar clause was included in the laws of the Edinburgh Compositors Society.[41]

Although they emphasised the freedom and independence of their members, such societies often themselves imposed very strict rules and discipline. As we noted in chapter 1, the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century experienced what has been described as an 'evangelical revival'. Increasingly, social status became conditional on leading a temperate, abstemious and morally blameless life. The middle classes, in particular, became associated with a campaign to 'purify' the morals and habits of society as a whole. R.Q.Gray, in his work on Victorian Edinburgh, has noted the importance of friendly societies in helping to fulfil the social aspirations of their members.[42] Gray suggests that although the tradesmen and artisans who joined such organisations were keen to establish their self-reliance and independence of their social betters, the 'distinctive institutions of the artisans stratum were contained within a social world dominated by the middle classes'. In their acceptance of and desire for 'respectability', tradesmen and artisans endorsed the norms of what Gray conceives as bourgeois values, as surely as they resisted direct forms of social subordination.[43] Thus, friendly societies and voluntary associations among artisans preached respectability as well as independence. This was in evidence before the mid-nineteenth century, however. The Breadalbane Oak Club Friendly Society was founded in 1825. It was open to any individual who bore,

> a respectable moral character, free from any bodily impediment, or disease of any kind, not under the age of sixteen, or above the age of thirty-six.[44]

One article of the laws of the society warned against drunkenness and another advised that

> if any member be convicted of vicious practices, or bringing trouble upon himself by irregularity, such as rioting, drunkenness and more especially the venereal disease, or be found dissembling himself with the Society.[45]

Never the less, it was with the middle classes and their efforts to reform the lower orders that the drive for respectability was most closely associated. As we have noted, Brewer emphasises the importance of friendly societies in freeing working people from dependence on the charity of their betters. In fact, the middling groups which spear-headed the tremendous growth in charitable organisations in Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were well aware of the scope they gave for social control and manipulation. As The Scotsman rather subtly put it in 1820, with regard to relief given to unemployed weavers:

> It...is pleasing to reflect that the *great body* of those who have been thus assisted have displayed a *due sense of gratitude*, and shown themselves to be *deserving of what was done for them.* This is a fact which ought not be lost sight of by the public. Kindness, whenever it is exercised with discretion, will generate gratitude. And we are quite convinced, that charity thus judiciously applied, and the friendly intercourse which takes place between the different classes of society, form the best cure for disaffection.[46]

One charitable institution which aimed to bring about both material and spiritual 'improvement', was the Edinburgh and Leith Seamen's Friend Society/

Society, founded in 1818. The society had support in high quarters. Its fifth anniversary meeting was held in the prestigious Assembly Rooms in the New Town and, in the absence of the Lord Provost (who appears to have been its president, ex-officio) the chair was taken by a Captain Deans of the Royal Navy.[47] There was also a strong clerical element in the society. Four of the eight speeches on this occasion were given by clergymen.[48] The society provided schools for seamen and their children and operated a 'floating chapel'. On average, claimed the organisation, each service had been attended by 248 seamen,

> among whom have been distributed 13,000 tracts, containing 79,200 pages of useful religious instruction.[49]

It also set up fifteen lodging houses

> to preserve the morals of the seamen from contamination while on shore....[50]

In fact, the Edinburgh and Leith Seamen's Friend Society appears to have used its influence to involve itself very broadly in the lives of the seamen. It was reported at the fifth annual meeting that

> An attempt was lately made, by a delegation sent to Leith for that purpose, to induce the seamen to combine for a rise of wages, but [this,] through the efforts of the society, proved abortive.[51]

Organisations such as the Edinburgh and Leith Seamen's Friend Society were but one of many such societies which flourished during the early nineteenth century, in which well-to-do individuals tried to improve, as they saw it, the lives of the poor. Many, like the Seamen's Friend Society, saw spiritual and material welfare as going hand-in-hand and believed/

believed that poverty and irreligion were closely linked. Thus, there was particular concern that the message of the gospel should reach those most in need. The Leith Town Mission, for instance, which was under the management of four clergymen, employed three agents,

> who are engaged five hours daily, in visiting the houses of the poor and destitute, inculcating and enforcing the duties of religion, promoting the circulation of the scriptures and explaining their import and tendency.[52]

Similar philanthropic societies in Edinburgh included The Society for the Suppression of Beggars, For the Relief of Occasional Distress, and for the Encouragement of Industry among the Poor (S.S.B.), founded in 1813, and the Temperance Society founded in 1831. Like the Seamen's Friend Society, the S.S.B. enjoyed broad support among 'respectable' society. Its subscribers included Lord Glenlee, a high court judge, the former Lord Provosts Donald Smith and Neil MacVicar, and burgh reformers Archibald Fletcher and Adam Black.[53] It was also aware of the importance of charity as a means to encouraging better behaviour among the poor.

> When the supply is too small to encourage idleness, and, being *voluntary*, is made to depend on good behaviour, and as much as may be on good character, all risk of imprudence in trusting to it is removed...[54]

None the less, the ostensible purpose of the S.S.B. was to encourage self-reliance and improvement and as the quotation suggests, it did not wish its benefits to become an encouragement to laziness or dependence on charity.

> When the poor may depend *with certainty* on the bounty of others for the necessaries of life, to procure them by their own exertions may become no longer an object with them, and dependence, once yielded, soon degenerates into a corrupting habit.[55]

The S.S.B. aimed to make the recipients of its charity both respectable and self-supporting. It was concerned about the temptation to vice which awaited young girls after leaving school 'and before their strength enables them to go into service'. Thus a straw-plaiting school was founded,

> which at the same time as it repels the approaches of vice under the cloak of idleness, is calculated to nourish the principles of virtuous and religious conduct...[55]

A small loan scheme was set up along with a savings bank, in order to encourage habits of 'economy and foresight', 'industry and sobriety'.[56] The Temperance Society, like the S.S.B., was inspired largely by middle-class philanthropy aimed at the poor, as is made abundantly clear from The Scotsman's account of its first meeting, in June 1831;

> there were but one hundred persons present at the appointed hour, and their good fashionable clothing, and their healthy and cheerful appearance, evinced that they had no great occasion to become members of 'temperance societies', but attended solely for the purpose of giving their support to the benevolent and meritorious institution. As the chairman observed...the meeting should have been in the evening, at an hour convenient for those classes in society who are believed to stand most in need, and who would certainly have profited most by the addresses and admonitions at the meeting. [57]

The formation of charitable and benevolent organisations like the S.S.B. and the Temperance Society, is usually associated with the early nineteenth century onwards, and the rise of 'Victorianism'. Nevertheless, such societies can be seen as one part of a movement for 'improvement' which had been in evidence since the mid-eighteenth century at least. As we have seen, the concept of improvement was one of the central themes of the Enlightenment, of which Edinburgh was one of the/

the foremost intellectual capitals. This spirit can be seen in many of the clubs and societies which were formed in the city during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

2) Societies in the Age of Improvement.

One of the earliest societies in Edinburgh associated with the Scottish Enlightenment is the 'Rankenian', founded around 1716 and named after the tavern in which its members met. They included many of the leading intellectuals of the day, such as the Rev. Robert Wallace, Professor Colin McLaurin and William Wishart, the Principal of the University. The aim of the society was mutual improvement, through discussion and debate. Books were reviewed and essays delivered by the members themselves.[58] This society set the pattern for many clubs which were formed during the course of the century, such as the Philosophical Society (1737) and the Select Society (1754 or 5). David Hume, a leading member of the Select Society, saw its purpose as being to encourage the spirit of improvement in all areas of Scottish life. In early 1755 he wrote enthusiastically to Allan Ramsay, a fellow member, of

> a project of engrafting on the society a scheme for the encouragement of arts and sciences and manufactures in Scotland, by premiums, partly honorary, partly lucrative.[59]

Similar organisations included the Royal Society (1783), which aimed to bring about improvement in 'every branch of science, erudition and taste', and the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland (1784), which hoped to revitalise the society and economy of the Highlands. Within the University a number of debating societies were formed during the course of the century, including the Speculative Society (1764) and the Dialectic Society (1787). Others were organised among professional groups within the city, most notably the legal profession. The Juridical Society was founded in 1773, 'for the encouragement of the study of the law/

law'.[60] Through such organisations passed many individuals who were later to become prominent in public life and whose debating skills were doubtless sharpened by involvement in these societies. Francis Jeffrey, Henry Brougham, Francis Horner and Henry Cockburn were all at one time members of the Speculative Society. Archibald Fletcher, one of the pre-eminent advocates of burgh reform in Scotland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was an active member of the Juridical Society, as a young man.[61] Without doubt these societies acted as power houses of the Scottish Enlightenment. Never the less, the impact which they made on Edinburgh society as a whole is open to question. Membership of many of the most prestigious societies was limited to men of considerable social or intellectual standing. Moreover, although a number of these organisations published essays and accounts of their proceedings, it is doubtful whether they were at a price or on a level which commended them to a wide section of the community. One is tempted to doubt how far the influence of many of the most prestigious societies of the Scottish Enightenment was felt in the city, outside the charmed circle of its social and intellectual elite. There did exist in Edinburgh, however, a number of debating societies which were perhaps more 'popular' in their appeal and influence.

One of the most famous of Edinburgh's popular debating societies in the late eighteenth century was the Pantheon, earlier called the Robin Hood Society. This probably indicates that it was one of the many imitators of the London Robin Hood Society (1747) which appeared in a number of British towns in the mid-eighteenth century. The Pantheon was committed to the great ideal of improvement (in this case in the art of public speaking[62]), like the elite debating societies of the Scottish Enlightenment. It pitched its appeal at a much wider audience, however. The Pantheon was intended as a means of public amusement as much as instruction, as is reflected in the questions which were debated at its weekly meetings. These included 'Whether is Fancy or Judgement most consulted in chusing a Wife'[63] and 'Whether Poverty or Flattery is most inimical to Female Virtue'.[64] None the less, the Pantheon did debate subjects/

subjects of a less frivolous bent. In fact, the specialised nature of some of the topics discussed suggests a considerable degree of popular interest in and knowledge of public affairs. On 21 December 1782 the Pantheon discussed whether 'it would be for the benefit of Scotland, that Trial by Jury should be independent in Civil Causes'.[65] On 18 July 1782 the society discussed whether the rejection of the Scots Militia bill was of benefit to Scotland. In May 1784 one question discussed was, 'Ought the Schoolmaster's Bill now pending in Parliament, to be passed?'.[66] Moreover, in times of political crisis or upheaval the most pressing public issues of the day were discussed at length. The various problems which beset the nation during the latter stages of the American War of Independence, for instance, occupied many of the society's debates. As speculation mounted, in 1781, as to possible changes in the Cabinet, the Pantheon asked 'Ought the present Ministry to be dismissed his Majesty's Councils.[67] The following week it debated, 'Should the American War be immediately terminated?',[68] a subject to which it returned in July 1782.[69] Although few accounts of the Pantheon debates appear to survive a report by the Caledonian Mercury of a debate on Irish affairs, in 1783, suggests that their standard was by no means poor. The debate took place at a time when there had been mounting pressure in Ireland for constitutional reform, and the question under discussion was whether the demands of the Irish reformers should be met. The Mercury concluded that

> a very animated and interesting debate took place, in the course of which it having been thrown out, that it would be improper to call a vote upon the general statement of the question, as it naturally divided itself into two questions; 1st 'Ought the demands so far as regard internal legislation and reformation of parliament, to be Granted?' 2nd, 'Ought the Irish to participate in every commercial privilege with Great Britain?' The society having agreed to call a vote upon these distinct propositions, the former carried unanimously, while the latter passed...by a majority of six only.[70]

There seems little doubt that many of the Pantheon's weekly meetings were/

were well attended. At a debate on the conduct of Sir Lawrence Dundas, the city's MP, in 1781, the Edinburgh Evening Courant suggested that 247 individuals voted on the question.[71] People viewed the Pantheon debates as a valuable opportunity to air their views on the most pressing issues of the day and complained if they were not afforded the opportunity to speak. The Caledonian Mercury of Wednesday 26 June 1782 carried the following account of a meeting of the Pantheon:

> At a meeting held...last Thursday, for the purpose of signing an address to his Majesty, upon the late change of *Men* and *Measures*, some then present seemed dissatisfied that they were not permitted to deliver their sentiments, either upon the propriety or impropriety of the measure. The Society, therefore, in compliance with the wishes of such, has agreed that the...question be the subject of debate *tomorrow* evening.[72]

In fact, the Pantheon debated the petition to the King on three subsequent occasions.[73] People clearly believed that their opinions mattered and deserved to be heard. The Pantheon appears to have acted as a forum for popular discussion, at a time when there were relatively few channels through which the public could express an opinion. The popularity of its debates is a demonstration of the degree of popular interest in public affairs which existed in the city.

Debating societies such as the Pantheon doubtless also provided scope for mirth and conviviality, and many of those who participated in and attended the debates probably afterwards adjourned to a nearby tavern or coffee house to discuss the evenings proceedings. Similarly, many of the societies associated with the luminaries of the Scottish Enlightenment were convivial as well as intellectual gatherings. The Poker Club (1762) was formed to agitate for the creation of a Scottish militia similar to that which already existed in England. Its members consisted

> of almost all the literati of Edinburgh and the neighbourhood (most of whom had been members of the Select Society), together with many country/

> country Gentlemen who were indignant at the invidious line drawn between Scotland and England.[74]

The society met regularly for a meal at Nicolson's tavern and its minutes indicate that it

> continued to hold frequent meetings every seven years...every member being satisfied with the frugal entertainment, was no less pleased with the Company.[75]

In this respect, the Poker Club was probably not dissimilar to the many social clubs which flourished in Edinburgh during the eighteenth century.

3) Convivial Clubs.

Few aspects of Edinburgh life in the eighteenth century have recieved such nostalgic attention as the now legendary convivial clubs of 'Auld Reekie'. Hardly a street or close in the Old Town appears to lack association with some tavern club or clique, from which Henry Dundas and his cronies or some other well-known worthies, it is claimed, were wont to depart in a drunken stupor.[76] As we have already noted, the middle classes began to become increasingly associated with the 'evangelical revival' and its ideal of a sober and abstemious lifestyle, from the end of the eighteenth century onwards. This perhaps signalled the downfall of many of Edinburgh's most notorious tavern clubs, at least among those who wished to be considered part of 'respectable' society. The eighteenth century as a whole, however, was the heyday of such organisations. Edinburgh remained the fashionable resort for Scotland's wealthy and titled. Its population was continuing to expand rapidly, and the restraints which respectability placed on mirth and merriment appear to have been much less pervasive than they were to become during the following/

following century. In this environment convivial clubs and societies flourished, though little is known of many beyond their often fanciful titles. These included the Dirty Club, the Black Wigs, the Odd Fellows and the Bonnet Lairds. Some have become more well known only because individuals of some note joined their ranks. James Hogg, the 'Ettrick Shepherd', was a member of the Right and Wrong Club. This club, according to Hogg, was apparently formed in 1814,

> at a jovial dinner party in the house of a young lawyer, now of some celebrity at the Bar. The chief principle was that whatever any member might assert, the whole were bound to assent to the same, whether right or wrong... We dined at five and separated at two in the morning, before which time the Club had risen greatly in our estimation; so we agreed to meet the next day for five or six weeks, and during that time our hours of sitting continued to be the same. No constitution on earth could stand this... The result was that several of the members got quite deranged, and I drank myself into an inflammatory fever.[77]

Many of these societies, like the Right and Wrong Club, were probably very informal and short-lived. Some, however, were more structured in organisation and, given the nature of these clubs, it is hardly surprising that this was often of a very fanciful nature. The Wig Club was formed in 1775, but by the early 1780s it had become a burlesque on the Society of Antiquaries, founded in 1780. Chief among the societies possessions was a wig of somewhat spurious history, which the society claimed it was going to place in the Antiquaries collection of historical relics.[78] Like the Antiquaries the Wig Club was formal in organisation. It held regular meetings and election of new members was by ballot. It was by no means plebeian in membership. Entry money was two guineas and one of its meetings was fixed to follow the day on which the Caledonian Hunt met, a social event for which much of Scotland's gentry and aristocracy would already be in Edinburgh.[79] Equally formal in its organisation, though more cosmopolitan in membership, was the Cape Club, founded in 1763.[80] Like the Wig Club, the Cape was very burlesque/

burlesque in concept. It was headed by a 'Sovereign of the Cape', who was elected by the members every six months[61] and invested with the regalia of the club, including the 'Cape of Honour', the 'Imperial Crown of Gold',[62] and the mace and seal.[63] He was assisted by a host of other officials, including the Depute and Substitute Sovereigns, the Secretary, the Recorder, the Premier and the Chaplain.[64] New members were initiated into the club in an elaborate ceremony and as 'Knights of the Cape' took on a formal title. William Coulter, a future Lord Provost, became Sir Crab, and when James Laing, the Town Clerk, joined the society in 1780 he became known as Sir Spy.[65] Although the club appears to have hired private club-rooms, which were opened to members on a regular basis, the principal meetings of the society were at formal dinners, including the so-called 'Grand Capes', which were held bi-annually, and other miscellaneous events, such as meetings to honour distinguished members[66] or in memory of deceased Knights.[67] These occasions appear to have all to often ended in drunkenness and disorder. In 1775 there was a complaint against Sir Toe

> for being so brutish as to call his friends one after another by the opprobrious name of liars, without provocation or foundation, in spitting in Sir Ship's face and afterwards stripping to fight him...[68]

In 1777 two members were suspended for behaving in a 'riotous and disorderly manner',[69] and in 1813 one member was expelled for moving a chair just as another member was about to sit down.[70] Despite this, the club had become one of the most prestigious in Edinburgh, by the turn of the century, and came to include among its members many of Scotland's most eminent citizens. James Watt, the engineer, and Henry Raeburn, the painter, were Knights of the Cape. William Miller, the future High Court judge and a parliamentary candidate for the city in 1780, became a member in 1782.[71] Unlike the Wig Club, the Cape Club was relatively broad in membership. As well as advocates and solicitors, the membership of/

of the club included watckmakers, coppersmiths, booksellers and tailors.[92] Its official positions were by no means limited to men of great social standing. In 1769 the Sovereign was an upholsterer and the Chaplain a bookseller. In 1781 the Sovereign was a hatter, and in 1785 a candlemaker.[93] In fact, it is perhaps possible to draw comparisons between the Cape Club and the popular festivals held in some communities, where a 'lord of misrule' chosen from outside the elite would mock and parody the trappings and ceremonies by which the ruling classes demonstrated their power. The elaborate forms and practices of the Cape Club probably played an important part in its popularity, just as they did in the masonic style secret societies from which much of Cape Club organisation and ritual appears to have derived. Like the Freemasons, the Cape Club insisted on its members taking an oath of secrecy as to its affairs.[94] Unlike masonic practice, however, the Cape ceremonies were a burlesque, a conscious take-off of the formality and pomp which played such a conspicuous part in eighteenth-century public life. The diplomas of admission issued by the society, with their references to the 'Most Noble Order' of the Cape, the 'Super Eminent Sovereign' and the 'Grand Cape of Heaven' appear to have been a skit on masonic terms.[95] The Cape Club gave individuals outside the elite an opportunity to participate in rituals and ceremonies usually monopolised by the wealthy and powerful. On the other hand, the strong element of ridicule and parody was perhaps a welcome antidote to the stifling grandeur and ceremony by which power was demonstrated; a humorous 'raspberry' at authority. In fact, it was when its officials began to take themselves and the myriad of rules and regulations which they had created too seriously, that the Cape Club began to have problems. In January 1771 a large part of the Grand Cape was taken up with ratifying rules on attendance and expelling members who had not appeared to collect their diplomas of admission.[96] The problems of the Cape appear to have reached a crisis, however, sometime before the Grand Cape of March 1784, when

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> A select number of Old Sovereigns, Counsellors and Knights, delegated and appointed by their Brethren, having previous to this festival met in order to settle and terminate all differences and to lay the foundation of a future lasting Union in the society, their sealed Agreement and Report was opened by Sir Fine and read to the Grand Cape...[97]

The report was unanimously approved and the Deputy Sovereign closed the meeting by

> exhorting a strict adherence to the laws and regulations of the Order as the only means whereby the Happy Union could be rendered permanent and lasting.[98]

None the less, the tedium of creating and enforcing the rules and regulations of the club was not always appreciated by the society. At the Grand Festival of 1787

> Much public business was to have come before the Cape, but all present being of opinion the evening ought to be consumed in festivity and good fellowship, the jollity and good humour of the Knights was set in motion with a song...[99]

Like many organisations the Cape Club may have suffered from members bringing outside disputes into the society. When a 'Mr Miller' was elected to the society, a letter was delivered to the club in which a complaint was made that the application was irregular and that the rules of the club had been ignored. 'A power of dispensing with the laws of a community', warned the letter,

> is a power of the most dangerous nature; a power ever fatal to liberty and the rights of mankind; a power which none but tyrants exert, and which none but slaves will submit to.[100]

The language used is very similar to that employed during the parliamentary election of 1780 in Edinburgh, an extremely bitter and contentious affair, in which the language of 'liberty' and 'freedom' was very freely bandied around by both candidates. One of those was William Miller, who was elected to the Cape Club in 1782. No Grand Capes appear to have been held between 1782 and the Cape of March 1784 mentioned above,[101] where an attempt was made to 'terminate all differences and to lay the foundations of a future lasting union...' Disagreements between the supporters and opponents of William Miller may have played an important part in these differences.

4) Politics and the Clubs.

Clearly, even in clubs which were not ostensibly 'political', the language and ideas of politics were not always absent. As we shall see, the course of politics during the 1790s excited very strong feelings and these frequently came to play a part in the proceedings of organisations which were not formally committed to any political party or movement. As organisations such as the Pantheon debating society demonstrate, there was considerable popular interest in political affairs and it is hardly surprising that in organisations which brought individuals into contact with each other, for whatever purpose, politics should be discussed. The Social Congress Hall was a late eighteenth century social club, composed largely, it would appear, of minor public officials and others of a lower middling background. The minutes of the society show that politics very frequently entered its discussions.[102] At the meeting of 11 May 1792,

> The conversation which took place at this Congress was chiefly upon two subjects, viz the Unitarian Doctrine, and the operations of the Society stiling themselves 'The Friends of the People', craving for a parliamentary reform.[103]

Societies such as the Pantheon were not political as such, but political crises of the latter part of the eighteenth century, such as that associated with the American War of Independence, helped ensure that political discussion played an increasingly important part in their proceedings. The activities of many organisations, such as the Merchant Company, involved attempting to influence Parliament and the authorities, and this inevitably brought them within the ambit of the apparatus of politics. The citizens of Edinburgh may not have had much formal power over their governors, either at a local or national level, but clubs and societies were one means by which they could lobby and harass the authorities. Experience in the Merchant Company, the trades Incorporations or the myriad other clubs and societies which existed in Edinburgh, was a valuable apprenticeship. Late eighteenth century Edinburgh society was by no means devoid of the skills of political organisation and agitation and when issues appeared which aroused strong enough feelings these skills could be effectively demonstrated. When the government attempted to extend Roman Catholic relief to Scotland, in the late 1780s, there was a groundswell of popular feeling against the authorities. The Protestant Association was founded in late 1778 and a committee formed in Edinburgh to co-ordinate Scottish opposition to Roman Catholic relief. The individuals who formed this committee were drawn from a broad range of middling occupations, and some may have had an artisan background.[104] The president was a dyer, the secretary a Writer to the Signet. Other members of the committee included a glover and a goldsmith, while Patrick Bowie was described as 'formerly a weaver, now an Accomptant's Clerk'. The treasurer, Walter Russell, a merchant, may be the same Walter Russell, 'merchant in Edinburgh', who was a delegate to the 1788 Burgh Reform Convention, in Edinburgh.[105] A Walter Russell also attended the first Convention of the Friends of the People reform movement, in 1792, as a delegate of the Original Association in Edinburgh.[106] Equally, David Linsay, another member of the committee of the Protestant Association, and likewise a merchant,[107] may be the same David 'Lindsay', 'merchant in Edinburgh', who also attended the 1788 Burgh Reform Convention, in Edinburgh.[108] The relatively/

relatively low social background of some the leading members of the Association appears to have disturbed some of the citizens of the city. 'Aurelius' wrote to the Caledonian Mercury, that

> The members of the several Protestant Associations, considered as manufacturers and mechanics, are highly to be respected. In a commercial country such characters are these are the firmest supporters of national grandeur, and deserve every attention on the part of the legislature. But when not content with the humble sphere in which they were designed to move, they force themselves forward into public view, and deciding on the most obtuse points of religious controversy, pretend to censure the resolves of Parliament, their conduct appears in a very unfavourable light.[109]

This opinion received a scathing rebuke, however, from at least one supporter of the Association. One 'Manufacturer' wrote to the Caledonian Mercury, that Aurelius appeared to be saying to manufacturers and mechanics, that

> by your industry, we are enabled to live in ease; by your labours we are clothed in purple and fine linen and fare sumptously every day; and as you are necessary to protect our properties and fight our battles, in return you will take care that, like any other beast of burden, you will be plentifully fed, well curried, and littered down.[110]

This correspondent warned that the picture, held up to mechanics and manufacturers by Aurelius, was

> drawn by the pencil of despotism and passive obedience. In fact, it is saying, in plain language, that they ought to surrender their reason and judgement entirely to the direction of others.[111]

Clearly, the radical Friends of the People movement of the 1790s, which will be discussed in chapter 6, did not emerge from a social or political/

political vacuum. The clubs and societies of late eighteenth-century Edinburgh demonstrate at least a kernel of all the elements which combined to make such oranisations a reality. There was an abundance of organisational experience. Many tradesmen and shopkeepers, as well as merchants and lawyers, were involved in the running of formal and structured societies. There is no doubt as to the extent of popular interest in public affairs or the degree to which people were prepared to voice their opinions on the great questions of the day. lastly, there was that streak of independence, nourished by the incorporations, friendly societies and benefit clubs. By such means, an increasing number of those 'out of doors' tried to improve their own lot and give themselves a greater say in their own affairs, independent of the traditional leaders of society. Such individuals, as the reaction to Aurelius suggests, were beginning to develop strong views as to the worth of their own opinions and indeed their own rights, although it might take some sort of a crisis to rouse or inspire them to action. It is unlikely that such people could have begun to express political ideas coherently, however, had it not been for the development of the press. Newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets and hand-bills provided the wealth of information and ideas which inspired and guided the growth of popular political awareness.

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Newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets and hand-bills played a central part in the development of popular political consciousness in Edinburgh. They provided the information and disseminated the ideas which helped individuals and groups to develop an informed judgement on public affairs. They added fuel to many of the controversies which encouraged an increasing number of Edinburgh's citizens to participate in political argument and agitation. Their columns acted as a forum for political debate and as a platform from which those with political ambitions could try to influence both the public at large and those in power. The press could be the agent of both agitation and education, and it was by means of the vision that it presented that the vast majority of the public was able to witness the progress of affairs of state. Clearly, the press was instrumental in the politicisation of Edinburgh. It is unlikely that any of the political crises and movements which emerged in the city in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century could have touched as many people or made as powerful an impact, had it not been for the way in which the press allowed agitators and ideologues to reach out to a wide section of the community. Nevertheless, there are still many questions which can be asked about the importance of the press. To what extent did it lead rather than simply reflect public opinion? Was it powerful enough to merit the term, 'fourth estate', which has sometimes been applied to it? The first section will look at the growth of the Edinburgh press during the course of the eighteenth century. The second will examine the content of the press during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with particular reference to the most popular newspapers of the day. The final section will discuss the extent to which the press appears to have influenced the course of events and the role which it played in shaping the opinions of Edinburgh society.

a) <u>The Growth of the Press</u>

When Edward Topham visited Edinburgh during 1774 and 1775 he was not impressed by the state of its press. 'Though the Scotch are certainly a very ingenious people, and in general good writers', he wrote,

> you see very few publications make their appearance. You are pestered with none of those weekly, daily, and almost hourly pamphlets, which every where one meets in London...[1]

In 1779 Hugo Arnot could write, in his History of Edinburgh, that,

> till within these forty years, the printing of news-papers, and of school books, of the frantick effusions of fanatical clergymen, and the law-papers of the Court of Session, joined to the patent Bible printing, gave scanty employment to four printing-houses.[2]

None the less, whilst it may not have matched the volume and variety of output of its London counterpart in the mid-1700s, the Edinburgh press made tremendous strides during the course of the eighteenth century. In 1763 there were only six printing houses in Edinburgh. By 1790 there were sixteen.[3] One of the chief reasons for the expansion which took place in the Edinburgh press during the second half of the eighteenth century appears to have been the fact that Scottish publishers were not affected by the English law of copyright. According to this, the right to publish a work was perpetually vested in the authors and their assignees or, where the author was not known, in whoever had first published the piece.[4] An Edinburgh publisher, Alexander Donaldson, successfully established, however, that Scottish publishers were not bound by this law, even when they sold their works south of the border. Donaldson subsequently opened a bookshop in the Strand, selling cheap Edinburgh editions of popular English books, and his example was soon followed by many other Edinburgh printing houses.[5] Topham noted that many of the London booksellers had partners in Edinburgh and he estimated that 'many thousand' volumes printed annually in Edinburgh were sold in London and elsewhere.[6] The expansion of the Edinburgh press was also encouraged by the intellectual activity which took place in Scotland during the eighteenth century. As the seat of a thriving and expanding university, a power-house of the so-called Scottish Enlightenment and the meeting place of many of the country's intelligentsia/

intelligentsia, Edinburgh became a leading publishing centre of Scotland's intellectual revival. The spirit of investigation and enquiry, and the desire for knowledge and improvement, acted as a spur to literary output in the city. Luminaries such as David Hume, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, all had editions of their works published in Edinburgh. By the late-eighteenth century, Edinburgh publishers were producing a wide range of books and pamphlets, as is demonstrated by the Edinburgh publications listed in the Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue.[7] The entries for 1776, for instance, reflect the thriving intellectual climate which existed in Edinburgh at the time. Publications included Henry Home's, The Gentleman Farmer, an influential work on agricultural improvement, William Duncan's The elements of Logick, James Lind's A Treatise on the Putrid and Unremitting Marsh Fever and The Anatomy of the Human Bones, by Alexander Monro, one of a famous dynasty of Monros who monopolised the chair of Anatomy at Edinburgh University during much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There were also many of the 'frantick effusions of fanatical clergymen' referred to by Arnot. These included a pamphlet edition of a sermon by W.Graham, entitled The Gospel of Christ, the Glory of Christians, and William McEwan's Select Essays, Doctrinal and Practical. Despite the apparent popularity of such works, however, and the hostility of some of Edinburgh's more zealous clerics to 'immoral' popular entertainments, there was no shortage of more light-hearted material. 1776 also saw the publication of an Edinburgh edition of Hearts of Oak, by David Garrick, one of the leading actor-managers on the London stage. There was also an edition of Allan Ramsay's famous poem The Gentle Shepherd. Popular drama was in abundance, with publications such as Fair Margaret's Misfortunes, a romance in four parts, and tales of blood-shed and valour, such as John Armstrong's last good-night; declaring how he and his eight-score men fought a bloody battle at Edinburgh. Ballads, probably printed in hand-bill and broadside form, were also much in evidence. These included an Edinburgh edition of the ever-green border ballad, 'Chevy Chase', and works entitled Follow Me over the Mountain and Lord Thomas's Tragedy. Many publications/

publications at this time, as we have already suggested, were probably cheaper editions of popular works, printed in Edinburgh, but with a wider circulation throughout Scotland and the rest of Britain in mind. A Select Selection of Oriental Tales was printed for Gordon, Bell, Creech and Elliot, in Edinburgh, T.Cadel in London, and R.Taylor of Berwick. John Laurie's Tables of Simple and Compound Interest was printed for sale by Creech and Schaw in Edinburgh, and J.Murray in London. Duncan's Elements of Logick was printed for booksellers in both Edinburgh and Glasgow. There were also Edinburgh editions of popular political works. 1776 saw the publication in Edinburgh of Thomas Paine's Common Sense and Richard Price's Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty. Political questions more directly related to Edinburgh, however, were also aired in the Edinburgh press. The smouldering factionalism within the Town Council and the tradesmen's Incorporations (which was to culminate in the elections of 1780) spawned a number of pamphlets and broadsides during 1776. These included An Address to the Citizens of Edinburgh on their ensuing Elections and John Walker's To the Right Honourable James Stoddart, Lord Provost of Edinburgh. Clearly, the Edinburgh press was by no means as limited or unadventurous as Topham appears to suggest. History, politics, philosophy, medicine, religion, popular drama and romance were staples of the Edinburgh press and indicate that the purveyors of books, pamphlets, broadsides and hand-bills catered for a broad and varied readership, both in and outwith the city. Likewise, the Edinburgh newspaper and periodical press served a cosmopolitan readership.

b) The Newspaper and Periodical Press

Although there appears to be some disagreement as to when the first newspaper was published in Edinburgh, or indeed in Scotland as a whole,[8] there is no doubt that by the end of the second decade of the eighteenth century there was an established newspaper press in the city. In 1705 the first number of the Evening Courant appeared,[9] followed by the Scots Postman in 1714 and The Freeholder and the Weekly Packet in 1716.[10] All of/

of these newspapers, however, appear to have had a brief existence, and it was not until the establishment of the tri-weekly Edinburgh Evening Courant, in 1718, that the newspaper press in Edinburgh began to acquire some stability. The Courant was subsequently joined by the Caledonian Mercury, in 1720, also a tri-weekly, and these two papers, supplemented by the bi-weekly Edinburgh Advertiser, in 1764, constituted the staple of the Edinburgh newspaper press during the remainder of the century.[10] By the 1780s the Caledonian Mercury and the Edinburgh Evening Courant had become virtually indistinguishable in appearance and layout. Each consisted of a single sheet folded double to make four pages. Approximately half the space was taken up with advertisements: property for sale, shopkeepers wares, public notices and so on. The rest was divided up between a 'London' section, which consisted of news culled from the leading London papers, and an 'Edinburgh' section, in which most of the specifically Scottish or Edinburgh news could be found. The Edinburgh Advertiser, although identical to the Courant and Mercury in its subject matter, was somewhat different in appearance. Despite its title, the Advertiser did not contain significantly more advertisements than its two rivals. Its chief distinguishing feature, apart from the fact that it appeared only twice rather than thrice a week, was that it consisted of two folded sheets making eight pages, as opposed to the one sheet of its rivals.

G.A.Cranfield, in his work on English provincial newspapers during the earlier eighteenth century, has noted that the provincial press was very dependent on the London newspapers for its material.[11] There is no doubt that the Edinburgh newspapers owed a similar debt to the London press. The 'London' section of the Courant, Mercury and Advertiser was taken up wholly with reprints of articles which had already appeared in the London press. Often the London paper in question was specifically mentioned. In the Caledonian Mercury of 10 May 1780, for instance, one section was headed, 'From the London Gazette, May 6', and another, simply, 'From the London papers'. Even the 'Edinburgh' section was often filled with material obviously taken from London newspapers. In the same edition/

edition of the Mercury, a large part of the 'Edinburgh' section was taken up with an account of an Indian ruler. This dependence meant that different Edinburgh newspapers often carried the same story word for word. On January 27 1789 the Edinburgh Advertiser printed exactly the same comments on a letter from the Prince of Wales as appeared in the Caledonian Mercury two days later. In part this dependence on the London newspapers related to inadequacies in the Edinburgh newspapers themselves. There is nothing to suggest that any of the Edinburgh newspapers had an independent news reporting capability which extended far beyond the bounds of the city. Like the English provincial press the Edinburgh newspapers were dependent on external sources for the bulk of their non-local material. This would have been of little consequence had the Edinburgh newspapers reported merely Edinburgh news. Whilst all the city newspapers carried items directly related to Edinburgh itself, however, this constituted only a small part of their material as a whole. There is little information to suggest how great a circulation the London newspapers themselves had in Edinburgh, but it would appear that the Edinburgh newspapers saw the formula for success as being a wide coverage of general news, culled from the London newspapers, plus a limited number of local items. This would suggest, firstly, that neither the Caledonian Mercury, the Edinburgh Evening Courant, or the Edinburgh Advertiser would have been so successful had they carried only local news and, secondly, that a significant proportion of the newspaper-reading public in Edinburgh preferred to read a digest of general material taken from a range of London newspapers, rather than the London newspapers themselves. The Edinburgh newspapers were more than simply purveyors of local news, supplementing an outside press. They aimed to provide a wide coverage and satisfy a broad range of interests.

Cranfield suggests that 'blood and sex' were the staples of the English provincial press in the period 1700-1760.[12] There is no doubt that wars and bloodshed, at least, continued to be an important source of material for the Edinburgh newspapers in the late eighteenth century. Items of this sort which related to exotic locations, or which fuelled xenophobic prejudices/

prejudices of the time, were particularly popular. In its edition of 12 January 1788, for instance, the Edinburgh Advertiser carried an article on disorders perpetrated by Turkish troops. After describing a massacre of Christians in Belgrade, the Advertiser went on to relate the carnage which took place in a garrison town in Moldavia. It concluded:

> The garrison, which was composed of 2500 Janissaries and 2000 Spanish, were reinforced on the nineteenth by 8000 Turks. Between these troops a dissension broke out, which has occasioned the most terrible outrages and disorders. On the night of the 23rd December, they fell upon each other, and then set fire to the town, after having plundered all the Greek merchants, violated their wives, and carried off their children. Fortunately the fire consumed no more than forty houses; but the streets are filled with dead bodies.

The American War of Independence provided a gold-mine of material concerning battles and bloodshed. It also offered an opportunity to appeal to the patriotism of the public. As the war gathered momentum, the Edinburgh newspapers carried an increasing number of items extolling the bravery of British troops and slighting the capability of the Americans.[13] There were accounts of battles, sieges and mutinies in the enemy camp and despatches from the front became a regular feature.[14] The final defeat of the British put an end to these stirring accounts, but the Edinburgh newspapers continued to find blood and gore in their American despatches by painting a dismal picture of the fledgling republic. During 1785 the Edinburgh Advertiser carried a series of articles detailing the problems in America.

> The American provinces are divided amongst themselves in such a way, that the authority of Congress is without avail, in the midst of disorders... The north part of the republic wants to crush the south. Bands of robbers infest the counties, though Congress has ordered military execution of those who are taken. Three bankruptcies have been declared at Philadelphia, which will probably occasion others in Europe.[15]

As to the other staple of the English provincial press (according to Cranfield), there appears to be relatively little material in late eighteenth-century Edinburgh newspapers which could be labelled 'sex'. With a few exceptions the Edinburgh newspaper press seems to have demonstrated a sense of propriety which is in contrast to the newspapers cited by Cranfield.[16] Occasionally, somewhat risque stories appeared. On 12 February 1781, in the Caledonian Mercury, a 'private letter from Paris' hinted at Louis XVI's impotence. In January 1783 the same paper carried an item on the misdeeds of the Prince of Wales.

> The gallantries of a certain heir-apparent are likely to make some noise in polite circles. On Thursday last, he eloped with the wife of a certain Knight, a member of the Lower House, and has locked her up somewhere, in so snug a manner, for his private use, that all enquiry to find her out has hitherto proved in vain.[17]

None the less, this article appears to be exceptional and such material does not seem to have been the object of 'perennial interest' to the extent that Cranfield has suggested. This is perhaps to some extent due to the fact that Cranfield's study focusses mainly on the first half of the eighteenth century. It may well be that during this period Edinburgh newspapers cribbed the London press in this respect just as closely as they did in every other. By the second half of the eighteenth century, however, the so-called 'evangelical revival' was beginning to take hold in Edinburgh, as throughout Britain as a whole. This may have made the 'respectable' classes increasingly conscious of immoral behaviour and articles such as that described above, concerning the Prince of Wales, were no doubt included so that the public could look on with disgust and disapproval at examples of reprehensible behaviour. At the same time the Edinburgh newspapers probably became more bashful about describing 'the sinful doings of high society'[18] in as forthright a manner as Cranfield indicates in his study of the English press during the first half of the century. As we shall see, many of the ideas associated with this movement were reflected in the contents of the press itself and it is perhaps/

perhaps fair to say that the relative absence of any risque material in the Edinburgh newspapers of the late eighteenth century is simply a reflection of changing tastes among the newspaper-reading public.

It would be misleading, however, to imply that the Edinburgh newspapers shied away from sensational or bizarre material. As we have already seen, the press was fascinated by accounts of battles, sieges and carnage, and this hankering after bloodshed and violence was reflected in many stories and anecdotes. In its edition of 25 January 1785 the Edinburgh Advertiser described to its readers the outrages committed by a mad dog in London. On 28 January the same paper related a 'melancholy circumstance' in which a North Wales gentleman murdered his wife and then committed suicide, leaving a letter blaming a curse put upon him by a former fiancee for his behaviour. Not surprisingly, murder trials were a particular favourite. On 19 April 1781 the Caledonian Mercury described the trial of John Donellan, a celebrated case at the time, in which Donellan was accused of poisoning a relative to gain control of his estate. In April 1782 the Mercury decribed a case brought before the Devonshire Assizes:

> A butcher, of the name of Trathing, five or six years ago, got into a farmer's house in the neighbourhood of Great Torrington, when all the family were gone to market, except a servant girl; he knocked down the girl with a hammer, and leaving her for dead, proceeded to search the drawers for what money he could find; on coming out of the house, and percieving signs of life in the young woman, he cut her throat in a most horrid manner....'[19]

Stories about strange robberies[20] and a devastating fire,[21] which appeared in the Advertiser in September and October 1793, are typical of the sort of short stories designed to titillate the newspaper reading public. In its 7 January 1788 edition, the Caledonian Mercury included an article on a performing parrot which could talk and beat time with its wings as it sang. It would be unfair to suggest, however, that the Edinburgh/

Edinburgh newspapers were merely purveyors of sensationalism, although there is no doubt that they were keen to emphasise the element of melodrama in their material. Interest in the unknown and unexplained could be directed in a more laudable direction. The newspapers fulfilled an educational role. Accounts of the customs and lifestyle of foreign peoples were common. Between May and August 1783, for instance, the Caledonian Mercury printed a long series of 'Select Letters on the Character and Manners of the Portugese'.[22] On 1 September 1783 the same paper printed a 'work, elegantly written, and replete with agreeable information', on the lifestyle of an order of monks in Burgundy. In March 1793 the Edinburgh Advertiser noted the arrival of Captain Bligh and the HMS Providence at St Vincent. The article described the tropical fruits which the expedition had discovered and related Bligh's encounters with the native populations of New Holland and New Guinea.[23]

The newspapers also tried, in half-hearted fashion, to appear as arbiters of taste. There was occasionally poetry. During the first half of 1785, the Edinburgh Advertiser printed an 'Ode to the New Year', by William Whitehead, the Poet Laureate, an 'Ode on the King's Birthday' and an 'Ode to Winter', by Samuel Johnson. On 3 January 1785 the Caledonian Mercury carried a critique of 'Joseph', a French poem. Such items were relatively rare, however. No attention appears to have been given to the great intellectual figures of the age and the newspaper press could hardly be considered to be in the van of the Scottish Enlightenment.

Politics and public affairs were the real bread-and-butter of the Edinburgh newspaper press. Or as the Scots Magazine put it in 1780, in an article on the contents of a newspaper, politics were 'the Roast Beef of the times, and a dish equally sumptuous to the King and the Cobbler'. There is little doubt about the priority which was given to political news. In October 1782 one correspondent wrote to the Caledonian Mercury enclosing an account 'of some singular customs and usages among the Gentoos and other Eastern nations', expressing the hope that it 'may afford/

afford some amusement to your readers during the present dearth of political news'.[24] During the sittings of Parliament, Commons and Lords debates were printed at length. Aside from advertisements, virtually the whole of the Edinburgh Advertiser of 1 February 1785 was taken up with the King's Speech to Parliament and the ensuing debates. On 10 May 1781 the Caledonian Mercury printed a long report on the debates in Parliament for and against concluding a peace with the Americans. On 15 February 1785 the Advertiser described debates on the Scotch distillery bill and the Scotch judges bill. In 1785 the Edinburgh Advertiser reported, amongst other matters, the budget debates, India business debates, the report from the Commissioners of Public Accounts and the reception by the Commons of a petition from the Calico manufacturers of the County Palatine of Lancaster.[25] Inevitably, these reports were taken from the leading metropolitan papers. In fact, no Scottish newspaper was given access to the press gallery in Parliament until 1881.[26]

No public business appears to have been considered too insignificant to merit mention in the Edinburgh newspaper columns. Not surprisingly, however, it was the most contentious debates, and those involving the most eminent personalities, which excited the greatest interest. In 1784 Charles James Fox's return as MP for Westminster was challenged by his defeated Pittite opponent, as being fraudulent. The ensuing Commons debates on the subject were printed at length by the Edinburgh papers.[27] The press was particularly keen to give its readers a sense of the drama which invested the great affairs of state. The impeachment of Warren Hastings was an emotive occurrence in its own right, but the press made special efforts to emphasise the mixture of pomp and tension which characterised the trial. On 21 February 1788 the Edinburgh Evening Courant gave a long account of Edmund Burke's speech for the prosecution on the trial's third day.

