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THE CHARTIST PRISONERS, 1839-41*

I

Historians of Chartism face a dilemma. On the one hand, they are obliged to interpret this national political movement on the national level, to attempt to explain why millions of British working men and women were engaged in organized political activity over several decades. But, on the other hand, many of the richest sources on Chartism are found on the local level. Older histories of the movement treated Chartism from a national perspective, but failed to take note of many of its complexities. More recently, a good deal of local research has rigorously tested our assumptions about Chartism, but the task of carefully analyzing the movement on the national level still remains.¹

An experience which Chartists from many localities shared was arrest, trial and imprisonment. The manifold sources on Chartist prisoners provide a valuable tool for analyzing the movement as a whole, yet they have hardly been utilized. This paper treats the subjects of Chartist prisoners during the early years of the movement, 1839-41, when thousands were arrested, and nearly 500 people served prison terms for offenses committed in the pursuit of political aims. During this period, the Chartist prisoners became a *cause célèbre*, as important to the movement as the Charter itself.

The sources on Chartist prisoners fall into two categories. First, there are the writings of the prisoners themselves, or their Chartist supporters

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¹ Several scholars have pointed to the necessity of returning to the national level for a re-appraisal of Chartism. Thomas Milton Kemnitz, "Approaches to the Chartist Movement: Feargus O'Connor and Chartist Strategy", in: *Albion*, V (1973), provides a new angle on the question of violent rhetoric and action. Kenneth Judge, "Early Chartist Organization and the Convention of 1839", in: *International Review of Social History*, XX (1975), presents some thoughts on the national organization of the movement. James Epstein, "Feargus O'Connor and the Northern Star", *ibid.*, XXI (1976), offers a major re-interpretation of the Chartists' national newspaper.

outside of jail. These include prison letters (many of which were confiscated by the authorities),² personal reminiscences, and articles in the Chartist press. Such sources convey with immediacy the experience of imprisonment, but suffer the drawback of narrowness and subjectivity. The other set of sources consists of various government documents. Hitherto, the most widely consulted of these sources were the records of Crown prosecutions gathered in the Treasury Solicitor's Papers (Public Record Office, TS 11), and the Home Office Papers relating to disturbances (HO 40, 41, 45, 48, 49). Other government sources which thus far have not been greatly utilized by historians are two systematic attempts to investigate the conditions of the early Chartist prisoners. The first was a parliamentary inquiry, conducted in the spring of 1840.³ In response to constant prodding from radical MPs,⁴ the government sent a query to every prison in the country, requesting the names of all political prisoners held between January 1839 and June 1840. The resulting report is a list of about 700 political prisoners, of whom 470 were in English and Welsh jails,⁵ along with their occupations, offenses, sentences, and prison conditions.

² There is no single repository of Chartist prison correspondence. A good number of letters can be found reproduced in the pages of the *Northern Star* and other Chartist newspapers. Some of Lovett and Collins's letters are printed in *Parliamentary Papers*, 1840, XXXVIII, 44, pp. 751-66. The Lovett-Place correspondence is in Set 55 of the Place Collection, British Library, Reading Room. This volume of the collection is devoted solely to the imprisonment of Lovett and Collins, and sheds light on Place's extraordinary efforts to aid the Chartist prisoners. Vincent's letters to John Minikin are in the Vincent Manuscripts, Labour Party Library, Transport House, and there are three letters written by O'Brien from Lancaster Castle in the Allsop Manuscripts, British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics, Coll. Misc. 525. Much confiscated prison correspondence may be located in various county record offices. For example, a letter from Lawrence Pitkeithly to James Duffy dated 5 September 1840 was found in the North Riding Public Record Office, Northallerton. It is printed in Fred Singleton, *The Industrial Revolution in Yorkshire* (Clapham, 1970), pp. 182-83.

³ PP, 1840, XXXVIII, 600, pp. 691-750.

⁴ Much parliamentary time in 1839-40 was consumed by debates on the treatment of Chartist prisoners. See Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, Third Series, L (1839), cc. 483, 528-83; LI (1840), cc. 508-10, 1808-95, 1159-60; LII (1840), cc. 392, 1049-50, 1109, 1133-50; LIII (1840), cc. 1103-17; LIV (1840), cc. 647-56, 895-913, 917-22, 953-54, 1165-68; LV (1840), cc. 408-09, 613-56, 771-74, 1287-1304, 1364. The inquiry was made in response to a request by Joseph Hume on 26 June, and the report was printed 5 August. See PP, 1840, "Votes and Proceedings of the House of Commons", pp. 1194, 1550. It is clear that the Chartists wanted such an inquiry made, to suit their own propaganda purposes, and Hume may have been fulfilling a request from them. See James Watson to Place, 4 May 1840, Place Collection, Set 55, ff. 366-68.

⁵ It is safe to assume that the English and Welsh political prisoners all were connected with Chartism, and that the 200-odd Irish were not. The one Scotsman, James Cairns of Hawick, was not a Chartist either. There is some confusion over the true number of prisoners. The table at the beginning of the report gives a total of 380 English and 60

The other systematic government investigation of Chartist prisoners was a set of standardized interviews conducted by Home Office prison inspectors in the winter of 1840-41. The outcome was a collection of seventy-three interviews, denoted HO 20/10.⁶ The inspectors, led by Captain W. J. Williams,⁷ asked questions concerning date and place of birth, religion, education, occupation, nature of offense, and conditions of imprisonment. They missed only a handful of those Chartists still in prison at the time. The seventy-three thus comprise a sub-set of the 470 Chartists listed in the parliamentary investigation, and the information on these two groups will provide much of the basis for this paper. Of course, government documents also contain biases of which the historian must be aware. Officials tended on occasion to over-estimate the threat of Chartist violence, while under-estimating the seriousness of the Chartists' political commitment. The material in HO 20/10 is especially useful in this respect, as it combines comments from the inspectors with direct quotes from the prisoners themselves.⁸ Of course, not all the prisoners would speak frankly with a Home Office inspector. The role of government spies in the arrest and conviction of many Chartists helps to account for this reluctance. Yet, a surprising number of prisoners did let down their guard when interviewed, and one can detect instances of rapport with the inspector. In such a situation, Chartists spoke with a different voice than when they addressed their followers from the platform or in the columns of the *Northern Star*. They appear less dogmatic, occasionally less confident, always more human.

Taken together, these sources on Chartist prisoners comprise a rich documentation of the movement's early years. They provide a unique view

Welsh prisoners, but the former number should have read 480. The discrepancy is due to an arithmetical error or misprint. Also, there are numerous repetitions in the list of prisoners. A careful count yields a total of 470 for England and Wales. This number includes some who did not spend much time in jail. According to Fox Maule, 467 of the prisoners were brought to trial in 1839-40, of whom 379 were convicted. See Hansard, Third Series, LVIII (1841), cc. 751-52.

⁶ For a detailed discussion of these documents, see Christopher Godfrey and James Epstein, "H.O. 20/10: Interviews of Chartist Prisoners, 1840-41", in: *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, No 34 (1977), pp. 27-34.

⁷ William John Williams was one of the first Home Office prison inspectors appointed under the Prisons Act of 1835 [6 Will. IV, c. 38]. He also was a member of the commission which investigated the state of the Birmingham borough prison, 1853-54. See *Modern English Biography*, ed. by Frederic Boase (6 vols: London, 1921), VI, c. 898. Williams appears to have held a commission in the army, which made him particularly well suited to conduct these interviews, as he would have been accustomed to dealing with large numbers of men from working-class backgrounds.

⁸ Throughout this paper, unless otherwise noted, direct quotations have been taken from the interviews in HO 20/10.

of a large number of “middle-range” Chartists, those who mediated between the dozen or so leaders of national importance and the many thousands of local participants. A better understanding of these people is the key to a re-interpretation of Chartism as whole.

The Chartist prisoners were among the more serious members of the movement. The Whig Government was interested in isolating the most active Chartists, and its policy was to arrest masses of people in a disturbed area, but then to release most of them on their own recognizances. This was true even in the most serious case, the Newport rising. In the weeks following the attack on the Westgate Hotel, 125 persons were arrested and examined before the Newport magistrates. Of these, only twenty-nine were committed to trial, twenty-two of whom were charged with high treason.⁹ Space is not available here to list all 470 Chartist prisoners; in any case, their names are easily obtained from the parliamentary report. Those interviewed in HO 20/10 will appear most prominently in this paper, and their names are listed in Appendix I, along with the chief location of their Chartist activity.

Generally speaking, the Chartists arrested in the early years of the movement are of three types. First, there is the small group of leading orators and journalists of national reputation. The earliest to be arrested was J. R. Stephens, followed by Henry Vincent, P. M. McDouall, John Taylor, William Lovett, John Collins, G. J. Harney, Bronterre O'Brien, William Benbow, and Feargus O'Connor. They were jailed on such charges as incitement to riot, illegal assembly, and seditious libel. The second category comprises those local leaders arrested on similar charges, such as William Ashton of Barnsley, Christopher Doyle of Manchester, and William Carrier of Trowbridge. But by far the largest proportion of the prisoners are of the third type, the participants in the various Chartist riots, conspiracies and insurrections of 1839-40.¹⁰

⁹ Mark Hovell, *The Chartist Movement*, ed. and completed with a memoir by T. F. Tout (Manchester, 1918), p. 180.

¹⁰ These include the riots at Birmingham and Mid Wales (July 1839), Bolton and Nottinghamshire (August 1839), and the risings at Newport (November 1839), Sheffield and Bradford (January 1840). More problematic is the group of about a dozen Chartists arrested in South Lancashire and Cheshire on a charge of conspiracy in early August 1839. They had procured a large number of weapons, and, although it is impossible to ascertain their intentions, it is likely that they were preparing to resist a government attack on the Chartists during the National Holiday, in the style of Peterloo. See *Stockport Advertiser*, 2 August 1839; Lloyd Jones, “Chartism in Difficulties”, in: *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 13 September 1879, p. 3; Lovett Collection, Vol. II, f. 73, Birmingham Reference Library; Winifred M. Bowman, *England in Ashton-under-Lyne* (Altrincham, Cheshire, 1960), p. 501.

The early Chartist prisoners comprise a spectrum ranging from the national leadership to the local rank and file, but do they present an accurate profile of the movement as a whole? To be sure, the sample is not random in the statistical sense; no set of Chartists ever could be. One problem is that the zealotry of the authorities varied from one region to the next. Another objection might be that a group of prisoners would be weighted in favor of those Chartists willing to resort to violence. The latter problem can be met by pointing out that the conventional physical-*versus*-moral-force dichotomy is not a useful tool with which to analyze Chartism, especially in these years. Nearly all Chartists agreed on the right of the people to bear arms, and that overt oppression by the State would justify their use. The geographical distribution of Chartist violence was very wide in 1839-40. Indeed, the 470 prisoners represent nearly every major center of early Chartism, and thus comprise as reasonable a cross-section of the movement as we are likely to find. One of the principal themes which will emerge from this examination of Chartist prisoners is their extraordinary diversity of background, which reflects the remarkably broad appeal of Chartism itself.

II

The two government investigations yield much information on the background of the Chartist prisoners. Such key variables as age, education, occupation and religion can be examined, in an effort to determine what sort of person was likely to become a Chartist.

We are fortunate to know the occupations of the vast majority of the early Chartist prisoners, and this information can be used to test our assumptions about which trades were attracted to the movement. The occupational data from the parliamentary investigation of 1840 are summarized in Appendix II. Unfortunately, some of the categories are very broad. It would be interesting to know, for example, how many of the weavers worked at hand-loom *versus* the number who worked at power-loom, but in most cases the report did not make such distinctions. Nevertheless, educated guesses can be made if occupational data are analyzed in conjunction with geographical location. The trades of the seventy-three prisoners in HO 20/10 appear in Appendix III. Because the information on this group is so much more detailed, some explanatory notes have been included for most of the occupational categories.

Perhaps the most striking feature of these tables is the sheer number of occupations represented; nevertheless, certain patterns do emerge. The majority fall into the category of traditional artisan trades, most of which

were not as yet affected by mechanized production techniques.¹¹ Yet, the presence of so many types of handicraft workers among the political prisoners should not lead to the conclusion that Chartism was a “pre-industrial” protest movement, or that it depended principally upon the support of “backward” trades fighting a hopeless battle against the machine. To be sure, the degraded status of handloom weaving, especially in cotton, was due in part to the advent of cheap cloth produced by power-looms. But technological innovation was only one element in the economic transformation occurring in this period; there were other pressures which affected artisans more generally.

Of paramount importance was the rapid growth of the British population. This led to a steady increase in the demand for the products of tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, bricklayers, and many other types of artisans, while simultaneously sending a vast influx of new labor (often an excess of labor) into these trades. Under such circumstances, the older forms of artisan self-government — apprenticeships, agreed standards of quality, and the like — crumbled. Handloom weaving was the most severely affected occupation. An easily learned trade, it had become very overcrowded, and apprenticeship rights had been long lost. The tailors had suffered a more recent loss of privileges. In London they could not prevent the advent of low-paid female labor or the utilization of part-time work by employers.¹² Although the growth of the British economy did not always entail a decline in the material standard of living of workers, it did cause a nearly universal erosion of artisan privileges. The trades were faced with, as it were, a “crisis of expansion”.¹³

Moreover, economic expansion in the first half of the nineteenth century was marked by a violent boom-and-slump pattern. The creation of a national market through improved transport led a growing number of artisans to be affected by the vagaries of the trade cycle. The slump of 1837 was unprecedented in the suddenness and breadth of its impact, and even the most secure trades were affected by the deep depression of 1837-42.

