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JAMES LOSH: His ideas in relation to his circle and his time

by

Jeffrey Smith LL.B., MA

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
University of
Northumbria for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**in collaboration with the University of Durham, Libraries of the
University of Durham, University College (London) and Carlisle
Library (Carlisle Archives)**

October, 1996

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CIRCLE AND HIS TIME.

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JEFFREY SMITH LL.B.,M.A

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Northumbria at Newcastle upon Tyne for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

A study of the ideas of James Losh, whilst of considerable historical interest in its own right, may also provide a window into the mental world of a significant subgroup of English society, at a time when it was going through significant changes. The Industrial Revolution, the American Revolution, and the French Revolution, all added their quota to a political and social ferment that was stirred by some of the time's most potent minds, including Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox, and William Godwin. From this dynamic climate emerged movements for Parliamentary Reform, Catholic and Slave Emancipation in England.

The emerging middle class, particularly the professionals - the older professions of law, medicine and clergy; and the newer and forming professions of science, engineering, architecture, and journalism - played a leading role in these movements. They formed pressure groups that bombarded Parliament with petitions; that organised meetings and demonstrations. We will see that James Losh, a determined politically-aware campaigner, epitomised this increasingly powerful and vocal middle-class section of society. Through his diaries, letters, articles and speeches, we are able to enter his mind, and through him understand the aspirations of his peers.

This thesis will first seek to create a picture of Losh as a provincial middle-class professional seeking social and political justice in several areas. This includes relief from the restrictions suffered by Dissenters and Catholics, a wider franchise, education for the underprivileged, and emancipation for the West Indian slaves. Secondly, by comparing Losh with a selection of other middle-class personalities, who were his friends and acquaintances, it will attempt to illuminate the relationship between the provinces and the metropolis in the pursuit of these causes. These personalities will include Henry Brougham, Thomas Creevey, Revd. Sydney Smith, William Smith, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey.

Such a comparative study will examine the thoughts and ideas of these well-known personalities on the movements of the day, and by juxtaposition show that Losh was genuinely representative of a wider group of provincial men who were active in a number of linked reforming movements.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Primary Sources:

1. The James Losh diaries are held in the Carlisle Public Library Ref:B320(a microfilm copy is available). These are hand written in 33 volumes, and both volumes and pages are unnumbered. To assist identification, volume numbers are assumed to run chronologically. Entries are, therefore, referred to as follows: 'LD volume...'
2. The James Losh articles in magazines are referred to by title, volume and date.
3. I have made extensive use of the *Newcastle Chronicle*, which reported the major national debates to its influential local readership. That Losh's speeches were reported there in full, is an acknowledgement of his standing in the community. Reports will be referred to by date of issue. There are no page numbers. Several full speeches are in the Appendices.
4. The James Losh correspondence with Charles, 2nd Earl Grey, is held at the Archives and Special Collections section of the University of Durham library at Palace Green, Durham. They are referred to as 'the Earl Grey papers 2nd, letters from 1819-1820, and 12 February - 18 June 1832'. They will be cited as 'UD date..'
5. Charles, 2nd Earl Grey. Primary source material relevant to Grey has been drawn from the recent life by Professor J.W.Derry *Charles, Earl Grey* (Oxford 1992), and also from *Lord Grey 1764-1845* by E.A.Smith (Oxford 1990).
6. The James Losh correspondence with Henry Brougham is held at The Library, University College of London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT. The college citation is 'Brougham 5637, card no...' They will be cited as 'UL card no...'
7. Henry Brougham's life and times have been well documented. His speeches and comments on the movements of the day are extensively quoted in *Henry Brougham: His Public Career* by Robert Stewart (London 1986) cited as 'BRS page no.' and *Life of Henry Brougham up to 1830* by Chester New (Oxford 1961) cited as 'BCN page no.' Brougham's articles in the *Edinburgh Review* will be cited by volume and date.
8. Thomas Creevey. Many of his letters are reproduced in two comprehensive collections edited by John Gore: *The Creevey Papers* (revised 1963, London) and *Creevey's Life and Times* (London 1934). They will be cited 'CP page no.' and 'CLT page no'.
9. The Reverend Sydney Smith. As with Brougham, his life is well documented. *Sydney Smith* by Gerald Bullett (London 1951) has been used for the Peter Plymley letters, and other items relevant to the issues. Cited 'SS page no.'
10. Letters of Theophilus Lindsey are available at Dr.William's Library, London. Ref.12.44
11. Letters of Rev. Christopher Wyvill available at North Yorkshire County Record Office, Northallerton. Ref.ZFW 7/2

Secondary Sources:

The period of Losh's active engagement in the great social and political movements of his time 1792 - 1833 has been the subject of numerous books, articles and papers in recent years. Whilst many have been consulted in an endeavour to place Losh in context, space has prohibited extensive consideration of most of them. Where scholarly opinion was found to be divided, reference has been made to representative accounts of the contrasting viewpoints. Where opinions appear to be generally held, that consensus has merely been adopted. For example: on the important issue of pressure groups, the recent book by Patricia Hollis is preferred; the question of class is considered by E.P.Thompson, J.Foster, R.S.Neale, R.Dahrendorf, H. Perkin, N.Gash, and P.J.Corfield. I have examined critically the views of these authorities, and adopted a model appropriate to my argument. The bibliography lists the many authorities referred to.

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INTRODUCTION

The central focus of this study is an examination of the ideas of James Losh (1763-1833) in relation to those of his peers, his place and his time. As a member of the emerging provincial professional middle class, with a regular and intimate connection with leading figures in government, the arts and business, Losh was uniquely placed to comment on the great movements and figures of his day. His diaries, speeches, and writings - hitherto largely ignored - are an invaluable and revelatory source.

Through a close analysis of James Losh and his circle of friends, colleagues, and acquaintances in the context of their social and intellectual milieu, this thesis will seek to throw some light on the emerging provincial middle class and its relationship with the metropolis. It will also argue that these milieux, or networks of middle-class professionals, by adopting the issues of the day advanced their own cause, and increased their own influence upon the political life of the nation.

A thematic rather than a biographical approach to Losh's life has been chosen, because a chronological structure would cause the narrative to switch constantly between the major themes which overlapped during the last forty years of his life, with

a resultant loss of contact. I endorse the words of Conor Cruise O'Brien in the preface to his book on Edmund Burke: '...I found the thematic approach suggested by Yeat's lines worked well for me. The day-to-day clutter, which accumulates in the strictly chronological approach, fell away...'¹

The major issues, seen not only through the eyes of Losh but of those selected, will present a multi-faceted consideration of them, and contrast his distinctively provincial attitudes with those of the metropolis. Four major primary sources will be used: the hand-written diaries which he kept for most of his life; his correspondence with Earl Grey and Henry Brougham; his published articles on parliamentary reform, Catholic emancipation and anti-slavery; and the *Newcastle Chronicle* which reported all his major speeches. When considering the provenance of his diaries, we must guard against the distortion or bias which is often inherent in such personal sources. As T.J.Nossiter reminds us:

...it will not absolve us from treating the raw data with the same cautious scepticism and mature judgement that the historian ordinarily demands in the use of literary sources².

However, they are the original hand-written records, for the most part compiled at the date of the event, or immediately afterwards. Losh carried his diary with him when travelling the circuit, on business, or for pleasure, and had a practice of making a nightly entry in it. He comments on an exception to this:

End April 1829.

From about the middle of February I neglected to keep my Journal regularly and it is made from short notes in my pocket book, from memory and from my Diary of the weather etc. It cannot, therefore, be so fully relied upon as to minute accuracy, as usual, in all matters of importance, however, and with respect to my employment, reading etc. I believe it is substantially correct...³

It is reasonably clear, when comparing the appropriate entries with his correspondence and reported speeches, that the diaries are a fairly accurate record of the events described. On the question of the privacy of the diaries, it must first be said that there is no evidence of editing.

The content of the diaries point to their being intended as a private record. They are often repetitive, sometimes pompous, and occasionally irritatingly sanctimonious. His inadequacies are held up to the light and, in true dissenting spirit, are his account to God. In this respect his judgement of his daily successes and failures are a dialogue with his maker whose 'corrections' he tried to accept with equanimity. He was quite sure that his catastrophies both major and minor were for his eventual good, an instruction from on high.

He was often highly critical of his children, of those he knew, those he met, and of his neighbours. It is unlikely therefore, that he would have wished his comments to become common knowledge. He was not a vindictive man, and in practice tried to 'turn the other cheek'. He was sometimes bitter about the advancement denied him because of his Unitarian principles, something I'm sure he would not want to

admit in public. He had made his choice at an early stage of his career, and never wavered from that position.

How the diaries got to Carlisle is made clear by a newspaper report of 1926 provided by the Carlisle Library (Appendix Seven). It would appear that they were transferred to Woodside, the family estate outside Carlisle, after Losh's death and became available at public auction after the death of the last owner of the estate. The newspaper report makes the point 'That it was not intended for publication is very evident, but that it was to be drawn upon for an autobiography is equally clear.' This intention is referred to in the following diary entry:

January 18, 1829.

...I intend to enter fully upon it in the *Sketches of My Life* which I mean sometime or other to write.

Before addressing the main social and political issues with which Losh was engaged, we need first to establish that James Losh can fairly be described as a member of the provincial professional middle class. To that end an examination of each of these factors, in terms of his time, is called for. This whole area of study has long been a subject of controversy among historians and social scientists. Perhaps more has been written on the question of class than almost any other similar topic.

With regard to class, J Foster has pointed out:

The biggest problem [in studying the emergence of the middle class] is to disentangle the national from the local. With the big bourgeoisie so nationally orientated, it is difficult to tell where one ended

and the other [shopkeepers, petty master etc.] began'... Whilst these three factors complement each other in the character of Losh, it will make for easier consideration to examine each in turn: class, professional and provincial.

Class, as we have noted, has been a pre-occupation with British scholars for many years, so that the amount of material on this subject is considerable. It could be that this fascination may have something to do with the fluidity of British society and a common aspiration for upward mobility. The idea that 'jack is as good as his master' is almost a feature of English culture, as opposed to the historically more rigid structures in continental countries. Be that as it may, there are as many interpretations of class as there are authorities.

The adoption of the word itself was a consequence of the desire to describe the changes in society which resulted from the dynamism of the eighteenth century. As P.J. Corfield describes it:

...it is not surprising to find that linguistic fluidity interacted creatively with social changes, both promoting a new vocabulary and conceptual framework for the analysis and interpretation of society itself. 'Class', a powerful organising concept, then came into use. Contrasting with its later combatitive and contentious resonance, its arrival was simple. It glided into the language, and for some time was deployed alongside older terms... 'Class'... contained a potential for change, whether by co-operation, competition, or conflict⁵.

As she points out the word 'class' entered the language in 1789⁶ when referring to the 'working class', and was

subsequently used by Tom Paine who referred to 'two distinct classes', and Thomas Spence wrote of 'labouring classes'. Indeed, there are those historians who see class simply as the result of social conflict. One of these, R.S. Neale, reminds us that the Marxian definition of class presumes

society polarized into two classes by the separation of labour from the means of production : the bourgeoisie who controlled property as capital; and the proletariat. They act as classes when they recognise and acknowledge their 'positions'. A class with a developing class consciousness via its perception that its interests are antagonistic to those of another hostile class. The simple point is that two classes are essential for the formation of one class⁸.

Neale further points out that class consciousness begins when men understand that their struggles are really conflicts over the source of power from which these things flow, which under capitalism is property. It can be argued that this two-class model of the social structure fails to take sufficient note of the diversity of worker relationships inherent in industry, agriculture, and domestic services. However, it provided the paradigm of industrial labour relations for Marx and Engels.

That great proponent of the Marxian view, E.P. Thompson, argues that working-class consciousness is the product of perceptions of relationships between capital and labour, between exploiters and exploited. He lumps together rulers and employers as if in a political sense they were the same. His is essentially a two-class model of social relationships which he considers the gradual development of a two-class society which he describes:

In the years between 1780 and 1832 most English working people came to feel an identity of interests as between themselves and as agreed between their rulers and employers. This ruling class was itself much divided and in fact only gained cohesion over the same years because certain antagonisms were resolved (or faded into relative insignificance) in the face of an insurgent working class. This working class presence was in 1832 the most significant factor in British political life⁹.

It is one of the arguments of this thesis that it was precisely this pressure from below that stimulated the emergence of a middle class, caught between the workers and the aristocracy, at a time when they were filling the professions and establishing their identity in the political life of the nation.

The significance of the working class, in the sense that Thompson argues, was not lost on Losh. He was very much aware of their aspirations and his diaries reveal the considerable effort he made to encourage them through educational projects like Mechanics Institutes. Typically:

December 18, 1809.

I attended meeting today for the purpose of establishing schools in the Lancaster or Bell's plan. A committee was appointed with the powers to build and regulate the school for one year after its completion... schools of this description I consider of the first importance to the morals and happiness of the poor, and I trust no circumstances will prevent me from forwarding most zealously their establishment and support.¹⁰

He would probably have had sympathy for the situation of the working class, and their dignity in the scheme of things as expressed by John Trusler in 1790:

A poor man is equally respectable in society also, if he is a useful member of it, and his equality with the rich is shown and seen by his usefulness. As the servant cannot do without a master, so the master cannot do without the servant...They are equal in point of utility,

as members of the same society and subjects of the same state¹¹.

(One can imagine how Thompson would have replied to this!)

However, class feeling was not seen as solely a matter of economic strife but also a matter of ideas. John Foster comments:

The distinguishing feature of class consciousness is *intellectual commitment*¹².

By this he means that to be class conscious, workers had to have passed beyond mere trade union activity and blind protest to an awareness of the political nature of their struggle to exist and preserve their identity. He also argues that *liberalization* was in fact a collective ruling class response to a social system in crisis and integrally related to a preceding period of working class consciousness¹³.

In contrast to the historians already considered, the sociologist Ralph Dahrendorf adopts a more complex model of class structures and interactions. He argues that class conflict has its roots in the unequal distribution of power and authority rather than in differences in property, income and consumption¹⁴. In Dahrendorf's model, the crucial determinant of classes is the distribution of authority and therefore power in society. He challenges the view that class is an 'historical concept' inseparably tied to a definite historical entity such as the industrial proletariat or to an historical epoch such as the nineteenth century.¹⁵

Dahrendorf's five-class model uses the concept of an imperatively co-ordinated association, and focuses upon relationships of authority and subordination as the bases of classes in the early nineteenth century. Underpinning these relationships are property relations as perceived both by those with and those without property¹⁶.

The component groups in the five-class model are as follows:

1. Upper class - aristocratic, land-holding, authoritarian exclusive.
2. Middle class - big industrial and commercial property owners, senior military and professional men, aspiring to acceptance by the upper class. Deferential to upper class because of this and because of concern for property and achieved position.
3. Middling class - petit bourgeois, aspiring professional other literates and artisans. Collectively less deferential and more concerned to remove privilege and authority of upper class in which without radical changes they cannot realistically hope to share.
4. Working class A - industrial proletariat in factory areas, workers in domestic industries. Collectivist and non-deferential, and wanting government intervention to protect rather than liberate them.
5. Working class B - agricultural labourers, other low-paid urban labourers, domestic servants, urban poor. Working class women from A & B households, deferential and dependent¹⁷.

Neale, in considering Dahrendorf's five class model, contends that by the 1820s enough people in the social strata covered by the middle class had generated sufficient similar social consciousness to develop as a political class, at least in some regions. Working class A was beginning to develop a distinctive proletarian social class consciousness again in some regions and was beginning to emerge as a political class. This model, in contrast with the more conventional three-class one, represents an attempt to formulate a conceptual apparatus which focuses attention on a number of crucial aspects of early nineteenth century England. These are: the existence of

a middle class identified by its class consciousness; the dynamic political and economic roles of this class; movement between social strata rather than classes; and the rise and fall of political classes associated with uneven economic growth¹⁸.

Perhaps the most important idea (in the context of this essay) to emerge from Dahrendorf's five-class model is that of the middling class - a class identified by political action based on privatised and achievement-orientated consciousness, and on clear perceptions about the basis of power in what appeared to its members to be more a traditional order than a class-based society. Its perceptions and programme were rooted in a long radical tradition extending from Paine and Cartwright, through the Corresponding Societies, the Hampden clubs, the inspired agitation of Henry Hunt, and the campaign for Parliamentary Reform in the late 1820s and early 1830s¹⁹. We shall see in the career of James Losh, that political activism that found its voice through pressure groups for both local and national political purposes, though often described in non-political terms (e.g. literary societies, Bible societies, hospital committees). They were nevertheless forums for political expression of one sort or another, and through their activities made their members politically visible.

This view of the middle class is also affirmed by G. Kitson Clark. He points out that despite the diversity of this amorphous group there was some unity of purpose

...people who at any given moment might be called middle class vary so widely in so many different ways that there seems to be a high probability that any general statement that purports to include them all must be fallacious, any common attribute credited to them all must be a delusion. Nevertheless, the general term *middle class* remains useful as a name for a large section of society. Moreover, it is necessary to remember that a belief in the importance and significance of the middle class in the nineteenth century derives from contemporary opinion. From early on in the century men were fond of discussing the part which they thought the middle class was likely to play in the life of the nation. Certainly they seemed to be politically important at the time of the Reform Bill and that Bill was proposed and passed largely as a recognition of their importance²⁰.

As we shall see in chapter four, Losh played a key part in the political emancipation of the middle classes, and was involved with many leading figures in the struggle who recognised in him a conduit of provincial middle class opinion. Losh himself, whilst referring to 'middling ranks' and eventually to the 'middle classes', more often described that section of the local community as 'respectable people'. He recognised that there was a complex of professional people between the very rich and the very poor, and he appeared to move with freedom within all these groups.

An indicative entry in his diary:

May 20, 1823

Dinner with the Schoolmasters' Association...We had several good songs...harmless and hardworking set of men with very little chance of becoming opulent by their own exertions...the successful efforts they have made to provide a decent maintenance for widows and orphans...²¹

When considering the various models proposed it is important to recognise that early English nineteenth century society was dynamic rather than static. Norman Gash, for example, makes this point:

For all its harshness and crudities the industrial revolution was the saviour of British society in the

conditions which prevailed between 1815-1865. It enabled the mass of the working classes to improve their standards of living, eat more and better food, have better houses and clothes, enjoy cheap travel, obtain more education and organize themselves for further social and political advancement²².

P.J. Corfield agrees with this picture of an improving nation:

...the nation as a whole was becoming more affluent, besotted by the 'luxury', but in particular the gulf between rich and poor was filled by the increasingly numerous and socially visible 'middling' interests²³.

Gash further suggests that in the first half of the nineteenth century the aristocracy and gentry never lost their political power. They made concessions, a greater measure of equality was admitted. They accepted new blood from below and their younger sons and daughters married into non-aristocratic families. Gash sees the professions acting as a bridge between the aristocracy and the middle classes, finding their clients in both areas. They were gentlemanly, university-educated, and self-governing. He makes the point, however, that by 1815 the dominance of the three learned professions was being challenged by the apothecaries, solicitors and others from the expanding middle class, each seeking status and influence:

What can be loosely described as a middle class culture was beginning to be a dominant influence in morality, art and literature long before Victoria came to the throne²⁴.

Indeed, H. Perkin identifies this rising group as a forgotten fourth class, the professionals, emerging from this amorphous band lying between the aristocracy and the working class, during the period 1789 - 1833:

This class society was characterized by *class feeling* that is by the existence of vertical antagonism between a small number of horizontal groups, each based upon a

common source of income. By the mid-nineteenth century there were three identifiable major classes each with its own combatant ideal: the entrepreneurial, the working class, and the aristocracy. But there was a fourth class: the *forgotten* middle class.

This was composed of professional men, virtually above the economic battle. Able to rely on a steady income less the subject of competition than rent, profit and wages. These men were able to choose their *ideal* for society from those available. [Theirs] was a functional one based on expertise and selection by merit. Furthermore, via the mainstreams of nineteenth century thought men from the forgotten middle class attempted to sublimate the economic interests of the other three classes into morally and intellectually coherent social philosophies...It is true that they came from all three major classes but they were drawn mainly from the free-choosing members of this forgotten middle class²⁵.

As we will see, Losh belonged to this body of professional men, who sought to formulate their own political and social ideology. As many of them were Dissenters this ideology often blended religious and political ideas into a language of reform. Something of this can be seen in an entry in Losh's diary.

November 21, 1817:

Meeting to establish a savings bank. This seems to me to be one of the wisest and most effective plans for improving the condition of the poor which has yet been suggested. The circulation of the scriptures, the education of the children of the poor, and the savings bank, appear to me calculated to raise the human race in the scale of existence, and lead on to I hope still greater improvements at no great distance.²⁶

The greater improvements he refers to were the increased franchise through the Reform Act, the emancipation of the Catholics, and the emancipation of the West Indian slaves. In all these movements, which we will consider in their places, Losh played an effective part, and identified himself with the aspirations of his peers.

Losh would be identified by Perkin as a member of that group who were to a considerable extent outside the prevailing economic system. This class generated its own rational and moral idea as well as ideologies and spokesmen for all other ideals (e.g. James and John Mill, Robert Owen, Thomas Malthus). This fourth class became in fact a class within a class, professional men who were educated, vocal and giving the middle class, as a whole, leadership. Increasingly they imposed upon themselves and their peers a sense of mission, a determination to have some say in the running of the country's affairs.

W.J.Reader makes similar points in discussing the emergence of the professionals, quoting one of Losh's contemporaries:

'The importance of the professions and the professional classes can hardly be overrated. They form the head of the great English middle class, maintain its tone of independence, keep up to the mark its standard of morality and direct its intelligence.' Words written in 1857 by H Bryerly Thomas (1822-1867) who, after University College, London, and Jesus College, Cambridge had himself taken to the profession of law, and who lived to be a legal author of some eminence²⁷.

Reader, commenting on the importance of the landed family on the emergence of the professions, writes:

...the landed family...was the central unit of eighteenth-century society. This had an important effect on the way gentry looked upon the matter of getting a living...In the matter of getting a living, the essential point about landed property was that it broke the direct connection between work and income, which governed the life of the ordinary middle class men. It gave him independence, the first necessity for a gentlemanly life. If this was what an estate was for, it meant that the family in possession, or its own credit must provide for its members ...the younger sons would expect an education and at the outset of their careers, more or less prolonged and heavy financing...belonging to a landed family or being connected with one, gave not only

direct access to private fortunes. It gave something which might even be more important: access to patronage. ...and patronage was linked very closely with property and power²⁸.

Patronage for those of dependent status, until the middle of the nineteenth century, was of primary importance. Especially for those of the upper classes there were few suitable occupations available. Many (though not all) regarded trade in the ordinary sense as below consideration, being the occupation of a lower class. It must either be that of a large merchant, the civil or military arms of the East India Company, or one of the liberal professions: divinity, medicine, or law. For the latter a liberal education based on the classics at a university, was essential.

The professional class was centred upon the liberal professions, becoming more and more specialised as the nineteenth century proceeded. Their reputation for polite learning made these professions suitable occupations for gentlemen, and this attracted the attention of the rising middle classes. It was just this influx of vigorous middle class sons that organised the professional education of the professions. That same desire for reform which energised the political scene transformed the professions.

Losh, the dedicated reformer, spent most of his working life cultivating his professionalism. If anything he was over-sensitive to what he saw as his inadequacies in this area. The need for improvement in his immediate surroundings did not escape him. He would even forego the comfort of his home and

stay in lodgings to make himself more available to his clients. But then Losh, the dedicated provincial, knew how lowly the provincial lawyer was considered when compared with his metropolitan counterpart. How dedicated he was will become more and more apparent as we consider his attitude to the major issues of the day. His involvement and identification with the culture in which he lived can be read in the following selection of entries from his diaries. There is a pride in his peers that is not concealed by the acid of his pen for their pomp and circumstance.

After the battle of Trafalgar and the death of Nelson, a ball and supper were held in Newcastle to honour the naval victories, and the newly created Lord Collingwood, who was born in Newcastle, and whose family lived in Morpeth:

November 28, 1805

After dinner returned to Newcastle in a chaise with Mr Peters, and went to a ball and supper in honor [sic] of the great naval victories. A large party mixed as to quality of company. It was amusing enough to observe the ill grace with which many of the *Old Gentry* paid their respects to the newly-created Lady Collingwood, who certainly had the appearance and manners of an amiable and unaffected woman. The supper appeared to be handsome but as I did not readily get a seat in the scramble for good things, I went quietly home to bed when other people sat down to eat.²⁹

Newcastle had an active social calendar of concerts, balls, plays, dinners, and they figure regularly in the diaries. He comments on all the plays he attends with his family, and his remarks on Mrs Siddons, Kean and Kemble are invariable trenchant but appreciative. He writes of Mrs Siddons in 1812 'the wonderful powers of this great actress are less affected

by her age (near if not quite 60)...in Lady Randolph she had all the grace and dignity of a high born middle aged matron and I never saw her more happy in expressing the working of grief and despair'.

Losh is not always as complimentary about his local peers:

November 1, 1814.

Cecilia and I dined with a large and very dull party at the Mansion House. The persons of large fortune in this district form themselves into a party and as most of them (particularly the ladies) appear to be dull personages this, whilst it spoils the general society, does not improve their own. As far as we are affected by their folly, I believe it is the fault of ourselves, as I have no doubt we might be admitted among the select did we choose to pay the price for being so.³⁰

From the foregoing few examples one can appreciate how involved Losh was in his local community. It was an involvement not merely with his own class, but cut right across the spectrum of the whole population. In no sense can one say he was a refugee from the metropolis which he knew so well and in which he was so welcome. His more fortunate origins did not reflect in his attitude to those less fortunate, nor did it make him less welcome.

Losh, as the second son of a landed family, had looked first to his family for his education, and thereafter directly through his uncle for the small income that would give him some independence whilst furthering a career in law. He in turn struggled to provide similar educational and professional benefits for his eight children, and did not hesitate to seek the preferments that the patronage of his connections would

give them. He accepted that it was endemic in the society of his day, but did not seek it for himself. He saw that it had its uses and abuses.

The extent of the stranglehold that peerage patronage had on politics and the armed forces, can be seen in the figures quoted by John Rule, who endorses the view expressed by Professor Cannon in *Aristocratic Century*, that peerage patronage over seats in the Commons increased around fourfold between 1715 and 1785.

In 1786, 200 borough MPs were controlled by the peerage; eighty two sons of peers sat in the House. In 1784, in addition to 107 sons of peers and Irish peers, there also sat forty-six blood relatives of peers and twenty-two sons and brothers-in-law. Between 1782 and 1820 cabinet office was held by sixty-five men of whom forty-three were peers and fourteen sons of peers. In the Army and navy...of 102 colonels of regiments in 1769, fifty four were peers or their sons, grandsons or sons-in-law; as were more than 40 per cent of the generals and seventy per cent of the field marshalls³¹.

The great movements of the time for reform still left the aristocracy and gentry in control at the centre of things, using patronage at national and local level to support their relatives and dependents. This did not endear them to the rising middle class struggling to advance their sons.

If the gentry wanted to hang on to their political power, the middle class did not object very much, but what did annoy them was to find themselves shut out from the material rewards of power. The system of patronage, however, was a consequence of needing to attract men of independent fortune into unpaid office. It was expected that office-holders would recoup their fortunes and reward their dependents through exercising

patronage of their office. Losh, himself, in the 1820s, approached Brougham and other government ministers for advantage and place for his sons and for those projects dear to him e.g. the local railway.

The patronage system developed from a need to provide continuity in government, though of an aristocratic nature.

Perkin writes:

The court and government patronage systems developed to provide a parliamentary majority...from the lucrative state offices down it amounted to a 'system of personal selection from among one's kinsmen and connections' through which 'property influenced recruitment to those positions in society which were determined by property alone'³².

He also points out that in the church a similar system of preferment prevailed, with the middling and lower gentry soliciting for rich livings for their sons.

The aristocracy made use of higher church office for their second sons, but it was the middling and lower gentry who were always soliciting for rich livings for their sons.

In the next chapter we will consider Losh's ideas on the national Church, its influence on social and political affairs, and on controversial issues like the plurality of livings. To Losh, Christianity had an important role in maintaining and promoting the well-being of society, and the Christian gentleman had a responsibility for those below him.

January 20, 1827.

Public meeting for forming a society for relieving the sick and indigent poor. Respectably but not numerously attended. I think on the whole a society of this kind may do good...to avoid the evil of pauperism.³³

This acceptance of responsibility for the lower classes was widely seen as a Christian duty by a society reminded of this responsibility by the evangelicals and other religious bodies. The paternalism which had once been exercised by the aristocracy was diminished when people left the land and moved to the towns. The desperate conditions of the working class were increasingly a problem for the middle class to solve. As the middle class acquired greater power, their attitudes towards themselves and those whom they saw as being placed by God below them became manifest. Practical philanthropy became the hallmark of a middle-class Christian gentleman.

The years following the Reform Bill saw this attitude becoming more general with the acceptance of an hierarchical society.

David Roberts writes:

Early Victorians believed in the exercise of paternal authority through kings, judges, magistrates etc. as expressed in capital punishment, whipping, severe game laws, and the imprisonment of seditious writers. The paternalist also never doubted that God had created a hierarchical society, and that such a hierarchical society was necessary and beneficial. Without inequality of property there would be no incentives for the poor to work nor the wherewithal for the wealthy to rule, develop the arts of government and do charitable works. How could the landowner build cottages for the poor unless he was wealthy? How could a Bishop guide his clergy and they their flocks unless they were of superior rank, degree and wealth? And how could the governing class attend parliament and guide the nation's destiny unless they had wealth and privilege? At the heart of the paternalist's hierarchical outlook is a strong sense of the value of dependency, a sense that could not exist without those who are dependent having an unquestioned respect for their betters.³⁴

If by these various attributes and attitudes we can identify a middle-class provincial gentleman, then James Losh is the epitome of the upper-middle class provincial gentleman of

private property, who tolerated the existence of patronage and sought its benefits for his sons and his circle; while also accepting the paternalistic responsibilities of property and privilege. Losh gave to the poor, established schools for the children of the poor, and built cottages for his miners. He supported Henry Brougham in founding University College, London, and various Mechanics Institutes. He also participated in many schemes for community benefit, seeking to reform (but not remove) the long established institutions of society, and fighting for reform of the franchise as a way to prevent insurrection and preserve the constitution.

Losh kept a diary for nearly forty years, and so many entries demonstrate his involvement in, and feeling of responsibility for, his community. A selection of entries reflects this involvement in a wide variety of paternalistic matters, and shows his acceptance of patronage as a means of advancement:

Dec 21, 1800.
Charity school.

June 25, 1801.
At infirmary. I spoke several times on things proposed at the meeting. Meeting at Soup kitchen. Subscription.³⁵

End May 1802.
I have also been much engaged by the plan for establishing a lectureship in natural philosophy in Newcastle and by scheme for opening a Fever Hospital of the Infirmary.³⁶

It was a consequence of Losh's vigorous committee work in the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society that the minister of his Unitarian church, William Turner, was appointed to the lectureship in natural philosophy.

Losh was often involved in prosecuting bankrupts, and his compassion for their circumstances reflects his own apprehension of financial disaster and its dire consequences for a 'respectable' family. Something of Losh's efforts to maintain his family's respectability can be sensed in the next entries:

June 9, 1823.

I received a very kindly letter from Brougham acquainting me with his exertions for Baldwin [Losh's second son] through the Earl of Rosslyn, and giving me reasonable hopes of obtaining a commission at no distant period.

End Sept, 1823.

My sole object is to make my children independent...to give them all the advantages of education and to leave my daughters enough to maintain them as gentlewomen should they remain single, as also my sons sufficient to enable them to pursue their respective professions fairly and without being obliged to cringe to anyone.³⁷

Losh sought patronage for his sons, because he was anxious that they would not find it necessary to seek it for themselves.

April 12, 1824.

I most unexpectedly received from my friend Impey [whose uncle was on the East India board] the offer of a cadetship in India for Baldwin... I am grieved to send my son to such a country in such a service but he has chosen the army as a profession, and a commission at home holds out no great moral advantages, no fairer promise of a healthy or a useful life than one in India, whilst the expense is greater and the prospect of future emolument less. We have accepted Impey's offer.³⁸

Losh's third son John eventually took the appointment, and by a study of native languages improved his prospects. Losh realised when his son went off to India that he was unlikely to see him again. So it proved.

The foregoing examples - together with many of those which will be discussed later - suggest that Losh can be readily identified as a provincial middle-class professional, in the terms defined by recent twentieth-century scholarship. In his own time the loose description *middle ranks* gave way to *middle class*; from a loose range of classes between the labouring class and the aristocratic upper class, formed by the pressure of that mutually-identifying *working class* into the ambitious property-owning class of the Reform Act of 1832, spearheaded by the leadership of an assertive, organisation-forming professional group, determined on a share of the political power of the nation.

One can argue that James Losh's long career of good works illustrates and epitomises the paternalistic commitment of his class. He was generous in his charitable donations. He was energetic in promoting the education of the poor and in the promotion and support of institutions like the Literary and Philosophical Society, Mechanics' Institutes, Schoolmasters' Associations, and Bible Societies. He led his class in an active involvement in campaigns for political reform, the betterment for Catholics and Dissenters, and the emancipation of the slaves.

Subsequent chapters of this thesis will consider in some detail the major issues of his day; the manner and degree in which he was involved; the value of his distinctly provincial

view of the great events; and those personalities with whom he shared and exchanged views. To put these major issues in some kind of context, we will first acquaint ourselves with Losh's life - with a consideration of his local milieu- then in the following chapter examine his views and those of a selection of his closest friends, associates, and contemporaries on the Court, the established Church, and the government of the State.

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CHAPTER ONE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James Losh was a product of the Enlightenment: educated in the classics, a rationalist who had a veneration for *information* and the products of the mind, yet alive to the human issues of his day, not only in Britain but worldwide. He was a Dissenter, though without the fanaticism often associated with more extreme forms of dissent. A businessman with a compassion for working people and a concern for the less fortunate, he was a gentleman in the best sense of the word.

James Losh was born in 1763 into a substantial Cumberland family, the second of four sons and a daughter. His father had been a striking eighteenth century squire of the typical hunting, shooting and fishing style. A big man in every way, he could trace his lineage for several hundred years. The Loshes were respectable people when 'respectability' meant educated, well-informed, responsible, involved. James was all these things. Tall, handsome (if his bust in the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society is accurate) and every bit the product of his county-family background.

Losh successfully combined a career as a barrister on the Northern Circuit with that of a caring father of a large family. He was also a convinced educationalist; a Unitarian with a determination to achieve religious freedom; a business

man with literary aspirations; a reformer with a Burkean commitment to preserving existing institutions; a compulsive diarist; a horticulturist; and a good friend. A recitation of some of his many interests suggests the vitality and involvement of the man who always yearned for a quiet studious life. Nevertheless, he became the chairman of committees for good works at the drop of his fashionable hat. The poet Robert Southey, (who knew him well) described Losh in a letter to his brother:

March 14, 1809.

On Monday last, after a week's visit, I took coach where I had appointed to pass a day with James Losh, whom you know I have always mentioned as coming nearer the ideal of a perfect man than any other person whom it has ever been my good fortune to know; so gentle, so pious, so zealous in all good things, so equal-minded, so manly, so without a speck or stain in his whole habits of life.¹

A word picture of a paragon of virtue - yet Losh in his own eyes was a lazy dreamer given to 'castle-building'. He was constantly anxious about those around him, and given to living above his means. He was conscious of too often sliding from his standards of Christianity, and guilty in his own eyes of inexcusable irritability. His faults make him the more easy to like, and to understand. He always regretted he never found the energy to write something credit-worthy - yet his diaries, stretching over nearly forty years, are revealing of him and his time. They are written in a style that is sometimes reminiscent of Jane Austen, a compound of good sense, elegant prose and waspish humour. He kept the diaries for a number of reasons: to remind himself of his good resolutions and his failings; to record his gratitude to God for his many

blessings; and to gather material for a projected autobiography. He had unrealised literary ambitions.

When compared with the diaries of Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846)² a well educated upper-middle class professional gentlemen - a painter of historical themes - one sees the differences between them and also their parallels. Haydon's diaries reveal a highly emotional, revealing and self-justifying person; confessing to his successes and failures in almost a 'Coleridge' style of language. Losh by contrast is cooler, yet self-revealing, only occasionally self-justifying; an Enlightenment-style of diarist. Haydon clearly meant his diaries to be read after his death to give him the credit for what he saw as his achievements: Losh never meant them to be read by anyone at all, as their virtual disappearance after his death makes clear.

Losh's diaries begin in 1796 - by which time he had already been to Paris in 1792 (to see the revolution at first hand), sat at the feet of the radical William Godwin, and met Wordsworth. For the earlier years, however, we have to rely on occasional later comments and upon secondary sources, in some cases written long after Losh's death in 1833.

Before going up to Trinity College, Cambridge, he had a year at Penrith school, to which he admitted he owed little.³

(Wordsworth, who was to become a lifelong friend, was more fortunate in the school at Hawkeshead, which he found more

congenial than the attentions of his reluctant guardian and uncle). To enter Cambridge in the late eighteenth century required classical and mathematical knowledge, then considered necessary precursors to becoming a man of the cloth. Latin dominated the classroom, so that Losh who found this congenial, went up to Cambridge well prepared. His interest in classical literature remained with him all his life.

Wordsworth, however, who went up to St. John's in 1787, a few years after Losh, was disenchanted by the constant dissipation. He abandoned his courses, dismissing Cambridge as 'wild and dissolute', and the dons as 'grotesque in character'⁴⁵. Occasional remarks in Losh's diaries suggest that Losh was not above sharing in the riotous behaviour of his fellow students - one of his friends from Cambridge days was to die early, and Losh put this down to early excesses. He made good friends at University, among them John Bell KC, the eminent Chancery lawyer; John Tweddell, the classical scholar and traveller; and the Hon. Charles Warren. In later life, he found himself welcomed whenever he had the opportunity to renew old acquaintance. Cambridge was, in those days, intended primarily as a school for future clerics, but James, who had begun with these aspirations, quickly found himself sympathetic to the cause of religious dissent. What he saw as the hypocrisy of the national church was not for him; he found a more congenial home with the Unitarians. It is likely that he found himself in sympathy with Joseph Priestley whose Unitarian views were expressed in *Letters to*

the Young Men who are in the course of their education for the Christian ministry at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit (1777) - an open invitation to them to examine the beliefs of their fathers, and to look at the connection between the church and state.