> His speech was grave and temperate: but it was pathetic and moving. He did not indulge himself in those excursions of fancy, to which, when in a playful mood, he gives so much variety and beauty; nor did he suffer his indignation of the crimes with which he charged the prisoner/

prisoner, to influence his mind beyond the tenor of dignified accusation. Every expression and sentiment were appropriate; and though in the progress he led the ignorant to the most familiar acquintance with the origin of the crimes and evils of India, he astonished the most knowing, with the new aspect which he gave to the whole....[28]

Similarly, when Parliament assembled in the summer of 1782 to hear of the fall of the late Marquess of Rockingham's ministry, the Caledonian Mercury attempted to capture the mood of trepidation in the Commons:

> Yesterday, in consequence of the change of ministry, the House of Commons was uncommonly crowded, not less than three hundred and fifty members having taken their seats at three o'clock. The strangers also flocked down in equal numbers, and before half an hour after two, the gallery was quite full. From this appearance every one was filled with expectation, which seemed in a most extaordinary manner to agitate every one present.[29]

The newspaper press also liked to give the impression that it had its finger on the pulse of the political establishment and that its readers were being made privy to information which emanated from those who moved in the highest political circles. Reports frequently began with phrases like, 'It is confidently expected in ministerial circles', and papers often suggested that their prognostications were on the authority of 'a shrewd politician'. On 20 February 1782 the Caledonian Mercury carried a report about the beleaguered First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Sandwich:

> It is said with some confidence at Court that Lord Sandwich would certainly resign his seat at the Admiralty, as soon as the intended enquiry into his conduct has blown over. Lord Howe is much talked of as his successor; and if we may judge from the moderation with which his lordship decanted on the conduct of the Admiralty board, on the opening of the Navy estimates, this charge does not appear very unlikely.

The newpapers also liked to suggest their intimate connection with the political establishment by passing on anecdotes about public figures which could only be supposed to issue from individuals who moved among the elite. On 6 May 1785 the Edinburgh Advertiser reported a royal levee at which Charles Fox, at that time in opposition to the government, was much perturbed at being snubbed by the King. According to the Advertiser Fox asked Lord Mansfield to explain the King's behaviour, and,

> My good friend (Lord Mansefield answered, with a smile), if you expect the King shall make long speeches to you in the Drawing Room, you must make short speeches in St.Stephen's Chapel [the House of Commons].

It was not only public affairs in Britain which excited the interest of the press. As we have seen, affairs in America continued to be reported even after the thirteen colonies had secured their independence. The 'Foreign Mails' were a common feature in the Edinburgh newspapers and the activities of the great Continental powers were avidly followed. Naturally, there was particular interest in the relations foreign powers had with Great Britain herself. On 12 February 1781 the Caledonian Mercury described Britain's position in Europe with the same suggestion of 'inside information' as characterised many of its reports of public affairs in Britain:

> It is confidently said, should the Empress of Russia take an active part against Britain, the Grand Signior is determined to make a diversion in our favour. We are assured, that in a private party lately at the Mufti's, his Sublime Hignness declared his disapprobation of the conduct of the Dutch; and swore by his bird (the most sacred oath a Mussalman can take), that if the Emperor attempts to assist that faithless people, he will immediately attack her in person....

The internal affairs of foreign states were speculated upon with almost the same fascination which was shown toward politics in Britain itself. On 20 February 1782, for instance, the Caledonian Mercury reported an insurrection in Madrid and printed an article on Joseph II's plans for the reform of religious orders in the Habsburg lands.

The Edinburgh papers also frequently printed essays on topical public issues of the day. In 1785, a year when the troubled state of Ireland continued to make it a popular source of material for the press, the Edinburgh Advertiser printed a considerable number of pieces on Irish affairs.[30] These included 'The system of trade with Ireland explained', Lord Sheffield's 'Observations on the manufactures, trade and present state of Ireland' and the Dean of Gloucester's 'Reflections on the present matter in dispute between Great Britain and Ireland'. During the same year it also printed 'Extracts from Dr.Tower's pamphlet on the rights and duty of juries' and John Sinclair's 'History of the public revenue of the British Empire'. The newspaper reading public was considered to be able to stomach the heavier fare of public affairs as well as the more easily digestible material represented by stirring parliamentary debates, cabinet crises or machinations at foreign courts.

Clearly, it would be somewhat misleading to suggest, as E.H.Cowan has done, that the content of the Scottish press was simply 'news not views'.[31] It is true that there was, as Meikle has put it, 'an absence of systematic comment'.[32] Not until the advent of The Scotsman, in the early nineteenth century, did the 'editorial' become an established feature a leading Scottish newspaper. Nevertheless, the material printed by the late eighteenth century Edinburgh press was replete with commentary. As we have already seen, many political articles took the form of speculation and conjecture. Essays of the sort mentioned above offered ideas as well as facts. In fact, although newspaper proprietors were keen to emphasise that their publications adhered to no party and were (as one conductor of the Edinburgh Evening Courant put it) 'true and impartial',[33] there was certainly no absence of partisan comment. In July/

July 1782 the Caledonian Mercury blamed the problems of the ill-fated Rockingham ministry on the duplicity of the Earl of Shelbourne.

> As soon as the Earl of ----------, by the kind assistance of the Rockingham party, had been exalted into the dignity of one of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, from that moment he concieved the ungenerous design of totally subverting the consequence and independence of his colleaguues, and of degrading them into the pitiful situation of mere nominal, nugatory Ministers, without opinion and without efficency.[34]

In early 1793 the Edinburgh Advertiser printed an article praising Charles Fox, who, unlike many of his erstwhile colleagues in the Whig camp, had refrained from abandoning the opposition to Pitt's ministry. The article warned that, when opposition ceased, ministers would become absolute and 'the liberties of Britain would perish'.[35] The 1790s were, ofcourse, a period of intense political controversy and, as we shall see in a later chapter, the press by no means remained aloof from the debate. None the less, prior to the onset of reaction in the mid-1790s, most proprietors appear to have believed that with a relatively limited readership, compared with London for example, it would be unwise to nail their colours too firmly to any party or ideological mast. As we have seen, however, this is not to say that the press shied away from carrying material of a highly partisan nature. Rather, they tried to illustrate the opinions of a variety of parties. Just as they printed material from a variety of London newspapers, so did they also carry articles representing a range of viewpoints. Each newspaper was a pot-pourri of opinions as well as sources. During the Regency crisis of 1788, for instance, the Edinburgh papers tried to put themselves forward as 'true and impartial' recorders of events. The arguments of both the Prince of Wales' and Pitt's party appeared in all the Edinburgh papers. The Prince's letter to Pitt, of January 1789, appeared in the Mercury, the Advertiser and the Courant, and the different papers summaries of recent events were often identical word for word.[36] None the less, it is possible/

possible to detect in the way in which the papers treated the news, a noticable political bias. In late 1788 the Edinburgh press began giving serious consideration to a mysterious illness which had apparently seized the King. On 23 October the Edinburgh Evening Courant reported that the King was suffering from 'what was thought to be a gout in his stomach'. During the next few weeks speculation mounted about the nature of the King's illness,[37] and by the middle of November it had become clear that the King's malady was more serious than had hitherto been suspected. On 15 November the Courant gave the shocking revelation that a fever had seized the King's brain. 'We candidly confess', ran the article,

> that from the best motives, we have till now with-held from the public the real and alarming state of his malady...great fears are entertained of his future derangement in faculty.

By the end of November the King's capacity to carry out his duties was being brought into question and the Edinburgh papers were already reflecting on what measures might be taken 'for arranging the executive powers of Government' should his illness become long-lasting. None were in any doubt, however, that if the Prince of Wales were given unfettered powers to act in George III's stead, the Prince's personal and political connections would be enough to ensure the dismissal of Pitt and the accession to power of Fox and the Whigs. On 27 November 1788 the Caledonian Mercury made its opinions plain as to what form any changes should take:

> There is not at present a shadow of doubt remaining but that Parliament, on their meeting after the present adjournment, will fins it necessary to proceed to the speediest measures for arranging the executive powers of Government. There is as little, that this can be done constitutionally only by lodging these powers fully, and without encumberance, in the hands of the Prince, in the same manner as the Imperial Crown had devolved to him by another event; more decisive though not less melancholy in its effects.

The Edinburgh Advertiser, however, had other ideas. It indicated the importance 'to the prosperity of the nation' of Pitt's administration remaining in office.[38] Doubtless with this in mind, it viewed the prospect of the Prince securing full powers of regency, with much less enthusiasm. The Advertiser suggested that 'All discussions that have yet taken place on the subject of a Regency are premature...', but nevertheless added, that the Prince's,

> being Heir Apparent, gives him no positive title to the Regency. That point can only be settled by both houses of Parliament. They have always determined what security is required, in what hands the administration of government should be placed, and also on what conditions.

In contrast to both the Advertiser and the Mercury, the Edinburgh Evening Courant tried to refrain from endorsing any contentious opinions. It suggested that Parliament had the ultimate right to dispose of the executive power,[39] but affirmed its intention to steer between the extremes of the contending parties.[40] As speculation mounted that Pitt aimed to ensure not only that the Prince's powers as regent would be strictly limited, but that he would be only one of a council of regency, the tone of the Caledonian Mercury's commentary became increasingly impassioned. It suggested that 'the idea of a joint Regency is the most preposterous that can be formed...',[41] and noted that Queen Charlotte (one of the proposed council) had warned Pitt that she

> would take no part whatever in any political arrangements in the state, more especially such as might be deemed encroachments upon the dignity of the Heir Apparent....[42]

Repeatedly, the Caledonian Mercury ruminated on the Prince's talent and maturity, emphasised his fitness for the duties of kingship, and declared that a limited Regency would be a wholly unjustifiable snub to the/

the heir to the throne.[43]. The Mercury decribed the Prince as 'one of the most enlightened and accomplished men of his age',[44] and noted the the glowing portrayal of him given by the Lord Chancellor, in the Lords debate of 27 December.[45] Not surprisingly, Pitt and his supporters were described in the most insulting terms. The ministers, claimed the Mercury, were more interested in securing 'another quarter's salary', than settling the fate of the nation.[46]

> Mr *Pitt*, notwithstanding the apparent popularity which he possesses, is one of the most miserable politicians who are constrained to substitute artifice in the place of ability. He may impose for a while on the world, but sooner or later, the mystery will be revealed; and nothing will be found to be couched under it, but a thread of pitiful expedients, the ultimate end of which never extends farther than the gratification of his own inordinate ambition.47

In contrast, the Edinburgh Advertiser tried to emphasise the divisions among the opposition. It suggested that the Prince would be happy to accept the regency under any conditions Parliament saw fit to impose, as opposed to Fox, who contended that Parliament had no rights in this matter and that the Prince should be invested with full royal authority, as if he had actually come to the throne. The Advertiser pointed out that the arguments of the Opposition Whigs were strange, coming from a party which had previously been no friend to the power of the Crown.

> The principles of the leaders of opposition when they acted against Lord North, were not only Whiggism, but republican in the highest degree. The person and privileges of the Sovereign were their topics for insult and censure on every debate, and now they pretend to stand up for a hereditary right without Parliament. Such barefaced inconsistency is insulting to the feelings of every man who thinks for himself.[48]

The Edinburgh Evening Courant refrained from strongly worded attacks on either/

either of the parties. None the less, it argued that Pitt had the 'greatest political character ever sustained'[49] and although warm in its praise of the Prince of Wales,[50] it warned of the dangers of investing the full powers of regency solely in his hands:

> all the laws of prudence oppose the precipitate resolution, which would place the reins of government in the hands of a young and inexperienced regent, untried, perhaps,, in the ardous science of politics; and though generous in his nature, not wholy exempted from the suspicion of partialities unfavourable to the successful discharge of office.[51]

Soon, reports of improvement in the health of the King began bringing into doubt the necessity for a regency. Not surprisingly, however, conflicting reports appeared about George III's condition. The Edinburgh Advertiser, with its hostility to the Opposition Whigs and the prospect of a regency, was quick to latch on to any reports of the King's recovery. As early as 30 December 1788 it reported George III 'considerably better' and 'in an improving state'. By 6 January 1789 it could claim that 'The King's state of mind and intellectual faculties are very visibly recruiting every day'. Although the Caledonian Mercury confirmed the reports about the King's improvement, it suggested that it would nevertheless be unwise to abandon the plan for a regency, as a hasty reintroduction to public business might bring about a relapse.[52] It even suggested that the King wished to grant the regency to the Prince of Wales, by royal signet, but the Willises (two physicians, father and son, in whose care the King had been placed) had prevented him from seeing his eldest son.[53] The extent of the King's recovery had bee grossly exaggerated, suggested the Mercury:

> although his Majesty is certainly somewhat better, the malady at present, throwing the partial fondness of loyalty and affection aside, is by no means removed...and the hasty report, therefore, of an actual recovery, we are sorry to say, is both premature and delusive.[54]

As late as 12 March 1789, the Caledonian Mercury carried an article from the Morning Herald, that the King was 'as much deranged as ever', although by the 16th it had to admit that the his health 'cannot be better'. By this time it had become clear that a regency would no longer be necessary, and the whole affair began to recede from public attention. The Edinburgh Advertiser, however, could not resist a final dig at the Whigs. The conduct of the Prince of Wales, it opined, 'must endear him to every Englishman...'. As for Fox,

> All his conduct...on this affair, has given such perfect disgust, that there is not, perhaps, a man in public life in less favour with every party than he is.[54]

The newspapers, then, reported more than 'news not views'. The conduct of the newpapers during the regency crisis shows that they were fully prepared to enter into the hurly-burly of political debate, and that some of the newspaper proprietors appear to have been anything but non-partisan in their views. A very healthy political debate also took place in the correspondence columns of the papers. In the Caledonian Mercury, between 1781 and 1783, there were letters on economical reform,[56] on burgh and parliamentary reform,[57] and on the Scottish county franchise.[58] Clearly, those who read the newspapers were not content to be merely passive spectators of the political process. The newspapers offered a forum for debate, in which lack of wealth, status or political connection, were no bar to participation.

In contrast to the newspapers, the periodical press, as a whole, was more broad in its content. Magazines appear to have compensated for the relative absence of literary material in the newspapers by giving over much more of their space to belles-lettres. The monthly Letters of the Critical club (1738), for instance aimed at 'the reformation of manners',[59] while the first Edinburgh Review (1755-6) aimed to demonstrate/

demonstrate 'the progressive state of learning in this country...'.[60] There were also magazines which catered exclusively for a special subject, such as The Religious Magazine or Christian Intelligencer (1760) and The Farmer's Magazine (1800-25). At the same time, there is no doubt that the magazine press was well aware of the interest in political affairs. Like the newspapers, many magazines printed material from the leading London papers. The introduction to the first edition of the weekly Thistle (1734-6) bemoaned the lack of information regarding the 'state of affairs, both home and abroad...'.

> It is for this reason that a new weekly paper here seems necessary, in which the reader may expect always to find, besides some essay or letter concerning our own affairs, the substance of what is to be found in the best London papers.

The Scots Magazine (1739-1826), the most successful of all the magazines produced in Edinburgh, had regular sections summarising the course of public affairs in Scotland, England, and on the Continent, as well as essays and poetry.

c) The Importance of the Press

The Edinburgh papers apear to have been aimed at a fairly well-to-do audience. The advertisements which predominated in the Edinburgh newspapers seem to have been intended for a largely middling and gentile readership. Advertisements offering dancing tuition, or notices about forthcoming events at the Theatre Royal and property for sale, were not the stuff of plebeian life. Moreover, at a price of 3d, in 1776, papers such as the Caledonian Mercury were an expensive luxury for ordinary people. There is little doubt, however, that groups of people clubbed together to buy newspapers and periodicals, and individual copies probably had a wide circulation. The bookseller, Adam Black, wrote of his father, Charles Black, a mason, that he

> could not afford a paper for himself at 1s. 6d a-week; the *Caledonian Mercury* or *Evening Courant* thrice a week at 6d, or the *Edinburgh Advertiser* twice a-week at 9d. But he joined with three or four friends in getting a paper between them, which was passed from one to the other.[62]

Papers were available at taverns and coffee-houses. An advertisement for the 'Edinburgh Coffeehouse', on North Bridge, in 1788, noted that it kept the 'English Irish and Scottish newspapers'.[63] Organisations such as the Cape Club kept papers for the use of their members.[64] Subscription libraries did exist, and with a minimum subscription of three shillings and sixpence a quarter, the Edinburgh Circulating Library was by no means beyond the pocket of the tradesman and artisan.[65]

There is no doubt that by the later decades of the eighteenth century, the Edinburgh press was becoming increasingly confident about its role in shaping public opinion and influencing those in authority. To a large extent, the 'Edinburgh' section of the newspapers was something of a backwater, in which lists of local births, marriages and deaths, and so forth, had difficulty in competing with the rest of the news. Aside from cases brought before the local and high courts in Edinburgh, or the occasional shipwreck, there was very little which could compare with the excitement of the London material. The Edinburgh section, however, was used by newspaper proprietors to air their views on local affairs. There were injunctions against parents who let their children run in the streets,[66] and encouragements to the public to give aid to the poor. [67] The influence of the increasing moral awareness associated with the so-called 'evangelical revival', was especially noticeable in many of the 'Edinburgh' items. On 5th December 1791, the Caledonian Mercury noted the trial, before the city Magistrates, of an Edinburgh man named Paterson, who was accused of keeping a 'disorderly house'. 'The number of young men', commented the Mercury,

> who have been deluded from the paths of virtue, and initiated into every species and degree of vice, exceeds credibility....To such a pitch/

> pitch was wickedness arrived at in this nursery of iniquity, that a club was held every night, composed of both sexes, where laseivious (sic) conversation, and viscious indulgences, occupied them till morning.

Here, the desire to promote moral rectitude, and the desire to get a good story, went hand-in-hand. In its 27 December 1793 edition, the Edinburgh Advertiser noted the death of David Donald, a smith at Carmyle, who fell into a hole whilst returning home from a public house, and commented:

> What a lamentable example of the hurtful tendency of intoxication and of the tippling houses, with respect to the morals and safety of the people.

On 24 October 1791 the Caledonian Mercury argued that 'drunkenness is the great inlet to every other vice', and urged the Magistrates to be more cautious in giving out licences to tippling houses. As we shall see, the Edinburgh papers became increasingly critical of the Town Council during the latter decades of the eighteenth century. They played an important part in sustaining the momentum of the burgh reform movement, and in promoting the agitation which led to the establishment of the Edinburgh Police Commission, in 1805.

Clearly, the Edinburgh press can be by no means overlooked, in any understanding of the growth of popular consciousness in the city during the eighteenth century. It would be difficult to argue that during this period the press acted as a fully fledged 'fourth estate'. As we have seen, the newspapers tried to advise and arouse their readers. There is no real comparison, however, with the way in which (as will be discussed in chapter 8) The Scotsman attempted systematically to cajole and inspire the public, during the agitation for burgh reform in the early nineteenth century. At the same time, there is no doubt The Edinburgh public appear to have been very well informed on the course of politics in/

in Britain as a whole, in the late eighteenth century. The press gave its readership a greater awareness of public affairs, and the ability to discuss politics with a degree of knowledge and insight. The treatment of politics, by the press, may have been at times shallow and melodramatic Nevertheless, it gave the public the opportunity to scrutinise the conduct of their rulers, and allowed Edinburgh people to relate their local affairs to the wider political world. It is difficult to believe that the disputes which arose over control of the Town Council and the parliamentary representation of the city, could have been discussed in such sophisticated terms, or as closely related to the wider political scene, had it not been for the information and ideas provided by the newspapers and periodicals. Moreover, the correspondence columns of the newspapers acted as a valuable forum for popular debate. It is true that many of Edinburgh's contests and crises gave rise to large out-pourings of pamphlet literature. Pamphleteering demanded resources, however, which were by no means within the reach of every pocket. Writing to a local newspaper may have put the correspondent at the mercy of the whims of its proporietor. Nevertheless, it gave the public at large the ability to reach a wide audience, with its ideas and grievances.

1. Edward Topham, Letters from Edinburgh in 1774 and 1775 (Edinburgh, 1776), Letter XXII.
2. Hugo Arnot, The History of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1779), Book IV, ch. 4, 438.
3. William Creech, Letters Respecting the Trade, Manners etc. of Edinburgh (Edin., 1793), p. 20.
4. Arnot, History of Edinburgh, Book IV, ch. 4, 438.
5. Robert Chambers, Traditions of Edinburgh (Edin., 1868), p. 62.
6. Topham, Letters, Letter XXII.
7. The Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue (Research Publications Limited).
8. J.F.Birrell, An Edinburgh Alphabet (Edinburgh, 1980), pp. 160-1.
9. Ibid.
10. Edinburgh Evening Courant (1718-1886), Caledonian Mercury (1720-1867), Edinburgh Advertiser (1764-1859).
11. G.A.Cranfield, The Development of the Provincial Newspaper 1700-1760 (Oxford, 1962), pp. 28-9.
12. Ibid., ch. 4.
13. Caledonian Mercury (CM), 2 April 1781.
14. CM, 14 April 1781.
15. Edinburgh Advertiser (EA), 4 January 1785, also 24 May 1785 and 10 June 1785.
16. Cranfield, The Provincial Newspaper, p. 65.
17. CM, 12 February 1781.
18. Ibid.
19. CM, 10 April 1787.
20. EA, 27 September 1793, 8 October 1793.
21. EA, 18 October 1793.
22. CM, 26 May, 4 June, 7 June, 16 June, 2 July, 30 July, 13 August 1783.
23. EA, 19 March 1793.
24. CM, 28 Oct. 1782.
25. EA, indexes to 1785.
26. R.H.Cowan, The Newspaper in Scotland, A Study in its First Expansion, 1815-1860 (Glasgow, 1946), p. 24.
27. EA, 15 February 1785.
28. Edinburgh Evening Courant (EEC), 21 February 1788.
29. CM, 10 July 1782.
30. EA, indexes to 1785.
31. Cowan, The Newspaper in Scotland, p. 31.
32. Henry Meikle, Scotland and the French Revolution (Edinburgh, 1912), p. 43.
33. James McEwan to Robert Wodrow, 1719, quoted in W.J.Couper, The Edinburgh Periodical Press (Stirling, 1908), vol.II, 22.
34. CM, 10 July 1782.
35. EA, 4 Feb. 1793.
36. Article predicting Prince's assumption of regency, EA, 28 Nov. 1788, CM, 1 Dec. 1788.
37. EEC, 18 Nov. 1788.
38. EA, 18 November 1788.
39. EEC, 6 December 1788.
40/

40. EEC, 1 Dec. 1788.
41. CM, 29 November 1788.
42. CM, 11 December 1788.
43. CM, 1 December 1788, 3 January 1789.
44. CM 3 January 1789.
45. Ibid.
46. CM, 5 Jan. 1789.
47. Ibid.
48. EA, 23 December 1789.
49. EEC, 29 Jan. 1789.
50. EEC, 15 November 1788.
51. EEC, 8 December 1788.
52. EEC, Feb. 16 1789, Feb. 19 1789.
53. CM, 23 February 1789.
54. CM, 26 February 1789.
55. EA, 3 March 1789.
56. CM, 10 April 1781.
57. CM, 5 April 1783.
58. CM, 14 February 1781.
59. Couper, The Edinburgh Periodical Press, vol.II, 71.
60. Ibid., 91.
61. The Thistle, No.1 (13 Feb. 1734), introduction.
62. Alex. Nicolson (ed.), Memoirs of Adam Black (Edinburgh, 1885), pp. 9-10.
63. CM, 17 November 1788.
64. National Library of Scotland, MS 2004, Sederunt Book of the Knights Companions of the Cape, 1764-1787, January 26 1769.
65. CM, 25 November 1788.
66. CM, 31 March 1783.
67. CM, 11 January 1783.

As we have seen, by the later eighteenth century, 'public opinion' in Edinburgh was becoming an increasingly expressive force. Traditionally, the lower orders had been able to express their outlook through the mechanisms of popular disorder. Now, through the press, through institutions such as the Merchant Company, the Chamber of Commerce, and the many other clubs and societies spawned during the 'age of improvement', various interests within the community were able to publicise their views and put pressure on those in power. None the less, the community of Edinburgh had no collective power or check over any of the formal institutions of government. The focus of authority in Edinburgh centred on the Town Council, an organisation whose responsibilities encroached on virtually every aspect of life within the city, but over which the populace of Edinburgh had no direct control. The Town Council elected the Burgh's representative in Parliament, it exercised both judicial and police functions, it claimed supervisory powers over many other institutions within the city, and it possessed a considerable and lucrative store of patronage. The Council was, in effect, the institutional expression of the city's identity. The wide powers and responsibilities vested in the Council derived from two sources. One was the fact that the institutional power structure of Britain (both Scotland and England) traditionally devolved a wide degree of responsibility to powers within the localities, and away from central authority. Central government remained relatively limited in its scope and resources, and a great many of the duties associated with the government of the community were delegated to local authorities. The other source of the Town Council's power was the fact that it was the corporation of Edinburgh; the former capital of the kingdom of Scotland, and still first city of North Britain. The power and prestige of the Council advanced with that of the city itself. As Edinburgh grew in status and importance during the middle ages, successive rulers tried to curry favour with their principal city by adding to the powers and privileges of its corporation.' In this way, it came to possess an authority in advance of that of any other Scottish burgh. In particular, as the city expanded, the rulers of Scotland sanctioned the absorption by the Town Council of the jurisdiction of a number of surrounding burghs; those of Canongate, Portsburgh, and South Leith. The privileges of the Council/

Council were confirmed in the 'Golden Charter' of 1603, granted by James VI only a few days before he departed for England.[2] The 'palpable excess' of the charter, however, particularly with regard to criminal jurisdiction and mercantile affairs, came to be considered derogatory to the dignity of the Crown, and the Council voluntarily renounced it in 1630. Most of its provisions, however, were renewed by a charter of Charles I in 1636.[3]

Despite the favour it received from the Crown, it would be wrong to suggest that the Council enjoyed an unopposed plenitude of power. By the eighteenth century, there existed within Edinburgh a growing body of opinion which was opposed to the Council's management of affairs. Traditionally, opposition had been focussed on the 'sett' or constitution of the burgh, which on the one hand ensured that power within the Council was heavily weighted in favour of its merchant members, and on the other made certain that those who controlled the Corporation, a virtually self-electing and perpetuating oligarchy, were free from any direct control or check by those 'out-of-doors'.[4] As the eighteenth century progressed, the criticisms of the sett were given added weight by the increasingly unsavoury reputation of Scottish burgh government for corruption and mismanagement.[5] This is not to say that the Town Council of Edinburgh was sunk in torpor and decrepitude. In fact, as we shall see, it took a leading part in many of the developments in the city associated with the 'age of improvement'. Its worsening reputation, however, was reflected in the opposition which arose in the city to some of its plans. Ironically, the ideals and outlook of the Council, with regard to the development of the city, often closely corresponded with those of its critics. The latter may have agreed with the aims of the Council, but they doubted its probity and competence, particularly where large sums of money were involved. Opposition to the Town Council was not simply a matter of 'burgh reform', of attempts to effect alteration in the burgh sett, and secure a more responsible and representative council board. Distrust of the Council led to suspicion of schemes championed by the city fathers, even when they were ostensibly for laudable purposes. The role and activities of the Council, therefore, were closely tied to the vagaries of burgh politics, both within/

within the confines of Council chamber and in the wider community. The aim of this chapter is to examine these connected themes. The first section will look at the constitution and management of the Council, and the increasing opposition to the 'burgh system' which was emerging by the latter part of the eighteenth century. The second section will look at the role and responsibilities of the Council, and how they were influenced by the politics of local government.

The Town Council of Edinburgh was comprised of thirty three members.[6] According to the sett of the burgh, the provisions of which had been fixed in the reign of James VI,[7] sixteen of these had to be tradesmen and the remaining seventeen, merchants. This simple division, however, does not reflect the complexity of social and status divisions within the Council. All the trades councillors were drawn from fourteen tradesmen's Incorporations of the burgh of Edinburgh, and each Incorporation was represented in council by its 'Deacon' or chairman (the two remaining tradesmen in Council, who could be chosen from the membership of any of the Incorporations, were designated simply 'trades councillors'). The councillors drawn from the less wealthy trades, such as the Fleshers, however, often had little in common with their counterparts from the most wealthy Incorporations, such as the Goldsmiths or the Surgeons (the latter of which was granted the title of the Royal College of Surgeons, in 1778). Equally, merchant councillors could be drawn from a fairly broad background. The term 'merchant' was traditionally a very broad one, in Scottish usage,[8] and this was reflected in the diversity of background of the merchant councillors. During this period, wealthy and socially prestigious members of the community became councillors, such as the wine and tea merchant Sir William Fettes (Lord Provost 1800-1802, 1804-1806),[9] or the banker Sir John Marjoribanks (Lord Provost 1813-1815).[10] Men of a more humble background, however, who nevertheless had business, political, or personal connections with those influential in burgh affairs, could find themselves on the Council board. One such individual was Gilbert Meason, the agent of Sir Lawrence Dundas, Member of Parliament for the burgh between 1768 and 1781. In fact, during the Town Council elections of 1780, there/

there were complaints that Sir Lawrence had been packing the Council board with men of a low social background.'[11] Although social status was probably very important in seeking high office within the Council, the merchant councillor ranks appear to have been potentially open to any 'respectable' inhabitant who was not a member of one of the tradesmen's Incorporations or of the legal profession.'[12] Although the social division between merchant and tradesmen councillors was not as stark as the terms might imply, however, the sett still made a clear distinction between the two. Although they possessed a numerical majority of only two, the merchant councillors enjoyed a privileged position vis-a-vis their trades counterparts. All the major offices of the Council, including Lord Provost, Dean of Guild, Treasurer, and the four Baillies (or aldermen) had, under the sett, to be held by merchant councillors. Moreover, although the full, or 'extraordinary' Council, consisted of thirty three, the 'ordinary' Council, which managed most of the day-to-day affairs of the burgh, consisted of only twenty five, effected by the removal of eight of the trades councillors. The disadvantages under which the trades councillors laboured gave them a sense of unity which defied the diversity of their social background, and which, as we shall see, provided a focus to demands for reform of the sett.

Over this body, the community as a whole had no direct control. At the annual Michaelmas Council elections, nineteen of the councillors were directly elected by the outgoing Council itself.'[13]. The remaining fourteen were the Deacons of the Incorporations. They were elected by a process known as 'leeting', which involved both the Council and the respective Incorporations. A 'leet', or list of six names was presented to the Town Council by each of the Incorporations. The Council struck off three names from each of the fourteen leets, and returned them to their respective Incorporations. Each Incorporation then chose a Deacon from among the three remaining names on the list. This gave the Council at least some control over those who were returned. Indeed, the Council could reject a leet altogether. The Incorporations, like the Council itself, were often riven with/

with faction, and on occasion more than one leet was proposed. If the Council did not favour the leet which received majority support within the Incorporation, and which was sent to Council, it was not unknown for it to declare a minority leet the legal return, and make its choice on that basis. In 1798, for instance, two leets were proposed to the Cordiners Incorporation, one by the Deacon, and one by William Ross. The Deacon's leet received majority support, and was returned to Council.[14] The Council, however, rejected this and returned three names from Ross's leet. Ross was subsequently chosen as Deacon.[15] Moreover, by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the membership of a number of the Incorporations was steadily declining. By 1825, the united Incorporations of Mary's Chapel (the Wrights and the Masons), which elected two Deacons, had a combined membership of twelve.[16] This, of course, made it increasingly easy for the Council to exert influence on the electors. In fact, the almost self-electing nature of the Council encouraged the perpetuation of the control of the Corporation by an oligarchy centred among the constitutionally privileged merchant councillors, which could consolidate its position with virtually no threat from the vagaries of a large outside electorate.

It was not only the constitutional formula of the Council which encouraged and buttressed oligarchy. The Town Council possessed considerable patronage, of an estimated value (in 1788) of £20,000 per annum.[17] Official appointments at the disposal of the Council included lucrative and prestigous positions, such as twenty ministries of the Kirk in the city and county of Edinburgh, the office of Principal and eighteen professorships in the University. The Town Council administration itself yielded considerable patronage, including the City Chamberlain, numerous clerks, revenue collectors, and accountants.[18] There were also many minor appointments, such as street cleaners, watchmen and the membership of the 100-strong Edinburgh City Guard. Such patronage could be used to secure or reward the loyalty of members of the Council itself, or of people who could be of use to the Corporation. John Hutton was a merchant councillor in 1788, and a Baillie in 1789 and 1792.[19] He was subsequently appointed Superintendant of Police.[20] There were accusations that even the University professorships were/

were not free from 'jobbing'.[21]. Of course, many appointments only became available very occasionally. In the maintenance of properties under its control, and in public works, the Council was able to distribute patronage. Such work was rarely put out for tender, and much of it went to individuals who were closely involved in Council politics. The statement of trademen's accounts for 1799, for instance, includes many familiar names.[22] Out of a total of £3070, over £605 was owed to the wright Francis Braidwood, who was Deacon of the Wrights 1795-6, Convener of Trades of Edinburgh in 1796, and a trades councillor in 1797. Other creditors included William Ranken (Deacon of the Tailors 1791-2, 1797-8, 1801-2, Convener of Trades 1798, and trades councillor 1799-1800, 1801-2), and William Dalrymple, who was a Baillie in 1794 and 1798, and a close associate of Sir James Stirling,[23] (who was Lord Provost in 1790-1, 1794-5, and 1798-99). It would be difficult to verify any incontrovertible instance of patronage being dispensed in return or expectation of a particular favour. None the less, individuals soliciting patronage never failed to remind the patron of past (or future) services, and it would be hard to deny that such considerations played their part in the distribution of Council patronage. One pamphleteer claimed, with regard to the appointment of a city cleric, that the Deacon of the Tailors was told that if he did not

> vote for a particular Clergyman, on the occasion of a disputed call, he should be excluded from a slice of the Guard clothing, which he accordingly did lose, in consequence of his voting contrary to his instructions.[24]

The 'management' of the Town Council was also aided through the very procedures by which Corporation affairs were conducted. On average, the Council appears to have met once a week.[25] These meetings were very formal affairs. There was relatively little discussion and decisions were usually arrived at 'unanimously'. The full Council meetings probably only rubber-stamped decisions which had been arrived at behind the scenes. Even where there was disagreement, this was expressed with an obviously pre-arranged formality/

formality[26] In fact, much of the real work was probably done in the various committees. These included the committees for the Chamberlain's and tradesmen's accounts, University affairs, and public works.[27] Dividing up business among committees probably made it much easier to exert sufficent influence among the relevant committee members to secure a favourable decision. The most important committee was probably that of the Lord Provost himself. Requests for patronage appear to have been channelled through it,[28] giving the Provost and his cronies a powerful influence over the division of the spoils. It is also likely that a fair degree of the discussion and politicking which preceded a Council decision took place outside the formal apparatus of the Corporation altogether. The banker, George Ramsay, was closely connected with a number of individuals in the Council, though he was never a member himself. Ramsay kept a diary, in which, in a ledger like fashion, he recorded the names of the individuals who attended the various clubs, dinners, and drinking sessions in which he was involved.[29] From these, we can see that members of the Council met regularly on an informal basis. On 3 February 1789, for instance, Ramsay met with six companions at David Ross's tavern. These included James Stirling, William Creech, George Leslie (all councillors), Lord Provost Elder, and William Scott, who had been Treasurer in 1779.[30] Elder, Stirling, Creech, Leslie, and Scott, met again at Morton's tavern (along with Ramsay), on 11 February.[31] On 9 December 1789, the guests at Ramsay's own home included Elder, Stirling, and Creech, plus John Gray, the Town Clerk. Ramsay noted that the discussion turned to the recent conflict between himself and Treasurer of the Navy Henry Dundas, the Burgh's representative in Parliament, and an extremely influential figure in Council affairs.[32] It is also more than probable that conversation at these gatherings included the business of the Council itself. Indeed, it is not unlikely that considerable informal politicking took place during these unofficial contacts between Council members.

The virtually self-electing nature of the Council, therefore, plus the patronage at the corporation's disposal, and the way in which Council business was conducted, all helped to foster and aid rule by oligarchy. Once/

Once it had organised a majority within the Council, a knot of councillors, acting together, had the means at their disposal with which to consolidate their position indefinitely. Oligarchy, or 'party', was indeed a recognised feature of burgh politics in Edinburgh.[33] Such a system was suited to a man of wealth and influence who wished to secure the Council in his interest. In return for looking after the city's affairs in London, and securing places, pensions and other favours for councillors, a patron could go a long way toward securing the support of the dominant influence within the Council. In fact, it was common for the ruling party in the Town Council to align itself with a powerful individual with influence in high places. Following the end of the 1745 uprising, the Council came under the influence of the third Duke of Argyll and his Edinburgh sub-minister, Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun.[34] From 1767, the Council was managed by Lawrence Dundas, who was MP for the burgh between 1768 and 1781. Following his death in 1781 the mantle of Sir Lawrence was assumed by Henry Dundas, a distant relative, though bitter political opponent, of Sir Lawrence and the Council remained under the influence of Henry Dundas's family until the local government reforms of the 1830s. Not surprisingly, town councillors of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have often been portrayed, both at the time and subsequently, as, by and large, little more than self-seeking opportunists, who were prepared to sell their influence to the highest bidder. In 1825 Robert Mudie claimed that,

> whoever chooses to go the expence...can purchase the votes of Scotch provosts, baillies, and counsellors, with as much ease and certainty as he could do the necks of as many geese.[35]

Burgh management, however, as we shall see, was perhaps not as simple or as trouble free as Mudie suggested. In a study of the workings of the political system in Scotland, Ronald Sunter has emphasised the importance of material rewards in securing an interest in a Scottish burgh.

> However distasteful a burgh member of parliament might find his constituents, he had to accustom himself to taking account of the greed/

greed, vanity and ambitions of the councillors of his towns, or he would not long retain the seat. Such a politician, moreover, was required to demonstrate, not only his adherence to the administration which dispensed the things which councillors desired, but that his own services were of a sufficent value to ensure a steady flow of patronage came through his hands; for if any doubt arose on this head, the burgh leaders would begin to seek an alternative representative.[36]

The correspondence between Sir Lawrence Dundas and his agents in Edinburgh suggests both the importance of patronage in securing an interest in city politics, and the constant attention which management of the Council demanded.[37] The correspondence highlights the significance not only of being able to reward one's supporters, but of being seen to be able to do so, by friends and foes alike. As an influential figure in Parliament, and in government circles, Sir Lawrence was expected to be able to reward his supporters. Writing to Sir Lawrence in 1777, Thomas Dundas reminded his father of the promise of a government pension which they had made to a supporter in Edinburgh:

> It is known over the whole Town that he is to have it...and every person supposes the thing to be done. I can assure you that if it is not immediately done, if there is the slightest doubt about it, it will be a matter of the greatest joy to our opponents, and will have the very worst effect, amongst all our friends.[38]

Clearly, material rewards played an important part in securing political allegiance, and supporters of a political allegiance could be fairly candid in admitting as much:

> It was the influence which Sir Lawrence Dundas and his son possessed, it was the respect which they commend, that made me sollicitous of their patronage.[39]

So wrote Hugo Arnot, a long time supporter of Sir Lawrence.

Management of the Town Council became most difficult when more than one interest was competing for the support of the corporation. During the 1770s, Sir Lawrence Dundas and his agents found their position under increasing threat from the interest of Henry Dundas, a competition which culminated in 1780, when the Council elections coincided with a General Election. (This contest will be discussed more fully in the following chapter.) Even when a patron was not under serious threat from a rival interest, however, Council management was by no means untroubled. Councillors expected to be courted by their patron, or his representatives, and any slight could be deeply felt. In the elections of 1803 and 1804, Charles Hope was elected M.P. for the burgh, under the patronage of Henry Dundas. Hope appears to have been less than assiduous in his attention to the Council, and he experienced difficulties when attempting to secure his re-election in 1804. Councillor William Fettes wrote that,

> Capt. Hope... received my accosting him, rather coldly, the first time I met him after the first Election, when I asked him to come and see me in Edinburgh. And although I repeatedly procured seats for lady Ann, he passed with a nod when we met, and never called until a dissolution in Parliament was expected.
>
> I therefore declined to engage my vote. Lord Melville [Henry Dundas] asked what ailed me and his friend Hope. I told him. He wrote afterwards, and I promised to give him my support....[40]

Patronage, supposedly the glue which held an interest together, could all too often be the source of conflict and disruption. Disappointment over the exercise of the Council's patronage lead to a more serious break between Melville and Fettes, in 1807. Fettes made note of a rather frosty encounter with Dundas:

> Lord Melville breakfasted with me. Conversation general, no private politics of any kind. The Council last Wednesday have approved P. Cunningham as conj. Clerk, and no communication made to me on the subject. Resolve to withdraw myself entirely from attendance and all further connection with city politics for ever.[41]

Clearly, material considerations played an important part in determining the loyalties of those involved in Council affairs. Patronage could be a source both of loyalty and division. Naturally, however, councillors would have been unwilling to portray themselves as simply unprincipled opportunists. Their correspondence suggests that they had little difficulty in portraying their motives in terms of less mercenary ideals; such as service to the community. It cannot have been difficult to argue that the allegiance of the Council to a wealthy and powerful individual was of as much benefit to the community as to the councillors themselves. A patron such as Sir Lawrence Dundas was expected to be lavish in his support of worthy causes in the city.[42] Equally, an influential patron could be as important in smoothing the path of the city's interests in London. Councillors were fond of expressing their conduct in terms of loyalty and service. Gilbert Meason, a long time member of the Council, writing to Thomas Dundas (Sir Lawrence's son), in late 1781, concerning the composition of the Council board for the following year, concluded that 'if it was not to serve your family, I wish to have no tenures, as that was my only motive for being in that line.'[43] Equally, as we shall see, Sir Lawrence's friends were quite willing, in 1780, to endorse his claim to be defending the 'purity' of the city, against the flood of corruption being unleashed by the Lord Advocate Henry Dundas.

None the less, as the eighteenth century drew to a close, there was increasing criticism of the way in which the Corporation was run. One pamphleteer pointed out that adherence to principle and to party were not always consistent, 'for if that were the case, a party of robbers, faithful to each other, might often claim the character.'[44] In fact, there was a long history of opposition to the municipal constitution of Edinburgh. Traditionally, this was rooted among the fourteen Incorporations. The perpetual domination of Council affairs by an oligarchy of the merchant councillors had led to deep seated opposition to the sett among the Incorporations (despite the fact that they enjoyed a relatively privileged position vis-a-vis the population as a whole). Trades opposition to the sett of the burgh had, for centuries, periodically erupted in open crisis[45] and/

and it was only too easy for an aspiring politician to take advantage of merchant/trades antagonisms. As a pamphleteer put it in 1746,

> The distinction betwixt these Denominations of Citizens hath been so long kept up, and taken such Rooting, that any designing Person or Party might soon kindle a flame amongst the Citizens by means of it at any Election, and in that Confusion effect their purposes....[46]

Soon after his election as Lord Provost, in 1774, James Stoddart broke with Sir Lawrence Dundas and stood in opposition to him for the parliamentary representation of the burgh. Stoddart received only desultory support, but, following the expiration of his provostship, he secured favour with the Incorporations by supporting an (unsuccessful) application to the Convention of Royal Burghs of Scotland for an alteration of the sett in their favour.[47] During the 1770s and early 1780s, Henry Dundas and his supporters (including Stoddart, who had allied himself with more powerful interests), bitterly challenged Sir Lawrence for control of the Town Council. They sedulously encouraged the Incorporations to believe that Henry Dundas favoured reform of the sett to their advantage.[48]

Although opposition to the municipal constitution of Edinburgh had traditionally focussed on the grievances of the trades, there had been sporadic calls for a more thorough-going measure of reform. In 1746, there was a short-lived campaign to abolish the self-election of the Council and to grant the municipal franchise to the freemen, or 'burgesses', of the city.[49] Burgess-ship, which was secured by purchase of a Burgess Ticket from the Town Council, was a prerequisite of membership of the trades Incorporations and the Merchant Company, as well as possessing social prestige, and a burgess franchise would have extended the vote as far as traders and craftsmen. Interestingly, there were also calls at this time for the parliamentary franchise to be taken away from the Town Council and vested in a wider section of the community.[50] In the early 1760s calls for reform were renewed, when the Council, exercising its ecclesiastical patronage, presented the Rev. John Drysdale to a vacant Edinburgh church.[51]

Drysdale/

Drysdale was identified with the Moderate party in the Church of Scotland, and his presentation aroused considerable anger among the more 'evangelical' members of the Kirk. The result was a vigorous campaign of opposition. A bitter propaganda war took place, with over fifty pamphlets and broadsides.[52] Initially, the crisis focussed on Drysdale himself, and the ecclesiastical issues surrounding the affair. Soon, however, criticism began to be renewed against the Council, which had been persuaded by its patron, the Duke of Argyll, to appoint Drysdale.[53] The Corporation was denounced as a corrupt self-interested oligarchy. There were calls for the abolition of 'leeting' and the vesting in the Incorporations of full control over the choice of their Deacons. It was again also suggested that the burgh's MP should be elected by the Burgesses.[54] With each crisis in municipal politics, demands for reform became more insistent, until in the early 1780s, as we shall see, Edinburgh reformers emerged as the leaders of an organised campaign for burgh and parliamentary reform in Scotland.