¹¹ The best work on the place of artisan trades in the history of Chartism has been done by Iorwerth J. Prothero. He feels that their “role in Chartism is clearer and more obvious than that of miners or factory workers”. See his “London Chartism and the Trades”, in: *Economic History Review*, Second Series, XXIV (1971), p. 204. Although he is dealing with London, Prothero’s assertion holds true for many centers of Chartism.

¹² See, for example, *English Chartist Circular*, II, pp. 6, 10-11.

¹³ A recent study of French workers utilizes the notion of a “crisis of expansion”. See William H. Sewell, Jr., “Social Change and the Rise of Working-Class Politics in Nineteenth-Century Marseille”, in: *Past & Present*, No 65 (1974). For a full discussion of the crisis facing English artisans in this period, see E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1963), ch. 8.

The artisans faced political as well as economic pressures. The clauses of the Elizabethan Statute of Artificers regulating wages and apprenticeships had been repealed in 1813-14, and restrictions on the importation of foreign manufactures were being steadily reduced. The government had renewed its direct attacks on combinations of labor in the 1830's, with the spectacular prosecutions of the Dorchester agricultural laborers and the Glasgow cotton spinners.

Thus, a whole set of interrelated pressures, economic and political, were brought to bear on the artisans during the early nineteenth century, and they were felt by those in relatively healthy, dynamic trades, such as woolcombing and cutlery, as well as by the declining handloom weavers. It is not surprising that so many of these trades entered Chartism in force. The situation of the seven Bradford woolcombers in HO 20/10 is illustrative. Woolcombing was far from a doomed trade in the early Chartist period. On the contrary, the introduction of power spinning had greatly increased the demand for their work, and the implementation of mechanized woolcombing did not come until the late 1840's.¹⁴ Bradford was flooded with new labor, attracted by relatively high wages. But the rapid expansion of woolcombing spelled the end of apprenticeship restriction, and the combers' union was smashed in the unsuccessful strike of 1825. When the woolen industry was hit by the downturn of the national economy in the late 1830's, the combers found themselves powerless to resist unemployment and sudden wage cuts.¹⁵ Of the seven woolcombers three had been unemployed at the time of their arrest, and a fourth, Francis Rushworth, had been in work less than a week, following a prolonged period of enforced idleness. The Sheffield cutlery trade exhibited similar characteristics. After years of expansion and high wages, the cutlers suffered a drastic decline in the late 1830's. All but one of the five Sheffield cutlers in HO 20/10 were unemployed at the time of their arrest.

Although artisans predominate among the early Chartist prisoners, there is a significant number of workers in the newer, mechanized trades. These include the large group of cotton spinners, and a considerable portion of the weavers, mainly from South Lancashire, who no doubt worked at power-looms. One should not distinguish too sharply between these workers and the artisans, for in many respects they faced similar problems. The cotton spinners displayed pride in their skill to the same extent as did

¹⁴ In 1852, when the woolcombers *were* being displaced by machinery, Ernest Jones called woolcombing "an ancient – a once flourishing and high-paid trade". See *People's Paper*, 4 September 1852, p. 1.

¹⁵ A. J. Peacock, *Bradford Chartism 1838-1840* (York, 1969), pp. 2-3; Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, op. cit., p. 282.

shoemakers and carpenters. They attempted to control entry into their trade and conditions of work in much the same manner as did the older associations of handicraftsmen. But the spinners found it difficult to exercise such control over their livelihood, especially after the introduction of larger self-acting mules in the mid 1820's.¹⁶ A sense of injured pride is clear in Timothy Higgins's remarks to the prison inspector:

I was brought up a cotton spinner – it was a very agreeable calling when I first followed it, but they have got into the habit of applying self-acting Machinery and *man* is of no use. I know some of the most intelligent in Society who cannot get bread. They take a man now for his muscular appearance not for his talent – machines have become so simple that attending to them is commonplace labour.¹⁷

The spinners were plagued by an excess of labor and by cyclical unemployment, much as were the woolcombers and cutlers. Moreover, the cotton spinners' employers were notably hostile to any sort of trade-union or radical activity on the part of their workers. At least three former cotton spinners in HO 20/10 – William Aitken, William Butterworth and Charles Davies – had lost their jobs for this reason.

The reader will also have noticed among the occupations of Chartist prisoners a considerable number involved in non-manual labor: schoolmasters, preachers, publicans, newsdealers, and various shopkeepers. Their presence might be taken to indicate a large measure of *petit-bourgeois* support for Chartism; but, upon closer examination, most of these people turn out to have been very much a part of the working-class community. The profession of Chartist journalist, dissenting preacher or schoolmaster involved one intimately in the milieu of working-class life. Most of the shopkeepers in Appendix III had been forced out of a manual trade through victimization, unemployment or ill health. For them, running a small beershop¹⁸ or news agency did not represent a step up to middle-class respectability, but rather a desperate attempt to stay out of the workhouse. John Clayton told the prison inspector that when he lost

¹⁶ Much the best account of the problems of the Lancashire cotton spinners in this period is R. G. Kirby and A. E. Musson, *The Voice of the People: John Doherty, 1798-1854* (Manchester, 1975); see especially p. 15.

¹⁷ Quoted in Godfrey and Epstein, "H.O. 20/10", loc. cit., p. 30.

¹⁸ A distinction should be drawn between public houses and beershops. The former required procuring a license, which entailed a certain degree of surveillance by the authorities. James Duke lost his license immediately after his arrest, and could not re-open his pub, the Bush Inn at Ashton, when bailed. Beerhouses, after the Act of 1830, did not require licenses. Any householder whose name was in the rate book was authorized to sell beer, but not other intoxicating beverages, on payment of two guineas to the Excise.

employment as a cutler in mid 1839, he helped his wife sell greens in order to stay off parish relief. After the clock and watch maker, John Broadbent, was jailed at Chester Castle, his wife opened a beershop in Ashton. When James Duffy was forced to leave his hand-loom due to failing health, he became a beerhouse keeper at Sheffield. The economic situation of these shopkeepers was often worse than that of manual workers. James Mitchell's Stockport beershop "barely affords him subsistence"; John Wilde is described as "dependent upon his shop which is carried on by his mother to little advantage". Most of the Chartist shopkeepers relied on a working-class, even an explicitly Chartist clientele, and beerhouses often provided a venue for Chartist meetings. The Stockport Chartist Committee met at Mitchell's beershop, and Peter Hoey's was the center for radical activity at Barnsley. David Lewis's beerhouse, the "King Crispin", was an important focus for Chartism in the South Wales valleys.

There is not a significant number of workers in the occupations which were subject to the closest social control: agricultural labor, domestic service, and the military. The five soldiers and three servants in HO 20/10 all had moved on to other occupations by the time of their Chartist involvement. The failure of Chartism to appeal to the mass of the English agricultural population is highlighted by the fact that all three Chartist prisoners in Appendix III who worked on the land lived in South Wales.

One of the most striking features of the background of Chartist prisoners is the degree to which they represented the dominant trade in their localities, which is revealed by analyzing occupational data in conjunction with geographical location. To this end, the occupations of over half of the prisoners in Appendix II have been grouped according to where the prisoners were arrested (see Appendix IV). The most extreme example is Nottinghamshire, where all but one of the twenty-two prisoners were involved in framework knitting or lacemaking. The industrial North displays the same phenomenon in a less exaggerated form. At least eleven of the thirty-two Bolton Chartists worked in the cotton textile industry, and this figure increases when one considers that the engineer, sizer, and many of the eleven laborers probably worked in cotton mills. Similarly, at least eight of the twenty-one Manchester prisoners, and six of the nineteen from Stockport were involved in textile manufacture. Across the Pennines, the same feature presents itself. Nine of eleven Bradford men worked in the woolen industry, six of the eight Barnsley prisoners were linen weavers, and eleven of the twenty-three Sheffield Chartists were in the cutlery trade.

Wales exhibits a similar pattern. Thirty of the fifty-two arrested in Monmouthshire (most of whom were involved in the Newport rising) were in the coal-mining industry of the South Wales valleys, while thirty-six of

the forty-eight Montgomeryshire prisoners (mainly arrested for rioting at Newton and Llanidloes) worked in textiles, no doubt flannel. When we come to Middlesex, however, we are faced with a bewildering variety of trades, with none of the concentration displayed elsewhere. But this is only to be expected, for London and the Home Counties had no dominant trade. The fairly high number of prisoners from the “lower”, less organized trades (shoemaking, tailoring, and the various building occupations) and the absence of “higher”, better organized ones (coachmakers, coopers, goldsmiths, shipwrights, wheelwrights) bear out Prothero’s thesis on the composition of London Chartism.¹⁹ The prisoners from Somerset and Wiltshire also do not display any occupational concentration.

On the face of it, it may not seem significant to find the Chartist prisoners so closely representing the dominant trades in their respective localities. Yet surely this points to one of the great strengths of the Chartist movement. The breadth of Chartism’s appeal was such as to enable it to take root in widely divergent parts of Britain. The fact that it did attract support from the most important elements in each community – whether artisans or factory operatives – accounts for the movement’s longevity, despite numerous setbacks.

In their religious beliefs, as well, the Chartists were representative of their localities. The prison inspectors noted the religious persuasions of the seventy-three Chartists in HO 20/10, and this information appears in Appendix V. The Anglicans display no geographic concentration, while the majority of the Welsh prisoners (eight of fifteen) are Baptists or non-Wesleyan Methodists. A majority of the Catholics are Irish-born and/or residents of Barnsley, a center of Irish settlement. The presence of a Presbyterian, Robert Peddie, is explained by the fact that he was born in Edinburgh. The high number of members of the Church of England is surprising, as one normally associates nineteenth-century radical movements with religious dissent. Yet, the large number of Anglicans in the group may well serve to underscore the notion that Chartism appealed to the most important groups in working-class communities. The majority of English workers no doubt considered themselves to be members of the Established Church, even if they seldom attended.

Indeed, quite a few of the prisoners who called themselves Anglicans were obviously lax in their faith, much to the dismay of the prison inspectors. Captain Williams recorded that William Martin belonged to the “Established Church, according to his own statement, but I doubt his adhesion to any religious sect”. The inspector also doubted the sincerity of

¹⁹ Prothero, “London Chartism and the Trades”, loc. cit., p. 209.

William Wells's self-definition as an Anglican. Lack of solid faith was not confined to the Church of England, however. Benbow "calls himself a Baptist — but really is of no religion. [He] pays the most marked disrespect at prison chapel by never rising from his seat." Eleazer Hughes normally attended Lady Huntingdon's chapel in Birmingham; but he also went to the parish church on occasion. Even among the Catholic prisoners outward religious fervor varied. James Mitchell saw a priest daily; William Ashton had no such desire.

Nine of the prisoners in HO 20/10 are recorded as having no religion. All but one were from South Lancashire manufacturing towns, and most of them were incarcerated at Chester Castle. Several of the Chartists at this jail had long been freethinkers, and they may have influenced their fellow prisoners. James Duke had belonged to a group of Carlilite freethinkers in the 1820's.²⁰ Isaac Armitage, formerly a Methodist, "now thinks for himself". When C. H. Neesom was questioned by the authorities at Newgate prison as to his religious persuasion, he replied by paraphrasing Tom Paine. "I told them that my creed was, if it was a creed, that the world was my country, and to do good my religion." Neesom refused to attend prison chapel, for which he was placed in solitary confinement, on a diet of bread and water.²¹ These secularized radicals felt that political action should be strictly divorced from theological matters. Isaac Johnson, a bitter enemy of J. R. Stephens, said: "let religion stand on its own grounds and politics upon its."

Conversely, a number of the prisoners had combined Chartism with strong religious feelings. Stephens and W. V. Jackson, both former Wesleyans, had seceded to form their own sects. They had both attacked the factory system and the New Poor Law on religious grounds, and it was this campaign which had led them into Chartism. George Johnson, who had left Wesleyanism to become a religious teacher under Stephens, told the prison inspector: "I only consider myself bound to obey the Laws of Man, when in consonance with that of God."

The Chartist prisoners were not teen-age hooligans; their age distribution, laid out in Appendix VI, is quite flat. There is only one man in teens, more than half of the prisoners are over thirty, and there are eight in their fifties. The median age is thirty-one. To further emphasize their "maturity", it is worth noting that fifty-three were married, of whom forty-five had children. These are people with something to lose, who would not enter a radical movement without careful thought.

²⁰ I owe this reference to Dr James Epstein.

²¹ John Maughan, "Memoir of Mr. C. H. Neesom", in: *National Reformer*, 20 July 1861, p. 7.

But careful thought did not imply formal education. When the prison inspector asked the HO 20/10 group what instruction they had received, they found that very few had had much in the way of proper schooling. Only three – O'Brien, O'Connor and Stephens – had enjoyed an extensive formal education. Yet, by one means or another, most of these Chartists had learned how to read. Only nine of the prisoners seem to have been totally illiterate; another twelve could read but not write. One, Joseph Crabtree, had been illiterate until his wife taught him to read and write. Another, Joseph Bennison, had never been to school, but began to teach himself to read at age twenty, three years before his arrest. At least two men had been taught to read by their fellow prisoners. Two Chartists, William Booker and John Lovell, had been Sunday-school teachers, and William Aitken had run his own school at Ashton since 1833, when he lost his job as a cotton spinner. Peter Foden was employed as a teacher while at Wakefield House of Correction.²²

The inspectors often were surprised by the intelligence and seriousness of those they interviewed. Of George Thompson the inspector noted: "Reads and writes well – rather of a serious turn of mind, or apparently so." Isaac Johnson was described as "a shrewd man, a republican I suspect upon principle". Charles Davies's education was "very limited – but [he] has improved himself and is a man of considerable energy and talent." Captain Williams found John Broadbent to be a man of "some mind", while Aitken impressed him as "manifesting an extreme desire to acquire knowledge". Timothy Higgins "is a man of considerable intelligence and not devoid of feeling. He shed tears when I spoke to him of his family."