Dissent, as Martin Fitzpatrick points out, has a long history. By the early years of the eighteenth century Arianism was a prevalent heresy: denying the Trinity, but believing in God, and relegating Jesus Christ to a less than divine status. Socinianism, which was to become more important, representing a more rationalist tradition of theology, impatient of the nonsenses and superstitions many believed to be incorporated in the trinitarian views. For the Socinians (who believed in the essential humanity of Christ) the Arian ideas did not go far enough. These 'Rational Dissenters' also held that scientific truths belonged to the same category as theological ones, both could be understood through the application of reason; revelation merely provided extra assistance⁶.

By 1782, when Losh went up to Cambridge, the vigour of Dissenting self-publicizing was beginning to be looked at askance. As John Seed has noted, from the 1760s Dissenters became increasingly alienated from successive administrations. Seed's findings agree with John Phillips whose investigation demonstrates ' a clear-cut intense, and strengthening relationship between Opposition politics and Nonconformity

dominated popular behaviour in the boroughs where the relationship could be measured'⁷. At Cambridge Losh met William Frend, a fellow of Jesus College, who later resigned from the ministry over religious principles, and whom Losh joined in William Godwin's circle.⁸ Jesus College had a strong tradition of Latitudinarianism, a term intended to suggest theological breadth rather than depth, with a concentration on the few essentials which could unite most English Protestants. The Latitudinarians were known for their emphasis on natural rather than revealed theology, since they believed that the essentials of Christian revelation could be confirmed by the study of nature which made manifest the mind of its Creator⁹. Frend's religious radicalism had a respectable pedigree. It was, as John Gascoigne points out:

the willingness of many Cambridge dons to define the boundaries of acceptable theological and intellectual debate [which] did much to open the eighteenth-century Church, and the English establishment more generally to currents of thought to which the term 'the Enlightenment' refers¹⁰.

It was his position on subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and his criticism of the constitutional position of the Church of England (as well as of its Trinitarian theology), that was to lead to Frend's expulsion from the University in 1793. Whilst the Latitudinarians of the early part of the century subscribed to the Articles, by the reign of George III they found their Latitudinarian views suspect and the subscription unacceptable. Their unpopularity with the establishment was not just because of their broad religious views, but also because of their political attitudes which were a natural development of them:

As a group Latitudinarians emphasised the role of natural theology rather than revelation and so too, in the political realm the Latitudinarians tended to favour theories of government based on natural law rather than the almost sacerdotal view of kingship held by their ecclesiastical opponents; similarly in matters of church government the Latitudinarians tended to view episcopal authority as a convenient form of administration rather than a divinely ordained institution¹¹.

One of the most important early figures in Latitudinarian, and eventually Unitarian thought, was Benjamin Hoadly (1676-1761). Hoadly maintained that the Church was an entirely human institution, which should be organized by the State since Christ had left behind him no visible human authority and no judges over the consciences of the religion of His people. Hoadly's views took root in Cambridge¹².

Defending Hoadly's views that church ordinances had no divine force was Thomas Herne (d.1722). Herne argued, that it was wrong to compel subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles when 'CONSENT is the only FOUNDATION of Ecclesiastical as well as of Civil Government'¹³.

Most of the Latitudinarians, however, continued to subscribe to the Articles, justifying any doubts about the doctrine they embodied by arguing that such oaths meant no more than a declaration of loyalty to the Church of England as established. The increasing influence of religious heterodoxy at Cambridge led to individuals making personal protest, as Frend was later to do. One of these was John Jackson (1686-1763), one of Hoadly's admirers.

[He]maintained that no church had the right to impose any doctrine 'which is not clearly and expressly contain'd

and declared to be necessary in the Gospel' and suiting action to the word, he refused to take any further oaths of religious orthodoxy¹⁴.

One of those with considerable influence within Cambridge was Edmund Law (1703-1787), Master of Peterhouse from 1756 to 1768, who thought that to insist on adherence to articles and creeds was to prevent its continuing development. His ideas helped shaped the thinking of prominent Cambridge theologians such as William Paley (1743-1805), Richard Watson (1737-1816), and John Hey (1734-1815)¹⁵.

With such an array of reforming intellects in the period just before Losh's entry into Cambridge, and his friendship with Frennd, it is not surprising that Losh found his Anglican views too rigid. From what we now know of his strong moral beliefs and his desire for social justice, this was completely in character.

Another Cambridge graduate and an admirer of Law, was Francis Blackburne (1705-1787), one of the architects of the petition of 1771 against subscription. This petition was largely the work of Cambridge men (including among its signatories the entire fellowship of Law's college). It argued that the Church was not empowered to prescribe and enforce belief, this being among the 'rights and privileges which they [the petitioners] hold of God only'¹⁶.

The failure of the petition caused several of the signatories to leave the Anglican church. One of the most notable was

Theophilus Lindsey, a former fellow of St. John's College. Lindsey, John Disney (1746-1816), John Jebb (1736-1786), John Palmer (1742-1786), William Frend (1757-1841) are all examples of Anglican clergy who turned to Unitarianism. Though they left the Established Church, they nonetheless derived from the Anglican Latitudinarian tradition the intellectual foundations of their critique of the established order in Church and State¹⁷.

Losh we know, maintained a long friendship with Frend, and he would have been aware of the work of Lindsey through his relationship with Turner. Like those above who turned to Unitarianism, Losh inherited their reforming attitude to Church and State.

By the time Losh left the University in 1786, subscription for graduates had been abolished:

Despite parliamentary failure of reform of the subscription laws, significant changes in Cambridge were made; in 1772 a declaration of bona fide membership of the Church of England replaced subscription to the Articles for BAs...¹⁸

How Losh dealt with this situation is not recorded. We do know that he turned to Unitarianism as a consequence of his being influenced by religious heterodoxy at Cambridge (even though by his time it was becoming decidedly unpopular). Having decided against the ministry, and chosen instead a career in law, he may have felt that at 23, he had declared himself enough. He had already taken a large step. However, something of his attitude towards subscription might

be inferred from this later diary entry:

February 1, 1829

I went to St. Nicholas's Church...I received the sacrament which indeed I never objected to do except as a qualification for an office...¹⁹

Losh graduated BA and entered Lincoln's Inn, being called to the Bar in 1789. We know that in the early 1790s Losh was actively associated with gentlemen reformers in London, who had formed the Society of the Friends of the People. At this time leaders of the working and artisan classes like Hardy, Place and Horne Tooke were setting up the London Corresponding Society, which was to be so savagely repressed by Pitt. Losh and George Tierney drafted the petition of the Society of Friends of the People in favour of parliamentary reform which Charles Grey presented to the House of Commons in 1793. Losh was also a member of the small group that discussed the doctrines of the day with William Godwin. Godwin's diary records such a meeting at an evening tea party of largely Cambridge men, who were opposed to the Government and the war:

February 27, 1795. Tea at Frennd's with Holcroft, Losh, Tweddell, Jonathan Raine, Edwards, Wordsworth, Higgins, French and Dyer²⁰.

Peter Marshall points out that Godwin would have attracted men of this calibre, if not actively radical, then decidedly reformist in their attitude to Church and State:

Godwin's rejection of original sin and innate differences enables him to argue for the perfectability of man...religion in all its parts, he declares to be an 'accommodation to the prejudices and weaknesses of mankind...his idea of justice did not include government...he is even less happy about representation...given the uniqueness of human beings no one can be represented...²¹

Certainly, Losh had some difficulty with Godwin's views, which we will discuss later.

It is enticing to speculate that Losh met Wordsworth in Paris in 1792, at the time of the September massacres. Losh was there from a desire to see the revolution at first hand, while Wordsworth was tarrying on his way home to raise money to marry Annette, his pregnant French fiancée²². Losh was fortunate to escape with his life. Being a strikingly handsome and well dressed person he had been mistaken by the *sans culottes* for an aristocrat, and was saved by Marat, who had become a family friend during his sojourn in Newcastle. Losh wrote of his escape in a later letter:

I left Paris on Tuesday night after witnessing the most dreadful barbarities. There was the greatest difficulty in getting out of the barriers and tho' we had passports ready for some days, we only got off at last by getting possession of a diligence which the passengers had deserted for fear of being murdered at the barriers. Fortunately for us the night was very stormy and the mob (or Sovereign as they are called) had not assembled and we passed without danger.²³

Thus Losh escaped the September massacres when many another was executed on the streets! It was during this period too, that he first ventured into print, translating and publishing books on the French Revolution (e.g. E.B.Constant, *Observations on the strength of the present government in France*, printed in Bath in 1797)²⁴. These followed an edition of Milton's *Areopagitica* which he published in London 1791²⁵. After only about a year practising at the Bar, serious health problems forced him to leave London for more congenial surroundings in the Bath-Bristol area. There Losh met up with Wordsworth, (who had found it politic to become less visible) and also made the acquaintance of Coleridge and Southey. They met regularly for meals, walks, and talks. The entries

in Losh's diaries are maddeningly brief, as we will see later, but nevertheless they are suggestive of the enjoyment Losh found in listening to, and discussing, their poetry at first hand.

All the members of the group admired the French Revolution in its early stages. Coleridge lectured the people of Bristol on Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*. Wordsworth and Losh had both seen and regretted its bloodshed, whilst applauding the French people's struggle for freedom from a corrupt aristocracy. Southey was the most radical of them all at that time. Another of Losh's Bristol friends was Dr. Beddoes (whom he consulted about his poor state of health); and from October 1798, Humphry Davy, Beddoes's assistant at the Pneumatic Hospital. Davy too was a poet of some ability, increasing the web of talent that for a few years stimulated the west country. A piece of poetry by Davy shows how even his poetic imagination was redolent with scientific imagery:

Let the philosophic sage
His silver tresses white with age
Amid the chilling midnight damp
Waste the solitary lamp
To scan the laws of Nature o'er
Curbed beneath his harsh control
The blissful passions fly the soul²⁶.

At about this time Losh began to take an active role in Sunday Schools and Schools of Industry. This was an interest he was to pursue for the rest of his life. At this time too, he was engaged in writing articles for the *Economist or Englishman's Magazine*, run by his friend T. Bigge of Benton near Newcastle, 'one of the first attempts to enlighten the mass of the people

by means of cheap publications²⁷.'

Losh maintained a life-long friendship with Wordsworth, and with Coleridge and Southey. Although there were long intervals in their relationship, he visited and was visited by them, regularly over the years. Indeed, to better understand the kind of man Losh was, it is worth looking at these relationships, particularly that with Wordsworth. Although the Lake poets were often at odds with each other, Losh maintained a friendship with each of them that lasted nearly forty years. He was sometimes critical of their political and professional attitudes, but remained warmly appreciative of them as human beings.

We know that Losh met Wordsworth first in the early 1790s, sometime after their independent visits to Paris during the September Terror of '92. It has been suggested that Losh and Wordsworth met variously at Godwin's in 1795 and Frennd's in 1793²⁸. Whichever it may be, Losh's diaries which begin in '96 mention frequent meetings with all three of them in that year.

1796.

May 29. Mr. Coleridge's morning and evening.

July 5. Letter to Mr Wordsworth. {ditto August 20,
October 7]

Nov 13. Breakfast with Southey, Coleridge, Dr Beddoes

Dec 4 Long walk with Southey.

Dec 12 Letter to Coleridge. Read Joan of Arc. Fair but gloomy.²⁹

When he moved to the Bristol area, Losh, who had some kind of chest complaint, was concerned first of all with his health:

Year end comment, 1798.

...For many months my health was bad and this blighted

all my other comforts; it has lately improved very much and I have now once more the cheering hope of a perfect recovery, at least to a tolerable state of health and strength, and that is all I pray for...³⁰

The decision may have had something to do with Wordsworth (who had preceded him into the west country), and to his future wife Cecilia, whom he re-encountered there. The entries in the diaries are frustratingly brief at this time, although, in the light of the poets' known radical views, it is easy to believe that poetry would not have been the only subject discussed.

The next entry is indicative of the freedom and confidence they felt in each other's society, allowing them to discuss subjects that perhaps would be unwise in any other. It suggests that they were irked by the restrictions of the Pitt government.

1798

- Apr 3 Tea including Southey. Our conversation turned principally upon the invasion of liberty. I stated the probability of a stop being put to Southey's Joan of Arc, in that case he declared his intention of leaving the country. We all agreed that were there any place to go to, emigration would be a good thing for literary men and the friends of freedom...Southey repeated to me a singular but fine little poem by W.
- June 12 Supper with Mr Cottle and Wordsworth. Wordsworth pleasant and clear but too earnest and emphatic in his manner of speaking in conversation.
- 14 Conversation with Wordsworth and walks - he is staying with us.
- 15&16 Wordsworth - conversation and hearing his poems.³¹

Losh always seemed to find Wordsworth too 'declamatory' in style, although this mannerism did nothing to cool Losh's affection for him. The poems referred to were probably the Lyrical Ballads.

In 1798, Losh married Cecilia Baldwin, daughter of the Reverend Doctor Baldwin of Aldingham, near Ulverston, a marriage that Losh's uncle and benefactor frowned upon. The reason for this disapproval is not clear from the diaries, but significantly his uncle Joseph Liddle thereafter became less generous to him. The newly married couple moved to Shirehampton where, during the summer of 1798, they entertained the three poets. They were invited to accompany Wordsworth, his sister, and Coleridge to Germany towards the end of that year. There, Wordsworth was to begin *The Prelude* and Coleridge to learn the language, and through it hopefully recoup his fortunes.

Wordsworth wrote the following invitation:

11th March, 1798.

...Coleridge is now writing at the same table. I need not say how ardently he joins with me in this wish, and how deeply interested he is in everything relating you. We have a delightful scheme in agitation, which is rendered still more delightful by a probability which I cannot exclude from my mind that you may be induced to join in the party. We have come to a resolution, Coleridge, Mrs Coleridge, my sister and myself going to Germany where we propose to pass the two ensuing years in order to acquire the German language and to furnish ourselves with a tolerable stock of information in natural science. I am dear Losh your affectionate friend. W. Wordsworth.³²

Losh's health however, had not materially improved, so he and his wife decided to move to Newcastle, where members of his family had mining, brewing, coal mining, engineering and chemical interests. In 1799, we find Losh and his wife travelling north, first to the family home at Woodside near Carlisle, and then to Newcastle where he set up as a barrister. He had already practised briefly on the Northern Circuit in 1794³³.

Bearing in mind Losh's dissenting views it is interesting to consider the religious ferment that Newcastle had been subjected to in the years leading up to his arrival there.

J. Bradley describes it as follows:

The Dissenting community in Newcastle upon Tyne was one of the largest in the north of England, though it lacked some of the rich diversity of Bristol. Seven chapels belonged to the Scots Presyterians...The Scots chapels... were closely linked through the Newcastle Presbytery which in 1783, included thirteen ministers...Two Unitarian chapels subsisted in the eighteenth century... and there was a group of Particular Baptists...The Quaker meeting was situated in Pilgrim Street and on 20 December 1742, the Methodists opened the Orphan House in Northumberland Street...³⁴

By the time of Losh's arrival, the legal profession had achieved some respectability and influence in society, though this had been more the case with attorneys, who in the eighteenth century had been reluctantly accepted.

As Robert Robson describes them:

As has been shown, these men were already among the leaders of provincial society, and in 1800 they were only entering into a role whose period of major influence lay in the future. But even at that date, they had established themselves in a position of strength and the respectability of their calling was conceded³⁵.

Robson, however, points out their standing in society was not always so elevated. He quotes Henry Fielding's description of the position of attorneys:

Religion, law, and physic, were designed
By Heaven the greatest blessing on mankind;
But priests, and lawyers, and physicians made
These general goods to each a private trade,
With each they rob, with each they fill their purses,
And turn our benefits into curses.³⁶

Happily for Losh, he was not to depend solely upon slowly building up a practice. Through his uncle (very reluctantly it has to be said) Losh acquired interests in two Tyneside

collieries: Saltwellside, and Tynemain in Gateshead. He was already a partner with two friends, Bell and Thain, in an alkali business, and subsequently bought shares in the brewery at Hexham. As his elder brother inherited the family estate, Losh as a younger son was obliged to seek his coveted 'independence' through these and other investments. His earnings at this stage were negligible, and they were not helped by his being a Dissenter. As his income grew, through these sources and from the inheritances of his wife and himself, so did the responsibility with the increase in his family. His wife bore him ten children, of whom eight survived, so he was never free of financial worry. We have seen that he was always fearful of losing his 'respectability' through being unable to maintain his position as a gentleman, and of failing to make sufficient provision for his children's independence.

Both of his brothers, William and George, had business interests too. William in particular had his alkali interests, and his ownership of the Walker Ironworks. Here it was that George Stephenson, who was foreman, produced steam engines and developed patents for such things as locomotive wheels. George Losh also had a large investment in ironworks over the border, which were to prove a headache. All of the Loshes were speculators with an eye to the main chance. In the early days, both of James's brothers burnt their fingers and turned to him for both legal and business advice.³⁷

An example of the far-sighted investment that James Losh became involved in, is the building of the railway from Newcastle to Carlisle³⁸. He was particularly energetic in his promotion of this scheme. As chairman of the committee devoted to raising the funds and overseeing the first stages, Losh was the first to invest £2000. It was he that went to London to obtain the Act to begin work, and to persuade the government committee to put public money into the project. Later he had to persuade the same committee to over-ride the objections and allow locomotives rather than horse-drawn vehicles to operate on the line. An interesting entry in his diary shows how perceptive he was in recognising the talents of others, in this case the young engineer Brunel:

January 8, 1830.

Today we elected Mr. Giles engineer for the Newcastle and Carlisle railroad. Of Mr. Giles, individually, I have a very good opinion, and I really hope that if we have a good active working committee, he may answer our purpose very well. I cannot help thinking, however, that his election was secured by a species of manoeuvring, and that there is a danger of his being too much connected with a party among the directors. The rival candidate, Mr Brunell, appeared to me to be an intelligent and active young man, and I preferred him because he would have given us his whole time and attention.³⁹

It is greatly to his credit that Losh found the time and energy to promote so many worthy causes, with such a weight of professional and domestic responsibility. Whenever there was a social need, there we find Losh. That he could also find time to read widely and improve his knowledge so extensively, is staggering. He set himself courses of study, allocating time each day when not on circuit. Apart from Latin and Greek classics, he also read modern authors such as Walter Scott,

Byron, Maria Edgeworth, Hannah More, Priestley, Paley and many more. We find a later comment on the sale of his library following his death:

On the third of March, 1834, and the four following days an event occurred in Newcastle upon Tyne the like of which it had never seen before, and was never likely to see again. The sale in Small's salerooms of a private library the books of the late Mr. James Losh of The Grove, Jesmond.

The auction was spread over five days. Even a cursory glance at the items in the printed catalogue is sufficient to indicate that this was no ordinary bibliophile's collection; the variety and range of subjects are unusual.⁴⁰

In 1799, he was unanimously elected a member of the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society, and became an active vice chairman for over thirty years. There is reason to believe that the society owes its very fine building largely to his efforts⁴¹. In 1802, he warmly promoted the new institution of permanent lectures. In that year too he hotly engaged with Dr. Clarke and others in the enlargement and re-arrangement of the Infirmary, and the establishment of a Fever House.⁴²

As an active member of the local Unitarian community, Losh aided his minister Rev. W. Turner in many excellent schemes for the improvement of the morals and education of the young. In 1810, he took a leading part in the establishment of the Jubilee Schools, and other infant schools. His exertions to promote the education, particularly religious education of the lower classes, we can trace from the Bristol days in the 90s. His interest in education - which he saw as the eventual route to manhood suffrage - was deep and abiding. It led him to

promote the formation of self-run Mechanics Institutes. As befitting a close friend of Henry Brougham, he took shares in the establishment of University College, London, and maintained a lively interest in the founding of a college in Newcastle and a university at Durham. We find in his diary that he did not hesitate to criticise a proposal to exclude Dissenters from its degrees⁴³.

One of the links that Losh had with the early Coleridge was Unitarianism. In the latter's case the commitment did not last; for Losh, however, it was one of the mainsprings of his reformist outlook, particularly in its local context. As in most large urban centres, the Unitarians formed a minority group in Newcastle, yet their influence was considerably greater than their numbers suggest (An effect repeated throughout the kingdom). By 1824, members of this sect in Newcastle had established its first bank (Robert Rankin and Ralph Carr), its Literary and Philosophical Society (Rev. William Turner), its Society of Antiquaries (J Cookson), its Mechanics Institute (William Turner and James Losh), and were at the forefront of local educational and social reform⁴⁴.

In a recent study, John Seed describes the emerging Unitarian community in Newcastle as follows:

In the late 17th century Presbyterians had been immensely powerful in Newcastle and included an important section of the town's governing elite. In 1727 they were wealthy enough to finance the building of a new fashionable chapel, with seating for 600 people...The site was called Hanover Square: 'in testimony of their attachment to the reigning family and the principles of revolution'. By the second half of the eighteenth century Hanover Square

chapel had become a settled and a respectable part of the town's life.⁴⁵

[By 1782]an old presbyterian congregation had a Unitarian minister William Turner, its members came from various religious backgrounds - many from traditional English liberal presbyterians, several from Anglican families, thus there was a wide diversity of belief within the congregation...

As William Turner explained in 1811, religious individualism was the cornerstone of the congregation:

its members...desire to be considered as a Voluntary Association, not of Espiscopalian, Presbyterian, or Independents...of individual Christians; each one professing Christianity for himself according to his own views of it, formed upon a mature consideration of the Scriptures, and acknowledging the minister's right to do the same; and necessarily united in nothing but a desire to worship the Supreme Lord of all as disciples of one common Master⁴⁶.

Seed in analysing the congregation of the Hanover Square chapel describes it as containing 13 professionals: 1 barrister, 2 solicitors, 3 physicians, 2 surgeons, 4 newspaper editors and publishers, and a mining engineer. 18 merchants and manufacturers in which are included 2 shipbuilders and 3 shipowners. The rest covers a variety of trades and minor professions. Medical practitioners were particularly prominent and included Dr.Thomas Greenhow, who built up a large practice and eventually became professor of Medical Ethics at Durham University. John Buddle, the famous mining engineer and agent for Lord Londonderry had links with the congregation.

In other provincial cities, a similar growth of Unitarian communities could be seen. Seed describes these emerging congregations:

At Manchester, Wakefield, Leeds, Liverpool, Bristol,

Birmingham, Nottingham and elsewhere a group of affluent and educated merchants and professional men gathered at the old presbyterian chapel each Sunday. Of course this *haute bourgeoisie* were only an elite in congregations in which the majority of the membership were less exalted - shopkeepers, small-scale capitalist manufacturers or dealers, schoolmasters and so on. However, the elite were decisive in the shaping of rational dissent; their wealth maintained the chapel and its minister. They constituted a self-selecting oligarchy of trustees appointing the minister and sitting in judgement on his preaching⁴⁷

In the course of the eighteenth century economic growth, he explains, created an expanding bourgeoisie who were increasingly affluent. 'The Dissenters are some of the most wealthy merchants and manufacturers here', an American visitor to Manchester commented in 1777. Cross Street chapel, the oldest, largest and most important dissenting chapel in the town, numbering among its trustees in the 1770s and 1780s a substantial group of prosperous textile merchants, as well as a banker, a doctor, a solicitor and two landed gentlemen. Most of these men belonged to families which had been part of the town's presbyterian community for several generations⁴⁸.

A similar picture can be seen in Leeds. R.G.Wilson writes that one of the most important features in the religious history of Leeds is the widespread influence of Unitarianism.

One of the most important features in the religious history of Leeds is the widespread influence of the Unitarians...A large measure of the success of the Unitarian church in Leeds was due to its recognition and comprehension within its system of church government of the small tradesmen and manufacturers. The Unitarian approach to the problems of the new industrial society of wealth and poverty, were refreshing... It was the continuing attraction of the chapel to all sections of the community and its easy assimilation of the new manufacturing classes who were to play so large a role in Victorian Leeds...Excluded from civic office and sharing common Whig political opinions the Unitarians were thrown closely together... It was this, rather than

any singularity in the tenets of their faith that levered them into positions of economic dominance. Moreover the reformist political opinions of the Unitarian merchants - induced by their own civic disabilities more than any convinced democratic belief - dovetailed with those of the new manufacturers and engineers⁴⁹.

In Liverpool, which being a seaport with a manufacturing hinterland bears some resemblance with Newcastle, one can also see strong Dissenting communities emerging. J. Bradley describes it thus:

In the first quarter of the eighteenth century three Presbyterian chapels constituted the whole Dissent in Liverpool. Nonconformity grew with the burgeoning population of the city and by the 1770s there were eight Dissenting congregations. By then Liverpool was competing in size with Bristol, and by 1800 it was arguably the largest provincial city in England. The Presbyterians - distinguishable from Unitarians in name only - maintained three chapels in our period, and in 1763 they added a fourth...Newington chapel was established in 1777 as the borough's one Congregational meeting. One unnamed Baptist chapel at the end of Matthew Street and Stanley Street was matched by a much larger Baptist meeting in Byrom Street. The Friends had a meeting house ...and the Methodist chapel was situated in Mount Pleasant⁵⁰.

Anne Holt⁵¹, commenting on the difficulties that faced emerging Unitarian congregations, reminds us that the end of the eighteenth century was difficult for all minority movements. However, she writes that Liverpool escaped the worst political outbreaks, though not without some internal dispute. In 1790 it had indulged in one of its recurrent Unitarian controversies...there ensued a controversy 'carried on in the usual manner of arraying battalions of texts against each other, and on each respective side of the question'. Between the end of 1816 and ... 1831 were years of turmoil and experiment. George Harris, minister at Renshaw Street chapel from April 1817, wrote that he saw in Liverpool 'a station for

disseminating correct views of that Gospel which alone maketh wise unto Salvation'. Harris held that Christ was a man, but at the same time he believed in the resurrection of the body. His controversial views added to the local turmoil of the time. Newcastle was fortunate, perhaps, in having a Unitarian ministry that was peaceable by comparison.

A consideration of the religious constituents of Newcastle, Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool makes it clear that many provincial centres had similar characteristics: strong nonconformist dissenting communities that were each in their own way to transform their towns. It is also likely that these dissenting communities were familiar with the activities of Dissenting communities of other provincial towns.

Having considered the growth of Dissent, and in particular Unitarianism, in Newcastle and in various provincial centres, one might now ask: What kind of Unitarian was Losh? Was he Arian or Socinian? Although he did not address the question in his diaries, I feel it not unreasonable, considering the long and close relationship with William Turner, to accept that the latter's beliefs would have been compatible with those of Losh. Helen Nicholson in her *Brief Account* describes Turner's religious principles as follows:

His theology was typical of the particular period in the history of Unitarianism. He held that 'the New Testament uniformly represents the Deity as the original fountain and Father of mercies; who has constituted His Son Jesus, as the propitiation seat, through whom he publishes his gospel of His own, free, unpurchased grace. Further, it is undoubtedly a great confirmation of our faith in the

promises of God which relate to a Resurrection of the Dead, to have an instance of it in one of our own species... In his preaching he propounded his profound belief in the Oneness of the Deity and as to the nature of Jesus Christ, that of a complete and perfect instructor of mankind.⁵²

I infer from the foregoing that probably Turner had moved from Arianism to Socinianism, and it seems likely that Losh must have arrived at the same position. The long relationship of Turner with Theophilus Lindsey, who was fearlessly Socinian, supports this position.

We find in Seed a description of Unitarians that emphasises their differences as well as their points of agreement:

The Unitarian body consisted of people who, despite other differences, rejected the doctrine of the Trinity and hence the divinity of Christ...Yet in a number of other respects Unitarians belonged to the protestant dissenting tradition. They accepted God's revelation through the Bible, confirmed by the empirical evidence of the miracles, and that Christ - though a man like other men - had a 'divine commission' and rose from the dead. For Unitarians the whole image of God which orthodox religion - catholic, anglican and dissenting alike - constructed was anathema...Such a God, moreover, contradicted 'good sense'...⁵³

Seed also points out that the nature of Unitarianism had been subject to change in the eighteenth century:

Anti-trinitarian doctrines circulated throughout Protestant Dissent in the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century. Arianism - the upholding of a distinction between God and Christ though not going quite so far as to assert the simple humanity of the latter - was everywhere...From the 1740s noted Dissenting ministers like Caleb Fleming and Nathaniel Lardner were cautiously preaching the simple humanity of Christ.⁵⁴

This varied nature of Unitarianism is endorsed in E.M.Wilbur's book, but he then examines its developed Socinian nature:

It has from first to last been anti-trinitarian, or at least un-trinitarian...Indeed, its consistent adherence to the unipersonality of God and the subordinate rank of

Christ, may almost be said to be incidental to the movement rather than essential to it...But overshadowing all other elements that helped to shape Socinianism was the tendency to look directly to the word of Scripture itself as the sole pure source of religious truth, and to ignore as unimportant whatever could not be traced to this source⁵⁵.

Like Losh himself, other Unitarians were unable to hold public office without occasional conformity, so they channelled their energy into the fight for a wide range of social improvements, as well as constantly agitating for parliamentary reform. The demographic changes consequent upon the industrial revolution highlighted social problems particularly as far as the working people were concerned. And it was the Unitarians who were in the forefront of the struggle for reform. Their 'rational' dissent tended to make them see social ills in more simplistic terms, untinged by religious bigotry. They saw what had to be done, regardless of the attitude of the establishment, sought to apply 'practical' remedies to the problems. The motivation of the Unitarians for reform in general, according to D.C. Stange 'arose out of a liberal theology that sought to prove its moral superiority, a minority status and consciousness that sought social acceptance...that fired an emotive drive against social evils'⁵⁶. According to Raymond Holt, the social philosophy of Unitarians was first that of John Locke, and then that of Jeremy Bentham. He also claims that Bentham was a Unitarian in theology, and that the principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number he took from a passage in Joseph Priestley's work.⁵⁷

Losh is a fine example of this commonsense, practical type of classroom Christianity. Throughout his life we have seen, he organised, supported, attended, and argued for, education for the poor, hospitals, better prisons, better working conditions, cultural activities, institutes for the working people, savings banks. His pocket was as accessible as his presence.⁵⁸

The Unitarians in Newcastle were sociable and worldly, they met with members of every religious and professional group at the variety of activities and functions that made up the social life of the city. The Losh family attended balls, masques, plays, and concerts. Even while on circuit Losh recorded his participation in the balls that seemed to be held during each assize.

3 August 1801.

Ball in the evening. The room full of genteel-looking well-dressed people. Some but not many handsome women. I had a pleasant evening...⁵⁹

The Newcastle Unitarian congregation, as we have seen, included many of the business and professional families in the area: coalowners, doctors, lawyers figured prominently in their ranks. Even though they were a tightly knit group there was no social isolation for the Unitarians as Losh's diaries testify. They were 'respectable' people, in the sense that Losh meant it: educated, Christian, concerned, and active. When they argued for liberty in religious thought and practice, they were arguing for all non-Anglicans, not just Protestant Dissenters.

Losh's diaries help us to understand the motivation of this larger group of which he was a member, during the period 1795 - 1833, explaining much about the Unitarians that would otherwise have to be inferred from their actions. This estimate of Losh's standing in the community, is justified by the very positive response evoked by his speeches even on the most controversial subjects: for example, those at the meetings on Parliamentary Reform and Catholic emancipation e.g. 10 March 1829).

During the eighteenth century, Newcastle had been one of five major provincial cities of England together with Norwich, Bristol, York and Exeter) and each was at the centre of a web of local economic activity, communications and social life. Although newer towns such as Manchester and Birmingham had grown to over 50,000 by 1801, Newcastle, had only 28,000 habitants and had slipped to thirteenth largest town by this date. At the time, the total population of England was 8,664,000 and of those about 60,000 were Unitarians.⁶⁰

James Losh's life, as evidenced by his diaries, shows that in the area of local social reforms, Unitarians led most other groups. But if Unitarians took the initiative, they were also supported by members of the established church, and by other Dissenters. Losh's relationship with middle class people of other denominations was most cordial. The number of

his religious circle who were prominent in business, suggests that they were fully integrated into the fabric of the city and the area. His diary records frequent meetings with Charles Grey, the Brandlings, the Riddleys, and other important families, suggesting that the period from 1800 to 1832 was one where religious differences became of negligible social importance between members of the middle and upper classes in Newcastle. There was a cohesion between the professional middle class - the lawyers, the doctors, the coal owners and the rest - that appeared to over-ride any political and religious differences. The following diary entries are indicative of this social involvement:

10 Feb.1819.

In the evening we had a large party (nearly 100) to a dance and supper. Everything went off well and was remarkably elegant and comfortable. Cecilia was civil and attentive to everyone. The whole did not break up until past 4.

15 Aug.1819.

Dinner at Mr Brandling [prominent local coal-owning family] with a large party. General and Mrs Grey, JW and C Brandling, Miss Rhodes, and two or three others in addition to 9 or 10 circuiteers.⁶¹

This was typical of Unitarians elsewhere. A similar picture emerges from the biography of Elizabeth Gaskell by Jenny Uglow, which not only illustrates activities in the Manchester area, but also Gaskell's connection with the Unitarian community in Newcastle and her relative William Turner:

Women were not excluded from the Literary & Philosophical Society ...Newcastle provided Elizabeth with a different education. There was the buzz of excitement in the air: the hum of ideas as well as the clatter of industry and trade...she was living for the first time in an atmosphere of active politics. One of Turner's chief allies in Newcastle was James Losh, a prominent barrister on the Northern Circuit...⁶²

The local newspapers which regularly reported the reforming

work and aired the views of Dissenters during the period were the *Newcastle Chronicle* and the *Tyne Mercury*. Their delivery area covered all parts of Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland and the North Riding of Yorkshire. Welford in his *Men of Mark* quotes the epitaph of Solomon Hodgson who took over the *Chronicle* upon the death of his father in 1784:

In times of unexampled difficulty, the honest and independent conductor of the *Newcastle Chronicle*...through the medium of an uncorrupted press, delighted in disseminating the principles of rational liberty and internal truth⁶³.

John Mitchell, another Newcastle Unitarian, edited and printed a weekly newspaper, the *Tyne Mercury*, with a smaller circulation, which took a more radical line⁶⁴.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Unitarianism had been at the religious fringe; by the end of the century Unitarianism 'drew a growing lay following, especially among such expanding professional groups as scientists, publishers, writers, reformers, campaigners and educators'⁶⁵. Something of this can be seen by the esteem acquired by the Literary and Philosophical Society, which was created by the Unitarians, and largely motivated by them. This is confirmed in the minutes of the Newcastle Common Council December 31, 1826 when thanks were extended to the Rev. W Turner and John Dalglish for the '[c]analization of water at several springs in the neighbourhood of the town which would supply the water...'⁶⁶ Losh was vice chairman of this organisation for many years, and his and Turner's active involvement was a magnet to a growing intellectual membership.

For nearly forty years Losh took a leading part in all the great movements of the day on the liberal side of politics. He was equally active in promoting a knowledge of social questions, then but little recognised by the general public, sometimes struggling to create an audience from among his peers. In the cause of the emancipation of the slaves, catholic emancipation, and the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, he was a tireless campaigner, often making effective use of petitions. He was regularly consulted by Charles Grey as to political opinion on Tyneside. For instance, during the crucial last stages of the battle for the Reform Bill, we find him writing of his visit to the Prime Minister:

March 17, 1832.

I called upon Lord Grey and sat with him for some time. He received me in his usual frank and kind manner. I say usual, because I never experienced any other during an acquaintance of forty years, tho' formerly we have had very warm disputes on political subjects...he asked what was thought of him and the Reform Bill in the north...I stated to him that in the Northern Counties the anxiety for parliamentary reform was very intense, and that failure in the present measures would produce the most alarming consequences...He said that he would neglect nothing in his power to ensure success...he had more at stake upon the result than any other person. I said that I had personally the greatest confidence in his firmness...after some conversation on more general subjects I was leaving the room, when he renewed our conversation and begged me sit down again...He complained of the labour of his official business, and said more than once 'Losh I am too old for my work'⁶⁷...

The diary records that Losh was frequently in the company of other men of national stature: including Lambton, Russell, Brougham, Attwood, Horne Tooke and other radicals in politics; and Scarlett, Hullock, Cookson and others in law.

It is interesting to compare Losh, his character and career, with those of two other Unitarian reformers of his time:

William Smith MP and Samuel Heywood. About Smith, Richard Davis has written:

William Smith's background, was solid, conservative, loyal to King and government. It might, therefore seem strange to find him, immediately after his entry into Parliament, among the liberal and reforming element of Pitt's supporters...The odd thing is that he should have remained true to reforming ideals at a time when interest was dwindling...Smith loved order and he had a deep inbred dislike of an unrestrained populace...But though he took a firmly liberal line, Smith was never to be pushed to a point where the more extreme radical ideas had any appeal for him...the household franchise...the most obvious test of property on one side and of the selecting population on the other...Smith was no democrat...Smith as a Dissenter, did not have much faith in the good sense of the common man. He was deeply influenced by the doctrine of Necessarianism, advanced by Joseph Priestley...made Smith basically optimistic. 'I would not emancipate [he said of slavery] by a sudden measure...'

Samuel Heywood (1753-1828) is described by G.M.Ditchfield as follows:

He became serjeant-in-law in 1794 and, with an extensive legal practice on the northern circuit, was both well travelled and observant. He was a leading protagonist on behalf of the civil liberties of Dissent in general and of Unitarianism in particular, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and it seems peculiarly appropriate that he should have lived just long enough to witness the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828. The influential tracts in favour of repeal which flowed from his pen marked him out as one of the most articulate and politically aware of the rational Dissenting laymen...Heywood's Unitarian convictions...did not cause him to entertain any illusions about the unpopularity of the development of Arian theology amongst English Presbyterians.'