The 'Drysdale Bustle', as that affair became known, is an example of how burgh politics and burgh administration overlapped. Administration involved patronage; and patronage was, as we have seen, part of the very stuff of local politics. Similarly, the motivation of those 'out of doors' who favoured burgh reform, was not simply adherence to an abstract ideal; it was closely related to the way in which the Council carried out its duties: the quality of burgh administration was seen as a consequence of the virtues, or lack of them, of the civic constitution. Dissatisfaction with the quality of burgh administration fuelled calls for burgh reform, while at the same time, lack of confidence in the probity or competence of those who made up the Corporation, encouraged distrust of the way in which they discharged its duties.

The civic duties of the Town Council can be grouped in three, admittedly overlapping divisions. Firstly, the Council filled a judicial and police role. Secondly, it exercised certain supervisory and (as we have seen) patronage powers over other public institutions in the city; such as the Church, the University, and the public schools and hospitals. Thirdly, in the/

the broadest sense, the Council concerned itself with the welfare and interests of the city. It lobbied Parliament and the government in favour of those schemes of public utility in the city which it favoured, and, as we shall see, it played an important part in the 'age of improvement' in Edinburgh.

The judicial functions of the Town Council or to be more precise, of those of its members empowered to act as the Magistrates of the burgh, were principally exercised through four courts: the Criminal Court, the Baillie Court, the Ten Merk Court, and the Dean of Guild Court.[55] The first three were presided over by the Lord Provost and the four Baillies, and the latter by the Dean of Guild. There was also a Justice of the Peace Court in Edinburgh, modelled along English lines. Most of the business which could be brought before it, however, was already heard before the longer established burgh courts and in any case, the Lord Provost and Baillies were also empowered as JPs. Theoretically, the criminal jurisdiction of the Magistrates was wide. The 'palpable excess' of the Magistrates' criminal jurisdiction was one of the principal criticisms against James VI's 'Golden Charter' to the city.[56] Legally, the Lord Provost and the Baillies, acting respectively as Sheriff and Sheriff's-Depute of the city of Edinburgh, could try all criminal cases except treason. Under the terms of the Golden Charter, the Magistrates were empowered 'To be judges in all crimes; and to punish offenders or criminals by death, banishment, or other punishment....'[57] Trials for murder were held before the magistrates in 1690, 1691, 1700, 1702, 1732, and 1733. As the eighteenth century progressed, however, the Magistrates' criminal jurisdiction became more circumscribed. The Magistrates had no professional knowledge of the law; indeed, members of the legal profession could not become members of the Town Council (although the Magistrates were empowered to appoint lawyers as their Assessors, or advisers). By the late eighteenth century it was usual for more serious cases to be sent to the High Court of Scotland, or in lesser instances, to the county court of Edinburghshire. The Sheriff of the county, a lawyer by profession, was for that purpose empowered with a jurisdiction which extended to the city itself. The Magistrates criminal jurisdiction/

jurisdiction was generally limited in practice to what one report described, perhaps somewhat inaccurately, as 'petty delinquencies'.[58] The jurisdiction of the Magistrates was in fact still sustained in such matters as theft, house breaking, assault, the publishing of defamatory libels, and *crimen violati sepulchri* (the lifting of dead from their graves, or 'Burking', as it has become infamously known).[59] Civil causes, such as debt, sequestration, matters of contract, and so on, were brought before the Baillie Court, and the Ten Merk Court, both of which met weekly. Matters involving the evasion of the city taxes were usually brought before these courts. The Ten Merk Court dealt with 'very trifling' cases, and had been instituted so that justice should be easily available to the poor, and in cases of little moment. The cost of bringing an action was sixpence,[60] and it was so called because ten merks, or 11s 1d, was the highest sum for which any action could be brought. Under the provisions of a statute of George III's reign, this amount was increased to £3 6s 8d.[61] Nonetheless, there is no doubt that there was criticism of the way in which these 'amateur' judges dispensed their duties. Actions were on occasion brought against the Procurator Fiscal (or public prosecutor) of the city, and even the Magistrates themselves, for unwarranted exercise of their authority.[62] One pamphleteer complained that in lesser cases, the accused was often brought before the court and convicted, without any regular procedure and with no opportunity given to say anything in his own defence.[63]

The other civil court was that of the Dean of Guild. Originally, the Dean of Guild Court was authorised to deal with all disputes between merchants. By the late eighteenth century, however, its sole purpose was the regulation of buildings in the city. The business of the Dean of Guild and his court was to see that building within the burgh was carried on according to law; to see that encroachments were not made on public streets; to judge between disputing proprietors as to the limits of their respective properties; to ensure that all buildings were kept in a safe state, and so on.[64] 'In this respect,' wrote one commentator,

> it is a court of great utility, especially in Edinburgh, where the vast height/

> height of the houses, and their being very much crowded upon each other, makes an institution of this sort peculiarly necessary.[64]

This comment was made at a time when the New Town of Edinburgh was in only the early stages of its development. There are grounds to suggest that toward the end of the eighteenth century, as the middle and upper strata (including many of the councillors themselves) began to move away from the crowded tenements of the Old Town, the Dean of Guild and his court became increasingly uninterested in the older parts of the burgh.[65] It is certainly true that during this period the Old Town was allowed to begin its steady decay into ruin and slum.

None the less, it is clear that despite the slight diminution of their criminal jurisdiction, the Magistrates still possessed a considerable judicial authority. In fact, it was probably through this aspect of its duties that the Town Council, or rather those of its members who were empowered as the Magistrates of the burgh, made the greatest impression on the consciousness of the public at large. In the Edinburgh press it was common to use the term 'Magistrates' when referring to the Town Council as a whole, as well as to the Magistrates proper. During the latter part of the eighteenth century, changing needs and values, and changing conceptions as to the role of government, began to have a noticeable effect on the duties of the burgh Magistrates. The maintenance of order and the activities of the Town Guard, for instance, became a subject of increasing debate, as will be seen in the chapter on the emergence of the Edinburgh Police Commission. Changing values also had a perceptible effect on the Council's duties with regard to public morality and the regulation of the economy.

The Town Council of Edinburgh had long watched over the morality of the citizens of Edinburgh. In 1566, for instance, it had issued an edict against 'the vyces of nicht walking, drinking, harletry and dissolut living',[67] and in 1587 a proclamation of the Council promised the expulsion of, 'all menstrallis, pyperis, fidleris, commmon sangsteris, and specially of/

of badrie and filthy songs'.[69] Arrests for Sabbath-breaking, street-walking, and so on, were a traditional (if largely unsuccessful) occupation of the Magistrates. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, however, changing moral attitudes gave a heightened significance to this role. During this period Britain experienced what has often been described as the 'evangelical revival'. This was characterised by a renewed religious fervour and enthusiasm, and the desire to effect moral regeneration throughout all ranks of society. The evangelical revival, and the rise of 'Victorianism', as some historians have called it (somewhat misleadingly, as it was well in evidence long before Victoria's reign),[69a] are most closely associated with the growing middle classes, and their attempts to impose a more puritan form of morality and religious observance on society as a whole. It was on the poorer members of society, however, that the evangelicals concentrated their enthusiasm.[70] It may be that the essential social deference of its predominantly middle-class background, and its political conservatism, deflected the movement away from too severe a criticism of the way of life of the upper classes. In the press, as we have seen, there were frequent demands for action against prostitution, gambling, and public begging (which was associated with sloth and moral laxity). To these the Town Council responded with vigour, and a heightened application of its traditional role. Following a Royal Proclamation of George III for the encouragement of piety and virtue, the Council, in February 1788, issued an Act for Preventing Vice and Immorality. It noted that,

> many Complaints are made of gross abuse of the Lord's Day within this City and its neighbourhood, particularly that many Coffee Houses, Taverns, and Ale Houses are kept open and recieve Company upon that day during the time of Divine Service, that houses of Bad form are open upon that day, and through the whole week prostitutes infest the street during the nights.[72]

The proclamation also complained of cattle being driven through the streets and shopkeepers carrying on business, during the Sabbath. The Council warned/

warned that all found committing such offences would be brought before the Magistrates and, 'dealt with according to law'. Drunkenness, prostitution, and public begging were long established and well attested aspects of Edinburgh society. A literal interpretation of this Act would have probably brought the work of the burgh courts to a halt, and the Council appears to have fulfilled its duties by periodically making an example of individuals guilty of such crimes. In September 1795 the Caledonian Mercury noted that on the previous Thursday, by order of the Magistrates, every prostitute who was found on the streets had been arrested. On the following day they were brought before the Magistrates and delivered a stern lecture on the evils of their trade. Some were committed to the city bridewell, others were dismissed on promising to find work on the harvest.[73] Following a petition from shopkeepers in the vicinity of the Tron Church, thirty nine prostitutes were arrested and confined in the city lock-up.[74] On 9 December 1790, the Mercury noted:

> we are glad to hear that the nuisance of low Billiard Tables, so long complained of, is now removed. The whole offenders were this day brought before the Magistrates and fined, and the Billiard Tables ordered to be broken down.

In July 1788, the Town Council sent Archibald Martin to the Tolbooth, for 'publishing and vending obscene papers within this city and liberties.'[75] Despite, however, the degree of public support which appeared to exist for such actions, the Council nevertheless found that success was by no means assured. Street walking, begging, and other such regrettable practices remained a feature of Edinburgh society and were to cause a great deal of concern to the Edinburgh Police Commission during the early nineteenth century. The Council found that the means at its disposal were far from adequate. One particular thorn in the flesh was Dr. James Graham, a quack medic and itinerant preacher. Graham, 'President of the Council of Health; sole Proprietor, and Principal Director of the Temple of Health', in London,[76] believed that the vices and evils of humanity, on which he apparently dealt at length, were a result of the consumption of animal flesh/

flesh. The encouragement of a vegetarian diet would help improve the moral tone of society.[77] When Graham began lecturing in Edinburgh, in 1783, the Town Council was thoroughly alarmed and had him imprisoned in the city Tolbooth[78]. Graham, however, appeared to relish the publicity it gave him. He preached to the Tolbooth prisoners[79] and published a pamphlet against the Magistrates, claiming to be the victim of 'Proceedings, Persecutions, and Imprisonment, more cruel and more shocking to the laws both of God and man, than any of those on record of the Portugese Inquisitions.'[80] The affair even reached the high courts, where Graham attempted, without success, to have a bill of suspension and liberation passed in his favour.[81] Eventually, Graham was fined by the Magistrates, for his 'scandalous and malicious libel' against them, and released.[82] Apparently emboldened by his release, Graham published his sermon to the Tolbooth prisoners and resumed his lectures, inserting a lengthy justification of himself in the Edinburgh newpapers.[83] He was still lecturing in the city, as late as November 1784.[84] Indeed the irrepressible Graham re-appeared in Edinburgh in 1794, 'fresh from Lisbon, Paris and London', and advertised his services as a physician.[85] Clearly, the Town Council's attempts to silence Graham were of no avail; indeed the notoriety which the affair gave Graham, probably only swelled his audiences. The Edinburgh press may have supported the moralistic activities of the Town Council. The Graham affair, however, showed that the press could also be profitably exploited by an individual bent on publicity. The Council had no means of preventing Graham from advertising in the press, nor of the newspapers reporting his activities, The newsworthiness of Dr. Graham certainly appears to have over-ridden the apparent distaste with which the press viewed his activities.

Although there were some areas in which the Council was keen to assert and reinforce its traditional role, such as in watching over the morals of the community, changing ideals also acted to curb the activities of the Magistrates, in other areas. Traditionally, the Town Council had played an important role in the regulation of the local economy; fixing and enforcing wages and conditions among the trades, guarding the consumer against the sale/

sale of faulty merchandise, or enforcing the 'assize of bread' in times of scarcity. In 1760, for instance, the Magistrates fixed the wages of journeymen tailors at a maximum not exceeding one shilling per day; promising that any journeymen tailor who refused to work for such a sum would be punished in the burgh courts.[96] In 1786, however, it was the master tailors who were fined for provoking a 'combination' among the journeymen by paying some men above the set rates.[97] There was also a long tradition of Council regulation of the market place. The records of the Town Council's Superintendant of Police during the 1790s suggest that a primary object of his duties was the supervision of the city's market sellers.[98] He regularly toured the markets and traders were often brought before the Magistrates for their misdemeanours. As a result of one of those tours, ninety-three individuals were fined for forestalling butter.[99] Following a series of similar prosecutions, in 1787 the Caledonian Mercury noted:

> The poor, and middling class of people, have experienced much distress for a long time past, by the exhorbitant prices to which almost every necessary of life has been advanced in our public markets. These advances, there is reason to believe, too often happen from the insatiable thirst of grain with which the dealers in such commodities are actuated. There is great reason to be thankful, that, on the contrary, everything is to be had in abundance. It must therefore afford some pleasure to observe a prosecution instituted at the suit of the Procurator Fiscal, before the Magistrates, against the whole Incorporation of Fleshers...for forestalling the markets.[100]

By the end of the century, however, this tradition of municipal intervention and regulation was being undermined by the free trade ideas of political economists such as Adam Smith, one of the leading thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the principles of Smith (or at least elements of them) were being used by the British ruling classes to justify what one historian has described as 'the abdication on the part of the governors'.[101] Laissez faire, or 'free market' ideas were being used, as we have already seen, to attack the exclusivist and/

and regulatory traditions of the Incorporations as an unhealthy restraint on trade. They were also used to explain the steady dismantling of the machinery of paternal protection of the lower orders, which had been a tradition of government in Britain.[92] One of the key elements in this system was the assize of bread. It seems clear that the Council was still enforcing an assize on bread, as late as 1787.[93] By 1800, it had been abandoned, though not without arousing disquiet among some sections of Edinburgh society who were used to an older mercantalist tradition of government; especially in such times of scarcity and price fluctuation as characterised the period of the French wars. One pamphleteer, warned that to abandon such a power, at such a time, was an decision of little 'prudence or deliberation'.

> To concede...to the bakers of Edinburgh, at a period so unprecedented for dearth (though I trust not so for scarcity as imagined) as the present, a privilege they have been so long, and so anxiously wishing for, is arguing a degree of confidence in the bakers of Edinburgh, which I confess, I for one, would be unwilling to grant them; and cannot see is defensible upon any ground of reason or expediency.[94]

The Town Council may have been ready to re-affirm its traditional role as a guardian of the morals of the community, but it was becoming increasingly circumscribed in its attitude to guarding the community against the forces of the market place.

Even when the outlook and ideals of the Council appeared to be in accord with those of the community, however, support was not always secure. As we have seen, the concept of 'improvement' was one which had a tremendous impact on society in Edinburgh during the late eighteenth and early ninetenth centuries. The citizens of Edinburgh appear to have taken a considerable pride in the physical improvements which took place in the city during this period; most notably the growth of the spacious and elegant New Town, which arose in stark contrast to the crowded tenements of the older parts of the burgh.[95] The Town Council of Edinburgh was in full agreement/

agreement with these sentiments. As the New Town began to take shape, the Council set out rigid building regulations to ensure that the quality of construction kept to the spirit of the original vision.[96] The Proposals for carrying on certain Public Works in the City of Edinburgh of 1752, in many ways the blue-print for future improvements in the city, appears to have been inspired by Lord Provost George Drummond.[97] Drummond, probably Edinburgh's greatest Lord Provost, was chief magistrate of Edinburgh 1725-7, 1746-8, 1750-2, 1776-8, and 1762-4. He set a pattern for the city fathers which was followed by men such as Lord Provost James Hunter-Blair (1784-6), under whose stewardship the South Bridge began to take shape.[98] In an article of 1790, the Caledonian Mercury paid tribute to the improvements which had taken place in the city in the preceding twenty or so years. 'This alteration for the better', concluded the article,

> must in candour be in a great measure ascribed to the public spirit and active exertions of our Magistracy, and shows that the government of the city has been vested in Gentlemen worthy of the charge.[99]

Drummond was described as the 'Father of the People of Edinburgh', praised for his role in projecting the New Town, and portrayed as the chief promoter of both the Royal Exchange and the Royal Infirmary. Lord Provost David Steuart (1780-2) was singled out for his patronage of the new city Bridewell, and of St. Andrews church. Provost John Grieve (1782-4, 1786-8) was praised for promoting the New Bridge in Leith, while the most recent Provost, Thomas Elder (1788-90), was thanked for his part in the improvements to the High School of Edinburgh, and the projection of the New College buildings of the University.[100] Such praise, however, was by no means assured, and the ambitious ideas of the Council did not always meet with the wholehearted approval of the community. The worsening reputation of burgh administration began to have a perceptible effect on public attitudes to the plans of the Magistracy. In late 1786, the Council gave leave of its intention to bring in a parliamentary bill for the improvement of the docks and harbour of Leith. At first, the Council's plans, which included/

included the borrowing of £25,000, appear to have met with considerable approval in the city. The Magistrates were praised for their far-sightedness in promoting the improvement of trade and commerce, and for the degree to which they had consulted organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce.[101] As the provisions of the bill became more fully known, however, particularly with regard to the raising of extra revenues, this enthusiasm began to turn to distrust and hostility. One contributor to the letter columns of the Edinburgh press, while paying tribute to past improvements to the city by the Council, added a word of warning:

> While, however, we are thankful for past benefits, we ought to be on our guard, that under the plausible and specious appearance of beautifying the city, these Gentlemen do not assume to themselves too great and extensive a power, not only over the property of some individuals, but over the purses of the community. It should be remembered that our Magistrates are not elected by us, and that they are not accountable to us for their actions....In such circumstances, without throwing any reflection on the characters of those who at present fill that office, we ought to beware how far we increase the power, or enlarge the revenue intrusted to the management of persons thus without controul.[102]

Another commentator noted that the bill would allow the Council to buy up considerable tracts of land cheaply, which being adjacent to the proposed dock enlargements, could be afterwards sold to merchants and manufacturers at vastly inflated prices.[103] In May 1787, the Council agreed to withdraw the bill.[104] This would not be the last time that doubts as to the propriety of the Council would encourage distrust of schemes it promoted.

The later eighteenth century, as we have seen, was a period which offered many challenges to local goverment. New ideas, as well as the force of social and economic change itself, were demanding a fresh response from civic rulers in Edinburgh, as elsewhere. The concept of 'improvement', in particular, offered tremendous scope for the participation of the Town Council in the process of urban development. Increasingly, however, the ability of the Council to respond to this challenge was compromised by the gulf/

gulf of distrust which was beginning to emerge between the community and its city fathers. The public response to the Magistrates plans for the improvement of Leith harbour was a demonstration of the extent to which the Council could be ham-strung by its reputation, even when the ostensible purpose of its plans had wide support in the city. This suspicion became more deep-rooted as time passed. It played a significant part in the setting up, in 1805, of a separate Police Commission to deal with the problem of order, and in the efforts of the Church in Edinburgh and the University to lessen Council influence over their affairs, during the early nineteenth century.'[95] The roots of this distrust lay in the way in which the corporation was run. Party, oligarchy, and 'management', were traditional characteristics of burgh politics in Edinburgh. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, however, an increasingly articulate and well informed public was beginning to look with a more jaundiced eye at the conduct and reputation of the Council. Political crises such as the 'Drysdale Bustle'of the 1760s, helped to focus attention on the machinery of politics in the city, and emphasise how little control the community had over the activities of the corporation. Increasingly, disillusioned citizens, taking their cue from ideas thrown up by the old merchant/trades conflict, began demanding political reform. As further crises kept the issue in the public eye during the 1770s, demands for change became more urgent. At the centre of this process was the conflict between Sir Lawrence Dundas and Henry Dundas, for control of the Council. The increasingly bitter and public feud between these two antagonists, provided a rich store of evidence for those who condemned corruption and abuse in burgh affairs. This conflict, which culminated in the parliamantary and municipal elections of 1780, became a demonstration of the worst aspects of burgh politics in Edinburgh, and a catalyst to a movement for reform.

1. Municipal Corporations Report (Scotland) (London, 1825), part 1, 279-422.
2. Ibid., p. 283.
3. Ibid.
4. Robertson and Wood, Castle and Town (Edinburgh, 1928), Ch VII, 'The Sett of the Burgh', pp. 166-202.
5. Archibald Fletcher, Memoir concerning the Origin and Progress of the Reform proposed in the internal government of the Royal Burghs of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1819).
6. See note 4.
7. The Decreet Arbitral of James VI, 1582.
8. T.M.Devine, 'The Merchant Class of the Larger Scottish Towns', in G.Gordon and B.Dicks (eds.), Scottish Urban History (Aberdeen, 1983), pp. 92-111
9. Marguerite Wood, The Lord Provosts of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1932), 92-111.
10. Ibid., pp. 98-99.
11. An Address to the Citizens of Edinburgh Upon the Nature of the Present Sett (Edinburgh, 1780).
12. For a full list of all members of the Council between 1730 and 1826, see An Historical Sketch of the Municipal Constitution of the City of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1826), Appendix.
13. See note 4.
14. Scottish Records Office (SRO), GD 148/208, Sederunt Book of the Incorporation of Cordiners, 13 Sept. 1796.
15. Ibid., 15 Sept.
16. The Scotsman, 31 Dec. 1825.
17. For full list of the Council's patronage, see The Scots Magazine, vol. 50 (1788), 617.
18. Ibid.
19. An Historical Sketch, Appendix.
20. Edinburgh University Library (EUL), Laing Manuscripts, La. III 552, Memorandums of John Hutton, Superintendant of Police, 1793-96.
21. Municipal Corporations Report, General Report, 66-73.
22. Address to the Town Council of Edinburgh by Thomas Smith Esquire (Edinburgh, 1799), Appendix V.
23. SRO, Melville Castle Muniments, GD51/1069/1, James Stirling to Henry Dundas, 11 April 1795.
24. Letter to Thomas Smith Esquire (Edinburgh, 1800), p. 20.
25. For example, Edinburgh City Archives (ECA), Town Council Records, 29 Aug. 1781.
26. The Scots Magazine, vol. 42 (1780), 503.
27. ECA, Town Council Records, 6 Oct. 1794.
28. ECA, Notebook of Sir William Fettes, 1780-1825, 45.
29. SRO, Steel-Maitland Papers, GD 193/1/1, Diary of George Ramsay of Barnton, 1788-1807.
30. Ibid., 5.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 17
33. Strictures upon the Political Parties in the City of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1800), pp. 17-19.
34. Richard Sher, 'Moderates Managers and Popular Politics in Mid-Eighteenth/

Eighteenth Century Edinburgh: The Drysdale Bustle of the 1760s', in Dwyer, Mason and Murdoch (eds.), New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland (Edinburgh, 1982).

35. Robert Mudie, The Modern Athenians (Edinburgh, 1825), p. 173.
36. R.M.Sunter, Patronage and Politics in Scotland 1707-1832 (Edinburgh, 1986), p. 195.
37. Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office (NYRO), Zetland (Dundas) Archive, Papers of Sir Lawrence and Sir Thomas Dundas, ZNK X/1-2.
38. NYRO, Zetland MS, ZNK X/1/2/310, Thomas Dundas to Sir Lawrence, 2 Dec. 1777.
39 NYRO, Zetland MS, ZNK X/2/1/313, Hugo Arnot to Sir Thomas Dundas, 24 Jan. 1782.
40. ECA, Fettes Notebook, 47.
41. Ibid., 55.
42. Reflections on the Different Modes of Proceedings by which Sir Lawrence Dundas, Bart. and William Miller Esq. Advocate, were returned as Members of Parliament for the City of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1780).
43. NYRO Zetland MS, ZNK X/2/1/182, Gilbert Meason to Thomas Dundas, 1 Oct. 1781.
44. Strictures upon the Political Parties in the City of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1800), p. 19.
45. Robertson and Wood, Castle and Town, 173. More recent scholarship, however, has suggested that the conflict may not have been as great as has been suggested. See Michael Lynch, Edinburgh and the Reformation (Edinburgh, 1982).
46. A Letter from One Citizen of Edinburgh to Another Concerning the Proposals for A New Sett for the Said City (Edinburgh, 1746).
47. Wood, The Lord Provosts, pp. 75-6.
48. John Walker, To the Right Honourable James Stoddart Esq., Lord Provost of Edinburgh, two pamphlets of same title (Edinburgh, 18, 30 Sept. 1776
49. A Letter from One Citizen.
50. Address to the Burgess Inhabitants of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1746).
51. Sher, 'The Drysdale Bustle'.
52. Ibid., p. 179.
53. A Letter to the Inhabitants of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1762), A Second Letter to the Inhabitants of the City ofEdinburgh (Edinburgh, 1763).
54. A Second Letter.
55. Hugo Arnot, The History of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1779), 497-501.
56. See note 3.
57. Arnot, The History, p. 498.
58. Municipal Corporations Report, Part 1, 303.
59. Arnot, The History, p. 499.
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61. Municipal Corporations Report, Part 1, 302.
62. Letter to Thomas Smith (Edinburgh, 1800), pp. 7-8.
63. Ibid.
64. Arnot, The History, pp. 500-1.
65. Ibid.
66. Gordon and Dicks, Scottish Urban History, p. 80.
67. David Daiches, Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1980), p .39.
68/

68. Ibid., p. 40.
69. Harold Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880 (London, 1969), p. 280.
70. Ibid., pp. 282-3.
71. The New Picture of Edinburgh for 1818 (Edinburgh, 1818), p. 173.
72. ECA, Town Council Records, 27 Feb. 1788.
73. The Caledonian Mercury (CM), 26 Sept. 1794.
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75. CM, 24 July 1788.
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78. CM, 11 Aug. 1783.
79. Ibid.
80. CM, 13 Aug. 1783.
81. CM, 20 Aug. 1783.
82. CM, 23 Aug. 1783.
83. CM, 1 Sept. 1783, 3 Sept. 1783.
84. CM, 23 Aug. 1783.
85. CM, 24 May 1794.
86. The Scots Magazine, vol. 45 (1783), 50.
87. CM, 28 Dec. 1786.
88. EUL, Police Memorandums.
89. Ibid., 13.
90. CM, 1 March 1787.
91. Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society, pp. 183-95.
92. Ibid.
93. CM, 4 Jan. 1797.
94. Letter to Thomas Smith, pp. 11-12.
95. CM, 17 Jan. 1788, 6 Oct. 1796.
96. The Scots Magazine, vol. 47 (1785), pp. 309-10.
97. Daiches, Edinburgh, pp. 116.
98. CM, 7 Oct. 1790.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
101. CM, 26 Dec. 1786.
102. CM, 21 April 1787.
103. CM, 5 May 1787.
104. CM, 19 May 1787.
105. Laurence Saunders, Scottish Democracy 1815-1840, the Social and Intellectual Background (Edinburgh, 1950), Part IV, pp. 316-321, Municipal Corporations Report, Part I, 297.

Most historians who have sought to analyse and explain the emergence of the movement for political reform in Britain in the earlier part of the reign of George III have concentrated on 'national' issues and themes. Their focus has tended to be on developments which transcended local boundaries, such as the Association movement, or which were centred on London, such as the Wilkite crisis.[1] This chapter is not a critique of this approach. It is difficult to see how it could be avoided in any overview of the subject. None the less, such an approach can tend to obscure the way in which developments more particular to a distinct area could combine with wider issues in the evolution of the reform movement outside London. Some historians, however, have examined in greater depth the relationship between local circumstance and wider political developments. T.R.Knox has discussed the relationship between ideas thrown up by the Wilkite movement and local issues, in an article on the Newcastle parliamentary elections of 1774.[2] John Money has also discussed the interaction of 'local' and 'national' issues, in his work on Birmingham and the West Midlands in the late eighteenth century.[3] A further example of the way in which local and national could interact forms the subject of this chapter: the bitter factional contest in municipal politics in Edinburgh in the 1770s and early 1780s. This contest, which reached its peak in the parliamentary and municipal elections of 1780, centred on the rivalry between Sir Lawrence Dundas and Henry Dundas for control of the Town Council of Edinburgh. Although distantly related, Sir Lawrence Dundas and Henry Dundas were the bitterest of political opponents. The ideas and arguments stimulated by this contest were certainly far-reaching and can be cited in an exploration of the campaign for political reform in Scotland which emerged in the early 1780s. In order to examine these themes it is necessary to look firstly at the background to the elections and in particular the combatants themselves. From this foundation we shall then focus on the contest itself and especially the printed propoganda of the campaign. Finally, the aftermath of events will be discussed and the affair will be related to the emergence of the Scottish burgh and parliamentary reform campaigns of the 1780s.

Sir Lawrence Dundas of Kerse was MP for Edinburgh from 1768 until his death in 1781. He had begun his career as a relatively humble Edinburgh merchant.[4] During the Jacobite uprising of 1745, however, his ability as a war contractor had come to the notice of the Duke of Cumberland, the commander-in-chief of the Hanoverian army. With Cumberland's support Dundas subsequently secured a number of army contracts, culminating in his appointment as commissary-general to the Allied army in Europe during the Seven Years War.[5] As a result Dundas acquired a considerable fortune which he used to launch his political career. By 1777 he could command the votes of five members of the House of Commons.[6] Using the influence which his contacts gave him Dundas was able to secure a baronetcy in 1762. Thereafter he attempted, without success, to acquire a British peerage. Ambitions of this kind naturally kept Sir Lawrence close to the administration and he was a loyal supporter of Lord North's government throughout most of the 1770s. He supported Lord North's pursuit of the war in the American colonies after it broke out in 1775. Like many politicians, however, Sir Lawrence was increasingly alarmed by Britain's lack of success in the war. His correspondence with Lord Sandwich (in charge of the Admiralty), in December 1779, suggests his doubts about both the prospect of victory and the competence of the government itself.[7] The turning point in Sir Lawrence's career, however, appears to have came with Lord North's unequivocal refusal to grant him a peerage, which seems to have taken place in early 1780.[8] Sir Lawrence regarded this as a clear affront to his honour in view of the support he had given Lord North. Writing to one correspondent on the subject he concluded that

> after all I have done in support of his measures, to be neglected as I am at this time, must appear strange to my friends, and I must feel cruelly used.[9]

Thereafter, Sir Lawrence's name began to crop up in the opposition division lists in the Commons. He became involved in the opposition campaign/

campaign against what was seen as the increasing power of the Crown, which the government's opponents argued was becoming over-mighty as a result of the patronage or 'influence' put at its disposal by the needs of war. Sir Lawrence voted in favour of Dunning's famous motion against the influence of the Crown, passed on April 6 1780, which claimed that 'the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished', a course of action which aroused considerable discussion amongst both his friends and opponents in Edinburgh. In fact, Sir Lawrence already had contacts with a number of leading opposition Whigs. Sir Lawrence's son, Thomas Dundas, was married to a niece of the Marquess of Rockingham, the leader of the Whig grandees, and the Dundas's principal residence, Aske Hall (in Yorkshire), brought the family within the social circle of Wentworth, the Rockingham's home.

There was, however, a further factor in Sir Lawrence's estrangement from Lord North. From the early 1770s onwards Sir Lawrence faced an increasingly formidable challenge from a leading member of Lord North's administration: Henry Dundas of Arniston. Henry Dundas came from a much more powerful and well-known branch of the family. The Dundases of Arniston were one of the most influential groups in the Scottish legal establishment. Both the brother and father of Henry Dundas served as Lord President of the Court of Session. Although he trained as a lawyer, however, Henry Dundas's ambitions were in the field of politics rather than the law.[10] He entered Parliament, for the county of Edinburgh (or Midlothian), and became Lord North's Lord Advocate for Scotland in 1775. An early object of Henry Dundas's political ambitions was control of the representation of the city of Edinburgh, the most prestigious seat in Scotland. This naturally brought him into conflict with Sir Lawrence Dundas, the sitting member and a fellow supporter of Lord North. At first Lord North appears to have reacted fairly even-handedly to this conflict.[11] As the Lord Advocate's stature in Parliament and influnce within the government grew, however (by 1780 he was Lord North's chief spokesman in the Commons'[12]), this became increasingly difficult. As the 1770s progressed a steady stream of complaints emerged from Sir Lawrence's/

Lawrence's friends in Edinburgh about Lord North's supposed partiality to Henry Dundas in distributing favours and the Prime Minister's apparent tolerance of the Lord Advocate's use of Crown servants in Scotland to further his own ambitions.'[13] In a letter of 1776, Sir Lawrence himself complained that

> it sours me not a little to find those who are Servants of the Crown using every method that they can think of to overturn my interest in every corner of the country. Promises of employment etc etc to whoever will engage with them, and assurances that I have not the power of doing anything for my Friends.'[14]

Dunning's motion against the influence of the Crown must have struck a very personal chord with Sir Lawrence, given Henry Dundas's conduct in Scotland. None the less, the influence of the Crown had been useful to Sir Lawrence himself in furthering his own political career. The end to any immediate access to of patronage and favours from the government, following his break with Lord North, did not augur well for his efforts to secure his interest in the Edinburgh Town Council in 1780.

When Parliament was dissolved in September 1780 it was hardly surprising that both Sir Lawrence and Henry Dundas made clear their determination to contest the seat. Sir Lawrence, however, was not challenged by Henry Dundas in person. William Miller, a young advocate (who mounted the bench, as Lord Glenlee, in 1795) and the son of the Lord Justice-Clerk, stood in the Lord Advocate's interest.'[15] The ensuing campaign took place on two distinct, but not unrelated, levels. The Town Council appointed the MP for the city of Edinburgh and both parties anxiously lobbied the members of the Corporation. Both combatants, however, also conducted a propaganda campaign aimed at the wider community. By means of the press the public were spelled out the issues as each party saw them and urged to show their support for the favoured candidate.

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A central theme in both aspects of the campaign was the parliamentary conduct of Sir Lawrence Dundas, as member for the city. The general election of 1780 was fought against the background of the deteriorating war situation in America. The opponents of the government, both inside and outwith Parliament, were voicing doubts about the conduct and competence of the administration, and raising the spectre of an overmighty executive which was determined to silence all opposition. The friends of the government denounced its critics as factious and disloyal, seeking party political advantage at the expence of the interests of the nation. Sir Lawrence's break with Lord North and his support for the Rockinghamite opposition were seen very much in this light in Edinburgh. This can be seen in both the printed propoganda of the campaign (which will be discussed later) and in the views presented by members of the Town Council. Sir Lawrence's friends in Edinburgh had clearly been disturbed by his change of allegiance. The Town Council, with its patron's support, had been only too ready to vote supplies and petitions of support to the government in the early stages of the war. The Town Council did not want to be seen as disloyal to King and country and it was not prepared to endorse Sir Lawrence's conduct without question. Sir Lawrence's agents anxiously assured the Council that their patron

> was not an opposition man for the sake of opposition, nor an enemy to the King's measures.[16]

His conduct was merely a reflection of his lack of confidence as a parliamentarian. Doubts remained, however. Gilbert Meason, a leading supporter of Sir Lawrence in the Council, warned his patron

> that if you voted against the American war, it would infallibly hurt your Political Interest in this Place, and in every other part of Scotland, as the whole of this Country were keen form prosecuting that war.[17]

There appears, however, to have been little inclination on the part of Sir Lawrence's friends to abandon his interest following his parliamentary volte-face. In fact, if anything, Sir Lawrence's control of the Town Council became more entrenched. Coincidentally, the dissolution of Parliament came only a few weeks before the annual Michaelmas Town Council elections, from which Sir Lawrence's interest emerged favourably.[18] Henry Dundas campaigned hard among the 14 Incorporated Trades. All the fourteen Deacons from the tradesmen's Incorporations (who sat in the Council ex-officio) pledged their support to the Lord Advocate, as opposed to twelve in the previous Council. This was offset by the rest of ther return, however. Of the remaining nineteen councillors (all of whom were directly elected by the out-going Council itself), Sir Lawrence's party were able to ensure that seventeen of those elected were in his interest, as opposed to twelve in the previous Council. Sir Lawrence thus secured an overall majority in the Council as a whole and emerged with more councillors in his favour than before. Clearly, the distate which Sir Lawrence's tactics in Parliament had aroused over the past twelve months, even among his own supporters in Edinburgh, was not reflected an any marked reduction of influence in the Town Council. This would appear to confirm the theory that the relationship between a burgh patron such as Sir Lawrence and his supporters was a basic cash nexus. As we have seen in the chapter on the Town Council, Ronald Sunter has argued that the key to a patron's success was

> to ensure a steady flow of patronage came through his hands; for if any doubt arose on this head, the burgh leaders would begin to seek an alternative representative.[19]

The reality in this particular case, however, was perhaps more complex. If the contest had been purely a matter of who was most able to to proffer patronage and favours, there seems little doubt that Henry Dundas would have emerged victorious. As the chief law officer of the Crown/

Crown in Scotland and an important figure in Lord North's government, Henry Dundas must have seemed a very attractive prospect to these with an eye on the Aladdin's cave of government patronage. There is no doubt, moreover, that he was canvassing among Sir Lawrence's friends during this period.[20] Sir Lawrence Dundas, on the other hand, was a much poorer alternative. Following his break with Lord North and certainly after voting in favour of Dunning's motion in April 1780, there was little hope of Sir Lawrence being favoured with patronage from the government. Likewise, despite the government's difficulties, the prospect of the Rockinghamites coming to power in the immediate future must have seemed relatively slim.[21] Sir Lawrence's private income and contacts could not hope to compete with the patronage deemed to be at the Lord Advocate's disposal. Clearly, something other than the material rewards on offer in 1780 induced Sir Lawrence's friends in the Town Council to maintain his interest. The answer may be, simply, personal loyalty. Sir Lawrence had been MP for Edinburgh since 1768. He had made a number of enemies, but he had also engendered the goodwill and confidence of many of those involved in local politics. He could not long have retained the seat otherwise. It would be foolish to deny that this loyalty might involve gratitude for favours received. At the same time, Sir Lawrence's ability to maintain his interest in 1780 does not suggest that loyalty evaporated as soon as the flow of patronage was interrupted or a more promising alternative came into view. Even if one cannot accept that support for Sir Lawrence's conduct in Parliament played any part in the loyalty of his supporters (for there is nothing to suggest that many of his friends in Edinburgh approved of his actions), it is not enough to suggest that the relationship was merely a cash bond which would be broken as soon as the cash dried up. Loyalties, however engendered, could become more enduring than that and it would be an over-simplification to suggest that, in this case, political allegiance was a simple response to the material rewards on offer at the time. How Sir Lawrence's interest might have faired with the passage of time, had he not gained access to any alternative source of patronage, is open to question. None the less, his difficulties in 1780 did not result in any serious weakening of his interest in the Council, at the time.

Despite Sir Lawrence's success in maintaining his position in the Town Council, a substantial minority were clearly sympathetic to the Lord Advocate. The Council, in fact, was split into two irreconcilable factions, both equally determined to secure the election of their candidate. The councillors friendly to the Lord Advocate met on 15 September and declared William Miller the new member,[22] while on 7 October Sir Lawrence's friends met and elected Sir Lawrence for a further term.[23] As we shall see, the parliamentary election was only finally settled by a committee of election of the House of Commons, in March 1781.

These events, not surprisingly, aroused intense interest among the community at large. The Merchant Company of Edinburgh discussed the affair.[24] The Pantheon debating society debated who was the legally elected member[25] and the Wagering Club took bets on the final outcome.[26] Nowhere was the contest more closely than in the Edinburgh press. The Caledonian Mercury, the Edinburgh Evening Courant and the Edinburgh Advertiser all carried regular 'election intelligence'. These accounts were, in the main, 'news not views' and avoided open endorsement of one or other of the parties. Competing for a relatively limited market, these newspapers were unwilling to risk alienating readers by openly supporting a particular candidate. The most contentious debate took place not in the newspapers but in the many pamphlets, broadsides and handbills which were produced during the campaign. Indeed there seems little doubt that both sided were involved in the systematic production of printed propaganda. Neither party ignored the value of public opinion. Both parties, but especially that of the Lord Advocate, encouraged the public to become involved in the campaign. Given the majority in Council in favour of Sir Lawrence, Henry Dundas's friends had particular cause to hope that the pressure of public opinion could be brought to bear on the Corporation. One pamphleteer, who favoured the Lord Advocate, urged

> all the incorporate bodies, all the private societies, and the inhabitants/

> inhabitants at large [to] join in an address to His Majesty expressive of their abhorrence of Sir Lawrence's political conduct...[27]

Another pamphleteer reminded his readers that the councillors, by virtue of their being involved in trade and business, had a 'dependence on popular favour'.[28] Deacon Smith, of the Skinners' Incorporation, complained that for giving his support to the Lord Advocate, 'My customers have been solicited away from me'.[29]

The propaganda produced in Sir Lawrence's favour focussed on three main issues: the American war, Roman Catholic relief and the background of William Miller, the Lord Advocate's candidate. Criticism of the government's record with regard to the war provided a means both of criticising Henry Dundas (a leading member of the administration) and of justifying Sir Lawrence's desertion of Lord North. Blame for Britain's lack of success in the war and its enormous cost was lain squarely at the feet of the government of which the Lord Advocate was a member. Addressing Henry Dundas's supporters, one pamphleteer friendly to Sir Lawrence noted:

> We owe then to your Hero, and the ministry whose champion he is, American measures, begun in violence, prosecuted without vigour; a load of debt, which is oppressive upon the subject without effecting that purpose for which it is contracted.[30]

Another observed that the result of the government's policies had been

> the apparent loss of the western world... the precarious situation of our richest isles, the decline of trade, and a people groaning under the oppression of taxation....[31]

Against this background, Sir Lawrence's conduct was portrayed not as a desertion/

desertion of the government but simply common sense. Far from being disloyal, Sir Lawrence was acting in the interests of the country.

> In this state of affairs, so different from what was expected at the commencement of the American war, has operated a great change in the sentiments of the men best attached to government: insomuch that, if they had known at the beginning of the war, what they know now, they would certainly have opposed it. Is it then blameable that, in such situation, Sir Lawrence should vote for recommending economy at a time when our expenses are so great and our debts are so heavy.[32]

Criticism of the war was not the only means by which Henry Dundas was attacked. In 1778, when a bill to reduce the civil disabilities of Roman Catholics in England was going through the Commons, the Lord Advocate promised a similar bill for Scotland. This plan aroused bitter and widespread opposition in Scotland, and was quickly dropped. Henry Dundas's opponents, however, were not about to allow the public to forget his supposed support for 'popery', especially as attitudes to the Gordon Riots (in the summer of 1780) had revealed the depth of anti-Catholic feeling both north and south of the border. Henry Dundas was portrayed as a secret friend of the 'popish interest' and what was often seen, by Protestant British opinion at least, as its attendant evil: despotic government. One pamphleteer warned that the Lord Advocate still waited for

> a moment of supineness and security... when a deep wound may be given to the laws which were intended as a bulwark against the idolatry of the Church of Rome, and the insolence of arbitrary power.[33]

A grim picture was painted of what would be the consequence of a victory in Edinburgh for Henry Dundas.

If/

> If he shall finally prevail in this struggle, and in consequence receive so powerful an advantage as the effectual confirmation of the candidate for whom he has canvassed, it is no idle speculation to consider the danger to which the Protestant Interest may be exposed. With new consideration he will acquire new courage. The favourite idea of destroying all restraints upon popery will be revived....[34]

Judging by the vehemence of the reaction of the Lord Advocate's friends, this attack stung deeply. Sir Lawrence and his supporters were warned that they were playing with fire, for

> there is no instrument so powerful as that of religious frenzy... the most effectual means to inflame the passions of the mutlitude....[35]

Hostility to Roman catholics was not the only source of division in Edinburgh society which the Lord Advocate's opponents sought to exploit. As we have already seen in chapter one, there was considerable hostility between the community as a whole and the legal elite which, to a large extent, dominated Edinburgh society. The electioneering potential of this was not lost on the friends of Sir Lawrence. They pointed out that both Henry Dundas and William Miller were advocates, and warned the trading and mercantile element in the city not to allow its representation in the city to be lost to the lawyers. 'An ancient Burgher' noted that Edinburgh was the only Scottish Royal Burgh which still represented the mercantile interest in Parliament and that

> we seem to be in a fair way of having it wrested from us, and so not have one single mercantile representative from the whole Royal Burghs to look after their interest... degradation of our privilege in the highest degree.[36]

In contrast to Miller, Sir Lawrence was portrayed by his friends as an ideal/

ideal MP for the city: a supporter of economy in government, a friend to the protestant interest and a generous patron in Edinburgh.