III

Thus far, the sources on Chartist prisoners have told us something about what sort of person was a likely recruit to the movement. But what was the actual motivation which led one into serious radical politics? Sheer distress has often been cited by historians as the mainspring of Chartism. Donald Read characterized it as "the creed of hard times".²³

Again, the material on Chartist prisoners can be used to test conventional assumptions. The inspectors noted which of the prisoners in HO 20/10 had been unemployed or "destitute" at the time of their arrest, and, for about one-third of the prisoners, they recorded precise wage earnings. This material is summarized in Appendix VII. Of course, it is difficult to

²² Newspaper Cuttings Relating to Sheffield, Vol. XLI, p. 258, Sheffield Central Library.

²³ Donald Read, "Chartism in Manchester", in: *Chartist Studies*, ed. by Asa Briggs (London, 1959), p. 56.

say which wage levels constituted relative poverty or affluence in this period. The problem is complicated by many variables, such as price fluctuations, regional differences, and the availability of non-monetary income such as through poaching. Without becoming bogged down in the voluminous and inconclusive debate on the nineteenth-century standard of living, we can safely consider a wage of ten shillings per week or less to be a "poverty line" of sorts. For example, the family of Phineas Smithers was receiving parish relief while he was earning 10/- per week as a woolcomber. On the other hand, an income of between one and two pounds per week seems to have been quite comfortable. Walter Meredith's income of £1 per week as a miner was sufficient to enable him to be a small freeholder. Isaac Johnson earned 30/- per week as a smith, and owned several houses in Stockport worth a combined rental of £30 per year. Not surprisingly, those in the higher income brackets (18/- or more) include the more highly skilled workers (e.g., iron roller, cabinet-maker, mason, smith, staymaker), plus the miners. Handloom weaving, perhaps the most degraded occupation of the age, exhibits the lowest wages. Of the seven handloom weavers in HO 20/10, all were earning 10/- per week or less, with the exception of the Barnsley linen weavers, who earned over £1. Only in linen was powerloom weaving still impractical. Taken together, the number of Chartists in Appendix VII who earned 10/- or less, or were unemployed or "destitute", slightly exceeds the number in more comfortable circumstances.

These income data are more revealing when placed in their local context. It is clear that economic distress underlay the Sheffield rising. The cutlers had recently experienced a drastic decline in their living standards. Thomas Booker told the Home Office inspector that he had customarily earned 50/- per week, but since 1837 that figure had dropped to 7/-. He had joined the Chartists only four or five weeks before the rising, in the belief that the enactment of the Charter could relieve his poverty. Thomas Penthorpe, a shoemaker, earned only 5/- to 9/- per week, and his family was receiving parish assistance. Five of the nine prisoners involved in the Sheffield insurrection had been unemployed, some for over a year.

The case of the Bradford rising is similar. The leader, Robert Peddie, was quite well-to-do. Prior to commencing full-time political activity, he had been a master staymaker at Edinburgh, indirectly employing fifty men, and earning £300 per year. But, of the nine other Bradford men in HO 20/10, three were unemployed woolcombers. The wages of the four woolcombers in work ranged from 5/- to 12/- per week. Only one of Peddie's followers, a cabinet-maker, earned over 12/-. These statistics are corroborated by evidence of a qualitative nature. A dozen prisoners had

been examined by the Bradford magistrates on the day after the insurrection, and a local account states: “The appearance of all these prisoners was wretched in the extreme.”²⁴

A number of the South Lancashire Chartists were also motivated by poverty. Davies, the victimized cotton spinner, told the prison inspector:

The great distress is the cause of our discontent – if the wages were what they ought to be, we should not hear a word about the Suffrage. If the masters will only do something for the workmen to get them the common comforts of life, we should be the most contented creatures on earth.

In the case of the Newport rising, however, hunger does not appear to have been a direct motivation. None of the seven prisoners in HO 20/10 who had been involved were especially poor. John Lovell, a tenant farmer, “was earning a very comfortable subsistence”. The three miners in the group earned between 15/– and 25/– per week.

Indeed, for most of the prisoners, with the notable exception of the Bradford and Sheffield men, it was a deep commitment to radical principles which led them into Chartism, rather than the desperation of poverty. This is not to say that they were unconcerned with the economic plight of the working class. Most Chartists believed that the attainment of their political program would result in a speedy alleviation of the worst forms of poverty and inequality. Political and economic issues were inter-related in Chartist thought; it was long and careful study of these issues which motivated a great many working people to enter the movement.

An examination of the earlier careers of the Chartist prisoners reveals that many had been involved in radical politics. Being previously committed to a sweeping away of Old Corruption, it is no surprise that they endorsed the Charter; it was the logical next step in many a long radical career. As was mentioned before, there were among the early Chartist prisoners quite a few agitators of national stature, whose involvement in pre-Chartist radicalism is well known, and need not be recited here. But numerous local figures also had previous political experience which they took with them into Chartism.

The leadership of Chartism in Barnsley included several veterans.²⁵ William Ashton had been active since the late 1820's. “This man's career has been an extraordinary one”, wrote Captain Williams, who interviewed

²⁴ Bradford Observer, 30 January 1840.

²⁵ The most thorough study of the radical tradition in Barnsley is a doctoral thesis by F. J. Kajjage, “Labouring Barnsley, 1815-56: A Social and Economic History” (Warwick University Ph.D. thesis, 1975). See also id., “Manifesto of the Barnsley Chartists”, in: Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, No 33 (1976), pp. 20-26.

him at Wakefield. "His hatred of the government of the country seems incredible, and vents itself on the slightest occasion. He is a man of considerable powers, most cunning, and has considerable influence in Barnsley." Joseph Crabtree told Williams: "I was a Radical before a Chartist." Indeed, the author of Crabtree's obituary traced his radical proclivities back to the very day of his birth. "He imbibed political excitement at his mother's breast, as he was born during the heat and turmoil of a general election [at Dewsbury in 1807], which accounts for his political bias, and forwardness in turnouts and radical movements."²⁶ Crabtree was involved in the 1830-32 reform agitation, and in the distribution of unstamped newspapers. He worked as an agent for Joshua Hobson's *Voice of the West Riding* in the mid 1830's, and was a reporter for the *Northern Star* for one year. He founded the Barnsley branch of O'Connor's Great Radical Association in 1836, which was transformed into a Chartist body two years later.²⁷ Peter Hoey told Captain Williams: "I have made up my mind to a *change* – but I have always been opposed to physical force. I am a Radical Reformer and always shall be." In fact, Hoey had been rather more extreme than he was leading the inspector to believe. At a public meeting in July 1839, shortly before his arrest, he had used inflammatory language, calling for arming and a general strike.²⁸

Although we have seen that most of the participants in the Sheffield rising were newcomers to politics, their leader, Samuel Holberry, did have some previous experience. As a soldier in the early 1830's he had been an Orangeman. But when he learned that the reactionary Duke of Cumberland controlled the Orange Order, he quit that body, and soon afterward the army. He worked several months in London during 1837-38, at which time he became a Chartist. In the period preceding the rising at Sheffield he had toured the East Midlands for the Charter.²⁹

In South Lancashire, too, there was a strong tradition of political radicalism which contributed to the strength of Chartism in that region. Although he was only about eleven years old at the time, R. J. Richardson claimed to have been present at the Peterloo Massacre of 1819. Speaking at the great Chartist demonstration at Holloway Head, Birmingham, in August 1838, Richardson said that he "began his [political] career on the

²⁶ Joseph Wilkinson, *Barnsley Obituary*, p. 151, Barnsley Public Library.

²⁷ Kaijage, "Labouring Barnsley", *op. cit.*, ch. 9, *passim*.

²⁸ Frank Peel, *The Risings of the Luddites, Chartists and Plug-Drawers*, 4th ed. (London, 1968), p. 323.

²⁹ "Biographical Sketch of the Late Samuel Holberry", in: *English Chartist Circular*, Nos 118-22; Lloyd Jones, "Poor Chartists Not To Be Forgotten", in: *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 11 October 1879, p. 3; information in HO 20/10.

16th of August, 1819, when the men of Manchester and South Lancashire met to petition Parliament for annual Parliaments, universal suffrage, and vote by ballot. From that time on he had persevered in those principles".³⁰ Richardson went on to be active in trade unionism and the Ten Hours and anti-Poor-Law movements during the 1830's. He was secretary of the Manchester Political Union, which organized the great Chartist rally on Kersal Moor in September 1839.³¹ William Aitken had been a cotton spinner at Ashton-under-Lyne, where he led a short-time committee. He testified before the Royal Commission on Child Labour in 1833, whereupon he was dismissed from his factory job. Nevertheless, he remained in the Ten Hours movement, sitting on the Central Short-Time Committee at Manchester.³²

The New Poor Law had drawn large numbers of people into political activity. It was a piece of blatant class legislation, and underscored the relevance of national politics to the daily lives of the workers. Opponents of the law were naturally led to advocate the acquisition of political power by the masses. The punitive treatment which the 1834 Act meted out to the poor particularly offended men of strong religious sensibilities, such as Stephens and Jackson. Typical of the grass-roots activists in the anti-Poor-Law agitation was George Johnson of Ashton. He chaired a meeting on Christmas Day, 1838, before he had undertaken any Chartist activity. He introduced Oastler and Stephens to the crowd, and stated that "he loved and revered them because they grounded all their claims on behalf of the poor and needy upon the doctrines, precepts, and practice of Christianity."³³ Such men hoped that Chartism could be instrumental in overturning an especially obnoxious law, but their commitment to the Charter was never so strong as that of a person like Richardson, who opposed the New Poor Law on orthodox radical grounds.³⁴

The experience of trade unionism in the 1830's, when the Whig Government seemed to be acting in concert with the manufacturers to smash all combinations of labor, also contributed to the politicization of the working class. This had been the case for Charles Davies. According to

³⁰ The Grand Midland Demonstration at Birmingham, August 6, 1838 (Birmingham, 1838), p. 16.

³¹ Read, "Chartism in Manchester", loc. cit., pp. 41-43.

³² Obituary in Ashton-under-Lyne News, 2 October 1869, p. 8. See also Aitken's serialized "Remembrances of the Struggles of a Working Man for Bread and Liberty", *ibid.*, September-October 1869.

³³ Operative, 6 January 1839, p. 3.

³⁴ It should be pointed out that not all the Chartists were so implacably opposed to the New Poor Law. Isaac Johnson told the prison inspector: "I am of the opinion that the Poor Law Bill was not wrong as a whole but in parts."

Captain Williams, “this man’s Political agitation seems to have emanated from the failure of his attempts to increase the Wages of Working Men, which he says that Political power can only accomplish. [. . .] I have no doubt this man would go *any lengths* to carry out his own feelings with regard to the working classes.” William Ashton told the inspector he had been active in the negotiations between the masters and linen weavers of Barnsley in 1829. He stated that a wage agreement had been reached, which the masters then refused to honor. A strike ensued, during which violence occurred. Although not directly involved, Ashton was arrested, convicted at the York assizes of rioting and destroying work, and sentenced to fourteen years’ transportation to Van Diemen’s Land. He received a pardon in 1838 and returned to England with money donated by the Barnsley weavers.

Other Chartists had had previous experience with the harsh English legal and penal systems. While serving in the East Yorkshire militia in 1819, John Marshall had been brought to trial with two others for breaking into a counting house. He was acquitted, but his co-defendants were transported. William Brook had served several terms in jail prior to his confinement as a Chartist, for refusing to support his wife, whom he claimed was an adulteress. Although not politically related, such brushes with the law may well have acted to decrease these workers’ allegiance to the State.

An important method by which Chartists acquired their radical ideas was through family connections, yet historians of Chartism have paid remarkably little attention to this factor in examining the roots of the movement.³⁵ Many of the Chartist prisoners had acquired their radical ideas at home. Father-and-son combinations occurred frequently, as with Thomas and William Booker of Sheffield. James Duke told Captain Williams that his father was currently in Kirkdale Gaol, although no such man appears in either HO 20/10 or the parliamentary investigation. Isaac Johnson’s father seems to have been involved in the radical agitation of the post-war period. Isaac told the prison inspector that his lack of formal education

was owing to his being turned out of school, after gaining six prizes, in consequence of his father obliging him to go to school in a white hat with

³⁵ An exception is Dorothy Thompson, “Women and Nineteenth-Century Radical Politics: A Lost Dimension”, in: *The Rights and Wrongs of Women*, ed. by Juliet Mitchell and Anne Oakley (Harmondsworth, 1976). This essay draws attention to the role of women in conveying political attitudes within working-class families. Of course, the family backgrounds of some of the more famous Chartists, such as O’Connor, have been examined by their biographers.

crape and green riband at Peterloo time, for which he was expelled and never went anywhere afterwards.³⁶

Thomas Lingard, a Barnsley Chartist arrested in August 1839, was the son of Joseph, who had been active in the unstamped-press agitation, and also was arrested in 1839. Isaac Armitage's father had been involved in radical politics, and was arrested with Isaac and another seventeen-year-old son, but only Isaac had been brought to trial. Two of the Bradford Chartists had elder brothers in the movement: Paul Holdsworth's brother, James, had been indicted in 1840, but was acquitted, and William Brook's brother is said to have been a more active Chartist than he. William Martin's brother, Walsingham, was involved in Chartism at Chesterfield. William Wells of Sheffield was the cousin of Samuel Holberry.