These two profiles reveal a remarkable similarity to Losh's: in their religious beliefs and in their determined, (but restrained) reformist attitude to the organisation of Church and State. There appears to have been something in the Unitarian faith that created such philosophies, but taking a

broader view of the Dissenting personalities in the period, one sees other parallels.

In his legal work, which continued until his death in his seventieth year, Losh earned and enjoyed large public confidence. His earnings from the early days steadily increased, although without his private investments and inherited wealth he would have had difficulty in maintaining his increasing family. The following diary-entries give one a measure of his improved financial status:

End of 1801.

After paying all our debts, I consider us to have an income of £800 per annum...£300 from my profession, £200 interest of money...and £300 business.⁷⁰

End of 1812.

£2,600-£1400 from legal fees, £1000 from mining investments, and £200 from interest on capital.⁷¹

(see Appendix Five for further information on his sources of income)

Losh's integrity was such that he refused to improve his income by circumventing the Test and Corporation Acts, even though he was offered public appointments. He was his own man and a small incident reveals how little he was intimidated by the national reputation of the famous. Although a close friend of Humphry Davy, he refused to ignore the contribution of George Stephenson in the development of the miner's safety lamp. While admitting Davy's claims to the Government grant - which he never got - Losh joined very heartily with many coal owners in presenting Stephenson with a handsome service of plate⁷².

But perhaps the most eloquent testimony to his character, is

the assessment given by his lifelong friend John Bell:

I have known men of greater genius but I never knew one possessed of more honourable and amiable qualities, accompanied with a most excellent fund of good sense more useful for all common purposes both to the owner and his friends, than splendid talents which are often accompanied with great aberrations such as were never found in our friend. His only fault was that whilst studying together I could never persuade him of the extent of his own powers. His modesty inclined him to think every one who had obtained a little reputation was one with whom it was in vain to compete, and this diffidence lost him much valuable time which, if duly employed, would have placed him over the heads of many he declined contending with in our then pursuits. Time at last taught him a better opinion of his own merits, but not equal to his deserts.

Was I a younger man, I never could expect to meet with his like again. His opinions were formed on the highest principles of integrity and honour and when once formed, not interested motives could change them. I used a wrong term when I spoke of his as common sense - it was uncommon, as such a portion falls to the lot of few, but it was tempered with mildness and kindness that to a common observer for the first time he might have passed as an ordinary man, but the more he was seen, the more was he honoured and respected. Of all men I ever knew, his character was formed after the highest models and through life he acted up to his first great and noble conceptions of what was most virtuous in human conduct.⁷³

And from the *Christian Reformer* (1833) upon his death:

September 23rd. James Losh Esq. Barrister at law - Recorder of Newcastle. A gentleman who proved himself during the whole of his life to be an enlightened and zealous friend of Constitutional freedom. He was justly considered the head of the Whig party in his neighbourhood. He was a member of the Unitarian congregation under the pastoral care of Rev. W. Turner, who preached a funeral sermon which has since been printed.

Losh lived to see the realisation of his three main aims: the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, the passing of the Reform Bill, and the emancipation of the West Indian slaves. In the last thirty three years of his life, no one was better placed for observing and reporting on the political and social scene in the north. Local honours - the Recordership of

Newcastle, the freedom of the city - fell to him, and he was content that it should be so for he preferred to dwell among his own people rather than in high places. It was this characteristic that makes his life, his view of the great events of his time, so valuable and illuminating.

CHAPTER TWO

CROWN, CHURCH & STATE

We will in later chapters, be considering Losh's ideas on Catholic Emancipation, Parliamentary Reform, and the slavery issue. Each of these issues will be considered in a self-contained chapter, but to put these ideas into context, the larger background needs to be examined. Losh may then be seen in relation to British society as a whole, so that his convictions, his comments, through his diaries, speeches, and articles on the main issues dealt with in later chapters may be more fully understood.

Here, Losh is seen as a witness of the broader constitutional debates of his time, rather than as a participant. Nevertheless he had interesting comments to make on all the institutions of crown, church and state. These comments are not only a valuable indication of how intensely a man of his social position read and reflected upon current affairs. They also reveal the development of Losh's ideas up to his actual engagement in some of the great debates of the day.

Losh's political attitudes were substantially Burkean. He believed in the gradual change of social and political structures, which he wanted preserved - but in forms more appropriate to nineteenth century needs. He had a horror of violence and mob rule, and a distinctly anti-radical view of reform. He believed in the British constitution, and was

sometimes a little smug about its superiority over continental nations. At the same time he admired the American democratic system, particularly its religious freedom. In all his activities, whether with local or national intent, he revealed his progressive liberal commitment to reforming the institutions of society to give religious and political equality.

Something of his position on these matters, and in particular the place of religion in society, can be read in his early diary comment on Mackintosh's 'Introductory Essay':

March 1, 1799.

It is finely written and certainly contains much learning and many excellent observations, but he appears to be strongly disposed to conciliate 'the powers that be' and in consequence of this is to adopt a contemptuous mode of speaking towards all who wish to simplify laws and the principles of government - very unworthy of a philosopher. He also praises both the Civil and English law in a way far too indiscriminate and much beyond what can be supported by truth. Again, though he speaks in respectful terms of religion in general, and Christian religion in particular, he evidently means to lessen the importance by representing morality and principle of law deduced from it as a complete and unerring rule of life, without the aid of either natural or revealed religion, contrary to my opinion both to reason and experience.²

And again later in the same month we find a similar view expressed on a work by Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), Unitarian minister and natural philosopher.

March 15, 1799.

Priestley's *Evidences* - this is a most valuable book and may be read to advantage by Christians of every denomination. To such as are unbelievers, not from pride or other vicious propensities, but from want of information, or from conviction that the doctrines of revelation are untenable, I should recommend this book as one of the best that has ever been written...³

Like Priestley, Losh believed firmly in education as a way to overcome the prejudices of society. He took an active interest

in enlarging access to it, and during the thirty three years he lived in Newcastle, he was a determined advocate of charitable schools:

15 December 1799.

Mr. Turner [minister of the Unitarian chapel]- extolling charity for educating the poor. He insisted much upon the importance of educating the children of the poor, whether we consider it in a religious point of view or as a means of forming useful members of society.'

Losh's ideas on education, and his attitude to other denominations, will be discussed as they arise. However, at this point we must establish a general outline of the structure of contemporary society and relate it in greater detail to the ideas of Losh and a selection of his contemporaries, most of whom were his friends or acquaintances. It is, in a sense, artificial to separate Crown, Church and State into separate compartments. There is abundant evidence of their close interdependence in the eighteenth century. But the wealth of material to be presented, if arranged chronologically, would make a sustained argument difficult to maintain. Therefore, on the grounds of coherence as well as expediency, I shall deal with them separately.

* * * * *

The Crown.

The issues that dominated British politics in the years of Losh's early manhood, were not representation and reform, but allegiance and sovereignty. This was in part a consequence of the American crisis, but similar issues were inescapably at the head of the agenda from the start of the French Revolution until 1815. The

defence of private property was a central function, both of the legislature and of Establishment political theory. At the centre of this structure was the crown itself, therefore any challenge to the status and authority of the monarchy also threatened the interests of the privileged social elite, and yet elements of the elite were anxious to maintain or re-inforce constitutional restraints on the monarch's power. In the 1780s, when the Rockingham administration came to power, Edmund Burke, Rockingham's propagandist, determined that the power of the Crown ought to be curbed and the sources of patronage reduced⁵. The tension between the desire to preserve the crown as the central pillar of the establishment, while at the same time restraining the monarch from interfering with the affairs of powerful subjects, makes the role and status of the monarch a crucial issue in the politics of this era. The attitude of Losh and his circle to the crown is thus of particular interest in the context of this thesis.

Thomas Creevey (1768-1838), as a metropolitan member of Losh's circle of friends and fellow professionals, provides an interesting contrast to Losh's more provincial view of the same events. Like Losh, Creevey was a Cambridge graduate and barrister. He became a minor Whig politician and a crony of Henry Brougham (another associate of Losh). Losh met Creevey occasionally in London, and also on his visits north to Lord Lambton. Creevey wrote frequently in his journal about the problem of the King's health and his heavy hand on politics:

May 3, 1804.

...The King has communicated to him [Pitt] that he

will see him tomorrow or Saturday, *which communication Pitt immediately forwarded to Fox.* There is, I hope, much value in these facts; they show, I hope, that the Monarch is *done*, and can no longer make ministers; they show too, I hope, that Pitt thinks so...⁶

But the death of Pitt put an end to any influence from that quarter, and the death of Fox, so soon after Pitt, extinguished the brightest of 'All the Talents'. The king's opposition to Catholic relief bedevilled the following administration. It almost seemed that the heavy hand of the king, the loss of Pitt and Fox, and of course the war with France, prevented reforming thought.

One might speculate on how far James Losh's low opinion of the Royal family, and of their deadening affect on political and social improvement, reflected the opinion and pessimism of his own class. Certainly, because of his constant involvement in local and national affairs, he would be very aware of their feelings. On the occasion of the investigation into the Duke of York's alleged corruption, he was to confide in his diary his disgust of the House of Commons vindication of the Duke's shoddy behaviour, and his fear of the consequences:

18 March 1809

For some time an enquiry has been going on as to the conduct of the Duke of York - of his guilt no sensible men doubt, and the evidence before the House was quite sufficient at the least to send him to his trial. Today's post has brought the mortifying intelligence that the House of Commons has decided in the Duke of York's favour by a large majority. God grant this may not produce the worst consequences. I cannot help looking forward with much dread to a long civil war, a military despotism, or subjection to a foreign yoke.

...The violent agitation of the country at the Duke of York's conduct has produced very bad effects and in my opinion one question will press upon another until the nation sink quietly into slavery or recover its constitution and liberties.⁷

The health of the king at this stage was causing anxiety and some speculation. Losh had no confidence in the changes a Regency would bring, either because of his lack of confidence in the Prince, or his belief that the Prince was incapable of curing the ills of society:

November 8, 1810

For some days past the King has been officially stated to be in a state of derangement and on Monday we received the account of the death of Princess Amelia. The King's situation must in all human probability lead to a Regency, but I confess I have no sanguine hopes from the Prince of Wales. His understanding is said to be good, but I fear he has no very correct notions of his own or his country's honour and happiness. The welfare of his subjects I suspect will not be the first object of his attention.⁸

The uncertainty surrounding the King's health and its effect on the state of political affairs prompted Henry Brougham to write to Creevey. Henry Brougham (1778-1868) barrister, reformer, later to become Lord Chancellor in Earl Grey's administration, was well acquainted with James Losh through their mutual involvement on the northern circuit. The note of familiarity in this letter suggests the intimacy he enjoyed with Creevey:

1810 (date not given)

...the Hon. Company are (as well as all other companies and most individuals) singularly obliged to Providence for restoring our Gracious Sovereign. His death or idiocy would have been in the nature of a *quo warranto*. He is nearly recovered, and I hope to God will be able to prorogue. If a Regency had been got up for a short time, with present men as Ministers, I am confident Eldon, Perceval etc. who, when driven to desperation never think of violent measures, but licked the dust before the Parliament to good purpose. I wish the old ruffian [George III] however, may not have renewed his term...⁹

Although Losh was in the middle of helping Losh, Wilson & Bell¹⁰ (his brother's company) to survive the failure of the local bank, he found time to write the following:

December 28, 1810.

The King has for sometime been in a state of (as it seems to me) hopeless insanity, but the accounts today seem to make it possible that his sufferings will have a speedy termination. God grant his successor may profit from his errors...¹¹

The Prince Regent, far from fulfilling the expectations of his long-time Whig cronies and friends, decided to continue maintaining his father's last administration. Of course Fox, with whom he had been on intimate terms for so long, was dead, and he was suspicious of Grey because of the latter's abhorrence of his rumoured irregular marital arrangements with Mrs Fitzherbert.

Thomas Creevey, though taken aback by the turn of events, wrote to his wife of the Prince's apparent apostasy:

February 2, 1811.

...At Brooks's I found Sheridan just arrived from Carlton House, where the conclave has just broken up, and the Prince had decided against the pressing into service of all present NOT to dismiss the government. Sheridan was just sober, and expressed to me the strongest opinion of the injurious tendency of this resolution to the Prince's character...The Prince has written to Perceval a letter which is to be sent tomorrow, stating to him his intention, under the opinion of the physicians respecting his father, NOT to change the government at present, and at the same time expressing the regret he feels at being thus compelled to continue a government not possessing his confidence, and his determination of changing it should there be no speedy prospect of His Majesty's recovery after a certain time.¹²

In April, Henry Brougham, by this time a MP through the influence of Lord Grey, wrote to Creevey on the uncertainty, and the likely result of the Prince's choice of policies. Henry Brougham, was always ambitious, and viewed these disruptive circumstances with a calculating eye:

April 1811.

...Before the next meeting of parliament, the Prince must either have changed his ministers, or he must lay his

account with systematic opposition to his government. Even though the old leaders of the party [Lords Grey and Grenville] should be willing to break with him, they will not be able to prevent their friends from declaring open hostility against his government. If such a rupture should take place, many of course would desert the party; but those who remained, agreeing better with one another in their opinions, and consisting of more independent men, would in fact be a more formidable opposition than the present¹³...

One wonders what part Brougham saw himself playing in that opposition? Creevey, was losing his sympathy for what he had viewed as the Prince Regent's predicament. He wrote to Mrs Creevey:

20 July 1811:

...Prinny's attachment to the present Ministers, his supporting their Bank Note bill, and his dining with them must give them all hopes of being continued, as I have no doubt they will...The folly and villainy of this Prinny is certainly beyond anything¹⁴.

The King's recovery being now considered out of the question, it was hoped that the Regent, having had time to consider, would avail himself of the occasion for a reconstruction of the Cabinet to put his own political friends in power.

By the end of January 1812 Losh had little hope in the Prince, or in the political awareness of the populace:

End January, 1812.

The situation of our country becomes every day more critical; as war with America becomes to be almost certain and the Prince gives but little ground to hope either for a prudent or a vigorous government. People in general seem wonderfully indifferent to the state of public affairs, but perhaps they are not the less likely to become suddenly violent as one extreme generally produces another.¹⁵

A month later, even less sanguine, he was writing:

End February, 1812

The Prince Regent has acted like a mean and selfish hypocrite, gross sensuality, unrestrained indulgence,

have produced the usual effects.¹⁶

The Prince had acted contrary to Whig expectations. Instead of dismissing Perceval, he invited Grey and Grenville to join his administration, which they refused to do so long as Catholic Emancipation was a forbidden subject. The Regent bitterly resented their conduct, and Perceval continued in office until he was assassinated in the lobby of the House of Commons on May 11.

Losh saw in the tragic death of Perceval, and its possible consequences, a worsening of the political situation:

May 14, 1812.

Yesterday I heard of the assassination of Mr Perceval, the Prime Minister (however unfit for that situation) of this great nation. This is a very awful event and seems to be one of the 'signs of the times'. What effect it will produce I am wholly at loss to conjecture, but I do not hope of anything good from it. The Prince has gone too far to retract and I fear we shall have the same miserable measures conducted by worse and feebler men than Mr. Perceval.¹⁷

Losh, whose health was always precarious, was suffering from a severe bowel disorder 'from something which had disagreed with his stomach'. Nevertheless, he wrote of his concern:

May 23, 1812.

As I expected the Prince Regent seems determined to adhere to his new friends, or rather to his wretched system of favouritism. The miserable remains of Mr. Pitt's administration are to carry on the government of this great country in these awful times - in the very crisis of its fate the Prince must, if he persevere, ruin himself and his family. God grant he may not ruin the nation also!¹⁸

The Prince Regent, displaying his usual indecision, was suspicious of everyone. Creevey, close to the eye of the royal wind, wrote to Mrs Creevey:

28 May, 1812.

...Just after I finished my letter yesterday, I met Sheridan coming from a long interview with the Prince, ...He described the Prince's state of perturbation of mind as beyond anything he had ever seen. He conceives the different candidates for office to be determined upon his ruin...He first sends for one person then another...¹⁹

On the 3 June, Creevey wrote that Earl Grey was not prepared to accommodate the Prince Regent's frantic desire for a coalition:

...The Marquis [Wellesley] had been with Earl Grey and had offered him and his friends *four seats* in the Cabinet; that he himself had condescended to become the First Lord of the Treasury, that there must be some limitations of concession to Ireland, with a great variety of other restraints upon the four poor Foxite and Grenville ministers, the whole of which induced the Earl to give the Marquis the most unqualified rejection of those proposed indignities²⁰...

Unlike Brougham, Charles, Earl Grey (1764-1845), as we can see from the foregoing, would not contemplate a seat in any administration that was not committed to parliamentary reform and Irish Catholic emancipation. That is not to say that Brougham, was without integrity, but that he considered a cabinet seat essential to pursuing the many reforms he embraced. Party came second to political expedience.

For the moment Losh is unrevealing on the minutiae of domestic politics: events in Russia and on the Peninsula claim his attention:

End February 1813.

Public affairs abroad continue to improve but I still temper my joy with trembling. I dread the vigour and sagacity of Buonaparte, weak as he no doubt is, and I still more dread the feebleness and arrogance of his opponents. At home we have a miserable debauchee for a sovereign and weak ministers for our governors.²¹

Losh's evident joy in the success of the army is tempered by his judgment on the state of the country:

July 5, 1813.

News of the great victory by Lord Wellington over the French in Spain, and his pursuit of them into France, came today. This appears to be a most important event and if wisely used by our government, may have the most beneficial effect with a view to an honorable peace. A peace I really think we must have for in addition to the gross corruption which pervades every branch of our constitution, we have two dreadful evils to contend with: the depreciated state of our credit and currency, which I fear is incurable, and the feeble and profligate administration which our miserable sovereign, the Prince Regent finds necessary to his private views and therefore will support though to the ruin of the country.²²

As Losh saw, the government were in disarray. When the Tories came back triumphant from the polls in 1812, the Whigs were divided. The Old Whigs were inclined to withdraw from active hostilities in Parliament; while the Radicals - the 'Mountain' as they delighted to call themselves - cast about for a new weapon of offence against the hated administration. There was one ready to hand - one that was to serve them for many years to come - and it was Brougham who best saw its value and how it was to be wielded. He recognized the drab tragedy of the Prince and Princess of Wales as a trump card to lead in the party game.

The following pieces of correspondence (bearing in mind Creevey's intimacy with Brougham and the Prince Regent) illuminate the situation:

Creevey to Mrs Creevey 14 June 1814

...Prinny is exactly in the state one would wish; he lives only by the protection of his visitors. If he is caught alone, nothing can equal the execration of the people who recognise him. She, the Princess, carries everything before her..bye the bye I called on her this morning²³...

and on the 21 June, 1814

...since writing the last sentence Whitbread has shown me the Princess Charlotte's letter to the Prince of Orange. By God! it is capital. And now what do you suppose has produced this sudden attachment to her mother? It arises

from the profound resources of old Brougham, and is, in truth, one of the most brilliant movements in his campaign. He tells me he has had direct intercourse with the young one; that he has impressed upon her this fact that, if her mother goes away from England, as she is always threatening to do from her ill usage in the country, that then a divorce will inevitably take place, a second marriage follow, and thus the Princess's title to the throne will be gone. This had had an effect upon the young one almost magical²⁴.

Brougham, seeking party advantage from the situation, was acting as adviser to another member of the royal household, Charlotte's mother. He was negotiating a cash settlement with the Princess Caroline, the Prince Regent's wife, to stay abroad. Her amours abroad were a scandal, yet her popularity with the metropolis was greater than her husband's. Brougham wrote to Creevey:

1 July, 1814.

I suppose you heard of Mother P. bungling the thing so completely - snapping eagerly at the cash, and concluding with a civil observation about unwillingness to 'impair the Regent's tranquillity!.. We are of course fully justified in giving her up...However, tho' she deserves death, yet we must not abandon her, in case P. gets a victory after all²⁵...

The Prince Regent was always a good target for republican attack. George was seen as a clever, versatile, lazy man, of some taste in architecture and painting, attractive and rude by turns. But he was always a liar, always selfish, bad in his private and public conduct, and without the least understanding of his age. Fortunately for the country, the centre of power was largely in parliament although the crown's support still counted for a great deal in the parliamentary life of the ministry. We find in Losh's diary a comment on this baleful influence on overdue and contentious legislation:

May 29, 1813.

The rejection of the bill in favour of the Catholics appears to be a very dangerous as well as a very absurd

measure. Good may arise out of evil, but the Prince Regent and those who either influence him or submit to his miserable prejudices, have disgraced themselves in the eyes of all enlightened Christians, indeed in the eyes of all temperate and rational men.²⁶

Although Losh was always disparaging of the Prince Regent, that he was not antagonistic to royalty can be seen from a later entry.

November 8, 1817:

News arrived of the death of Princess Charlotte of Wales, and as far as we short-sighted creatures can judge, a heavier calamity could scarcely have fallen upon my beloved country. I trust I shall never be indifferent to the welfare of my country. This event is not only to be lamented as depriving us of a successor to the throne of full age, excellent character and possessed of vigorous understanding. But still more lamentable as making a long minority (to say nothing for a disputed succession) probable, and a quick change of King almost certain. These fears and a deep sorrow for the manner of the death of their beloved princess have thrown a deeper gloom over all ranks of people, than any single event which has occurred in my remembrance.²⁷

The Prince Regent was now in ill health and had no direct surviving heir. The Royal Dukes were therefore encouraged to make their various liaisons more regular, though the cost of their establishments was resented. Thomas Creevey, everyone's confidante, reported the following conversation with the Duke of Wellington, who always held Creevey in high regard:

July 17, 1818.

I dined with the Duke...We talked over English politics, and upon my saying that never Government cut so contemptible a figure as ours did the last session, particularly in the repeated defeats they sustained on the proposals to augment the establishments of the Dukes of Clarence, Kent, and Cumberland upon their marriages, he said: 'By God! there is a great deal to be said about that. They [the Princes] are the damndest millstone about the necks of any government that can be imagined. They have insulted - *personally insulted* - two thirds of the gentlemen of England, and how can it be wondered at that they take their revenge upon them when they get them in the House of Commons! It is their only opportunity, and I think by God! they are quite right to use it²⁸.'

Later that year the old queen died, and Losh records the different attitude that people had to her death:

December 2, 1818.

This day, the day appointed for the Queen's funeral. The shops were shut, muffled bells rung, and minute guns fired. A decent and orderly respect was exhibited, but none of that deep feeling which was universally shown last year, when the nation mourned in earnest for the Princess Charlotte...²⁹

The dissatisfaction with the royal dukes no doubt caused Losh to look back with some nostalgia when George III died in January 1820.

February 1, 1820:

The news of the death of the old King arrived, an event in itself not very important, but not unlikely to produce important effects in the present state of the country. He was obstinate, ill-educated, and by no means an able man, but he had many good qualities which supported him in many faults and misfortunes.³⁰

The death of George III was shortly followed by the unsavoury proceedings against Caroline. It was in these years, beginning with the publication of *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder*, that the devastating combination of William Hone's burlesque verse and Cruikshank's satirical illustrations reached their pinnacle of popular success.³¹

The King's death necessitated a general election. Losh's comment on the local election demonstrates how he thought the desire for reform among the middle classes, influenced the result:

18 March 1820.

This morning at 9 o'clock the High Sheriff announced that he had received a letter from Wharton declining the contest. Thus ended the contest which has been gratifying in all respects except the expense to Mr Lambton and his friends. It has proved no doubt that his personal popularity is great, but it has proved more decisively that his enemies are feeble and unpopular, and formidable only for their intolerance, their violence, and their hostility to

every species of reform. Whatever is still more important it has been shewn together with the petition at Newcastle, and Sir M.Ridley's triumph at that place, that the principles of liberty and reform are widely diffused thru' the middling classes of the people...³²

The nation was not expecting much improvement with the reign of the new sovereign following the indecision of the Regency. In July 1821 Losh recorded his impressions of the Coronation, and his thoughts on reform:

July 22, 1821.

The full details of the Coronation of George IV arrived ...Everything seems to have been well arranged...the King was received with *enthusiasm* within the Abbey and Hall, but as far as I can make out from the various accounts all out of doors flat and dull. The seats for seeing the show fell in price. The illumination was by no means general. The mob was evidently in favour of the Queen, and I suspect that the middling classes of the people thought more of the taxes and difficulties under which the country labours than either of the King or Queen, and considered the whole exhibition as idle pageantry, the result of puerile taste and inordinate fondness for splendour...³³

Losh's attitude - and possibly the prevailing provincial attitude to the Queen - is reflected in his later diary entry:

August 10, 1821.

The account of the death of the Queen arrived today. It is too early to decide what effect it may have upon the King, or the public. My own opinion is that it may produce a change in the administration, but that it is not likely to produce any very important changes in public measures. From the King's good sense or right feelings, I still have less hope. I feel he will be disposed to marry again. A measure neither wise nor popular. The people at large will, I have no doubt be deeply affected by the awful dispensation and, as feeling of an enlightened nation is seldom substantially wrong, this will tend still further to alienate their minds from *legitimacy and things as they are*.

Later: As far as I am able to judge, from conflicting accounts, the late Queen was a woman of considerable talents with an ardent and active mind. Had she been married to a good and sensible man, I believe she would have been an affectionate wife, and a respectable woman and

Queen, but was ill used from her first day of her arrival in England.³⁴

We can see that though Losh, in some degree, shares the common disgust with the King, and sympathy with an ill-used Queen, he also sees their inadequacy as a spring-board for reform. A reform that became all the more necessary if people turn away from the established institutions that are linked in the public mind with the crown. Losh is always fearful that a too radical change would damage those elements in the political and social structure, worth preserving and re-inforcing.

However much the king may have appeared pitiful to men of Losh's stamp, George IV was no cypher. His wishes, almost his whims, were still fraught with serious consequences, as we shall see when we consider events in 1827/8, and the excitement generated when Lord Liverpool was compelled by an apoplectic seizure to resign. He rebuffed Wellington as a candidate for Prime Minister. The King turned to Canning, who like Brougham was suspect to politicians of all parties as an adventurer and opportunist for all his brilliant gifts. Canning failed to form a Tory government, for Wellington, Eldon and Peel (among others) resigned on his appointment. Canning was thrown back on a coalition, and his negotiations with Lord Lansdowne kept excitement at fever pitch for many weeks.

Losh assesses Liverpool's virtues and shortcomings, and anticipates the problems facing Canning in his diary:

February 20, 1827:

An account of the sudden and alarming illness of Lord Liverpool arrived. Tho' not a man of great talents, Lord

Liverpool by his character for integrity and a certain straightforward manner in his management of public affairs ...and he will be lamented by many persons who by no means agreed with him in his political opinions. For my part, I cannot think it a great loss to be deprived of a prime minister who was the determined enemy of parliamentary reform, of catholic emancipation also. Upon the last subject, it must be allowed that his mind had made considerable advances in knowledge and liberality. What may be the result of his quitting the administration it is difficult to conjecture in this remote part of the country. It seems to me probable that an attempt will be made to put some moderate Tory at the head of the administration (perhaps Peel). But this I think cannot succeed as Mr Canning can scarcely submit to such an arrangement...there must be, as it seems to me, at no very distant period a mixture (or coalition) of what are called the Moderate Whigs with the Moderate Tories. All speculations of this kind, however, I am well aware are built on sandy foundations, and in practice frequently prove wholly fallacious.³⁵

Losh's analysis of the situation at this stage was more accurate than that of Creevey, who was nearer the action.

Creevey to Miss Ord, February 22, 1827:

...Peel went to Brighton to propose himself as Liverpool's successor, and he adds to it now, that the King's answer was, he was too ill to attend to the business, but that he would think of it...Kensington, on the other hand, says that not a word has been said to the King about a successor to Liverpool...from all I hear my belief is that Liverpool is not going to die, and it seems to follow of course, in the present state of the Cabinet that they will do nothing till he is sufficiently recovered to be consulted on the subject. In the meantime by Kensington's account, Huskisson must be infernally ill, so how these victims of the funeral will go on with their Corn Laws and Free Trade and Catholics one can't make out³⁶...

But Liverpool was not to recover, and Creevey describes the political world waiting to find out what the king will do.

Creevey's letter of April 10:

No Premier yet. It is now universally considered as true that the hitch is entirely between Canning and Prinney, and not between the former and his colleagues. The Sovereign is a true Protestant, and demands securities from Canning before he gives him supreme power that he will not use this new power to favor the Pope...³⁷

George IV had overcome his earlier antipathy to Canning and found him engaging. Wellington, who had been in sympathy with the King's hatred of Canning's liberal principles, expected to be called to form an administration. He resigned in chagrin at the appointment of Canning.

Losh, however, was looking at the wider picture:

End February, 1827.

...the affairs of this country in particular and Europe in general, seem gloomy and even threatening. The state of our finances I take to be the real cause of our embarrassments... I cannot help hoping that necessity may drive our government to substantial reforms in many respects. And that Catholic emancipation, economy in public expenditure, and perhaps even parliamentary reform may be the result.³⁸

By April, Losh, interpreting newspaper comment, recorded his view of the king's machinations:

April 19, 1827.

The news of Mr Canning's appointment to be Prime Minister. The resignation of the Chancellor, the Duke of Wellington etc...nothing seems yet to be fixed as to the new Administration, but I think it is plain that the seceders have presumed too much upon their power and influence with the King, hoping either to intimidate him or to persuade him that Mr Canning was not a man to be trusted.³⁹

The king was not prepared to give Canning any freedom on the question of Catholic Emancipation, and insisted on the guarantees. The personal powers of the monarchy had not diminished, even if his personal prestige had. Creevey's Journal, June 18, records the manoeuvring of the King:

...When the King had given Canning his commands, he sent for the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of London, and had them with him for five hours; during which time he told them again and again, that Canning was to form a cabinet upon precisely the same model as the last, that is to say, with a preponderance of one against the Catholics. It was known soon after this interview that Canning had been in the Palace all of the time of it, and as King left the room once for about 20 minutes, the Bishops concluded it was to

state to Canning what the King was communicating to them⁴⁰...

Canning's personal influence on the monarch might well have led to a change in the king's attitude to the Irish Roman Catholics. Unfortunately Canning died suddenly in August 1827, and his death bedevilled a difficult situation. The question of Catholic Emancipation was about to boil up again. Repeated failure to secure what the Irish considered to be a just return for the Act of Union had brought Ireland to the brink of civil war⁴¹.

The dilemma of a new administration is recorded in Losh's diary:

End of December 1827.

Lord Goodrich's weak and irresolute conduct, seems to threaten the present administration with ruin, and if what has been rumoured as to Mr Herries is true, one cannot help but suspecting the King and his private friends of want of sincerity. I should be sorry that the Whigs should go out of office, but perhaps it would be better for themselves to do so...⁴²

Losh also had misgivings about the Duke of Wellington.

January 21, 1828.

Today rumours of the change of Ministry was confirmed. The Duke of Wellington seems to be the Dictator or rather *Mayor of the Palace*. But I do not think he has either talents or popularity sufficient to sustain him long in what appears to me his most unconstitutional situation... I confide, however, in what I have always looked to with hope and comfort - the wisdom of providence and a deep conviction that all things are working for good.⁴³

And again at the end of the month.

End January 1828.

The state of politics would be a subject of merriment and ridicule were not the state of our finances alone sufficient to create more laborious feelings. The health of the King is also such as to create well-founded feelings of alarm, for the life of George IV [III?] even became valuable by preserving the country from the dangers of a Regency...⁴⁴

However, with the uncertainty bred by the king's state of health, the question of the royal prerogative was increasingly being

considered. (A complaint about it had been raised by Lord Russell in 1821).

As we have seen, Losh's criticism of the Crown was largely directed at the incumbents, not at the institution. He respected George III's solid family virtues, but not his heavy hand on politics. For George IV he had nothing but contempt, and he was disparaging of William IV's shilly-shallying during the Reform crisis.

In this period the two major constitutional issues - Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform - were being fiercely debated in the Houses of Parliament. In both these movements the Crown played a central (some would say reactionary) role. These issues are not considered further here, as they will be discussed at length later in the thesis. We will now move to a consideration of Losh's opinions of the Anglican church and its relationship with other sects.

The Church

For Christian thinkers the nineteenth century was an age of turmoil. Rapidly changing attitudes towards matters both religious and secular required ever fresh interpretation of the nature and purpose of the Church. With the growth of empire and the rise of industrial power, it was easy to believe that the Nation felt itself to be chosen of God with a mission to civilise

the world. The rising power too, of the mass of the newly prospering middle class was not to be ignored. Nor were they over-awed by or persuaded of the supremacy of the Church of England. It was increasingly paid lip-service, tolerated or merely regarded as a secondary institution, but its power to affect the lives of individuals was still considerable.

An illuminating comment about the influence of the Church on a provincial barrister appears in Losh's diary:

April 14, 1825.

Easter sessions...my being considered as a Whig and a Dissenter has also been highly injurious to me..

[Later].

I had a tolerable share of business, but certainly neither so much in quantity nor decription in quality, which I think I had a fair right to expect. Probably this arises from two causes: the influence of the Church, exercised I have no doubt pretty freely against a *Whig* and a *supposed* Dissenter...⁴⁵

Losh's more reasoned attitude towards the price exacted for dissent was not common. The nonconformists gained from every successful attack upon Anglican privilege, and their attitude towards the Church was, on the whole unfriendly, and often bitter.

The Anglican Church was often directly challenged by radicals, since its doctrines had long been identified as the unifying principles of social and political order. The union of the church and Tory party in the elections of 1820 is apparent in this comment from Losh on the March county elections:

March 18, 1820.

Durham. The opposition originated principally with the

Church party and those connected in some way or other with the present administration. Lambton, no doubt, in some degree provoked it by his contemptuous treatment of those opposed to him; by his overzeal in some of his political opinions; and by his want of accommodating conduct and affable manners to the gentry of the County of Durham in general...⁴⁶

Circumstances make strange bedfellows: the Tories and the Radicals! One can feel Losh's contempt for the machinations of the opposition, not that he was above working desperately hard for his own interest when the occasion demanded. Usually he was an attending barrister and as such he tried, usually successfully, to keep distant from the strife of the hustings. At least Lambton held his seat for the Whigs, and that must have been a relief for Losh. In the metropolis, Brougham was also alive to the problem of the Church. He wrote to Creevey on March 11, 1823, and his idea of a reformed Church embracing forms of Dissent is intriguing:

...There are millions - and among them very powerful and respectable people - who will go a certain way with us, but will be quite staggered by our going pell-mell at it. The people of this country are not prepared to give up the Church. For one - I am certainly not; and my reason is this. There is a vast mass of religion in the country, shaped in various forms and burning with various degrees of heat - from regular lukewarmness to Methodism. Some Church establishment this feeling must have; and I am quite clear that a much-reformed Church of England is the safest form in which such an establishment can exist. It is quiet and somewhat lazy church: certainly not a persecuting one. Clip its wings of temporal power (which it increasingly uses on behalf of political slavery) [i.e. against Reform] and purify its most glaring abuses, and you are better off than with a fanatical Church and Dominion of *Saints*, like that of the seventeenth century; or not Church at all and a Dominion of *Sects*, like that of America...⁴⁷

There were those of the rising middle class who sought to strengthen the Church's relationship with the state.

The three Lakeland poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, were amongst those in the forefront of this tendency. Close friends

of Losh since the days of their more radical youth, they had moved to a more orthodox Anglican position, and were now eloquent in defence of the status of the established church. Losh, alone of the group, retained his original reforming attitude, though this did not damage their fondness and respect for him. We will consider their views as representing an alternative middle class attitude to Losh.

All three of the poets, in their mature phases, could be seen as making a significant contribution to the problem of retaining an established church, giving all denominations practical equality before the law. Without Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth, the sense of the Church's functions and duties might be said to have been close to extinction in the first part of the nineteenth century.⁴⁸

In his book *On the Constitution of the Church and State according to the Idea of Each* (1830), Coleridge distinguished between a National Church and the Christian Church.⁴⁹ In contrast with Southey, he maintained that the Coronation Oath is not taken so that the monarch may exercise an actual function, but rather so that he himself may be protected from the political consequences of entanglement in ecclesiastical affairs. In Coleridge's argument the king becomes little more than a symbol of the attitude of his subjects. In *Church and State* he explained that:

my object has been to present the *idea*
of a National Church, not the history of the Church
established in this nation. Secondly, that two distinct

functions do not necessarily imply or require two different functionaries.⁵⁰

Clearly, the National Church as Coleridge understood it should not coincide with the established Church of England, whereas for Southey it most certainly should. Coleridge was prepared to go a long way towards meeting the Roman Catholics in allowing the laity (not their clergy) a convenient co-existence with the Church of England.

Wordsworth, in contrast to both Coleridge and Southey, believed it was vital to preserve the traditional English rural way of life and its values, despite contemporary social and constitutional changes. Unlike Coleridge or Southey, he did not respond to the problem by viewing both Church and State as partial metaphysical concepts with various historical manifestations. Rather he saw them as concrete institutions, belonging to the present and needing practical solutions to their contemporary problems.⁵¹ Wordsworth's attitude is rather grounded in a fear for the end of the rural life he had surrounded himself with. In a letter to James Losh, he explained that outwardly he might have appeared to have changed in the things he supported, but that he was consistent in always advocating those principles which would preserve what he regarded as the essential fabric of England:

Be not startled when I say that I am averse to further concessions to the Roman Catholics...That such concessions would set all other Dissenters in motion - an issue which has never fairly been met by the friends of concession; and deeming the Church establishment not only a fundamental part of our Constitution, but one of the greatest Upholders and Propagators of civilization in our own Country...I cannot but look with jealousy upon Measures which must reduce her relative influence⁵²...

In contrast to Wordsworth's calm countryman's attitude, Southey's change of heart retained some of the fervour of his radical youth. From an early reluctance to accept the tenets of the Church of England, he experienced a crucial change in about 1810 when he became both emotionally and doctrinally committed to the cause of that church.⁵³ For Southey the royal function is clear and practical:

the King has no doctrinal function but rather a strong obligation to defend the rights of the Church and clergy...Southey was adamant that the King should have open recognition of his supremacy by all his subjects...any denial threatened the nation's integrity⁵⁴...