> he made a warm opposition to the Popish and malt tax bills... he exerted his unfluence not in obtaining posts or pensions for himself, but in providing for his constituents; and upon his Edinburgh house, donations, subscriptions, etc, towards matters of public utility he has expended more than 20,000L.[37]

Sir Lawrence's support for the Rockinghamite opposition against the government was portrayed as a demonstration of his 'independence' and, by implication, the independence of the city itself. A major plank in the ideology of the opposition in Parliament (of which Dunning's motion was a reflection), was that the ministry was using the inflated stock of Crown patronage to attempt to buy off its critics. Unless this was checked, warned the Rockinghamites, Parliament might be reduced to little more than a rubber stamp of government and the people would have no defence against the threat of arbitrary power. Sir Lawrence's supporters described the contest in Edinburgh in a like vein. Henry Dundas of Arniston was portrayed as an ambitious officer of the Crown, whose aim was to shackle the city with 'chains and bondage, and House of Arniston'.[38] It was only by repulsing the advances of the Lord Advocate that the independence of the city could be secured.

> It is by defeating the proud pretensions of the House of Arniston, that the borough can secure most decisively its property and independence; and its protectors and guardians will not forsake it inits hour of danger and give it up to tyranny, oppression, and bondage.[39]

Clearly, although by no means a mirror image, the campaign mounted by Sir Lawrence's friends in Edinburgh owed much to arguments and ideas being/

being aired at a wider level. Intensely local issues were discussed alongside disputes doubtless being debated throughout Britain as a whole. National issues were related to local circumstance, usung a language and ideology which would not have been out of place in the parliamentary debates so copiously recorded in the Edinburgh newspapers. Similar themes can be seen in the propaganda produced by the supporters of the Lord Advocate. Reflecting accusations which were being levelled against many of the government's opponents, Sir Lawrence was portrayed by Henry Dundas's friends as being, like the Rockinghamites, an opportunist, prepared to abandon King and country in their hour of need, to further his own ambitions. His conduct was shameful and disloyal.

> At a time when the nation was engaged in the most formidable and most extensive war that ever threatened the downfall of a state, Sir Lawrence Dundas threw all his weight into the scale of a factious, turbulent, mercenary, and seditious minority in the House of Commons... this insatiable thirst after a peerage was the chief motive... he has given the clearest proofs that he would willingly sacrifice the welfare, not only of the metropolis of Scotland, but of the whole nation.[40]

Henry Dundas was portrayed by his friends (in much the the same way as Sir Lawrence was by his) as a benevolent patron and a worthy protector of the city's interests.

> In the Lord Advocate's public character, whether as a statesman, an orator, or a lawyer, he has always appeared a steady, and determined friend to the laws and constitution of his country.... Generous, friendly, warm-hearted, he delights in acts of munificence and humanity; and such is his disinterestedness, that he has been frequently known to bestow favours, and to procure pensions and places for persons from whom he could expect no return.[41]

In fact, in what might almost be described as a proto-nationalistic appeal, Henry Dundas was portrayed as one of Scotland's most illustrious sons/

sons and protectors. He 'is an honour to Scotland and I believe a true lover of his country', wrote one author,

> and from whatever quarter any attack may be made on his reputation or interests, she has not a son more able, nor I believe, who will be more eager to defend her....[42]

'One day shall arrive', claimed another,

> when his merits shall stand recorded in the breasts of his countrymen... that day must be marked with the tears of every Scotsman.[43]

Whilst it is difficult to assess the public response to this campaign, there is some indication that the Lord Advocate's party was gaining considerable support in the city. The Pantheon debating society voted 175 to 75[44] in favour of the election of William Miller as MP. The frequent references to 'a certain unpopular baronet',[45] in propaganda hostile to Sir Lawrence, were perhaps not altogether wide of the mark. Sensing, perhaps, that they were gaining the upper hand, Sir Lawrence's opponents appealed to the Town Council to pay heed to the wishes of the community and reject Sir Lawrence:

> It will certainly be granted, that every Member of Parliament ought to be the just representative of the people. It will also be allowed, that our City Council, who are the representative's of the community, ought to have the respect to the opinions of their constituents, especially when they are next to unanimous.... Let opposition boroughs have opposition members; but let a people zealous for a welfare and glory of their country have a member who coincides with their opinions, and supports their character.[46]

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In effect, the Lord Advocate's supporters were suggesting that the Town Council should be answerable to the community, a concept which, as we have seen, was hardly reflected in the existing constitution of the Burgh of Edinburgh. Thus the campaign was, in a sense, endorsing a conception of the rights of the community which could only act to highlight the shortcomings of the existing 'sett' of the Burgh. The consequence of these shortcomings was made only too clear in the critique of Sir Lawrence's management of the Corporation. Sir Lawrence, claimed his opponents, had packed the Council with un-patriotic and self-interested sycophants. Their conduct, claimed one pamphleteer,

> demonstrates, in the most convincing manner, that they are not influenced by love of their country, or of their fellow citizens, that they despise the sentiments and inclinations of the great body of the inhabitants they are supposed to represent.... What right have ten or a dozen people to thwart the united sentiments of the people? What right have they to monopolise its honours and emoluments?[47]

Ridiculing Sir Lawrence's claim that he stood for the 'purity' and 'independence' of the city, his opponents suggested that it was only by wholesale brobery and corruption that he managed to maintain control of the Council, against the wishes of the community.

> The administration of the town ever since the adoption of Sir Lawrence for its representative has been marked by no circumstance conducive to its interest or honour. Evry office, which, as member for the city, he was entitled to obtain, he disposed to gratify his own creatures and dependents.[48]

Clearly, the campaign against Sir Lawrence was beginning to border on a critique of the constitution of the city itself. From criticising the way the Corporation was managed it was only a short step to condemnation of/

of the constitution which made such mis-management possible. In fact, reform ideas gained wide currency during the election campaign. As we have seen in the chapter on the Town Council there was already a tradition of criticism of the existing 'sett' or constitution of the city. The trades Incorporations, in particular, demanded that they should have the free choice of their Deacons, un-fettered by the interference of the Council as a whole. Sir Lawrence Dundas had not shown any inclination to support such grievances while the Lord Advocate's supporters did nothing to contradict the assumption that the defeat of Sir Lawrence would inaugurate a period of reform. 'A Tradesman' prophesied that with the defeat of Sir Lawrence's party,

> the remnant of the party's *Interest* will soon vanish... and it will then be time to adopt legal measures to obtain an amendment of the imperfect, and in many ways inconsistent sett of the town. You will then, I hope, see the corporations having free and uncontrolled elections of their deacons....[49]

Increasingly, however, there were calls for more thoroughgoing reform. The above author, as well as promising liberty to the trades, also looked forward to

> the merchant company, and other respectable bodies of men having, like yourself, a proper representation in the town council.[50]

The most ambitious call for reform, however, came in an anonymous pamphlet entitled, An Address to the Citizens of Edinburgh upon the Nature of the Present Sett of the City and the Necessity of its being Speedily Reformed. Published on 10 October 1780, by which time most of the pamphlet literature of the campaign had already been published, this does not appear to have been simply another party political statement. Relatively little, in fact, was said about the candidiates themselves. None the less, the author had noted the Lord Advocate's seeming endorsement/

endorsement of trades grievances and clearly hoped that this indicated support for wider reforms. Warning that 'The interests of the community should never be made to rest upon the virtue of a few of its members',[51] he proposed a radical alteration to the way in which the Council was elected. Taking the constitution of the city of London as his model, he suggested that

> This city should, perhaps, be divided into a number of wards; the president of which should be chosen by a poll election and should represent his ward in council....[52]

Reform in Edinburgh, the author hoped, would be a spur to reform throughout Scotland.[53] Like the authors of the Proposals For Carrying on Certain Public Works in the City of Edinburgh of 1752 (which were discussed in chapter 1) this author also believed that the good example demonstrated by Edinburgh would be a model for improvements in other Scottish towns.

Although this pamphlet appears to have been one of the last major pamphlets produced during the campaign, the contest itself was far from over. Both William Miller and Sir Lawrence Dundas having been returned by factions within the Town Council, the matter was referred to a committee of elections of the House of Commons. The Committee did not give its decision until March 1781, when Sir Lawrence was declared the legally returned member. His victory, however, was short-lived. Sir Lawrence Dundas died on 21 August 1781.[54]

Following his father's death, Thomas Dundas (who was already MP for Stirlingshire) expected to take Sir Lawrence's place as patron of the Town Council of Edinburgh.[55] He was assured, both by members of the Council and relatives in Edinburgh, that the majority in the Corporation wished to continue their connection with Sir Lawrence's family.[56] The Council, however, was not prepared to accept the nominee of Sir Thomas (as/

(as he now was) for MP, his cousin, Lieuteant-Colonel Thomas Dundas, a soldier serving in America. Unwilling to be foisted with a very distant absentee, they suggested that councillor James Hunter-Blair might be elected, though it was emphasised that he would sit in Sir Thomas's interest.[57] This was taken by Sir Thomas's family as a gross affront to Sir Lawrence Dundas's memory.[58] Thereafter Sir Thomas appears to have washed his hands of the Council. Thomas Dundas had in the past expressed his distate for the hurly-burly of Edinburgh politics.[59] He may have viewed his disagreements with Corporation as an convenient pretext for withdrawing from Edinburgh affairs. It may also have been the case that those who supported Sir Lawrence saw his death as releasing them from any obligation to his family and affording them the opportunity of entering into a (potentially more profitable) arrangement with friends of the government. The election as MP of James Hunter-Blair, a member of the Council itself, rather than Sir Thomas's cousin, would give the Corporation more room for maneouvre. Members of the Council certainly expressed disapproval of Sir Thomas's intention to remain in opposition.[60] They also, however, wrote repeatedly to Sir Thomas (who remained in Yorkshire) and contacted his agents in Edinburgh, requesting his instructions and complaining about his apparent unwillingness to communicate with his friends in the city.[61] Thomas Dundas's dilatoriness as a politician is well attested.[62] The evidence certainly seems to suggest that his procrastination and obstinancy played a part in the collapse of his family's interest in Edinburgh. James Hunter-Blair was returned (unopposed) as MP for the city of Edinburgh, with the concurrence of the Lord Advocate's friends in the Council. Henry Dundas's prediction that the Council would soon be brought back into a connection with the government was proved correct. The Town Council was brought under the nominal patronage of the Duke of Buccleugh, who was firmly under the tutelage of Henry Dundas as well as being an undoubted and prestigious supporter of the government. Thereafter, the Council remained in the control of Henry Dundas and his family, until the passing of the 1833 Scottish Burgh Reform Act swept away the old municipal constitution of Edinburgh.

The contest between Sir Lawrence Dundas and Henry Dundas was, however, more than simply another chapter in power politics within the unreformed Town Council. It focussed attention on the workings of a body the affairs of which were normally shrouded in secrecy. It encouraged political assumptions which could only tend toward criticism of the existing municipal constitution in Edinburgh. The ideas and arguments thrown up during the campaign, as well as the methods of the campaign itself, appealed to a political community far greater than the Town Council. They appealed, moreover, to an increasingly sophisticated political culture. Much of the language and many of the ideas contained in the propaganda of the campaign would have made little sense had they not been directed at a community which was politically aware. As we have already seen, the Edinburgh press printed a great deal of political material. The language of the election campaign of 1780 makes clear that the community was assumed to be familiar with political manoeuverings in the highest circles, and topical political ideas. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that, when it became clear that Henry Dundas was no more favourable to reform in Edinburgh than Sir Lawrence, there were renewed calls for change. It was clearly not enough for the citizens of Edinburgh to wait for a benevolent patron to bring about reform. This theme was taken up by Thomas McGrugar, an Edinburgh Burgess, in his Letters of Zeno. These were published (anonymously) in the Caledonian Mercury, in late 1782 and early 1783, before appearing in pamphlet form.[63] McGrugar urged the community to 'assert your claim to freedom' and demanded that

> the right of election, respecting both counsellors and members of Parliament (be) vested, where it should have been, in the free and independent burgess.[64]

In justifying this demand McGrugar appealed to a number of ideas, including 'natural rights' and the 'ancient constitution'. A central theme of the Letters, however, was McGrugar's condemnation of the way in which/

which burgh politics in Edinburgh operated. Following McGrugar's lead a committee was set up in Edinburgh (consisting mostly of lawyers and merchants) to promote reform in the Royal Burghs of Scotland.[65] In 1784, under its aegis, a convention of delegates representing thirty-three of the sixty-six Royal Burghs, was held in Edinburgh. In 1785, a comprehensive plan of reform, respecting both the internal government of the Royal Burghs and their representation in Parliament, was approved by the convention.[66] Throughout the 1780s this convention continued to assemble annually although its demands for reform (reform of the internal government of burghs in particular,) did not meet with any success. These demands can be seen in terms of an on-going development of political ideas and consciousness which was taking place throughout Britain. frequently, however, it takes a political crisis to animate this consciousness. The contest between Sir Lawrence Dundas and Henry Dundas, and the election of 1780 in particular, brought on such a crisis. It helped demonstrate the need for change and it encouraged the discussion of ideas which fuelled demands for reform. The public response to the burgh reform campaign of the 1780s does not appear to have matched the degree of public dissatisfaction with the municipal constitution of Edinburgh which was to be demonstrated in Edinburgh in the years after the end of the Napoleonic wars. None the less, the emergence of reform in the 1780s acted as a precursor to the radical Friends of the People movement which emerged in Edinburgh (as in many other parts of Scotland) during the early 1790s. Although, as we shall see, many of the ideas of the Friends of the People proved too much for some of those people who had supported burgh reform, a number of individuals who had been prominent in the reform campaigns of the 1780s appeared in the ranks of the Friends of the People.

1. See I.R.Christie, Wars and Revolutions, Britain 1760-1815 (London, 1815) pp. 135-8, E.Royle and J.Walvin, English Radicals and Reformers 1760-1848 (Brighton, 1982), pp. 10-11.
2. T.R.Knox, 'The Newcastle Election of 1774', Durham University Journal, lxxii (1979), pp. 23-37.
3. John Money, Experience and Identity, Birmingham and the West Midlands 1760-1800 (Manchester, 1977).
4. R.M.Sunter, Patronage and Politics in Scotland 1707-1832 (Edinburgh, 1986), p. 90.
5. Northallerton, North Yorkshire County Record Office (NYRO), Zetland (Dundas) Archive, ZNK X/1-2, Papers of Sir Lawrence and Sir Thomas Dundas, ZNX/1/18/3, Notes on the history of the Dundas family, n.d.
6. Edinburgh Evening Courant (EEC), 18 December 1780.
7. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK/X/1/2/344, 346, Lord Sandwich to Sir Lawrence Dundas, 10 December, 16 December 1779.
8. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK X/1/2/407, Sir Lawrence Dundas to ? about interview with (probably) Lord North, n.d.
9. Ibid.
10. Cyril Matheson, The Life of Henry Dundas First Viscount Melville 1742-1811 (London, 1933).
11. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK X/1/2/191, 197, Richard Rigby (Pay Office) to Sir Lawrence, 3 Dec., 17 Dec. 1773.
12. Matheson, Life of Dundas, p. 68.
13. A typical example is NYRO Zetland MS, ZNK X/1/2/96, Thomas Dundas to Sir Lawrence, 4 October 1777.
14. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK X/12/235, Sir Lawrence to ?, 5 Oct. 1776.
15. Matheson, Life of Dundas, p. 66.
16. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK X/12/352, John Dundas (an agent of Sir Lawrence) to Sir Lawrence, 20 April 1780.
17. Ibid.
18. For allegiances of councillors in 1779-80 Council, see Narrative and Extracts of the Proceedings relative to the Election of a Member of Parliament of Edinburgh.... (Edinburgh, 1780). For the Council of 1780-1781 see the Edinburgh Advertiser, 3 Oct. 1780, 'Election Inteligence'.
19. Sunter, Patronage and Politics, p. 195.
20. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK X/1/2/409, Sir Lawrence to Lord Rockingham, late 1780 or early 1781.
21. Christie, Wars and Revolutions, p. 138.
22. The Scots Magazine, vol. 42 (1780), p. 498.
23. Ibid, p. 503.
24. Merchants Hall, Minute Books of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh, No.5, 23 October 1780.
25. EEC, 21 October 1780.
26. J.B.Sutherland, 'An Eighteenth Century Survival: the Wagering Club, 1775', in the Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, vol. II (1909), pp. 149-167.
27. Anon., To the Inhabitants of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1780).
28. Ibid.
29. Adam Smith, To the Public From A Member of the Town Council (Edinburgh, 1780).
30. Anon., A Letter to the Author of Calumny Detected (Edinburgh, 1780).

31/

31. The Caledonian Mercury, 11 September 1780.
32. A Letter to the Author.
33. Anon., To the Public (Edinburgh, 1780).
34. Ibid.
35. Anon., Calumny Detected (Edinburgh, 1780). See also Anon., To the Trades of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1780).
36. EEC, 25 September 1780.
37. Anon., Reflections on the Different Modes of Proceedings by which Sir Lawrence Dundas, Bart. and William Miller, Esq., Advocate, were returned as Members of Parlaiment for the City of Edinburgh, (Edinburgh, 1780).
38. Anon., A Short Account of the Elections at Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1780).
39. To the Public.
40. Anon., To the Citizens of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1780).
41. Ibid.
42. A Short Account.
43. Calumny Detected.
44. EEC, 21 October 1780.
45. Anon., To the Members of the Town Council and the Inhabitants at Large (Edinburgh, 1780).
46. Ibid.
47. To the Public.
48. To the Citizens of Edinburgh.
49. To the Trades.
50. Ibid.
51. Anon., An Address to the Citizens of Edinburgh upon the Nature of the Present Sett of the City and the Vicinity of its being Speedily Reformed (Edinburgh, 1780).
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. The Scots Magazine vol. 43 (1781), p. 503.
55. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK X/2/1/12, Sir Thomas Dundas to the Lord Provost, 24 Sept. 1781.
56. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK X/2/1/177, Charles Dundas to Sir Thomas Dundas, 28 September 1781. Also ZNK X/2/1/180, Lord Provost Steuart to Sir Thomas, 30 September 1781.
57. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK/X/2/1/178, Jamas Hunter-Blair to Sir Thomas, 9 Oct. 1781.
58. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK/X/2/1/189, John Dundas to Sir Thomas, 9 October 1781.
59. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK/X/2/1/295, Thomas Dundas to Sir Lawrence, 3 Oct. 1777.
60. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK/X/2/1/179, Charles Dundas to Sir Thomas, 28 Sept. 1781.
61. NYRO Zetland MSS, ZNK/X/2/1/212, John Dundas to Sir Thomas, 1 Nov. 1781.
62. Sunter, Patronage and Politics, ch. 6.
63. Thomas McGrugar The Letters of Zeno to the Citizens of Edinburgh On the present Mode of Electing a Member of Parliament for the City (Edinburgh, 1783).
64. Ibid.
65/

65. William Ferguson, Scotland 1689 to the Present (Edinburgh, 1978), p. 245.
66. Henry Meikle, Scotland and the French Revolution (Glasgow, 1912), p. 18.

> Everything rang, and was connected with the Revolution in France; which, for above twenty years, was the all in all. Everything, literally everything, was soaked in this one event.[1]
>
> Grown up people talked at this time of nothing but the French Revolution, and its supposed consequences.... If the ladies and gentlemen who formed the society of my father's house believed all that they said about the horrors of French bloodshed, and of the anxiety of people here to imitate them, they must have been very wretched indeed.[2]

Henry Cockburn was guilty, perhaps, of only pardonable exaggeration in his description of the influence of the French Revolution on the Edinburgh of his youth. Writing many years later, the whiggish Cockburn found it easy to scorn the degree of fear which events in France ultimately inspired among much of British society and the extent to which many believed similar events possible in Britain itself. At the time, however, such fears were very real and their impact was to colour the course of politics in Edinburgh, as in Britain as a whole, for decades to come. The French Revolution made a tremendous impact on public opinion in Britain. From the outbreak of the Revolution in the summer of 1789, and for many years afterwards, news of events in France and discussion of the course of the Revolution, dominated the pages of the Edinburgh press. In the long run the French Revolution encouraged a reaction against political 'innovation' that was to cripple the reform movement in Britain. Initially, however, the example of the Revolution in France inspired reformers at home with renewed hope and enthusiasm. A new age of liberty seemed to be at hand, and in Britain, both in and out of Parliament, reformers began to make renewed efforts for constitutional change. Nowhere was this development more marked than in Edinburgh itself. By the end of 1792 a flourishing network of reform societies had been established, under the title of the Friends of the People. Under their leadership reform conventions were held in Edinburgh in December 1792 and April 1793, with delegates coming from many reform associations besides those in Edinburgh itself. A further convention met in the city in November and early December 1793. Styling itself the British Convention, it managed to attract the presence of several well-known/

known English radicals, such as Maurice Margarot and Joseph Gerrald, from the London Corresponding Society. The impact of radicalism was also made manifest by the the flood of reform literature produced in the city during the early 1790s. As the centre of publishing in Scotland, Edinburgh was the lynch-pin of the propagandist campaign of the reform movement north of the border. Many of Scotland's leading radical activists, such as William Skirving and J.T.Callender, had their work published in the city. Many English radical tracts were reprinted in the city for distribution throughout Scotland. Edinburgh booksellers acted as a clearing house for these works and for the distribution of radical literature which they obtained in collaboration with their counterparts in London. At the same time, however, Edinburgh also became the centre of the reaction against radicalism in Scotland that was increasingly apparent from mid-1792 onwards. As the course of the Revolution in France became more radical and violent, the propertied classes in Britain became increasingly alarmed at the prospect of radicalism at home. With the suspension of Louis XVI in the summer of 1792, his execution early the following year, and the declaration of the Republic amidst growing anarchy and confusion in France, many began to contemplate the reform movement in Britain with heightened fear and suspicion. Were not events in France a warning of what might happen in Britain if radicalism was not firmly suppressed? With the encouragement of the government, supporters of reform were intimidated and threatened with prosecution. Conservative literature was produced to counteract the spread of radical ideas. Loyalist associations were founded to foster and channel the spread of conservatism. Edinburgh was, not surprisingly, at the centre of such developments in Scotland. As well as being the home of a thriving reform movement by the end of 1792, the city was at the same time the seat of the establishment in Scotland. It was here that the Scottish high courts sat. The principal officers of state, and the Scottish nobility and gentry as a whole, kept town residences in Edinburgh. As conservatism gained in momentum, the clash between reaction and reform in the city became increasingly marked. In December 1792 the Goldsmith's Hall Association (as it became known) was formed to counteract the spread of the Friends of the People and the political ideas which they supported, or were accused of supporting/

supporting. The Scottish law officers began to press for the prosecution of leading members of the reform movement. In January 1793 the first of the now infamous sedition trials began at the High Court of Justiciary in Edinburgh. These were in fact show trials which both the prosecution and the bench used an an opportunity to condemn not only the accused but the reform cause as a whole. Intended as a warning to all who might countenance radical ideas, the harshness of the judges in fact initially provoked a resurgence in the reform movement in the city, though it did not prevent the eventual demise of organised reformism in Edinburgh in 1793 and 1794. 'Martyrs' such as Thomas Muir, who was for a time imprisoned in the city Tolbooth, acted as a focus for outrage against the conduct of the Scottish judiciary. Amongst the governing classes at least, however, reaction was taking an increasingly powerful hold. Britain had gone to war with France in early 1793. Support for radicalism was equated with support for 'French (or Jacobin) Principles'; and so also with support for France itself; the national enemy. By 1795 all opposition to the conduct of the government was deemed to smack of treason, as Henry Erskine, the dean of the Faculty of Advocates, found to his cost when he lent his support to a petition from the 'Inhabitants of Edinburgh' condemning repressive legislation (including the infamous 'Two Acts') and calling for peace: Erskine was subsequently deprived of the Deanship. The aim of this chapter is to examine the response of Edinburgh society to the French Revolution; a response which varied from an enthusiastic welcome to the new age of liberty to bitter denunciation of all those who evinced support for Jacobinism. The first section will look at the initial response in Edinburgh to events in France and the development of the Friends of The People. The second will focus on the reaction against reform which gained momentum during the early 1790s, and the reasons why it ultimately destroyed organised reform in the city.

There is little doubt that the French Revolution was initially received with considerable enthusiasm in Edinburgh, as it was in Britain as a whole. Intellectuals such as William Robertson voiced their approval,[3] and the early/

early press accounts of the Revolution in France expressed both surprise and good-will. During July and August, news of the first great events events of the Revolution - the meetings of the States General, the storming of the Bastille on 14 July, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen - reached Edinburgh. The city press expressed its wonder and astonishment at the course of events. The most powerful monarch in Europe had been brought to heel by his subjects. A new era of liberty and constitutional advance had been inaugurated in a state hitherto a by-word for absolute and despotic government. The Edinburgh Evening Courant noted that,

> The revolution that has taken place in France astonishes every politician in Europe, to whom the news has reached. That a nation whose characteristic for several centuries has been unconditional submission to slavery, should have on a sudden, in the twinkling of an eye, been animated with the boldest spirit of liberty and patriotism, is an event to be contemplated with wonder.[4]

Similar sentiments were expressed by the Caledonian Mercury and other newspapers and periodicals. The Scots Magazine printed essays and articles in praise of the Revolution. Even the Edinburgh Advertiser, the most conservative of the major Edinburgh papers at the time, expressed its approval. The Advertiser, in an article of 25 September 1789, paid tribute to events in France and predicted the dawning of a new age of liberty in Europe (though at the same time, in less than liberal vein, it also looked toward the downfall of popery, that age old ally of despotism popery).

> Liberty is now the general cry throughout Europe, it glows naturally in every man's bosom, and must sooner or later burst out. The Inquisitions in Spain and Portugal begin to totter, and the tyranny of the priesthood to tremble on their papistical thrones. The Host, the cross, Purgatory, and the Bastile, long kept France in subjection - but as men's minds enlightened, superstition ceased, and the Goddess of liberty established her throne on the ruins of despotism. Thus it is in France - thus it will be in Spain and Portugal - and thus in the process of time, it will be in every civilised part of the universe.

It is true that the press did not overlook the degree of violence and bloodshed which had accompanied the great events of the Revolution. It was content to believe, however, that no people, so long enslaved as the French, could break the chains of tyranny without there being an initial degree of violence. The continuing violence of the French Revolution increasingly disturbed the Edinburgh press. It did not, however, overshadow the generally encouraging and favourable attitude of papers such as the Courant, the Advertiser, and the Mercury, toward the Revolution, which persisted until autumn 1792.

The idea that events in France were inaugurating a new age of liberty throughout Europe was a recurrent one during the early stages of the Revolution. The Edinburgh Advertiser noted that 'tyrants, and minions of tyrants, everywhere find it necessary to contribute toward that grand epoch' which was now unfolding.[5] On 19 September 1789, the Edinburgh Evening Courant expressed the hope that the end of the old French regime

> may teach a lesson of moderation and forbearance to Kings and Ministers, and inspire a more srupulous attention to justice and the rights of mankind.

This was not interpreted as a call for political reform at home. In fact, the most clearly expressed view was that the French were merely asserting rights already possessed by Britons. At a meeting of 18 November 1789, in celebration of Britain's Glorious Revolution, the Edinburgh Revolution Club toasted 'The Friends of Liberty all over the globe' and expressed the hope that 'all the nations of the world soon enjoy as much liberty as Great Britain'.[6] The Courant believed that the example of Britain's constitution was very close to the hearts of patriots in France:

> most of the nobility and gentry of France having visited this country within these few years, acquired a veneration for the nature and spirit of our constitution. Many of the most distinguished patriots/

> patriots of France have listened for whole days in Parliament, and it could not be without admiring the freedom, ease, and spirit, with which all public measures are allowed to be canvassed.

Soon, however, the rather complacent confidence in the excellence of the British constitution was to be shaken by the re-emergence in Britain of a movement for radical constitutional change. The example of revolution in France and the political ideas associated with that revolution led to a vigorous renewal of constitutional debate, which in turn led to increasing criticism of the system of government in Britain itself. As the Edinburgh Evening Courant noted, on 12 May 1791, 'The least attentive observer must have remarked that within these few years a spirit of enquiry and reform has been diffused over all the nations of Europe'.

Increasingly, this 'spirit of enquiry and reform' led to demands for constitutional change. Events such as the presentation of Henry Flood's parliamentary reform motion in the Commons, in March 1790, were a demonstation of the re-birth of the issue. New radical societies appeared. The London Corresponding Society was formed in January 1792. In April a number of liberal Whigs established the Society of Friends of the People, arguing that moderate reform was a means of averting the unrest and disorder which had befallen France. Reports of the first meeting of the Society, at the Freemasons Tavern in London, and of its political manifesto, appeared in the Edinburgh press.[e] Reform societies also began to flourish outside London. There was a Constitutional Society in Manchester by October 1790. The Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information was formed in late 1791, and by the end of 1792 there were similar organisations in numerous provincial centres, such as Birmingham, Newcastle, Norwich, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Although the first Edinburgh society was not formed until July 1792, it seems clear that a climate of opinion increasingly favourable to the idea of parliamentary reform was in evidence in the city by at least mid-1791. In an article of 19 May 1791 the Edinburgh Evening Courant praised the conduct in parliament of Charles James Fox, during the famous Canada Bill debates. During the debates he declared/

declared his support for constitutional change, and claimed that whigs in Britain were pursuing, as he saw it, the same goals as the revolutionaries in France: the protection of the liberties of the people against the threat of royal power.[9] The Courant hoped that such ideals would be followed by practical steps toward constitutional reform. Fox, it claimed,

> asserts justly, that the constitution of this country, though it has many faults, may have any good grafted upon it. We should not be sorry to see him co-operating with an administration possessed of the same sentiments, to remove the evils complained of, and complete in practice what has so long been admired in theory.[10]

During 1791 and 1792, booksellers advertisements offering a wide range of political tracts of the day, become increasingly common. Traders vied with each other in promoting publications such as the great conservative work of the age; Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France. Equally common, however, were works in favour of the French Revolution. These included Thomas Christie's Letters on the French Revolution, part 1 of Paine's Rights of Man, and Vindiciae Gallicae, in which James Mackintosh, as well as praising the French, looked back to the spirit of freedom which had distinguished Scots in the past and urged his countrymen to emulate their ancestors.[11] By autumn 1792 the Caledonian Mercury could remark that:

> In the history of Britain there has not, perhaps, occurred a period when such a vast number of political pamphlets, hand-bills, circular letters etc etc, attracted the notice of the public, as that which we live in. Not a day passes without some new publication making its appearance, and though the press labours incessantly, yet it appears to be inadequate to supply the demands of the public, with so much avidity are those publications read.[12]

There is also some indication that the increasing politicisation of the public in Edinburgh was not limited simply to the propertied classes. From 4 to 6 June 1792, a series of popular disturbances known as the 'King's Birthday/

Birthday Riots' took place in the city.[13] The King's birthday, on 4 June, was traditionally an occasion for much boisterous revelry and this frequently ended in violence and disorder. In the celebrations of June 1773, for instance, several of the city guard were wounded and a number of 'the lower class of people' were locked up in the tolbooth.[14] Such incidents, however, were traditionally viewed simply as turbulent frolic gettingout of hand and certainly not seen as having any political content. The riots of 1792 were something new. In the days preceding the King's birthday a large number of 'inflammatory handbills' were posted about the city.[15] One recalled Henry Dundas's support for Roman Catholic relief, and denounced his support of those composing the Town Council. 'These, and other circumstances of his conduct', it concluded, ' makes him merit the lantern more than any of the French Aristocrats'.[16] Other letters threatened the lives of the Lord Provost and other councillors. In the event, the King's birthday and the following two days were marked by serious popular disturbance directed against figures of authority in the city. On the evening of the 4th, a large crowd gathered in the High Street. A sentry box was taken from its place and burnt. When the Sheriff read the Riot Act, he and his military escort were stoned. On the following evening Dundas was burnt in effigy outside the home of his mother, Lady Arniston, in George Square. Dundas's nephew, the Lord Advocate Robert Dundas, was attacked when he tried to disperse the crowd and several windows were smashed. On the 6th a crowd, estimated at 2000,[17] re-appeared in George Square. Having been dispersed by a body of troops, the rioters made their way to the New Town, where an unsuccesful attempt was made to burn down the Lord Provost's house. Whilst there was no explicit ideological content in any of these disturbances, they do suggest the degree of hostility with which large sections of the populace regarded leading representatives of the Scottish political establishment. It is true that it is possible firmly to establish only very tenuous links between these disturbances and the emergence of active political radicalism in the city. Kenneth Logue has suggested that one Scott, a bookseller's clerk, who was arrested for posting placards prior to the rioting, may have been the Alexander Scott who was later charged with sedition, as a publisher of radical material, member/

member of the Friends of the People, and delegate to the British Convention.[16] None the less, it does suggest that there existed a climate of opposition to authority and to the status quo, in which a campaign for political reform could gain popular support.

A further indication of the potential support for reformism in Edinburgh can be seen in the emergence, in early 1792 of a new bi-weekly newspaper in the city, the Edinburgh Gazetteer (of which the above-mentioned Alexander Scott later became editor). The proprietor of the paper was Captain William Johnston, a former army officer. Although related to a number of distinguished individuals,[17] Johnston did not allow his social connections to prevent him from either bitterly denouncing the British establishment as a whole or calling for political reform. As we have seen, there was already considerable sympathy for the idea of constitutional change among the existing Edinburgh press. Burgh reform had remained on the agenda throughout the 1780s and papers such as the Courant were moving tentatively toward the idea of parliamentary reform. None were as explicit as Johnston's Gazetteer, however, in expressing a political agenda, or in urging the people to take action. In the paper's manifesto, Johnston set out his aims. He intended to demonstrate the degree of corruption among the governing elite, and the extent to which they were sytematically undermining the British constitution:

> we account it a proper use of the liberty of the press, to expose to mankind, in the strongest possible terms, the malversions of those who stand forth in any public capacity, and are entrusted with the business, or the property of their fellow citizens.
>
> we expect to demonstrate that great abuses do exist in this country -that no interest in the kingdom is fairly represented in Parliament -that the public money is squandered in the most infamous manner in corrupting the people, and undermining the constitution....

Johnston also declared his support for the constitution;

not/

> not to those defects produced by time, and by the efforts of bad men which now dishonour it, but to that British Constitution for which our fathers shed their blood, which is described in the laws, and holds out a Parliament consisting of King, Lords, and a House of Commons, in which every individual in the nation, who can be said to have a will of his own, is present in person, or by his representatives.[20]

Whilst this manifesto did not set out a specific programme of reform, it nevertheless set out an agenda for the discussion of reform issues. In fact, during the period in which the Gazetteer remained in publication (the final edition appeared in early 1794), it acted as a platform for the examination and dissemination of a wide range of reform ideas.[21] Indeed, so much so that in time the Gazetteer would become 'in a sense the official organ of the societies'[22] of the Friends of the People.

Inaugurating the Edinburgh Gazetteer, however, was by no means Captain Johnston's only contribution to the development of radical reform in Edinburgh. He played an instrumental part in the emergence of the Scottish Friends of the People. During 1791 and 1792, as we haveseen, extra-parliamentary reform agitation was beginning to re-emerge both in and out of London. The London Friends of the People, from which the Edinburgh societies would take their name, had been formed in April 1792. At East Linton, not far from Edinburgh, a meeting of 'Tenants and others' to celebrate the anniversary of the French Revolution, called for reform at home.[23] The toasts included 'an Equal Representation to the People of Great Britain' and 'may every Man who contributes to the support of Government fully enjoy his Natural Right, and elect his Representative'. By 23 July 1792 there was 'a society for effecting Constitutional and Parliamentary Reform' in Glasgow.[24] The first steps toward establishing a similar organisation in Edinburgh were taken on 26 July 1792, in Fortune's Tavern. 'At a meeting', as the Caledonian Mercury put it, 'of many well wishers of the people, assembled from different parts of the country', a society to be known as the Associated Friends of the People, was formed. With Johnston in the chair and James Campbell, a Writer to the Signet, acting as secretary, the new society declared its intention to,

> adopt such measures as they shall judge most expedient for collect the real unbiased voice of the people on the subject of their Parliamentary Representation, and for taking into consideration the means best adopted for restoring our constitution to its original purity.[25]

Before breaking up, however, the meeting committed itself to two broad reforming principles, pledging the new society to seek, firstly, 'an equal representation of the People', and secondly, 'a more limited duration of Parliamentary Delegation'.[26] Clearly, the Friends of the People society wished to encompass a broad spectrum of reforming support by not defining its goals too narrowly. The first resolution could imply a redistribution of seats as well as a reform of the franchise, without specifying the degree of reform, while shorter parliaments had long been a stock in trade of reformism in Britain.

During the following weeks the Friends of the People consolidated the organisation of their fledgling society. A further meeting, at the hall of the Barber's Incorporation, on 28 August, was attended by around 200.[27] It was agreed that the society should split into smaller units, which would themselves sub-divide as the society grew in membership. In this, the Friends of the People were closely following the plan of organisation which had been laid down by the London Corresponding Society (LCS), a radical club which had been founded in London in January 1792. The LCS set up branches in and around London, which split into further divisions as its membership rose. These branches kept in touch by means of a general committee, to which each division sent a delegate.[28] The development of the Friends of the People in and around Edinburgh, as we will see, very much mirrored this system.

In the coming months, the Friends of the People appear to have expanded quite rapidly in the city. One resident of the city noted the activities of the reformers,

> who collect little knots of people at different houses of rendevous, and harangue them upon the Rights of Man and the new Doctrines of Equality/

> Equality, distribute books and pamphlets among them, and persuade them to unite themselves to one or other of the larger Societies that are established in Town.[29]

A further meeting, in September, was attended by 300, according to Robert Watt, a government informant.[30] By November 1792 Watt was informing the Lord Advocate that the Friends in the city amounted to 'no less than thousands'.[31] By the end of November it would appear that the Friends of the People in Edinburgh had split into at least eight or nine divisions.[32] In January 1793 another informant could write to the procurator fiscal of Midlothian that there were eighteen divisions of the society in and around the city.[33] By this time a general meeting of the society was held each month, while a committee composed of delegates from each division met each week for the reception of new members.[34] These meetings appear to have been attended by delegates from divisions of the society in outlying communities which were within easy travelling distance of the city, such as Musselburgh and Penicuik, as well as from Edinburgh proper.[35] Further committees were formed to manage the finances of the society,[36] to co-ordinate the activities of each division, and to correspond with Societies of Friends of the People which were emerging in other parts of Scotland.[37] At the general monthly meetings of the society, each division was entitled to send delegates numbering a tenth of the actual membership of the division they represented.[38] Approximately 300 appear to have attended the monthly meeting of 22 November 1792;[39] suggesting a total membership of about 3000, in and around the city. By February 1793 the New Town and Calton division was reported to have 121 members and the Canongate division above 200.[40].

It was not only in its organisation, however, that the Friends of the People resembled the LCS. In the social composition of its membership the Edinburgh Friends of the People reflected the LCS to a much greater degree than it did the Friends of the People in London. The London Friends were a quite elitist body, led by liberal-minded whigs such as Charles Grey (the future Earl Grey). Two of the most prominent early members of the Scottish Friends of the People, Norman Macleod (Member of Parliament for Inverness) and/

and Lord Daer (eldest son of the Earl of Selkirk), had also been subscribers to the London society. They do not appear to have been typical, however, of the membership as a whole of the Friends of the People in Edinburgh, which was probably akin to that of the rather more broadly based LCS. Although a number of its most famous activists were trademen, such as the shoemaker Thomas Hardy (a native of Falkirk) and Francis Place, a tailor, the LCS also included lawyers, booksellers, and shopkeepers. The LCS was by no means a proletarian society, despite the claims of both its detractors at the time and later historians. Its membership seems to have been drawn from 'middling' elements in society as much as from artisans and tradesmen.[41] Similar conclusions can be reached with regard to the Friends of the People in Edinburgh. In November 1792, James Mathieson, an Edinburgh accountant, wrote to William Pitt, concerning the Edinburgh Friends, that, 'seven eighths of those persons who join in these meetings are tradesmen and many are members of Incorporations'.[42] It is not clear, however, whether Mathieson had actually attended any meetings of the society, or was simply repeating popular belief. By the end of 1792, the authorities were sufficently alarmed by the progress of radicalism in Edinburgh to have informants closely watch the activities of the society. Indeed, some, such as the unidentified 'JB' appear to have been trusted members of the Friends of the People itself. No comprehensive membership lists of the Friends of the People in Edinburgh appear to have survived, if in fact any were compiled. Nonetheless, many of the reports which the informants drew up contained, not surprisingly, detailed lists of those attending meetings of the society. Many of those listed were indeed tradesmen and artisans. George Malcolm, a shoemaker, presided at a meeting of the Canongate No.1 division on 8 January 1793 (He also represented Canongate No.1 at the first Scottish Convention of the Friends of the People, in December 1792).[43] Alexander Crawford, a mason, was president of the New Town division.[44] Other Friends included a flaxdresser,[45] a staymaker ,[46] a baker,[47] and a tailor.[48] Such individuals, however, are not altogether typical of those who feature in the reports of government spies. Equally common are references to merchants (admittedly a very loosely used term at the time), writers (minor members of the legal profession), and a variety of shopkeepers/

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shopkeepers.[49] Members of a middling background also included an apothecary, a fencing master, and a teacher.[50] It should be remembered that the names and occupations mentioned in spies reports were not part of a full membership list. Individuals were mentioned because they played a leading part in the organisation or because they had caught the attention of the informant. It is possible that informants took more note of individuals who were not tradesmen or artisans, because they stood out from the bulk of those present at the meetings Equally, it is also possible that the poor attended meetings of the Friends, but did not play a leading part in them, and so were not considered worthy of a mention. Nonetheless, the degree to which individuals of middling background appear in accounts of meetings of the Friends of the People does suggest that the Friends were by no means dominated by artisans and tradesmen.

The degree to which men of a more middling status appear in the records of the Friends of the People would certainly appear to indicate the extent to which such people lead the society. Many of those individuals who took the lead in the proceedings of the Friends of the People were men of some social standing. The president of the Lawnmarket division was the Rev. T.F.Palmer, a Unitarian Minister[51], and holder of a sinecure Oxford professorship.[52] Its vice-president was Dr. Johnston, a physician or surgeon.[53] President of the Portsburgh division was William Skirving.[54] Skirving was the son of a farmer at Liberton, near Edinburgh, and had been educated at Edinburgh University.[55] Skirving played a leading part in the summoning of the first Convention of the Friends of the People in Scotland, and he acted as its secretary.[56] Skirving himself claimed that the Friends of the People were 'generally speaking...not men of respectability...'.[57] None the less, many of the speakers at meetings of the Friends of the People were individuals of some social status. At a meeting of the society in Blackfriars Wynd, in November 1792, with Daniel Lamb, a builder, in the chair, the speeches were delivered by captain Johnston, Dalrymple of Fordell, and Thomas Muir.[58] Johnston, as we have seen, was a man of some background and status. Dalrymple, the president of the Friends of the People in Glasgow, was a lieutenant-colonel.[59] Thomas Muir, the vice-president/

president of the Glasgow society, was an advocate. Muir claimed to have played a formative part in the emergence of the Friends of the People in Edinburgh, though his name does not appear among the office-holders of the Edinburgh society in July 1792. He played a leading role in organising the Friends of the People in the west of Scotland and on his return to Edinburgh was elected vice-president of the Edinburgh Friends. [50] At a further meeting, shortly afterwards, in James's Court, the same individuals spoke (with the exception of Johnston, who was in the chair). They were joined by Norman Macleod MP, and Maitland and Millar, advocates.[51] John Millar, who represented the Edinburgh Cowgate division at the first Convention of the Friends of the People in Scotland, was the son of professor John Millar of Glasgow University, a leading figure in the Scottish Enlightenment and an early enthusiast of the French Revolution.[52] During this meeting Johnston was succeeded in the chair by Hugh Bell, a wealthy Edinburgh brewer. Bell, who was also a leading member of the Scottish burgh reform movement, chaired the opening sessions of the first Scottish Convention in December 1792.[53] Such individuals were by no means untypical of those who feature strongly in the activities of the Friends of the People. The proceedings of the first Scottish Convention were dominated by men such as Muir, Skirving, and the Rev. Palmer.[54] This is not altogether surprising. Such men had the advantage of good education. Some, such as Muir and Palmer, were also experienced public speakers. It is true that one does not necessarilly need to have had the benefit of extensive education and social standing in order to acquire organisational or speaking skills. David Downie and Alexander Aitchison, for instance, played an important part in the proceedings of the Friends of the People in Edinburgh. Aitchison attended the second and third Scottish Conventions. Downie, as we will see, played an instrumental part in the final stages of the Friends of the People movement in Edinburgh. As we have seen in Chapter 2, both were members of the Edinburgh Goldsmiths Incorporation; one of the most vigorous of the city's tradesmen's incorporations. They spoke regularly at its meetings, and took a lively, if not altogether successful part in its internal affairs.[55] The experience which such involvement gave them, in organisation, in public speaking, in people management, would obviously/

obviously be of use in their activities of the Friends. None the less, a privileged background still had its benefits. The Friends of the People lived in a deferential age. For all that the radical movement denounced the existing political system, it still accorded individuals such as Norman Macleod or Lord Daer (who chaired sittings of the first Convention) the same respect as did society as a whole. The Friends were no different from the many public and charitable institutions which recognised the advantages of associating themselves with individuals of status and rank. Such individuals helped bring prestige and respectability to the organisations they patronised. This was especially welcome to the reform societies of the 1790s. Their detractors among the propertied classes were all too ready to denounce them as organisations of the ignorant and uneducated.