Several of the Chartist prisoners had wives who were active in the movement. Charles Neesom's wife was a leader of the East London Female Charter Association and ran a Chartist school,³⁷ which may account for Charles's unusual interest in women's rights. Foden's wife, Sarah, was secretary of the Female Chartists of Sheffield, and Mary Holberry may have been involved in planning the Sheffield rising. She was arrested with Samuel, but was discharged a few days later. John Livesey married the daughter of James Wheeler, "a man notorious for political agitation at Manchester". The collier's wife who is listed in Appendix II is Amy Meredith, who was arrested with her eleven-year-old son, James, in November 1839, and charged with conspiracy and riot at Trevethin. The married woman is Elizabeth Creswell, framework knitter of Mansfield. No other members of her family appear to have been arrested.

IV

Once having acquired their radical ideas, the Chartists tended to remain faithful to them, and to each other, even when persecuted by the authorities. There are numerous examples of impressive solidarity on the part of Chartist prisoners. Four of the men in Chester Castle had been told before their trial that they could go free if they pleaded guilty, but none of them did so. One of them, James Burton, said: "they wanted me to plead guilty, and let me go. I did not come 40 miles to tell lies in Court." Samuel Holberry refused to implicate any other Sheffield Chartists in his com-

³⁶ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 120.

³⁷ Maughan, "Memoir of Mr. C. H. Neesom" (continued), in: *National Reformer*, 27 July 1861, p. 6. See also Brian Harrison, "Teetotal Chartism", in: *History*, LVIII (1973), p. 199.

ments to the prison inspector. He “is very frank in communicating every particular relating to the offense for which he is suffering, but is extremely guarded as to compromising others.” His wife proved equally impervious to the authorities. After her arrest, she was separated from Samuel, and confined eighteen hours without food in the same cell as a drunken vagrant. She was then grilled by the magistrates.

She was told [. . .] that if she would give evidence such as would be useful to the authorities she and her husband might escape; but that if she refused she would be tried for high treason, and would have to accept such consequences as might follow. She was deaf to every offer and every threat, and [. . .] in despair of obtaining any information through her, she was discharged.³⁸

On the other hand it should be pointed out that quite a few of the Chartist prisoners displayed rather less loyalty to the movement. A dozen of them did plead guilty at their trials, all but one of whom had been participants in the Sheffield and Bradford risings. This is not to be wondered at, for we have seen that these two cases mainly involved destitute workers, with no prior experience in politics, following one or two committed leaders.³⁹ One of the Newport rioters, Richard Benfield, told the prison inspector he had been forced to join the rising, while another, Jenkin Morgan, claimed not to have been present at all. Benfield’s story, at least, may have been true.⁴⁰ If not, it is still difficult to blame these men for seeking to dissociate themselves from Chartism, in view of the serious charges facing them. In the event, both Benfield and Morgan were sentenced to death, but these judgments were later commuted to prison terms. Other prisoners produced less credible denials of their Chartist past. The Irishman, James Duffy, “describes himself as an O’Connellite and a Repealer but no Chartist”; Charles Morris said: “I never was a Chartist, I never bothered myself about it”; and John Livesey stated: “I hold Chartist opinions, but had never anything actively to do in that way.” Such statements must be treated with skepticism, and illustrate the care with which prison interviews must be handled by the historian. Some prisoners no

³⁸ Lloyd Jones, “Poor Chartists”, loc. cit., p. 3.

³⁹ It should be pointed out that Holberry, Wells and Holdsworth, members of “Chartist families” mentioned above, were not among those who pleaded guilty to rioting at Sheffield.

⁴⁰ Sir John Campbell, the prosecutor in the Monmouth trials, wrote to the Home Office: “Richard Benfield and John Rees are the two for whom a slighter punishment seems stipulated. In truth we had not a particle of evidence against them except that they were found concealed in the Westgate Inn and that they stood out. I must have agreed to their acquittal.” Campbell to S. M. Phillipps, 19 February 1840, HO 20/8, Pt 1.

doubt hoped that by tailoring their responses to what they believed the inspectors wanted to hear, they might find their sentences shortened, or conditions ameliorated.

The prisoner who went the farthest in repudiating his Chartist past was Joseph Crabtree of Barnsley. He believed the true plotters of violence still to be at large, while those in jail had been their dupes. He wrote to his wife from Wakefield:

the very men that have been the cause of acts of violence [...] have taken care to keep out of the way. I maintain that, with two or three exceptions, there is not a physical force man in prison [...]. Poor [John] Frost was betrayed into the commission of that ever-to-be-lamented Monmouth act, and those who are anxious to know by whom, must ask the GREAT PETER [Bussey] of Bradford. Ah! Ah! but he is over the water [in America], out of the way; and, instead of him, we have in this prison, from Bradford, six individuals that absolutely do not know what the word Chartist means.⁴¹

Crabtree went so far as to approach the Home Office with offers of information on other Chartists, but he met with a curt refusal.⁴² George Bellamy performed a more useful service to the authorities by quelling a near mutiny among the criminal prisoners at Lancaster Castle.⁴³

Another breakdown of Chartist solidarity took place at Chester Castle, where the political prisoners were divided into two opposing camps of roughly equal size, one following McDouall, the other loyal to Stephens. Benbow, who identified himself with Stephens, described the situation in quite understated terms, in a letter to W. V. Jackson, then resident at Lancaster Castle: "The Chartists [in Chester Castle] are all well in health, thank God: but, we have now and then a little squabble about things as they are, and as they ought to be. I suppose that is natural."⁴⁴ In fact, the "little squabbles" led on at least one occasion to a violent fracas, in which a follower of Stephens broke the jaw of a McDouall man. The origin of the feud lay with the handling of some £600 raised by Chartists for Stephens's legal defense. This fund had been established at a meeting of Chartist delegates held at Manchester in January 1839, and the collections were organized by Thomas Fielden and Matthew Fletcher.⁴⁵ The fund proved to be more than ample to meet Stephens's costs, but he refused to share it with

⁴¹ Letter of 16 September 1840, printed in the *Northern Star*, 24 October, p. 7.

⁴² Hansard, Third Series, LV, c. 1301.

⁴³ Williams to Maule, 17 December 1840, HO 20/10.

⁴⁴ Benbow to Jackson, 16 October 1840, HO 20/10. This letter was confiscated by the prison authorities.

⁴⁵ Operative, 20 January 1839, p. 6; William Willis to R. J. Richardson, 12 March 1839 (copy of intercepted letter), HO 40/53, ff. 991-94.

the other arrested Chartists. When McDouall, a former admirer, criticized him on this score, Stephens accused McDouall of pocketing the funds himself. The terms of the argument rapidly deteriorated. McDouall charged Stephens with sexual license, while Stephens's friend Benbow made the following evaluation of Dr McDouall: "As a surgeon I would not trust him with a dog's leg to cure, and as a Chartist his only principle is money."⁴⁶

Unfortunately, McDouall and Stephens ended up in the same prison, which occasioned the division of the Chartist prisoners there. Although the prisoners may have been divided on the basis of personalities, there is also reason to believe that the split was more significant, representing one of the basic divisions within Chartism. Those loyal to Stephens appear to have been radicals of a transient, almost millenarian type, while McDouall's followers were more serious Chartists, who returned to activity in the movement upon their release.⁴⁷ Stephens had divorced himself explicitly from Chartism several months before his trial.⁴⁸ His followers seem to have been more interested in directly ameliorating the economic situation of the masses, especially with regard to the New Poor Law, than in acquiring political rights.

The defections and squabbles among the Chartist prisoners serve to remind us that these were ordinary human beings. Given the immense strains which arrest, trial and imprisonment placed upon them, they were a remarkably solid and loyal group. Even at Chester Castle, the Stephens-McDouall gulf did not prove unbridgeable. Higgins wrote in May 1840: "I differ from Mr. Stevens [sic] in regard to Politics. [. . .] yet he is a Man who as a Fellow Prisoner will ever be endeared to me".⁴⁹

The solidarity of the Chartist prisoners was matched by a major campaign of support from outside. By the summer of 1839, when about

⁴⁶ Benbow to Jackson, 16 October 1840. There is some further information on this episode in T. M. Kemnitz and F. Jacques, "J. R. Stephens and the Chartist Movement", in: *International Review of Social History*, XIX (1974), p. 224.

⁴⁷ I owe this insight to Dorothy Thompson. Benbow does not fit the pattern, however. His loyalty to Stephens defies explanation.

⁴⁸ See his "Last Sermon", in: *Northern Star*, 17 August 1839, p. 6. The degree to which Stephens's conduct alienated many Chartists is exemplified by Thomas Dunning, the Nantwich shoemaker: "The Chartists had subscribed liberally to the defence of Mr. S., but he having on his trial denied all connection with Chartism, Chartists felt no further sympathy for him; in fact, many felt pleased he got a heavier sentence than Dr. McDouall, who defended his Chartist principles in a speech [at his trial]." "The Reminiscences of Thomas Dunning (1813-94) and the National Shoemakers' Case of 1834", ed. by W. H. Chaliner, in: *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, LIX (1947), p. 119.

⁴⁹ Stephens's *Monthly Magazine*, 1840, pp. 190-91.

fifty Chartists were already in jail, the arrest and imprisonment of Chartists had become an issue in itself. The arrests of Stephens and Vincent seem to have had a particularly galvanizing effect on local Chartist branches, taking precedence over the debate on moral *versus* physical force.⁵⁰ Meetings were held in all the important Chartist centers, in order to develop a strategy to combat the government's repression. Typical was the gathering of delegates at Rochdale in early July.

This meeting was held for the purpose of considering the best means of creating a more efficient organisation throughout the northern districts – for preventing the further arrests of Chartists – and for the establishment of a defence fund for the protection of all Chartists who may be seized upon by the physical force of the dominant aristocracy.⁵¹

Speeches were heard from Benbow, Higgins and Wilde, all of whom were to find themselves behind bars shortly thereafter. The delegates at this meeting had little notion of what to do in the face of the government's policy, the cleverness of which they appreciated. "The Government cannot commit a million and a half men to prison, but they can pick them out here and there, and thus terrify the whole." There was a general consensus that arrests could not be prevented, but that the government's charges could be rebutted in court, and that efforts should be made to improve the lot of imprisoned Chartists.

The campaign in support of the Chartist prisoners came to be the most important facet of radical activity in Britain during 1840 and 1841. It filled the void left by the rejection of the National Petition, the disbanding of the Convention, and the suppression of the risings at Newport and elsewhere. When the leaders in a Chartist locality were jailed, others stepped in to take their place. This was the case in Stockport, where George Bradburn became the principal leader in the absence of Davies and Mitchell. At Barnsley, Thomas Lingard and John Vallance, who had been released on their own recognizances, took over for the imprisoned Crabtree, Hoey and Ashton. The opportunity to aid their imprisoned fellows gave individual Chartists an immediate focus for their efforts. No Chartist welcomed the arrests and imprisonments, but they did act to infuse the movement with new energy, and to maintain the level of indignation present in 1838-39.

⁵⁰ I. J. Prothero found this to be the case in London, where even Henry Hetherington took part in the campaign to support Stephens. See his "London Working-Class Movements, 1825-1848" (Cambridge University Ph.D. thesis, 1967), p. 199.

⁵¹ "Prospects of our Cause", in *Chartist*, 7 July 1839, p. 1. The wording of the last phrase is significant. Most Chartist rhetoric in this period, even calls for arming, were couched in defensive terms.

The Chartist press was filled with items on the subject.⁵² Letters and articles about the prisoners were presented in histrionic fashion, to produce the highest emotional impact. Moreover, the treatment of political prisoners provided an issue over which radical MPs could badger the government, and keep Chartism alive as a national question. The issue of Chartist prisoners acted to sustain the movement until the next peak of activity, in 1842.

One way in which the Chartists supported their arrested fellows was to raise funds on their behalf. A substantial amount of money from the profits of the *Northern Star* (over £400 by mid 1840) was donated to various defense and victim funds, and the paper carried weekly reports of the progress of those funds.⁵³ The large sum collected for Stephens's defense has been noted. As the number of arrested Chartists grew, so did the number of local defense funds. In the summer of 1839 the Convention established a National Defence Fund Committee, to act as a clearing house. The Committee's records contain numerous requests for aid on behalf of arrested Chartists. For instance, Edward Brown and John Fussell of Birmingham required £25 to pay their lawyer, all of which was raised locally within a month.⁵⁴ Indeed, it was at the local level that imprisoned Chartists received the most aid. Barnsley represents the sort of closely knit working-class community which gave an impressive degree of support to its arrested Chartists. Between late August and mid October 1839, the Barnsley Defence Fund expended over £77 in legal fees, and in payments to the families of the men of the town who had been arrested.⁵⁵ In the months following the arrest of twenty Stockport Chartists, an average of £30 per week was raised in the town on their behalf.⁵⁶

In 1840, after the trials of the Chartists had taken place, the emphasis in fund raising naturally switched from defense to the maintenance of imprisoned Chartists and their families. This was the first substantive topic to be discussed at the Chartist delegate meeting of July 1840 held in Manchester (where the National Charter Association also was established).

⁵² See for these years English Chartist Circular, McDouall's Chartist and Republican Journal, Midland Counties Illuminator, Northern Liberator, and of course the Northern Star. A report in the latter on a meeting to pray for imprisoned Chartists is reprinted in Thompson, *The Early Chartists* (London, 1971), pp. 218-19.

⁵³ Northern Star, 18 July 1840, p. 6. See also Epstein, "Feargus O'Connor and the Northern Star", loc. cit., p. 94, note 2.

⁵⁴ British Library, Add. Mss 34, 245 B (Miscellaneous Papers of the Chartist Convention, 1839), ff. 61-62.

⁵⁵ Northern Star, 26 October 1839, p. 5.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 14 September, p. 8. Owing to a powerloom weavers' strike, this level of support could not be maintained in 1840. See *ibid.*, 25 July 1840, p. 1.