James Losh, though having a genuine regard for Southey, was critical of his partisanship:

April 16, 1825.
Southey's *Book of the Church*...I am told that it is vigorously written tho' full of bitterness and sophistry...⁵⁵

As we can see, the issues drew the middle class intellectuals like Losh into the struggle for those civil and religious liberties involved with increasing intensity. The real target for the radicals and reformers was that agency of the state which confronted him in his everyday life. This was not Parliament: it was the Church. It quartered the land, not into a few hundred constituencies, but into ten thousand parishes. It impinged on the daily concerns of the great majority, by supporting its clerical intelligentsia; bidding for a monopoly in education, piety and political acceptability.

However, it was the Anglican church's Indian summer: in Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge and others, an ancient tradition found its last and not least distinguished defenders.

Practical men in the church wished to remedy a state of things which they could not defend and the public would no longer tolerate.

We find Losh involved in Church administration on a more practical level through his estate management for the wealthy Beaumont family:

December 14, 1830.

Mr Darnell (a prebendary of Durham) wrote to me yesterday, and came to my chambers today, for the purpose of making a bargain with Mrs Beaumont for the lead tithes of Stanhope Dr Philpotts (now Bishop of Exeter) having by his manoeuvres lost the living of Stanhope. As some promises had been made to him in the King's name by the Duke of Wellington, Lord Grey empowered the Bishop of Durham to appoint any of the Prebendaries of that place to be Rector of Stanhope, upon condition, however, of regular residence, and of appointment of the Bishop of Exeter to the vacant stall.⁵⁶

How strange Losh must have felt to find himself a Dissenter, well-known to the Established Church, as an opponent of their involvement in political matters so involved in matters so important to that church. It is surely an indication of his even-handed treatment of such sensitive matters, and the esteem in which he was held. And in the following year, Losh is further involved in the matter.

August 30, 1831.

I had a great deal of conversation with Mr Thorp (the only prebendary present) who is understood to be the present Bishop of Durham's adviser and prime minister. He told me the income of the See was only 15,500... He assured me further that the Bishops and Clergy are in earnest in making such reforms themselves as ought to satisfy all reasonable men... I advised them to lose no time 'as delays are dangerous'. Mr Thorp was very anxious to learn what I thought were Lord Brougham's real sentiments as to the Church, and begged me to write to him and mention what he had told me. He assured me that the Bishops and clergy are earnest in making such reforms themselves as ought to satisfy all reasonable men.⁵⁷

On the 14 September, 1831 Charles Thorp wrote to Losh seeking his help:

Dear Mr Losh,
 ...you have no reason to apprehend resistance to coming changes and reforms from our body nor hostility to your party in the state. The Church perhaps, would not have helped the present government into office, but there was a great disposition to support them when they took the reigns of power. And tho' the Reform Bill threw us then at a distance which a moderate measure would not have done (such a measure as would have satisfied the Chancellor and perhaps yourself), I am sanguine enough to hope that time will set us at one again: that we shall enjoy a season of union and prosperity. The Chancellor's wise and munificent arrangement of his minor patronage did much to conciliate the Church as well as to set us right in the minds of men who look with a just confidence to his opinions. It will be gratefully remembered of him, apart from the circumstances of office, as the strongest pledge of confidence and good will ever offered by an individual."

Losh was also keeping Lord Brougham closely in touch with the matter - a good example of the way in which Losh acted as a conduit on local matters to his friends in government circles.

He wrote:

September 17, 1831

My dear Lord Brougham,
 Upon my return from Carlisle yesterday I found the letter which I have enclosed. When I sent what you wrote (as you suggested) to Mr Thorp I gave him my own opinions pretty strongly: indeed he knows that I am in theory, no friend to Church Establishments, tho' I certainly think the Church of England deserves support at present. And he also well knows that tho' not a radical, I am stout Reformer. His answer, tho' not very explicit upon the main point, is upon the whole as favourable as I expected. And if he really knew the [sentiments?] of the bishops, I trust they feel as they ought to do towards you and that the Reform Bill has not much to fear from them. I shall, I hope, see Mr Thorp in a few days and, should that be the case, may possibly obtain some more distinct information from him.
 Yours always sincerely, James Losh

[in margin] Should the Lords reject the Bill [they will] find to their cost that the people are not asleep but only 'Hushed in Repose'.

We will see in chapter four the extent to which the Bishops, along with the Lords, resisted the Reform Bill. Certainly Losh was justified in his anxiety.

Although Losh was no ally of the established Church, he recognised its value, and was aware that it was subject to unreasoned attack. Here he is referring to such a pamphlet:

November 20, 1831.

Mr Beverley's attack on the Church of England, Ministers and Establishment [R.M.Beverley *A Letter to His Grace, the Archbishop of York, on the present corrupt state of the Church of England*] no doubt contains much truth and is written with great spirit and bitterness, but it is too highly coloured and loses much of its effect by the tone of exaggeration which runs through all its details. I had a long letter from the Chancellor, the great part of it written with a view of being shewn to Mr Thorp. I fear it will do no good, for tho' the Bishop of Durham etc. may be grievously alarmed and even see the folly of their opposing the Reform Bill, and yet I have no idea that they have manliness enough to confess their faults and sin no more. ⁵⁹

Losh continued to be a go-between Lord Brougham and the Bishop of Durham. A letter from Charles Thorp to Losh, November 23, 1831 reveals Losh assuming this role:

Dear Mr Losh,
The letter of the Lord Chancellor is creditable to his good sense and his good feeling and I really believe him to do no more than justice to the Bishop's interested motives in this case, with few exceptions, they would have none. The letter has been out of your hands too long... The Bishop of Durham knowing that our purse is not inexhaustible makes us very handsome offers on his own part and (looking to another useful object) we propose to enfranchise largely near the river at Shields and settle the property in the University...the feeling in favour of reasonable Church reforms is so strong among us, and so many important principles are recognised that we shall effect whatever changes may be thought desirable and greatly increase the efficiency of the establishment without breaking up the framework...

With much regard, Sincerely yours, Cha.Thorp.⁶⁰

The entry in Losh's diary for December 7, 1831, shows that the

Bishop of Durham is not reconciled to major changes in the Church's administration. Against the obvious heat of the Bishop's defence of his position, Losh offers a clearer statement of the issues, and nowhere is there expressed an extreme radical position, such as one might have expected from a professional man who had felt the weight of the Church's discrimination:

December 7, 1831.

...The Bishop of Durham's charge - finished this well written but neither powerful nor (in my opinion) *candid* defence of the Church Establishment. I have a great mind to publish an answer to this *protest*, but like most of my designs, unless carried into immediate effect, this intention will probably end in nothing. The Bishop does state the matter in dispute fairly and contents himself with answering arguments which his fair and honest opponents have relied upon, and with complaining of coarse and sarcastic attacks which are merely personal and do not at all affect the matters in dispute. The manner, too, which he speaks of *socinians, popery, infidelity, and atheism, and fanaticism*, classing them all together is neither fair nor liberal, nor does giving them offensive nicknames shew much Christian mildness...⁶¹

As the struggle for reform continued, Losh was fearful that its continued denial by the forces of reaction would have serious effects, not solely on the established church:

End January 1832.

Men are...beginning to open their eyes to the equal absurdity of suffering themselves to be the *dupes* of Kings, nobles, and priests. The great danger to be dreaded is, that the taste for war and violence may continue longer than the principle of submissions to existing institutions, hence may result in dreadful convulsions and misery. The diffusion of knowledge, and above all the knowledge of a mild and pure religion, is the only preventative for these dreadful evils or if they take place, the cure."⁶²

A few weeks later he is less alarmed:

March 15, 1832.

At 5 o'clock I went to Lord Brougham's to dinner in consequence of a very kind invitation...As our opinions agreed on most subjects, I need not enter into detail. He thinks not much better of the Bishops and the High Church party than I do, but has some kindness for our Church Establishment which I have not, tho' I am by no means disposed to pull it down until it becomes safe to do so;

and whenever that is done, I trust it will be done with mildness and Christian charity to the clergy...⁶³

And after the Reform Bill:

September 14, 1832.

...The great improvements in the Law and Bank arrangements are also very important, and I believe very salutary measures. And above all, as it seems to me, the prospect of a great change in the Church Establishment, and at no great distant period its entire removal, and a similar prospect as to corrupt Corporations ought to cheer the heart of every honest well-wisher to his country...⁶⁴

After the passing of the 1832 Reform Act , the Whigs turned their attention to the question of church property. They drafted a scheme for the appointment of a body of commissioners to manage episcopal and cathedral endowments. They proposed to forbid non-residence, to create new sees, and to cut down the incomes of the richest bishoprics in order to apply the surplus revenues to poor parishes. The Whig administration could not get their scheme in before they went out of office in 1834. The Ecclesiastical Commission led to reform, not to disestablishment, and church power can be seen as remaining a characteristic of England in the nineteenth century.

The foregoing has provided us with the opportunity to consider Losh's views, as a provincial professional, on the struggle over the Anglican church. Although Losh, both a Dissenter by persuasion and a reformer by political conviction, is in the role of a middle man, he is even handed in the negotiation between Church and Government. He, like other middle class professionals, had to work out a modus vivendi between church and state, in politics and religion. He could be said to epitomise the best

in the Unitarian tenet of individual freedom of religious belief,
of respecting different convictions free from political bias.

* * * * *

The State

Losh, and Dissenters like him, were excluded (strictly) by the Test and Corporation Acts from participation in the administration of the state, either in national political appointments or in local government. This injustice was something Losh fought against all his life. Although considered by many as the leader of the Whigs on Tyneside - the obituary at the end of the Introduction made this point - and an influential figure in all the great movements for reform in his time, he was not able to accept public appointments until after the repeal of the Acts in 1828. A determined Unitarian, Losh would not come to an accommodation in order to accept those honours that were his due. He found the influence of the Established Church in political affairs, as we have seen, unacceptable. During the fight for Catholic emancipation, he is disparaging of the activities of the Methodists, though he found the discrimination he suffered as a Dissenter abhorrent. But Losh accepted the need for all shades of religious opinion, and we find many entries in his diaries of visits made to other churches and participation in their services.

The Rev. Sydney Smith, the Anglican essayist and wit, wrote pungently on religious toleration. He had met Losh socially on

visits to Tyneside, but Losh was acquainted with his ideas more often through the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*, (Smith was a regularly contributor, and Losh an avid reader). Smith looked at the follies of his age with a compassionate honesty, and wrote on *Toleration*;

If a prudent man sees a child playing with a porcelain cup of great value, he takes the vessel out of his hand, pats him on the head, tells him his mamma will be sorry if it is broken, and gently cheats him into the use of some less precious substitute. Why will Lord Sidmouth meddle with the Toleration Act, when there are so many other objects in which his abilities might be so eminently useful...? We confess our trepidation at seeing the Toleration Act in the hands of Lord Sidmouth...

The alarm and suspicion of the Dissenters upon these measures is wise and rational...there is always a strong party ready...to abridge it [the Toleration Act] (if they dared) within the narrowest limits.

What right has any government to dictate to a man who shall guide him to heaven, any more than to persecute the religious tenets by which he hopes to arrive there?...it will hardly be contended that the Episcopalian only is the only judge when that call [to holy office] is genuine and when it is only imaginary⁶⁵.

The point has been made earlier, that participation in the Church-State was exercised for most people via the Church, not via Parliament. The position of the Church, among those with both religious and political awareness like James Losh, raised the most profound constitutional questions.

In denouncing the alliance between Church and State, Dissenters like Losh meant primarily to attack the Church's ability to interfere in politics, so as to deny them civil and political equality. The Dissenters argued for the separation of church and state, though they did not deny that religion was necessary both to morality and to public order. They rejected the necessity of

a specially state-protected, privileged church to maintain religion, and claimed that dependence on the State corrupted the Church itself. Finally, the Dissenters believed that the separation of the Church and State was necessary to prevent the Church party generally, using the laws to prevent the evolution of religious equality."

The disagreement between Dissenters and Churchmen over the Test Laws aggravated the struggle over constitutional reform. The Rational Dissenting leaders, whether teachers and philosophers or lawyers and merchants, could be seen as the intellectual element of a rising middle class which was already becoming more industrially focussed. Whilst Losh accepted the arguments for the existence of classes, and for the preservation of institutions, he nevertheless wanted to improve society, by removing religious discriminations and restrictions, and widening the franchise to the middle classes. As we saw in chapter one he also sponsored the improvement of the lower classes through education. The success of the aristocracy and gentry in retaining both the substance of their traditional political power and the social deference of other influential classes, remained a feature of the first half of the nineteenth century.

In 1807, Losh had a number of comments to make about the stranglehold which the aristocracy and church had upon the political life of the country, exemplified by their actions during the local parliamentary elections:

End April 1807.

The change in the administration and intended dissolution

of Parliament afford most decisive practical proofs of the corruption and degeneracy of our government. The late men by no means come up to my ideas of an honest and vigorous administration, but our present rulers seem to me contemptible in everything but the will and power to mischief. The cry of *Church and King* is equally disgusting and pernicious. [in this cry Losh is maybe recalling the attack on Priestley during the Birmingham riots].⁶⁷

20 May 1807.

The proceedings of the day [at the hustings at Durham] were very curious and such as contributed still further to satisfy me of the rottenness of the state of both Church and State...The Church showed themselves to be profligate and but shallow intriguers. They had completely duped Mr. Ellison [one of the candidates] if that is possible, degraded themselves and gained nothing for their masters, the present degraded administration.

24 May 1807

...I trust the elections have turned out less favourably for Government than was expected. It is said that opposition will muster 200 in the House of Commons, and if so I think the Administration must fall, a thing devoutly to be wished for...but with such a King and such a Royal Family, God knows what may be the consequence.⁶⁸

The responsibilities of what Losh called this 'miserable administration' were primarily in the field of external relations - the defence of the realm and the regulation of trade. Internally it was little more than a tax-raising, justice enforcing, property-protecting and order-preserving agency. When the local forces of control were inadequate, the state could bring in the ultimate sanction of the army. In relation to the numbers and wealth of British society, the scope of central government was remarkably small, the size of the executive departments and the revenues at its disposal correspondingly limited. This for the general public, was a matter of congratulation, rather than otherwise.⁶⁹

Boyd Hilton, describing a period a decade later, puts this attitude succinctly:

...it must surely be accepted that there was at this time a widespread presumption in favour of governments not interfering in social processes⁷⁰.

We frequently find Losh reflecting public concern about waste in government, and the need to reduce the burden of taxation, which he saw as restricting expansion of commerce and industry.

March 1816.

...Government have been driven from the odious property or rather Income Tax. The country is much distressed...⁷¹

The government, it was thought, would always use their power of appointment as a form of political patronage, and government administration in consequence would always be expensive and inefficient. Losh as we will see in the section devoted to Reform, was impatient with Grey for not making patronage an issue during the reform struggle. The cry for 'cheap and efficient' government to be raised by the radicals of the 1820s and 1830s, was a demand not for more government but for less. It was the redistribution of power which engaged most public attention rather than extension of governmental activity itself.⁷²

Losh was also a confirmed 'government watcher' and an avid reader of the newspapers. We find frequent references to this, and to his becoming a member of a coffee shop where several newspapers were available to his like. How typical he was of the provincial middle class in this respect it is hard to judge, but there is ample evidence of the breadth of his reading in his diaries. Prosecutions of the press Losh thought unwise, as it provided a platform for unsavoury personal attacks. However, he was not in favour of a completely free press:

October 15, 1819.

Mr. Benson entered most vehemently into the subject of the prosecution for blasphemy. It is absolutely necessary to protect both the laws and the religion of the country from indecent and scurrilous attacks, but it appears to me imprudent and even tyrannical to prevent free discussion with respect to either of them by the interference of state prosecutions. Besides the publicity and wide circulation given by such proceedings to the very opinions sought to be checked, should be well weighed before resorted to.⁷³

Losh had had much earlier reservations about the wisdom of interference with the printing of responsible views.

Milton's *Aeropagitica* which Losh had re-published in 1791, was in part a tract in favour of unlicensed printing. Much of it was devoted to describing the cramping effect of censorship on the individual and his society.

For the direct manipulation of public opinion, government was neither technically nor psychologically equipped. Most newspapers and periodicals were in the hands of the opposition or neutrals; and one of the lessons that had to be assimilated by Liverpool's cabinet in the next five years was that, with an active and articulate public, political virtue could not rely on intrinsic but unproclaimed merits to win its just rewards. By 1815 the national press had almost entirely emancipated itself from government influence. Secret service money could not compete with the profits from large circulation and heavy advertising. The only journals that sought ministerial assistance, were those whose support was not worth having⁷⁴. A free and generally antagonistic press found little in the post-war years to applaud. The economy had been geared for so long to war, that the outbreak of peace precipitated a severe slump in agriculture and manufacturing

which persisted until the early 1820s. The resulting high levels of unemployment and social unrest were made very much worse by the demobilization of more than a third of a million men. Many of them were clearly angry at returning to poverty and neglect. The alienation - and the military skills - of these hundreds of thousands of men go a long way towards explaining the peculiar bitter quality of popular protest in Britain in the twenty or even thirty years after Waterloo⁷⁵. As Seymour Drescher writes: 'There was something 'extra' behind extra-parliamentary agitation: very tangible reserve armies of violence'⁷⁶.

A new law passed in 1825 (largely at the instigation of Peel and the Home Office), while not attempting to make illegal either trade unions or collective bargaining, laid down a maximum penalty of three months' imprisonment for the use of threats or molestation specifically to promote strikes, enforce union membership or impose restrictions on employers⁷⁷. Even though Losh was involved in the consequences of the government's attitude towards organised labour, and tried always to mitigate the severity of the penalties exercised on working men seeking to improve their lot, he acknowledges in his diary the improved climate for discussion which he saw as the result of the spread of education and the press:

January 18, 1825.

Quarterly Review. Finished this 61st number of this Tory and High Church journal. I do not think any of the articles of this number above mediocrity, but they certainly breathe a more liberal and less bitter spirit than usual. Indeed, I would fain hope that the freedom of discussion which has been for sometime past so general, and the improved taste and more extended knowledge of

readers in general, will gradually soften the firmness of party and religious controversy⁷⁸.

December 1825.

The Edinburgh Review. It is too far distinctly the organ of the Whig party, and mixes their politics too much in speculations. But then it never attacks the great principles of Religion and Civil Liberties, and a fair and manly spirit pervades most of its articles⁷⁹.

Increasingly, the newspapers and magazines like the Edinburgh Review, Westminster Review, Blackwood's Magazine, were becoming a forum for political discussion. There were those, principally among the middle class, who argued that a more liberal attitude was overdue. An influential voice was Losh's acquaintance the Revd. Sydney Smith, as ever a keen observer of the political/religious manoeuvres of the Church and Government. He described them in his penetrating and humorous Peter Plymley's Letters:

I never met a parson in my life who did not consider the Corporation and Test Acts as the great bulwark of the Church; and yet it is now just sixty -four years since bills of indemnity to destroy their penal effects, or in other words, to repeal them, have been passed annually as a matter of course.

These bulwarks, without which no clergyman thinks he could sleep with his accustomed soundness, have actually not been in existence since any man now living has taken holy orders. Every year the Indemnity Act pardons past breaches of these two laws and prevents any fresh actions of informers...so that these penalties, by which alone the Church remains in existence, have not had one moment's operation for sixty-four years...the legislature...has reserved to itself the discretion of suspending or not suspending...And now when you have kept the rod over these people (with the most scandalous abuse of all principle)for sixty-four years, and not found it necessary to strike once, is not that the best of all reasons why the rod should be laid aside?⁸⁰

In his recent book, J.Bradley makes the point that the Test and Corporation Acts were something of a paper tiger:

...if a Dissenter could reconcile the practice of occasional conformity with his religious convictions, then no office under the crown was barred to him...

there is little evidence to prove that the Dissenters actually used the Indemnity Act to qualify for office... In 1719 Lord Stanhope pressed through Parliament the Act for Quieting and Establishing Corporations. This law provided that anyone elected to a town corporation, whose tenure was not questioned for six months thereafter, was freed from the need for any sacramental qualification and from any fear of prosecution¹¹.

Bradley makes the following additional telling point:

...the myth that Dissenters were strictly excluded from offices of trust was constructed by the Dissenters themselves in the interest of reform...¹²

In this climate, Losh's steadfast refusal to make even a token act of conformity in order to qualify himself for office is all the more remarkable.

The debates on the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts of March and April 1828 as reported in the press demonstrated the fear of the 'papists' that still coloured so many MPs views. On the 14 March Sir J Shelley - as reported in the Newcastle Chronicle - was [so he said] satisfied that to abrogate those existing safeguards would be made a stepping stone to the admission of Papists into Parliament and into the Offices of State...Losh, who had suffered for his Unitarian principles, closely following the debate in the Chronicle.

When it eventually came, Losh was jubilant at the success of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts:

End March 1828.
The defeat of the Administration on the Test & Corporation Acts was a glorious event: it shews the progress of knowledge and liberal sentiments and the decay of Toryism more strongly than anything which has hitherto occurred¹³.

But it was only the beginning of reform and he saw the next

step forward as the settlement of the Catholic question:

End August 1828.

Public affairs appear to be stationary, except in Ireland where the Catholic question becomes daily more and more important. Government must be well aware of the wisdom, not to say the necessity of granting the just demands of the Irish, and what they did with respect to the Dissenters, shews they are not hostile to religious liberty. I suppose the great stumbling block is the Church Establishment in Ireland, and the great patronage, public and private, connected with it and Protestant Ascendancy⁴.

We will see in the following chapter on the fight for Catholic Emancipation, how well Losh understood the consequences of maintaining a Protestant ascendancy.

* * * *

From a consideration of the sources we have examined so far a number of points arise which are worth considering further. Losh was a determined spokesman for the unenfranchised, perceptively following the constitutional debates of his day through the press, and through personal contacts with men close to the centre of affairs. However, we can see from Losh's view of the state that he was a reformer and not a radical.

It is clear, I think, that Losh never had any republican tendencies so far as the British government and Crown were concerned, though he sympathised with the French, and admired the American system. He regretted the stupidity, and corruption of the crown, but did not want it totally removed. His expressions of dissatisfaction also concerned the Prince of Wales and his brothers. Significantly, he had criticisms

of George III only in respect of his attitude to reform and the Catholic question. As we have seen from his diaries, he shared the national sorrow over the death of Princess Charlotte.

Losh's views on the exercise of the royal prerogative are difficult to determine. There is no written evidence to show whether or not he agreed with Russell's statement in 1821 on the reduction in the king's powers. However, it is clear that Losh was critical of the way the crown influenced the formation of governments, and the restrictions the King placed upon them e.g. Catholic Emancipation. After Pitt resigned on this issue, we find Losh writing in his diary:

February 12, 1801.

The news of the resignation of Pitt arrived yesterday. It appears to us a miserable intrigue with a view to retaining the power in the same hands substantially, and to pursuing the same measures which have led to the ruin of the country; and yet to amuse the nation at the same time with a shew of change. If the resignations be found on the reasons assigned for them then indeed one may consider the folly of our rulers as equal to their wickedness...Nothing can save the country but a complete and radical reform...¹⁵

This view that Losh held of monarchical influence did not change with the formation of a Regency, which he had welcomed:

March 20, 1811.

It appears the King has had another relapse. Indeed it is quite plain that his wisest course and the only one to save the country would be to retire and give up the full exercise of the Royal powers to the Prince of Wales¹⁶.

By the time of Percival's assassination, Losh had lost any confidence he may have had in the Regent:

May 14, 1812.

...The Prince has gone too far to retract and I fear we shall have the same miserable measures conducted by worse and feebler men than Mr Perceval¹⁷.

Among Losh's circle of acquaintances we saw that Thomas

Creevey too had welcomed the Regency, and had defended his decision to maintain the Perceval administration against the sense of betrayal felt by the Whigs - who had looked forward to office after being fellow-travellers with the Prince for so many years. The more pragmatic Brougham saw himself shining in opposition. (In the event, Creevey was to lose his sympathy for Prinny, and Brougham was to 'enjoy' many years of opposition).

We have seen that at the end of the eighteenth century the question of divine dynastic sanction broadened into divine sanction of the social hierarchy as asserted by churchmen. Losh accepted the structure of society, and agreed that subordination was part of it. Whilst he is critical of the aristocracy, it was largely because they were ill-educated, and often lethargic. We find an interesting entry in his diary relating to Earl Grey, with whom he had a very friendly relationship:

October 17, 1817:

Dinner and all night at Lord Grey's...The house is large, handsome and commodious...Tho' the mode of living at Howick and the society I met there were, I have no doubt, far above the average of what is found in great men's houses. They seem to me inferior, both in comfort, and even in amusement and interest, to what one meets with in families of well-educated and sensible persons in the middling ranks of life".

Losh was welcome and respected across the whole range of society, both locally and nationally. He was confident in his own place in society, and in his own ability, though quick to acknowledge superiority in others (Fox for instance). He was

also sufficiently self-critical to admit his own failings, morbidly so at times, possibly because of the Unitarian habit of self-examination. His only resentment of the aristocracy as a whole, was on the score of its not fulfilling its responsibility in society, or of adopting a selfish superiority.

End January 1829.

...My profession, my gardens, desultory reading, the railroad, the Literary Society, and the Coal Trade have occupied my time, and except for the last named, pleasantly enough. I much fear that the coal trade upon which my income greatly depends, is in a most unsatisfactory position. The folly of Lord Londonderry and the intrigues of his agent Mr Buddle, and the pride and obstinacy of Lord Durham, seem likely to throw everything into confusion, and we little personages must suffer for the absurdities of our magnificent fellow tradesmen".

Losh's attitude towards an aristocracy which was grounded in hereditary power and privilege may be compared with his own pride in being a member of a profession where promotion depended (largely) on merit.

On the wider stage, Losh never saw Britain as destined to have a mission to civilise the world and spread the benefits of its constitutional system. He was never-the-less quite unparochial in his outlook. Apart from his frequent visits to London, he frequently mentions conditions abroad: Greece, Spain, Portugal, South America, and the United States. The breadth of his understanding of, and interest in, international politics, reflected in his sympathetic liberal attitudes towards them.

End December 1823:

Abroad the prospect tho' somewhat gloomy is by no means such as to preclude hope. Naples, Spain, and Portugal

have certainly slumped back into despotism. Subdued by the arms and gold of the Holy Alliance, and being all of them too corrupt and too ignorant to achieve their freedom by patience and courage. But information is rapidly spreading in spite of all the efforts of what is called legitimacy to suppress and counteract it⁹⁰.

That Losh, as a Unitarian, was tolerant of other denominations we have seen. He visited other churches and participated in their services. But he was against the power of the established Church in political matters, and his correspondence with Lord Brougham during the exchanges with the representatives of the Bishop of Durham makes clear that he did not see the necessity for a state-orientated Church establishment. Brougham, of course, as Lord Chancellor was directly concerned with reducing that establishment, and removing the unjustified plurality of livings.

Losh as the observer, the diarist and correspondent, has revealed to us his ideas on crown, church and state. Not yet the participant, but yet the concern is apparent, the intelligence of his observations is manifest. On this bedrock we will examine his involvement in the major issues of the day, his political development in the local arena, coloured always by his religious views.

In the next chapter we will consider Losh's ideas in relation to the emancipation of the Catholics. This question was a central issue in the affairs of crown, church and state, and a precursor to parliamentary reform. Losh tended to link them together, seeing reform move through the removal of the restrictions of the Test and Corporation Acts to Catholic

emancipation to the Reform Act. Reform he saw as the salvation of his country, the only way to forestall revolution, or if not this, then at least severe social upheaval, which was anathema to Losh.

CHAPTER THREE

CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION

We have seen in previous chapters that Losh was constantly at odds with the Government of the day. On one issue in particular he was continually criticizing them: this was the treatment of the Catholics of Ireland. This is revealed in many of his writings, but a particularly apt expression of his opinion is recorded in his diary in 1824. It refers to a book by Maria Edgeworth, an author for whom Losh had considerable respect. Losh comments as follows:

July 25, 1824.

Captain Rock - interesting little work.

It is a severe but I fear just exposure of the long continued unjust and impolitic conduct of this country towards Ireland, and is I think well calculated to produce a deep and general effect upon a subject which has hitherto been strangely neglected by the public in general...Nothing can be more weak or more wicked than the conduct of our government as to the state of the Irish church in general, and tithes in particular, nor anything more abominable than their uniform conduct towards the Catholics¹.

Losh was aware that his fellow Dissenters were deeply divided on the issue: 'the Methodists and Evangelical Trinitarians were moving away from a common cause with the Unitarians². Richard Davis, in considering the division in Dissent on the Catholic question, has pointed out the differing opinions of scholars on this matter:

J.H.Hexter contends strongly...that the division was on social and educational lines, with the wealthier and better educated supporting the Catholics and the humble and illiterate opposing them. Halevy saw it mainly as a division between Unitarians and Trinitarians, and argued that there was something in the very creed of the evangelical revival which perpetrated anti-Catholicism.

G.I.T. Machin states: 'Enthusiasm often generates intolerance, and the products of the eighteenth-century revival were largely anti-Catholic'.

Losh himself had his feet on the ground. We never find him advocating causes for purely philosophical reasons as his acquaintance Godwin would. This pragmatic attitude was probably a consequence of his legal training, and it was paralleled by that of William Smith MP, a fellow Unitarian and acknowledged leader of the Dissenters in the House of Commons who:

demonstrated a remarkable grasp of what was possible and how to achieve it'.

As a Unitarian Losh believed passionately in religious freedom for all sects, including Catholics. This was not because he had any sympathy with the beliefs and ritual of the Catholic church. Indeed, his diaries show how distasteful he found his visits to Catholic churches. The following is a typical Losh comment:

December 25, 1810.

At Catholic church with Cecilia. The mummery evidently borrowed from the pagan rites, is no doubt very disgusting, but I was pleased to see the evident devotion of the congregation'.

But, however unacceptable Losh found their ritual, he was deeply concerned that the Catholics, like Dissenters, were denied a voice in public affairs. How large a group Catholics were in the local community has been difficult to determine accurately, but it is apparent from the lack of orchestrated unrest that Newcastle carried its religious differences with a reasonable degree of tolerance.

Looking at the Catholic question on the wider national stage G.I.T. Machin reminds us of its prominence. In taking an overview of the emancipation issue, he points to the serious political consequences of the failure to resolve this increasing social and political crisis:

The problem of Ireland was the most protracted of all those which beset English politicians in the nineteenth century. The Catholic Emancipation question was essentially a part of the Irish problem, and it set the stage for later developments of the larger issue by appropriating a great deal of English political attention in the century's first three decades...⁶

Hinde also sees the Catholic question as:

the most intractable and divisive issue of English domestic politics for the first thirty years of the nineteenth century...it could not be ignored, or only intermittently, because of the imperative need to pacify Ireland and an increasingly more liberal climate of opinion in England⁷.

Whilst the problem of Ireland became increasingly the question of the day, anti-catholicism on which it was grounded went back as far as the Reformation. Finding a solution to it, therefore, depended upon a willingness to admit the claims of the Catholics, who were reckoned, by the inaccurate statistics of the day, at around 500,000 Irish-born in England, Wales and Scotland'. Eighteenth-century England had generally been regarded as a society that was particularly tolerant of religious diversity. Yet in researching the social and political history of the period, it is difficult to ignore the strength, persistence and ubiquity of religious animosities. Jan Albers sees religious tensions as a common pre-occupation of the period:

The sectarian conflicts that arose among diverse denominations of Protestants could be fierce, but their most horrific visions were saved for the Roman Catholics.

Anti-Catholicism had been firmly rooted in English culture for so long by the eighteenth century that the Catholic stereotype was particularly elaborate. Roman Catholicism was a corruption of early Christianity, controlled by the popish Anti-Christ, who kept his flock obedient through the inculcation of superstition and idol-worship. In the political sphere, the Catholics wished to replace the rights of free-born Englishmen with unquestioning obedience to an arbitrary monarchy. Catholicism tapped at a primal wellspring of fear of foreign intrigue...⁹

Colin Haydon, in examining the stereotype, distinguishes the main features of eighteenth-century anti-Catholicism:

In the eighteenth century, English anti-Catholicism can be said to have manifested itself under three main heads. These are: political distrust; theological disagreement; and popular fear. From the Reformation, the principal political anxiety about the Roman Catholics concerned their allegiance to the Protestant monarchy... Catholics were held to be first and foremost, subjects of the Pope... Turning to their theological aspects, Popery was seen as the antithesis and perversion of true Christianity. The Pope rather than Christ was at the centre of the Catholic faith... Tradition was set above the Bible... It was generally assumed that, whenever it was in their power... Papists would extirpate heresy by force... more widespread was the belief that the Papists might one day rise against the Protestants...¹⁰

Haydon, whilst seeing a favourable change in the extremism of anti-Catholicism towards the 1780s, nevertheless is cautious about the general attitude:

By the end of the century, those who inveighed against Popery were increasingly out of step with fashionable thinking. But for the majority of our period, anti-Catholicism could be seen as the chief ideological commitment of the nation, as a set of generally held attitudes, not the obsession of 'ultra-Protestants'... One should remember that some 50,000 people signed the Protestant Associations petitions in England¹¹.

He argues throughout his book that anti-Catholicism remained a potent force¹².

One might suggest from the foregoing, that the more liberal attitude, which eventually made possible the passing of the Bill, existed primarily at Westminster. The country at large tended to be very anti-Catholic - the Gordon riots showed how

violent an anti-Catholic mob could be - though Machin asserts that:

The deep-rooted anti-Catholic sentiments of the English masses remained...unorganized and inert...mass opinion had changed gradually and imperceptibly from an aggressive movement into one of dominant impassivity¹³.

However Hinde notes that:

...the attitudes of those members of the educated classes who were not tainted by religious bigotry did not give the English Catholics a great deal to complain about...¹⁴

We will examine these attitudes further, in the light of Losh's own involvement in the Emancipation campaign.

Of the various nonconformist sects in Newcastle of Losh's day, the Presbyterian were most strongly represented as might be expected from the city's proximity to the Scottish border. In Newcastle there were three Presbyterian meeting-houses with a total of 1,200 adherents, one Unitarian with a membership of 700, one Independent or Congregationalist with 100, a small community of the Society of Friends, and the Catholics.

Though there was not the religious violence here that disrupted other cities at this time (e.g. Birmingham) those who were sensitive to discrimination campaigned for religious equality and social justice. Such a one was Losh.

By 1805, he was established in Newcastle and beginning his gradual rise to leadership of local Whig politics. At this stage he was still an observer of rather than a participant in, national affairs, but we will see as this thesis develops, that increasing maturity and commitment to seeking social justice, moved him on to the stage of local and

national politics. Born in 1763, he could be said to have grown up with the Catholic emancipation question. He had seen the pressures of the war with France inflame Irish discontent, followed by the concession of enfranchisement but not representation in 1793. He was in London at the time of the failure of Grattan's bill for complete Catholic emancipation in 1795, which led to the merging of Irish radical thought with nationalism. He would have been aware of the bloody ending of the popular rising, led by the Irish middle classes at Vinegar Hill, and the subsequent failure of the Union of 1801 to give the Irish what Pitt had promised.

Machin comments that:

...the Irish Catholics were convinced they had been duped¹⁵.

This was, as we have seen, a very sensitive and controversial issue. Its metropolitan aspect is reflected in the diary of Losh's friend and ally, Thomas Creevey, which frequently illuminates the characters in the national dramas of these years. On the 13 March, 1805 it records the following

Commons' exchange:

We had a famous debate on Sheridan's censure motion...in part of his reply when [Sheridan] fired upon Pitt for his treachery to the Catholics, Pitt's eyes started with defiance from their sockets, and seemed to tell if he advanced an atom further he would have his life...Never has it fallen to my lot to hear such words before in publick or in private used by man to man¹⁶.

Though Sheridan's treatment of Pitt was unfair, for all Pitt's effort, the Irish problem went on. The College Green assembly was gone, but otherwise the changes were minimal. The Protestant Ascendancy sheltered within the Union, but Catholics opposed it as a symbol of their subjugation¹⁷.

As we saw in chapter one, Losh was hopeful that after Pitt's death a Fox-Grenville administration, would introduce relief for the Catholics, along with a beginning on parliamentary reform. Those early hopes seemed to die with Fox.

The pro-Catholic members of the Ministry of All the Talents did not want to raise the question of emancipation at the cost of upsetting the King.¹⁸

The administration were forced to resign when the Irish petition for emancipation of 1807 caused the King to insist on a promise the matter would not be raised in that form.

About this time the Revd. Sydney Smith, another friend of Losh, was writing his Peter Plymley letters that ridiculed the government's treatment of the Irish Catholics:

...I want soldiers and sailors for the state...I want to render the military service popular among the Irish; to check the power of France...you call out 'For God's sake, do not think of raising cavalry and infantry in Ireland!' They interpret the epistle to Timothy in a different manner from what we do! They eat a bit of a wafer every Sunday, which they call their God!...When the population of half the globe is up in arms against us; are we to stand examining our generals and armies as a bishop examines a candidate for holy orders?...No power in Europe but yourselves has ever thought, for these hundred years past, of asking whether a bayonet is Catholic, or Presbyterian, or Lutheran...I am as disgusted with the nonsense of the Roman Catholic religion as you can be...but what have I to do with the speculative nonsense of his theology, when the object is to elect the mayor of a county town, or to appoint a colonel of a marching regiment?...

...the present population of Ireland is five millions
...of this population, two out of ten are Protestants;
and the half of the protestant population are dissenters,
and as inimical to the Church as the Catholics
themselves. In this state of things, thumbscrews and
whippings...will not ultimately avail. The Catholics will
hang over you; they will watch for the moment; and compel
you thereafter to give them ten times as much, against
your will, as they would now be contented with if it was
voluntarily surrendered¹⁹...

Smith went on to ask what it was the Catholics wanted. He concludes: not to be denied honours and emoluments of state because of their religion. Smith argued that for them to be denied these, with the current dangerous state of Europe, was rank folly. Losh was to make reference to some of these arguments as the issue progressed.