In the months following its initial formation in July 1792 the Associated Friends of the People discussed a wide range of ideas. Burgh reform, which had hitherto been the dominant issue among Edinburgh reformers, remained firmly on the agenda.[56] Reform of the Scottish excise laws, long a bone of contention among Edinburgh brewers, was also debated[57] and so was reform of the legal system, to make it cheaper and simpler, was also on the agenda[58] Not surprisingly, the ideas and focus of discussion of the movement often reflected the particular concerns of prominent individuals in the society. The brewer, Hugh Bell (who chaired the initial proceedings of the first Convention), had long been involved in the burgh reform movement. He was also a leading critic of the Scottish excise system and his tract, An Impartial Account of the conduct of the Excise toward the Breweries, particularly in Edinburgh..., appeared in 1791. He and a number of other Edinburgh brewers had met in 1788 to concert measures for excise reform. John Brims has noted that at least four, and possibly six of these men were later delegates to one or more of the Conventions of the Friends of the People.[59] However, parliamentary reform remained the dominant issue. An underlying assumption of much of eighteenth century political reform, was the belief that it was only through reforming the defective system of government, that any other reforms could be achieved. Daniel Eaton, for instance, a prominent English radical during the 1790s, believed that a reformed/

reformed government would be more responsive to the grievances of the people as a whole. It would lower taxes, abolish the game laws, and reform the poor law.[70] A similar theme can be seen in the ideology of Johnstone's Edinburgh Gazetteer. Only through a reform of parliament, could the corruption and abuse which characterised the conduct of those in power, and which contributed to the huge expence of govermnment, be eradicated.[71] The failure of the Scottish burgh reform movement to make any real impact on Parliament was a glaring example of the futility of appealing to the legislature for redress under the existing system of government. Reforms such as these could not be achieved until the fundamental problem, the defective system of government at the highest level, was itself tackled. This is not to say that the Friends of the People were not concerned with wider problems. At a monthly delegate meeting in February 1793 there was a lengthy discussion of the plight of the poor,

> which introduced many anecdotes of people in the most extraordinary state of poverty, disease, and starvation, being plundered of their little all, their wretched bits of furniture, by tax gatherers to pay the road money and the like.[72]

In particular, the meeting expressed its concern about the additional burden of tax which the government might impose on the poor to pay for war with France. This, however, did not deflect them from their primary objective of parliamentary reform. Like Daniel Eaton they appear to have believed that a reformed government would ease the condition of the poor by reducing the burden of taxation. Neither would it enter into expensive and unnecessary wars. Following the formation of the Associated Friends of the People, in Edinburgh, branches of the society began to appear in many other Scottish towns. By December 1792 there were societies of Friends of the People in Glasgow, Dundee, Stirling and Perth, to mention but a few.[73] With these societies, the Edinburgh Friends kept in correspondence. True to its original intention of 'collecting the real unbiased voice of the people on the subject of their Parliamentary Representation', the society determined to hold a Convention of all the Scottish Friends of the People.[74] This met in/

in Edinburgh, in James's Court, on 11 12 and 13 December 1792. Present were 160 delegates, representing the societies of thirty-five Scottish towns and villages. The Edinburgh societies, however, accounted for over half the delegates.[74] The chief task of the Convention was to formulate a series of resolutions on parliamentary reform. Thomas Muir and others wanted to press for annual parliaments and the vote for all freemen.[75] The Convention, however, remained true to the broad resolutions which the Edinburgh society had drawn up at its formation in July and voted to petition Parliament for an equal representation of the people and more frequent parliaments.[76] The Convention also inserted a clause in the petition emphasising that by equality they meant political equality and not equality of property.[77] Having completed its deliberations, the Convention adjourned until April.

Despite the reformers efforts to dispel alarmist fears as to their aims, the authorities were thoroughly alarmed by the proceedings of the Friends of the People. Thomas Muir presented a petiton to the Convention from the United Irishmen in Dublin, calling for constitutional reform. It included the words,

> not by a <u>calm</u>, contented, secret wish for reform, but by openly actively and urgently <u>willing</u> it, with the unity and energy of an <u>embodied</u> nation.[78]

A number of the delegates themselves pointed out that such words could be construed as high treason. In a letter to the Lord Advocate, Robert Dundas, dated 17 December, the Sheriff of the county of Edinburgh, John Pringle, noted, 'a very extraordinary motion made by a Mr Allan', to the Convention.[79] This motion suggested that every member of the Friends of the People should be armed with a bayonet, a gun, and ammunition, in order that they could assist the civil authorities in suppressing riot and tumult. It was intended to demonstrate that the members of the Association were friends of law and order. In the heightened atmosphere of distrust and suspicion, it had the very opposite effect. In his letter to Advocate Dundas/

Dundas, the Sheriff noted that he had come into possession of a letter intended for Thomas Muir. This letter assured Muir that there were 2000 men, 'ready for the command'. The Sheriff assured the Lord Advocate that he hoped soon to be in possession of such information as could be the basis of a prosecution against Muir.[80] The Convention further alarmed the authorities, at its close, by taking the French oath, 'to live free or die'.[81] Colonel Dalrymple noted that this oath might also be magnified into treason, and it did not appear in the printed minutes of the meeting which were publicly circulated.[82] By this omission it could also be construed that the Friends of the People were taking secret oaths.

In fact, a reaction against the growth of radicalism had for some time been gaining ground in Britain as a whole. Although the impact of this reaction became more marked from the latter part of 1792 onwards, there had been a conservative critique of the course of events in France almost from the outbreak of the Revolution itself. Initially, however, it was overshadowed by the wave of enthusiasm at the overthrow of the old regime in France. This critique is most closely associated with the work of Edmund Burke, and especially his Reflections on the Revolution in France, which first appeared in November 1790. In this, Burke argued that the French Revolution would ultimately result in anarchy and the collapse of the existing social order in France, and that similar disaster might befall Britain if radicalism was allowed to take root. Initially, Burke's views found little support, at least with regard to his opinions on the course of events in France. Reviewing Reflections, in November 1790, the Edinburgh Evening Courant described Burke's praise of the British constitution as,

> among the most useful and the most splendid of those discourses on liberty and government...of the last hundred and fifty years... conveying the most temperate notions of that liberty, whose blessings, when dispensed by the judicious hand of candour and moderation, are the peculiar boast and happiness of Britons, and the honour of human nature.[83]

None the less, the Courant regarded Burke's denunciation of the French National Assembly as, 'an unprovoked attack...that cannot be pardoned on the score of manners, nor justified on that of policy'.[84] Similar opinions were put forward in a review of the Reflections by 'Brutus', which appeared in the Scots Magazine, and the Edinburgh Herald (a staunchly ministerialist paper) around the same time.[85] Brutus also praised Burke's analysis of the 'great leading truths of our constitution', while criticising his views on the French Revolution. Burke was correct in outlining the virtues of the British constitution, which, in Brutus' opinion, might be in need of some changes, but was nonetheless fundamentally sound. Brutus took Burke to task, however, over his criticism of the Revolution in France. The old system of government in France, unlike the British, was rotten to the very core and needed fundamental reform.[86]At this time, it was still possible to admire the French Revolution with patronising detachment. The French were merely securing liberties long possessed by the British. Expressions of support for the French Revolution need not imply belief in any need for radical reform at home. Many were slower than Burke in recognising that the ideology and example of the French Revolution had wider application, and that they could also be used to criticise the theory and practice of government in Britain, indeed any European country. From the very outbreak of the Revolution, public opinion in Britain had been disturbed by the degree of violence which accompanied events in France. This attitude was well expressed in a petition of the Town Council of Edinburgh to the King, dated 24 November 1790. Though ostensibly relating to British relations with Spain, the petition concluded with a panegyric on the virtues of the British constitution:

> To us, no other wish remains, than a continuance of these blessings by the stability of that glorious Constitution which secures them to us; a wish that receives additional zeal from the awful contemplation of the miseries at this moment endured by other Nations less fortunate than ourselves, who wade at present through anarchy and bloodshed, in quest of that happiness we already enjoy.[87]

It/

It was not until the reform movement in Britain itself began to gain ground, however, that large sections of public opinion in Britain began to turn decisively against 'French Principles'. Erstwhile supporters of the Revolution in France felt obliged to emphasise that their support for reform in France did not imply enthusiasm for radical constitutional change at home. In a letter to the Edinburgh Evening Courant, dated 31 October 1792, 'Numa' claimed that he had looked on the French Revolution with 'speculative fondness',

> But I had no idea that comparisons were, or ought to be drawn between a theoretic plan of a Constitution of France, and the beautiful fabric that had for ages been erected and continually improving in this kingdom. I had no idea that the internal regulations of a mighty people determined to be free, ought to excite jealousy, or to meet with animadversion; or that their proceedings were to divide foreign nations into favourers and adversaries.[88]

By the summer of 1792 the Revolution in France was becoming increasingly violent and radical, and in August-September, the monarchy was overthrown. The movement for reform in Britain, which had initially been inspired by the appearance of a new age of liberty in France, found that its association with 'French Principles', was becoming a handicap. Erstwhile supporters of reform began to warn that the activities of organisations such as the Friends of the People would only play into the hands of the government. During the latter part of 1792, Archibald Fletcher, the leading figure in Scottish burgh reformism, was solicited to join the Friends of the People. A number of Fletcher's friends, such as John Millar and Thomas Muir, had aleady joined the movement. When Muir visited Fletcher to secure his support, however, Mrs. Fletcher 'heard them at high words in the adjoining room'.[89] Fletcher warned Muir that:

> These violent reformers will elevate such an alarm in the community, as must strengthen the Government. The country is not prepared to second the views of annual Parliaments and universal suffrage.[90]

Towards the end of 1792, while reformers in Edinburgh (as in many other towns and cities) worked to promote the spread of radical associations, a major sea change was beginning to take place among some sections of public opinion, both toward the French Revolution and its supposed imitators at home. This change in attitudes had been given official encouragement, as early as May 1792, with the royal proclamation against seditious writings. Initially, press reaction in Edinburgh to the government's attempt to suppress radical literature appears to have been to view it as an unwarranted attack on the liberty of the press. On 19 July 1792 the Edinburgh Evening Courant noted that,

> The liberty of the press, which we have so frequently extolled, seems in the opinion of some people, to be only a liberty to write praise, flattery, and panegyric, with a restraint on everything that appears to be disagreeable to those in power.

As late as 6 November 1792 the Edinburgh Advertiser complained that,

> It will be a curious question for the world to discuss, whether it it is legal for a man to speculate in England upon the art of Government. To say that we ought not, and dare not, is to assert that we are arrived at the utmost perfection, and that the human mind should be here arrested in its career after truth.

None the less, by the end of 1792, Edinburgh papers which had hitherto shown support for reform, such as the Edinburgh Advertiser, betrayed their doubts. The Advertiser noted that, 'there are abuses in the government, which have crept in from the lapse of time', but emphasised that,

> the great excellence of the English Constitution is, that it contains within itself the principles of reformation, without recourse to force, or violence'.[91]

Some clearly believed that, whatever the declarations of the Friends of the/

the People, the reform movement aimed at the violent overthrow (if necessary) of the existing order. George Home, a Clerk of the Court of Session, wrote from Edinburgh in early December, to his cousin, warning him that,

> many people, and some of no mean ability, are determined to exert themselves to bring about a similar Revolution in this Country [to that of the Frenchl, and by haranguing the lowest class of People, both in public anmd private, have made them fully comprehend their Power, and the will only is wanting, and the Exertion of that will, to make them overturn the present Government and sette a new one in any form they think proper.[92]

He urged his cousin not to be fooled by the moderate tone of the reformers:

> at first they spoke only of demanding their privileges and the rights of men. With the musket on their shoulder and the Pike in their hand, they now deprecate all violent measures, recommend peace, good order and moderation. They do all this to see if they can restore the confidence of the middle class, get them to unite in an application to Parliament to render elections more popular, and that being obtained and the power of the People encreased, they will then be better in a Condition to accomplish their purpose.[93]

Home was not the only individual to link the reform movement with violence and disorder. A joint meeting of the fourteeen Incorporated Trades of the city was called for 6 December 1792, 'to take into their serious consideration', as their advertisement put it,

> the frequent meetings held in and around the metropolis, and the many pamphlets circulated with great industry, tending to mislead and alienate the minds of the unthinking from that respect which is due to our happy Constitution....[94]

At this meeting, a 'spirited defence' of the Friends of the People was made by John Lindsay, a member of the society and a former Edinburgh Convener of Trades/

Trades[95]. Lindsay had long been involved in reform in the city. A one time opponent of Sir Lawrence Dundas, he played an important part in Trades agitation for burgh reform in the 1770s.[96] He was not altogether successful in securing the support of the Incorporated Trades on this occasion. The Trades did not openly condemn the reform movement, which was the intention of those behind the meeting. In fact, resolutions denouncing the Friends of the People as fomenters of riot and disturbance were defeated.[97] The meeting, however, did pass resolutions noting that successful trade was dependant on 'peace and tranquillity' in the state. The master tradesmen resolved to impress on their journeymen, apprentices, and servants, the importance of peace and good order.[98] The imputation was clear: reformist agitation represented a threat to stability in the country and therefore to the livelihood of tradesmen themselves. Other organisations were more explicit in their condemnation of radicalism. A meeting of the Incorporation of Merchants of Leith was held, on 7 December, 'to consider the foundation and object of the present discontents'.[99] The meeting declared that, 'the Civil and Religious Constitution of Great Britain is the happiest that the course of human affairs ever produced among men'. It noted that all men were equal before the law, and that there was nothing to stop men of virtue, talent, and industry rising in society. The Merchants of Leith warned every citizen, not to be misled by 'DESIGNING, DISAPPOINTED, OR DISCONTENTED MEN', or be beguiled by '<u>theoretical</u>, and <u>impracticable</u>, phantoms of government, which might terminate in ruin to himself, and destruction to his country'.[100] Similar resolutions were passed by the Merchant Company of Edinburgh, on 6 December.[101] When the Scottish Convention met, a few days later, the Edinburgh Merchant Company met again, to condemn its proceedings unanimously. Like George Home, the Merchants declared, that whatever their stated intentions, the reformers wished to usher in the anarchy and disorder which had befallen France. It 'appears to this Company', they resolved:

> that the conduct of these persons demonstrates plainly, that it is their object to introduce into this Country the same anarchy and confusion/

> confusion by which a neighbouring Nation have overset every Law by which property can be secured, and destroyed every principle upon which public and private virtue are founded.[102]

Perhaps the most important anti-reform meeting which took place was that of the 'Gentlemen of the County and City of Edinburgh', on 7 December.[103] As well as declaring its support for the constitution, and adopting a series of conservative resolutions the meeting agreed to set up a permanent organisation to encourage the dissemination of conservative political literature. This organisation subsequently became known as the Goldsmith's Hall Association, after Goldsmith's Hall, where 7 December meeting took place. During later 1792 and 1793 the reaction against radicalism became increasingly marked in Edinburgh and in Scotland as a whole. This reaction took two forms. One was the intimidation of those who were actively involved in the reform movement, and sometimes of those who were merely suspected of sympathy toward it. The other was a vigorous counter-propaganda campaign to convince the public that the aims of the reform movement were at best misguided and at worst treasonable and malicious. Both aspects of the campaign involved the authorities, and private individuals and organisations.

The intimidation of those who were suspected of supporting the reform movement took place in a variety of ways. At the highest level it involved the prosecution for sedition of a number of prominent members of the movement. There were many ways, however, in which pressure could be brought to bear. It could lead to social ostracism and humiliation. In December 1793, the Lord Advocate wrote that an office-holder in the Friends of the People in Edinburgh, a shopkeeper named Hart, had appeared in a public coffee-room to which he was a subscriber, 'and after receiving a Hiss from the whole Company, was with rather too much violence, kicked out of the room'.[104] Shopkeepers and tradesmen found that they were threatened with loss of business. To a large extent the economy of Edinburgh was a 'client economy', dependent on the patronage of the wealthy. Many of its trades catered for a clientele which included the leading members of Edinburgh, indeed/

indeed Scottish society. Few tradesmen wished to risk losing their principal customers. This could be used to good advantage by those among the propertied classes who feared the spread of reform. Tradesmen and shopkeepers involved in the Friends of the People movement in Edinburgh complained that they were in danger of forfeiting custom as a result of their support of the society. James Tod, secretary of the Potterrow division, noted, in February 1793, that 'his best customers had been solicited to abandon him....'.[105] On 11 December 1792 the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce resolved,

> to counteract and frustrate any wicked designs, by encouraging to the utmost of our ability, all sober, peaceable, industrious tradesmen, manufacturers, and others, whether masters, journeymen, or servants; and by showing a proportional discouragement of all such as are idle, evil disposed, seditious or tumultuous.[106]

In January 1793 the Convenery of Trades of Edinburgh promised, 'to give no employment or support to such deluded and seditious persons, until they become peacable members of society'.[107] Such considerations perhaps played a part in prompting the Edinburgh newspapers to print their occupations alongside the names of those delegates who attended the reform Conventions.[108] George Home wrote, in December 1792, that there was in Edinburgh, 'a General understanding to give no Employment to tradesmen or Shopkeepers who have adopted the new fashioned Doctrines'. 'Many of them', he added,

> are now withdrawing their names from the Societies established by the friends of the people, and expressing much contrition at having ever been led stray so far as to join them.[109]

It was not only tradesmen and shopkeepers, however, who found that their support (known or suspected) for the reform movement was at the expense of their/

their livelihood. Members of the legal establishment in Edinburgh found that suspicions about to their attitude toward reform could be a serious impediment in their profession. The advocate John Millar, for instance, found that his involvement in the Friends of the People destroyed his career and in 1795 he and his wife left for America.[10] Even individuals not directly connected with the movement found themselves affected. As we have seen, Archibald Fletcher, also an advocate and the leading figure in the Scottish burgh reform movement, refused, like most of the leading Whigs in Scotland, to join the Friends of the People, and repudiated their objectives. Nonetheless, such had become the horror of all 'innovation' among the governing classes that he found his association with burgh reform and liberal Whiggism, had become a serious impediment to his career.'[11]

As well as attempting to make life difficult for individuals who were known to support or suspected of supporting the reform movement, the establishment and its supporters harassed and threatened the Friends of the People collectively. Minute books of the society were seized by law officers as a prelude to the prosecution of those whose names were mentioned therein.'[12] At a meeting of the Canongate division on 27 March 1793 it was suggested that no names should henceforward be mentioned in the minutes.'[13] It also became increasingly difficult for the Friends of the People to secure meeting places. Many of their meetings had taken place in the halls possessed by the tradesmen's incorporations. Using the same methods which were used against individual tradesmen, the incorporations were warned about what might be the consequences of their continuing to allow the Friends of the People to meet on their premises. In February 1792 the society was informed that they were to be deprived of the use of Tailor's Hall, despite having possessed it for only three months of a six month lease.[14]

The strongest measures which were taken against the reform movement, however, were in the form of the so-called State Trials at the High Court of Justiciary in Edinburgh. These trials, on the charge of sedition, began in 1793 and continued intermittently well into the nineteenth century. Twenty/

Twenty-two took place before 1820.[115] Similar trials were begun in England in 1794, with the charge being treason; a charge more serious than that of sedition. The juries failed to convict and the proceedings were soon abandoned. In Edinburgh, however, in a climate of great fear and uncertainty among the propertied classes, and with the encouragement of judges such as the notorious Lord Braxfield, the bench had little difficulty in securing guilty verdicts on sedition charges. These trials allowed the Scottish authorities to make an example of those who were prominent in writing and agitating in favour of reform. They also permitted the prosecution and the bench to make wide-ranging condemnations, not only of the individuals on trial, but of the reform movement as a whole and the ideas for which it was believed to stand. The first to be brought to trial was James Tyler, who was charged with having published two seditious libels. Tyler failed to appear, and was declared an outlaw.'[116] On the following day three printers, Morton, Anderson, and Craig, were charged with having drunk to 'George III and last and damnation to all crowned heads', while in a canteen in Edinburgh castle. They were sent to prison for nine months. Other prosecutions followed. Proceedings were brought against the author, printer, and distributor of The Political Progress of Great Britain, a reformist pamphlet which condemned the whole system of government since the Glorious Revolution. The printer and bookseller recieved three and six months respectively, while the author, J.T. Callender, fled before he could be brought to court. In August 1793 Thomas Muir, the vice-president of the Edinburgh Friends of the People and a leading figure in the society as a whole, was brought to trial. He was charged with exciting disaffection by seditious speeches, circulating Paine's Right's of Man, and other seditious works, and reading and defending the Address of the United Irishmen to the Scottish Convention.'[117] Muir was sentenced to fourteen years in Botany Bay, by Lord Braxfield, to the horror of the jury, which had intended to apply for leniency.

The proceedings of the State Trials, not surprisingly, gained wide coverage in the Edinburgh press. This enabled the judiciary to make sweeping condemnations of the reform movement which were sure to reach a wide/

wide audience. Prior to the jury being named at the trial of Morton, Anderson, and Craig (the three printers) the five judges on the bench gave their opinion as to whether the indictment was relevant. In sustaining the indictment, their lordships gave full vent to their antipathy toward the reform movement. Their remarks were reported at length in the press. Lord Henderland noted that the three accused were members of the Friends of the People in Edinburgh, and that this society agitated in favour of 'Freedom and Equality'. He contended that all already possessed freedom under the constitution. As for equality, this Henderland understood to mean 'an equal division of Property...[which] it would be downright robbery to introduce....'. Lord Swinton endorsed Henderlands comments and praised the merits of the existing constitution. Lord Abercromby suggested that the accused were 'wicked and seditious men', who had come near to committing high treason.'[13]

The State Trials, however, were not the only way in which the Scottish bench could demonstrate to the public of Edinburgh, and of Scotland as a whole, the treatment which supporters of radical reform could expect at their hands. According to established custom, the Lord Provost and Magistrates of Edinburgh annually presented an address to the Lord President of the Court of Session, as to the state of police in the city. In turn, they were addressed by the Lord President on police matters. In January 1793, Ilay Campbell, the Lord President, chose to make it the occasion for a vigorous harangue against the reform movement. In his address he noted that the British constitution was based on the protection of liberty and property. The Friends of the People, however, believed in liberty and equality, a phrase, he claimed,

> of dark and mysterious meaning, well fitted to convey into ignorant minds the indistinct and inexplicable dreams of equal power, equal condition, and equal property, which, were it possible to realise them, would go at once to the complete annihilation, not only of all industry and all safety, but even of society in a savage state.'[14]

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This address was printed in the Edinburgh newspapers and also appeared in pamphlet form. Ilay Campbell's address was more than simply that of a prominent individual venting his anger and despair. The Lord President, like the judges who denounced the reform movement as a whole during the State Trials, realised that it was not enough to prosecute and harass those who were involved in the reform movement. Repression was inadequate in itself. It had to be accompanied by a vigorous propaganda campaign to discredit the ideas which had been put forward by the radicals. Ilay Campbell himself, in another part of his address, noted the success which he claimed the reform movement had achieved, in instilling 'prejudice' in the minds of the poor. The radicals, he warned,

> have not duly considered how dangerous it is to tamper with the minds and passions of uninformed men; and how impossible it is to say to a mob, 'thus far you shall go and no further'.'[20]

Others shared the fears of the bench. Edinburgh clergymen, such as Thomas Hardy, regularly included similar ideas in their sermons, which were often reprinted and distributed in pamphlet form.'[21] Increasingly, there was a consciousness of the need to propagate conservative ideas among the poor. George Home, the Clerk of the Court of Session, warned that,

> as many of the lower class both read and think..., some pains ought to be taken to point out the Errors of the Doctrines which have been lately propogated among them with so much pains and assiduity'[22]

As we have already seen, an association for that purpose had already been formed at the meeting of the 'Gentlemen of the County and City of Edinburgh' on 7 December in Goldsmith's Hall. The Goldsmith's Hall Association, as the organisation became known, included among its members many men prominent in Edinburgh society. The committee of the Association was made up wholly of men of some social standing, including advocates, bankers, and Writers to the Signet.'[23] They included Sir William Miller/

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of Glenlee, who had stood for the parliamentary representative of the city in the acrimonious campaign of 1780, under Henry Dundas's patronage. Other members of the committee were the banker, William Ramsay of Barnton, and Neil MacVicar, a sometime member of the Town Council, and future Lord Provost of Edinburgh. It hardly seems in doubt that the Association enjoyed official countenance. In fact, the authorities gave the organisation encouragement and assistance. In December 1792, Lord Advocate Robert Dundas wrote to the Home Office requesting that 'A copy of every Pamphlet which you wish circulated', should be sent to the secretary of the Goldsmiths Hall Association.[124] Likewise, the initial subscribers to the Association, 1368 individuals,[125] included many advocates, solicitors, Writers to the Signet, merchants, and numerous individuals simply styled 'Esquire'; or gentleman. John Brims has noted that 70% of the total number of subscribers were landowners, members of the traditional professions, and merchants or guild-brethren.[126] However, the subscribers also included many people of a less privileged background; grocers, tailors, booksellers, shoemakers, wrights and bakers. Many, in fact, of the same middling and trade background of individuals who could be found among the ranks of the Friends of the People. Some of the subscribers were of a quite humble craft background. Alexander Laidlaw and William Fraser were tinplate workers. Thomas Miller was a dyer.[127] It is possible that a number of the subscribers gave their support to the Association in fear of harassment. One of the subscribers was Alexander Nasmyth, the noted portrait painter. Nasmyth was a supporter of the Foxite whigs, and had made no secret of his support for reform, although there does not appear to be any evidence to suggest that he was a member of the Friends of the People. Nonetheless, Nasmyth found that his aristocratic patrons became increasingly unwilling, during the 1790s, to offer him commissions, owing to his support for reform.[128] His subscription to the Goldsmith's Hall Association may have been one way in which he attempted to dissociate himself from the stigma of 'Jacobinism'. Whatever the motivation behind subscribing to the Association, however, it is clear that its members were by no means simply the wealthy and privileged; although it was certainly directed by men of education and social standing.

The principal aim of the Association was to discourage the propagation of radical ideas, and to encourage the dissemination of conservative political propoganda among the poorer members of the community in particular. Fear of the mob was intrinsic to a society which lacked an efficent police, and the example of events in France can only have heightened a sense of horror among the propertied classes, as to the depredations of which the poor were capable under the influence of Jacobin principles. In one of its early newspaper advertisements, the Association provided a list of 'constitutional publications', and requested,

> that the friends of good order will take the measures for having these publications circulated amongst the lower classes, of our countrymen, whom the factious and seditious have been most sedulously employed in endeavouring to decieve and mislead, by industriously disseminating publications amongst them, and instilling delusive notions calculated to create discontent and dissatisfaction....'[128]

The Association also offered a reward of five guineas to individuals who gave information about any bookseller selling or distributing Paine's Rights of Man.[129] The publications recommended by the Goldsmiths Hall Association were not works of intense philosophy or reasoning. Burke's Reflections, does not appear to have been a text which the Association recommended to the lower classes. Rather it encouraged the dissemination of works which were written in a simple style, designed to effectivly convey basic ideas to a popular audience (not unlike Rights of Man in style, if not ideas). This is often reflected in the titles of the publications themselves, which included A Few Plain Questions to the Working People of Scotland, A Word in Season to the Trades and Manufactures of Great Britain, and Plain Reasons or a Serious Address to the Citizens of Edinburgh by a Hair-Dresser.[130] The Friends of the People may have included amongst its membership advocates and merchants, but it was the effect of radical ideas on the unruly 'minds and passions' of the poor and uneducated, that was feared most. The ideas put forward in these publications were straight-forward and blunt. A typical example is a pamphlet published in 1793 entitled, Ten Minutes Reflections on the late Events in France addressed by a/

a Plain Man to His Fellow Citizens. In this, the author pointed to the anarchy and confusion in France as a foretaste of what would happen in Britain if radicalism took root. He warned that under 'the new and fanciful system of the Rights of Man', men would be denied the protection of government and no-one would be free, 'because freedom in any neighbour to do me wrong may be liberty to him, but it is tyranny to me'.[132] He cautioned the honest and industrious not to be tempted by the 'levelling' principles of the radicals: tradesmen and 'honest workmen', as well as the rich, would be pulled down to the same level as the mob.[133] Better, the author concluded, to preserve the virtues of a constitution which had matured over time than to risk the fanciful and ill-conceived ideas of the reformers. Echoing, in simple terms, the ideas of Burke, he warned the people not to allow any theorist to tamper with the fabric of the constitution.

> The old established Government, which is called the Constitution, comes on by degrees, as necessity requires, and as the situation of the people admits. But if the greatest Philosopher or a set of the greatest Philosophers, sit down in their studies without that necessity, to invent or mend a Constitution, it is a thousand to one they make a bungling piece of work of it.[134]

Considerable conservative material also appeared in the Edinburgh newspapers and periodicals. As the sedition trials got under way, those who had lent their support to the radical cause were often only too ready to print loyalist propaganda, as a means to escape prosecution for their earlier sins. One Edinburgh periodical which had been conspicuous in its support for reform, was the Bee, which had been founded in 1791. Though never committing itself to party politics, the Bee had supported a number of reform ideas such as the injustice of the corn laws and the necessity for juries in civil cases.[135] In 1792 The Political Progress of Great Britain, which was the subject of one of the sedition trials (see above), was serialised in its pages. In January 1793 the Lord Advocate noted that the editor of the Bee, Dr. Anderson, was,

> afraid of his past conduct, as three weeks ago he wrote to me...a Proposal to wheel round from his former conduct and become a Writer or Publisher for the Government and Constitution, which I rejected with indignation at this impudence. So much for the Bee.[136]

By early 1793 newspapers such as the Caledonian Mercury, the Edinburgh Evening Courant, and the Edinburgh Advertiser had abandoned their former support for reform. They became eager apologists for the existing system of government, and for the measures which were being taken against the reform movement.[137] On 2 December 1793, Robert Allan, the proprietor of the Mercury, wrote to the authorities offering to insert in his paper notices of the Reevesite loyalist association in London, as a means of encouraging the formation of similar societies in Scotland (As we have seen, the Goldsmiths Hall Association was formed on 7 December)[138]. The authorities gave the press considerable encouragement. In fact, during the winter of 1792, payments to the Caledonian Mercury alone amounted to £134.[139]

During the early months of 1793, as the reaction against radicalism gained momentum, there were a number of reports that the Friends of the People were losing public support and in decline in Edinburgh. The government spy,'J.B.', reported that at the monthly convention of the Edinburgh societies, at New Year 1793, one of the speakers lamented that the 'very name of the Friends of the People, had fallen into disgrace, and was become a term of reproach'.[140] Another speaker suggested,

> That many people who wished well to the Cause of reform had been so intimidated by the recent transactions in France, and calumnies circulated by the Enemies of reform, that the friends of the people wished to Excite similar disturbances, that he thought the best thing they could do would be to ly by 'till the fake impression wears off....[141]

J.B. also reported an 'equal despondency' at divisional meetings. A meeting of the Canongate No.2 division in early January, heard that no new members had joined in the previous fortnight. Those who were members rarely attended/

attended and it would be impossible to continue meeting unless the mother society sent out a 'fresh colony' of Friends to bolster the society.[142] On 4 March 1793 only four people attended the Canongate No.2 division and it resolved to apply for reunion with No.1.[143] Members of the society became increasingly despondent as to the likelihood of their agitation for reform being successful. At the convention of the Edinburgh societies in March 1793 one speaker complained that 'a majority of the people, as well as their representives, seemed to be satisfied that the Constitution needs no reparation...'. He advised that once the Friends had presented to the legislature their petition for freedom of election and shorter parliaments, a petition which he supposed would be rejected, 'they ought then to sit down contented that they had done their duty'.[144]

It was in an atmosphere of some despondency, therefore, that the second General Convention of the Friends of the People in Scotland met on 31 April 1793. On this occasion one hundred and seventeen delegates appeared, representing twenty-eight towns and villages. Seventy one delegates represented the Edinburgh societies, compared with eighty at the first Convention.[145] No more than a dozen of those present had been at the previous Convention. None of the Edinburgh advocates, such as Millar and Muir, who played an important part in the first Convention, attended the second and their is evidence, as Meikle puts it, 'that the delegates as a whole were of a lower type than their predecessors'.[146] In fact, the society was being increasingly shunned by its erstwhile supporters among the more privileged classes. Individuals such as Hugh Bell and Norman Macleod, who had played a conspicuous part in the first Convention, were this time conspicuous by their absence. Macleod gave his guarded approval to the Convention, although he did not attend.[147] Despite the inauspicious circumstances in which the Convention met, a motion to the effect that the societies should dissolve after their petition to Parliament had been presented was defeated by a large majority.[148] Following the Convention, thirteen parliamentary petitions from the Friends of the People in Scotland, including one from the Edinburgh societies which stretched the full length of the House, were presented in May to the Commons, in support of/

of Charles Grey's motion.[149] The meeting of the Convention, however, does not appear to have brought any immediate revival in the fortunes of the Friends of the People in Edinburgh. Attendance at meetings remained poor. At a meeting of the Canongate division on 19 June, it was proposed that meetings should henceforth be monthly, instead of weekly. One member suggested, however, that this might spell the demise of the society and the proposal was dropped.[150] It does not appear to have been until the autumn of 1793 that the Friends began to regain some of their former enthusiasm. As we have already seen, the advocate Thomas Muir, a leading member of the society, was prosecuted at the High Court of Justiciary during early September. Muir was sentenced to transportation to Botany Bay for fourteen years. Far from cowing the reformers, the harshness of Muir's sentence excited widepread indignation and Muir himself became a symbolic rallying point for the Friends of the People. Following his conviction, Muir was confined in the Tolbooth, on Edinburgh's High Street. Here he recieved a constant stream of visitors, including Lord Daer and John Millar.[151] Muir was also visited by Lord Lauderdale, a member of the London Society of the Friends of the People, and he was assured that his case would be raised in Parliament.[152] On 7 September Lord Provost Elder wrote to Henry Dundas that,

> Muir's sentence has revived the frequency of the meetings of the Societies called Friends of the People, and in considerable numbers, and his remaining here tends very much to keep up the spirit of sedition.[153]

J.B., the government spy, wrote in similar vein. He criticised the severity of Muir's sentence, which far from extinguishing the Friends of the People, had given the association new life.[154] At a meeting 'in the Lodge', probably the monthly convention of the Edinburgh societies, he noted an attendance of over 200, 'the most numerous meeting I ever saw....' [155] The authorities, however, were slow to act and Muir was still in the Tolbooth in late October 1793. On the 28th the Lord Advocate wrote to the Home Office advising Muir's immediate removal from the city. He was clearly alarmed/

alarmed at the revival of the Friends of the People and he warned that,

> almost all the clubs of last year have been revived, have been attended by very considerable numbers, and are proceeding on the same regular and systematic plan which last year was so fortunately subdued.

On the following day the General Convention of the Friends of the People re-assembled in Edinburgh. This time the delegates were more explicit in outlining their reform proposals. Rather than simply calling for a more equal system of election and more frequent parliaments, they declared in favour of universal manhood suffrage and annual parliaments. After sitting for four days the Convention adjourned until the following April.[157] Equally alarming to the authorities was a delegation of English radicals, including Maurice Margarot and Joseph Gerrald of the London Corresponding society, that arrived in Edinburgh soon afterwards. They set about encouraging the growth of new divisions of the Friends of the People. Margarot attended the inaugural meeting of the Broughton society on 15 November[158] and Gerrald visited reformers in Penicuik.[159] At the instigation of William Skirving, the secretary of the Convention, it was decided to recall the delegates on 19 November. When the Convention met, the English delegates quickly came to the fore.[160] Lord Daer was present for only a few days, while Norman Macleod openly dissociated himself from the proceedings.[161] The Convention assumed the title, the British Convention, in virtue of the English representation; a title ominously reminiscent of that of the revolutionary French National Convention. This Convention, the Lord Advocate was later to claim, was,

> a determined and systematic plan and resolution to subvert the limited monarchy and free constitution of Britain, and substitute in its place by intimidation, force and violence, a republic or democracy.'[162]

The authorities in Edinburgh were not slow to act. Warrants were issued for the arrest of Margarot, Gerrald, Skirving, and others, on 5 December. They were/

were subsequently tried for sedition and they received the same sentence as Muir. On the evening of the same day, the Lord Provost, accompanied by a number of High Constables, broke up the Convention. A letter from Samuel Paterson, who was in the chair when the meeting was broken up, appeared in the press. Addressed to William Skirving, it suggested that the meetings of the Convention were a threat to 'the public peace'.[163] Paterson also had a letter printed denying that he had been pressurised by the Magistrates into making the statement.[164] When the delegates attempted to re-assemble on the following day, the meeting was broken up by the Sheriff-Substitute of Edinburgh.

This action appears to have finally broken the back of the Edinburgh Friends of the People as a whole. J.B. reported poor attendance at both the Canongate and Calton societies in late December 1793, and that there was some difficulty in securing meeting places.[165] Nonetheless, 'some hundreds' were reported to have assembled in the King's Park on 13 January 1794, resolving to stand by one another and meet again as soon as possible.[166] Clearly, the action of the authorities had left the supporters of reform little option; either cease their activities altogether or carry on clandestine and underground activity. This course of action was in fact adopted by a handful of the remaining Friends. A 'committee of ways and means' was formed, which met once or twice a week during March and May 1793.[167] Its members included Robert Watt, a sometime government informant, and David Downie and Alexander Aitchison, both members of the Edinburgh Goldsmith's Incorporation. According to Downie, the committee was initially set up to assist the families of distressed members of the society, to pay the cost of sending delegates to any further Conventions, and generally to carry on the cause of reform. Downie admitted at his trial that the committee had examined different sorts of pikes, though he claimed to have believed at the time that they were merely for the purpose of self-defence.[168] There is no doubt, however, that Robert Watt introduced a plan for taking Edinburgh castle to the committee. This has since become known as the 'Pike Plot'. Watt's scheme involved the capture of Edinburgh Castle, the seizure of the authorities, the banks and public offices, and the declaration/

declaration of a provisional government.[169] Although the Friends of the People had always emphasised their desire to achieve reform by peaceful means (to say anything else could be treason), some members of the society had already speculated as to what might ensue if the will of the people consistently thwarted. In a letter of November 1792, William Peddie, an Edinburgh grocer, suggested that the French would send over 80,000 men to help. 'I hope it will not come to this,' he concluded, ' but we will not hesitate which to choose, a Civil War or slavery'.[170] At a meeting of Friends in September 1793, those present resolved to part with their lives, before their rights and liberty. They hoped,

> that they may never be driven to that awful point, at which resistance becomes a duty, when the voice of reform is no longer heard; when complaining and remonstrating are indicted, and when the will of the ruler is made the law of an enslaved people'[171].

In fact, the right of resistance to a tyrannical government had long been an established part of constitutional thought in Britain and it had been defended by thinkers as respected as David Hume.[172] Joseph Priestley, an English radical, and contemporary of the Friends of the People, wrote justifying the taking up of arms against an arbitrary regime as a means of reforming the system of government and preventing further abuse of the people's rights.[173] Watt's conspiracy, the 'Pike Plot', was therefore more than simply a ludicrous adjunct to radical activity in the city. The activities of the authorities, in suppressing constitutional reform agitation, had left the reform movement no option (apart from cessation of their activities) except a course of action which had long enjoyed theoretical justification. How many might have followed Watt's lead is impossible to determine, for the government became aware of his activities. He, Downie, and numerous others, were arrested during August and September 1793. Watt was subsequently hanged, though David Downie received a pardon.

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The Friends of the People appear to have ceased their activities in the city by the summer of 1794, though a few individuals seem to have attempted to keep alive the cause of reform. In July 1796 an Edinburgh bookseller, Alexander Leslie, wrote to the London Corresponding Society offering to act as their representative in the city.[174]. In 1796, the mantle of the defunct Edinburgh Gazetteer was assumed by the bi-weekly Scots Chronicle[175]. This was published in Edinburgh, under the proprietorship of John Morthland, a Foxite lawyer who had been active in the Friends of the People. Besides supporting Charles Fox[176], the paper condemned extravagance and greed on the part of the government,[177] and was brave enough publish letters on 'The Inequality of Property' (in August '96). Finally, the government brought the Chronicle to court on a charge of libel for its criticism of authorities conduct during the Tranent riots of 1797. Proceedings culminated in an adverse decision in the Lords in 1802 and the weight of the legal expences appears to have the cause of the paper's demise.[178]

The authorities in Scotland, therefore, still saw cause for apprehension, Despite the apparent demise of the Friends, the authorities became no more tolerant of criticism. In fact, as the 1790s progressed, all opposition to the government and its supporters became increasingly proscribed. Fear of Jacobinism had become so great among the propertied classes that it became easy to condemn all those who were not supporters of the existing regime, for aiding and abetting both the movement for radical reform and the interests of France, which were increasingly identified as one in the same. Archibald Fletcher's wife claimed that anyassociation with Whiggery was enough to destroy an advocates career:

> such was the terror of liberal principles in Scotland, that no man at the Bar professing these could expect a fair share of practice. There being no juries in civil cases, it was supposed that the judges would not decide in favour of any litigant who employed Whig lawyers.[179]

Looking back on the 1790s, the Whig Henry Cockburn, claimed that the fear of Jacobinism was used by the Scottish establishment as a stick with which to/

to beat all its political opponents. The 'great Tory object', claimed Cockburn,

> was to abuse everybody but themselves, and in particular to ascribe a thirst for bloodshed and anarchy, not merely to their avowed public opponents, but to the whole body of the people.[180]

In late November 1795 a 'meeting of Inhabitants' took place in Sommers's Tavern in Edinburgh.[181] The banker James Mansefield, was in the chair and the Resolutions of the meeting were moved by the Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, Henry Erskine, a leading Scottish Whig. Those present expressed their abhorrence at the attack which had taken place on the King at the opening of Parliament. Nonetheless, they expressed their 'surprise and concern' that this should be used as a pretext for introducing into Parliament two bills which 'strike at the very root of the British Constitution'. These bills, the Seditious Meetings bill and the Treasonable Practices bill, which substantially extended the law of treason and gave the authorities wide powers over the holding of public meetings, subsequently passed into law and became known as the 'infamous' Two Acts. The meeting also went on to declare that,

> nothing can tend so much to quiet the minds of the people, and to secure the Constitution from the attacks with which it is threatened, as the restoration of Peace, and therewith the blessings of that plenty which we formerly enjoyed, and of which a long ruinous, and destructive war, has chiefly tended to deprive us.[182]

That no less a person than the Dean of the Faculty of Advocates had associated himself with such resolutions, appalled many of the more conservative members of Edinburgh society. It was immediately proposed that Erskine be induced to resign the deanship. In a public letter to Erskine, a number of members of the Faculty suggested that the conduct of the Dean was irresponsible/

irresponsible in the extreme and liable to encourage dangerous notions among the lower classes. They asked whether

> the Dean of the faculty of Advocates, that body which ought to be the firmest bulwark of the laws, should act the part of a demagogue, in agitating the ignorant and giddy multitude and cherishing such humours and dispositions, as, in our opinion, tend directly to overturn them.[183]

In a vote of the Faculty members, on 12 January 1796, Erskine was removed from office. Clearly, all opposition to the course of government policy was now in itself deemed to be a threat to the British constitution.