The delegates voted to establish a national Victim Fund, under the direction of Abel Heywood. This fund paid out more than £400 over the next year, mainly to wives of imprisoned Chartists. But, as before, the steadiest source of aid was in the Chartist localities. There is evidence in HO 20/10 that a number of the prisoners received generous support from outside. W. V. Jackson's congregation had sent him nearly £22 by December 1840, and the South Wales Chartists were generously supported by the miners of their district. From his letters to Thomas Allsop, we learn that O'Brien was well looked after by the Liverpool Chartists.

Thanks to the good people of Liverpool, I have all my reasonable wants satisfied since I came here. They sent me two pounds when I was in Kirkdale and six pounds since I came here [Lancaster Castle]. Had it not been for them, I should be now wearing prison dress, living on felons' fare, and picking cotton all day amongst thieves, house-breakers, sodomists, and vagabonds of every sort.⁵⁷

After his release in 1842, William Ashton gave testimony of the impressive support he and others had received.

Eternal honour is due to the noble-minded Chartists of Barnsley, they never deserted a townsman in need, but have paid hundreds of pounds for their imprisoned friends. Yes, they have paid even hundreds of pounds on my account alone, but now, alas, they are steeped up to the chin in misery and want.⁵⁸

Between April and September 1840, the Birmingham Chartists collected nearly £24 for the maintenance of Edward Brown's family of eight.⁵⁹ Some Chartists went to extraordinary lengths to aid their fellows in jail. John Markham was delegated by the Leicester Chartists to carry an address and fifteen shillings to the three prisoners at Oakham Gaol in August 1840. He walked twenty-six miles in either direction to perform the task.⁶⁰

However, not all the prisoners were so well supported. William Edwards, the Newport baker who had been arrested with Vincent in 1839, complained of the small amount of aid he had received. He had made great sacrifices for the radical movement before his arrest, spending £50 of his own money, establishing eight Chartist branches in Monmouthshire, and collecting 10,000 signatures for the National Petition. But after twenty-one months in jail, he had been sent only £1 10/- from the Newport Chartists, and about £5 from other localities. His wife had been supporting herself by

⁵⁷ O'Brien to Allsop, 17 June 1840, Allsop Manuscripts.

⁵⁸ Ashton to O'Brien, 5 August 1842, printed in *British Statesman*, 8 October 1842, p. 9.

⁵⁹ *Northern Star*, 17 October 1840, p. 5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 15 August, p. 7.

running a news agency, but was nearly ruined when the authorities seized £20 worth of Chartist newspapers from her store. It is worth noting that, after his former prison-mate William Shellard wrote a letter to the *Midland Counties Illuminator* on Edwards's plight, funds began to flow in a more satisfactory manner. In the succeeding three weeks he received over £4.⁶¹

It was not only Chartists who aided the prisoners; they received funds from sympathetic middle-class radicals, as well. Joshua Scholefield, the aged MP for Birmingham, donated £5 to Hannah Collins for her maintenance while her husband John served a year's sentence at Warwick.⁶² When Lovett was released from prison he received a gift of £80, which had been donated by seventeen radical MPs.⁶³ The treatment of the Chartist prisoners seems to have gained them a good deal of sympathy from middle-class radicals, and went some distance to reduce the gap between the Chartists and the bourgeois reformers, which had widened since 1838.⁶⁴ During the debate in the Commons on O'Connor's treatment, even *The Times* was prompted to comment "that some reasonable modification should take place in the discipline to which Mr. O'Connor is subject".⁶⁵

Their supporters also sought to aid the Chartist prisoners by petitioning the government on their behalf. The best-known instance is the campaign against the death sentences which had been pronounced on the leaders of the Newport rising. The success of this effort (the nine death sentences were commuted to transportation or imprisonment in February 1840) no doubt encouraged the Chartists to extend their petitioning campaign.⁶⁶ In the course of the next year numerous meetings were held across the country for the purpose of petitioning the Queen and/or Parliament for the release of the Chartist prisoners, or for an amelioration of their conditions.

⁶¹ *Midland Counties Illuminator*, 20 February 1841, p. 6, and following issues.

⁶² Hannah Collins to Place, 20 March 1840, Place Collection, Set 55, unnumbered folio.

⁶³ "Subscription for Lovett and Collins in 1839-40", *ibid.*

⁶⁴ The Chartist period was not the first time that the British public had been shocked by revelations concerning prison conditions, which radicals then used to embarrass the government. Sir Francis Burdett had first made his mark in Parliament by exposing the cruel treatment of the inmates at Cold Bath Fields prison in 1798-1800. In the early 1820's, there had been scandals surrounding Ilchester and Milbank prisons. Henry Hunt had issued a pamphlet, *A Peep into a Prison* (1821), which prompted several parliamentary inquiries. See, among others, PP, 1822, XI, 7, pp. 277-312; 1822, XI, 30, pp. 733-56; 1823, V, 150, pp. 365-78.

⁶⁵ *The Times*, 28 May 1840, p. 4. See also A. J. Peacock, "Feargus O'Connor at York", in: *York History*, No 2.

⁶⁶ The episode may well have been a crucial watershed in the history of Chartism, displaying the efficacy of legal pressure tactics and the futility of violence. See Dorothy Thompson, "Chartism as a Historical Subject", in: *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, No 20 (1970), p. 12.

These culminated in a “Victim Restoration and Charter Convention of the Industrious Classes”, which met in London during May 1841. The delegates canvassed over a hundred MPs, and attempted in vain to gain an audience with the Queen.⁶⁷ They presented a petition to T. S. Duncombe, the radical MP for Finsbury, which had been signed by over 1,300,000 people, a number in excess of the signatures on the National Petition of 1839. On 25 May, Duncombe introduced the petition in the House of Commons, and moved that an address be presented to the Queen, praying for the liberation of all political prisoners in Great Britain. Overriding the objections of the Whigs, he forced a division. The vote was drawn at fifty-eight on each side, and the motion was defeated by the casting vote of the Speaker. This result was far better than any other parliamentary vote on Chartism before or afterward, and was sufficiently embarrassing to bring the Ministry to the brink of resignation.⁶⁸

The petitioning campaign seems to have achieved something in the way of concrete gains for the Chartist prisoners. Quite a few of them were released before the expiration of their sentences, although they were forced to post large sureties for their future lawful behavior. For others, sentences of hard labor were remitted. The Home Office was spurred to conduct numerous investigations into the treatment of the prisoners, of which HO 20/10 was the most systematic.⁶⁹ At least one Chartist, John Neal, felt that these concessions were made in response to petitioning. He had been released from Warwick Gaol in December 1840, about a month ahead of schedule, on the order of the Home Secretary. “Mr. Neal states that he was instrumental in procuring a mitigation of the sentence upon himself and brother victims, by addressing a memorial to Lord Normanby, who thereupon instituted inquiries highly favourable to the memorialists.”⁷⁰

But the government often reacted with complete coldness even to the most modest petitions. In March 1841, Jane Peddie prepared a memorial to the Queen, asking that her husband’s hard labor be remitted, and that he be allowed to write at least one letter home per month. She obtained the signatures of many citizens of Edinburgh, and her petition was presented to the Home Office by T. B. Macaulay. Lord Normanby flatly refused to forward it to the Queen.⁷¹

⁶⁷ *Northern Star*, 8 May – 5 June 1841.

⁶⁸ Hansard, Third Series, LVIII, cc. 740-65; *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, Late M.P. for Finsbury*, ed. by Thomas H. Duncombe (London, 1868), p. 301.

⁶⁹ For others, see HO 13/77 (*Criminal Correspondence and Warrants*, 1840).

⁷⁰ “Liberation of Political Victims”, in: *English Chartist Circular*, I, p. 90.

⁷¹ *Midland Counties Illuminator*, 27 March 1841, p. 27.

The gradual release of the prisoners provided occasions for the Chartists to re-affirm their faith in the movement. The first major figures to be liberated were Lovett and Collins, soon followed by McDouall. After a year's imprisonment, Lovett's health was too fragile to allow his immediate return to political activity. But Collins and McDouall toured the country, receiving a particularly rousing welcome at a public meeting in Manchester on 17 August 1840.⁷² O'Connor was released from York Castle a year later, by which time only about twenty Chartists remained in jail. With the return of many of their imprisoned leaders, the Chartists engaged in their agitation with renewed vigor.

V

In the decade following the decline of Chartism, something of a legend came to surround the experience of Chartist prisoners, which retained a powerful resonance in radical circles. For example, in 1863 Normanby delivered a speech in the House of Lords criticizing the treatment of Bourbonists in Italian prisons. G. M. W. Reynolds, who had been involved in the later phases of the Chartist movement, swiftly counterattacked with recollections of 1839-41.

During his Home Secretaryship, he [Normanby] originated a series of prison regulations, by which political convicts were treated as harshly as if they had been felons of the vilest kind. [. . .] It is now a matter of history that these poor men were exposed to every conceivable insult and every possible cruelty by brutal gaolers, mean and servile-minded magistrates, who hoped to ingratiate themselves with the Home Office by interpreting its unwritten wishes to be that the Chartists should be treated worse than thieves, burglars, and even murderers.⁷³

The inevitable lionizing of the Chartist prisoners makes it difficult to draw an accurate picture of what their prison life actually was like. The task is further complicated by the fact that the prison inspectors tended in their reports to minimize the extent of their deprivations.⁷⁴

⁷² The Northern Star's report of this meeting is reprinted in Thompson, *The Early Chartists*, op. cit., pp. 139-74.

⁷³ "The Marquis of Normanby and the Torture of Political Prisoners", in: Reynolds's Newspaper, 17 May 1863, p. 1.

⁷⁴ The surgeon at Northallerton had recommended that Duffy and Holberry, for reasons of health, be moved to "some prison in a more elevated and airy situation". But Captain Williams wrote to the Home Office that "the case of Samuel Holberry is not one of immediate or pressing necessity", and that his condition was improving. Williams to Maule, 29 December 1840, HO 20/10. A year and a half later he died of tuberculosis, shortly after being moved to York Castle.

Admittedly, some of the prisoners had rather an easier time of it than others. When William Byrne was released from the Durham County Gaol in October 1840, he told a welcoming crowd of 2,000 that he had gained three pounds while in prison.⁷⁵ Arthur O'Neill, who served twelve months in Stafford County Gaol during 1843-44, had no complaints. "It was more like a home and study than a prison", he wrote later in life.⁷⁶

The more well-to-do Chartists, who could afford to maintain themselves in prison, received preferential treatment. Feargus O'Connor had the added advantage of being a national celebrity, and of knowing personally a number of radical MPs, who repeatedly raised complaints in the Commons during the spring of 1840 concerning his treatment. After the Home Office had conducted a special investigation into his case in June, O'Connor was given a large cell at York Castle, complete with a fire and servant.⁷⁷ Some of the other prisoners expressed annoyance when they learned of O'Connor's special treatment. The prison inspector reported that Edward Brown "is angry because he hears that Feargus O'Connor is more indulged than he is". Higgins was outraged that O'Connor continued to publish complaints of his treatment in the *Northern Star*. "Did he not know that a jail was not a place of or for recreation, did he expect to have a suite of Rooms prepared, and liveried menials to wait upon him [. . .]?"⁷⁸ In O'Connor's defense, however, it should be mentioned that when he was originally sentenced to serve eighteen months in York Castle, he pointed out to the judges that William Martin's earlier request to be sent there rather than to the infamous Northallerton prison had been denied on the grounds that York Castle was full.⁷⁹

Stephens and McDouall both received special treatment at Chester Castle. Duncombe wrote to Lord John Russell that he understood Stephens to be "in the Enjoyment of every comfort that his own money can procure him, together with the Society of his friends".⁸⁰ Captain Williams lamented that

in consequence of their being permitted to occupy and eat their meals in rooms adjoining the Turnkey's lodges, McDouall had the opportunity of

⁷⁵ *Northern Liberator*, 31 October 1840, p. 6.

⁷⁶ "A Chapter from a Memorable Life", in: *Birmingham Mail*, 9 December 1890.

⁷⁷ The best account of this episode is Peacock, "O'Connor at York", loc. cit. See also Donald Read and Eric Glasgow, *Feargus O'Connor: Irishman and Chartist* (London, 1961), pp. 90-91.

⁷⁸ Higgins to Samuel Walker, 29 May 1840, printed in Stephens's *Monthly Magazine*, August 1840, p. 188.

⁷⁹ *Northern Star*, 16 May 1840, p. 1.

⁸⁰ Duncombe to Russell, 5 December 1839, Place Collection, Set 55, ff. 208-10.

forming an intimacy with one of the Turnkey's daughters, a girl about 19, whom he succeeded in inducing to abandon her home on his discharge and who is now living with him.⁸¹

The vast majority of Chartist prisoners, however, suffered frightfully. Most English prisons in this period were merely old castles which had been taken over by the Home Office to serve as penitentiaries. The cold and damp of the Northallerton prison seems to have made it an especially nasty place; it is worth remembering that two of the Chartists, Clayton and Holberry, died. A few months before his death, while still at Northallerton, Holberry wrote: "They have destroyed my constitution [. . .], I am reduced to such a state of debility that I can hardly crawl [. . .]. And, dear friend, you may rest assured that I shall never serve two years more in prison; no, before half that time is expired, I shall be in my *grave*."⁸² The health of James Duffy was seriously impaired by his incarceration at Northallerton, and he died in 1843, two years after his release. Monmouth Gaol was no better. Wright Beatty complained of the cold and damp, which the Home Office inspector corroborated. Due to overcrowding, Beatty had to share a bedstead with two other prisoners. Several of the Chartists at Chester Castle reported that they were kept in cells below ground level: "at the time we write, the water is actually running down the walls with the dampness of the weather"⁸³ Peter Hoey lost the use of one leg while in York Castle, which prevented him from returning to his trade as a linen weaver upon his release.⁸⁴ David Lewis seems to have suffered greatly at Milbank Penitentiary, according to a report in the *English Chartist Circular*.