It is impossible to quantify the effect of Smith's letters, but it is true that in 1810, the political temperature was higher than it had been for a number of years. Others were writing on the Catholic question. 'Do you take the Catholics?' Jeffrey wrote to Henry Brougham, in March 1810, of the next issue of the *Edinburgh Review*, 'at all events I hope the responsibility and something else political - at such a moment as this it is really throwing away your great powers to employ them on anything else²⁰'. The great reviews were stirring the thoughtful and helping to raise the tone of political debate in early nineteenth century England. They upheld the notion that there was no social or political issue that could not be rationally discussed.

Losh was an avid reader of the reviews, and his early admiration for Sydney Smith probably began with his reading of the pieces that appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*:

December 29, 1810.

Edinburgh Review. A most masterly and satisfactory essay in favour of removing the restrictions from the Irish Catholics²¹.

Losh was proud to be seen as a reforming Whig, and like Brougham, he saw the two most important domestic issues

facing the Whigs in 1810 as Catholic emancipation, and parliamentary reform. Though the king's relapse made speculation on a Regency rife, there was no agreement on what position the party would take on these questions if invited to take office. Brougham, like Losh, took a decidedly moderate position on both questions: a position that was calculated to win Grey's approval.

During the closing period of Perceval's government, another moderate dissenting Whig, William Smith, asserted in the House:

...He knew nothing but religious liberty, which was the right of every man to worship God in his own mode. For this he contended, and he thought the Catholics were entitled to it as well as every other sect of Christians, as a matter of right²².

On Tyneside, one of the ways local reformist opinion was mobilised, was through the holding of Fox Dinners, ostensibly to remember their erstwhile leader. Significantly, at the 1812 dinner, both Dissenters and Catholics were represented, to express their dissatisfaction with the Government's policies. Losh's diary records:

January 24, 1812.
Dinner at Foster's - Fox's birthday - large party, 108 or thereabouts, Sir. R. Millbank in the chair. A great number of county gentlemen present. Most principal Catholics and Dissenters in particular attended. Everything was conducted very well, and the meeting was in every respect such as the friends of civil and religious liberty might have wished for. There still remains in this nation much good sense and right feeling²³.

In contrast, William Smith, whilst actively seeking parliamentary influence, was not enthusiastic for public support:

Further, he contended that the cause of religious liberty had made much more rapid strides in Parliament...he considered public opinion...a most unreliable and perhaps even dangerous ally²⁴.

Only a few weeks later, Losh, looking at the state of Ireland, and also at the Sovereign and the prime minister, is filled with foreboding:

March 18, 1812.

Sketches from Ireland [Maria Edgeworth]. It is written with great spirit, but in a singular and frequently affecting style. The observations are sensible and the accounts of the feelings and situation of the different parties I have no doubt are true, and if true, surely no time ought to be lost in attempting a mild and rational means to prevent the horrors which seem to be fast approaching. With an apostate from the principle of liberty for our ruler, and a plausible but narrow-minded bigot for his prime minister, what hopes can we have to weather the impending storm?²⁵

Losh's impending storm seemed to break when Perceval was assassinated on May 11. The Whigs would only come in as a party, so Grey and Grenville again declined the offer of four or five places in a reconstructed Tory administration to be headed by Wellesley and Canning. Brougham, a close friend of Losh, agreed and concluded in the *Edinburgh Review* that:

...the lot of the Whigs is merely to modify and palliate the mischievous proceedings of the Tories, by their opposition, and to come in, for a few months or weeks, once or twice in a reign, to carry through some great and salutary measure, which it goes against the conscience of the said Tories to adopt - and to go back again to the unpopularity of conscious virtue, which is so obviously their portion in the world²⁶.

Losh himself saw little chance for improvement with any replacement for the assassinated Perceval. Nor was there any hope in the Commons. The Whig leaders continued to show more interest in squabbling among themselves than in opposing ministers. On only one issue, the emancipation of the Roman Catholics, did Brougham and Canning find themselves on the

same side of the political divide. Both men, however, experienced the frustration of battling against the entrenched elites who ruled their respective parties. Liverpool, the new prime minister in 1812, did not consider the time had yet arrived for a settlement of the question that would satisfy Catholics and still provide security for the Protestants²⁷. His government was neutral towards Catholic claims.

With no alleviation of Catholic disabilities, the unrest in Ireland continued. The crisis of public order in 1812-3 prompted unsuccessful experiments in the role of both magistrates and militia. The sense of crisis of a contained explosion continued affecting both Catholics and Protestants.

As a Unitarian, Losh saw the folly in continuing to restrict the Catholics or any Dissenting group:

February 17, 1813.

An article in the *Morning Chronicle* by Mr. Butler. This is the clearest and most decisive (and at the same time the most temperate) statement of the folly of restricting the civil rights of the Catholics or any other section, on account of their opinions, and contains a triumphant reply to all the common topics of abuse against the Roman Catholics, as unworthy to be trusted as subjects or members of society²⁸.

While Losh was following the latest news on the Catholic question, parliament was considering Grattan's motion for the committee on the claims of the Roman Catholics, which the House of Commons had pledged to institute. Grattan's speech to the Commons of the 23 April, 1813 was reported in the *Newcastle Chronicle*:

Would they deprive two-thirds of the Irish people, and one-fourth of the people of the British Empire of their

civil liberties forever?...In disqualifying a British subject on account of his religious opinions, they would attack the principle that made them a parliament, and disqualifying themselves...

Ireland has proved herself capable of long and patient allegiance...You have voted thanks year after year to armies composed of Catholics...²⁹

Grattan pointed to the 10,000 English signatures in support asking for full rights and closer integration. He appealed for full constitutional privileges, recalling the Irish blood that drenched the fields of Spain. After a hard debate Grattan passed his motion by a majority of forty. In May his bill received a second reading and went into committee stage. A great part of the discussion on the bill revolved around the securities it ought to embody. Peel criticised the lack of effective security in the plan:

At no time and under no circumstances, so long as the Catholic admits the supremacy in spirituals of a foreign earthly potentate, and will not tell us what supremacy in spirituals means - so long as he will not give us voluntarily that security which every despotic sovereign in Europe has by the concession of the Pope himself, I will not consent to admit they are excluded from privileges for which they will not pay the price that all other subjects pay, and that all other Catholics in Europe but themselves consent to pay³⁰

Meanwhile, the question of securities was splitting the Catholics in Ireland; many rejected any scheme of emancipation that would subject them to Protestant control.

In the English provinces groups of middle-class citizens were striving to be heard on this issue. In Newcastle, Losh and the local gentry petitioned the Prince on the question:

May 13, 1813.

Public meeting to address the Prince of Wales. This meeting was numerous and respectably attended, and no opposition was made to the measure. I did not speak as there was no necessity for my

doing so. Had there been any opposition, I certainly should have delivered my sentiments³¹.

The lack of visible opposition is noteworthy: meetings were more contentious during the struggle for the Reform Bill.

In Ireland, Daniel O'Connell, with more than a touch of cynicism, had this to say, referring to the 1813 Bill:

Our enemies themselves consenting to give us ...all, all, except parliament. They consented to it all³²!

The coming of peace with France in 1815 also turned parliamentary scrutiny to the state of Ireland, raising the Catholic question. Peel was resistant, but at least he realised the depth and intricacy of the problem, particularly the part played by the economic conditions of the Irish peasantry³³. He pointed out that emancipation would confer no benefit on the mass of Irish people, only the Catholic aristocracy and middle classes. The Catholic clergy would suffer an absolute loss of privilege and independence as a result of the restrictions which emancipation would impose.

Losh's friend Brougham, a close observer of this debate, was now determining the direction of his political future. His broad parliamentary strategy in the last years of Liverpool's administration was to shed his radical leanings and to concentrate upon those large questions which occupied the centre of the political stage: the conduct of foreign affairs; Catholic emancipation; the state of the agricultural interest; and ultimately parliamentary reform. Thomas Creevey cursed him for his moderation, but Brougham realised that the

future of liberalism rested on the ability of the Whigs to woo the squirearchy away from Toryism³⁴. Whilst Brougham manoeuvred to improve his parliamentary image, Losh was writing for the Westminster Review, struggling to keep the flag of reform aloft. His old friend Grey saw little prospect for reform and was content to let those that would, fight the opposition game.³⁵

So far as the course of English politics hung on the actions of individuals, it hung, in the 1820s, chiefly on the actions of Brougham and Canning, each of whom had the power to shake the fragile foundations of his party. In so far as politics was centred on great public issues, the dominant force in the 1820s was the swelling current of Irish nationalism. Roman Catholic emancipation might sound the knell, if it were granted, of old Toryism, but if it were withheld, of the union between Great Britain and Ireland. Brougham and Canning were emancipationists, but neither was ready to sacrifice his prospects by uncompromising fidelity to the cause³⁶.

Lord Grey took a more uncompromising position:

'To Catholic emancipation I consider myself pledged,' he wrote to Lord Holland, 'that I could not come in without it.'³⁷

Grey was a little wary of Brougham, and implacably opposed to Canning, but the prospect for Tory disunion stirred the enthusiasm of other Whigs, especially Lord Lansdowne and Brougham, who looked to achieve their political objects, especially Catholic emancipation, by aligning themselves with

the more forward looking Tories. In 1821 this collaboration saw a limited measure pass through the Commons, to be rejected by the Lords.

The founding in 1823 of the Catholic Association by Daniel O'Connell first raised the temperature of debate; and then in 1824 the so-called Catholic Rent, O'Connell's system of national subscription. As Hinde points out, O'Connell turned himself and the Association into a politically effective instrument:

O'Connell took the struggle for Catholic rights out of the clubs, counting houses, and drawing rooms of Dublin and Irish countryside, and the mass of poor Irish Catholics made him their uncrowned king³⁸.

The Association began to loom large in the political consciousness of the English. It was thought that they might want to separate from England altogether³⁹.

The King demanded that the government suppress these movements or he would no longer allow emancipation to be treated as an open question. He was as vehemently against the emancipation of the Irish Catholics as his father had been. An illuminating comment appears in Losh's diary, concerning a dinner at Lord Grey's to celebrate the visit of the King's brother, the Duke of Sussex, to Newcastle:

September 7, 1822.

The Duke of Sussex said [to Losh] that he believed his father's last attack was brought on by the Catholic question, that is by his doubts and anxiety about his Coronation Oath⁴⁰.

In 1823, a speech by Sir Francis Burdett on Catholic

Emancipation raised the temperature in the House. Thomas Creevey, always a keen observer of the Commons scene, wrote on the 18 April to his relative Mrs Ord:

You never saw such confusion and consternation as was produced in the Ministerial row by Burdett's speech. In the midst of the debate arose that alarming episode between Brougham and Canning...Brougham was laying about him upon Canning's 'truckling' to Eldon for his late admission into the Cabinet ... Brougham was going like a madman, but Canning was much worse in his rage, and in his violation of the rules of the House¹¹...

In 1823 Losh was now sixty: a hard working barrister, with a wife and eight children to support. But his interest in national matters never flagged. Energetically organising political meetings and petitions, he was a valuable barometer of middle-class feelings and attitudes. Losh always took the opportunity to gather 'information' on the questions of the day from those he met when working round the circuit:

January 26, 1823.

I breakfasted alone at Belford [North'd] and soon after 10 o'clock proceeded to Berwick in the mail coach. I had as companions three very sensible and pleasant men, one of them an officer in the cavalry who had been many years in Ireland. His account of the south of that divided country was very dreadful. He told me that the measures of the Marquis of Wellesley were neither vigorous or conciliatory... Losh added in his end of the month summary: Ireland still continues in a dreadful state and much, very much reform is wanted¹².

But the struggle was intensifying, no doubt aggravated by the King's attitude towards the Catholic Association. A bill to amend the Acts relating to unlawful societies in Ireland, though bitterly contested by the opposition, was carried by a large majority. During its passage, Brougham (furnished with information by O'Connell and the Association) stressed the

urgency of conceding Catholic Emancipation in order to arrest the growth of Irish nationalism. At the opening of Parliament in February 1825 he said:

[The Association] had the hearty support of the Catholic Body of Ireland, of six millions of people, whose feelings and wishes it actually represented, to attack it by Act of Parliament, therefore, would be to attack the people of Ireland themselves...If they desired to put down the Catholic Association for ever, let them, instead of waging war against six million of Catholics, announce that Catholic Emancipation will be granted - and there would be an end to the Association⁴³...

Despite Brougham's arguments the bill went through. The Catholic Association was disbanded, and re-formed as the New Catholic Association. It was clear that the barristers of the emancipation movement could always contrive a legal method of pursuing their agitation. In official English circles it was taken for granted that emancipation if it had to come, must be hedged round by safeguards.

Losh read all the newspaper reports, and was soon to become more actively involved. He saw no good in the Bill making the Catholic Association illegal:

February 18, 1825.

Debate on the Catholic Association.

After a debate of four days, it was determined by a large majority in the House of Commons to put down the Association by Act of Parliament. A measure in my opinion very likely to do harm and incapable of producing good.

[End of the month comment] the Catholic claims have excited much attention and it seems to me they are rapidly gaining ground. There has been no cry of *No Popery* and *The Church is in Danger*. Certainly the state of Ireland is much better understood than formerly, and its importance much more truly estimated⁴⁴.

For Losh 1825 continued to be a time of thought and effort on the Irish Catholic question. As ever, he read everything

available on the issue, applauding the broadening of public discussion by such means.

April 16, 1825.

Finished Butler's book - this sensible and tempered defence of the Catholics...I have not read Southey's *Book of the Church*, to which this is an answer, but I am told that it is vigorously written tho' full of bitterness and sophistry. These altercations and exposures do much good and the public mind is I think fast settling into right opinions and right feelings, as to the wickedness and folly of all religious persecution of every kind and in every degree⁴⁵.

To Losh, petitions were the most appropriate means of letting Parliament know the minds of the people. Here for the first time on this issue, we find him taking the initiative with his colleagues on the circuit. It was to be a pattern for his future involvement and leadership:

May 7, 1825

...I also today had the satisfaction to succeed in obtaining a petition to both Houses of Parliament from all the barristers (Williamson, Cookson, Askey and myself) and 35 attorneys in favour of the Catholics. I drew the petition which is very short⁴⁶.

Nor was Losh loth to discuss the matter with those he met socially, whatever their political complexion. As a Unitarian he was a firm adherent to freedom of thought, arriving at his conclusions by rational argument:

May 24, 1825.

Dinner and evening at Sir Robert Leigh's. Sir Robert and Mr Kay, with more zeal than good manners discussed the Catholic question, and abused every person who had supported the liberal party in or out of Parliament... Sir Robert Leigh acute and sensible as he certainly is, lost his temper and with that his powers of reasoning⁴⁷.

End June 1825:

The Catholics remain quiet but the rejection of their claims must produce a lasting and bad effect⁴⁸.

Others were not so filled with foreboding at the failure of the Catholic claims. Machin describes the reaction:

...the pro-Catholic effort in 1825 ended in failure. Public rejoicings were held by the anti-Catholic populace and church bells were rung...⁴⁹

However, those like Losh, who were agitating for emancipation, saw that it had to come inevitably, if not as quickly as they wished. Burdett and most of the Whigs were now preaching patience to the Irish. Grey, who had a relationship with James Losh going back to the 1790s, was quick to disassociate himself from this position:

As to what you say about Ireland, I can only repeat my former opinion, that it is best for us not to advise at all. But if I were bound to give an opinion...it may be very convenient to *US* to have no Catholic question, but is it equally good for the Irish? Have they ever got anything except what has been extorted in the hour of distress? ... but if I were an Irish Catholic, I should consider myself as in a state of war with the English government⁵⁰...

Meanwhile, the Catholic Association was having an effect on public opinion, even though few of its English sympathisers understood its make-up.

As the 1820s progressed, Daniel O'Connell's harnessing of the masses in the Catholic Association changed the relationship of the Catholic leadership to the same masses. The Catholic Church's involvement in the collecting of the 'rent' meant the masses themselves had now a sense of commitment to O'Connell's aims. The Association worked for the whole Catholic community, and by vetting parliamentary candidates, mustering the forty-shilling freeholders, had a decisive effect on the late 20s elections. O'Connell commented:

There is a moral electricity in the continuous expression of public opinion concentrated on a single point⁵¹.

But O'Connell never lost sight of the importance of Protestant support, a factor also reflected in Losh's diary. In 1826, he records how Protestant opinion was changing, and the concern for the attitudes of government and monarchy on this issue:

March 16, 1826.

I had a long and somewhat curious interview with Mr Liddell [a member of a powerful Tyneside family] who called upon me professionally to talk about the Catholic question, but perhaps with a further view of making out my opinion upon other points also...he declared strongly his wish for Catholic Emancipation and professed that he was friendly to civil and religious liberty in general. He admitted, however, to me he considered Mr Canning as his leader and guide...⁵²

However, as Losh was to find when publicly debating the issue, there was considerable heat in the issue, particularly with other Dissenters. Machin describes an incident at Manchester where

Methodist ministers agreed to sign an anti-Catholic petition but the others refused...Sometimes the Methodists appeared more anti-Catholic than the Anglicans⁵³.

Losh, though a Unitarian with a commitment to supporting full rights for the Irish, did not adopt a political stance without wide reading:

March 22, 1826.

Sydney Smith's *Advice to the Electors on the Catholic Question*. Finished this clever little pamphlet. It contains much good sense and a considerable wit and dexterity, but upon the whole I was disappointed in it. There was a want of clearness and simplicity in the arrangement, and of vigour in pressing the arguments to the full extent. Now and then the statements go beyond the truth and consequently do more harm than good. It is, however, well worth circulating⁵⁴.

And again on November 19, 1826.

Declaration of the Catholic Bishops. This is upon the whole a plain and sensible explanation and defiance of the peculiar doctrines of the Catholic church, quite different no doubt to shew the folly of excluding Catholics from civil rights, but not enough to clear them

from the imputation of holding some superstitions and at least one uncharitable opinion that of 'exclusive salvation'⁵⁵.

The general election of 1826 was fought with unexpected eagerness. Anti-Catholic feeling placed Brougham farther behind his opponents than in 1820⁵⁶. Machin makes an interesting point on the electoral situation in Northumberland where Lord Grey's son Viscount Howick contested the election. Grey wrote to his son about Hon. T.T. Liddle, a supposed pro-Catholic Tory:

...He had got votes from the Catholics[pro-?]¹, by private promises to support their cause. His most active and powerful supporters...are the most uncompromising opposers of the Catholic claims...he has especially refused to sign a pledge...⁵⁷

The failing health of Lord Liverpool in January 1827 was putting the continuance of the government in doubt. Losh, though concerned for the premier, recognises that his death could mean an administration more sympathetic to the Catholic cause. We have already seen how he assessed Liverpool's virtues, and regarding his attitude to the Catholic question Losh wrote:

February 20, 1827.

An account of the sudden and alarming illness of Lord Liverpool arrived...For my part, I cannot think it a great loss to be deprived of a Prime Minister who was a determined enemy of Parliamentary Reform, of Catholic Emancipation also. Upon this last subject, it must be allowed that his mind had made considerable advances in knowledge, and liberality...⁵⁸

In the last week in February 1827, Canning had been informed secretly that the bulk of the Whigs under Brougham and Lord Lansdowne were ready to support him even if he were not

¹As the Catholics did not have the vote, one must assume that voters who were pro-Catholic on this issue, is meant here

immediately in a position to carry the Catholic question. Wellington resigned his government appointments rather than serve under Canning. Canning was endeavouring to persuade the King to give him some freedom on the issue⁵⁹.

On April 10, Thomas Creevey wrote:

No premier yet. It is now universally considered as true that the hitch is entirely between Canning and Prinney, and not between the former and his colleagues. The Sovereign is a true Protestant, and demands securities from Canning before he gives him supreme power, that he will not use this new power to favour the Pope...⁶⁰

Brougham was still in the north when the King asked Canning to form a government on the 10th April. Brougham came quickly to London, determined that negotiations should not fail: 'a greater or more ruinous error never was yet committed, or one more fatal to the Catholic question⁶¹'. The 20th April negotiations with Canning broke off, wrecked on what Brougham would have called the punctilio of standing out against the King's insistence that to preserve some balance in an overwhelmingly 'Catholic' government, the Irish Lord-lieutenant and Secretary should both be 'Protestants'.

Losh wrote of this:

April 17, 1827.

...the resignation of the Chancellor, the Duke of Wellington etc seems to be considered generally as a great public good, but that of Mr Peel, many people lament very much. I confess, I am not one of those who does so, for tho' he is certainly a man of considerable talents, active and I believe desirous of doing good, yet his prejudices on the Catholic question and no doubt about religious freedom altogether, render him an unfit person to form part of a liberal administration...⁶²

In its final shape the new cabinet contained twelve who could be described in their sympathies as 'pro-emancipation' and

only three 'anti-emancipation'. The press and the bulk of middle-class opinion was on Canning's side. What he needed was time to prepare the ground for a settlement of the Catholic question, by direct appeal to the King. The substitution of Canning for Liverpool was a factor likely to be decisive at long last. Grey and a small band of supporters watched in dismay as the bulk of the opposition crossed the floor of the Commons.⁶³

Canning was not to have an easy passage, with Grey so determined in opposition, and so personally hostile. It was held by more than one observer that if anyone was responsible for Canning's collapse, it was Grey. Canning's personal physician Dr. Parr told the Duke after Canning's death 'It was Canning's temper that killed him.'⁶⁴ O'Connell described Canning's death as 'another blow to wretched Ireland'⁶⁵.

When the Duke of Wellington set about forming a new government, the King insisted that Catholic emancipation was not to be made a cabinet question, and that in Ireland the Lord Lieutenant and Lord Chancellor were to be Protestants. However, he was prepared to allow that the Government should include both pro- and anti-emancipation ministers. The Duke himself was attached to the Irish problem, and expressed himself emotionally on the subject. In 1824, he had written to Peel on the subject of political societies of whatever colour, which he was bitterly opposed to:

If we can't get rid of the Catholic Association, we must look to civil war in Ireland sooner or later⁶⁶.

The new administration caused much speculation, particularly about the Catholic question. Creevey wrote to Miss Ord:

February 28, 1824.

...I have been sitting with Sefton who has a headache. He is quite convinced that Wellington will turn out the greatest *Economical* reformer the country can produce, and he thinks after he has proved himself to have such dispositions, Grey will come into office, but I say *Not* without Ireland being set at rest, and even then at Grey's time of life, it is idle to speculate on such matters...⁶⁷

During the lull in the Catholic Emancipation question, Losh was keeping up to date with the propaganda circulating on it. He was always even-handed, and read and studied all sides of the question. Nevertheless, he was consistent in his opinion and expressed himself forcefully when the material moved him:

April 21, 1828.

Philpotts on *The Coronation Oath*. Finished this tedious book. It is cunning and bitter - in parts well written and now and then displaying considerable talents and power of argument. The whole scope and object of the work seems to be to blacken and ridicule the characters of past and present Catholic priests, and from thence to infer that granting indulgence to that sect is dangerous. He assumes that were the Catholics emancipated, they would have the power as well and the inclination to destroy the established Church of Ireland, and again he assumes that the destruction of that establishment would overturn the British Constitution, and destroy the peace and happiness of this great country⁶⁸.

The following month the Commons, which had already declared itself for a repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, now expressed its opinion that there should be a final removal of the penalties under which the Irish Catholics still suffered.

Machin comments:

The importance of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts can hardly be exaggerated. Exclusion of Dissenters although only a theoretical exclusion, was as much a part of the constitution as the actual exclusion of Catholics; once the first had fallen, the other was likely to follow⁶⁹.

The issue was raised by a motion introduced by Sir Francis Burdett on 8 May, and after three days of debate at the division the Commons declared in favour of Catholic emancipation, by a majority of six. An almost equally important decision on Ireland had been reached by the Cabinet six days before. On 2 May they had decided not to renew the 1825 Act against the Catholic Association.

From the end of July the Duke of Wellington was to fight round after round on behalf of Catholic emancipation. The King was still passionately against; Ernest, Duke of Cumberland, the King's influential brother, furiously so; and of the Cabinet, Lord Anglesey was for it, and Peel also, by conversion, but pledged to resign as soon as his side won. 1828 was a very wearing year for the Duke.

Losh reveals in his diary how well he appreciated the difficulties that lay ahead of the Duke:

End August 1828.

Public affairs appear to be stationary, except in Ireland where the Catholic question becomes daily more and more important. Government must be well aware of the wisdom, not to say the necessity of granting the just demands of the Irish, and what they did with respect to the Dissenters, shews they are not hostile to religious liberty. I suppose the great stumbling block is the Church establishment in Ireland, and the great patronage, public and private, connected with it and Protestant Ascendancy⁷⁰.

Creevey was actually in Ireland at this time. He knew everyone and was a welcome guest at the homes of the rich and powerful. He was scathing of the selfish Irish aristocracy.

He wrote in his diary September 3:

Dublin tells its own story. The Aristocracy have sold their country to England; they have left excellent

streets and public buildings to starve in...⁷¹

Losh, without the benefit of Creevey's first-hand view of the problem, also sensed that the matter was coming to a head. He wrote:

End December 1828.

...the Catholic question must agitate the whole country. It will I have no doubt end well, because common sense has now fair play, and no administration can help seeing the necessity of giving peace to Ireland. Bigotry and the dread of innovation will make a desperate struggle, and many good men will I have no doubt join in the cry that the *Church is in danger!*⁷²

But the year 1829 came with the Catholic question still embedded in the quicksands of royal evasiveness. Early in January, Wellington had discussions with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of London and Durham. They were all hostile. The King, having given his consent for the Cabinet to take up the Catholic question, was, in February, backing out of it because of the opposition of Cumberland, his beloved and feared brother.

Peel now supported the Duke, making the Cabinet wholly for emancipation. Hinde has identified this as a fear of doing nothing to quieten the turbulence of Ireland, a danger greater than the risks consequent on removing the disabilities⁷³. The Duke was prepared to consider any solution that did not imperil the Union. He had written to his brother William:

I don't like the Catholic question. It is the natural wish in every people to become independent of their numerous and more powerful neighbours⁷⁴.

Either the King must give his assent to the bill, or they would resign. His refusal to assent the Bill brought their

immediate resignations. The King realised the enormity of what he had done and sent an immediate letter of retraction:

...I have decided to yield my opinions to that which is considered by the Cabinet to be for the immediate interests of the country⁷⁵.

Creevey, that indefatigable correspondent, was quick with the latest news to his sister-in-law Miss Ord.

February 4, 1829.

Everyone was up with the news of the day. That Wellington had decided to let the Catholics into Parliament...I have always, you know, been convinced that the Beau must and would do *something* upon this subject... Wellington went to see the King last Monday week, and told him the thing *must* be, and Prinney struck without making any fight to signify⁷⁶...

In the North East, Losh had to wait for the news by coach from London.

February 7, 1829.

This day the King's speech arrived announcing Catholic Emancipation. This is a glorious event from whatever cause it may have arisen⁷⁷.

On February 11, the *Newcastle Chronicle*, faithful to its readers, who represented a whole spectrum of liberal opinion, printed the debate on the King's speech. It urged the consideration of the state of Ireland, and legislation to suppress the Catholic Association, and led to the following remarks by Peel:

...If Ministers were of the opinion that a continuation of the Catholic disabilities would prove more injurious to the interests of the Church and State than a consideration of the state of Ireland, it was their duty to advise His Majesty to that effect. He (Mr Peel) had no hesitation in declaring, that there was less evil in considering the whole state of Ireland than in refraining from it...

The *Chronicle* also gave Henry Brougham's reply:

...What I understand is, that we are to do all that ought to be done, and that we are to do it at once - and that we should make to the Roman Catholics such concessions as

may once, and for all, terminate the differences between us; that we should give the Roman Catholics what we can afford to give, and what they ought to be satisfied to receive...

Catholic emancipation when it finally came in 1829 could be seen as a concession wrung from the Duke's 'Protestant' government by the exhibition of the Catholic Association's power to render the existing system of exclusion unworkable. This would, however, ignore the willingness of the Duke to resolve the matter, and also his personal effort with the King. For the Irish Catholics, the consequence of emancipation was the loss of the forty-shilling freeholders.

O'Connell was heavily criticized for not protesting more strongly against the disenfranchisement of the Irish poor. In December 1828, he could not have been more violent in his expression of defiance:

If any man dares to bring in a bill for the disenfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders, I would rather go back to the Penal Code. If an attempt were made to take from them the privileges vested in them by the Constitution, I would conceive it just to resist. I would be ready to perish on the field or on the scaffold...⁷⁸.

The opponents of Catholic Emancipation were still presenting petitions to parliament on behalf of Protestant groups. At Sheffield a meeting promoted principally by the clergy, at which pro-Catholics were not allowed to speak, voted for a petition against emancipation. The anti-Catholic petitions clearly had the advantage in terms of numbers of signatures. But their validity as genuine expressions of 'respectable'

public opinion was hotly debated in both Houses of Parliament and disputed in the pro-Catholic press⁷⁹.

Early in February Lord Darnley presented a petition from the Kentish freeholders. Earl Grey, as leader of the opposition and a supporter of the Duke of Wellington's measure, had the following scathing comment to make, as reported in the *Newcastle Chronicle*, February 29, 1829:

At present is it not a fit occasion for debating at large that great question so vitally affecting the interests of the country, which, I trust, at an early period will be brought before us in the shape of a bill...
 ...Let the people be left to the exercise of their own judgement and discretion, and they will show no violence either in favour of or against this measure...from the confidence I have in the Noble Duke himself, that when he determined to take this course, he considered well how he should best carry it into effect. I do not believe the Noble Duke to be a man of half measures.

In the legislation of 1829 a general oath of allegiance, unexceptionable for Catholics was introduced, and state offices apart from a few very grand exceptions, opened up to them. At the same time, a string of minor restrictions about modes of worship and tithes were instituted; the Catholic Association was dissolved, against O'Connell's public efforts; the forty-shilling freeholders were disenfranchised by raising the threshold of county voting qualifications to ten pounds. The boroughs were left untouched. Though spectacularly corrupt, they were corrupt in the Protestant interest.

Thomas Creevey, reported on the Duke's success to Miss Ord:

February 5.

...the Whigs are quite as sore as the Brunswickers at this victory of the Beau over Prinney and his Catholic prejudices. They had arranged the most brilliant

opposition for the approaching session, and this coup of the Duke's has blown up the whole concern⁸⁰

And again on February 6:

...It does Wellington infinite honour; the only drawback to his fame on this occasion is his silence to Anglesey as to his intentions⁸¹.

Losh, meanwhile, was battling for support for the measure in the north east. Though not violent in their opposition to legislative relief for the Catholics, the opponents of any concessions were robust in their opinions. This was a major speech by Losh, and the newspaper report makes it clear that during it he demonstrated how skilful he had become in handling heckling from the floor.[see Appendix One for full speech].

The *Newcastle Chronicle* reported the meeting on the March 14, and we see Losh holding himself aloof from the noise and provocation from the floor:

Mr. Losh came forward and was received with immense cheering from the right, and great clamour and hisses from the left.

'I am entirely in your hands, and will wait just as long as you please. When you are disposed to hear me I will go on.'

Reasonable quiet having been restored, Losh continued:

We, the requisitionists, called together a public meeting...to know whether it was your will and pleasure to petition Parliament in order to remove the Catholic disabilities...We did not attempt to take you by surprise. We wished not only to say that we desired to petition, but to tell you what we intended to say to Parliament...

The meeting at this moment was so quiet as to present a remarkable contrast to the previous confusion. Losh went on: ...we gave an immense majority in this country, in favour of Catholic Emancipation...if Mr Bell had not been supported by friends of Catholic Emancipation, he would not now have been the member for the county of Northd (great applause and tumult)...I ask what are the opinions of the Duke of Northumberland? Why, according to these gentlemen to destroy the Protestant religion, and subvert

the Constitution of this country! A fit person, forsooth, for such a task. Are you to believe that all these persons I have mentioned to you, with the King and his ministers, are united deliberately, to destroy the Constitution of country?

...I mention the name of Earl Grey - a name no Northumbrian can ever forget...but if we are not to be taught by names, I will meet these persons on the merits of the question itself.

Every Lord Lieutenant who has gone to Ireland... after he had seen the state and condition of that country has returned a decided friend to Catholic Emancipation...

At this point there was further uproar. Mr Losh turned to the left...

When you have had enough Gentlemen, I will give over; make your signal and I am done. Gentlemen [to the meeting] I was addressing myself to you, to shew you the utter absurdity of the grounds these persons take in opposing the petition (clamour)...They are contrary to the commonest principle of justice... Then are Catholics disturbed for their religion? They are not, this Gentleman says...if he were a Catholic... he would find he could not hold office - and yet we are told that this is not persecution.

...But to tell me that it is not persecution to deprive our fellow creatures of those advantages which ought to belong to every honest man, I say this is a mockery and delusion. I say that the Catholics are under very heavy persecution...

We are told that this measure will do no good - that it is folly. That the country is quiet...It is quiet by an army of 30,000 men in Ireland. It is quiet by an annual expenditure of four million sterling, which is literally thrown away; and will it be no saving, then, to obtain a settlement of the Catholic question?

In this speech Losh very skilfully blended mention of local personalities, whose support for emancipation was unquestioned, with the absurdity of the anti-Catholic position. He recorded in his diary his reactions to the meeting:

March 10, 1829.

Public meeting for petitioning on the *Catholic Question* I spoke at considerable length, and tho' I did not enter so fully into the subjects as I intended to do, nor pursue quite the line of argument which I had previously arranged yet I was upon the whole satisfied with my exertions. The clergy and Methodists had formed a junction and bringing in a number of colliers etc., they outnumbered us... Even their majority

amongst the mob might easily have been prevented by a little exertion.

March 11, 1829.

Perusing and correcting Hodgson's notes [*Newcastle Chronicle*] of my yesterday's speech. Upon perusing the notes I was surprised and pleased that I was able amidst the noise and confusion of an adverse mob, to preserve so much consistency. The very circumstances of violent and uncivil interruption were likely to make me speak with more vigour. I am sorry I did not dwell more upon the strange inconsistency, not to say meanness, of the anti-Catholics, who refused to give freedom to a sect which they say is every way contemptible both as to numbers and absurdity of dogmas... I am satisfied that as soon as they are freed from all restrictions, they will mix freely and melt by degrees into the mass of society, I fear that the high church men are more alarmed at the spread of free enquiry, than at the enlargement of the papal power, and the diffusion of popish doctrines. Things in fact which no well-educated and impartial person can seriously apprehend⁸².

The Catholic Relief Bill was presented to the House of Commons on the 10 March. The substance of the enacting clauses was: Roman Catholics were to be allowed to sit and vote in Parliament having taken the oath; Roman Catholics could vote and also be elected; they could hold all offices civil and military except certain high offices. A letter to the Editor of the *Newcastle Chronicle* on March 21, 1829 shows that some strong anti-emancipation feeling continued here and there in the north east. It probably had its source in the resentment against an immigrant Irish population increasing in the area⁸³:

Sir, At the late almost unanimous meeting at South Shields I had the misfortune to differ in opinion from my neighbours and fellow townsmen, and am in consequence held up not only as a liberal, but also a radical; and as having avowed myself friendly to Catholic Emancipation... The disabilities and penal restrictions under which Catholics now labour, were imposed upon them, not so much as a religious body, as a political faction... I can assure such gentlemen, that the Church and constitution are not endangered by this measure; that the King has not been forced to it by ministers; that our existence as a country, and our temporal and spiritual prosperity as ship-owners, etc.etc. do not depend upon the admission of a few Catholics into Parliament; that

should emancipation be conceded, there is no probability of their being burnt as Protestants in their respective market places...

MINORITY.

Something of the excitement generated by the issue all over the North of England can be also judged by this intriguing comment of Charlotte Bronte, at the Haworth home of an evangelical Church of England minister:

Parliament was opened and the Great Catholic question was brought forward and the Duke's measures were disclosed and all was slander, violence, party spirit and confusion. O those three months from the time of the King's speech to the end! Nobody could think, speak or write anything but the Catholic question and the Duke of Wellington or Mr Peel. I remember the day when the Intelligence extra-ordinary came with Mr Peel's speech in it containing the terms on which the Catholics were to be let in. With what eagerness Papa tore off the cover and we all gathered round him, and with what breathless anxiety we listened as one by one they were disclosed and explained and argued upon so ably and so well; and then, when it was all out, how Aunt said she thought it was excellent and that the Catholics [could] do no harm with such good security..."

We have seen that something of this feeling was apparent at the meetings which Losh addressed on the question, particularly that of March 10. There is no doubt that feeling ran high, certainly among those supporters of the Anglican church. The bogey of the Catholics persisted long beyond Losh's time. However, in the result, the majority of Losh's peers were in accord with that more liberal attitude which Losh recorded in his diary:

End April 1829.

I rejoice that the Duke of Wellington has had the firmness and perseverance to effect his great measure of Catholic Emancipation, in spite of the clamour of the ignorant and selfish, for into one or other of these classes the great body of the anti-Catholic may, I think, be fairly divided. That there were some honest and sensible men who contended that restrictions for the sake of religious opinions did not amount to intolerance, and that disqualifications were not persecution, I believe is

true, but I think the number was small and at all events they were not amongst the most clamorous and violent. It seems at first sight singular that the great measures of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts and Catholic Emancipation should have been carried by men as the Duke of Wellington and Mr Peel, altho' they had failed under the auspices of Mr Fox, Mr Pitt, Mr Burke etc. But the state of public opinion has slowly but steadily undergone a complete change upon the subject of religious restrictions, and I am greatly mistaken if it be not found, ere long, to have done the same upon many other subjects of equal, nay, if possible of still greater importance. Mr Grey in particular, and the Whigs in general, deserve great credit for supporting in the most vigorous and disinterested manner the measures of a party which must be considered as politically opposed to them⁸⁵.