This tide of repression was further strenghtened by means of the Volunteer movement. From 1794 onwards part-time regiments of able-bodied civilians, known as the Volunteers, were raised throughout Britain. By 1804 they amounted to over 450,000 men. The first Edinburgh regiment was raised in 1794 and others followed, both in Edinburgh and Leith.[184] The purpose of the Volunteers was two-fold. They were intended on the one hand as a means of giving members of the 'respectable' classes a military training, in case of either French invasion or internal unrest and disorder. On the other, they were also seen as a way of further inculcating 'loyal' principles among the population. The military training would help instil a sense of loyalty among the participants, as would the dire warnings against the threat of radicalism and sedition which were habitually issued by the officers and clergymen attached to the regiments.[185] It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many of those involved in the Goldsmith's Hall organisation became Volunteers. Bain Whyt, for instance, the adjutant of the first regiment of Edinburgh Volunteers, was also assistant secretary of the Goldsmiths Hall Association. George Home, though not himself a member, was an enthusiastic supporter of the movement. The Edinburgh Volunteers, he noted, consisted,

> of the most respectable young and middle-aged men in town, lawyers, writers, bankers, merchants, the principal Tradesmen and Shopkeepers....[186]

Home believed that the Volunteers were playing a very significant part in further weakening the influence of Jacobin principles.

> It has extinguished all seditious meetings, put a stop to the propagation of that Democratical nonsense so catching among the vulgar, preserved the peace of the city merely by its reputation, and by the ready appearance at all hours of the day and night....It may even contribute something to give a turn to the sentiments of the rising generation, when they see all the principal Characters in the Country ...engaged in preserving peace and good order.'[187]

Quite how effective they really were, is perhaps open to question. It is probably true that they helped confirm in people's minds, a link between reform and the threats of public disorder and foreign invasion. There was, however, an built-in conflict between the twin aims of the movement; counter-revolutionary military force and counter-revolutionary propaganda agent. The authorities had no intention of giving arms and a training to members of that part of society against whose seditious tendencies the Volunteers were intended as a military bulwark. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Edinburgh Volunteers were made up largely of members of the propertied classes. Half of the 735 members listed in June 1795 came from the legal profession alone.[188] This, in consequence, meant that the propagandist element of the movement principally reached those whose loyalty to King and constitution was already well trusted. The preachers who delivered loyalist harangues to the Volunteers, warning them of the wickedness of Jacobinism and eulogising the virtues of the British constitution, were to a large extent merely preaching to the converted.

None the less, there can be little doubt that by the late 1790s the Friends of the People and reform as a whole had ceased to represent any open threat to the authorities in Edinburgh. Moreover it is unfair to suggest that this was the result simply of a vigorous campaign of repression/

repression on the part of the governing elite. The attempts to crush the reform movement could hardly have been successful if significant sections of the population had not been themselves convinced of the aims and assumptions of the forces of reaction. It is true that the triumph of the ideals of conservatism was most apparent among the propertied classes and that they could use the 'client economy' as a means to threaten those who were unwilling to endorse their views. It is clear, however, that the Friends of the People in Edinburgh were unable to build up a bulwark of support among the community as a whole, that was strong enough to withstand the onslaught of loyalism. Although the propertied classes most feared the impact of 'Jacobin' ideas among the ignorant minds of the lower classes, there is little to suggest that the reformers or reform ideasmade any significant impact among the poorer members of the community. Apart from a few isolated examples, including the King's Birthday Riot of 1792, it is difficult to see much evidence that radical ideas taking hold among the poor. Many of the ideas put forward by the Friends of the People; reform of the Excise laws, or a cheaper and quicker legal system, were clearly a response to middling grievances. It was a movement which responded to the outlook and ideals of the middling in society, and apart from envisaging parliamentary reform as a panacea for all ills, it offered very little to the poor in Edinburgh. In any case, by the mid-1790s, the ideals of conservatism were at least as likely to appeal to a wide section of the community. Radicalism and France had become inextricably linked. Conservatism was now not simply the defence of property and the constitution; it meant the defence of Britain itself against France, the national enemy. It would be unwise to underestimate the importance of patriotism as a political force among all parts of the community in late eighteenth-century Edinburgh, as in Britain as a whole.

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Fears engendered by descriptions of the crime and disorder in France during the Revolution probably also added, as we shall see, to the mounting criticism of the system of police in Edinburgh during the latter part of the eighteenth century. As the city continued to expand rapidly, in terms both of population and area, the chorus of complaints grew. By the 1780s and 1790s many were convinced that the city was in the grip of an unprecedented crime wave. Some commentators, such as William Creech, a future Lord Provost, warned of the dire consequences which would ensue if the decline into anarchy and disorder, as they saw it, were not checked. The most important consequence of the increasing concern about crime and disorder in Edinburgh was the passing, in 1805, of the Edinburgh Police Act. This legislation set up, for the first time, a single governing body for the enforcement of law and order in the city as a whole, to be known as the Edinburgh Police Commission. It also set up, for the first time, a full-time civil police force in Edinburgh. With hindsight it is clear that the 1805 Act and its successors inaugurated a new era in the policing of Edinburgh. In fact, however, the 1805 Act was framed according to a concept of 'police' which was very traditional. Like the many similar police acts which were being passed for other British cities during this period, the Edinburgh Police Act invoked the traditional meaning of the term 'police' as it was then understood. This is a meaning which is much wider than that which the term has come to assume today. Put simply, the term 'police' comprehended virtually all the duties and responsiblities associated, at that time, with the government of a local community; from the prevention of crime to the provision of public lighting. In fact, as we will see, the Edinburgh Police Commission took over many of the duties which had hitherto been associated with the Town Council. The prevention of crime and the suppression of disorder were certainly primary concerns of the early police acts. At the same time, however, these acts laid dowm a whole host of provisions for the regulation of daily life in a much wider sense. There were provisions governing the construction of new buildings, the use of market places, the disposal of rubbish and the movement of traffic on the streets, to note but a few. The Edinburgh police/

police acts, like those which were passed for many other British towns and cities, were more than an attempt to tackle simply crime and disorder. They were a response to the many problems highlighted by the dramatic urban expansion which was such a marked feature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

None the less, although complaints about the state of the police in the broad sense continued beyond the passing of the 1805 Act, it was the problem of crime and disorder which aroused the greatest degree of polemic. The provisions of the 1805 Act and its successors which dealt with this aspect of policing aroused an often bitter debate which dogged the early years of the Police Commission. As the activities of the police establishment developed, it became increasingly enmeshed in controversy. This controversy not only sharply divided political opinion in the city; it encouraged the debate of themes which were very much in the mainstream of British politics. The early years of the nineteenth century, particularly those immediately after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, were a period of considerable political turmoil in Britain. The existing system of government was being increasingly questioned, once more, and the campaign for political reform was re-emerging with renewed vigour in Britain as a whole. The ideas thrown up by this campaign were widely disseminated in Edinburgh, with regard both to parliamentary reform and reform of the Town Council. They also, moreover, played an important part in the frequently contentious debate surrounding the constitution and activities of the Edinburgh Police establishment. This chapter will discuss the debate on the police as it developed through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The first section will look at the increasing criticism which was expressed in the later eighteenth century concerning the degree of disorder, and seeks to suggest why this criticism became more marked. The second section will discuss the debate on the police as it developed during the years following the establishment of the Edinburgh Police Commission itself, in 1805. The debate is examined with regard to two distinct, though related themes. The first is the notion of accountability, or public control/

control of the police, a concept which was central to the disputes which surrounded the Police Commission during its early years. The second is public ideas about what the role and duties of the police ought to be. The latter theme relates to the concepts of order which influenced public attitudes toward the role of the police constabulary and the degree to which the police were conceived to be fulfilling that role.

Until the passing of the Edinburgh Police Act of 1805, the day-to-day maintenance of order in Edinburgh was entrusted to the City Guard. The Guard, which was responsible to the Magistrates, was a full-time paid militia of around 120 men, customarily retired regular troops. The primary duties of these men appear to have consisted in patrolling the streets of the Old Town, providing an armed presence on public occasions and acting as a ceremonial escort for civic dignitaries. Although the City Guard gained a very unsavoury reputation as a result of the part it played in the famous Porteous Riots of 1736,[1] many authors have portrayed it as being, by the later eighteenth century at least, a fairly harmless and ineffectual organisation.[2] None the less, until the latter decades of the century the city appears to have retained a relatively good reputation with regard to crime and disorder. T.C.Smout has suggested that few lives were lost in eighteenth century Edinburgh riots and that the mob was not perceived as presenting any real threat to order in the city.[3] There does not appear to have been a major crime problem. When Captain Topham visited Edinburgh in the mid-1770s he declared confidently that

> there are fewer robberies, and less housebreaking in Edinburgh, than any where else.[4]

By the 1780s, however, there were an increasing number of articles in the Edinburgh press suggesting that the city was in the grip of a grave and worsening crime wave. In 1788 one correspondent of the Caledonian Mercury claimed that

> the present state of police of Edinburgh and suburbs, respecting theft and robbery, is surely very feeble, or remiss, or both. The depredations that are committed upon the inhabitants are frequent and great....[6]

William Creech, sometime Lord Provost of Edinburgh, gave a very bleak account of the supposed rise in lawlessness in the city at the turn of the century. Creech had no doubts about the improvements which had taken place in Edinburgh. It had become a more prosperous and beautiful city. Its population had become more wealthy, refined and learned.[6] As opulence increased, however, claimed Creech, so too did crime and immorality. Edinburgh had become

> a huge dissipated, gluttonous, collected mass of folly and wickedness.[7]

Increased wealth and luxury were sapping the moral strength of the population, according to Creech. This encouraged vice and corruption, and created an atmosphere in which crime could flourish. Drunkenness, prostitution, theft and violence, were all on the increase.[8] It seems clear that many were ready to listen to Creech's gloomy prognosis. His ideas were first printed, anonymously, in the Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Evening Courant newspaper, in 1783.[9] The article re-appeared, as part of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster's Statistical Account of Scotland, in the 1790s, and went through at least one more re-print.

In part, the mounting apprehension about crime and disorder probably reflects the tremendous expansion which took place in Edinburgh. As we have seen, both the populaton of the city and its geographical extent grew rapidly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It would be very surprising indeed if there had not been any increase in the incidence of crime during this period. There were perhaps other ways, however, in which the expansion of Edinburgh in the eighteenth century/

century encouraged people's fears. The increased anonymity of the city by the turn of the nineteenth century may well have acted to increase a sense of insecurity on the part of many of its citizens. Until the middle of the century Edinburgh remained a remarkably compact and close-knit community. When Topham visited Edinburgh he wrote that his presence in the city by no means went un-noticed. He concluded:

> It is impossible at Edinburgh to be concealed or unknown: for though you enter into the city a mere traveller, and unacquainted, you cannot be there many hours before you are watched and your name and and place of abode found out....[10]

The cramped and overcrowded quarters of the Old Town probably encouraged a sense of familiarity and closeness which helped dispel apprehension and anxiety about personal and community security. As we have seen, moreover, there was no clear geographical separation of rich and poor in the city until the middle of the eighteenth century. Rich and poor alike shared the great tenements of the Old Town. Thus many of the faces in the crowd in popular disturbances were probably familiar to the leaders of Edinburgh society. If Chambers is to be believed, the leaders of the crowd in mid-eighteenth century Edinburgh were by no means anonymous vagabonds. Rather they were respectable tradesman such as Joseph Smith, a cobbler in the Cowgate area of the Old Town.[11] The fact that, in public disturbances, the Magistrates were probably often dealing with familiar and well-known faces, allowed for an element of give-and-take which belies the image of heavy-handed brutality suggested by the example of the Porteous Riots. By the end of the century, however, circumstances had changed. The tremendous expansion of the city was acting to break down the close-knit community which Topham had sensed. Moreover, with the growth of the New Town (and other areas) by the end of the century, many of Edinburgh's more wealthy citizens were deserting the crowded tenements of the old city. Parts of the Old Town were degenerating into slums inhabited only by the poor; 'no-go' areas to their social superiors. With the increased anonymity of Edinburgh, as a result/

result of population growth and the heightened geographical separation of social class, division and distrust probably increased. John Bohstedt, in his work on Manchester during the industrial revolution, has suggested that the Magistrates were increasingly confronted with a 'city of strangers'.[13] As population rapidly expanded the leaders of Birmingham society were faced with an increasingly unfamiliar, and seemingly threatening, urban environment.[13] It may well be that a similar process was taking place in Edinburgh. With the removal of many of the wealthy to newer areas of the city, and away from a great deal of personal contact with their social inferiors, it must have been increasingly tempting for the rich to regard the rapidly deteriorating tenements of the Old Town as dens of crime and look on their inhabitants with increasing suspicion. It would have been easy to view the poorer elements of Edinburgh society in a dangerous light; not so much the type of people one might move among each day, even share a common-stair of a tenement with, perhaps, but rather an anonymous and potentially threatening mass. The example of the French Revolution probably heightened such fears. By the mid-1790s the French republic had declined into anarchy and violence and reaction had taken root at home. The British press was full of articles depicting the carnage inflicted on their betters by the poor of Paris and other French cities. In the charged atmosphere of the 1790s it would not have been impossible to contemplate that the poor of Edinburgh were capable of similar depredations. If the Friends of the People aped the politics of the Jacobins, might not the lower orders in Edinburgh follow the example of the Paris mob? Historians have questioned the degree to which fear of revolutionary turmoil inspired calls for an improved police. It has been pointed out that this theme played no part in the parliamentary debates on the London police bills of the 1790s.[14] Fear of revolution probably played a more important part in the creation of the Volunteers, an explicitly counter-revolutionary force, as we have seen, than it did prompting solutions to the more general problem of 'crime and disorder'. None the less, the popular image of widespread theft, destruction and violence, which characterised British perceptions of events in France in the/

the 1790s, can have done nothing to allay people's fears about increasing lawlessness at home.

Dissatisfaction with the 'police' (in the broad sense of the word) of Edinburgh probably had strong roots in another powerful influence on Edinburgh society in the eighteenth century: the Scottish Enlightenment. As we have seen, a central theme of the Scottish Enlightenment was the concept of 'improvement'; improvement of knowledge and culture, and also of the environment in which people lived and worked. The development of the New Town and of the many fine public buildings and thoroughfares which appeared in Edinburgh from the latter part of the eighteenth century, are testament to the influence of this theme. At the same time, there is no doubt that people increasingly expected an improved standard of cleanliness in the streets of the city, better maintained highways and more adequate public lighting. There is ample evidence about the filth and squalor which was such a noted feature of early eighteenth century Edinburgh. Topham, in December 1774, described the dirty state of the streets, and noted that 'This town has long been reproached with many uncleanly customs'.[15] As the middling and upper strata moved out of the cramped and squalid Old Town, however, they began to demand a provision of public services which did justice to their improved surroundings. There was probably a stong element of civic patriotism, indeed proto-nationalistic feeling, in such demands. In September 1792 the Caledonian Mercury noted the absence of public lighting in the New Town and concluded:

> Surely the most beautiful city in the world ought not to be so disgraced: If the tax for that purpose is not sufficent, the other resources of the Town might be applied....[16]

In July 1789 the same newspaper had pointed out the poor state of the pavements in many parts of the city.[17] and it contrasted the poor lighting in Edinburgh with that in London. There is little doubt, however/

however, that the spirit of civic patriotism also manifested itself in dissatisfation with the state of the criminal police. After the riots in Edinburgh and Leith at New Year 1791, the Caledonian Mercury remarked on how poor an impression such occurrences would give to strangers visiting Edinburgh.

> A little harmless mirth may be tolerated, nay even be proper - but the riots in Edinburgh and Leith on the first day of the year, and on the King's birth-day, are a disgrace to society, and must impress strangers with unfavourable ideas of the police of the metropolis, and the exertions of its Magistrates, of which last every good citizen will testify his approbation, and regret that any improper impression should be left on the minds of strangers from a transient view of any particular occurrence.'[8]

Another aspect of the ideal of improvememt which certainly played some part in the development of the policing in Edinburgh in the early nineteenth century was the concept of 'moral' improvememt. As we have seen, the so-called 'evangelical revival' appears to have had a strong influence on much of Edinburgh society, or at least those members of it who wished to be considered 'repectable' citizens. There is no doubt that many of these people considered it their duty to work for a reform of the morals of the poorer part of the population in particular. After the Edinburgh Police Commission was set up, in 1805, it soon began to envisage policing of the morals of the populace as a legitimate sphere of activity, as we shall see. It is questionable, however, whether this concept actually played an important part in the setting up of the Police Commission. Whilst 'moral' policing certainly came to occupy an important place in the priorities of the Commission after it was set up, it is difficult to argue that the role was actually envisaged by the initial framers of the nineteenth century police system, or that this notion of policing played a part in the agitation for police reform in the late eighteenth century. Commentators such as William Creech certainly believed that increasing crime was a symptom of a moral disease/

disease, a consequence of the worsening vice and immorality in Edinburgh.[19] Nevertheless, none appear to have envisaged an improved police force as a moral scourge. A more adequate police would help to counteract the rising tide of crime, but an improved police force does not seem to have been envisaged as an antidote to the moral decay which some believed was at the root of increasing lawlessness. Some suggested that a better education of children to root out 'idleness and dissipation at an early age', was one response to the root moral problem.[20] That the police could be used to reform and discipline the morality of the populace, however, only seems to have become apparent once the nineteenth century police force had become established. Perhaps the only aspect of police reform in which the desire for moral improvement played an undoubted part, was the setting up of the Edinburgh bridewell, or house of correction, which was clearly envisaged as an institution for the protection of the morals of the community.[21]

The first real efforts to improve the police of the city appear to have taken place in the early 1770s, with the passing of an act of Parliament for the purpose of 'cleaning, lighting and watching' in the new districts which were growing up on the south side of the city. This Act sanctioned the levy of a tax on local houses, shops and businesses, and set up a commission of twenty-six individuals, elected by the inhabitants. This commission was empowered to appoint watchmen and street-cleaners, and see to the maintenance of public lighting and pavements.[22] A similar act was passed for the Canongate in 1772.[23] In 1785 a further act was passed setting up a commission for public lighting, the jurisdiction of which covered the New Town and parts of the Old Town not affected by the earlier acts. In these latter areas, however, 'watching' still remained the responsibility of the Town Guard. Still complaints continued. In 1787 a deputation from the New Town met the Magistrates to complain about 'the nightly depredations by thieves and housebreakers'.[24] The response of the Magistrates appears to have been to dismiss some of the older and more infirm members of the Town Guard and insist on 'strict order and discipline'.[25] A Superintendent of Police/

Police was also appointed around this time, although his duties appear to have consisted of the enforcement of municipal bye-laws concerning traffic control, the regulation of the town markets and so on, rather than apprehending 'thieves and housebreakers'.[25]

By the turn of the century the police of Edinburgh was subject to a multitude of jurisdictions and a number of independently operating officials. In 1805 the first step was taken toward establishing a more unified system of police for the city of Edinburgh as a whole. Under the Edinburgh Police Act of 1805 a new Police Commission was set up for the city. This absorbed many of the duties of the earlier commissions, although it was not until 1812 that they were entirely abolished. The new commission was made up of sixty-eight individuals, forty two of whom were elected (seven for each of the six wards of police into which the city was divided), the remainder sitting ex-officio, as representatives of various public bodies in the city. The electoral franchise was limited to men whose property was assessed at a £10-a- year rental value (£6 in two of the poorer wards). Unfortunately no record appears to remain as to exactly how many individuals this included. Of the twenty-six ex-officio commissionersthe biggest single group came from the Town Council, which provided eight of its members. They were accompanied by the Lord President of the Court of Session and the Lord Justice-Clerk (the two most senior judges in the Scottish high courts), the Lord Advocate of Scotland, the MP's for the city and county of Edinburgh, and a number of other public figures, such as the Principal of the University and the Master of the Merchant Company.[27] The elected commissioners on the other hand, came to include a number of individuals of relatively humble background. The more wealthy wards, particularly in the New Town, returned advocates and Writers to the Signet, but they sat alongside bakers, tailors, wrights and apothecaries; men of a craft and 'middling' background.[28] At the time, the inclusion of both 'official' and elected members must have seemed like the best way of uniting the maximum degree of support behind the commission. In fact (as we will see), the divisions which grew between elected and ex-officio commissioners, were to cloud the early years of the Commission.

The main duties of the Commission included the appointment of the principal servants of the police establishment and the formulation of the rules and regulations which governed their conduct. According to the notion of police as it was then understood the remit of the Commission was fairly broad and it was empowered to enact bye-laws

> for apprehending Vagrants and disorderly Persons, and other offenders against the law...for suppression of common Begging, preventing and removing Nuisances and Obstructions, enforcing the rules which are or may be laid down as to lighting and cleaning the streets and passages, and in general for all other purposes connected with the presevation of peace and good order, and the general safety and comfort of the inhabitants....[29]

The most important appointment was that of the Superintendent (or captain) of Police. The Superintendent had a dual role. As well as sitting as a judge in the Police Court which was set up for the trial of petty crimes, he had the day-to-day command of all the watchmen and street-cleaners employed by the Commission. By 1812 the watchmen, excluding officers, amounted to over 200 men.[30]

From the very start, the new police system, like the authorities it succeeded, was subject to complaint. There were two principal bones of contention. The first concerned the cost-effectiveness of the system. Ratepayers grumbled that despite the supposedly exorbitant rates they were forced to pay, the streets were still not being adequately cleaned, public lighting was poor, and crime and disorder were still widespread. At the same time, fears began to be expressed that the police system represented a potential threat to the liberty of the citizens of Edinburgh. The ratepayers may have desired a better policed city, but some came to fear that the powers of the police establishment might be an infringement on their rights. As early as 1806, an anonymous pamphleteer, 'Civis', drew attention to the wide powers granted to the Superintendent. He noted that sitting as a judge in the Police Court (from which there was no right of appeal/

appeal), the Superintendent had the authority to punish actions which he considered to be criminal, even if they were not defined as such by any existing law. The Superintendent, therefore, claimed 'Civis', combined the powers of both legislator and judge, which struck at the 'long established principles of British liberty'.[31] In a further pamphlet he advised the Commissioners that

> the power of the Superintendent of Police is arbitrary and unlimited; that his office, when armed with such authority as he possesses, is dangerous to the liberty of the citizens of Edinburgh; and that the public bodies of that city should exert themselves to get his powers defined, and some salutary controul imposed on his mischievous propensities.[32]

To these fears, a committee of Commissioners replied that

> the whole Act is framed on the supposition that the Superintendant is amenable to the Court of General Commissioners, which has power to take cognizance of any neglect of duty in the Superintendant, or misconduct of any kind in him, as well as of the other officers of Police, and, if necessary, to remove him from office on sufficent cause being shown.[33]

Privately, he was denounced among the more conservative Commissioners as a 'democrat', whose views were worthy of the radicals of the British Convention. Although the Whig lawyer Henry Cockburn claimed in his memoirs that there was 'a burgh rebellion' against the power of the Superintendent,[34] Civis's warning's appear to have been something of a lone cry, and there was no immediate change in the constitution of the police establishment. In fact, little changed until 1812, when a new Edinburgh Police Act was passed. This act did respond to some of the demands expressed by Civis, but the general tenor of the legislation only added fuel to the fears which he first expressed.

Although there had been complaints about the apparent inability of the Edinburgh/

Edinburgh Police Commission to tackle the problem of crime, virtually from the time of its creation in 1805, the 1812 Edinburgh Police Act was passed largely as a result of the disorders which took place in the city during the New Year's celebrations in 1812 itself. Traditionally the citizens of Edinburgh welcomed the New Year by gathering, on Hogmanay, outside the Tron Kirk, a church on the High Street of the Old Town. New Year was usually marked by boisterous revelry on the streets of the city, but, in 1812, this spilled over into violence when gangs of youths began attacking and robbing citizens as they made their way to, and returned from, the Tron. One police watchman was so badly beaten that he later died.[35] Immediately there were demands for an improvement in the system of police. There were dire warnings in the press as to the extent to which the crime and disorder seemed to be overtaking the city,[36] and Creech's pamphlet with its prophecy of decline into chaos and anarchy, was once more re-published. The Town Council responded by calling together an ad-hoc committee made up of its own members, and other ex-officio members of the Police Commission, including the Lord President of the Court of Session, the Lord Justice Clerk, the sheriff of the county of Edinburghshire, and the Lord Advocate of Scotland. This committee concluded that the chief weakness of the Edinburgh police was that it was too independent of established authority, and that its direction was entrusted to a commission most of the members of which were elected 'laymen' who had no knowledge or experience of police matters. The committee concluded that

> In considering the <u>powers</u> to be vested in the Commissioners under the new act, it has appeared to the committee to be desirable, that these should be confined to the subject of assessment and money payments, and to the making of general regulations as to the mode of watching, lighting, and cleansing the metropolis; but that these Commissioners should have as little connection as possible with the <u>executive</u> department. Instead, therefore, of vesting these Commissioners with the power of naming watchmen and other police officers (a power which naturally tends to solicitation, and consequently to the improper choice of officers in the first instance, and the utmost difficulty in removing them afterwards, however ill-qualified for the discharge of their duty), it is proposed that this power should be vested solely in the Superintendant; who will consequently have no excuse as to the inefficency of those placed under him....[37]

As well as increasing the control which the Superintendant had over the watching force at the expence of the Board of Commissioners (though he was removed as a judge in the Police Court), the committee recommended that the power of appointment and dismissal of the Superintendent be removed from the Commissioners.[88] These recommendations were incorporated in the new Police Bill which the Town Council and its supporters successfully piloted through Parliament in 1812. Henceforth the power of appointment and dismissal of the Superintendent was vested in three individuals referred to as the 'high functionaries'; the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, the Lord President of the Court of Session, and the Sheriff of the county. In the charged atmosphere following the Tron disturbances, these new provisions attracted little adverse comment, but they laid the foundation of divisions which were to reach crisis point in the early 1820s.

In fact, sporadic criticism continued over subsequent years about the supposedly overmighty powers of the police establishment. In 1816, when a further Police Bill was proposed (largely, it would appear, at the instigation of the Town Council and its supporters among the ex-officio Commissioners), which would have increased the discretionary powers of arrest granted to the Suprintendant and his men, there arose a chorus of opposition. The alarm, hysteria almost, which had gripped the city following the Tron disturbances, had long since subsided and a wide spectrum of opinion united in denying the necessity for the new powers to be granted to the Superintendant and his men. In stark contrast to the fears which had been expressed following the disturbances of 1812, one anonymous 'Old Citizen' emphasised the degree of harmony and good order in the city.

> I shall venture to affirm, that no town of the same size contains so small a proportion of rabble. We have no manufacturing population, none of these classes who, in the vicissitudes of trade, pass suddenly from the possession of abundance to absolute want, and from incessant labour to total idleness. Neither have we those mixed multitudes which abound in sea port towns, of persons who are estranged from domestic ties, and from the nature of their situation are unavoidably thrown into/

into habits of association with the lowest and most worthless. We have not even that quantity of commercial wealth, which allures needy adventurers, from all quarters to London. These, however, are the classes that produce disorder, and require a Police armed with strong powers, and not fettered in their exercise; and since such classes do not exist in Edinburgh, one would imagine that a Police Establishment of the slightest kind would prove sufficent.[39]

The opposition to the bill revealed the extent to which the police establishment had forfeited the confidence of the middling classes. Public bodies representing a broad spectrum of Edinburgh society unanimously condemned the bill. In a petition to the House of Lords, the Goldsmiths Incorporation, one of the most prestigious of the craft guilds of the city, warned that the Bill 'contains provisions dangerous to the liberty of the Citizen...and may be attended with consequences hurtful and prejudicial'.[40] Similar sentiments were recorded by many other public bodies in the city, including a further seven of the fourteen craftsmens incorporations, the Merchant Company, the Faculty of Advocates and the Committee of Public Charities.[41] The Caledonian Mercury warned that the police

> are apt to frame their regulations merely for the purpose of giving themselves facility to practice their own discretionary powers and not at all to consider how far the general liberty of the community may be abridged by the undue extension of their jurisdiction.[42]

Such was the extent of the opposition to the 1816 Police bill that it was withdrawn and an Act merely renewing the existing legislation, passed in its place. The extent to which the affair aroused popular interest in the activities of the Police Commission had clearly surprised the framers of the Bill. It had been drawn up without consultation with any public bodies in the city, and when it began its progress through Parliament many people were unaware of its provisions. The opposition to the 1816 Police Bill was, in fact, one manifestation of/

of the re-awakening of popular political activity in Edinburgh which took place following the end of the Napoleonic Wars. This re-awakening took many forms; a vigourous re-emergence of the burgh reform and parliamentary reform movements, the growth of societies dedicated to abolition of the slave trade or to prison reform, the beginnings of campaigns to root out corruption or mismanagement in various public institutions in the city, such as the Royal Infirmary. It brought a degree of popular participation in politics which had been unseen since the heady days of the early 1790s, and which involved a wide spectrum of Edinburrgh society; from advocates to shopkeepers, from merchants to craftsmen. The new spirit was symbolised by the appearance of The Scotsman newspaper, in 1817. Condemning the political myopy and timidity of the older Edinburgh newspapers, the The Scotsman made little secret of its reformist views; indeed, it continually condemned the apathy of the Edinburgh citizenry, and urged them to take a more active part in both local and national political affairs. This sea-change can be seen as part of a political re-awakening which was taking place in Britain as a whole, during this period. As the strain of years of war, and of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation took its toll on British society in the early years of the nineteenth century, organised opposition to the policies of government began to re-emerge, both within and outwith Parliament. With the end of the war, in 1815, many of the opponents of the existing political system began renewing their calls for parliamentary reform with heightened vigour. The force of reaction had cast a long shadow over British politics and few re-iterated the extravagant demands which some radicals had made in the 1790s. None the less, radicals such as Sir Francis Burdett, Francis Place, and the veteran John Cartwright, tried to unite behind a programme of reform which would extend the franchise to the propertied classes as a whole.

The themes and ideas thrown up by the re-emergence of reformism in post-war Britain, played a very important part, as we shall see, in the burgh and parliamentary reform movements in Edinburgh. They also, influenced/

influenced the continuing doubts which were being expressed as to the way in which the police system was taking shape in the city, and added new topicality to fears which had already been gaining force in the preceding years. The supposedly arbitrary authority of the Superintendant was a theme which had began to take shape, as we have seen, virtually from the time of the inauguration of the police system itself, in 1805. As the 'police force' (to use a modern term) expanded in number during subsequent years, worries arose as to the threat supposedly posed to the liberty of the citizens of Edinburgh by the power of the constabulary. In an editorial of 30 September 1820, The Scotsman warned that

> mercenary policemen, like mercenary soldiers, will always be dangerous to the country that employs them. Whenever they are formed into a class unconnected with the people. and independent of them, they will naturally think of employing their powers for their own purposes.[44]

As this comment itself suggests, this was not a novel accusation. Fears that a professional standing army could be used by an ambitious ruler against his own subjects had been a stock in trade of libertarian thought since William III's day. The aged radical, John Catrwright, continued to make the abolition of a standing army and its replacement with a 'citizen militia', made up of the people themselves, a plank in his reform platform. A part-time army, he believed, would not be as ready as a paid ('mercenary') force, to turn on fellow Britons. Such ideas had gained renewed currency when the government had used troops in 1819 brutally to break up a large crowd gathered to hear radical speakers at Saint Peter's Fields, in Manchester. The Scotsman did not make any direct reference to the infamous 'Peterloo Massacre', as that event has become known, but it clearly saw parallels between the uses to which a full-time army and a full-time police force, could be put. In its editorial of September 30 1820, The Scotsman, following the same reasoning as Catrwright, contemplated the idea of replacing the paid police with a 'citizen'police.

> Are we to entrust the duty of watching to hirelings who make it a separate profession, or shall we compel the inhabitants to watch in rotation for their own safety?

This intrusion of issues raised in national political debate, into discussion of the police in Edinburgh, became increasingly marked, as the Police Commission was drawn into deeper controversy during the early 1820s. In 1819, a committee of Commissioners was appointed to investigate apparent irregularities in the financial affairs of the police establishment. By 1820 it had uncovered a widespread network of corruption spreading through many departments of the police. There had been falsification of accounts with regard to the purchase of many items used by the establishment, such as brooms and batons. Worst of all, it was discovered that the police had been claiming pay for a number of men who had either left the establishment some time before or who had a very dubious attachment to it. One supposed night-watchman was found to be employed by day as a servant in the Superintendent's household.[44] The Clerk of police was immediately dismissed and legal proceedings were instigated against him for recovery of the missing funds.[45] Soon, however, the accusing finger turned on the Superintendent himself, Captain Brown, whose counter signature was attached to all the pay accounts. The committee concluded that Captain Brown was either involved in the corruption himself or was grossly negligent in being uanaware, as he claimed, of its extent.[46] Although these investigations were ostensibly carried on in secret, they were in fact given considerable public airing. The deliberations of the committee were discussed in the columns of the Caledonian Mercury, whose proprietor, Thomas Allan was himself one of the elected Commissioners and a member of the investigating committee. Superintendent Brown attempted to defend himself in A Letter to the Right Honourable the Lord Provost,[47] which was published in pamphlet form in November 1820, and he was vigourously supported by the conservative Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine.[48] The Commissioners retaliated with an anonymous Reply to Captain Brown's Letter....[49] Events were also closely followed by The Scotsman. At the time/

time the police crisis broke The Scotsman was conducting a campaign against what it saw as the corruption which existed in many public bodies in the city. The chief object of its condemnation was the Town Council of Edinburgh. The largely self-perpetuating oligarchy which controlled the Council, and its friends in government circles (chiefly the adherents of the Melville/Dundas interest), were castigated as incompetent and self-seeking sinecurists. Similar criticisms, however, were levelled against the management of a number of charitable institutions in the city, such as the Royal Infirmary. The Infirmary was managed by a similarly self- pepetuating oligarchy, which was as independent of the contributors to the charity which maintained the hospital, as the Town Council was of the Burgesses of the city. Indeed, most of its managers were drawn from the same inter-connected group of 'friends of government', which controlled the Council. The Scotsman believed that a wide web of corruption was being drawn round these institutions by a number of self-seeking individuals. As the extent of the corruption within the police system became apparent, The Scotsman began to suggest that this web was being drawn round the police establishment.[50] This belief was given credence by the fact that a small, but influential number of the Police Commissioners stood out resolutely against all attempts by the majority on the Police Commission to secure the dismissal of the Superintendent. Under the provisions of the 1812 Police Act, the power of appointment and dismissal was vested in the three 'high functionaries'; the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, the Lord President of the Court of Session, and the Sheriff of the county of Edinburghshire. In November 1820, they rejected the recommendation of the majority of the Police Commission and claimed that there was insufficent evidence directly to implicate Brown or justify his dismissal.[51] Although the high functionaries drew up an able statement in Brown's defence, which was published by the Police Commission, their apparent condemnation of the entire affair seemed to suggest that they were not merely defending Brown, but that they were trying to cover up the corruption of which he had been accused. Even Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine, which defended the Superintendant, suggested that the high functionaries/

functionaries might have shown more willingness to admit the degree of corruption in the police system, and a more apparent enthusiasm to root it out. To The Scotsman, the affair seemed to be yet another example of systematic corruption among public officials and their influential friends in high public life, who were attempting to maintain control over public institutions for their own self-seeking ends. Though The Scotsman did not dare go so far as to name specific individuals, it christened this supposed system, 'the spirit of Toryism'. A desire to gain control of every profit-yielding public office, warned The Scotsman,

> was the besetting sin of the Tory faction, the very bane of the country. There is no species of patronage, from the appointment of a parish bellman, or a police scavenger, upwards to the professors of our universities, that they do not wish to engross for themselves ...introducing jobbing, peculation and corruption everywhere.[52]

Again, like the fears which had been expressed against the dangers of a full-time police force, this was not a novel accusation. Indeed, similar ideas were gaining wide currency in national political debate in Britain as a whole. In particular, these ideas were associated with the work of the radical propagandist William Cobbett. In his periodical, the Political Register, Cobbett denounced corruption at national political level. Government ministers, he claimed, were presiding over a vast system of jobs, honours, bribes and frauds. It was this corruption which made taxes so high. Only by a radical extension of the franchise, to give a wider section of the populace who paid for the government a say in affairs of state, could this corruption be rooted out and taxes reduced. There were many similarities between Cobbett's evocation of a corrupt national political system, and The Scotsman's campaign in Edinburgh. Indeed for The Scotsman's 'the spirit of Toryism', one might almost read the famous phrase, 'Old Corruption', which Cobbett used to denounce the sinecurists and placemen who, he believed, controlled the political establishment.

Without a doubt, Cobbett's arguments played an instumental part in popularising the reformist appeal in Britain, in the early nineteenth century. This was probably also true, with regard to the Edinburgh police, of the similar ideas propounded by the The Scotsman. In the past, critics of the way in which the system of police was developing, had warned of the dangers inherent in the system, and especially of the apparently arbitrary authority possessed by the Superintendant. Now, they could link their grievances to the widespread corruption which had been uncovered, and so also to the supposedly high cost of the police establishment, which had itself been a bone of contention for many years. In July 1820, the Incorporations of Wrights and Masons resolved

> That these Incorporations have for a long time, viewed with concern and surprise, the enormous expenditure of the public money, in all the depatments of the Police Establishment, the numerous abuses arising from the nature of the establishment, the want of an efficent check on the conduct of the officers thereof, and worst of all, the enormous power and authority vested in the hands of the superintendant, the operation of which is completely subversive of evey principle of constitutional freedom....[84]

The linking of old fears about the power and arbitrary authority of the police, with complaints about the cost to the ratepayers of the establishment, was a potent combination. The issue of the Superintendent became something of a cause celebre. Increasingly, public opinion in the city became polarised between those who saw reform of the police as an absolute necessity and those who saw the public agitation for the removal of the Superintendent as a dangerous precedent in popular irresponsibility. Even more than in 1816 a wide section of Edinburgh society and many public bodies in the city loudly voiced their views about to the system of police. Public meetings were called by the Commissioners in the various wards of police. They condemned the conclusions of the 'high functionaries' and supported the majority of the Police Commission in calling for captain Brown's dismissal. Few of these meetings failed to notethat it was among the elected majority of the/

the Police Commission that the campaign against corruption and demands for the dismissal of the Superintendent chiefly emanated, whereas his stoutest defenders were generally ex-officio members of the Commission, such as the representatives of the Town Council, or the county Sheriff. Increasingly, as the demands of the majority on the Police Commission for the dismissal of the Superintendent met with continued rebuttal from the high functionaries (themselves all ex-officio Commissioners), the existing constitution of the police establishment began to be condemned. Reflecting ideas which were being mooted at a national level by parliamentary reformers, such as Cobbett, a wide array of opinion in the city began to claim that it was the want of an effective control on the power of the senior officers in the police establishment which had led to the growth of corruption. The only way to prevent further abuse among the police establishment was to make it more responsible to those who payed for it: the public. The Scotsman condemned the system whereby the Superintendent was, in effect, responsible solely to the high functionaries, who alone could dismiss him:

> The closeness of the present system is one great evil, the care which is taken to exclude the public from the management of their own affairs another; but the divorcing of the Superintendent in his very hopes and feelings from the citizens of Edinburgh, and the rendering him entirely independent of them, while large discretionary powers are put in his hands, is the very worst. The public of Edinburgh should be permitted to attend to their own local concerns; they should be allowed to make regulations for themselves...and to appoint their own officers.[55]

The Goldsmith's Incorporation resolved that the source of the evil

> is the want of sufficient control possessed by the Inhabitants over the conduct of the officers of the Police Establishment, and the Superintendent being amenable to persons different from these who now bear the burden and have the chief interest in the proper discharge of his various duties.[56]

To the high functionaries, however, and their supporters among the ex-officio Commissioners, the very reverse was true. Granting too much authority to the Police Commission would do the operation of the police establishnent infinite harm. In a statement delivered to the Commissioners, the high functionaries declared that the Act of 1812

> was framed on the principle of limiting the patronage of the Commissioners as much as possible-and we think it wisely so framed.... Patronage can never be advantageously entrusted to a numerous, and especially a fluctuating body. There is too little of individual responsibility in such bodies-and the nomination to offices, or, we should rather say, the election to offices by them, is too generally made a matter of interest and canvass on the part of the candidate, and a matter of personal favour, intrigue and cabal on the part of the Electors, without due regard to the merit and qualifications of the several candidates.[57]

Increasingly, the disputes which were dividing public opinion in Edinburgh over the police reflected political divisions which were becoming a marked feature of British society as a whole. The post-war depression which affected much of Great Britain saw the re-emergence both of reformism in Parliament, and popular radicalism out of doors, particularly in the more depressed industrial regions, such as the English midlands and north, and the west of Scotland. The calls in Parliament by radicals and progressive Whigs for an extension of the franchise, were dismissed out of hand by the government. To popular radicalism out of doors, the governing classes re-acted with increasing repression and hostility. The violent response of the Manchester authorities to the 'Peterloo' meeting in 1819, or the passing of the repressive Six Acts later in the same year, merely symbolised a determination by authority to crush all dissent. Edinburgh, unlike Glasgow and the west of Scotland, did not possess a significant 'industrial' economy, nor was its craft economy in decline, as it was in many other areas. There was no great depression during these years, nor any significant emergence of working class radicalism. None the less, established/

established authority in the city reacted to the emergence of popular opposition to the police system with the same fear and distrust which marked governmental attitudes to political dissent or social protest in Britain as a whole. In 1822, under the aegis of the Town Council, a new Police Bill was brought forward, which would have narrowed the electoral base of the Police Commission and further emasculated its powers. Under this bill the electorate was to be reduced by almost a third, the electoral wards to be redistributed in favour of the more wealthy parts of the city, the number of ex-officio Commissioners increased and the Superintendent tied even more firmly to the high functionaries. In opposition to this, the Police Commission produced its own Police Bill, which would have retained the existing franchise, substantially reduced the number of ex-officio Commissioners and re-established the Commission's right to appoint and dismiss the Superintendent.[58]

On this occasion the Town Council and its supporters neither underestimated the importance of public opinion nor ignored the extent of popular interest in the police. Rather than introduce the Bill into Parliament with virtually no intimation to the public, as it had done in 1816, the Council sent a draft of the Bill to all the major public bodies in the city and ensured that it was published in the newspapers. This draft was accompanied by a report justifying the most contentious clauses of the Bill. The corruption which had been uncovered in the police establishment was ascribed not to negligence or peculation on the part of senior officers of police, but to financial mismanagement on the part of the Commission itself. Re-iterating ideas which had been put forward at the time of the 1812 Police Bill, the 'Council Chamber' report (as it was called) emphasised that the Police Commission, which, as a partly elected body, was subject to the 'ebullitions of popular feelings' should be excluded from any part in the management of the 'criminal' department of police. The maintenance of law and order should NOt be entrusted to a body which was subject to the often deleterious influence of 'public clamour'.[59] Yet however much the Council decried public clamour, its (uncharacteristic) efforts to publicise its views were/

were in themselves a recognition of the importance of public opinion. In fact, the publication of the Council Chamber report signalled the beginning of an increasingly acrimonious public debate about the respective Police Bills. The Scotsman and the Caledonian Mercury urged the public to support the Police Commission's bill, and gave wide coverage to the ward meetings called by the Commissioners. The Police Commission replied to the accusations of the Town Council in a pamphlet entitled Observations on the Report sent out from the Council Chamber....,[60] in which it assured the public that the finances of the police establishment were in a healthy surplus, owing to the economies instituted by the Commission itself. In an anonymously published pamphlet, Henry Cockburn, the Whig lawyer, condemned the Council Chamber Police Bill as an ill-disguised effort to ensure that the Police Commissioners were reduced to 'obsequious drones', nominated by a 'small select handful of voters, instead of being directly connected with the general mass of the taxed population'.[61] Cockburn, like all Whigs, resented the continuing dominance of public life in Scotland by the Melville/Dundas interest, which he had no hesitation in denouncing as a narrow 'Political Aristocracy'. Though, like most Whigs, he had no desire to radically extend the franchise, he saw the Council Chamber Police Bill as a crude attempt to deny the 'middling orders' their rightful role in the government of the community. In the same way that moderate middle class parliamentary reformers frequently denounced the 'friends of government' for confusing their cause with that of radical reform, Cockburn denounced the framers of the Council Chamber Police Bill as being motivated by an unjustified fear of the political outlook of the middle classes. It was this fear which inspired the comments in the report accompanying the bill that warned against the dangers of 'public clamour' and 'popular feelings'. Cockburn certainly believed that there was wide support for moderate reform among the Edinburgh middle classes. On the other hand, he believed that the governing elite were obsessed with the supposed threat of more radical political change. The Town Council's Police Bill, with its further narrowing both of the authority of the Police Commission and of the franchise on which its majority/

majority were elected, was inspired by a wrongful belief in the support for political extremism among the Edinburgh middle classes.