We had [. . .] lately the melancholy pleasure of a visit from David Lewis, one of the Monmouth victims, who after a long incarceration in the Milbank Penitentiary, under a sentence of transportation for seven years, was liberated in consequence of the medical officer's representation to government, that even a few hours further detention would prove fatal to him. Poor

⁸¹ Williams to Maule, 3 November 1840, HO 20/10. Benbow described this woman as "a duck-footed wench nearly two yards in length". Benbow to Jackson, 16 October 1840. If she really was six feet tall, they would have made a humorous couple, as all descriptions of McDouall emphasize his petite stature. The two were married at Glasgow in 1840, and had five children, one of whom, a daughter, died while McDouall was serving a second prison term in 1850. McDouall emigrated with his family to Australia in 1854, but he died soon after their arrival. Mrs McDouall returned to England with her four children, and was thrown onto parish relief at Everton. She also received some aid from a special Chartist fund. See *People's Paper*, 9 August 1856, p. 4.

⁸² Holberry to Harney, 24 April 1842, printed in *Northern Star*, 30 April, p. 1.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5 September 1840, p. 7.

⁸⁴ Hoey to Duncombe, 20 May 1851, printed in Hansard, Third Series, LVIII, cc. 745-46.

Lewis's appearance bore horrible testimony to the truth of the doctor's representation, and that the sentence had well nigh proved one of death. Shall we not say *legal* murder?⁸⁵

Nearly all the Chartist prisoners complained about the meager and unpalatable prison diet, frequently mentioning the total absence of meat (an indication that many working people in the period were accustomed to eating meat several times per week). When he first arrived at his cell in Northallerton, William Martin reported that the guard tossed in a loaf of black bread and a tin of skilly. "It was the worst meal I ever had in the course of my life; and surely no individual can be a better judge of coarse food than an Irishman."⁸⁶ Lovett and Collins were unable to eat the porridge or soup at Warwick without becoming ill.⁸⁷ From Wakefield, John Walker wrote: "I have not seen as much fat as would cover a shilling piece."⁸⁸ At Fisherton Gaol, William Carrier had to eat sour bread, not even getting potatoes. He received neither soap nor towels, and wrote that "itch, lice, and filth of every description prevails in almost every part of the prison".⁸⁹ Many of the Chartist prisoners complained to the inspectors of indigestion and diarrhea.

A most contentious issue was the assignment of prisoners to the treadmill. A parliamentary inquiry of 1824 had revealed that for prisoners sentenced to hard labor the normal period on the wheel was seven and half to ten hours per day, at a pace of over forty steps per minute.⁹⁰ Many of the Chartist prisoners did not have to work at that rate, however. At Brecon, due to the small wheel and the large number of prisoners, only one hour per day was required. At other jails, a dozen men were taken off the treadmill after a period ranging from three days to three months, often on the orders of the prison surgeon. But at Northallerton the treadmill was in nearly continuous use. Not only were the four Sheffield Chartists who had been sentenced to hard labor forced to work on it; five others were put on it contrary to their sentences. One of them, Martin, initially refused to work the treadmill, whereupon he was placed in solitary confinement. They "put me in a cold dark Dungeon, with double doors, wherein I was

⁸⁵ "Liberation of Political Victims", loc. cit.

⁸⁶ "Letter from William Martin to a Friend in Sheffield", in: *Sheffield Working Man's Advocate*, 6 March 1841, p. 5. A portion of this letter was also printed in the *Northern Star*, 6 March, p. 7. Martin was born in County Wexford, Ireland.

⁸⁷ Petition dated 10 January 1840, Holyoake Collection, Co-operative Union Library, Manchester, No 13.

⁸⁸ Walker to his wife, 9 August 1841, printed in *Northern Star*, 28 August, p. 7.

⁸⁹ *English Chartist Circular*, I, p. 153.

⁹⁰ *PP*, 1824, XIX, 247, p. 169.

fed on Bread and Water.” The next day Martin agreed to go on the wheel. “The first heart rending scene I had to behold, was, Wm. Brook, of Bradford, (who had fallen from the mill) stretched to all appearances lifeless on the floor. But what do you think, my dear friend? The poor fellow [. . .] was compelled to work on the murdering machine, the following morning.”⁹¹

Peddie was the most vocal in his complaints about the treadmill, forwarding a petition to Duncombe on the subject. Captain Williams charged that “in his voluminous petition, there are many groundless statements”. Yet, from Peddie’s description of his forced labor, we know that the experience was horrible indeed. In a letter to his wife, Peddie included “A Week’s Diary on the Treadwheel”, during which he was so exhausted by the labor that he could eat no more than a few spoonfuls of porridge, or sleep more than two hours per night. He concluded by saying:

it must be obvious to all who may learn of the fact, that my apprehension of a fatal termination being put to my life by the operation of the mill is anything but imaginary, as it is impossible for any human being to survive many weeks such as the one I have above but very faintly described.⁹²

His wife reported that, in the following week, Peddie was taken off the treadmill, which greatly improved his physical condition. The surgeon then ordered him off it permanently.⁹³ Many of the prisoners who were taken off the treadmill were forced to pick oakum, a laborious task which could ruin one’s fingers for such delicate crafts as shoemaking and tailoring.

Imprisonment entailed more than physical privations, however. At many jails, the silent system was enforced. W. J. Vernon, imprisoned at Bridewell for Chartist activity in 1848, was subjected to the silent system. Although not properly belonging to the early Chartist period, his description poignantly reflects what all prisoners must have felt when told they must abstain from any conversation with their fellows.

This to me was an appalling announcement; how it affected others I know not, as from that time to the present moment I have had no opportunity of communicating with them. I felt that I was to be alone, without speaking, cut off from all rational and social intercourse with my fellow creatures for two years; submitted to the uncontrolled tyranny of gaolers; badly fed; not even to be allowed a pencil, pen, or ink, to make a mark, or to note the onward, although under such circumstances, apparently slow march of

⁹¹ “Letter from William Martin to a Friend in Sheffield”, loc. cit.

⁹² *Midland Counties Illuminator*, 10 April 1841, p. 34. Peddie’s “Diary” also was printed in the *Northern Star*, 17 April, p. 5. See also Peacock, *Bradford Chartism*, op. cit., p. 51.

⁹³ *Midland Counties Illuminator*, 10 April 1841, p. 34.

time. I thought of these things, and of the active and exciting occupations of my past life, and for an instant I felt sick.⁹⁴

Peddie found the silent system nearly as unbearable as his treadwheel labor. He wrote to his wife: “send me a great deal of private news; that surely will not be objected to [by the prison authorities]. You have no conception how interesting even the most trifling information becomes to me; for here all is as silent as the grave!”⁹⁵

The prisoners’ contact with the outside world was haphazard. Lovett had to receive special permission for each letter he sent from Warwick.⁹⁶ At Lancaster Castle, O’Brien managed to circumvent the ban on letter writing.

A fellow prisoner has contrived to get smuggled into our ward for my use, four sheets of paper, four penny postage stamps, about two thimble fulls of ink and a little sealing wax — whereby I am enabled to steal a march on our worthy Governor by writing four letters unknown to him of which this is one.⁹⁷

Much of the Chartists’ prison correspondence was confiscated, as in the case of Benbow’s letter to Jackson cited above. After being released from Worcester County Gaol, Samuel Cook endeavored to recover two letters to his children which had been sequestered by the magistrates. The latter agreed to return some of his correspondence, but not the two letters in question, as they had expressed “very improper sentiments”.⁹⁸ But, as in other respects, some prisoners fared better than the rest. Aitken managed to have a letter published in honor of Henry Hunt’s birthday.⁹⁹ O’Connor was able to send communications to the *Northern Star* quite regularly, and Vincent edited the *Western Vindicator* from Monmouth Gaol in 1839. Stephens had his journal, *Stephens’s Monthly Magazine of Useful Information for the People*, published by friends while he was at Chester Castle. With regard to what newspapers the prisoners were allowed to read, there was a similar lack of uniformity. At Chester, only *The Times* was available, whereas at Lancaster most of the Chartists were allowed to read any newspapers they could get, even the *Northern Star*. But one of the prisoners

⁹⁴ W. J. Vernon, “Prison Discipline — No. III”, in: Reynolds’s Political Instructor, 2 March 1850, p. 135. This passage is taken from one in a series of articles written by Vernon for Reynolds’s paper, shortly after his release. They constitute one of the most detailed descriptions of the treatment of political prisoners in the early Victorian period. Vernon himself, greatly weakened by his imprisonment, died in 1851.

⁹⁵ Midland Counties Illuminator, 27 March 1841, p. 27

⁹⁶ William to Mary Lovett, 12 August 1839, Place Collection, Set 55, ff. 37-39.

⁹⁷ O’Brien to Allsop, 17 June 1840.

⁹⁸ Northern Liberator, 23 May 1840, p. 6. See also Cook to Normanby, 17 March 1840, HO 20/11.

⁹⁹ Northern Liberator, 14 November 1840, p. 3.

at Lancaster, O'Brien, was considered sufficiently dangerous to be allowed no reading matter except "a few moral and religious books, approved by the chaplain".¹⁰⁰

People who possessed the degree of seriousness and intelligence displayed by the Chartists were naturally chagrined by the humiliation and boredom of imprisonment. Dr John Taylor, who had "black flowing hair, parted in the middle, and hanging in long curls below his broad shoulders", was forced to submit to a haircut by a convict, a former sawyer, during his brief imprisonment at Birmingham.¹⁰¹ O'Brien wrote to Allsop of his first day in jail, when he was stripped, and his body and clothing meticulously searched for lice. He complained of the long hours spent in his cell. "We are regularly locked up every evening at 7 o'clock, and during the six winter months will be locked up from 4 P.M. till 8 o'clock next morning, i.e. for 16 hours out of the 24!!!!"¹⁰²

An indignity of which the Chartists often complained was the fact that they were treated in much the same manner as common criminals. Lovett was outraged when he was placed on the felons' side of Warwick Gaol, and O'Connor's supporters expressed indignation at his being placed under the same regulations as a convicted murderer.¹⁰³ Yet, we have seen that many of the Chartist prisoners obtained amelioration of their treatment owing to the support they received from outside, particularly from their friends in Parliament. Common criminals possessed no such powerful allies.

In spite of their formidable problems, some of the early Chartists managed to make their imprisonment a creative period. Lovett and Collins produced their well-known treatise on self-improvement in Warwick Gaol.¹⁰⁴ Vincent used this time to absorb further the radical literary tradition.

I always take a book up to bed with me, and my favourite bird the lark awakes me every morning before 4 o'clock, so that I get two hours good reading before six o'clock every morning. I have several of Cobbett's works and I am reaping much instruction therefrom.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ O'Brien to Allsop, 17 June 1840.

¹⁰¹ R. G. Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement, 1837-1854*, 2nd ed. (London 1894, reprinted 1976), pp. 29, 133. See also *Northern Star*, 13 July 1839, p. 1.

¹⁰² O'Brien to Allsop, 17 June 1840, quoted by Ray Faherty, "Bronterre O'Brien's Correspondence with Thomas Allsop", in: *European Labor and Working Class History Newsletter*, No 8 (1975), p. 29.

¹⁰³ William to Mary Lovett, 26 August 1839, Place Collection, Set 55, ff. 47-48; "Feargus O'Connor Herding and Feeding with Convicted Felons", in: *Northern Star*, 23 May 1840, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Chartism: A New Organisation of the People* (1840, reprinted New York, 1969).

¹⁰⁵ Vincent to Minikin, 1 June 1839, Vincent Manuscripts.

Peddie produced a volume of poems, entitled *The Dungeon Harp*, which was published in 1844. R. J. Richardson wrote *The Rights of Woman* in 1840, and suggested a new scheme of Chartist organization.

VI

The British government displayed remarkable sophistication in its handling of the Chartists. It reacted swiftly to disturbances, potential and actual, but was selective in whom it chose to keep behind bars for an extended time. Reprieves were judiciously granted, as in the case of the Newport rioters, and prison conditions often were ameliorated, most notably for the movement's national leader, O'Connor. This mixture of swift punishment and discretionary mercy was intended to discourage prisoners from resuming political activity upon their release, or at least to dissuade them from advocating violence.¹⁰⁶

The government's policy may have been largely successful, as most of the 470 prisoners disappear from view. Their names do not turn up in a combing of the Chartist press of the 1840's. This does not necessarily mean that they forsook political involvement, only that the historian's opportunities of rediscovering them are few. Even the *Northern Star* could not provide comprehensive coverage of Chartist activity in the localities. Nonetheless, we know that many of the prisoners did make a conscious decision to withdraw from Chartism. Three of the Bradford rioters – Hutton, Rushworth and Smithers – promised the prison inspector they would not resume political activity upon their release. Rushworth stated: "I have been at meetings at Odd Fellows Hall. I went to hear what they had to say. I heard them talk of getting arms. I will take care to go to no more meetings." The three do not re-emerge in later phases of Bradford Chartism. Daniel Ball of Bolton "expresses regret at having been induced to attend meetings, which he had been told might better himself. [He] will take care not to do so again", and appears to have kept his promise. Joseph Crabtree told Captain Williams he intended to "keep from politics and look after my family". He also indicated a desire to join the police, but it is not clear whether he did so.