By dint of Whig votes, Catholic Emancipation had been carried through parliament and into law. Lord Grey, delighted that a most cherished political object had been won, saw no cause to abandon what he called his 'friendly neutrality' towards Wellington's government. Grey's impracticality, as Brougham put it, prevented the organisation of a more vigorous opposition. Nevertheless, it marked a turning point in English politics, and by driving an immovable wedge between Wellington and the ultras, it fatally weakened the parliamentary strength of Toryism. O'Connell could not form a solid bloc of Irish voters, as Parnell did later⁸⁶. The ground was cut from under his feet. Because liberation for the Catholics was accompanied by a drastic reduction in the county voters in Ireland, from 216,000 down to 37,000, with the disqualification of the forty shilling freeholders⁸⁷.

Reaction in London was dramatic. The Duke was accused of subverting the Constitution and forcing the King to violate his oath. He fought a duel with Lord Winchelsea over the

accusation⁸⁸. In consequence of the duel moderate
'Protestants' came forward to remonstrate with the extremists.

Creevey wrote to Miss Ord about the reaction to the measure.

April 11, 1829.

...The King was very angry at the large majority [for the Catholic Relief Bill] and did not write the Duke a line in answer to his express telling him of it. The Beau's troubles are not over yet. This distress in the country is frightful. Millions are starving, and I defy him to do anything to relieve them⁸⁹.

In Newcastle, too, Losh saw that the Catholic Relief Bill was only the beginning of the solution to Ireland's problems and looked to the Government to settle the unrest continuing there:

October 29, 1829.

Ireland seems more disturbed than it ought to be after the Catholic Emancipation, but the causes are not very difficult to comprehend, and I consider them merely temporary, indeed such as must necessarily disappear, if the government act impartially and firmly⁹⁰.

* * * * *

There were many shades of opinion expressed on the question of Catholic emancipation: from the passionate Irish Catholic radicalism of O'Connell to the more pragmatic Henry Brougham. A comparison of some of these views helps to make the individual positions of less prominent individuals like Losh more understandable. For example, we have seen that Sydney Smith in his *Peter Plymley* letters made the points that, at a time when Britain was fighting Napoleon, the command of a regiment was refused to an Irish Catholic because of religion; that the public had a fear of raising troops in Ireland; that

Catholics were refused public office and excluded from Parliament. He pointed to the absurd fears of a bigoted and largely instinctive attitude to Catholics, particularly absurd in a country with 10,000 educated ministers preaching the state religion. How could a minority of Catholic MPs possibly upset that religion, or destroy the Constitution?

Losh, in contrast, tended to take a more general attitude; a Dissenter's view of restrictions for religious reasons. His was an argument based upon reason, that such restrictions are unjust, and immoral, and contrary to the Christian idea of equality, and to equality before the law. It was also grounded in experience: when Losh came north to Newcastle in 1799, he had suffered from professional discrimination as a member of a minority Unitarian church. The Reverend Sydney Smith as a minister of the established Church had none of these difficulties, though it was late in his career before he enjoyed some preferment. (This was probably because of his outspoken views). In this sense, he and Losh were fellow-travellers.

We have seen that as early as 1812 Losh was advocating measures that would placate the Irish:

March 18, 1812.

...no time ought to be lost in attempting a mild and rational means to prevent the horrors which seem to be fast approaching...⁹¹

Losh could see that *mild and rational means* would not do if the matter was left too long. Sydney Smith too, counselled the wisdom of giving something now, rather a great deal later:

...They will compell you to give 10 times as much thereafter against your will as they would now be contented with..."

They both had confidence that the loyalty of the Irish was not in dispute. We saw that Grattan pointed to this in his speech pleading for relief from the Catholic disabilities: 'You have voted thanks year after year, to armies composed of Catholics...and two thirds of the Irish people...were being deprived of their civil liberties.' Sydney Smith put it succinctly: 'Whatever you think of the Catholics, there are nearly 5 million of them.'

Losh, as ever, had found a sound commercial reason for giving the Irish their liberties. In his speech of March 10, 1829: '...the country is quiet. It is quiet by an army of 30,000 men in Ireland. Quiet by an annual expenditure of four million sterling, which is literally thrown away; and will it be no saving, then, to obtain a settlement of the Catholic question?' Losh, as we will see again in later chapters, was conscious of the calibre of his audience. They were professional middle class people, many with interests in industry and commerce. They understood a financial argument, and had a dislike of the fiscal policies of government. What was just as important to them, they saw in Losh one of themselves.

While the Irish Catholics were denied the right of petitioning (as was referred to by Earl Fitzwilliam in 1812) Losh remained a firm advocate and believer in the efficacy of the petition. He rallied support for them on every occasion when the issue

demanded that the local middle class voice be heard. In the Conclusion to this thesis I will be discussing this strategy, and considering how the initial distaste in government circles for petitions gave way to a more ready acceptance.

In the following two chapters - on Parliamentary Reform and Slavery - we will see how Losh used petitions for gathering local support and political action at national level.[see Appendix Four for two typical local petitions].

This chapter is in a sense pivotal, following Losh from the role of informed observer, to that of an active participant. His commitment to reform, to social justice, impelled him into a forward position. He became a leader of his local professional people almost by default, having no personal political ambitions to pursue. To him the issue was the important matter, and he had some of Earl Grey's distaste for personal cults. In the following chapters we will see Losh becoming even more prominent, as a spokesman for local opinion, and as a conduit through which it could reach the metropolis.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM

'We are said to be rash and hasty speculatists - hasty surely the friends of Reform have not been, for they have been at least fifty years engaged in their object. In 1770, the great Lord Chatham brought it forward, and ever since that period the question has been repeatedly agitated. Surely then we are not hasty...'

So argued James Losh in a public speech in 1820 (see Appendix Two).

As we have seen in previous chapters, and will see again in this, Losh was both a consistent and a persistent reformer. His desire for parliamentary reform was not prompted by political ambition, as one might say, for example, of Henry Brougham. Losh responded to social need rather than political climate, although he was always sufficiently aware when the time was right, as he was in 1830, for energetic action. Yet his argument for reform was continuous throughout the period 1793-1832. He saw the need for changing the corrupt system he first knew in his youth, and which he attacked, not with pious platitudes but with reasoned detailed argument. He was impatient with politicians who judged the climate not tactically favourable for debate on the issue. Yet Losh was not naive, he was sufficiently au fait with metropolitan politics to understand the political game. What he found difficult to stomach was a reluctance in politicians to express personal commitment to parliamentary reform when they supposedly held liberal views. Losh saw the need for giving the property-owning middle class the benefit of an increased franchise. This was not a personal demand: he owned property in both Cumberland and Newcastle which entitled him to cast

his vote. To him it was an injustice, and its remedy was long overdue.

And, of course, Losh was correct in arguing that parliamentary reform was no new innovation, it was a 'hot potato' in the 1770s with the plea of the American colonists for 'no taxation without representation.' As John Cannon succinctly puts it:

The condition of the representative system and the question of Parliamentary Reform is thus at the very heart of modern history¹.

In 1785, William Pitt (1759-1806) offered to Parliament a reform proposal (which was printed by the Rev. Christopher Wyvill in 1793 to coincide with the reform submission of that year).

...a proposal for reforming the representation of the people of England...A considerable part of the nation undoubtedly heard the proposal with aversion because it aimed to destroy their ill-acquired and unconstitutional power...by others it was disregarded because they thought it not sufficiently extensive and many who approved the general principle on which it was proposed to reform the representation; yet... were too indolent to examine it with sufficient attention to obtain any exact comprehension of it².

Cannon comments on how ill-timed these reform proposals were:

At a time when the beginnings of industrialisation were creating new manufacturing towns, it was peculiarly inappropriate to add to the county representation...the result was a stunning blow to reformers.³

When Pitt made his first proposals for parliamentary reform, Losh was twenty-two years old, and in the light of his comment on the fifty years that parliamentary reform had been 'repeatedly agitated', it is not unreasonable to suggest that he was familiar with the substance of Pitt's proposals for re-allocating pocket-borough seats to the counties and to London.

This conjecture is supported by the fact that in 1792, Losh was associated with Charles Grey and a group of reforming aristocrats who formed the Society for the Friends of the People. Charles Fox was against its formation and against the raising of the parliamentary reform issue, at a time of rising war fever, but Grey persisted⁴. Losh refers to the Society, and to his relationship with Grey, in a later diary entry:

March 17, 1832.

...I remember 40 years ago (in Debret's shop) having a warm discussion with Lord (then Charles Grey) when he took fire at my stating to him my fears that the *Friends of the People* (of which society he was chairman) would fail for want of energy and decisive measures. We were then young men...We got to high words...We parted haughtily...⁵

The Society eschewed a too-radical position, seeing as its basic purpose a movement to preserve the constitution by reforming it. Ignoring Fox's advice, Grey pushed ahead with parliamentary reform proposals. Having announced his intention in the House of Commons, Grey tabled a proposal which had been drafted by George Tierney and James Losh. It is possible that the choice of Losh was influenced by his being, like Grey from the north, and a fellow Cambridge man. The fact that Losh had re-published Milton's *Aeropagitica* (1644) a plea for a free press, in 1791, may have also been a factor.

The Society's proposal did not commit them to a very definite programme of reform: it spoke of restoring the freedom of election; ensuring a more equal representation of the people in Parliament; and giving the people a more frequent exercise

of their right to choose representatives. The following extracts give something of the flavour of the document:

We know the indispensable necessity of a Reform of the House of Commons...to have stated an enormous public grievance without proposing a remedy would naturally expose us to the imputation of having had no other view...but to alarm and agitate the minds of the people, and to disturb the peace of society...we propose, namely 'That we make the Preservation of the Constitution, on its true principles the Foundation of all our proceedings'...

But if it be material to the People at large to be represented, really and bona fide...if a real representation of the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament can only be by the free election of all such persons...We then contend, that a House of Commons, constituted as it now is, does not give the Commons of this kingdom their constitutional share in the legislature, nor even a proper organ to express their opinion...every plan of Parliamentary Reform...is to obtain a free Independent House of Commons, really elected by, and representing the Commons of the Kingdom, who are in fact the nation⁶...

The generalisations of this document evaded the difficult questions which marked off the various shades of reformist opinion from each other. If the Friends of the People rejected universal suffrage, where and how would they fix franchise levels? Were they prepared to go further than triennial parliaments? What was their attitude to annual elections? Experience eventually confirmed that Grey favoured a conservative answer to each of these questions. And as we shall see, so did Losh. He was never a radical (in the then accepted sense of the word) in his approach to the reform of institutions which had evolved over many generations. But neither did he believe in preserving a structure that did not meet the needs of the day. He was also sufficiently a product of the Enlightenment to value rational thought, and eschewed emotional rhetoric and ideas.

Losh, as we shall discuss in the Conclusion, was at this time a member of the circle of radical intellectuals gathered around William Godwin (1756-1836). Godwin's views tended towards the anarchical. It is, therefore, surprising that the language of the Society's plea for reform was so temperate and the ideas so unspecific, considering that one of the authors was a member of this circle. Losh was a thirty-year old barrister with an uncommon amount of common sense. Certainly there is nothing in Losh's later writings or his diary entries that would point to his having absorbed anything ultra-radical. Perhaps it underlines how little Losh was given to the emotive appeals of a Brougham or a Fox. Certainly his language was grounded in the art of the possible, perhaps a result of his court experience.

By the time Grey moved his reform resolutions in the Commons on 6 May 1793, the political situation had been further transformed by the fact that from 1 February Britain had been at war with France. To suggest moving a general reform of parliament in the midst of war, with radical societies calling for reforms which went far beyond what Grey either approved or desired, seemed to a vast majority of MPs to be courting disaster. Windham questioned: 'His honourable friend might open the door, but would he be able to shut it?' Fox had anticipated the result, and did not want to be drawn on the subject. His own preference was to let the reform issue rest. He advised Grey to soft-pedal the issue but Grey ignored his advice - surprising seeing his near idolisation of Fox. Losh did not begin his diaries until 1796, so we do not know how he

felt about the failure of the project. Significantly, perhaps, he became a 'watcher' rather than a 'participator' in political questions for some years thereafter.

As we saw in the chapter one', in late 1799 Losh moved to Newcastle where his brothers William and George had been long established in business. The early years of setting up house and establishing a law practice, did not dampen his ardour for keeping himself politically aware, and his diary records this awareness. In an early volume of his thirty eight years of diaries we find the following entry:

Feb 3, 1801

This day the news of Pitt's going out of office was confirmed...nothing can save the country but a complete and radical reform, strict economy, and the exemplary punishment of those who have disgraced and nearly ruined us...'

Losh was in London during the short Peace of Amiens(1802).

This visit was largely for business reasons, but we find among the pages recording visits to his many friends, entries on the failure of the reform ventures of the 90s, which are illuminating:

March 6, 1802.

...called on Tierney...He says he is as much and as ardently a friend of Parliamentary Reform as ever...but that all thought, all interest upon the subject seem dead among the people...Tierney spoke with considerable bitterness of Fox, said that he was never a friend of Reform, and that he and his friends checked all hope of success by preventing the Society of Friends of the People from persevering when there seemed to be a favourable feeling in the nation (this I believe to be true from my own knowledge)...¹⁰

March 17, 1802.

Erskine...said the same thing of Fox's ruining the cause of Parliamentary Reform as Tierney did when I talked to him. I have no doubt Erskine [Thomas Erskine 1750-1823] is anxious to be Chief Justice...¹¹

Losh's diaries at this time show no personal involvement in the reform issue, but no doubt he was aware that the climate was improving, as Cannon points out:

Though there was no immediate prospect of a revival of the reform movement, the years after the Union afford some slight indications that tension was relaxing...¹²

Like many of the Unitarian persuasion, his attitude to politics was coloured by his religion. We see it in the following diary entry Losh's reaction towards Pitt, whom he saw as a great, though wrong-headed, statesman

End January 1806

It is reported that Mr Pitt is dead...I consider Mr Pitt as a great instrument in the hands of Providence for deceiving and punishing mankind and next to Buonaparte he seems to me to have done more to alter the relative situation of the states of Europe than any man who ever existed.¹³

Though he never deceived himself as to the poor state of the country, Losh was rarely pessimistic. In this he was typically Necessarian: the world was created by God and it was inevitably moving towards its proper end. (He was less sanguine about his own personal deficiencies). After the death of Pitt, he is hopeful for the 'Ministry of All the Talents':

March 6, 1806.

The account of the final arrangement of the new ministry arrived. ..There may be objectionable parts in the administration but upon the whole it holds of the promise of talents and vigour... It seems to me that the immediate measures ought to be: the giving of emancipation of the catholics in Ireland and the Dissenters at large; the abolition of slavery...¹⁴

But then Fox died:

September 19, 1806.

I yesterday heard of the death of that illustrious man Charles James Fox - very superior indeed to his rival Mr. Pitt and all other public men of this time in talents and also in clear and just ideas of government. He

failed greatly in that species of wisdom which may be called discretion. ¹⁵

Losh met Charles Fox before his death, when visiting the Commons to listen to the debates. Fox was a little distant with him, but that never changed Losh's appreciation of his fine qualities.

February 6, 1804.

...he received me very coldly. Indeed, I believe he was displeased by the warmth with which I spoke to him on Parliamentary Reform (a warmth that did not become so young a man addressing so eminent a person)...[Losh was 41!]¹⁶

Whilst the parliamentarians at Westminster blew hot and cold on reform, the constant business of elections went on.

Losh, in his capacity as an observing barrister, was frequently involved in both local and national elections. He always tried to avoid bias, though his comments were often sharp and penetrating:

End May 1807.

The elections have occasioned me much bustle and very considerable profits not less I trust than £300, some compensation to me personally for the wretched consequences of the late most profligate dissolution of Parliament, by our wicked and imbecile administration... It is said the opposition will muster 200 in the House of Commons, and if so I think the administration must fall, a thing devoutly to be wished for...but with such a King and such a Royal Family, God knows what may be the consequence.¹⁷

[We saw in chapter two what Losh thought of the royal family].

In April 1808, Henry Brougham, destined to be Lord Chancellor in Grey's reform administration, and another in James Losh's orbit of men of political significance, wrote a piece in the *Edinburgh Review* which was variously decried as a dangerous piece of demagoguery and as a trumpet call of liberalism:

Those who had so little of what is commonly called interest in the country ...they who could not pledge

*their fortunes, having only their lives and liberties to lose...Common justice demands such a thing in government as will give the people who had saved the state...a large share in its future management*¹⁸...

This comment of Brougham would have jarred on Losh, who considered it undesirable that those without property should decide what to do with the property of others. As he expressed it:

...the possession of a competent property is a condition essential ...to a right of disposing of the property of another...¹⁹

Losh, who came to know Brougham intimately in the years ahead, both as a barrister on the northern circuit and as a fellow reformer, would no doubt have put Brougham's statement down as a typical piece of high-flown rhetoric. In his many letters, speeches and diary entries on this issue, Losh stressed that universal suffrage was only possible with a higher standard of education and the exercise of civic responsibility.

Losh, as a reforming Whig, shows his concern in this 1809 entry for the unity of the opposition, and the consequence of the rupture in the relationship of Grey and Whitbread, after the latter's ill-advised attendance at a radical meeting:

April 24, 1809.

I heard today that Lord Grey and Mr. Whitbread have quarrelled as politicians. I consider this an important event in the present very critical state of the country²⁰.

Lord Grey was making other alliances. He said of Brougham in September or October 1809 'the first man this country has seen since Burke's time is Brougham²¹'. But the question of Parliamentary Reform was undisturbed. Cannon puts it humorously:

In December 1809...Grey was in full agreement with the policy of masterly inactivity...²²

Losh remarked on this inertia when dining with Grey. There is a tinge of criticism in his words:

October 6, 1809.

...Lord Grey had much the appearance of a man content and satisfied with his family and situation, and by no means anxious to take the lead which his talents and his character entitle him to take in public affairs²³.

On 13 June 1810 in the House of Lords, Grey declared that while the best interests of the country depended upon parliamentary reform, nothing should be done to hurry it on until 'it was taken up by the people of England seriously and affectionately²⁴.' To all this Brougham was decidedly opposed. There was nothing moderate in his advocacy of extending the franchise to all who paid taxes, and of triennial parliaments. He saw clearly enough how fantastic was the proposal for annual parliaments, that idea so dear to Bentham and Place, Major Cartwright and most of the Radicals.

In an article in 1810 in the *Edinburgh Review*, Brougham stated that any attempt to substitute a new system of representation was impracticable. There were too many 'placemen' in Parliament; thorough reform of representation in Scotland 'where there was' he demanded, 'no popular representation at all'; there should be general enfranchisement of copyholders in the counties; extinction of the rotten boroughs and a transfer to the large towns such as Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds²⁵.

The following year Brougham detailed suggestions for reform in an article entitled *Parliamentary Reform*. He wrote:

...the rights of electing members should be taken away from 'all places too small and insignificant as to have become, in a great measure, the property of an individual' ...if the cost of elections was reduced...then triennial parliaments would be desirable. By the extension of the elective franchise, many of those excluded would have a part assigned to them²⁶.

A far cry from the sweeping statement of 1808, that had been almost a plea for universal suffrage!

Losh as an attending barrister was increasingly involved in local elections from this time on. His observations on the cost of the process determining the successful candidate are interesting:

March 19, 1812.

I was today retained by Sir. C. Monck who was determined to offer himself candidate for Northumberland, a vacancy having been occasioned by Lord Percy's promotion to the House of Peers. The conduct of the Duke of Northumberland seems on this occasion to be as weak and profligate as that of the Prince Regent himself... I fear, however, that the ruinous expense of the election will determine the election of whosoever the Duke may nominate²⁷.

Coming closer to Grey, Brougham wrote in 1813 and 1814, a number of good Whig letters to him, suggesting that the party should push strongly for Catholic Emancipation, to the reform of the law and the reduction of the expenses of law proceedings, and amendment of the Poor Laws²⁸. (No mention of Parliamentary Reform here though). Lord Grey asked Lord Darlington for his borough seat for Brougham, and before the session of February 1816, Brougham proposed to Grey and Creevey his idea of opposition policy: they should concentrate

on retrenchment and reduction of taxes, and in foreign policy, act as a corps of observation²⁹.

During the following few years Losh was dissatisfied that Parliamentary reform had been put in abeyance - lost in the manoeuvring of professional politicians playing the parliamentary game. We find him critical of Grey for this change of direction; and of his avoidance of a personal commitment to reform, whenever he was invited to speak at local 'Fox dinners'. Losh commits to his diary his disappointment with Grey:

September 1814.
 Lord Grey was in the chair...He spoke well and with such apparent frankness. He avowed himself the enemy of every species of corruption, and recommended to the whole company, in their respective spheres, to keep a watchful eye on the government...I could not help but observing, however, that Lord Grey never in direct terms mentioned Parliamentary reform, tho' both Lord Lambton and Dr. Fenwick gave him fair opportunity of doing so...³⁰

Whilst still concerned with political matters, over the next two years Losh, like so many of his class, was struggling with the serious economic consequences of the end of the war, the near famine that followed the bad harvest of 1816, and the 'odious property tax'. An entry of 1815 suggests the difficulties facing business men at the end of the war:

July 22, 1815.
 Much confusion in Newcastle today owing to the run upon the banks in consequence of the stopping of Mowbray & Co's bank at Durham. There seems to be no serious danger to any of the Newcastle banks, but I fear much misery must be caused by this unfortunate event, as their circulation and connections were very widely extended. Most fortunately, however, neither I nor any of my connections are at all likely to suffer by the failure.³¹

Meanwhile, the economic problems of the country were not yet the concern of a liberal Whig government. In 1817, Brougham was working for the whig/radical alliance. But by this time Francis Place (1771-1854), one of the founders of the London Corresponding Society who had sponsored him, was bitterly against him for refusing to support universal suffrage and annual parliaments. Brougham objected to the well-educated urging the un-instructed and the illiterate to demand universal suffrage as a birthright. And yet in his own Parliamentary constituency he was attacked by such intelligent men as Wordsworth and Southey as a dangerous revolutionary³².

Cannon comments on Brougham's attitude to the radicals, and what he saw as their dangerous influence:

Brougham living down his earlier flirtation with manhood suffrage, launched fierce attacks on extremists who deluded the people³³.

Losh, however, had more confidence in him. By this time Losh was a close personal friend, and in March 1818 wrote to Brougham about the forthcoming Westmorland election in which Brougham was a candidate:

March 3, 1818.

...Mr Monkhouse and Mr. Martindale are the only Westmorland freeholders in this district and I have procured very strong applications to both of them in your favour...³⁴.

I have met with another West'd Freeholder, a Mr Procter of Newcastle, and fortunately I have some claims upon him which will, I trust, prevent his voting for your opponents.

As we saw in chapter one, Losh's family were a Cumberland family of some influence. In the early years of his residence

in Newcastle, he attended the assizes in Carlisle, and whilst there took the opportunity to renew old acquaintance with people right across the social spectrum. He was not above attending farming events and using the occasion to spread his 'gospel' about reform.

Despite Losh's assistance Brougham lost the 1818 election. However 1819 saw Brougham reacting to the horror of the Peterloo massacre. He tried to organise a protest meeting in Westmorland. He said frankly, in a letter to Lord Grey, that advantage should be taken of the situation to prepare for a definite Whig move for a measure of Parliamentary reform. Losh, ever ready to support Brougham, wrote to him.

October 2, 1819.

Unluckily I am not a Freeholder and not residing within the county I cannot sign your Requisition according to the terms of it...I trust something can be done in this county...The subject of Parliamentary Reform should not be introduced upon this occasion but a temperate Reform must be distinctly brought forward without delay - or Revolution will follow³⁵.

Losh's diary records that he wrote and published a pamphlet in which he condemned the Government for not making it clear that such high handed action by the Manchester magistrates would not be tolerated. Unfortunately, the pamphlet appears not to have survived and only its tenor is recorded in the diaries.

On October 14 Losh also wrote to Lord Grey:

It certainly appears to me there can be no doubt of success at a county meeting for the purposes you mention. And I am persuaded that the safety of the Country very much depends upon having numerous and temperate meetings of that description. I had a letter from Brougham on the subject of the Cumberland meeting and was glad to see that the requisition was signed by all the principal landholders

in that county, except the immediate connections of Lord Lonsdale...³⁶

The immediate effect of Peterloo was, of course, to harden entrenched positions and exacerbate class antagonisms - yet one had the feeling once the initial fright was over, the upper classes gazed into the abyss and recoiled at the prospect of unending strife they saw before them. Grey seems to have succumbed to a moment of sheer terror when he warned his radical friend, Sir Robert Wilson, that if Hunt and his supporters gained power 'I shall not precede you many months to the scaffold'³⁷.

A perceptive man of law, who travelled widely, Losh had every opportunity to take the pulse of the nation. Though sensitive to the proprieties, he had a talent for having people talk to him about their fears. He confided his disquiet to his diary:

December 6, 1819.

The country seems in a most alarming state. The lower orders are miserable and discontented. The whole middle rank of society (by very far the most valuable) persuaded of the necessity of reform and economy, but so worn down by taxes, and listlessness as not to seem capable of much exertions, and the higher classes with few exceptions, selfish and profligate. The strange alarms and reports which are circulated and believed by persons of the highest rank, as well as elderly women and weak and timid men, would be amusing were they not powerful engines in the hands of a feeble but mischievous and corrupt administration.³⁸

Grey, less troubled, refused to take what he called the noise of public meetings for public opinion. He believed the country gentlemen were repelled by demands for universal suffrage and annual parliaments. Reform, he believed, could never be achieved without the support of the people, who would have to

make their wishes clear³⁹. To Losh, Grey was less involved than he should be.

In January 1820, Grey wrote to his son-in-law Lord Lambton ('Radical Jack') son of the Earl of Durham, that there was little likelihood of reform in his lifetime⁴⁰. In Newcastle, however, Losh expressed a more confident opinion in a speech on January 26, 1820 supporting a petition for parliamentary reform. It was well timed, with local elections about to take place. [see Appendix Two for full speech].

Losh was reported in the *Newcastle Chronicle*⁴¹ as having this to say:

...I feel it is right to say a few words as to the nature of Parliamentary Reform...to consider what the House of Commons is... it ought to be and must be, to be of use, the fair representation of the feelings and the opinions of the people at large...

...Can it be right that the majority of the House should be elected by a few individuals, by the basest means, by gross corruption, and thus composed of persons who have no common interest with the people whatever?... Is it reasonable that the county of York...should only send two members to parliament, whilst Old Sarum sends the same number?

Another great object, Sir, which we have in view, is the shortening of the duration of Parliament; and both upon principle and original practice, it is quite obvious that seven years is too long a period for delegating trust to anyone whatever...

There is no magic in the word one year...If you dare not trust your representative for more than one year, why trust him at all? It appears to me plain that one year is too short as it is that seven years are too long...

Losh is one of the very few who saw that there could be a day when universal suffrage would embrace the nation. (And this was in 1820). He continued:

The second point...Universal Suffrage, which seems to me wholly unfit for the present state of society, and for the moral habits and degree of knowledge of mankind in general.

A period no doubt may arrive, when from the diffusion of knowledge and virtue Universal Suffrage might be safely adopted, but I do not expect that it will do so in my time...

Losh at this point expresses his dislike of the secret ballot:

The third doctrine held to be infallible, I think more mischievous than either of the others: I mean Election by Ballot. This would lead to every species of meanness, and degrade us from that manly character which I hope Englishmen will always maintain...

Losh dismisses the opposition of those against reform because of their fear of changes to the constitution, and refutes the accusation that he and his fellow reformers are acting rashly.

With his last words he prompts them to act:

But we have been told, sneeringly, that we do not deserve to have a Reform, because we have not courage to ask for it. Gentlemen, it is for you to answer this taunt, by the petition which will be proposed to you...

We can see how far his ideas have progressed since the move for reform in the 90's. He is speaking directly to his own kind, in language they understand. He sees himself as a gentleman speaking to other respectable gentlemen of their right to be heard. Even at a time when reform was not a 'hot' subject, the meeting drew a considerable middle class audience. As the population of Newcastle was something like 26,000, to attract an audience of 1000 for a subject that was supposedly in abeyance suggests how active in gathering support Losh and his kind were.

In his diary entry for the same day, Losh makes the following comment:

January 26, 1820.
Public Reform Meeting, and previous meeting of the Requisitionists...Dinner at Mr Pollard's - messrs Armstrong, Donkin, Reay etc...Our host noisy and forward and party not very pleasant. The meeting was held at Fletcher's Long Room, and attended by about 1000 people. Most very respectable persons. Bigge was in the chair. I proposed the Resolutions in favour of Parliamentary Reform, in a speech about an hour long. Moderate and sensible enough, but neither so well delivered or well arranged as I had hoped would have been the case. It was, however, much applauded.⁴²

In 1820 Losh seemed to be one of the few still agitating for reform. His diary entry of the end of March makes it clear how his attention had been given not only to the local elections, but to the wider issue. His missing pamphlet is referred to:

End March 1820.
I was busily employed the whole month profitably and not unpleasantly at contested elections. I am satisfied my speech on parliamentary reform and my little pamphlet signed 'An Observer' (tho certainly written with no such intention) bringing me afresh into notice, were the main causes of my being consulted and employed about contested elections...⁴³

Losh's pamphlet on Peterloo had obviously been used to good effect.

As Cannon notes:

...in the late 1820s the opponents of parliamentary reform remained numerous, active and formidable, yet stage by stage they were forced onto the defensive: the arguments that carried the day so easily in the past no longer held conviction...⁴⁴

But at this point a matter that seemed even more urgent was engaging public attention: Catholic Emancipation. As the fight for it moved to centre stage, parliamentary reform took a back seat, and for the next few years Losh was heavily engaged in the local struggle to remove the disabilities from the Irish

Catholics. We saw in the last chapter the bitterness of the strife, which was as tortuous locally as it was in Westminster. It was to be seven years before the subject of Parliamentary Reform appeared again in Losh's diaries. His entry of February 1827 shows that the reform issue was on the move again and a further public meeting was held. It is interesting to see how far Losh is identified with the issue. He records his impressions:

February 7, 1827.

I dined at a great dinner given in Fletcher's Long Room to a Mr. Beaumont [MP for Northumberland] it was numerously and upon the whole respectably attended.

I spoke upon the subject of parliamentary reform (having been requested to give that as a toast). So I knew the day before, and I had considered the heads of what I thought right to say, and acquitted myself apparently to the general satisfaction...⁴⁵

But Losh was a little premature with his enthusiasm. The country was not yet responsive to the reform message, as Cannon describes it:

In the early summer of 1827 the prospects for parliamentary reform looked anything but good. The country evinced very little interest...⁴⁶

Though the issue did not encourage any further local meetings for two years, Losh was not slow to use other means to activate the subject. In 1829, he took up his pen again in the cause of Reform and his article appeared in the *Westminster Review* January 1830⁴⁷. He is replying to the Address of the London Radical Reform Association to the People of the United Kingdom, October 19, 1829:

...it is generally professed to be acknowledged, that the people ought to be represented; but nobody has ever been able to determine whether this is best done by their having voices in the election of their representatives, or by their having none. Some persons, for instance,

think that it would promote the intended object, if the large towns like Manchester and Leeds had a chance for chusing at least one representative. Others, on the contrary, believe, that the way to accomplish the end, is to cause two representatives to be elected by nine drunken men in Cornwall...

If the people are to be represented at all, they ought to chuse their representatives. If they do not chuse their representatives, they are not represented at all. Another of the sophisms of the same school, is that men and classes of men are well enough represented, if they have *some* representatives. This is the fallacy of *virtual representation*...But what is really meant by the phrase, is to persuade the manufacturers, for instance, that they are represented because there are *some* manufacturers in the house. Each class is to have a representative, or it may be two or three, and *those who live upon the public to have the rest.*

It is interesting to note that Losh in this article is arguing solely for the middle class to be represented, whereas in 1820 he covers the whole spectrum of parliamentary reform:

reduction in the duration of parliament; disenfranchising the rotten boroughs; extending the franchise; and the evils of a secret ballot. Perhaps he concentrated on the one overall issue, in the belief that the time for speculation was past and what was needed was 'a call to arms'? Or maybe in seeking a wider audience he was looking for the opportunity to support Grey and his reforming Whigs?

Elsewhere in the provinces things were beginning to happen. Thomas Attwood's Birmingham Political Union was founded in December 1829. Sheffield, in February 1830, petitioned, making the point that a town of 80,000 inhabitants had 'a just claim to be directly represented by deputies of its own choice'. The Leeds petition of 1830 was specifically said to come from the 'bankers, merchants, manufacturers and others'⁴⁸.

When George IV died in June 1830, a general election caused the reform issue to be debated more vigorously and with greater knowledge of the issues than ever before.

In many respects the election of 1830 was unremarkable... from the earliest returns, however, it was clear that, in those places where it could be expressed, opinion was running strongly against Wellington's administration. Peel and his relatives fared particularly badly...In the English counties the government suffered severe setbacks...⁴⁹

Losh as usual was involved in his own constituency election: July 30, 1830.

This is the Newcastle election day. Sir M. Ridley and Mr Hodgson were the only candidates. Mr Hodgson acting very absurdly and expensively. He is neither rich nor likely to speak in Parliament. Had Mr Ellison not prematurely resigned, the contest for Mr Hodgson would have been expensive enough to have ruined him...⁵⁰

The Tories were in again, and Losh's comment suggests how poor the administration was, and how dependent it was on the personal reputation of its leader:

End April 1830.

The Duke of Wellington's Administration seems to rest on the weakness of all other parties, and certainly also on the feeling in the public that he is an honest and straight-forward politician.⁵¹

Following their hollow victory at the hustings, Wellington's new administration was certainly more vulnerable than ever before. Some members of his own party were hoping that he would seize the initiative by bringing in a moderate reform. Grey challenged Wellington on the issue and it stung Wellington into claiming that the representative system had the full and complete confidence of the country. What he said enraged his opponents, disappointed moderates, and convinced many that as long as Wellington was prime minister there was no hope of reform. It had the effect of polarising politics,

and was a grave error of judgment⁵². Opinion in the country rallied to the reform cause in response to the prime minister's apparent obstinacy.

Grey realised that it was now the time for an effective measure of parliamentary reform. Such a reform motion would win the confidence of the middle ranks of society. When Grey spoke of the middle orders being represented he did not dream of every middle-class household being personally enfranchised, or of the new industrial and manufacturing classes becoming dominant⁵³. Like most Whigs, Grey conceived a reform of parliamentary representation primarily in terms of a redistribution of seats rather than an extension of the franchise. Grey did not like universal suffrage, annual parliaments or the secret ballot.

On 15 November Wellington's ministry was defeated on proposals related to the civil list. Radicals were aware that Grey's proposals fell short of what in theory they wished to achieve, but they knew that the only realistic hope of getting a substantial measure of reform through parliament lay through Grey. There was no chance of a 'democratic' measure being accepted by Parliament.

Losh comments on the new administration:

November 19, 1830.

It appears that Lord Grey has the confidence of the King, but the precise construction of the new Administration is not yet known. I much doubt the stability of any administration formed wholly of either Lord Grey's Whig friends or a mixture of them and Tories. *Liberal* measures must be adopted or else the *ultra-liberals* I fear will throw all into confusion.⁵⁴

A few days later he is expressing his fears:

Nov.24,1830.

...Brougham is Lord Chancellor. His extra-ordinary talents entitle him to this high situation, but I cannot help doubting the prudence of him accepting it, and I still wish he had been Master of the Rolls. Lord Grey has I think formed a strong administration in point of talents and character, but unless they proceed vigorously to reform and retrench, they cannot last. My great fear is that too much, and much too soon, will be expected of them...⁵⁵

After the years of fighting for parliamentary reform, it is typical of Losh that he sounds a note of caution. He is ever the believer in 'softly,softly, catchee monkey'.

The *Newcastle Chronicle*, the editor of which was a fellow Unitarian, S.Hodgson, printed a leader on November 27 which was a rallying call to all reformers:

...'In this critical juncture, this crisis of the great question of Reform, we consider it is particularly incumbent on all reformers to make common cause, to lay aside their differences of opinion upon minor points, and not strengthen the opponents of all Reform by dissensions among themselves.To obtain even a moderate Reform, as it has been termed, will be a work of great difficulty, and it will require the united efforts of all reformers to make even a 'moderate' impression on the bulwarks of corruption.

Let the advocates of every plan of Reform, therefore, consent to make mutual concessions, and lend their aid to carry into effect...such a system of Reform as there is reasonable prospect of obtaining...Even Mrs Glasse in her cookery says: 'First - catch your hare'.

A letter to the Editor of the *Chronicle* on December 8,1830 supported the call for unity among reformers:

What are now the dangers to the cause of Reform? Crafty and subtle opposition from the interested defenders of all abuses - hollow support from its disguised enemies - disunion among its sincere friends...Let the reformers of Great Britain assume such an imposing and determined attitude as shall discourage their open enemies and frustrate their efforts...their attitude of strength be likewise one of vigilance. Let their hidden enemies clearly perceive that secret machinations will not escape detection.but above all let there be union and mutual sacrifice of opinion amongst themselves...We must consent to give up some of the advantages we wish for, in order to secure those which are within our grasp...

Although it was to be some fifteen months before the administration would be ready with its reform proposals, Losh did not lose the opportunity that this local concern for reform gave him, to keep the issue in front of the 'respectable' people. The *Newcastle Chronicle* published a report of a public meeting 20th December 1830⁴⁴ to consider a petition on Reform. James Losh opened the meeting:

Mr Losh said it now became his duty, on behalf of the gentlemen who had signed the requisition just read, to state to that great and respectable meeting the grounds upon which they had called them together, and the object they had in view. That object was to obtain for this great country a thorough and efficient form of reform of the Commons House of Parliament, and that object he trusted would be pursued by all fair and proper means.

Even at this late stage, Losh is respectful to the Duke of Wellington (we saw in the previous chapter how he admired the Duke's firmness on the Catholic question). He reminded them that the present corrupt system had to be changed, asserting that now was the time for making their voices heard, and urging them to support Grey in the difficult task ahead. Losh believed, as reported, that people had now more knowledge of the true state of affairs and the circumstances which had brought that about. He commented:

Since that period knowledge and information had been extensively diffused...he thought he might be permitted to allude to the Lord Chancellor[Brougham]...his high situation...would enable him to do more ...to spread more widely the plans of improvement..