> The [Council] committee are evidently misled by unconcious references in their own minds to merely political offences; and they are framing a police-bill solely with a view to that single description of crime. This, however, is an offence that occurs too rarely, especially in comparison with other delicts, to be made the principal object of a statute that is chiefly intended for proceedings of a totally different character; and even when offences of this, or of any other popular nature occur, it is scandalous to suspect either the persons who elect the Commissioners, or the Commissioners themselves, of the slightest tendency to protect them.[62]

Even more than in 1816 a wide spectrum of middling Edinburgh society united in opposition to the Town Council's police bill. The committee of Commissioners which drew up the Police Commission's bill was dominated by lawyers and merchants, though it also included James Brown, a wright.[63] Public meetings held in all 26 of the wards of police, both rich and poor, overwhelmingly endorsed the Police Commission's bill.[64] Faced with this opposition, even the Town Council's supporters in government were forced to offer some concessions and a compromise Police bill was engineered by lord Melville himself. Under the Edinburgh Police Act of 1822 the electoral franchise remained unchanged and 'secret service' money was abolished. The cleaning and lighting departments of the police establishnent were put under the management of an Inspector appointed by the Police Commission. The power of appointment of the Superintendent, however, who retained charge of the 'criminal police', remained with the 'high functionaries'.

Although The Scotsman concluded that 'the victory is unquestionably with the public'[65] and reform-minded Commissioners were lionised by the Whig leaders in Edinburgh, the victory was at best a partial one. None the less, the agitation had demonstrated that the power of the political establishment/

establishment in Edinburgh was not absolute, and that the friends of government could not afford to ignore public opinion. The agitation over the 1822 Police Bill, and indeed the discontents which had been growing over previous years, were also important in the impact which they had on the ideology of burgh reform in Edinburgh. When reform re-emerged in Edinburgh following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the issue of burgh reform quickly gained the ascendancy. The ideology of burgh reform, however, as will be dicussed more fully in the following chapter, was based overwhelmighly on an appeal to the past and to the representative and responsible system of government which had supposedly existed in the early burgh. Although the appeal to the past probably helped reform to escape its associations with 'Jacobibism', the evocation of a dim and distant ideal as a model for reform in early nineteenth century Edinburgh had distinct drawbacks, as we shall see. As the movement for police reform gathered momentum, however, a different ideology began to emerge. An appeal to the past did not have the same efficacy for reform of an institution which was itself only a few years old. As resentment against the power of established authority in the police system grew, police reformers began to adopt a 'natural rights' argument to justify popular control of the Police Commission. As the Police Commission itself put it, in 1821

> It is still the inhabitants...who either directly, or through the medium of Commissioners, possess, and ought to possess, the fundamental control. They have the original, natural, and inherent right to this, independent of statute; and such right must continue with them, until positively taken away.[66]

This was not intended as an argument for democracy, however. The leaders of the movement frequently qualified their arguments by stressing that it was only the 'repectable' inhabitants, men of property and education, who could safely be entrusted with this right, and whose support was necessary for an efficent system of police. In a petition to the House of Lords against the 1816 police bill, the trades Incorporations of Mary's/

Mary's Chapel warned that, 'no system of police can be beneficial unless it is supported by the good wishes and co-operation of the respectable part of the community'.[67] Rarely was a clear definition offered as to who constituted the 'repectable' inhabitants. As a result of the emergence of the movement for moral reform, however, the ideal of respectability had gained wide currency. 'Respectability' encompassed those who lived temperate, Christian lives. It was generally associated with people of a middling status, and those among the lower orders who had come to absorb their views, a group usually identified with what historians now call the 'labour aristocracy'. The advocates of moral reform had little difficulty in identifying who they saw as the least respectable members of society; those among the poorer members of the community who did not lead thrifty, responsible, God fearing lives. The ideal of repectability, therefore, was as much a social, as a moral definition. It came to encompass that part of society which the predominantly middling order police reformers believed could safely be entrusted with control of the police establishment; a broad group ranging from wealthy advocates and solicitors, through professionals businessmen and shopkeepers, to tradesmen and craftsmen. In essence, it was the same group of people who appealed to the advocates of burgh reform, and it is not surprising that there was a considerable overlap of personnel and support between the two movements. The ideal of community invoked by the exponents of police reform, was one much closer to the realities of early nineteenth century Edinburgh, than the somewhat archaic ideal of the burgh reform movement. 'Respectability' was a somewhat loosely defined concept. It cannot be seen as a class-based idea, at least in the Marxian sense of the word: 'respectability' transcended such divisions, certainly in Edinburgh. It encompassed those social groups who were to dominate nineteenth century Edinburgh; the elect of nineteenth century Edinburgh society, as it were. The ideal of merchant and trade burgess rights (with its age old conflicts and exclusions), however, was rooted in a very simplistic notion of society, which ignored many of those socio-economic groups who were to prove a bulwark of Edinburgh reformism. The movement for police reform, therefore/

therefore, helped the middle classes in Edinburgh - the 'respectable' class - move toward an ideology and self-perception which more adequately reflected the broad social alliance that was, as we shall see, was to unite behind a reform programme in the years leading to the great reforms of the 1830s.

The ideal of respectability did more, however, than help define conceptions about to whom the police system should be accountable; it played an instrumental role in defining the role and duties of the police force itself. As we have seen, it is difficult to argue that the movement for moral reform played a central part in the establishment of the Edinburgh Police Commission. Never the less, although some historians would question whether the movement for moral reform played any part in the initial establishment of nineteenth century police forces,[68] there is broad agreement amongst modern scholarship that once the police had become established they came to play an important part in the movement to reform the morals of the poor . Robert Storch's phrase, the 'domestic missionary',[69] probably sums up the attitude of a number of historians to the role of the police during the nineteenth century. In an article on the development of the police in Portsmouth between 1815 and 1875, John Field commented:

> Order of discourse may not amount to order of importance in the mind, but one is still struck by the weight given to moral concerns as opposed to fears of thieving. It was a demand that persisted, with occasional complaints that the force was not doing enough to prevent Sunday rowdyism, rough games, and above all, prostitution and public inebriety.[70]

Although there is no mention of 'moral concerns' in the 1805 Police Act (or indeed any of the subsequent police acts), it is clear that such ideals came to play an important part in the deliberations of the Police Commission. The elected Commissioners may have feared the development of a police force which could threaten the liberties of the 'respectable' inhabitants/

inhabitants, but they showed much enthusiasm in advocating the use of the police to curb immorality and vice among the less 'repectable' part of the community. The clearest outline of their aims was in the Instuctions, Orders, Regulations and Bye-Laws.... which the Commission regularly issued to the police force. These left little doubt about the 'moral crimes' which most offended the sensibilities of the Commission. Although the Instructions..... of 1822 began by warning that 'the officers and watchmen be vigilant in preventing all crimes and offences', it was drunkenness and prostitution which appear to hve been the chief concern. The police were reminded the importance of,

> watching the motions of night walkers and suspected persons, and attending particularly to houses frequented by bad characters, tippling-houses, and disorderly houses of all descriptions....'[71]

They were enjoined to apprehend all persons 'behaving indecently',

> or employing obscene or indecent language on the streets, or who shall appear thereupon indecently dressed....[72]

Finally, the watchmen were warned that any of their number,

> who shall associate on the street with loose women, or who shall not apprehend all persons appearing on the streets,or at the mouths of stairs, entries, or closes, indecently dressed, using indecent language, or making indecent gestures, to the annoyance of the respectable part of the community,[73]

would be fined in the first instance and, if the offence were repeated, would be dismissed. The Police minutes are replete with similar injunctions, encouraging the police to more diligent action in apprehending 'loose characters'. Although many questioned the success of 'moral/

moral police', it is rare to find any open rejection, among 'respectable' opinion at least, of the concept of using the police for such a purpose. An exception, was one anonymous correspondent who wrote to The Scotsman in 1817. Although clearly supportive of the idea of moral reform, he believed that the police were merely attending to the consequences of a grave problem, while leaving its root causes untouched. The means to eradicating crime and immorality was in eradicating the social problems out of which they arose, and not in instituting a draconian code of regulations to be enforced by the police. It was by the means of the numerous benevolent societies of Edinburgh, and their 'acts of kindness...[toward] the lowest and most miserable classes', and not the vigilance of the police, that the poor would be improved .[74]

> It is infinitely more desirable to improve the condition of society by bestowing education, nourishing better principles and habits, and so preventing the growth of vice, and the commission of crimes, than to multiply restrictive, correctional, and vindictive laws and regulations.[75]

As we have noted, a recurring theme during the early years of the police establishment was the desire, amongst 'respectable' opinion, to ensure that the police did not become a threat to the liberty of the citizen. This correspondent appears to have been one of the few to see any conflict between this ideal, and the concept of using the police as an instrument of moral control. He believed that the minutiae of police regulations in this respect, were not only unlikely to effect any improvement among the populace, but were a serious restraint on 'civil liberty', and he advised their repeal. Quoting William Paley he argued that 'a law being found to produce no sensible effects, is a sufficent reason for repealing it, as adverse and injurious to the rights of a free citizen....' This correspondent appears to have been a lone voice, however. Similar conclusions were not drawn by the Police Commissioners themselves. It does not seem to have occurred to them that the degree to which/

which they encouraged the police to be vigilant against indecencies that might offend 'the respectable part of the community', was in any way at odds with liberty as such. Perhaps this was because most police reformers concieved of 'liberty' in a more overtly political sense, particularly in the politically charged climate in Britain at the end of the Napoleonic wars. Perhaps it was also because the 'respectable' inhabitants did not conceive that moral policing had any call with them; they had nothing to fear. The whole movement for moral reform was aimed primarily at the poorer sections of the community; almost by definition the less respectable part of society. Similarly, an underlying assumption of the police system was that it was among the lower orders that crime and immorality primarily originated, and to whom the vigilance of the police should be directed. None of this represented a threat to the middle classes or their way of life.

Not surprisingly, the most persistent calls for more vigilance on the part of the police against indecency, came from those parts of the town where there was the greatest interface between respectability and vice. Most complaints did not originate in the most wealthy parts of the city, such as the New Town, whose inhabitants experienced relatively little contact with the poorest members of society. In fact, most complaints appear to have originated in the Old Town, where there was greatest contact between the respectable inhabitants and their less respectable counterparts. Some parts of the old core of the city retained some degree of their former status, even after the exodus of much of the middle and upper strata of Edinburgh society to the newer residential suburbs had begun. Parts of the 'Royal Mile', the old High Street running from the Castle to Holyrood Palace, retained some of their former grandeur. It retained a role as a business and commercial centre of the town. The Town Council, the Sheriff Court, and the Scottish high courts continued to meet in buildings off this street. At the same time, however, many of the lesser streets and closes leading off the High Street, had become notorious slums by the beginning of the nineteenth century; the preserve of the poorest and most unfortunate members of society/

society. Here, amongst the most poverty stricken members of the population, social malaise was most acute, and phenomena such as drunkenness and prostitution were widespread. These, ofcourse, were not new to the Old Town. Prostitution was hardly an unaccustomed aspect of life in the city, and there is plenty of evidence about the more Bacchanalian aspects of eighteenth century Edinburgh society. As the movement for respectability gained momentum, however, the middling classes began to look increasingly askance at the continuing prevalence of vice among the poor, and balk at its presence in their midst. The prostitutes of the Old Town, for instance, who lingered off the Royal Mile, became an enduring bone of contention to the shopkeepers of the still respectable high street. After complaints from High Street proprietors, Captain Robison, the Superintendent of police, was called before the Watching Committee of the Police Commission, in 1826, to answer for the poor showing of his men in that part of the town. He replied that

> orders had been given to the officers to keep the streets as clear of prostitutes as possible and at all times, but they found it no easy matter to keep such characters always within proper bounds.[76]

The committee enjoined the Superintendent to redouble his efforts. Similar complaints came from areas such as Roxburgh Place and Drummond Street, which although relatively well heeled suburbs, were nevertheless quite close to more down-trodden parts of the city.[77]

In the absence of reliable evidence it is difficult to assess how the poorer members of society themselves reacted to the activities of the police. The oral culture of the Edinburgh poor has not been as well recorded as the views and outlook of the more literate members of society. As historians such as Robert Gray have shown, the 'labour aristocracy' as they have been called, the elite of the urban working classes, were often the most ardent exponents of the ideals of 'respectability'/

'respectability'.[78] Small masters, artisans and craftsmen, struggling to retain a social status just above that of the 'labouring poor', were frequently zealous adherents of the values championed by their betters. None the less, it seems clear that their were elements of conflict between the ideal of respectability, and the attitudes of some of the populace themselves. There is evidence that sections of the community acted to protect those whom their betters accused of social crimes, and against whom the police were directed. In 1825, Mr Fyfe, a shopkeeper, complained that a woman both intoxicated and a prostitute had strayed into his shop. Fyfe admitted to having 'pushed her rather violently out of his shop'. In consequence, an angry crowd gathered and the shop windows were smashed. Fyfe's complaint was that the watchman who was at the scene, and confronted by the mob, refused either to arrest the woman, or call for reinforcements to dispell the crowd. The watchmen excused his conduct to the Police Commission, on the grounds that he was an acquaintance of the woman.

The Police Commissioners were themselves conscious that the majority of the police force were drawn from that very section of society which they saw as being the most criminal. They were prepared to admit that the conduct of the police was not above reproach. In a report of 1816, the Watching Committee concluded that

> with respect to the common watchmen, the committee have full reason to be satisfied that they have been uniformly attentive and civil. To expect that in the course of a whole year some instances of a contrary nature should not have occurred amongst nearly 200 persons of that class of society from which watchmen behove to be taken is to look for more than human nature admits of.[80]

The Scotsman claimed in 1831 that the police force was drawn from the 'lowest class of the city population'.[81] This comment can perhaps be excused on the grounds that it was made at the height of the Reform Bill crisis/

crisis, during which the conduct of the police during public demonstrations excited much hostile comment in pro-reform circles. It is true, however, that the rank-and-file of the police force were men of a fairly humble background. The desire for economy on the part of the ratepayers was ever present and police pay was by no means generous. The turn-over rate of policemen appears to have been high. The records of the police physicians show that there was a high incidence of illnesses normally associated with the poor and it is clear that drunkenness was a constant problem. It is therefore not surprising that doubts were expressed about the ability of the police to fulfil their role as guardians of public decency. The same correspondent who wrote to The Scotsman, in 1817, questioning the whole idea of moral policing, suggested that if it was to be carried out it should be done by the community itself in the form of a neighbourhood watch scheme. In this way a greater degree of examination could be permitted than should to allowed to a force of mercenary hirelings.[92]

Despite the criticisms which were expressed against the system of police in the early nineteenth century, there were no serious attempts either to abolish the new police or to institute the sort of schemes suggested by the correspondent of The Scotsman. Neither did the fears expressed by many of Edinburgh's citizens (including a number of Police Commissioners themselves) about the irresponsibility of the police have any lasting impact on the development of the police system. As the nineteenth century progresseed the 'watching' department appears to have become increasingly independent of the Police Commission and its successor (the Commission was abolished in 1848 and its powers were vested in the reformed Town Council). Never the less, the Police Commission and the disputes surrounding the development of the police had played an important role in the development of early nineteenth century Edinburgh. The establishment of the Police Commission had introduced a virtually unprecedented elective element into local government in the city. The fact that many people who had hitherto been excluded from any real part in local administration were now playing an important/

important part in the the government of the community, probably gave added hope and confidence to the more liberal and reforming elements in Edinburgh society. At the same time, the conflicts over control of the police establishment helped 'respectable' society (as it defined itself) to develop a greater awareness of its rights and encouraged it to assert its influence. As such, therefore, the developmemt of the Edinburgh Police Commission was a valuable 'dress-rehearsal' for the responsible government which was to emerge in Edinburgh after the reforms of the 1830s.

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Following the collapse of the Friends of the People in Edinburgh in the mid 1790s, organised reformism seems to have died out in the city. The underground radicalism which continued to exist among some working class communities in the West of Scotland (much of it linked to the activities of the United Irishmen) does not appear to have been replicated among the middling and trades groups which had dominated reformism in Edinburgh. This is not to say that, under the impact of war and the loyalist reaction, the spirit of political dissent entirely withered away. As we have seen, the Edinburgh Police Commission was enveloped in political controversy from its very inception in 1805. Neither did the demand for burgh reform disappear, although the organised burgh reform movement appears to have ceased its activities after 1794, in despair of ever gaining sufficient parliamentary support. The issue was briefly re-animated in Edinburgh in 1799, when Bailie Thomas Smith, himself a member of the Town Council, published a pamphlet comdemning the way in which burgh affairs were managed and warning that the Corporation was on the verge of bankruptcy. Although the affair was quickly quashed by Henry Dundas and his adherents, it had a significant impact, as we shall see, on the course which the burgh reform movement took in the years leading to the great reforms of the 1830s. None the less, both Smith and his supporters, and those who agitated for reform of the Police Commission, were branded by their opponents as being akin to the Jacobin radicals of the 1790s. With the defeat of Napoleon, however, a new climate began to emerge. The cessation of hostilities made it more possible for reformers in Edinburgh, as in Britain as a whole, to agitate for change without being branded as traitors to their country. At the same time, the disappointment which soon manifested itself among those who had looked forward to a new age of liberty and prosperity following the end of the war, helped provide a broad base of support for the reform movement. In particular, those who had laboured under the burden of taxation imposed by the hostilities, confidently expected that much of this would cease with the dismantling of the war establishment. These hopes were soon shattered, however, and there seems little doubt that opposition to the high cost of government (and to the graft and corruption/

corruption which was seen as its root) played an important part in the re-emergence of the movement for parliamentary reform. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that the end of the war saw a resumption, in Edinburgh, of the reform movement which had flourished in the early 1790s. Reaction had made a powerful impact and as we shall see, the demands of the re-emergent parliamentary reform movement fell far short of the position taken by the Friends of the People. The only evidence of the legacy of the 1790s seemed to be in the determined effort of the movement in Edinburgh to distance itself from the radicalism of that period. In ideology and outlook, those who advocated constitutional change owed much more to the reform movement in Edinburgh in the 1780s and even earlier. Indeed, as in the 1780s, it was in fact the campaign for burgh (as opposed to parliamentary) reform, which soon came to the fore. An examination of the social background of those associated with the re-emergent reform movement also seemed to confirm the pattern set down in the previous century. The movement still appeared to be one which drew its support from the 'middling' ranks in society; from professional and semi-professional groups, shopkeepers, and the master craftsmen who controlled the Incorporations. There is little evidence of participation by working people not drawn from a craft background, and certainly not of any working people's movement which can be distinguished from the movement as a whole. A contrast can therefore be drawn between reformism in Edinburgh and the movements of Glasgow and the industrialised West of Scotland. The movement in these areas included a reformism which was clearly dominated by working people and was much more radical in ideology than that in Edinburgh. In fact, it is not until the late 1820s and early 1830s that we can see a more clearly distinguishable 'working class' element in the Edinburgh movement. This is not to say that the re-emergence of the reform movement in the city after the end of the Napoleonic wars, simply marked a return to the pattern of the 1780s. With the establishment of The Scotsman, in 1817, there appeared a newspaper which reported and encouraged reform to a degree hitherto without compare in the annals of the Edinburgh newspaper press, with the exception of the Edinburgh Gazetteer of the 1790s. Following/

Following in the footsteps of Jeffrey's famous Edinburgh Review, which had been inaugurated in 1802, The Scotsman argued the case for moderate reform and relentlessly urged its readers to play a more active part in public affairs. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the course of this re-emergent reform movement in Edinburgh, from the end of the war, in 1815, to the beginning of the Reform Bill crisis of 1829-32. The composition and ideology of the movement will be compared both with that in other parts of the country and with earlier reform movements in the city. Particular emphasis will be placed on the way in which the reaction of the 1790s had influenced the aims and ideology of the reformers in Edinburgh.

With the final defeat of Napoleon in June 1815, Britain, after two decades of war, began the difficult transition to a peace-time society. Between 1814 and 1817, 200,000 soldiers and seamen were demobilised, many facing a very uncertain future in an economy much of which was contracting after wartime expansion.[1] Ex-servicemen, many with no skills and only a small pension, added considerably to the ranks of the army of vagrants who lined the streets of Edinburgh. Vagrancy, a problem which had long been a bugbear of respectable Edinburgh society, appears to have assumed alarming proportions in the years immediately after the end of the war. The Society for the Suppression of Beggars, for the Relief of Occasional Distress, and for the Encouragement of Industry among the Poor, had been founded in 1813, but its work continued into the post-war years.[2]. In 1815 it was joined by the Committee for the Relief of the Labouring Classes, which provided temporary employment in stone-breaking and road- making. Soup, meals and coal were also provided to impoverished married men with families.[3] In 1816 there were around 1900 applications for assistance. Seven hundred came from labourers or individuals 'of no fixed employment', and over one hundred from ex-servicemen. There were also about five to six hundred applications for relief, however, from skilled tradesmen and artisans, such as printers, masons and smiths.[4] Clearly, economic depression was by no means affecting only the poor and unskilled. This is suggested in the breadth of/

of opposition which emerged in Edinburgh, as in the country as a whole, to the high level of taxation. Understandably, many expected that the end of the war would lead to a reduction in taxation. Hopes were expressed that there would be relief 'from part of the heavy taxes to which the community has for so long, and with so much patience submitted....'[5] Particular odium had fallen on a new assessment, the income tax, which had been first introduced during the war, not only because of the assessment itself, but because of the inquisitorial methods which tax officials were empowered to use in investigating people's income. When, following Napoleon's escape from Elba, in 1814, the government rescinded its promise to withdraw the tax, a committee of the Corporate Bodies of the city was formed, to petition the Commons, in protest.[6] In the Goldsmiths Incorporation, resolutions were passed warning that,

> the nature and principles of the tax, with the mode of assessment and other provisions for making it effectual, are repugnant to the free principles of a British Constitution.[7]

In a strongly worded petition of March 1816, the Goldsmiths Incorporation renewed its opposition to the tax. It condemned what it referred to as the unprecedented magnitude of the peace establishment and suggested that the tax could be abolished by a much needed retrenchment in government expenditure.[8] Although there was as yet no overt call for political reform, one can see in these complaints, many of the grievances which helped fuel the re-emergent campaign for reform. Discontent at the level of government expenditure helped give credence to opposition complaints that the government was dominated by placemen and sinecurists, who were lining their own pockets at the people's expense. Moreover, the charge that the mode of assessment for the income tax was an invasion of liberty, exacerbated the reputation for authoritarian government which was being gained by the Liverpool administration in the post-war years. The campaign against the tax was, in fact, a demonstration of the extent to which the shadow that had fallen/

fallen over all political opposition during the war years, had been lifted. It was also a foretaste of the extent to which post-war reform would still be dominated by middling elements in Edinburgh society. The most notable part of the campaign against the property tax was a 'respectable' meeting held in Merchant's Hall, in February 1816, which secured the support of even Henry Cockburn, who was never an enthusiast for the popular activism of the 1790s. It was, he later claimed,

> the first respectable meeting held in Edinburgh, within the memory of man, for the avowed purpose of controllong the Government on a political matter; and was justly considered as striking indication of the tendency of the public mind....[9]

In fact, a quiet revolution was taking place in the Merchant Company itself. Contrary to Cockburn's claims, 'respectable' opinion, through the Company, had already made repeated complaints against the rising tide of taxation. In 1813 it had resolved against the proposed tax on letters, and in 1815 had came out strongly against the Shop Tax.[10] The Company also recorded its opposition to attempts artificially to maintain the price of grain through legislation. When, at the behest of the agricultural interest, the government sponsored what became the infamous Corn Laws of 1815, the Merchants warned Parliament of the 'various alarming evils [which] may justly be apprehended' from the measure.[11] How far these declarations were supported by the Master and Assistants of the Company, it is difficult to say. Traditionally, as we have seen, the Master and Assistants were drawn from the same mercantile group which controlled the Town Council and which was connected to the government through its patron, Viscount Melville. Even the Council, however, was moved to protest against the proposed Corn Bill in 1814, before it became a government measure[12]. The executive of the Company were certainly not sympathetic to the increasing support which, as we shall see, the rank and file were showing toward the re-emergent burgh reform campaign and in 1818 the old regime in the Company was cast aside, with the election as Master, of a bookseller, Adam Black, one of the leaders of post-war burgh reform in the city.[13]

Equally significant was the change which was taking place in the character of the Edinburgh press. As we have seen, the press in Edinburgh had demonstrated support for reform during the early 1790s (as well as before) and had initially criticised the reactionary measures of the government. It too was to a large extent overtaken by the tide of loyalism which swept the country from 1793 onwards. During the short-lived Peace of Amien of 1802, however, a more tolerant climate began to form, and it was at this time that the famous Edinburgh Review first appeared. The leading spirits of this quarterly were a number of prominent young Whigs, including Francis Jeffrey, Henry Brougham and Sydney Smith. Although it was careful to avoid the indiscretions of newspapers such as the Scots Chronicle and the Edinburgh Gazetteer, the Edinburgh nevertheless soon gained a reputation for outspoken criticism of corruption and abuse. Among its literary and philosophical articles, the Edinburgh Review found space to support a number of reforming causes, including anti-slavery,[14] Catholic emancipation[15], and abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts[16] In 1808, in an article ostensibly on the Spanish rebellion, Jeffrey and Brougham made a biting criticism of the English upper classes and called for 'reform of the administration of our affairs...to prevent more violent changes.'[17] The article appears to have caused a storm among conservative opinion. Walter Scott cancelled his subscription and helped to set up the rival Tory Quarterly Review in 1809.[18] None the less, the Edinburgh Review became increasingly open in its support for constitutional reform. In an article of 1810, Brougham (now an MP) criticised the absence of popular elections in Scotland,[19] and affirmed his commitment to parliamentary reform.[20] By 1814 the Edinburgh had an estimated national readership of around 50,000[21] and there seems little doubt about the impact which it made on respectable Edinburgh society in particular. In 1825 Robert Mudie in his description of the 'Modern Athens', described the Edinburgh Review as,

> a work, the boldness of spirit, and originality of which were at the time altogether unprecedented.... Though the real ability of the Edinburgh/

> Edinburgh Review was great, the vast popularity which it so speedily obtained, and the brilliant course which it ran, were unquestionably more owing to the novelty of its plan, and the fact of its advocating these political principles which were agreeable to the majority of the people at the time, than to its merits.[22]

It is important, however, not to misunderstand the political views which the Edinburgh Review helped to promote. Although it certainly angered some of the older Whigs,[23] it stopped far short of endorsing the radical parliamentary reform put forward by the Friends of the People and it denounced popular radicalism as strongly as it did Toryism. In a review of William Cobbett, in 1807, Jeffrey condemned the idea that the evils in the state were wholly owing to the legislature being chosen by the influence of powerful families or corrupt electors. Cobbett's solution of a vastly expanded electorate, claimed Jeffrey, would destroy the balance between royal, aristocratic, and popular influence, which was the essence of mixed government.[24] Walter Scott wrote in 1810 that, in Edinburgh,

> folks on both sides are quarrelling with the Edinburgh for being neither democratical nor (what shall I call them) Whiggish.[25]

Jeffrey himself, described the Edinburgh Review as being caught between the 'adherents of the Court', and the 'dangerous...discontented advocates for reform and innovation'.[26] Clearly, the Edinburgh Review was by no means the Jacobinical emulator of Thomas Paine which some of its detractors claimed.[27] Moreover, at a price of 5 shillings (raised to 6 in 1809), it was certainly not aimed at the individual working man.

Equally bold in its conception, and relatively liberal in its politics, was The Scotsman, a weekly newspaper which first appeared in 1817. The Scotsman made little secret of its condemnation of the existing newspapers in Edinburgh. In their Prospectus of November 1816, the projectors of the paper, William Ritchie, a Whig lawyer, the bookseller John/

John Robertson and a geologist, Charles Maclaren, condemned the timidity and conservatism of the existing press:

> nothing of a very spirited or liberal nature can find its way through the Edinburgh daily or weekly press...many political matters and transactions in Scotland are thus never generally known; and...the conductors of the Edinburgh Prints act, editorially, as if they dreaded nothing so much as the idea of being thought independent.[28]

Ritchie, who had strong views against supposed mismanagement in the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, had found it impossible to publicise his opinions in the existing Edinburgh press.[29] This is perhaps reflected in The Scotsman's promise to open its columns to,

> all who shall...bring forward a case which, politically, morally, or religiously, is deserving of consideration.[30]

As we have already seen, the columns of The Scotsman became open to police reformers, and a number of other reform issues, including both parliamentary and burgh reform, were to be publicised in its pages. In many ways, The Scotsman differed little from the existing newspaper press. Like the older Caledonian Mercury and Edinburgh Evening Courant, it had sections dealing with foreign news, with specifically Scottish news, and with extracts from the leading London papers. Apart from the liberalism of its political outlook (which we will examine later), The Scotsman stood out from the rest of the press, in the way in which it used what is today referred to as the 'editorial'; not only to argue a particular case, but to urge its readers to take a full part in public affairs. As we have seen, the older papers had by no means been without political slant. None, however, had been as open as was The Scotsman, through its pioneering use of the editorial, in confidently proclaiming its views on the pressing issues of the day. During its first year, the paper's/

paper's leading articles, or 'Disquisitions', included, 'On the Necessity for Reform', 'On the Political Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands', and 'On the Naming of Juries in Matters Civil'.[31] The paper used such articles actively to encourage the public to make their presence felt in the political arena; it openly sought to stimulate public debate and agitation in a way which unparalleled in the Edinburgh newspaper press at the time. In the Prospectus, the projectors declared their intention to animate the 'Public Spirit', and the paper repeatedly urged the public in Edinburgh to rouse themselves from apathy. When the 1819 Parliamentary Report on municipal government in Scotland was published, The Scotsman warned that 'every man must now take his stand for or against the system' and declared that the evidence,

> will remain to after ages a monument of the gross defects and vices of the municipal government of Scotland, as well as of the torpid patience and culpable indifference of her people.[32]

Such outspoken comment is hardly surprising. Both Robertson and Ritchie became zealous reformers in post-war Edinburgh. Robertson was active in burgh reform,[33] while Ritchie combined his condemnation of the management of the Royal Infirmary, which was under the jurisdiction of the Town Council, with involvement in attempts to reform the Police Commission.[34] Such involvement also helps explain the leading part which The Scotsman took in the re-emergence of the movement for burgh reform, in post-war Edinburgh.

Unlike parliamentary reform, the issue of burgh reform had never quite been submerged by the wave of reaction during the 1790s. Although the organised movement for reform of the Scottish burghs appears to have ceased its activities around 1794, the issue was dramatically re-animated in Edinburgh in 1799, with the publication of a pamphlet by Baillie Thomas Smith, a disgruntled member of the Council. Smith condemned/

condemned the management of affairs by the Council, and warned that the corporation, already heavily in debt, was fast approaching bankruptcy.[34] Although there is much about the affair which remains obscure, including the motives of Smith himself, there is no doubt about the impact which it made on public opinion in Edinburgh. A flurry of pamphlets appeared, the vast majority endorsing Smith's views as to the state of the city finances, and criticising the Council. The affair was swiftly hushed up by Henry Dundas and his supporters, but not before it had once again focussed attention on the way in which the corporation was run. In particular, the publication of correspondence between Henry Dundas and members of the Council[35] demonstrated the degree to which the Council was manipulated by party and influence; and by Dundas himself. One commentator noted that,

> we learn from Mr Smith's address, that it is customary to send the different leets for magistrates, etc for the city of Edinburgh, to be approved by Mr Dundas, thereby making him the Elector of his own Electors. A train of conduct most admirably adapted to the freedom of election under our present happy constitution![37]

Another claimed that the affair merely demonstrated the extent to which the members of the Council were motivated by greed and self-interest.[38] Given the spirit of the times, it is hardly surprising that none of the commentators went beyond suggesting administrative and organisational reforms. Nonetheless, the implications of the affair were clear; it was the constitution of the burgh, and the self-seeking, oligarchical system of government it encouraged, which were at the root of the Council's problems. With the revival of burgh reform after the end of the war, the lessons of the Smith affair were not forgotten. Smith himself was often invoked by the reformers[39] and there was, as we will see, a heightened realisation of mismanagement and abuse of the Council's finances, as another aspect of the shortcomings of the old regime. True to its promise to open its columns to all who had a worthy case 'politically, morally, or religiously', The Scotsman newpaper became a regular platform/

platform the expression of burgh reformist ideas. Given the commitment of its projectors to the issue, it is hardly surprising that the paper in fact became the principal propogandist for the re-emerging burgh reform movement in Edinburgh. As in the past, an appeal was made to civic (and perhaps proto-nationalist) patriotism. 'Does not every native of Scotland feel for the disgrace of its metropolis?', asked The Scotsman, in a disquisition calling for popular election of the Council. Only a change in the constitution of the burgh would put its citizens on a par with their counterparts in England.[40] In a letter to the paper, in March 1817, 'Philo-Edinensis', called for burgh reform, contrasting the virtues of the Edinburgh, and the Scottish people, with the the absence of political liberty north of the border.

> You hear him [the citizen of Edinburgh] constantly contrasting the beauties of his native town with the confined streets, the brick built houses and smokey atmosphere of the metropolis [London]; he boasts the pre-eminence of his countrymen in intelligence, morality and literature, but drops their claim to public spirit, political independence and attachment to the principles of civil liberty...as a thousand facts are ready to...compel him, however reluctantly, to confess his inferiority.[41]

Despite the past commitment of the Town Council to the improvement of the city, The Scotsman warned that the present municipal constitution meant that this commitment rested on a very shaky foundation. If the Council were popularly elected, this commitment would reflect the steadfast support of the community itself to the concept of improvement. At present however, this commitment depended solely on the whims of its councillors, who were responsible to no-one but themselves. The consequence was incoherence and the absence of a clear policy:

> we...observe that the alternative fits of langour and furious exertion show that the state of our municipal affairs fluctuates with the personal character and humours of our rulers; whereas were the public spirit of our citizens the governing principle, improvements would go on with a steady and progressive pace.[42]

Moreover, the irresponsibility of the Council allowed it to carry out projects which no popularly elected corporation would dare inflict on the populace. In particular, The Scotsman pointed to a block of buildings which had been constructed under the patronage of the Council on the North Bridge; 'A shapeless mass of crude deformity...execrable from every point from which it can be viewed....'[43] The Council, claimed The Scotsman, was driven to sanctioning such projects by its continual need for extra revenue, a need brought about by the 'jobbing and waste' which flourished under the system of self-election. The same financial problems had forced the Council to 'ruin the plan of the New Town' (which envisaged an uninterrupted view of the new gardens), by sanctioning building on the south side of Princes Street. Similarly, the Royal Exchange had been 'rendered useless' by the corporation's converting its passages into market booths, in its quest for money.[44]

Increasingly, it was concern about the financial problems of the Council, which appears to have dominated the thoughts of the burgh reformers. Reflecting the legacy of the Smith affair, but also developments in other Scottish burghs, fears as to the level of the city debts and the possibilty that the burgesses of the city might be held liable for them, began to play a prominent part in pro-reform propoganda. In 1817, the corporation of Aberdeen became insolvent, and in a remarkable 'Address...to their Successors in Office' of 1817, subsequently published in Edinburgh,[45] the retiring Council confirmed many of the worst fears of the burgh reformers. The system of self-election, claimed the magistrates, tended,

> to give any individual or party, who may be so inclined, an excessive and unnatural preponderence, and to foster and encourage a system of secrecy and concealment, under which the most upright and best intentioned magistrates may not be able to acquire that thorough knowledge of the situation of the burgh, which is requisite for the due administration of its affairs.

Only/

Only a change in the mode of election of the Council could remove the abuses which had resulted in the 'heavy calamity' which had befallen the corporation[46]. As if to underline the fears encouraged by this declaration, the magistrates of Dumfries issued a statement stating that the burgesses of the town were liable for all debts contracted by the Council[47]. 'The Burgesses of Edinburgh should have Aberdeen and Dumfries constantly before their eyes', warned The Scotsman.

> They may yet, when it is too late, repent of their supineness, and regret that they ever permitted any set of men burden and mortgage the public funds at their pleasure.[48]

The Scotsman recalled Thomas Smith's warnings about the Council's mounting debts[49] and while it was willing to assert that the threat of bankruptcy was 'remote and contingent',[50] the paper warned that the corporations's habitual secrecy about its financial affairs suggested that it had something to hide.[51] Repeatedly, The Scotsman warned of the danger of entrusting the burgh revenues to a self-elected junto.

> To place a large annual revenue, destined for public purposes, at the disposal of a set of men, who neither derive their powers from those in whose behalf they act, nor are accountable to them, nor any way connected with them, but who have got into office by intrigue, and keep together from views of private interest, to conceal the knowledge of public concerns from all but those who have an interest in their mal-administration, and to endow a body thus constituted with extensive patronage and influence; this we think, is little more than holding out a bounty to malversation in official men, and scattering the seeds of corruption through society.[52]

Not until self-election was ended, and a body of popularly elected councillors came into office, would there be a magistracy with sufficent virtue and public support, to root out the corruption and abuse which bedevilled Edinburgh's municipal affairs.[53]

To a large extent, therefore, the appeal of the burgh reform movement was a simple appeal to utility; a popularly elected municipal government would be a better one. As one ananymous reformer put it,

> We are not asserting any speculative doctrines; we inculcate no theoretical novelty, we preach no rights of man, but we call for the redress of a definite grievance widely felt and clearly manifested.[54]

It is easy to understand why the leaders of the burgh reform movement should have been so eager to avoid 'speculative doctrines'. During the reaction of the 1790s, the 'rights of man' and the 'metaphysical' justification for reform so bitterly condemned by Burke, had become inextricably linked with Jacobinical radicalism and the excesses of the French Revolution; and the burgh reformers had no wish to associate themselves with the ideals of the discredited Friends of the People. Nonetheless, the burgh reform movement did look to an ideal for their reforms, though it was in an appeal to history, rather than speculative theory, that they saw their model for change. As we have already seen, the appeal to history had been a part of burgh reformism since The Letters of Zeno of 1783, and in the re-emergent burgh reforn movement, this took form as the so-called 'Incorporation of the Guildry' of Edinburgh.

In late 1817 the election of the Town Council of Montrose was declared void and according to a precedent set by Henry Dundas himself, in the case of Stirling in 1781, the Lord Advocate, Alexander Maconochie, issued a new charter to the burgh. Under this charter, all the burgesses were allowed to vote in the electon of 1818 and thereafter the six merchant councillors were to be elected by the merchant burgesses of the town.[55] The government quickly realised its mistake, in allowing the precedent of an injection of popular election into burgh government, and there was no repetition of events in Montrose. None the less, the case of Montrose acted as a spur to burgh reform in Edinburgh, as in many other/

other Scottish towns.[56] The Merchant Company petitioned the government in favour of reform, citing the precedent of Montrose,[57] as did many of the Incorporations. An (ultimately unsuccessful) action was brought in the Court of Session, in order to have the 1817 municipal elections declared void, a decision which would open the way to a new charter and sett for the city. Perhaps the most interesting and most telling aspect of the re-emergent burgh reform campaign, however, was the establishment of the Incorporation of the Guildry. Again, this related closely to the case of Montrose. Under the charter issued by the Lord Advocate, the election of the merchant councillors was given to the ancient Guild of Merchants (similar to the right of election of trades councillors held by tradesmens incorporations). Historians of Edinburgh have disputed whether any equivalent institution existed in the city's past.[58] The Merchant Company of Edinburgh corresponded with the concept of the Guildry in terms of membership, but it dated only from 1681. The Deanship of Guild, however, was an office of the Council, and its holder was empowered to grant so-called Guild tickets to merchant burgesses of the city. By the early nineteenth century the privileges granted by possession of the Guild ticket were to a large extent nominal (though it still held social prestige) and the Guildry had no existence as a formal institution. A committee of the 'Incorporaton of the Guildry', however, as they styled themselves, was formed to re-assert (as its supporters saw it) the right of the Guild brethren to elect the merchant members of Council. The membership of this committee drew together many of the various strands of reform in the city. Besides John Robertson, one of the founders of The Scotsman, it included the bookseller Adam Black, whose election as Master of the Merchant Company in 1818 was seen as a triumph against the old regime in municipal affairs. As well as being closely involved in burgh reform during the 1820s, Black became a pro-reform Police Commissioner and was involved in parliamentary reform in the early eighteen-thirties. Another member was James Gibson (later Sir James Gibson-Craig), a Writer to the Signet and a leading Edinburgh Whig. He also later played a prominent part in parliamentary reform as a supporter of the Grey government and as a campaigner in favour of Francis/

Francis Jeffrey's attempts to become MP for Edinburgh. Despite this, however, and despite the fact that at least four members of the committee besides Black were associated with police reform (namely Archibald Anderson, Archibald Glen, Andrew Scott and John Wright),[58] the ideology of the Guildry, as of burgh reform as a whole, was markedly different from that of police or indeed parliamentary reform. Whereas the latter (in Edinburgh at least) were rooted in an appeal to utility, and to the natural right of the community to elect its own servants and representatives, the basic justification for the Guildry was an appeal to the past. Arguing the case for the Guild as a legitimate institution, with firm roots in the city's past, could smooth the way towards a reformed municipal constitution in the same mould as the Lord Advocate himself had created for Montrose. Moreover, an appeal to our own past, as reformers on the national stage such as Francis Burdett or Major Cartwright understood, was one way of side-stepping the association with Jacobinical 'innovation' and the French Revolution. This is perhaps one reason why burgh reform played such a prominent role in the re-emergence of reform in post war Edinburgh. It had been a live issue in Edinburgh politics long before the 1790s and it had never been as closely associated with the radicalism of the Friends of the People, as had been the issue of parliamentary reform. Burgh reform retained an aura of respectability, which the radicalism of the 1790s had severely undermined in parliamentary reform. The lengths to which the post-war burgh reformers were prepared to go in their pursuit of historical precedent, however, leads one to question the degree to which they were really committed to extending active political rights in the community; and how far their ideology was relevant to the realities of nineteenth-century Edinburgh. In their commitment to ensuring historical precedent, the Incorporation of the Guildry and its supporters pictured a vision, and endorsed a programme of reform, which was becoming as archaic as the system of municipal government it so bitterly condemned. The committee of the Guildry looked back to an ideal of civic government in which community control over the magistracy was exercised through membership of either the merchants Guild or one of the tradesmen's Incorporations, which/

which elected their respective representatives in Council (the form of government enshrined in the reformed sett of Montrose). Thus, as well as calling for election of the merchant councillors by the company of merchant burgesses, the Guildry endorsed the age old demand of the fourteen tradesmen's Incorporations for abolition of the 'leeting' system and the free election of their own Deacons in Council.[60] This, claimed the Guildry, was how burgh government in Scotland had operated prior to the infamous statute of 1469, which had established the principle of self-election.[61] In effect, the Guildry pictured a trading and mercantile community, in which active political rights reflected the individual's status as either a trading or a mercantile burgess. Unfortunately, however much this ideal may have been appropriate to the medieaval burgh, it took little account either of the scope and diversity of the early nineteenth century city, or of current trends in the theory of political economy. Confirming, even strengthening the role of the tradesmen's incorporations in the life of the community, ran directly counter to the increasingly influential ideas of thinkers such as Adam Smith. 'Laissez faire' ideology viewed the privileges of such bodies as a dangerous restraint on trade, and it might have been difficult to justify the extension of the political rights of institutions whose economic *raison d'etre* was increasingly being brought into question. Moreover, as one 'Old Burgess' pointed out, the membership of the Incorporated trades and the Merchant Company amounted, in total, to little over a thousand individuals.[62] This was in a city whose population was in excess of 100,000 and of whom one author estimated around 18,000 were householders.[63] The simple society envisioned by the Guildry bore little relation to the reality of Edinburgh in the early nineteenth century. The overwhelming majority of working people had no connection with the tradesmens Incorporations, while, despite the traditionally broad scope of the term 'merchant' in Scottish usage, the Merchant Company represented only a very privileged segment of the middle classes. Nevertheless, no one appears to have questioned the wisdom of a reform which merely injected an elective element into a structure of government which was increasingly fossilised and/

and represented only a narrow section of the community. The scope of the burgh reformers' vision took no account of the rise of the law profession in Edinburgh, nor of the growth of the city as a centre of education, supporting numerous schools and colleges, besides the University itself. It ignored a whole range of middling occupations, from accountants and architects, to journalists and teachers. Such people had no active role in the political constitution of Scotland and they would still have no role once the changes envisaged by the burgh reform movement had been brought about. The reform envisaged by the burgh reformers offered a very limited response to the desire of the burgeoning middle classes for a greater say in their own government. Indeed, some members of the Guildry appear to have shown positive hostility to the extension of active political rights to individuals outside the traditional merchant and trades' occupations represented in Council. As we have already seen, friction between the legal profession and the rest of the community was an established aspect of Edinburgh society, and it was still well in evidence in the early nineteenth century.[63] Despite the association of Whig lawyers such as Jeffrey and Brougham with the cause of reform and despite the support which burgh reform had traditionally drawn from the legal profession (James Gibson, as we have noted, was a committee member of the Guild itself), prejudice against the legal profession arose within the Guildry itself. At an open meeting of the Incorporation of the Guildry in March 1818 one Guild brother asked what right the members of the College of Justice had to be members, given that they were not merchants, and were traditionally exempt from the burgh taxes. Andrew Scott, the convener of the committee of the Incorporation, declared the question fair and moved that the committee enquire as to whether the Dean of Guild had any right to issue Guild tickets to lawyers, a motion only subsequently withdrawn at the insistence of Adam Black and others.[64] Clearly, an appeal to the past as the basis of reform had its pitfalls; it could fuel historical animosities as well as provide an historical model for reform. There seems little doubt as to the sincerity of the burgh reformers in their abhorrence of the system of government they wished to change. Neither does/

does there seem any doubt that this struck a chord among a community which was increasingly well aware of the inadequacies of its civic rulers. The plan of reform the Guildry put forward, however, appears to suggest that its leaders were more concerned with ousting the old regime in municipal government than in extending active political rights to a substantial proportion of the population. Limited and partial as had been the reforms sanctioned in Montrose, they established a precedent for change to which the burgh reformers could appeal. In limiting themselves to the scope of the Montrose reforms, however, the movement did little to answer the desire of an increasing proportion of the population for a greater say in public affairs.