Several of the ex-prisoners emigrated, their destination usually being

¹⁰⁶ The adroit combination of terror and mercy had long been a characteristic of the English legal system. In the Chartist period, the government applied against an organized political movement methods which had proved effective against common criminals, both individual (murderers, thieves, forgers) and social (rioters, poachers, machinebreakers). See Douglas Hay, "Property, Authority and the Criminal Law", in: *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, 1975).

Australia or the USA.¹⁰⁷ Occasionally, they may have been helped on their way with secret-service funds, for the government was only too happy to “export” political agitation.¹⁰⁸ It is obvious that the prison inspectors who compiled the interviews in HO 20/10 were trying to encourage the men they talked with to emigrate. John Broadbent had already visited America, “where he says he imbibed his political principles”. He indicated to Captain Williams an intention to return there, although no evidence has been found that he did so. According to Williams, Bronterre O’Brien also planned to emigrate, but this is almost certainly a case of wishful thinking on the part of the inspector. In fact, O’Brien not only remained in England, but like many Chartists opposed emigration schemes as “transportation of the innocent”.¹⁰⁹ William Ashton left for America with the aid of secret-service funds shortly after his release in 1842, but before the end of the year he was back in Barnsley. He engaged in a fierce controversy with O’Connor over the Newport rising, sat as a delegate to the 1848 Convention, and then emigrated permanently to Australia in the early 1850’s. William Carrier sailed from Liverpool on 30 December 1841, four months after his release, leaving behind a wife and child in Trowbridge.¹¹⁰ His destination and subsequent movements are unknown. Peter Foden returned to his birthplace, Staleybridge, where he resumed his profession as a confectioner, and continued to speak at Chartist meetings. But, according to his obituary, written in May 1873, “he could not settle and removed to Doncaster. Then he sold all off, and went to St. Louis, in America, and died about two years ago.”¹¹¹ Two others, George Johnson and John Wilde, were in America by the 1860’s, and “doing well”,¹¹² but did not emigrate until after playing an important role in the later stages of Chartism in South Lancashire.

A considerable number of prisoners did return to political activity, although some altered their tone and tactics from what they had been during the early years of Chartism. Henry Vincent seems to have undergone a remarkable transformation during his imprisonment. The erstwhile

¹⁰⁷ Chartist emigration to the USA has received study in Ray Boston, *The British Chartists in America, 1839-1900* (Manchester, 1971). Unfortunately, this book is rather scanty and, in places, inaccurate.

¹⁰⁸ A. R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge: A Portrait of George Julian Harney* (London, 1958), p. 230; Boston, *The British Chartists in America*, op. cit., pp. 24-26.

¹⁰⁹ See Boston, op. cit., pp. 16-18. The English Chartist Circular, I, p. 45, charged that “attempts are now being industriously made to seduce many of our countrymen into transporting (*emigrating* is the cant term) themselves from their native soil”.

¹¹⁰ Northern Star, 22 January 1842, p. 7.

¹¹¹ Newspaper Cuttings Relating to Sheffield, Vol. XLI, p. 258.

¹¹² Aitken, “Remembrances”, loc. cit., 9 and 16 October.

“Lion of the West” emerged as a teetotaler and supporter of co-operation with middle-class radicals.¹¹³ O’Brien, who had been one of the most advanced socialist thinkers in Britain during the 1830’s, supported the moderate complete-suffrage movement in 1842.¹¹⁴ After twenty-one months behind bars, William Edwards wrote from Oakham Gaol:

If I could, I would have the working people well rewarded for their labour, well educated, well lodged, well fed, wise and respectable. To accomplish this I will do all I can after I leave this prison. But I will not countenance any illegal proceedings. My aim will be to improve the condition of the whole people, and my motto shall be “Peace, Reform, and Religion.”¹¹⁵

Robert Peddie lectured widely for the Charter upon his release, but stressed that it must be “a peaceful, moral and bloodless battle”.¹¹⁶ His lectures concentrated on the spy system and prison conditions, subjects on which he was eminently qualified to speak.¹¹⁷ He appears to have addressed his last Chartist meeting at Edinburgh in 1848,¹¹⁸ after which he moved to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he was chiefly interested in questions of foreign policy. R. J. Richardson also forsook violent rhetoric, and in 1848 came out in support of Joseph Hume’s “Little Charter”. In a letter to John Bright he wrote: “I have been for twenty years a radical reformer and advocate of universal suffrage”, but then went on to say he regarded it as “no derogation of principle” to assist in the movement for household suffrage, which he felt would yield substantial benefit to the working class.¹¹⁹ The goals of these people had not been altered by imprisonment. They still held a vision of a more just society, and subscribed to the Charter as the means for attaining that goal. But they had acquired a heightened respect for the power of the government, and were dissuaded from employing violent action or rhetoric. Appreciating the barriers to radical reform, they were led to seek middle-class allies, which placed further pressure upon them to moderate their tone.

A number of the ex-prisoners looked to individual self-improvement as a concomitant, or even a prerequisite, to political advancement for the

¹¹³ Vincent’s sudden change was viewed with suspicion by many of his former supporters. The young W. E. Adams’s Chartist aunts were convinced “that the Government had somehow found means to influence or corrupt him”. W. E. Adams, *Memoirs of a Social Atom* (2 vols; London, 1903), I, p. 168.

¹¹⁴ See *British Statesman*, April–December 1842, *passim*.

¹¹⁵ *Midland Counties Illuminator*, 20 February 1841, p. 6.

¹¹⁶ *Northern Star*, 26 August 1843, quoted in Peacock, *Bradford Chartism*, p. 53.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, *Northern Star*, 20 May 1843, p. 6.

¹¹⁸ Leslie C. Wright, *Scottish Chartism* (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 167; Alexander Wilson, *The Chartist Movement in Scotland* (Manchester, 1970), p. 203.

¹¹⁹ Printed in *Manchester Examiner*, 22 April 1848, p. 6.

working class. William Lovett devoted most of his time in the 1840's to educational projects. Several of the Chartist prisoners became temperance advocates, and four signed Vincent's teetotal pledge in January 1841, while still in jail.¹²⁰ William Brook, formerly "a violent, garrulous character", also was converted to teetotalism.¹²¹ But temperance advocacy did not preclude political involvement. William Martin felt that sobriety would strengthen the Chartist movement. In a letter to George White from Northallerton prison, he wrote that if a person abstained from drink, "it will save him many a pound, many a headache, and will make him a good Chartist".¹²²

For many Chartists imprisonment did not lead to a moderation of rhetoric or activity. Captain Williams reported that Aitken's "political opinions appear to have undergone no change but to have been rather strengthened by the punishment". He returned to his school at Ashton, where he wrote for *McDouall's Chartist and Republican Journal*, and was involved in the general strike of 1842. Several other ex-prisoners also played a role in the 1842 Plug Riots. Christopher Doyle, George Johnson, James Mitchell, Richard Pilling and John Wright were all arrested for their involvement in the Lancashire work stoppages.

Perhaps the most incorrigible Chartist was P. M. McDouall. He told the Manchester crowd which welcomed him from prison that "nothing could have added to his resolution more than the imprisonment the Whigs had given him; that imprisonment had not altered his sentiments in the least, or, if there was any alteration, he was inclined to go a little further than the Charter."¹²³ McDouall did more than any other national leader to support the general strike of 1842. After a few years' self-imposed exile in France, he returned to agitate in 1848, for which he served another prison sentence. Long periods of imprisonment also did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of George White, who served sentences in 1840, 1843-44 and 1848-49. Upon his release from Kirkdale in October 1849, he wrote: "I have spent nearly four years out of the last ten in gaol for Chartism."¹²⁴

Fifty-seven-year-old William Benbow resumed agitation for his old project, the national holiday, when he spoke from a Chartist platform at

¹²⁰ The four who signed Vincent's pledge were William Edwards, W. V. Jackson, Isaac Johnson and William Shellard. See English Chartist Circular, I, p. 35.

¹²¹ Peacock, *Bradford Chartism*, pp. 42, 50-51; *Northern Star*, 9 April 1842, p. 7.

¹²² Martin to White, 13 September 1840, printed in *Northern Star*, 26 September, p. 7.

¹²³ "Liberation of Mr. McDouall from Imprisonment", in: *Northern Liberator*, 29 August 1840, p. 7.

¹²⁴ White to Mark Norman, 18 October 1849, printed in *The Harney Papers*, ed. by F. G. and R. M. Black (Assen, 1969), p. 89.

Manchester in September 1841.¹²⁵ W. V. Jackson delivered political sermons throughout the North during the 1840's, and presided at a meeting to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Peterloo in August 1844.¹²⁶ Charles Davies and James Mitchell resumed their activities on behalf of the Stockport cotton spinners, leading the resistance to wage cuts in autumn 1841.¹²⁷ William Martin had vowed to Captain Williams that he would agitate for the Charter upon his release, and he was true to his word. A month after he left prison he was in Birmingham, castigating the Christian Chartists for refusing to join the National Charter Association. He was also among the 150 delegates who welcomed O'Connor from York Castle on 30 August 1841. A banner in the crowd read: "William Martin, [. . .] formerly an inhabitant of Northallerton Hell-hole, delegate for Bradford." Eight other ex-prisoners were present on this occasion.¹²⁸ William Byrne of Newcastle insisted that the authorities had miscalculated in their efforts to silence Chartist protest. "The Whigs had entirely failed in their expectations when they incarcerated the leaders of the Chartists, and if they had known the result would have been what it is, they never would have commenced such persecution."¹²⁹

Some of the prisoners who had protested to the inspectors that they never had been Chartists actually did return to the movement. James Duffy, who had claimed to be a mere O'Connellite, wrote a week after he left prison that "my persecutors have not been able to obliterate from my heart and mind one single letter of the glorious Charter!"¹³⁰ He briefly took charge of the Shakespearean Chartists at Leicester when Thomas Cooper departed for the North in August 1842.¹³¹ He also was active in the West Midlands and Yorkshire. Richard Benfield held a meeting at Tredegar in July 1842, at which he enrolled twenty new members in the local branch of the National Charter Association.¹³²

Several of the early Chartist prisoners were involved in the renewed activities of 1848, besides the obvious figures of O'Connor, McDouall and

¹²⁵ *Northern Star*, 2 October 1841, p. 6.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 24 August 1844, p. 7. Another ex-prisoner, Christopher Doyle, also spoke at this meeting.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 11 and 18 September 1841, p. 3.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4 September, pp. 6-8; A. J. Peacock, "Chartism in York", in: *York History*, No 3, p. 128; George Barnsby, "The Working-Class Movement in the Black Country, 1815-1867" (University of Birmingham M.A. thesis, 1965), p. 162.

¹²⁹ *Northern Liberator*, 31 October 1840, p. 6.

¹³⁰ Duffy to his son, 16 May 1841, printed in *Northern Star*, 29 May, p. 3.

¹³¹ J. F. C. Harrison, "Chartism in Leicester". in: *Chartist Studies*, op. cit., p. 133.

¹³² *Northern Star*, 9 July 1842, p. 5.

White. Christopher Doyle was secretary of the Convention, and one of the chief organizers of the Kennington Common rally of 10 April. On the local level, the ex-prisoners William Aitken, George Johnson, G. H. Smith and John Wilde were active in South Lancashire. Smith addressed a Chartist meeting in the Salford Town Hall Square on 13 March, held to congratulate the French Republic. He stated: "if the working people would be unanimous, they might accomplish their objectives, as the French had done."¹³³ Wilde was arrested on a charge of seditious conspiracy and riot at Dukinfield on 14 August.¹³⁴ Paul Holdsworth was involved in rioting at Bradford.¹³⁵ Charles Bolwell, who had served six months at Ilchester Gaol in 1840 on a charge of sedition, was active in West Country Chartism during the spring of 1848.¹³⁶

Some of the ex-prisoners were prominent in the National Land Company. Doyle joined the Board of Directors in 1845, and was for a while superintendent of Charterville. Peter Hoey served as secretary of the Barnsley branch of the Land Company. Charles Walters, who had been arrested with a musket at Newport, was secretary of the Land Company branch at Chepstow, Monmouthshire, until 1847.¹³⁷

When the Ten Hours movement revived in 1844, it attracted a number of the former prisoners, including William Aitken, W. V. Jackson, George Johnson and Richard Pilling. Jackson indicated that social and political reform were inextricably bound together when, at a Manchester meeting of 13 March, he moved "that, to give full effort to the ten hours' bill and to labour, the meeting deemed it expedient to continue agitation until the document called the people's charter, became the law of the land."¹³⁸

Some ex-prisoners continued to be involved in politics into the 1850's and beyond. Although the radical solicitor W. P. Roberts devoted most of his time to his job as legal advisor to the Miners' Association, he also maintained his contacts with the remnants of the Chartist movement. In 1856 he chaired a soirée at Manchester in honor of the return of John Frost, the transported leader of the Newport rising.¹³⁹ Samuel Cook still held monthly Chartist meetings at his house in Dudley as late as 1856, and

¹³³ Manchester Examiner, 14 March 1848, p. 5.

¹³⁴ HO 48/40 (Law Officers' Reports, 1848), unnumbered folio.

¹³⁵ Peacock, Bradford Chartism, p. 50.

¹³⁶ R. B. Pugh, "Chartism in Somerset and Wiltshire", in: Chartist Studies, p. 215.

¹³⁷ Angela John, "The Chartist Endurance: Industrial South Wales, 1840-68", in: Morgannwg, XV (1971), p. 33.

¹³⁸ Manchester Times, 16 March 1844, p. 6. See also J. T. Ward, The Factory Movement, 1830-1855 (London, 1962), p. 286.