Losh's diary entry relating to this meeting records how difficult the meeting had been. As usual he demonstrates his ability to skirt details of confrontation in the interest of the main issue:

21 December 1830.

This was a meeting only for the purpose of signing a requisition and preparing a public meeting...We have now a fair prospect of success, but I much fear that the suspicions and impatience of the ultra-reformers may create dissensions and cause confusion...

We had a somewhat stormy debate and I was obliged to take somewhat more of a part in it than was proper as chairman. We finally succeeded so far as to receive the assent of all parties to a resolution mentioning 'ballot' as a thing 'specifically' worthy of consideration but without distinctly either recommending or condemning it. This may, I trust, preserve unanimity tomorrow which appears to me a matter of real importance.⁵⁷

It is clear that now the subject is centre stage, there are those who take a more radical view of the issue. The entry goes on:

Public meeting 5 hours. The reform meeting went off well, certainly much better than I expected. It was numerous and respectable. The Mayor, A Reed, presided (this same gentleman refused to call such a meeting in 1820)

I opened the business in a speech of 40 minutes duration...My main object was to prevent any division amongst ourselves [Losh acting typically as a mediator] Mr Liddell answered part of what I said ...finding fault with my attack on what he called chartered rights, with somewhat of a sneer at my attacking close boroughs when many of my Whig friends were themselves owners of such boroughs...This made it necessary for me to answer...I think he did not feel comfortable under the chastisement he brought upon himself...

Whilst Losh was so heavily engaged in Newcastle, Thomas Creevey found himself be more closely drawn into the ranks of the Whig reformers in the capital. He was writing to his sister on the 22 November, 1830:

...My Lord was instantly sent for to Brook's, and when he arrived we withdrew to his room. It seems Lord Grey and Lord Brougham dined there yesterday, and much was said about me, I mean at dinner, both the Lords being extremely desirous I should have a berth...If it is made a point that I am to be in the House of Commons, I can't and won't go there if I am to vote against Reform⁵⁸...

Whilst Creevey was considering these options, the indefatigable Losh went wherever he could gather middle class support. Here he is in Morpeth:

January 27, 1831

I went with Beaumont to Morpeth to attend the County Meeting called by the High Sheriff upon the requisition of near 300 most respectable gentlemen and freeholders. The meeting was well attended by Morpeth people who conducted themselves very properly, and appeared much satisfied with what was done. I said a few words in favour of an adjournment [stormy weather] and called upon Mr. Beaumont to state his opinions on Parliamentary Reform as the member for the county. I spoke with ease myself and was well received. Beaumont made a clear and sensible speech and was much applauded. The snow was heavy on the ground and much drifted. We had difficulty getting to Morpeth with four horses and the roads to the North West and East were impassable. As Beaumont and I travelled by ourselves I had a great deal of conversation with him; he does not want sense and has both read and thought a good deal on politics. His opinions are liberal and moderate and he is in *theory* far from being an aristocrat, but he has been spoiled so much by early indulgence and by a long course of dissipation and selfishness that I fear he will always *in practice* be a slave to his passions...⁵⁹

At the Reform Meeting recalled in Morpeth on 9 February, 1831 Losh, in answering the allegation of a previous speaker that reform was unnecessary, had the following to say:

He rejoiced in his able support [Mr. Liddell's] but the honourable gentleman instantly veered around, and the whole of his speech, from beginning to end, was intended to show, that parliamentary reform was unnecessary, that a corrupt House of Commons never did anyone any harm, and that a reformed one would do no good, and that pensions were not only good things in themselves, but were approved by His Majesty's Ministers (LAUGHTER)... If the honourable gentleman considered what a representative government was, he would see that if in 1793, a reform had taken place, founded on the petition of the Friends of the People, the war would never have taken place, or, if begun, would have been put an end to sooner...⁶⁰

Losh's diary entry following this meeting, shows the effort the moderate reformers went to to avoid the radical demands

for the ballot, that could well have split support for the Grey proposals:

February 8, 1831.

...The meeting however, was not very numerous and the mob of Morpeth certainly proved a majority in point of numbers...Mr. Liddell, I may venture to say, gained nothing by our second contest...We were fortunate in beating or rather eluding the sticklers for the ballot.⁶¹

On February 16, 1831, Losh wrote to Lord Brougham:

I have no doubt petitions may be obtained from all our towns in this part of England if you wish it. But nothing can be done until the Reform question is disposed of. A substantial Reform and a moderate property tax might, and [I] trust would, save the country. They may be bitter pills but they must be swallowed by the Capitalists and the Aristocracy...⁶²

Cannon describes the reception to the first intimation of the ministry's reform plan:

Russell's somewhat low-keyed speech on 1st March, outlining the ministry's plans, was received with dismay by the moderates, jubilation by the radicals, and fury by the Tory opposition...Throughout the country the ministerial declaration for reform evoked an enormous response. Political unions on the Birmingham model sprang up in dozens of towns...⁶³

On the 2nd March, T.B. Macaulay in a thrilling speech, justified the Reform Bill by saying that since the constitution had last been adjusted by the Whigs in 1688, there had been a great deal of social development - the rise of the 'middle classes' - and it was now necessary to adjust the constitution by giving more of those middle class people the vote. Before Macaulay spoke, the middle classes were only glancingly mentioned in the debate. Once Macaulay had spoken, it became accepted as fact that its primary purpose was the incorporation of the middle classes into the constitution.

He said:

The character of the old corporations changed. New forms of property came into existence. New portions of society rose into importance. There were in our capital rich traders, who were not livery men. Towns shrank into villages. Villages swelled into cities larger than the London of the Plantagenets. Unhappily, while the natural growth of society went on, the artificial polity continued unchanged. The ancient form of the representation remained, and precisely because the form remained, the spirit departed.

All history is full of revolutions, produced by causes similar to those which are now operating in England. A portion of the community which had been of no account, expands and becomes strong. It demands a place in the system, suited not to its former weakness, but to its present power. If this is granted, all is well. If this is refused, then comes the struggle between the young energy of one class, and the ancient privilege of another...Such...is the struggle which the middle classes in England are maintaining against [the] aristocracy“.

The first version of the Reform Bill was presented to the House of Commons by Lord John Russell on March 1, 1831 and proposed the disfranchisement of 60 boroughs with populations of less than 2000, involving 119 MPs and the partial disenfranchisement of 47 boroughs between 2000 and 4000. With 168 seats eliminated, the new House would be smaller, since England would gain only 97 seats, Wales 1, Scotland 5 and Ireland 3 in compensation for these losses. The borough franchise was to be vested in the £10 householder. In the counties the £10 copyholder and the 50 shilling leaseholder were to be enfranchised in addition to the forty-shilling freeholder.

Tyneside opinion was sufficiently strong to cause a further meeting.

March 8, 1831.

Attending a Reform meeting at the Turk's Head and waiting upon the Mayor with a requisition for a public meeting of the town and neighbourhood. Mackenzie and Macleod behaving admirably, giving up their peculiar opinions

with a view to promote unanimity in order to carry the great measure, the destruction of the property boroughs. The Mayor granted our request with a much *shew* of cordiality⁶⁵.

On March 10, 1831 Losh wrote to Lord Brougham about it:

My dear Lord Brougham, Newcastle.

We have had an admirable meeting here. We were threatened with a formidable opposition both from the Radicals and the free Burgesses, but the leaders of the former declared their unqualified approbation of Lord John Russell's Bill, and disclaimed Hunt's declaration that the radical reformers were not satisfied. The only shade of dissatisfaction they said was the duration of Parliaments, but they would even submit to that in order to prevent dissension - 3 years would satisfy them. All our resolutions passed unanimously... The meeting at North Shields went off as well as possible and I have no doubt there will be a similar result in all the other towns of this district...

P.S. We have the greatest reason to believe that the Tories (and Tories in London) were the authors of two attempts to throw our meeting into confusion. If so, their discomforture was compleat⁶⁶.

And again on March 16, 1831

My dear Lord Brougham,
Our meeting here went off admirably. It was both numerous and respectable, and the resolutions etc passed unanimously. The only danger we had of opposition was from the farmers who were not satisfied with the restriction to those who have leases for 21 years. It was, however, market day and we contrived, by seeing a good many of them, to prevent any public expression of their dissatisfaction...⁶⁷

We can see that Losh as usual was acting not only as a reporter of middle class opinion but also as a mediator. He is giving Brougham the reassurance that the majority of the 'respectable' people were behind the government, and that he himself was rousing them to defeat the intentions of the opposition.

Meanwhile the London clubs were in a ferment on the Reform question. Thomas Creevey, writing to his sister-in-law on March 2, 1831:

...At Crocky's [Crockford's] last night, it was a decided Anti-reform concern and numerous...but thank God, in the face of every one of these worthies, and in his manner of talking too, there was an evident misgiving and despair that so sweeping a measure should ever have been proposed by a Minister. Indeed! and there's the rub, my boys, because as sure as my name is Diddy Creevey, this sweeping plan of Reform never will be for a moment lost sight of, from the time of its birth, and that it must and will be carried...

Again on March 3.

Well, what think you of our Reform plan?... you should have seen your Squire Western with me yesterday. After have looked me through with awe for some minutes, he said 'Did you ever hear of such a plan of Reform as this in the world?' 'Never'[I said]. 'It is quite impossible it ever can be carried, Creevey'. 'It is as sure to be carried as we are now in this room.' and I added that if it should fail by a few votes, a dissolution would very soon put that to rights. He then said he did not know what to do, that Maldon was to lose a Member, and that he dare not vote for that. In short, I never saw a man in a greater quandary in my life"...

During this period Sydney Smith, another constant advocate of reform, made four speeches in support of the Reform Bill:

This is the greatest measure which has ever been before Parliament in my time, and the most pregnant with good or evil to the country...Every year for this half century the question of reform has been pressed upon us...I defy the most determined enemy of popular influence...to prevent a Reform in parliament. Some years ago, by a timely concession, it might have been prevented. The arguments and the practices...which did very well twenty years ago, will not do now. The people read too much, think too much, see too many newspapers, hear too many speeches, have their eyes too intensely fixed upon political events...

There are some men much afraid of what is to happen... I believe in an evil hour it may lead some misguided members of the Upper House of Parliament to vote against the bill...I do not believe they have given up one atom of reform - that the people will ever be content with much less than the present bill contains... I am perfectly satisfied that with a fair and honest House of Commons the power of the press will diminish and the greatest authority would centre in the highest place..."

Back in London, Creevey's letter of the 7th April records the opposition of the very Tory Duke of Northumberland:

The Duke of Northumberland has sent down a petition which is now lying in the Grand Jury room for signature, praying that the Reform Bill may either be rejected altogether or be materially altered. I have not seen it but one of the Magistrates tells me so...

At this critical juncture, Losh fired off another article to the *Westminster Review*, April, 1831. This was a journal that Losh read regularly, and though an admirer, he was not an uncritical one, as the earlier diary entry shows:

December 29, 1825

Westminster Review. Finished the last number which certainly continues to deserve the patronage of the public from the useful information with which it abounds, and from the fearless manner in which it attacks prejudices of all kinds...throws great light in detecting the errors and fallacies of others...what however, I mainly object to...is a sarcastic (not to say sneering) manner which pervades the whole of it...⁷⁰

The following are some of the points Losh raised in his 1831 article:

Free governments are simply an invention for bringing clashing interests into unison without violence; for making government direct what the people will obey, and the people obey what the government direct. This is not Radicalism; it is good Whiggery of 1688...

The matter in debate is, whether the Tories did not pursue an organized system of injustice...whether they did not keep open shop, for the delivery of a portion of the public spoil to everybody who would give valuable assistance in return, and whether they did not make the country one nest of jobbers, where the labour and patrimonies of the operative and middle classes were turned over by a constant and uniform operation, into the possession of the parties engaged in the plot...⁷¹

Losh knew his middle class readers and how much they resented paying taxes without a voice in their own affairs. To them, a political issue should resolved itself down to 'the man who pays the piper calls the tune'. Losh never hesitated to stress the financial aspect of any issue.

The changes which Russell announced on 18 April, at the committee stage of the bill, did nothing to quench the heated opposition. The Government was defeated by 299 votes to 291. On the 21st the King agreed to a dissolution.

Creevey's letter of the 25 April betrays something of his excitement at the latest move:

...Here ...is your Saturday's letter - full of your natural rejoicing at our Billy's courage and fidelity. [the King was very popular now as a result of dissolving parliament!]

Losh was not patiently waiting the outcome of the election. He was busy in Cumberland, the county of his birth and where he now had property with voting rights:

April 28, 1831.
I went into Cumberland on Saturday to attend a great meeting of farmers etc. where William Blamire, M.P. for Cumberland, presided as your brother James' deputy. Politics were prohibited in our public speeches but great enthusiasm was shewn in conversation and I contrived to hint pretty broadly at reform in what I said to the meeting at large...⁷²

Cannon writes that it was a disaster for the Tories:

The result of the general election was almost a foregone conclusion. In the open constituencies, Tory candidates went down like ninepins...Old established interests that had dominated shires and boroughs for generations were swept away in the storm. The Lowther empire collapsed...the Whigs swept 35 counties...⁷³

Losh is jubilant at their success.

Diary entry May 7, 1831.
Was there ever anything like our success in the County elections?...To sum all, Lord Lonsdale consents to let a Reformer come into his hitherto pocket county of Westmorland. I foresee that the loss of the Durham seat will be a lasting sore place to the Taylors [Tory]...In congratulating the country on the defeat of the various anti-Reformers [in The Star] it likewise congratulates them 'upon the return to Parliament of that honest member, Mr Creevey for Downton...'⁷⁴

He was also giving a little advice to Lord Brougham - and being listened to - on dispensing government patronage to influence Tory support:

Letter undated, but before 9 May:
 ...It appears to me that you are *too delicate* in your mode of dispensing the Government Patronage. I am quite sure, that the only means by which the Tories can be softened, much less converted, is to make them *see and feel* that (*in all cases* where it can be done without some very distinct cause) persons with liberal opinions are preferred, I allude particularly to inferior situations such as Excisemen, Tidewaiter etc...⁷⁵

This must seem a strange piece of advice from Losh, considering his aversion to patronage, but then we saw in the Introduction that he could seek it for others if not for himself. Nevertheless, he was realistic enough to recognize its value in obtaining support for the government.

The King wrote to Grey on 28 May urging him to consider modifications which while not affecting the principle of the bill, would conciliate. Grey was unmoved.

Losh was also keeping in touch with Lord Durham ['Radical' Jack Lambton]. It seems that Losh had offered some suggestions for combining voting rights and jury service.

Diary entry for June 4:
 I had much talk with Lord Durham both with respect to the Reform Bill and the state of the collieries. I found him frank and kind and unaffected in his manner, as he has uniformly been to me.
 ...Lord Durham agrees with me in all my opinions as to the defects of the Reform Bill - the division of the counties and the want of uniformity in the qualification in particular. He told me that they had tried my suggestion of making the right of voting and duty of serving upon juries co-extensive, but found that the number of voters would be too small. We both agreed that dividing the whole thing down into districts, pretty nearly equal as to population, and making the franchise uniform, must finally be

resorted to, but it probably would have been too strong a measure to begin with⁷⁶.

Between the rejection of the second bill and the introduction of the third, riots and disorders broke out in many parts of the country. In Birmingham there was a resolution to pay no taxes until the bill was passed. Though not so alarmingly, pressure was continuing on Tyneside. In this heightened public emotion, Losh was, as on previous occasions, struggling to maintain unity of action. He wrote that 'Mr Attwood, who has the talents of making confusion and dissensions amongst those who wish for reform by throwing out suspicions, and thus dividing into hostile parties those who have at present one common object 'The Bill'⁷⁷.

The Newcastle Reform Meeting to petition the House of Lords in favour of the Reform Bill, held on 26th September, was reported in the Newcastle Chronicle:

Mr Losh: The Reform Bill had now passed the House of Commons...it became distinctly necessary, as stated in the requisition...that it should meet with no impediment in the House of Lords. The bill had passed after a tedious...a most disgraceful opposition...the King and the House of Commons, and the nation, were on one side, and only a handful of interested borough proprietors and borough nominees on the other...⁷⁸

Losh's diary entry following this meeting, senses the increasing temperature for reform:

September 26, 1831.

It is quite clear to me that in the North at least (and I believe all over the kingdom) the desire for parliamentary reform has become more intense instead of (what has been pretended) any reduction having taken place. The present bill liberal as it is, may not permanently satisfy the nation, but it will probably do so for some time at least and, at all events, it is preparing the way, and affording a chance for a system of gradual and quiet amelioration, instead of scenes of bloodshed and confusion which, without it, must inevitably have taken place.

My opinion for above forty years has not changed, Kings and privileged orders must give way to increasing information, just as witchcraft and astrology have already disappeared. (my italics)

In this Losh shows how much he is a product of the Enlightenment. To him, most of the ills of the society of his day could be cured by increasing education, and with the consequent improvement of people's understanding, greater participation in government. We can also see that Losh foresaw that the reform measure might be only a temporary solution to the demand for a wider franchise. In this he is anticipating that this increasing education would renew demands from those that the bill would leave unrepresented. Losh had a clearer vision than Grey, who was content to solve the immediate problem and leave the reins of power still largely in the hands of the aristocracy.

But that same privileged order was not ready to concede defeat. The House of Lords continued to resist the passing of the Reform Bill. Lord Brougham tried to persuade them in his speech of October 7

...I deny that this bill is change in the bad sense of the word nor does it lead to, nor has it any connection with, revolution, except so far as it has a direct tendency to prevent revolution...'.
The grand charge iterated by [Earl Dudley], and re-echoed by his friends is, that population and not property is assumed by the bill, as the basis of representation. Now this is a mere fallacy...is there anything in the bill resembling universal suffrage?...

An end must be put to the abuse which suffers the most precious rights of Government to be the subject of common barter...I do believe that no man...can, in these times, dream of carrying on any government in despite of those middle orders of the state...the middle class, indeed forms the link which bind even your lordships with the populace, whom some of you wont to despise...

my whole argument upon the national enthusiasm for Reform rests upon the known fact that it is the growth of half a century and not a few months.[If the system works well] Then why does the table groan with the Petitions against it...?...pass the Bill...and the press will no more be able to dictate it, as now, when none else can speak the sense of the people...⁷⁹

The Lords rejected the Bill by a majority of 41. This rejection provoked a massive outburst of rioting and disorder in London, Bristol and Nottingham. Losh commented:

October 25, 1831.

The accounts from Bristol are very bad. The mob appears to have committed great outrages and to have been only subdued by the soldiers and with a great cost of lives. This riot seems to me to prove two things: first, that either a Reform or a Revolution must take place immediately, and secondly, that 'the Schoolmaster' has still much to do. Of both these facts I have for a long time been fully satisfied.

October 26, 1831.

The riots of Bristol seem to have terminated as soon as the respectable part of the community recovered their senses sufficiently to defend their own lives and liberties...⁸⁰

I have found no newspaper reports of similar riots in Newcastle at this time, which suggests that perhaps 'the respectable part' had a tighter hold of the community. In this area riots had not been uncommon in the past: the seamen (1815) and the keelmen (1819) had both caused considerable upheaval in recent years. It may well be that this 'unnatural' quiet was caused by the outbreak of cholera. Losh records it:

November 7, 1831.

It seems nearly certain that the Cholera Morbus (of Asia) has made its appearance at Sunderland. This awful visitation has for some time past been gradually approaching...and it seemed highly improbable that we should escape with impunity...⁸¹

Meanwhile at Westminster, Grey, who was anxious to preserve the essential character of the House of Lords, saw there was

no alternative to the opposition of that house, but the creation of sufficient Whig peers to ensure the passage of the Bill.

Frustrated by the action of the peers, the middle classes of Newcastle were taking action. Losh's diary entry records:

October 25, 1831.

Meeting today for the purpose of addressing the King and Lord Grey on the subject of the rejection by the Lords. The requisition was signed by, I think, about 300 of the most respectable persons of the town and neighbourhood, of all classes, and by many *quondam* Tories."²

Losh was beginning to get support from those whom he would formerly have had to persuade to endorse a Whig proposal.

The meeting was reported at length in the *Newcastle Chronicle*:

Mr. Losh...they would never be satisfied until they had obtained a measure equal to that which had been rejected by the Lords...He for one had certainly felt surprise as well as disappointed by the decision of the House of Lords; for he, foolishly perhaps, gave them credit for possessing the same common sense and knowledge which the other well-educated persons possessed. but he perceived the Schoolmaster had not yet been among them, and that they had a miserable lack of Infant Schools and Mechanics Institutes (laughter)

...he would recommend them there, and upon all occasions, to pursue their object with calmness and firmness, and with a solemn determination never to rest till they had obtained a parliamentary reform equal to, and upon the same principles as the bill introduced by Lord John Russell."³

Losh had a poor opinion of the aristocracy's education and its intellectual capacity, and compared it unfavourably with the middle class. His allusion to 'the Schoolmaster' appears to refer to Brougham.

Losh informed Lord Brougham of the local effort they were making, and in it he demonstrates, as we have seen several

times in this chapter, his talent for mediating and negotiating agreement:

November 9, 1831.

We have so far been able to keep the Ultra-Reformers quiet and by a *little management* [my italics] our public meetings in this district have gone off very well. But unless the Reform Bill be passed very soon there will be bursting out of public indignation which nothing can resist in the Northern Counties. What is called the Northern Political Union has done mischief. A few ill judging men (Mr Attwood etc.) are the leaders and as they have no real influence themselves, they have but too successfully excited the pitmen etc. and made them more restless and discontented than they were before. Indeed, previous to the great meeting on the Town Moor, I do not believe that the pitmen ever thought of interfering in political matters at all.

Had I been in the country when this union was formed, I think I could either have prevented it or diverted it to temporary and harmless purposes. Even yet I hope to be able to neutralise it by narrowing its objects to, 1st supporting Ministers in passing the Reform Bill, 2nd securing the election of Liberal candidates at the next election, and 3rd assisting the Government and the Magistrates in preserving peace of the country against all riots or disturbances.

I wish I had more helpers, but I am sorry to say that our temperate Reformers, particularly the younger men, shew but little energy, except in making professions".

One can understand Losh's disenchantment with the younger generation, and his lack of support. Perhaps he was beginning to feel his age - he was sixty eight, a good age for the time, or perhaps he was referring to the absence of his eldest son, who was carving out a career in law. He continues:

I had a letter from Mr. Warner a few days ago in which he says that his friend the Bishop of Bath and Wells 'repents bitterly the vote which he gave and that 'had he seen me beforehand he believes his vote would have been different'. I confess I have no great confidence in that good Bishop's repentance, which is merely the result of bodily fear and , with regard to myself, it is quite clear that he avoided seeing me as I called twice upon him and left my card each time...But these holy personages are sad intriguers and if they could see any reasonable prospect of throwing Lord Grey and you out of office, they would join Sir R. Peel or anyone else tomorrow. The members are no doubt many of them radical Reformers but the great majority of them are cool

reflecting men, all determined Reformers, even to the knife, but fully resolved to resist to the utmost also everything like violence and confusion whilst there remains any hope of succeeding by other means.

All the information that Losh passed to Brougham must have been of considerable value to him and his cabinet colleagues, in that Losh was not one to exaggerate. He believed that what his local middle class thought was important, and he was a indefatigable correspondent. Diary entries reveal that he wrote many more letters than have survived. His ability to put his finger on matters of importance, and to anticipate correctly the future turn of events, cannot have failed to have been valued by his political friends. But there was little Losh could do to ease the difficulties the administration were experiencing at this time. Cannon describes their difficulties:

The early months of 1832 were wretched ones for Grey and his colleagues, full of acrimony and uncertainty. Almost every member of the cabinet threatened resignation at one time or other, and Durham constantly...on December 29, Durham demanded an immediate creation of peers...the same day Brougham argued a similar case...⁸⁵

All this led to increasing speculation over the turn of the year, Thomas Creevey at the ringside, so to speak, wrote to his sister-in-law.

Feb 27, 1832

.... If the Bill is lost by Grey not using his power to make new peers...even his life will not be safe; to such a pitch is the reforming part of the press now goading the pubick[sic] on this subject⁸⁶.

A further letter of 29 April:

...I found on my arrival here that Brougham had been most dreadfully out of spirits when here, tho' somewhat better the last two days, but according to Sefton - a perfectly altered man... He was here six days, and on one of them went over to see the King...there does not seem to have been anything of their first good fellowship and fun, and what there was of politicks was more than suspicious. He

[the King] was prodigiously up at the 2nd reading of the Reform Bill having been carried in the Lords without any new Peers, and took great credit to himself for having always predicted that it would be so⁹⁷...

Defeated in the Lords on Lyndhurst's motion in Committee on May 7, the Ministry resigned in view of the King's refusal to enlarge the powers of creating the necessary peerages.

The fact that this meant there was no chance of forming an anti-reform administration was not lost on James Losh. This and the agitation of the country is reflected in James Losh's diary.

May 9, 1832:

The country was thrown into a great agitation by the success of the manoeuvres of the oligarchy in the house of Lords and the consequent resignation of Lord Grey. The conduct of the King is much to be lamented...I do not think it possible to form an anti-reform administration..."

The strength of the agitation can be seen in Losh's next diary entry:

15th May, 1832.

Meeting of 10,000 people at Newcastle."

Wellington's failure to form an anti-reform administration (as Losh had predicted), together with Grey's determination to stand firm, is reflected in Thomas Creevey's letter of May

16th:

From what I have learnt of yesterday's transactions, when Wellington announced to the King that all his efforts to make an administration had failed, the King wrote to Lord Grey, which in itself was not civil, as he ought to have sent for him; the substance of the letter related to him, Lord Grey, carrying the Reform Bill, but suggesting alterations of some kind or other, and the tone of the letter not over civil. To this letter after it had been submitted to the cabinet, an answer was returned by Grey worthy of himself and his position i.e. as firm as a rock on the Bill.

All that was further known last night was, that a great meeting of the Tories was held at Apsley House to whom it was stated by Wellington that the King resolved to make

no new batch of Peers on any account...it is absolutely necessary for Lord Grey should have this power, and be assured that he will not start again without it. It is said Lord Grey had been with the King this morning, and if so, of course must have been sent for⁹⁰...

Later:

...The only other thing I know is that Grey had an audience of the King for two hours before the Levee, so there can be no doubt they are in again, and when Lord Grey could look so happy one knows he is in upon his own honest terms⁹¹.

The peers capitulated and the Reform Bill received the Royal assent on June 7th. It became necessary for Creevey to look for a new seat.

The final letter of James Losh to Lord Brougham on the success of the Reform Bill, expressed the hope that the dust would be allowed to settle:

September 7, 1832.

...The Reform Act...has done so much and gone so far beyond the most sanguine hopes of all reasonable men, that I most anxiously wish that no attempt may be made for several years to come, to make any material alterations in it - nothing beyond improvements in the mere detail of its operations, where it may in practice be found not to work well...⁹²

It appears from the foregoing that Losh's ideas on parliamentary reform expanded but never changed in forty years, and in this he was more consistent than his friend Grey, and more in keeping with the later Brougham, than the Brougham of 1808. His arguments in 1833 had been fostered by those of 1793. One might argue that his frequent contact with the metropolis and its political figures, could have made his ideas more 'metropolitan' rather than 'provincial'. It is clear, however, that his ideas - if one accepts the evidence of the newspaper reports - received the support of his own

community: the provincial middle class, or as he expressed it, the 'respectable' people.

It might be argued that Losh was inflexible in his ideas on reform. But then unlike Grey, who saw the reform as an extension of the old system of 'virtual representation', Losh foresaw the day when education would lead to universal suffrage. Furthermore, his arguments always had a tinge of the business man, his analogies made commercial sense, the kind of sense that would appeal to his largely middle-class business and professional audience. He moved from a 'consensus' position, to a firm advocate of a middle-class extension of the franchise, modest property qualification, redistribution of pocket-borough seats, and triennial parliaments. He was cautious too, in not wanting any early revision of the details of Russell's reform bill.

It is therefore unlikely that he would have found any cause for satisfaction in the assessment of Richard Brent of the reform agitation after his (Losh's) death in 1833:

Such concessions [the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Catholic Emancipation] by the Anglican Tory party not so much appeased Dissenters as increased their appetite for agitation in order to seek political redress for their outstanding grievances. The passage of the Reform Act in 1832 exacerbated this condition, since it increased the political influence of Dissent³³.

Far from seeking to increase this agitation, it has to be acknowledged that reformers of the like of Grey, Brougham, and of course Losh, sought to preserve the institutions that had been handed down by previous generations, but in a form more

appropriate to the changing circumstances of a nineteenth-century upward-striving population. In some ways they were fellow travellers with Burke, who repudiated the radicalism of Tom Paine, and the revolutionary radicalism that so many professed at the outbreak of the French Revolution. (Southey, Coleridge and Wordsworth, for example, expressed extreme views in their youth, while some of those who sat at the feet of Godwin were also radicals in this extreme sense).

The tag, or epithet, 'Radical' had become synonymous in the years up to the Reform Bill, with those who held that there had to be universal suffrage, annual parliaments, and the ballot. Francis Place and Major John Cartwright were of this view. However, it was radicals of this kind who endangered the passing of a more moderate bill than they would have accepted. Thus we find Losh in the local struggle to support Russell's Bill, referring to the activities of his *radical* opponents, and as usual attempting to dampen down their extreme views:

October 1830.

The meeting went off very well. I opened the business in a speech which appeared to produce very great effect and was loudly cheered...I considered a great deal what it was best for me to say, but the circumstances which occurred with respect to the Freemen and the mainly sensible conduct of what are called the Radicals, made it necessary for me to change in my plan...[he anticipated more trouble than in fact happened]."

And on September 26, 1831:

Public meeting to prepare an address to the House of Lords in favour of the Reform bill.
I opened the business with a speech of some length which was received with great applause...Mr Attwood not having been consulted as much as he expected [made a speech opposing]. This speech, though absurd enough, was still

well received by the ultra-radicals, which encouraged him to present a different petition, more coarse and violent in expression...⁹⁵

A letter to Lord Brougham in the same month contains the following comment:

September 17, 1831
 ...And he also well knows that tho' not a radical, I am a stout Reformer...⁹⁶.

Losh later reiterates the same point whilst counselling the radicals to support the Reform Bill without dividing over side issues:

May 12, 1832.

We had a meeting at my chambers to arrange matters for the public meeting fixed for Tuesday...A deputation from the Political Union (radicals) called upon me and at first proposed that the meeting should be considered to be one of the Union. This I distinctly refused to consent to and it was finally determined that the Union might attend if they pleased, but as part of the inhabitants of the Town...I agreed...that our speeches should be firm, but temperate and confined to the great measure of Parliamentary Reform...⁹⁷

We have already noted that Losh always believed that the road to universal suffrage lay through education: as a good thing in itself; as a way to social improvement, and to social responsibility; and through the access to information, as a move towards the exercise of the vote. His consistent attitude reveals a homogeneity in his views on education, enlightenment and liberty. We have seen that he worked with Brougham and we find in his diaries frequent references to calls that he made while on official law business, to stationers and booksellers, urging them to stock the leaflets and pamphlets of Brougham's Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.⁹⁸

However, in spite of his progressive views, Losh could not make a clean break with the past. He had his own views on property qualification for suffrage and the use and misuse of patronage. In 1793, Losh and Tierney had said ' We affirm that the right of election is not, in its nature, a property, and cannot as such belong to any individual or collection of individuals...' Nevertheless, Losh was well aware that pocket boroughs, army commissions, minor government posts, preferments etc. were bought and sold. He was not blind to the corruption that existed at all levels of society, but there was in Losh a dichotomy. As we saw when Losh sought patronage for others, he accepted the advantages whilst regretting the corruptions of the system as it was.

We see another survival of traditional attitudes in Losh's very practical form of paternalism. Charity and good works were a natural expression of his firm Christian views. A typical example of this is his wedding of Christian festivals to family occasions: for example the Christmas Day celebrations with family, servants, and poor neighbours. (see the Introduction) Also we have seen him trying to give good counsel to the miners in their struggle for better living and working conditions, and trying to mitigate the severity of the law towards strikers and rioters.

All in all, we have seen Losh striving to strike a balance between his own interest, his desire to act fairly, and his concern to fulfil his paternalistic responsibilities. He was

always anxious to maintain a reputation for honest even-handed dealing, and the fact that he was consulted by all ranks of society, from Earl Grey to local politicians, from coal owners to the striking miners, suggest that in the main he was successful. Losh's ability to strike a balance between competing loyalties, one set of claims against another, reveals some talent for compromise and persuasion that is so apparent in the events described in this chapter on Reform.

In the following chapter, on the emancipation of the slaves, we will see Losh's liberal Christian views exercised on an issue in which he had no personal interest, but on which nevertheless he acted with his usual energy and tenacity. We shall also see from the reception given to his speeches that he spoke for the majority of his local provincial middle class audiences, on what was to become a very sensitive issue.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SLAVERY ISSUE

Losh, and those with whom I will contrast him, was involved in the fight for Slave Emancipation rather than the abolition of the slave trade. However, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Losh, through his relationship with Grey and Henry Brougham, and as a consequence of his continual involvement in political issues, would be familiar with the long campaign that eventually led to the slave trade being made illegal. We find an entry in his diary of 1806, the first of many on the subject. When considered as a statement of his beliefs, of his aspirations for the nation, one could say that it represents what would drive Losh for the next three decades:

March 6, 1806.

The account of the final arrangement of the new ministry arrived... It seems to me that the immediate measures ought to be: some vigorous and almost general arming of the younger classes of the population of the Empire, the giving of emancipation of the catholics in Ireland and the Dissenters at large, the abolition of the slave trade etc...¹

Losh had the wit to see that abolition of the slave trade was only one of a number of issues that required reform, and following his experience in 1793 and the abortive struggle for parliamentary reform, that a generalized fear (stemming from the French Revolution) of all reform, and a widely disseminated sense amongst the political nation that the West Indies, and hence the slave trade which supplied them, were a vital imperial interest with which one would tamper at the nation's peril².

In eighteenth-century Britain that Losh was born into, enlightened opinion attached much importance to liberty and tended to extend the definition of it. There was felt to be

...a compatibility between the teachings of moral philosophy and of revealed religion...One significance of this is that the more emphasis was given to liberty and happiness, the more condemned and isolated did the slave system appear. Moreover, slavery was specifically condemned with near unanimity by the leading philosophers of the day...³

A consequence was that defence of the system on moral grounds was untenable. Roger Anstey points out that there was:

Little serious defence of slavery being offered by about the end of the third quarter of the eighteenth century... it was mainly religious conviction, insight and zeal which made it possible for anti-slavery feeling to be subsumed in a crusade against the slave trade and slavery.⁴

In proposing that religious conviction was the mainspring of the anti-slavery campaign, Anstey was overturning the dialectical evolutionary theory of material progress. In Eric Williams's schema, for instance, economic interests rather than moral aversion fuelled the movement towards abolition: in other words, humanitarianism became convincing in Britain only when it served material interests⁵. However, there seems to be a marrying of the two points of view in Anstey's last book where:

The key argument...is that in 1806 an unpredictable and fortuitous conjunction of politico-economic circumstances enabled the British abolitionists to suppress their religious and humanitarian goals and appeal entirely to national interest in order to secure passage of a law which effectively abolished about two thirds of the British slave trade⁶.

Bolt and Drescher make the point, which can also be made in

connection with the campaign for Catholic Emancipation, that British activists were distinctive in their focus on the national legislature, in their realisation that no campaign could succeed which failed to enlist the sympathy of that body.⁷

That the abolitionists so directed their efforts pre-1806 is re-inforced by Anstey when he writes of the great importance of the anti-slavery lobby which exploited the popular feeling excited by religious principle, and that by its constant pressure on the government ensured a tolerable solution⁸.

Like the abolitionists themselves, Anstey believed that

No status to be reformed could have such basic importance as that of slavery and no evil to be ended could be as fundamental as the enslavement and transhipment of the free...⁹

The Dissenters generally defined slavery as a moral rather than as a political issue. That is not to say that they were unsympathetic to economic or political factors, as we will see in James Losh, a man of firm Unitarian beliefs yet sufficiently a business man to grasp the economic considerations of the problem as well. Losh realised, as has been said by Anstey that 'Providence virtually guaranteed that religious duty and economic interest would coincide...'¹⁰

The Ministry of All the Talents (1806), that Losh refers to in his diary entry of that year, turned out to be firmer in its opposition to the trade than its predecessor. The Foreign Slave Trade Bill was passed in May 1806, and the entire British slave trade was abolished in May 1807. As Anstey reminds us:

...it is...important to see that the 1807 measure of abolition, whose actual effect, given the Foreign Slave Trade Bill, was to end the slave trade to the older British West Indian islands, and which was overtly based on justice and humanity, served no national interest but in fact ran starkly counter to it. The manifest interest of Britain, by 1806-7, was to maintain and even augment her own slave trade and deny slaves to her rivals¹¹.

It could be argued that the abolition of the slave trade in 1806 merely intensified the fight to remove an institution which remained an offence to the humanity of many. The anti-slavery movement, by its constant surveillance, were aware that the Bill alone was insufficient to stop a trade that was so lucrative to so many influential families.

One of those engaged in the new struggle was Henry Brougham, who from the outset, was conscious that, because of this lucrative interest, it would not happen for many years:

The avarice of the Europeans may for yet a few generations wallow in the blood-stained spoils of African labour; until in the fullness of time, the great event which has for ages been slowly preparing shall be accomplished, and the African warriors, gradually civilized in the fruitful island of America, shall obtain quiet, and, may we not add, rightful possession of those plains which have been cultivated by the toils and sufferings of their fathers¹².

Henry Brougham entered parliament in 1810- about the time when he was becoming familiar with Losh - determined to remedy the failings of the 1807 legislation. His first great speech made on the 14 June, embodied his proposal to make slave-trading a felony. By introducing the Slave Trade Felon Bill on the 5 March 1811, he secured the enforcement of the 1807 Abolition Bill. By 1812 Brougham was attacking plantation slavery. He was not activated by religious or Christian mission. His was an intellectual approach. He abhorred a

system that practised such cruelty.