Traditionally, burgh reform in Edinburgh and reform of the parliamentary representation of the city had remained distinct issues, despite their close practical connection. Although the burgh reform movement which emerged in the early 1780s initially called for the parliamentary franchise to be taken from the Town Council and vested in the Burgesses of the city, this demand was soon dropped and agitation was confined to reform of the municipal government itself. During the 1790s, as we have seen, although some burgh reformers such as the brewer Hugh Bell had been involved in parliamentary reform, the leaders of the movement, including Archibald Fletcher, chose to remain aloof from the radicalism of the Friends of the People. Despite the undoubted overlap in involvement and in likely areas of support, the distinction between the two remained sharp during the post-war revival of reform. In fact, parliamentary reform, still dogged by its association with Jacobinism, was much slower to emerge from the shadow cast by the war and from the reaction of the 1790s, and it was not until the early 1820s that it really re-emerged as a live issue in Edinburgh. A foretaste of things to come, however, was given in discontents which emerged during the Queen Caroline Affair of 1820. George IV's attempts to effect a legal separation from his unfortunate consort sparked off one of the most widespread anti-ministerial movements in Britain during the post-war years. The cause of Queen Caroline, harried by an unpopular regime, provided/

provided an issue with which all manner of opponents of the regime could sympathise.[65] A wide array of opposition groups, from Whig grandees to popular demagogues, soon leaped on the band-waggon of the Queen's poularity and, in Edinburgh, as elsewhere, opponents of the government used the affair to publicise their grievances. In December 1820 the Incorporations of Mary's Chapel petitioned the Queen, congratulating her on the collapse of the government's charges against her and emphasising how much those who feared for the constitution identified with her plight.

> we were satisfied, from past experience, that a foul conspiracy against your Majesty existed, and that the basest acts, would be resorted to, to support the fake charges by something like evidence; looking, therefore, at the whole power, and influence of his Majesty's Ministers, thus embodied, and thus supported, against a Single Individual, and the unprecedented importance of the Question at issue, both to your Majesty, and the Constitution, it is not to be wondered, that we felt anxiety and alarm.[66]

It was in this context that the famous anti-government public meeting met in the Pantheon arena in December 1820. This was called in order to petition the Crown to dismiss Lord Liverpool's government (a petition which subsequently secured 17,000 signatures). The Whiggish Henry Cockburn described it as, 'the first open and respectable assemblage that had been convened in this place, for such a purpose, for about twenty-five years.'[67] This meeting foreshadowed the future course of parliamentary reform in Edinburgh in a number of ways. Firstly, it was dominated by the Whigs. The meeting was chaired by James Moncrieff, a lawyer of long-time Whig associations, and the key speech was given by Francis Jeffrey.[68] Secondly, the meeting was very moderate in tone. Jeffrey cautioned the assembly to avoid 'the extravagance of which it had been predicted that it would be guilty',[69] and there were no calls for radical reform. Thirdly, the supporters of the enterprise were keen to emphasise that the attendance of the meeting was as 'respectable' as its intentions. The Scotsman claimed that the Pantheon was filled,

> with intelligent, and well-dressed people, with persons, in short, who, from character and property, and friends and connections, had a deep stake in the country. It was <u>not</u> filled with persons of that description who could justly be said to constitute a crowd.[70]

In fact, the course of events in Edinburgh was in stark contrast to developments in the manufacturing districts of the West of Scotland. In areas such as Glasgow and Paisley the years following the end of the war had witnessed the re-emergence of a popularly-based radicalism very reminiscent of the Friends of the People. At numerous meetings throughout the region there were renewed calls for universal manhood suffrage and annual parliaments.[71] Although for a time the government became seriously alarmed by the degree of civil unrest in the West, Edinburgh, to restate Cockburn's oft-quoted phrase, remained 'as quiet as the grave, or even as Peebles....'[72] The middling groups who dominated Edinburgh reform showed no desire to renew their contacts with radical reform and there does not appear to be any evidence to suggest the existence of the sort of working class radicalism which had spread in the West. Edinburgh had an economy which was markedly different from that of towns such as Glasgow and Paisley. No major trade was in decline, such as hand-loom weaving, a once proud and independent occupation, but one which on other areaswas in relentless decline from the end of the eighteenth century.[73] Neither were there the factories of cotton spinners, whose unions probably formed a basis for political organisation and communication among the radicals. In contrast, Edinburgh remained, with the exception of a few 'industries' such as brewing and printing, a predominantly 'small master' craft economy.[74] Here, the basis for either large scale unionism or the alienation between master and workmen, which probably contributed to the bitterness of political agitation in the West, was much less. Aside from the old tradesmen's Incorporations, there were small, craft-based, unions, such as the those of the Journeymen Bookbinders and Journeymen Printers. They do not appear to have had a history of agitation or activism which matched their counterparts in the West, however. In any case, the economy/·

economy of Edinburgh was not affected by the post-war depression to the same extent as that of such towns as Glasgow and Paisley. In fact, the radicalism of the West of Scotland (as in other industrial areas, such as Lancashire and Nottinghamshire) probably hindered, rather than encouraged, the progress of reform in Edinburgh. Although The Scotsman professed its sympathy for the 'Distresses of the Labouring Classes' in the manufacturing districts,[75] it made no secret of its fear of 'Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments',[74] which it associated, like conservatives, with the destruction of property and prosperity. Radical reform, moreover, would be of no benefit to working people themselves:

> It is in their interest that reform should be obtained gradually. Any great convulsion would either destroy capital, or drive it out of the country. The structure of society, and the springs of industry would, for a considerable period, share a common ruin. And with the division of all tangible property among them, the lower classes would find themselves in a worse condition than they are at present.[77]

At the same time the paper argued that a moderate reform of the existing system of government would help ease the discontent, by replacing the present ministry with a more responsible set of ministers.

> When this system has been thorughly changed, and the government of the country placed in the hands of those, who will act in unison with the sentiments and feelings of the public, the discontent and irritation to which it has given rise will gradually subside, otherwise, we shall never see tranquillity restored, and all the gagging and restrictive laws that can be passed will only aggravate the evil.[78]

This argument was similar to that used by reformers in the 1790s when it had been suggested that a timely reform of glaring abuses would head off the claims of the more radical. Such appeals had little success then, however, and one can sense, even in the columns of The Scotsman, a recognition of the unease brought about by the course of popular radicalism/

radicalism. By early 1820 the paper was able to express its satisfacton that 'The bugbear of Radicalism, [was] now so fortunately on the wane' and it hoped that radicalism had not diverted the Burgesses of Scotland from the cause of reform.[78] In fact, it was not until 1823 that Edinburgh petitioned Parliament in favour of parliamentary reform. With the encouragement of Henry Cockburn, who produced a pamphlet in favour of reform,[79] another public meeting was held in the Pantheon arena on 8 March. The meeting was chaired by John Craig, a merchant who had been connected with burgh reform and with agitation over abuses in the management of the Royal Infirmary.[80] A petition drawn up by Francis Jeffrey, calling for a householder franchise, was adopted, and on 5 May, along with 7000 signatures, it was presented to the Commons by James Abercromby.[81] In this petition the 'Householders of Edinburgh' made use of an argument first put forward by Jeffrey in the Edinburgh Review in January 1810.[82] Jeffrey had argued that a dangerous gulf was emerging between radical democrats (such as Sir Francis Burdett) on the one hand, and the Court on the other. The solution, he claimed, was for the Whigs to bring forward a package of reforms, including a moderate extension of the franchise to the 'respectable' classes. Bringing the middle classes within the pale of the constitution, argued Jeffrey, would ensure that they did not fall prey to the appeal of demagogic radicals. It was this theme which was pressed in the 1823 petition. Jeffrey noted that,

> The greatest and distinguishing defect in the political constitution of Scotland is, that throughout the Kingdom, but especially in the towns, there is no distinct place or honour assigned to the middle ranks. They are allowed to exist, and to pursue their avocations, and they are protected by the law. But they are not known to the constitution as the holders of any active political privilege.[83]

He warned that the middle classes could hardly be expected to uphold the constitution when they were excluded from any active role in it.

> Whenever the people, but especially the middle classes, are obliged merely/

> merely to obey the laws, but never allowed to assist in the making of them, and where the only occasion on which they know what government is, is when they feel its restraint; voluntary and unattached submission is hopeless.[84]

Predictably, the government dismissed this appeal for reform. In fact, by the time the Edinburgh petition reached Parliament, reform agitation in Britain was beginning to lose its momentum. There had been a series of good harvests and the economy was continuing to recover from the post-war depression. The government's own 'economical reform' measures were taking the sting out of reform demands. In 1822, Lord Archibald Hamilton's parliamentary campaign to secure burgh reform, sufficiently alarmed the government for it to bring in a bill making town councils liable to be called to the Exchequer Court to account for their expenditure. By 1823, however, despite the Edinburgh petition and the large number of votes secured by Hamilton's motion for reform of the Scottish county franchise, the reform movement in Britain was on the wane. The agitation for burgh and, to a lesser extent, for parliamentary reform, however, had demonstrated the groundswell of support which existed in Edinburgh for reform. Moreover, the part which merchants, shopkeepers and businessmen had played in police, burgh and parliamentary reform confirmed that the old position of the lawyers, as the leaders of the 'repectable classes', was no longer going unchallenged. Speaking of the early 1820s Henry Cockburn (himself a lawyer) referred rather patronisingly to the the rise,

> of an order of men, who till about this period had shrunk from exposure - the ordinary citizens. Some of them spoke excellently, and the rise of booksellers and haberdashers in this line was symptomatic.[85]

At the same time it was still Whig lawyers, such as Moncrieff, Cockburn and Jeffrey, who dominated the movement for parliamentary reform. In fact, liberal Whigs had re-captured the initiative on this issue in a way/

way which was in stark contrast to events in the 1790s, when the radicalism of the Friends of the People had become more than even liberal Whigs could stomach. With the creation of Earl Grey's reforming government in 1830 (of which both Jeffrey and Cockburn were members), the Whigs remained at the centre of the stage. None the less, despite the wide degree of popular support demonstrated in Edinburgh, in favour of the Whig administration, cracks were beginning to appear in the reform ranks, even before the Reform Bill had reached the statute books. As we shall see, the sort of reforms being championed by Jeffrey and Cockburn began to come under fire from a resurgent radical tradition and from a more self-consciously 'working class' reform movement, which was not prepared simply to follow the lead of the Whigs.

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Despite the success of Lord Liverpool's government in countering the the resurgent movement for reform, there was little doubt that, in Edinburgh as in Britain as a whole, reform was beginning to shake off its association with revolution and anarchy that had dogged it during the 1790s and early 1800s. The success of Liverpool and his colleagues was to a large extent due to their own calmness and fortitude in the face of crisis. Neither Liverpool nor his phalanx of Scottish supporters proposed any serious concessions in response to the discontent north of the border. By the time of Liverpool's resignation in 1827, however, the government party was beginning to break ranks. Between 1828 and 1830 Wellington's alternation between concession and retrenchment appeared merely to alienate his government's own supporters while uniting its enemies. Moreover, the cracks at the centre of the establishment body politic were spreading outwards. Viscount Melville was by no means adept at political management as had been his father, Henry Dundas, and his unwillingness (or inability) to give any firm lead to the Edinburgh Corporation exasperated the government's managers in Scotland.[1] By 1826 there were rumours of impending plots to unseat Melville's nominees, including William Dundas, the city's MP.[2] In fact, Dundas remained as MP for Edinburgh until 1831, but Melville undoubtedly had difficulty in managing the Council after 1825.[3] One critic of the Council suggested, in 1826, that Melville's involvement with Admiralty business had led him to neglect Edinburgh affairs and, as a result the system of political management which had been built up in previous decades was beginning to fall apart.[4] As early as 1825 the unanimity which the Town Council of Edinburgh (or at least the merchant oligarchy which controlled it) usually presented to the public was shattered by a contested election for the Lord Provost's chair. That year the Town Council had attempted to sell Leith docks to a joint stock company in which many town councillors had a large stake. The resulting scandal merely added weight to the demands of the burgh reformers and it also sparked off a campaign in Leith for the establishment of a separate municipal government for the area.[5] There is no doubt that the Council's supporters believed that Lord Provost William Trotter had handled the crisis badly. One of the government's/

government's agents in Scotland wrote in December 1826 to Lord Melville, denouncing Trotter and his Council as

> a set of wild and vascillating idiots, alternatively the tools and the laughing stock of the Whigs and fanatics of Edinburgh.[6]

Despite this, Trotter was re-elected for a second year, but only after a very bitter and public contest against William Allan.[7] During this election Allan had been linked with liberal elements within the city[8] and aspects of his conduct after his assumption of the Provost-ship, which he eventually secured in 1829, probably worried many of his colleagues on the Council board. In 1830 Allan chaired a public meeting in Edinburgh welcoming the overthrow of Charles X of France and the

> promptitude and energy with which the French people have resisted the unholy and bloody violation of their rights...[9]

The speakers included the Whig, James Gibson-Craig, who was to be a leading Edinburgh supporter of Lord Grey's government, and J.A.Murray, who was elected in 1833 as the first MP for Leith under the reformed electoral system.[10] Provost Allan also presided at an anti-slavery meeting during the same year, at which Francis Jeffrey spoke, although he vacated the chair after more radical resolutions were proposed in opposition to Jeffrey's.[11]

The fact that the leader of the Town Council, a body which had long been seen as a creature of the Dundas (or Melville) interest, was sharing the same platform with Edinburgh Whigs, is perhaps indication in itself of the extent to which the old regime was beginning to falter. Just how isolated the Dundas party had become in Edinburgh, however, really became evident when, in November 1830, Wellington's administration (of which Melville had been for a time a member) resigned/

resigned. The accession to power of Lord Grey's government was an inspiration to political reformers in Edinburgh, as well as those throughout Britain. The Scotsman's leading article of 27 November 1830 reflected the heady sense of hope and excitement which had infected reformist opinion in the city. The formation of the new government and the commitment which it gave to constitutional reform was, claimed The Scotsman, a result so much

> surpassing our hopes, that we now feel somewhat in the situation of persons, who having been overwhelmed by a sudden tide of good fortune, almost doubt the report of their senses, and are oppressed with fears lest some crass accident should mar the glorious prospect before them, and dash the promised happiness from their lips.

The Scotsman was, ofcourse, right to be apprehensive, for it was only after over a year of political crisis that parliamentary reform acts eventually reached the statute book. During this period there were formidable demonstrations of public opinion in Edinburgh in favour of the government and reform. Public meetings and parades were held, various institutions expressed their support for Grey and his colleagues, and reform petitions were sent to London. Although this agitation has many parallels with the reform impetus which emerged in Edinburgh at the close of the Napoleonic wars, it nevertheless marks a significant departure in the course of reformism in Edinburgh.

One particular contrast with the earlier post-war revival of reform was the extent to which parliamentary reform re-emerged as the principal object of the reform movement in the city. As we have seen, the importance which the Friends of the People attached to parliamentary reform as a precursor of all other reforms, was out of step with the course of reformism as a whole in Edinburgh during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Burgh reform had been the dominant issue during the 1780s and it re-emerged at the top of the political agenda after 1815. The inability of the post-war reform movement to make any significant/

significant impression on Parliament, however, despite the weight of public opinion in its favour, probably convinced many that a reform of Parliament itself must precede any further reforms. Adam Black, for instance, a prominent burgh reformer in the immediate post-war years, became a leading campaigner in favour of both Grey's government and parliamentary reform.[12] Nevertheless, burgh reform remained a live political issue and there seems little doubt that many saw parliamentary reform as a first step to the long awaited reform of municipal government in Edinburgh. When the Merchant Company resolved in favour of parliamentary reform in December 1830, it concluded that

> while the Company thus fully express their opinions on the state of the Representation in Parliament, they cannot omit the opportunity of again expressing as they have formerly done, their opinion of the pernicious system on which the Municipal Government of the Scotch Burghs is conducted.[13]

Contrary to The Scotsman's warnings not to expect too much from parliamentary reform, many appear to have viewed it as a forerunner of sweeping changes in British society. 'To imagine', warned The Scotsman,

> that mere reform in parliament is to cause the sun of prosperity to arise at once over the country, and to cheer every hearth with comfort and abundance, is to expect a physical result from a moral cause, or to look for bread from a mere act of legislation. Reform...will place the constitution in a sound and healthy condition; it will strike at the root of the disease; but like a constitution worn down to the verge of decrepitude by long continued evil habits, the country will require time to carry the healing influence into all its limbs....14

In spite of this, reformers encouraged the belief that parliamentary reform was little short of a panacea for all ills. Like Cobbett, the Edinburgh reformers appear to have believed that 'Old Corruption' (to use Cobbett's phrase) and the political system under which it flourished were/

were gradually undermining the health of British society as a whole. A reformed Parliament would usher in an enlightened regime and promote the eradication of all that was wrong in Britain. At a meeting in the Assembly Rooms in George Street, in December 1830, Adam Black suggested that parliamentary reform was a godsend to a whole range of righteous causes.

> every man...who dreads revolution and anarchy...every man who is desirous of peace at home, and friendly intercourse with foreign nations - every friend to economy, retrenchment, the reduction of taxation, and the removal of injurious monopolies, every friend to civil and religious liberty, and the moral and intellectual improvement of our race - every enemy to the most disgraceful of all traffics - the slave trade, will petition for reform in Parliament.'[15]

The extravagant ideas encouraged by some of Edinburgh's leading reformers (and likewise their counterparts in the rest of Britain) perhaps help explain the tension within the reform camp. In particular there was a marked conflict between the Whigs associated with Grey's government and those reformers who believed that the government was not going far enough in its commitment to change. There is no doubt that the reform agitation in Edinburgh in the period leading up to 1832 was dominated by the Whigs. The liberal Whigs were the heroes of the hour and it was their plans for reform which dominated the political stage. When Francis Jeffrey, the Lord Advocate for Scotland in Grey's government and one of the architects of the Scottish reform bill, attempted to become MP for the city of Edinburgh at the general election of 1831, the last held under the unreformed system, he was unsuccessful. None the less, Jeffrey's reception in Edinburgh demonstrated that the views of the Town Council, the parliamentary electorate of the city, were out of step with those of a large part of the community. The Lord Advocate was greeted with widely enthusiastic crowds. When the election of Robert Dundas, another scion of the Melville dynasty, was announced to/

to a large crowd gathered in front of the Council chambers in the Royal Exchange, there were cries of 'A rope for Dundas', and 'Burn the Bailies.'[16] When Jeffrey left the Royal Exchange, the horses were unyoked from his carriage and it was drawn to his home in Moray Place, 'amidst the loudest and most enthusiastic crowd'.[17] In contrast, the Lord Provost was greeted with hooting and hissing as he bravely walked down through the crowds in the High Street. In crossing the North Bridge, intimated The Scotsman,

> we are told his Lordship had nearly fallen sacrifice to his ill-timed temerity. The populace rushed in upon the Constables, and the Provost was on the point of being tossed over the bridge, but was happily rescued from the hands of the infuriated mob.[18]

The Provost was forced to take shelter in a shop, the Riot Act was read, and had to be escorted home by a party of dragoons.[19] In the following year, when Francis Jeffrey and another Whig, James Abercromby, stood for the two Edinburgh seats created by the Scottish Reform Act, they were returned with handsome majorities. Once parliamentary reform had been secured, however, the cracks within the reform camp became increasingly evident. During the reform crisis, so-called political unions were formed in Edinburgh, as in many other towns and cities in Britain. The Southern Political Union (SPU) was active in Edinburgh in 1832[20] and by May 1832, the Edinburgh Political Reform Union (EPRU) claimed a membership of over one thousand individuals.[21] These were formed primarily to agitate in favour of parliamentary reform. Many, however, countenanced a much more thorough-going parliamentary reform programme than that put forward by the government and they were also angered by the Whigs hesitancy in committing themselves to other reform measures once parliamentary reform itself had been achieved. It would appear that the Edinburgh Political Reform Union was more moderate than some of its counterparts. It was certainly unequivocal in its support of Jeffrey in the general election of 1831.[22] In November 1831 it wrote to the Manchester/

Manchester Union (which supported universal manhood suffrage) urging it to reject radicals such as Henry Hunt and unite with more moderate reformers behind the government's proposals.[23] At the general election of 1832, however, (the first under the reformed system), James Aytoun, the chairman of the EPRU, stood for the city of Edinburgh in opposition to Jeffrey and Abercromby, declaring his independence from the Whigs and claiming to support Joseph Hume, the radical MP for Middlesex.[24] When Aytoun appeared at a dinner to celebrate the passing of reform, in August 1832, he was recieved with hisses from supporters of the Whigs and was forced to leave the room.[25] At the hustings in Edinburgh in 1832 Jeffrey was given a rough ride by members of the SPU. William Peddie, its chairman, attempted, without success, to secure from Jeffrey a commitment to the ending of impressment for the Navy and to the abolition of the Edinburgh Annuity Tax.[26] B.T.Dun, the secretary of the SPU, harried Jeffrey about the supposed extravagance of the Civil List put forward by Grey's government.[27] Conflict within the reform camp was by no means unique to Edinburgh, however. In cities such as Leeds and Manchester there were internecine disputes between different reform groups. Some historians have suggested that there was a strong element of class conflict underlying these disputes. J.R.Dinwiddy has pointed out that many middle-class liberals in Leeds (who were grouped around Edward Baines of the Leeds Mercury) showed little support for factory reform. This alienated many working-class radicals, who set up the Radical Political Union in 1831.[28] It would be more difficult, however, to identify a clear class conflict underlying the disputes within reform groups in Edinburgh. There is no doubt that the leaders of reform in Edinburgh were overwhelmingly middling in background. The Committee of Inhabitants, which organised public support for the Whigs in the period leading up to the passing of reform, was dominated by lawyers and, to a much lesser extent, merchants.[29] Although the EPRU claimed to speak for the 'lower orders',[30] the leadership of the Political Union in Edinburgh was by no means proletarian. James Aytoun, the chairman of the EPU, was a lawyer, as were the treasurer and its secretary. The vice-chairman was a merchant.[31] The secretary of the SPU appears to have been a teacher.[32] Nor/

Nor did the programme of the EPRU identify it as being an organisation which addressed itself to working people in particular. When Aytoun stood in the general election of 1832, it was on a platform of burgh reform on a 'fair and popular basis', abolition of slavery and the Corn Laws, and a reform of municipal taxes to make them payable equally by all members of the community.[33]

At the same time, it would be wrong to suggest that there were no demonstrations, during the reform crisis, of a consciousness of a separate identity among working people. In this respect the agitation leading up to the passing of reform in 1832 contrasts with earlier reform movements in Edinburgh. As we have seen, although tradesmen and artisans were prominent in the Friends of the People, for instance, it was in no sense a 'class' organisation. There does not appear to have been any consciousness on the part of the working people in it of any unity amongst themselves which distinguished them from radical reformers of a more exalted social background. By the early 1830s there was certainly some sense of identity among working people. In April 1831 a 'meeting of tradesmen' (as The Scotsman styled it) was held to 'afford an opportunity of refuting the calumnious assertions made in Parliament, that the working classes of Edinburgh were hostile to reform'.[34] 'The hall', noted The Scotsman,

> though one of the largest in Edinburgh, was crowded to the extreme, and twice the number were forced to remain outside from want of accomodation.

The chairman of the meeting went out of his way to note that it had been organised independently of the Edinburgh Political Union, and prophesied that although

> this was the first public meeting of the working classes that had been held in Edinburgh... it certainly would not be the last.[35]

A kernel of working-class consciousness can perhaps be seen in the the formation of a number of so-called 'artisans reading rooms' in Edinburgh at the time of the reform crisis. In July 1831 The Scotsman noted that a group of mechanics had resolved to set up a reading room. The purpose of the organisation was to promote their improvement, independence and unity:

> By bringing the artisans frequently together, by affording them an opportunity for improvement, and for a friendly exchange of sympathies and opinions, as they increase in knowledge they will become the more united and the more able to resist any encroachments that may be attempted on their privileges, either by the legislature or the local authorities.[36]

By August 1831 the Edinburgh Artisans Reading Room claimed a membership of 400 individuals.[37] There seems little doubt that the encouragement of political awareness among working people was one of its primary aims. Its chairman, John Prentice, described by The Scotsman as 'chairman of the late meetings of the operative classes' was also a leading member of the EPRU and a frequent speaker at the great reform meetings of the period. The Leith Artisans Reading Room, which appears to have been formed in imitation of its sister organisation in Edinburgh, saw its purpose as being to spread 'a knowledge of politics and other useful knowledge...'.[38] These organisations seem to have welcomed the support of middle-class liberals in Edinburgh. William Chambers, the publisher, donated fifty magazines to the Edinburgh society[39] and Constable and Company gave forty-four volumes of their Miscellany.[40] Cash donations were accepted from William Steven, a hat manufacturer, and James Aytoun of the EPRU.[41]. At the same time, the Edinburgh Artisans Reading Room was very hostile to the idea that its members were dependent on the patronage of their betters. When a letter of support was received from Joseph Hume, one member suggested that he should be adopted as patron of the reading room. To this the secretary replied that

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> there was cetainly no man who had done more for his country, no man who had done half so much to promote the welfare of the artisans of Britain as ''honest Joseph Hume'', but the days of patronage were over, the mechanics of Edinburgh needed no patrons, they were well able to manage their own affairs.[42]

None the less, despite the protestations of unity and independence issued by such organisations as the Edinburgh Artisans Reading Room, the degree of class-consciousness which existed among working people in Edinburgh was still relatively weak. The continued importance of the craft economy, as we have already noted, probably acted to minimise a stark employer/employee divide, and there appears to have been little consciousness that working people's interests were in conflict with those of their employers. The Trades Council banner in the reform procession of 10 August 1832 included the slogan 'Employer and Employee United'.[43] Nor was does there seem to have been any attempt among working people to create a separate political identity or ideology, although working people's organisations played a very important part in many of the great parades and meetings which marked the progress of reform in Edinburgh. Few working people in Edinburgh appear to have questioned the reform proposals of the Whigs, which aimed to create an overwhelmingly middle class electorate. The reform procession which marched to Holyrood park in May 1832 was organised by the newly formed Edinburgh Trades Union Council and a large variety of trades were represented in the parade.[44] The slogans on the marchers banners, however, did not suggest any consciousness of a sense of separate identity on the part of working people. Slogans such as 'Liberty or Death' and 'Reform or no Taxes' exemplify the degree to which, in Edinburgh, reformers of a less than exalted background were still dominated by the political ideas and grievances of more well-to-do liberals.

In fact, the clearest evidence of social tension in the politics of post-reform Edinburgh was between different middling groups, rather than between the well-off and an emergent working-class. The later eighteenth and/

and early nineteenth century had witnessed the steady growth in activism and influence on the part of shopkeepers, merchants and well-to-do tradesmen. In the period leading up to the reforms of 1832, such people had co-operated with liberal elements in Edinburgh's legal elite, the traditional leaders of Edinburgh society, in agitating for thorough-going reform in the political constitution of Edinburgh. The reforms brought in by the Whigs during the 1830s satisfied the hopes of at least some of these reformers. Election of the city's parliamentary representatives was taken away from the Town Council and vested in those who possessed property worth at least £10 (roughly 7% of Edinburgh's population). Election to the Town Council was based on the same calculation and the archaic regulations which prevented lawyers from sitting on the Council were swept aside. Not surprisingly, Whigs, many of whom were lawyers, dominated both the Town Council and the parliamentary representation of the city in the years immediately after 1832. As Jeffrey Williams has shown, however, in his work on Edinburgh politics in the mid-nineteenth century, the continuing predominance of the legal elite in Edinburgh was increasingly resented.[45] As we have seen, hostility between the legal profession and the community as a whole was by no means new. Neither was political activism on the part of merchants, manufacturers and merchants. Reform brought within the ambit of the constitution many who never before played any formal part in municipal, or at least Town Council, affairs. None the less, the political alignments which emerged in local politics in the mid-nineteenth century reflected divisions which had long been characteristic of Edinburgh's distinctive social structure.

1. Scottish Records Office (SRO), Melville Castle Muniments, GD51/5/150, Robert Dundas to Viscount Melville, 20 Dec. 1826.
2. SRO, Melville Castle Muniments, GD51/5/198/13/43, John Marjoribanks to William Dundas, 4 June 1825, GD51/5/141, Murdoch Cunningham to Melville, 8 September 1825.
3. SRO, Melville Castle Muniments, GD51/17/75, p. 215, Melville to Lord Advocate, 15 November 1826, GD51/17/75, p. 240, Melville to William Trotter, 28 January 1827, GD51/17/75, p. 95, Melville to Kincaid MacKenzie, 6 October 1826.
4. Edinburgh Public Library, YJS 4235.326.44302, 'The Edinburgh Corporation Pack of Hounds', manuscript copy of pamphlet, 1826.
5. Alexnder Campbell, The History of Leith (Leith, 1826), 'The present state of Leith'.
6. SRO, Melville Castle Muniments, GD51/5/150, Robert Dundas to Viscount Melville, 21 Dec. 1826
7. The Scotsman (Scot, 20 August, 3 September, 7 September and 21 September 1826.
8. Scot, 20 August 1825.
9. Scot, 25 August 1830.
10. Ibid.
11. Henry Cockburn, Memorials of His Time (Edinburgh, 1946), pp. 271-2.
12. Scot, 8 December 1830.
13. Merchants Hall, Minute Books of the Company of Merchants of Edinburgh, No.11 (1829-30), 3 December 1830.
14. Scot, 1 Dec. 1830.
15. Scot, 8 Dec. 1830.
16. Scot, 3 May 1831.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Anon., A True Account of the Lord Advcocates Meeting in the Buccleugh Street Chapel on Friday 31st August 1832.
21. Scot, 30 May 1832.
22. Scot, 27 August 1831.
23. Scot, 2 November 1831.
24. Scot, 13 June 1832.
25. Scot, 11 August 1832.
26. See note 20.
27. Ibid.
28. J.R.Dinwiddy, From Luddism to the Reform Bill (Oxford, 1986), pp. 65-66.
29. Scot, 12 May 1832.
30. Scot, 24 December 1831.
31. Scot, 24 Dec. 1831
32. A True Account
33. Scot, 13 June 1832.
34. Scot, 23 April 1831.
35. Ibid.
36. Scot, 27 July 1831.
37. Scot, 31 Aug. 1831.
38. Scot, 26 Nov. 1831.
39/

39. Scot, 31 August 1831.
40. Scot, 12 Nov. 1831.
41. Ibid.
42. Scot, 10 August 1831.
43. Scot, 11 August 1832.
44. Scot, 16 May 1832.
45. J.C.Williams, 'Edinburgh Politics 1832-52' (Edinburgh University Ph.D thesis, 1972).

Conclusion

The advent of the great coustitutional changes of the 1830s reflected aspirations which had deep roots, as we have seen, in the political tradition of Edinburgh. The city's response to the great events of 1829-1832 reflected a long period of political and social gestation in Edinburgh itself, and it is unlikely that Edinburgh society could have reacted with such dynamism and sophistication to the reform bill crisis had it not been for the community's rich heritage and experience. In fact; Edinburgh had long enjoyed a wealth of social and political activism which belied the narrow and exclusive nature of its political constitution. The clubs and societies which flourished in Edinburgh during the eighteenth century, for instance, permitted a by no means insignificant section of society to participate in the social, intellectual, economic and even political life of the city. Clubs encouraged the dissemination and exchange of ideas. They nurtured organisational and managerial capabilities which could be (and were) turned to political advantage. They also helped afford their members a collective weight which could be brought to bear on the course of events. Some of these organisations, such as the Merchant Company and the tradesmens Incorporations, became prestigious and influential pillars of the community. Some clubs, such as the Protestant Association of the late 1770s, show that the citizens of Edinburgh were both ready and able collectively to challenge the highest authorities when the issues at stake seemed important enough. Similarly, the complex infrastructure of the Friends of the People organisation of the 1790s bears witness to the rich vein of organisational experience and ability which existed in the city. Societies such as the Friends of the People and the Protestant Association also demonstrate the influence and impact of the press. Edinburgh, as we have seen, was a major publishing centre, and many of the leading thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment had their work put into print by Edinburgh publishers and printers. Newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets built upon the spirit of enquiry and investigation which this intellectual flourishing encouraged. The ideas

which/

which they discussed and popularised helped prepare the groundwork for the emergence of political societies. The press promoted the spread of political ideas and it doubtless helped inspire individuals to political action. The relatively sophisticated political language of press and pamphlet coverage of the Edinburgh election of 1780, for instance, suggests that the public was relatively well informed about the course of politics in Britain as a whole and familiar with a wide range of political ideas. Moreover, despite frequent avowals of its non-partisan nature, the press frequently entered into the hurly-burly of political deabte. Similarly, as the movement for moral reform gained momentum during the latter part of the eighteenth century the Edinburgh press began to become increasingly strident in its moral exhortations. It was by building upon such assumptions and attitiudes that the pioneering newspaper, The Scotsman built its reputation during the early nineteenth century. Although the way in which The Scotsman cajoled, reprimanded and encouraged the Edinburgh public was virtually without precedent in the annals of the Edinburgh press, the newspaper nevertheless drew on a long experience of experiment and consolidation. Through clubs and societies, therefore, and by means of the press in Edinburgh, the community began to gain the political maturity which it was to demonstrate in its response to the reform bill crisis. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, government in Edinburgh was forced to come to terms with an increasingly organised and articulate public. As its articulacy increased so its dissatisfaction with the structure and conduct of government became increasingly apparent. Although the reaction to the radicalism of the 1790s temporarily silenced most opposition, the re-emergence of both parliamentary and burgh reform in the early years of the nineteenth century demonstrated that the underlying trend was still one of mounting dissatisfaction. The troubled history of the Edinburgh Police Commission (which was set up in 1805) demonstrated more than ever that the narrow and exclusive political system which the leaders of the Town Council had nurtured for so long, was out os step with the realities of Edinburgh society.

One should not make too much, however, of the popular activism which manifested itself in Edinburgh during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. To chart the progress of political reform in Edinburgh in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is, to a large extent, to chart one aspect of the progress to maturity of the Edinburgh middle-class. This maturity was fostered in the experience of clubs and societies in eighteenth century Edinburgh and it was given added cogency by the ideas expressed in the Edinburgh press. The reform movements which emerged in Edinburgh during this period encompassed a wide variety of ideas. The Friends of the People, for instance, developed a radical platform which alienated large sections of the community during the reactionary political climate of the 1790s. The revived burgh and parliamentary reform movements of the early nineteenth century, on the other hand, adopted a much more moderate programme. This captured the mood of discontent and disillusionment which spread over much of Edinburgh society in the difficult years after the end of the Napoleonic wars. Despite their ideological differences, however, all the political reform movements which developed in Edinburgh in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were remarkably similar in the social background of their members. Lawyers, as we have seen, were prominent in burgh reform, in the Friends of the People and in the reform movements which arose concerning the Edinburgh Police Commission. The backbone of all those movements, however, was a broad 'middling' group ranging from what some historians have called the 'labour aristocracy', through shopkeepers, merchants and (increasingly, by the early nineteenth century) the 'new' professionals, such as doctors, accountants and teachers. All the reform movements desired to increase the political influence and responsibilty of their members. In the burgh reform movements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries this desire was given ideological shape in the form of the age-old concept of burgess rights. As we have seen however, the appeal to history could all to easily re-assert old divisions. Merchants and craftsmen had often fought each other, in the past, over their respective burgess rights, whilst the legal profession was traditionally excluded

excluded (in theory at least) from burgess-ship altogether. In the disputes concerning the Police Commission, however, a different concept emerged and 'respectability' became, as we have seen, the key word. Reformers argued that the 'respectable' citizens had a natural right to govern the community. The respectable members of the community were those who lived sober, abstemious, God-fearing and morally irreproachable lives. In social terms, respectable values were usually associated with the middling orders and those in the 'labour aristocracy' who aped their ideas and outlook. It was those groups who became the nineteenth century 'middle-class' in Edinburgh. A common belief in respectability and a common desire to improve their own influence in the community united the various groups which made up this class. They were also united in animosity toward many of the poorer members of Edinburgh society. As we have seen hostility toward drunkenness, immorality, irreligion and the many other vices supposedly so prevalent among the poor appears to have played a very important part in determining the priorities of those who sat on the Edinburgh Police Commission. The Edinburgh middle class also showed a marked hostility toward the legal elite. This was probably not on the grounds of respectabilty (although there may have been some disapproval of the lifestyle of the upper-class). Lawyers, as we have seen, played an important part in Edinburgh reform movements. It would have been surprising had they not; lawyers were the traditional leaders of Edinburgh society. Hostility toward the privileged position of the legal fraternity, however, was long-established and it was certainly not extinguished by the part which they played in helping to secure reform. The political history of Edinburgh after 1832 shows that gratitude toward liberal Whig lawyers such as Jeffrey and Cockburn was soon overshadowed by a desire, on the part of the middle-class, to assert its own position within the new constitution. The reforms of 1832, therefore, were very much a triumph for the Edinburgh middle-class. Some groups lost out. The (largely) moribund Incorporations lost their priviliged position in the Town Council. For the first time, however, the Corporation was made responsible to a popular electorate. The Edinburgh/

Edinburgh middle-class was given the chance to put its political maturity to the test. No longer could the supposed short-comings of government in Edinburgh be ascribed to the evils of self-election and to the narrow oligarchy which had controlled or bridled the principal organs of government in the city.

Appendix 1: The Tradesmens Incorporations of Edinburgh.

(Returns made by the Tradesmens Incorporations of Edinburgh, in 1833, taken from the Municipal Corporations (Scotland) Local Reports of the Commissioners. Part 1 (Edinburgh, 1835), 354.)

Incorporation	No. of Members	No. of Apprentices	Amount of Funds
Surgeons	103	610	Heavy debts
Goldsmiths	38	173	£27,103.
Skinners and Furriers	14	28	£2,550.
Wrights and Masons	194	408	£20,000.
Tailors	42	147	£11,000.
Bakers	48	11(since 1823)	Dependent on value of mills.
Cordiners	37	20	£11,000.
Weavers	15	None	No return.
Fleshers	14	18	Heritable property, £800 yearly.
Waulkers	28	32	£1,300.
Bonnet-Makers	24	36	£200.
Hammermen	108	338	£1,235 and £242 yearly from houses etc.
Barbers*	48	7	£200.
Candlemakers*	14	14	£331.

*These Incorporations were not represented in the Trades Convenery of Edinburgh or in the Town Council.

PRIMARY

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John Hutton, Police Memorandums, 1793-6.	La.III 552.
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National Library of Scotland

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Home Office Correspondence, 1782-1820.	HO42
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The Caledonian Mercury (1780-1833).

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The Edinburgh Evening Courant (1780-1833).

The Edinburgh Gazetteer (1792-1794).

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3. Pamphlets

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Concerning the Proposals for a New Sett for the said City.

Anon. Address to the Burgess Inhabitants of Edinburgh Observing the Defects of the New Sett.

Anon. An Address to the Citizens of Edinburgh Wherein The Utter Unfitness of the Present Sett of the CITY is clearly and evidently demonstrated.

Anon. The Sentiments of a Citizen with Regard to the Alterations and Amendments May be made to the Sett of the City of Edinburgh.

1752 Anon. Proposals for Carrying on Certain Public Works in the City of Edinburgh.

1776 Anon. An Address to the Citizens of Edinburgh.

John Walker To the Right Honourable James Stoddart Esq. Lord Provost of Edinburgh (18 September).

John Walker To the Right Honourable James Stoddart Esq. Lord Provost of Edinburgh (30 September).

1777 Anon. The Manifesto of the Edinburgh Congress Mary's Chapel Edinburgh 19th August 1777.

Anon. To the Members of the Fourteen Incorporations By a Burgess and Guild Brother.

1778 Anon. Letter to the Proprietors of the Bank of Scotland and Royal Bank.

1780 Anon. A Letter to Sir Lawrence Dundas (by the Devil).

Anon. A Letter to the Author of Calumny Detected.

Anon. A Letter to the Town Council and Citizens of Edinburgh.

Anon. A Short Account of the Elections in Edinburgh.

Anon. A Vindication of the Influence of the Peerage over the Election of Commoners.

Anon. An Address to the Citizens and Inhabitants of Edinburgh upon the Constitution of the Borough.

Anon. An Address to the Citizens of Edinburgh upon the Nature of the Present Sett of the City of Edinburgh and the Necessity of its being Speedily Reformed.

Anon. Calumny Detected.

Anon. Calumny Exemplified.

Anon. Critical and Political Strictures on the Speech of the New Candidate for the Representation of the Borough.

Anon. Genuine Anecdotes of the Mock Election For A Member of Parliament for Edinburgh.

Anon. Narrative and Extracts.

Anon. Reflections on the Different Modes of Proceeding By which Sir Lawrence Dundas Bart. and William Miller Esq Advocate were returned as Members of Parliament for the City of Edinburgh.

Anon. Short Reflections.

Anon. Supplement to Falsehoods Detected.

Anon. The Merchants Shopkeepers and Inhabitants.

Anon. The Mock Election.

Anon. To the Burgesses Guild Brethren and Inhabitants of Edinburgh.

Anon. To the Citizens of Edinburgh.

Anon. To the Citizens of Edinburgh (22 September).

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Anon To the Inhabitants of Edinburgh.

Anon. To the Members of the Town Council and the Inhabitants at large.

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Adam Smith To the Public from a Member of the Town Council.

1783 James Graham A Discourse.

Thos. MacGrugar _The Letters of Zeno_ (2nd edition).

1788 Anon. _Minutes of the Convention met in August 1788 at Edinburgh 20th Day of August 1788._

1792 _Proclamation of the Town Council_ (7 June).

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1793 Anon. _Ten Minutes Reflection on the late Events in France._

William Creech _Letters Respecting the Trade Manners etc of Edinburgh._

1796 Anon. _At a Respectable Meeting of Inhabitants of this City_ (4 March).

1799 Anon. _A Buttered Slice._

Anon. _A Calm and Serious Reply to the Address of Thomas Smith Esquire._

Anon. _A Hit at an Old Magistrate and An Impartial Citizen._

Anon. _An Answer to Baillie Smith's Address to the Town Council of Edinburgh. By an Old Magistrate._

Anon. _Letter from an Old Magistrate and Guild Brother of Edinburgh to his Fellow Citizens._

Anon. Letters of Correspondence Between the Magistrates of Edinburgh and the late Provost Elder.

Anon. Letter to Thomas Smith Occasioned by His Letter to the Lord Provost and Maigstrates of Edinburgh.

Anon. Observations on Baillie Smith's Address and on the Answer Thereto By an Old Magistrate. By an Inhabitant of Edinburgh.

Anon. Strictures on the late Political Conduct of Bailie Smith.

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