¹³⁹ People's Paper, 30 August 1856, p. 5.

was active in local politics until his death in 1861.¹⁴⁰ Thomas Lingard and John Vallance were involved in the reform agitation of 1866-67 at Barnsley,¹⁴¹ and William Aitken supported the Liberals in the 1868 election. Aitken expressed a mixture of bitterness and pride in having been one of those who “kept the lamp of freedom burning through the long dark nights of arrests, imprisonments, and exile. [. . .] the only satisfaction we now have is to know that we were thirty years before our time, and those principles once proscribed are now the ruling principles of Great Britain and Ireland.”¹⁴²

VII

This account of a large number of Chartist prisoners has shown that, despite their diversity of background, they were linked by many common characteristics. They had been drawn into politics by the gradual degradation of their trades, conjoined with a sudden downturn in the national economy. Most of them felt they were acting in a tradition of working-class radicalism, a tradition which a few of the older Chartists had helped to shape. For some, religious zeal had contributed to their involvement in politics; for others, politics had supplanted religion as an ethical system. A good number had been raised in radical families. In any case, the Chartists took their politics seriously, and most of them stuck to their ideological guns, even when imprisoned under extremely harsh conditions. The issue of imprisonment itself contributed to the strength of the movement, cancelling out the negative effects of the temporary deprivation of leadership. Many of the prisoners remained active in politics, often beyond the Chartist period. It was this remarkable sharing of outlook and experience which enabled Chartism to be the first sustained mass-political movement in world history.

But in spite of their broad similarities, the Chartist prisoners also displayed great individuality. The membership of a national movement need not be portrayed as a faceless mass, as has too often been the case in accounts of Chartism. Wherever possible in this paper, the Chartists have been allowed to speak for themselves, as they are far more capable of communicating the vitality of their movement than are present-day historians. It is time to personalize the history of the Chartists, to treat them as the fascinating individuals they were.

¹⁴⁰ Barnsby, “The Working-Class Movement in the Black Country”, *op. cit.*, ch. 4, *passim*.

¹⁴¹ Wilkinson, Barnsley Obituary, pp. 43-58, 207-62.

¹⁴² Ashton Reporter, 30 January 1869.

APPENDIX

I

CHARTIST PRISONERS IN HO 20/10
n = 73

<i>Name</i>	<i>Chief location of Chartist activity</i>
Aitken, William	Ashton-under-Lyne
Armitage, Isaac	Stockport
Ashton, William	Barnsley
Ball, Daniel	Bolton
Barker, William	Manchester
Beatty, Wright	Monmouthshire, locality unspecified
Bellamy, George	Newton, Lancashire
Benbow, William	A figure of national importance
Benfield, Richard	Monmouthshire, locality unspecified
Bennison, Joseph	Sheffield
Booker, Thomas	Sheffield
Booker, William	Sheffield
Broadbent, John	Ashton-under-Lyne
Brook, William	Bradford
Brown, Edward	Birmingham
Burton, James	Stockport
Butterworth, William	Manchester
Carrier, William	Trowbridge
Clayton, John	Sheffield
Crabtree, Joseph	Barnsley
Davies, Charles	Stockport
Doyle, Christopher	Manchester
Drake, Thomas	Bradford
Duffy, James	Sheffield
Duke, James	Ashton-under-Lyne
Evans, David	Monmouthshire, locality unspecified
Evans, Ishmael	Llangynider
Foden, Peter	Sheffield
Godwin, James	Bryn Mawr
Higgins, Timothy	Ashton-under-Lyne
Hilton, John	Ashton-under-Lyne
Hoey, Peter	Barnsley
Holberry, Samuel	Sheffield

Holdsworth, Paul	Bradford
Howarth, Thomas	Stockport
Hughes, Eleazer	Birmingham
Hutton, Emanuel	Bradford
Jackson, W. V.	Manchester
Johnson, George	Ashton-under-Lyne
Johnson, Isaac	Stockport
Kidley, Thomas	Bryn Mawr
Lewis, David	Bryn Mawr
Livesey, John	Manchester
Lovell, John	Newport
Marshall, John	Sheffield
Martin, William	Sheffield
Meredith, Walter	Tredegar
Mitchell, James	Stockport
Morgan, Jenkin	Newport
Morris, Charles	Bolton
Naylor, Joseph	Bradford
O'Brien, J. Bronterre	A figure of national importance
O'Connor, Feargus	Idem
Peddie, Robert	Bradford
Penthorpe, Thomas	Sheffield
Pomeroy, James	Birmingham
Price, William	Tredegar
Rees, John	Tredegar
Richardson, R. J.	Manchester
Riding, John	Bradford
Rushworth, Francis	Bradford
Scott, Samuel	Manchester
Smithers, Phineas	Bradford
Stephens, J. R.	A figure of national importance
Thomas, William	Ebbw Vale
Thompson, George	Birmingham
Walker, John	Bradford
Walters, Charles	Newport
Wareham, George	Stockport
Wells, William	Sheffield
Wilde, John	Ashton-under-Lyne
Williams, William	Tredegar
Wright, John	Stockport

II

OCCUPATIONS OF ARRESTED CHARTISTS, 1839-40¹⁴³
n = 476

Attorney	1	Die-sinker	1
Baker	2	Dissenting minister	4
Barber	1	Draper	2
Barrister	1	Druggist	2
Basket-maker	1	Dyer	2
Beerseller	2	Editor/sub-editor	2
Blacksmith/smith	4	Engineer	3
Bookkeeper	1	Framework knitter	18
Bookseller/publisher	5	Gardener	4
Bricklayer	3	Glass-cutter	1
Brushmaker	1	Glass-maker	1
Butcher	1	Grinder	1
Cabinet-maker	6	Gun-maker	1
Calico printer	1	Hatter	1
Carpenter	1	Hemp-spinner	1
Carrier	1	Ironmonger	1
Carter	1	Ironplate-worker	1
Chain-maker	1	Iron turner	1
Chair-maker	1	Jeweler	1
Clogger	2	Joiner	3
Clothier	1	Keelman	1
Collier/miner	35	Laborer	42
Confectioner	1	Lacemaker	3
Constable	1	Mechanic	2
Cotton carder	4	Merchant	1
Cotton corder	1	Milkman	1
Cotton piecer	9	Mine agent	1
Cotton spinner	32	Moulder	2
Cow-keeper	1	Nailer	3
Cutler	7	Overlooker	1
Delver	1	Painter	2

¹⁴³ Source: PP, 1840, XXXVIII, 600. The total in this table slightly exceeds the number of prisoners listed in the parliamentary report, due to several prisoners having worked in more than one trade. For instance, R. J. Richardson is listed once as a cabinet-maker and once as a bookseller. A version of this table also appeared in a paper presented by Dorothy Thompson at the Anglo-Scandinavian Labour History Conference, 1975.

Pencil-maker	1	Stripper	2
Plumber	1	Surgeon	2
Porter	1	Tailor	9
Printer	6	Tobacconist	1
Publican	1	Victualler	3
Reporter	1	Warehouseman	1
Roller	1	Watchmaker	3
Sailor	1	Watchman	2
Sawyer	2	Weaver	69
Schoolmaster	2	Whitesmith	2
Silk-weaver	4	Woolcomber	10
Sizer	1	Worsted-weaver	1
Ship's carpenter	1	Yeoman	1
Shoemaker/cordwainer	31	Unknown	58
Shopkeeper	1	<i>Women</i>	
Slubber	2	Collier's wife	1
Spirit distiller	1	Married woman	1
Staymaker	1	Servant	1
Stonemason	4	Single woman	2
Striker	2	Widow	2

III

OCCUPATIONS OF CHARTIST PRISONERS IN HO 20/10¹⁴⁴

n = 97

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Agricultural laborer	1	South Wales
Barrister	2	O'Brien and O'Connor
Beerhouse keeper	4	2 former cotton spinners, 1 former weaver
Bookseller/newsdealer	3	1 former cotton spinner, 1 former carpenter, 1 left to become factory overlooker
Buttonmaker	1	Birmingham
Cabinet-maker	1	
Carpenter	1	
Clock and watch mender	1	
Clothes shopkeeper	1	Former weaver

¹⁴⁴ As in Appendix II, multiple occupations inflate the total beyond the actual number of prisoners in the group.

Collier/miner	9	All South Wales
Cotton spinner	9	3 Ashton-under-Lyne, 3 Stockport, 2 Manchester, 1 Bolton
Cutler/knife-hafter	5	All Sheffield
Dairy farmer	1	South Wales
Dissenting minister	2	Jackson and Stephens
Factory apprentice	1	Rockingham Works, Sheffield
Factory overlooker	1	Stockport
Gardener	1	South Wales
Gun-maker	2	Both Birmingham
Hatter	1	
Journalist/publisher	2	O'Brien and O'Connor
Laborer	2	
Letter-press printer	1	
Machine-maker	1	Manchester
Military	5	All former occupations, one deserted
Navigator	1	
Publican	1	
Rectifying distiller	1	
Retail hatter	1	
Roller	1	Tredegar Iron Works
Schoolmaster	1	Former cotton spinner
Servant	3	All former occupations
Ship's carpenter	1	
Shoemaker	6	
Silversmith	1	Birmingham
Smith	1	
Staymaker	1	
Tallow-chandler and soap-boiler	1	
Tea dealer	1	
<i>Weaver</i>		
Unspecified, powerloom?	2	Manchester and Bolton
Powerloom	1	Stockport
Handloom, unspecified	4	3 Barnsley (linen?), 1 Ashton-under-Lyne (cotton?)
Handloom cotton	1	Carlisle, quit due to ill health
Handloom silk	1	Newton, Lancashire
Handloom worsted	1	Bradford
Whitesmith	1	
Woolcomber	7	All Bradford

IV
 OCCUPATIONAL/GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF ARRESTED CHARTISTS,
 1839-40¹⁴⁵
 n = 259

<i>Nottinghamshire</i> , n = 22		Joiner	1
*Framework knitter	18	Plumber	1
*Lacemaker	3	Sizer	1
Brushmaker	1		
<i>Manchester</i> , n = 21		<i>Barnsley</i> , n = 8	
*Weaver	5	*Weaver	6
Laborer	3	Shoemaker	1
Shoemaker	3	Warehouseman	1
Bookseller	2	<i>Bradford</i> , n = 11	
*Cotton spinner	2	*Woolcomber	8
Cabinet-maker	1	Joiner	1
Dissenting minister	1	Staymaker	1
Editor	1	*Worsted weaver	1
Mechanic	1		
*Piecer	1	<i>Sheffield</i> , n = 23	
Shopkeeper	1	*Cutler	8
		Shoemaker	2
<i>Bolton</i> , n = 32		*Striker	2
Laborer	11	Tailor	2
*Piecer	5	Bookkeeper	1
*Weaver	3	Bricklayer	1
*Spinner	2	Cabinet-maker	1
Stripper	2	Confectioner	1
Cabinet-maker	1	Glass-cutter	1
*Carder	1	*Grinder	1
Clogger	1	Publican	1
Collier	1	Spirit distiller	1
Engineer	1	Woolcomber	1
Gardener	1		

¹⁴⁵ Source: PP, 1840, XXXVIII, 600. An asterisk signifies the dominant trade in the community. Only the localities which provided the largest number of prisoners are entered on this table. To include all of the localities listed in the parliamentary investigation would greatly extend the length of the table without altering the conclusions derived from it.

Montgomeryshire, n = 48

*Weaver	23
*Spinner	10
Shoemaker	3
Laborer	2
Single woman	2
*Slubber	2
Widow	2
*Carder	1
Ironmonger	1
Servant (female)	1
Tailor	1

Monmouthshire, n = 52

*Collier/miner	28
Gardener	3
Laborer	3
Blacksmith	2
Printer	2
Shoemaker	2
Victualler	2
Watchmaker	2
Baker	1
Butcher	1
*Collier's wife	1
Cow-keeper	1
Draper	1
*Mine agent	1
Sawyer	1
Ship's carpenter	1

Middlesex n = 30

Boot-/shoemaker/cordwainer	7
Laborer	3
Tailor	3
Cabinet-maker	2
Painter	2
Printer	2
Baker	1
Bricklayer	1
Carpenter	1
Chair-maker	1
Die-sinker	1
Ironplate-worker	1
Milkman	1
Porter	1
Publisher/bookseller	1
Sailor	1
Schoolmaster	1

Somerset and Wiltshire, n = 12

Cordwainer	3
Carrier	1
Druggist	1
Hempspinner	1
Laborer	1
Reporter	1
Solicitor	1
Spinner	1
Tailor	1
Working jeweler	1

V

RELIGIONS OF CHARTIST PRISONERS IN HO 20/10
(includes present religion only)

n = 73

<i>Religion</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Church of England	26	
Baptist	7	3 Welsh
Methodist	15	6 Welsh

Unspecified	4	2 Welsh
Wesleyan	2	1 Welsh
Independent	7	2 Welsh
Primitive	1	
Calvinistic	1	Welsh
Presbyterian	1	Scottish
Unitarian	1	Birmingham
<i>Other Protestant</i>	8	
Stephensite	4	Includes Stephens himself
Democratic chapel	1	Trowbridge
Lady Huntingdon's chapel	1	Birmingham
Calvinist	1	
Own congregation	1	Jackson
Catholic	6	3 Irish, 2 living in Barnsley
"Has own ideas" or "no particular sect"	9	8 South Lancashire, of whom 7 in Chester Castle

VI

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHARTIST PRISONERS IN HO 20/10
n = 73

Under 20	1	40-49	10
20-29	30	50 or over	8
30-39	23	Unknown	1

VII

ANALYSIS OF WAGE DATA IN HO 20/10
(earnings per week at time of arrest)
n = 73

£ 2 or more	2	11-14 shillings	4
Less than £ 2 but more than £ 1	6	10 shillings or less	8
18-20 shillings	6	Unemployed	11
15-17 shillings	3	"Destitute"	7
		Unknown	26