Losh, and many like him in the provinces, shared Brougham's horror of the trade. However, their determination in the face of political indifference, was fired by a religious fervour. They took up the lead of the Clapham Evangelicals, and over the next few years patiently worked towards the total emancipation of the slaves. Lacking Brougham's political platform for an expression of his views, Losh rallied his peers into associations and societies. He was an active organiser of pressure groups for political purposes in his area. We find an early example of this in Losh's diary:

September 7, 1814:

Slave Trade committee and Antiquarian Society¹³.

The debate in the Commons was led after 1816 by Wilberforce and Brougham, fed by the indefatigable research of Zachary Macaulay, and (after 1823) by Brougham and Buxton, supported by 30-40 members of all parties. Wilberforce and the Saints were written off as canting hypocrites, and Brougham as a self-seeking politician capitalizing on the supposed wrongs of the negroes. But Brougham had nothing to gain by incurring the opposition of powerful parliamentary forces, and his advancement in his own party could only be impeded by his zeal in this cause. Lord Grenville, Lord Grey and Lord Lansdowne were sincere friends of the slaves, but the Whig party as a whole cared for none of these things.

By the time Canning became Foreign Secretary, in Liverpool's Tory administration, all the leading maritime countries had

been persuaded to follow British example and abolish the trade. But it was a hollow victory because no government except the British took effective steps to enforce the prohibition on their own nationals. So although the British slave trade had been effectively stamped out by the Royal Navy, the trade as a whole was increasing¹⁴.

At home, in 1822, James Cropper, Liverpool Quaker philanthropist, organised another society for the abolition of slavery and he persuaded Zachary Macaulay to organise a similar society in London: the London Society for the Abolition of Slavery in our Colonies. In a series of letters to Wilberforce, published in the *Liverpool Mercury*, he took for granted the inhumanity of slavery and argued the key to abolition of slavery lay in the equalisation of duties on East and West Indian sugar, for once free-grown East Indian sugar competed on equal terms the old West India system would be doomed and the way paved for slave emancipation¹⁵. This is an argument we will find Losh using on his Tyneside audience.

Early in March 1823, Wilberforce published a pamphlet in which he forcefully but moderately argued the case for abolition. Meanwhile, Henry Brougham wrote an article which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* based upon Macaulay's book *Negro Slavery*¹⁶. It had a tremendous influence. He followed this by presenting the Quakers' petition for its abolition. On 15 May, the first parliamentary debate on the abolition of slavery was held, following a motion by Thomas Buxton¹⁷, who moved in the

Commons that 'the state of slavery is repugnant to the principles of the British Constitution and of the Christian religion; and that it ought to be gradually abolished throughout the British colonies with as much expedition as may be found consistent with a due regard to the well-being of the parties concerned. Buxton specifically proposed that Parliament should declare the freedom of all slaves born after a certain day.

As Anstey puts it:

Hardly a radical proposal...The essence of the Government policy was now amelioration with a view to eventual freedom - though the word itself was carefully eschewed.¹⁸

Canning proposed amendments to Buxton's motion which emphasised the primary importance of improving the condition of the slaves and looked forward to their emancipation as soon as practicable. The abolitionists had to make up their minds whether to go on pressing for the whole cake or to accept the half which Canning offered. Canning's amendments were passed without opposition¹⁹.

In the north-east, Losh became more robust in his attacks upon the slavery lobby, probably triggered by the activity at Westminster:

April 29, 1823.

Public petition against slavery. I proposed resolution in a speech of 1/2 an hour. This I delivered with perfect ease to myself, and I think it succeeded in producing a considerable effect. I endeavoured to point out the evils of slavery in the West Indies, and to show the reasonableness of a temperate mitigation of them, and of the final abolition of slavery when both the slaves and slave holders were prepared for the result. I stated the folly and extravagance of supporting the West Indies trade against the East Indies by bounties, duties etc and

agreed that nothing but free labor could enable the West Indies to bring their sugar to Europe at as low prices as that from the East. I mentioned some of the most obvious modes of gradually emancipating the slaves etc...²⁰

The *Newcastle Chronicle* on May 3, published the following report:

...a public meeting was held in the Guildhall for the purpose of petitioning Parliament 'to take into consideration the state of slavery in the West Indies, with a view to mitigate the condition of Slaves, and to promote the gradual abolition of slavery itself'.

Mr Losh rose ...'About sixteen years ago Parliament abolished the Trade in slaves altogether as connected with this country, and it was then hoped that that abolition would be productive of a great amelioration of the condition of the slaves in our West Indies settlements, and that a state of freedom would naturally have arisen from it. But from circumstances which must be obvious to all, it had happened that Slavery was not in substance much ameliorated²¹.

If anything the abolition of the slave trade had in many ways made the situation worse. Other nationals were now involved in a lucrative commerce, supplying the human merchandise to a clamouring market. Losh reminded his listeners of this situation:

...although England had abolished the Slave Trade, and had also exerted itself to procure its abolition by other countries, yet it continued to a great extent, and through the medium of other nations slaves were still brought to the West Indies settlements...²²

Losh was never extreme in his views and on this issue, as we have seen in others, he looked for amelioration of the worst aspects of the business, leading to eventual emancipation:

...to give them at once complete emancipation, would be attended with the greatest disadvantages to the slaves themselves, as well as their owners. But the advocates of the abolition of slavery did not propose any such speculation; they proposed nothing but what they were satisfied would be beneficial to both...²³

It had been suggested by some of those who fought for the abolition of the slave trade, that a cessation of fresh

supplies of slaves would compel owners to conserve their stocks and promote their natural increase. Losh made it clear that this never happened. To Losh the moral corruption that slavery brought was visited not only on those who participated, but upon the nation as a whole. In this he is conscious of their collective responsibility, and like many another churchman, believed that God would not let such a sin go unpunished:

But the evil did not stop there. This country also felt the evil consequences of the system...²⁴

As we have already seen when discussing his involvement in Parliamentary Reform and Catholic Emancipation, Losh knew how to make good use of the economic argument to an audience with investments in business and manufactory. In his evident empathy with his peers, Losh surely saw himself as a spokesman. The report continues:

That was a very important point for consideration, for he considered it an undeniable fact, that the labor of slaves could never compete with the labour of free men; and it was accordingly found out that, notwithstanding the distance to the East Indies was so much greater and the freight so much heavier, the West Indies planters could not contend in the market with the East Indies dealer, unless they received some artificial support from the Government...²⁵

This is the very point that Cropper had made: perhaps Losh had read the series of letters in the *Liverpool Mercury*? (After all the network of Unitarian correspondents had a particularly vigorous group in Manchester) Again as we saw in the chapter on Reform issue, heavy taxation was always a sore point with the middle classes, and Losh was quick to remind them of it:

Was it then to be endured, that we should continue to pay them between 2 and 3 millions a year, in order that they might continue to be dealers in slaves?²⁶

If the slaves were treated as normal human beings, Losh believed that they would act in the same way. Losh also believed that the negroes were capable of ruling their own affairs. We can see that this attitude was at one with his belief that the working class were equally capable of running the Mechanics' Institutes. He added:

There was no difficulty in making negroes good citizens, was not a matter of speculation. An experiment had been made that removed all doubt. An empire of blacks had recently risen up in the West Indies, and though struggling against the most formidable powers of Europe, yet those degraded negroes, who were treated no better than brutes, had overcome all opposition, and by their exertions and perseverance, had established a government under which they were protected in their persons, their property and their religion, and in fact enjoyed all the most essential purposes of government...²⁷

This had been a very long speech. Not only was his audience prepared to listen to it, but the *Chronicle* to print it in full. When one considers that the resolution of this issue was still ten years ahead, it says much for not only Losh, but also for the concern of a middle-class audience who had little connection with a trade that centred on western seaports.

From this speech in 1823, we can see Losh was coming to grips with both the economic as well as the moral issues of plantation slavery. He lamented that the war encouraged the planters to continue their ill-treatment of the slaves; they did not encourage slave marriages and therefore few children resulted; they were still sold like horses; plantation slavery was not efficient and needed a government subsidy as well as cruelty to produce its profits. Treat them well, give them our laws and religion and the slaves could rule themselves,

Losh proposed.

Losh's diary for 1823 and thereafter reveals how the issue was becoming a cause, if not in the provinces generally, then certainly on Tyneside:

May 14, 1823.

A very respectable meeting of the Friends of the Abolition of Slavery, this evening, Mr Bell the Mayor in the chair. I think our measures likely to be useful because they were temperate.

May 21, 1823.

Slavery Abolition Committee. I was in the chair...and had the satisfaction to see much zeal and unanimity amongst a set of the most respectable men in a most excellent and almost (as Mr Parkinson calls it) sacred cause.

August 1823.

...religious freedom and the abolition of slavery must follow.²⁸

Losh always ended each year in his diary with a summary, his own 'state of the nation' report. At the end of 1823 he seems to be struggling to retain his confidence in a benign providence:

...the state of Ireland, and the West Indies, the corruption of the higher orders...These and many more grievances make it clear that, tho' things work together for good, the process must necessarily be slow and interrupted by formidable difficulties...²⁹

That there were certainly difficulties to overcome in the next ten years of relative quiet on the issue, Anstey conjectures:

In the next ten years little effective action was taken. How do we explain this? It is firstly, the case that the West Indian representation in the Commons was significantly stronger...committed abolitionists were fewer...finally public opinion...was seemingly unaware of the actual evils of plantation slavery...³⁰

Canning's Order in Council of March 16, 1824 sought to reduce ill-treatment and pave the way to emancipation. Wilberforce had no illusions about the colonial assemblies and asked

whether or not the Imperial parliament should insist on abolition in all the colonies. Canning expressed his gradualist views: 'By gradual measures, producing gradual improvement, not only may the individual slave be set free, but his very status may be ultimately abolished...'³¹

1824 saw Losh's involvement in the issue continue to increase, particularly as he appeared to have little faith in Canning's vision:

March 19, 1824.

...I read the debates in the House of Commons on the subject of ameliorating the condition of the slaves in the West Indies. Mr Canning's speech is certainly very able and dextrous in many respects, but as is often the case when a person tries to please both sides, I think he will offend both the friends to real amelioration and West Indian proprietors. He certainly made an unfair attack on the conduct and motives of the former, and the contempt which he shewed towards the legislature of the Islands will never be forgiven.

Slave Amelioration committee. I was in the chair as usual and we had a very satisfactory meeting. We passed some sensible resolutions which were drawn up by Mr Thorp, and determined unanimously upon petitioning both Houses of Parliament.³²

Never slow to take personal initiative, Losh is again upon his feet at a public meeting. Here he is advocating more use of petitions, as the Anti-Slavery Society was resorting to:

March 31, 1824.

Public meeting on the subject of Negro Emancipation. I proposed the resolutions in a speech of nearly an hour and a half. On this occasion I considered the plan of my speech more than I ever did before, and even prepared some part of it in detail. I do not think, however that this was of much service to me, as I found I got on with more ease, and (as far as I could judge) with greater effect after I got through the prepared part of my address and gave some scope to my feelings at the moment. There can however, be no doubt, that to produce anything excellent, much preparation is essential. Upon the whole, I succeeded pretty well, and received more applause than I deserved...

My great object was to shew that petitions were useful

both for the purpose of supporting government and of pointing out to them the prudence, not to say the necessity, of extending their plan to the old as well as the ceded Colonies. I took an opportunity also of considering and recommending a fair and equitable compensation to the Planters, upon their making out cases of real loss, tho' I denied their having any title to their slaves, or their children, beyond a claim from the fact of Parliament having sanctioned their possession of them...

April 12, 1824.

My speech has, I find, made a more general and more favourable impression than I expected and I have been solicited by our Committee for it to be published³³.

It was printed by a local printer, probably at Losh's own expense³⁴. The following are extracts from the printed version of the speech mentioned above [see Appendix Three for full speech] It says something about the reception to his speech, that he was induced to print it:

...At the present moment, in particular, when the most strenuous exertions are made to degrade the characters of the friends to the abolition of slavery, and to impute improper motives to all their actions, it is of the utmost importance that we should thus have an opportunity of publicly stating our views, and of freeing ourselves from those imputations which have so unjustly been cast upon us. We have, indeed, upon all occasions avowed our readiness to meet those who differ from us in opinion...and to defend the principles upon which we act³⁵.

Having made clear his contempt for the 'partisan' press, Losh gave his attention to their arguments:

In their public documents, such as the Declarations of the West India Proprietors residing in London, and the Resolutions of the Island Legislatures, they tell us that we are meddling with what we do not understand, and that our interference is uncalled for, inasmuch as the negro slaves are better provided for and more comfortable than the peasants of Great Britain. I confess, Sir, that this assertion does rouse my indignation more perhaps than is fit on a subject of such infinite importance. Were it true, even, which I do not believe to be generally the case, that they are better lodged, and clothed, and fed, then, indeed, they might be considered as better provided for and more comfortable, in the same

sense, sir, in which your dogs and your horses are comfortable; they, too, being, I have no doubt, kept dry and warm, and abundantly fed!³⁶

Having refuted the claim that there was a comparison between the plantation slaves and the English peasant, Losh looked at the legal justification for slave ownership. He continued:

Again, the planters say, that at all events the slaves are their own absolute property, and that they are the best, nay the sole, judges as to the management of that which belongs to themselves. I am far from denying, Sir, that the laws of this country have guaranteed their right to this strange species of property; and I most freely admit, that they ought to have a fair compensation for any direct loss which they may sustain by the acts of the legislature, however wise and salutary those acts may be³⁷.

Losh was one of those who believed that government had to correct the ills of society, and pass legislation to this end. It was for Parliament to act and enforce the will of the people. Even the peasant and the horse have been protected by Parliament. He argued:

And when we are told, Sir, that no power upon earth has a right to interfere between the master and his slave; we must remind the persons who hold such language, that the Parliament of Great Britain has perpetually interfered for the regulation and protection of the labouring classes of the community; and surely they need not be reminded that laws have been passed in this country to secure even our horses and cattle from ill treatment and cruelty³⁸.

Ever the proponent of gradual change, Losh was persuasive in his argument. He disclaims any intention to press for immediate emancipation:

Let us next consider, Sir, what the means are by which we seek to attain this good end. We have never thought of a hasty emancipation. We know that men who have long been exposed to slavery and ignorance are not in a fit condition to be immediately set free. But we have proposed no such thing. If we had done this, we should indeed have deserved the name of rash speculators. But we have assumed, and I trust we deserve, the title of

'friends to gradual emancipation'. In what single petition presented to either House of Parliament, or pamphlet, or declaration issued by any society, has an immediate abolition been proposed, or even hinted at, except to be disclaimed?'³⁹

In this speech Losh again put a price tag on the cost of West Indian slavery, no doubt the result of his making enquiries. Whilst acknowledging that owners have a property right in their slaves, it was for Parliament to interfere, and for compensation to be paid where loss could be proved. Again Losh makes it clear that gradual emancipation was what they were about.

After this major speech Losh's diary continues to record his regular involvement and interest in the anti-slavery movement:

June 16, 1824.

Slave Abolition Meeting...was not numerously attended, but upon the whole went off very well. I was in the chair and only made a short speech in opening the business. Dr Fenwick spoke as usual with great clearness and effect...

October 15, 1824.

Finished a hasty perusal of this interesting little work System of Slavery which is said to be the production of Mrs Skemmpennich of Bristol. It shews very distinctly the great difference between the state of slavery amongst the Jews and that in the West Indies...and overturns most triumphantly all arguments drawn from slavery under the Mosaic Law in favour of negro-slavery.⁴⁰

Losh saw that the resistance of the planters could lead to the Government being provoked to take action:

End June 1825.

The conduct of the West Indies planters particularly what are called the Legislatures of Jamaica and Barbadoes, continues to be so weak, so violent and so contumacious towards this country, that I cannot help hoping good will come out evil, and that they may provoke the Government to take some decisive measure of their own accord, to compel some amelioration of the condition of the negro slaves, or what would be still better, that the nation at large may be fairly aroused and express their

indignation in language which cannot be misunderstood and which no government dare to treat with neglect⁴¹.

Losh again had the opportunity to speak at a large public meeting on this issue. The intervening three years had been largely devoted to parliamentary reform and the Catholic question. The fact that this issue could draw a large audience and be reported in the press, suggests the extent of the concern locally. Losh's diary confirms this:

May 8, 1828.

Public meeting at the Guildhall on the anti-slavery question. The Mayor presided and the meeting was a tolerably good one. I moved the resolutions and spoke about half an hour with ease to myself, and I have reason to believe to the satisfaction of the Friends of Emancipation. The resolutions, which were drawn up cautiously and confined to the support of measures proposed by the Government, passes unanimously and I trust that the petition will be numerously signed.⁴²

Losh's speech was printed in the *Newcastle Chronicle*⁴³. His longest to date, it reminded his audience of the long years of effort and the frustrations of dealing with the planters' lobby, and the need to continue to press government for action:

May 10, 1828

...He knew of many who had the strongest feeling for the emancipation of the slaves, who viewed with the utmost horrors the miseries to which they were subjected, who thought that by means of petitioning no good would be affected, and that, in fact, some mischief might probably ensue from it. With such opinions, however, he could never coincide. He felt that unless the public at large called upon the Government to fulfill their measures, that no advance would be gained - and that, after many years had been wasted in suspense and inactivity, this course would still have to be resorted to...⁴⁴

Losh reminded his audience that the larger slave-owning islands were continuing to resist the Government's wishes. Only the Crown colonies obeyed Canning's Order in Council of

1824. What must they do to deal with the recalcitrant planters? Losh insisted that they must express their determination to the planters:

May 10, 1828 (continued)

The power of the planters is so strong, that Government dare not do by main force what they ought to do. The present Government, no doubt, means well, but they must have the steady support of the country, or we shall gain nothing. There is a great number who vote with what is called the West India interest, not only in the House of Commons, but likewise in the Lords - they are a compact body acting together - and nothing can be done by the Government against this force, unless they are supported by the people - they must feel that, while they are opposed, on the one hand, by twenty or thirty members, they are supported, on the other, by thousands of the people (hear, hear, and applause)...⁴⁵

Losh had contented himself in this speech with rallying support for continuing the pressure on the government, avoiding the detail of his previous argument. With reform and the emancipation of the Catholics still in the balance, it says much for his dedication to the issue. It is not as if the region had a direct connection with the West Indies. None of the islands' exports came through the port, as they did at Bristol and Liverpool.

Meanwhile other provincial cities were experiencing a similar upsurge of interest in the slavery issue, though there is nothing to suggest that this was a result of a concerted effort. Losh was following the progress of these movements closely, however:

May 3, 1828.

We have observed in the London papers, the resolutions of meetings held at Birmingham, Liverpool, and other places of friends to the gradual amelioration of the condition, and ultimate emancipation of the slaves of the West Indies, and our other colonies. The almost total disregard which the Houses of Assembly of the several

islands have shewn of the British Orders in Council, seems to require that the British Public should do in its power to strengthen the hands of Government, by prompt and explicit declarations on this important subject...

By 1828, Brougham's health was showing the consequence of his intense campaigning. He continued, nevertheless, to attend the meetings of the Anti-Slavery Society. Brougham, when counselled to save his strength, answered that circuit lawyers had no choice:

No one can tell you, save they who belong to it, how ill-adapted our profession is to taking any care of health, unless it just happens to suit arrangements. These are inexorable and above all, they allow no respite except for a few weeks in the autumn. Now fain would most of us (who are in business) sacrifice a part, aye and the greater part of our gains to have more time for relaxation, and other pursuits! But it is impossible - it would sacrificing not the bulk, but the whole⁴⁶.

James Losh would have sympathised with this, being caught on the same treadmill, and also at times suffering indispositions due to his heavy commitment to parliamentary reform, the catholic question (now resolved), and the emancipation of the slaves. The latter question, as we have seen, was still an active issue on Tyneside, even though it was seen differently elsewhere:

In October 1829, an editorial in the Anti-Slavery Reporter reference to 'torpor' on the slavery question which 'had seized, with a few exceptions, on all classes'⁴⁷.

The next three and a half years saw a rising tempo of anti-slavery agitation. Traditional tactics were pressed forward with more vigour and success, especially the large public meeting and petitioning. No less than 5020 petitions against slavery were presented to the first reformed parliament in the opening months of 1833. In the provinces 1300 provincial

anti-slavery associations were formed⁴⁸. As James Walvin points out, there was a strong non-conformist influence on this movement:

By the 1820s a substantial proportion of all abolitionist petitions - numbered in their thousands - came from dissenting congregations.⁴⁹

In February 1826, in an article in the *Edinburgh Review*⁵⁰ Brougham supported a new policy arguing that the time for public feeling to express itself effectively was at the elections, and the friends of the slaves should vote only for candidates who were pledged to abolish slavery. A beginning was made in 1830. So it was that 1830 saw anti-slavery agitation coupled to a demand for parliamentary reform, reviving in the industrial counties of the north. The general election of 1830, caused by the accession of William IV, saw Yorkshire return Brougham. The abolition of slavery took pride of place among the measures ventilated. This heightened political awareness and pressure for change was to a large extent the work of provincial men like Losh. It was the increasing number of meetings recorded in the press, and the volume of petitions, that made Westminster aware that liberal opinion was becoming widespread. (We saw a similar phenomenon in the chapter four relating to parliamentary reform and will discuss this process further in the conclusion). The Whigs were wise enough to realise that slavery was a political issue not to be ignored. The public were aroused by the atrocities of plantation slavery, as they had been by the slave trade, and this had been fuelled by Brougham's memorable speech on the trial and death of the missionary John Smith.

Brougham, in the final part of his speech, addressed the Christian community, dwelling upon the insult to all Christians implied in the contention of the Demarara government that Smith had taught seditious principles from the Bible. To deny the slaves the teaching of the Christian message, to hold that it was seditious, went beyond the unfortunate Smith. It made the Bible unlawful, and the teaching of the slaves, a crime.⁵¹ Though Canning had defeated Brougham's motion on the narrowest of margins, the exposure by Brougham of the John Smith trial, was a watershed in the progress to slave emancipation. The tragic circumstances of the trial became a subject for debate.

Lord John Russell wrote in his recollections that Brougham's speech 'combined the closest and most pressing logic with the most eloquent denunciations of oppression and the most powerful to justice'. 'It contributed,' he said, 'in a very marked degree, to the extinction of slavery through the dominions of the crown of England⁵².'

On July 13, 1830, Brougham asked the House to resolve to consider the matter of colonial slavery in the next session. The motion was defeated by 29 votes. Brougham held that the imperial parliament had the right to determine the issue. It had the right to encroach upon what was called private property, since no man was justified in having property in his fellow creatures:

'Let the planters beware - let the assemblies beware - let the government at home beware - let the Parliament

beware! The same country is once more awake - awake to the condition of Negro Slavery; the same indignation kindles in the bosom of the same people; the same cloud is gathering that annihilated the Slave Trade⁵³.

With Losh and his committee colleagues constantly pressing the matter, the north-east was in the forefront of provincial agitation. Losh records in his diary:

August 11, 1830.

A numerous meeting of the Friends of Abolition of Slavery was held today in the large Methodist Meeting House. Beaumont was in the chair and Brougham made one of his magnificent but somewhat too-vehement speeches. He was warmed and somewhat exalted by the great events which have occurred in France, and also by the most honourable and flattering mark of public approbation which he has just received from the great county of York, having been called upon (together with Lord Morpeth) by the freeholders, and what is still more remarkable by the great majority of the gentry to represent them in Parliament...⁵⁴

The *Newcastle Chronicle* reported the meeting in the following issue, which was largely composed of Brougham's speech.

Brougham recognised that the elections made it clear that the emancipation of the slaves had to be dealt with. He reminded his audience of their achievements to date: the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts; Catholic emancipation. They now had the initiative to end slavery:

...that which we did for the Catholics and the Dissenters we are now prepared to do against West India slavery, with the same disinterested zeal, and I trust in God with the same glorious issue...⁵⁵

As Losh demonstrated in the cause of Parliamentary Reform, he was tireless in campaigning. Here we find him in a modest market town some distance from Newcastle:

October 29, 1830.

A public meeting of the inhabitants of Hexham in order to forward a petition for the abolition of slavery had been fixed for 10 o'clock this morning in order to suit my convenience. I therefore attended and proposed the first resolution, in a short but, I think, clear and well

arranged speech. The hour being inconvenient to the shopkeepers and workmen of all kinds, the meeting, tho' respectable, was by no means numerous, which prevented me from speaking fully or with much animation. I had considered the subject with some care, and had the meeting been large, I should have endeavoured at least to point out both the evils of and the remedies for the present miserable condition of the slave holders, as well as of the slaves, in the West Indies⁵⁶.

A few days later, he counselled another audience against a demand for immediate emancipation. He reminded them of the factors that had to be taken into account:

November 2, 1830.

Anti-slavery meeting 1 hour. An article in the Anti-Slavery Reporter in favour of immediate emancipation. This well and sensibly written...I do not think the writer has seen what appears to me the difficulty to be avoided in giving the slaves their absolute and uncontrolled liberty. I mean the ruin of the planters and their inability to employ the negroes as free labourers; and without regular employment it would be impossible to provide for them and their families. It seems to me that although the negroes should undoubtedly be restored to, or rather raised to, the rank of free men with all the rights of British subjects, yet that they should, for some reasonable time at least, remain under contracts of labour to their present masters... But I have no doubt that if the Government be in earnest, the planters see their own true interest, they may be provided for so as to not only gain liberty to the slaves, but also confer a substantial benefit to the planters themselves. A change in the administration and the success of the Whigs is certain⁵⁷.

In November 1830 the House of Commons voted to bring down the Duke of Wellington's Tory government. William IV called upon Grey to form a government. It was a government pledged to Reform. Whilst anti-slavery was still an issue that would not go away, reform was to become centre-stage. It was to consume the energies of the radicals and reformers almost exclusively until the passage of the Reform Act of 1832. Whatever else might be accomplished by this aristocratic administration of Grey, he knew that now was the time for Reform. It was to

become a close run thing. And Losh was to become, like so many of his class, heavily involved.

Anstey aptly describes the period and the effect of the reform issue on anti-slavery:

Not only from mid-1832 to mid-1833, but from 1830 onwards the political atmosphere of Britain had been dominated by the reform question. That question had complex interactions with the achievement of emancipation...It is clear that during the reform crisis even ardent anti-slavery men soft-pedalled emancipation...as the reformers that most of them were, they feared that to pursue both objects simultaneously would prejudice reform, and as abolitionists, they believed that emancipation was most likely to be attained on the flood tide of achieved political reform. With the safe arrival in port of the Reform Bill in June 1832, however, the political situation for emancipation changed greatly...⁵⁸

Even though he had been so immersed in the reform issue, the subject of slavery had never far away from Losh's mind. It re-emerges in his diary in 1833.

January 29, 1833.
I drank tea at 5 o'clock with Mr Beaumont (a most respectable Quaker) to meet Mr Knibb, a Baptist missionary, who was in Jamaica for several years, and was violently persecuted by the planters, and even imprisoned after the late disturbances in that island. I met several sensible well-informed Quakers and others, and found Mr Knibb a clear-headed man, with plain unaffected manners, very different from what I expected. He gave me a great deal of useful information, as to the real state of slavery in Jamaica. He said that the planters themselves were not so much to blame as their overseers etc and the agents of the non-residents. These persons, he said, were generally speaking without education and frequently men of desparate fortune and profligate habits. He have me a very favourable statement of the facts, to shew the negroes were not only capable of being civilised, but even at present so well disposed that immediate emancipation might with proper regulations, and a strong well-organised police, be safely ventured upon. He said the great difficulty would not be so much inducing negroes to become good and peaceable labourers, as to provide some useful employment for that set of men whom their emancipation would throw out of employment. The conversation was mainly between Mr Knibb and myself, but several others, particularly one or two Quaker ladies occasionally took part⁵⁹.

It is clear from Losh's diary that more and more local people were becoming involved in the emancipation issue:

January 30, 1833.

I attended a very numerous Anti-Slavery meeting held at the Wesleyan Chapel. I suppose there were 3000 persons present. The Mayor, John Brandling, presided and a great number of the most respectable men, principally however, Quakers and Dissenters were on the platform. I, as the Chairman of the Anti-Slavery Society, opened the business in a speech of about 3 quarters of an hour, which was received with great applause.

I had certainly thought a good deal on the subject but had not arranged what I meant to say and was much surprised at the size of the chapel and the number of auditors; I, however, found no difficulty in expressing myself and I do not think that I omitted anything of importance which appeared to me to support my view of this great question⁶⁰.

Losh's speech was reported in full in the *Newcastle Chronicle*.

Losh was his usual eloquent self:

[This is] no less than an inquiry whether our fellow creatures should remain bound men; whether in fact they should remain as the actual property of persons who in his mind could have no property in human beings. The motives which had actuated the advocates of slave emancipation had been treated with every species of misrepresentation and obloquy, and they themselves had been termed wild theorists - persons who were wishful to make a display of their benevolent feelings at the expense and to the ruin of others. Was that true?⁶¹

Losh feared that the bloody upheaval that had happened in St. Domingo would engulf the other islands:

There was a crisis at hand which would prove fatal to further delay; he believed in his conscience that the negroes had arrived at such a state that they would rather rush headlong to destruction than remain longer as they are, and if that were so we could not stop; we must either go on and emancipate them or expect to witness scenes of the most horrible description.

The learned gentleman then adverted to the question of compensation. He did mean to say that there might not be cases in which some compensation might not be fair; but it was their business to prove that and not the friends of the slave to wait for it. As soon as Parliament could find it expedient let them declare that no such person as a slave should breathe...⁶².

This was a simpler speech than Losh had made hitherto. Perhaps he felt he merely had to remind them of some of the issues.

1833 was to be the year for the emancipation of the slaves, the second great measure of Grey's administration. Losh, however, was not altogether satisfied with the West India Slave Emancipation Bill when it eventually came through. He wrote in his diary:

July 23, 1833.

I think the Government have done wrong in agreeing to a 12 year term of apprenticeship, and also in giving any compensation, except where loss is satisfactorily proved. 20 Millions is a large sum (but if necessary I do not object to it - only the necessity should not be taken for granted). My friends the Quakers, and other zealous enemies to slavery, seem to me unreasonably violent against the government plan and suspicious (without any cause) of their honesty and good faith⁶³.

Commenting on the contending powers that determined the question of compensation, Anstey writes:

The West Indians in parliament...had more weight and were more effective in checking anti-slavery in 1823-33 than twenty-five years earlier...their politically stronger position ensured for them terms of compensation which the Tory party believed such an establishment interest deserved⁶⁴.

Brougham, strangely, took little part in the cabinet discussions, even though he had been active in the anti-slavery issue in parliamentary circles since the turn of the century, and had often carried it forward almost alone during the unpopular years. However, he did lend his weight to the provision which most angered the abolitionists: the substitution of a period of apprenticeship in freedom rather than outright, immediate emancipation. This was not Brougham's final word on the subject. In 1838, he raised a

tempest of humane sentiment by a series of speeches at Exeter Hall and in the House of Lords on the state of West Indian slavery and the speeches regained for him a brief hour of public adulation. They did not succeed in persuading parliament to shorten the slaves' period of apprenticeship.

When we consider the foregoing, an interesting point that emerges is that Losh was active on an anti-slavery committee on Tyneside as early as 1814, eight years before James Cropper organised his society for the total abolition of slavery. There is not much evidence for anti-slavery activity in Losh's diaries between the early reference in 1806 and the 20s, largely because he was involved in so much both locally and nationally: the list includes the Newcastle-Carlisle railway, local schools, Catholic emancipation; and parliamentary reform, which he saw as the salvation to many of the nation's other problems. Yet he was ready when the groundswell of reform brought it back before his peers, which argues that he had given it plenty of thought in the intervening years.

In comparing his thoughts on the issue with his friend Henry Brougham, we need to remind ourselves that whilst they were both members of professional middle class, experiencing the rigours of life on the northern circuit, Brougham was very metropolitan, and as we have seen Losh was a determined provincial.

This difference is reflected in the way Brougham argued as a politician, largely on humanitarian grounds. He was seeking justice for fellow men, fellow subjects of Parliament.

Treating them like human beings, and in particular allowing marriages, would increase their population. He demanded government intervention.

As we saw, whilst making these points too, Losh pointed to the heavy subsidies on West Indian sugars, and the fact that those large profits were not reflected in the treatment accorded to the slaves. It can be seen that Brougham made little reference to any economic arguments in his long fight for final emancipation. He was a master of dramatic rhetoric (in Losh's eyes occasionally too dramatic), and appealed to the moral and Christian sensibilities of his audiences. As he was part of Grey's administration which eventually passed the Emancipation bill, it can be said he must have been sufficiently familiar with the economics of the sugar industry to support the 20 millions paid in compensation to the plantation owners.

Losh, however, was a business man with wide interests, and he knew the arguments that appealed to his own kind. From the breeding of slaves to replace the trade; the advantages of free over slave labour; the increase in output from paid labour; the value of the tax on East India sugar as a subsidy to West Indian sugar; to the use of the threat of withdrawing the tax and subsidy to force the planters to free the slaves.

Yet he was cautious too that emancipation should not go too fast, and he accepted the argument that provision would have to be made for the unemployed overseers and agents. His contract of employment between the freed slave and the plantation owner reflected his own attitude to his miners where such a contract was in use. Losh's fire had a more temperate and useful heat.

Though different in style, both Brougham and Losh recognised that the time was right for the kind of appeal they made to an audience who had, in the previous few years, seen the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Catholic emancipation, been given the vote with Grey's Reform Act of 1832, and were now being rallied to fight for the emancipation of the West Indian slaves. It also coincided with the audience's feelings of increased moral and social responsibility, its desire for change, and its increasing pride in its new-found strength and identity. The middle class now had political clout, and the inequalities of virtual representation were fast disappearing.

It had been a long hard fight and it is interesting to look at all the campaigners had to do to achieve that result. As a summary of the tactics of the anti-slavery campaigners, Seymour Drescher points to the methods used by them, many of which had been developed over the years of struggle for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Catholic Emancipation, and Parliamentary Reform. Losh and his Tyneside

colleagues had figured strongly in all of them. Drescher writes:

It had the characteristics of what we think of as a social movement... At critical moments it used mass propaganda, petitions, public meetings, lawsuits and boycotts, presenting anti-slavery action as a moral and political imperative... Organizationally it tended to be decentralized in structure and rooted in local communities⁶⁵.

The success of the slavery campaign was, for Losh, to set the seal on a lifetime of political activism, of moral and religious determination. To understand what this meant to Losh, we will better appreciate in the conclusion, when we look at all the issues so far discussed, and consider their influence on his life, and the kind of man he was in relation to his place and his time.

CONCLUSION

In this conclusion, I seek to evaluate Losh's role in the main issues of his day, and to relate his involvement in them to some of the dominant influences on his life and thought. My intention is also to explore the extent to which his views on these issues, as demonstrated, could be taken as exemplary of his class and time. To this end I propose to structure the conclusion in the following way: Firstly, I shall consider Losh's political and religious stance in relation to the four major issues of this thesis. Secondly, I shall examine some of the major influences on his life: his participation in Godwin's circle; his involvement in pressure groups; his relationship with the metropolitan milieu; his experience as a lawyer. Finally, I shall consider whether the sum of the foregoing makes Losh a representative of the emerging professional provincial middle class.

When we consider the ideas expressed by Losh in the four main chapters of this thesis, one attitude that coloured his thinking, was a desire for progress - but with stability and continuity. Whilst Losh regretted the corruption of the Court and its restricting effect on successive administrations - particularly where Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform were concerned - he had no republican sympathies. For instance, he did not advocate extreme radical remedies, such as those which his friend Wordsworth briefly flirted with, and

which circulated in the Godwin group. However, his hopes for progress through Whig liberal influence under the Regency were soon dashed, and we find him advocating reform for the salvation of the country, and the preservation of the constitution.

In a sense Losh can be seen as almost Burkean in his acceptance of the institutions of state, including the Crown, and of their status as the legacy of an evolved constitution. He was afraid of revolution, probably because he had seen it at first hand in the Paris of 1792, and recognized the destruction of society that might be the consequence.

He would have agreed with his old intimate William Frend, who wrote:

I had been witness to the miseries of the French, but saw no reason for adopting all their principles, or their conduct in government. There were many defects and abuses in our own government: yet the lenient hand of reform seemed sufficient for their removal...¹

Losh advocated reforming those institutions that bore heavily on the productive middle class and the labouring classes. He was aware of the hopelessness of the latter in the face of chronic unemployment, poverty, and hunger, often exacerbated by the actions of the upper classes. Losh was never backward in placing blame at the door of those coalowners, shipowners, clergy, and businessmen who exploited or ignored the poor. We shall see how he responded to the restrictive practices of Lord Londonderry, and to the shipowners during the strike in South Shields.

Losh never challenged the necessity for the throne, however critical he might be of the current incumbent, and his misuse of royal power and prerogative. His criticism of George III, often tinged with respect for his solid family life, was largely aimed at his stubbornness on the Catholic issue, and his maintenance of administrations that sustained the pre-reform status quo. Also, Losh's view of the aristocracy was seldom complimentary, and his comments on them are trenchant, though never less than fair. Nevertheless, his relations with them were always cordial, and several of them sought his opinion, help and advice on a number of occasions. Earl Grey, for instance, was grateful for Losh's help when he found himself the target of a spite campaign by a Mr Beaumont, a local political figure.

11 March 1824.

Lord Grey's letter is very friendly and even confidential. He is evidently much pleased that I have been able to prevent Mr. Beaumont pursuing his wild and vexatious measures, and at the the same time he wishes my advice and assistance with respect to his son's offering himself for the county when Mr.B. retires'.

Losh accepted his own place in society (though not the restrictions which were the price he had to pay for his Dissenting views) and in that capacity worked tirelessly for change. At the same time, as we saw in the Introduction, he was a strong advocate of the lower classes improving their situation, and their prospects, by education and industry. I feel we can accept that Losh was not a radical but a reformer, in the terms of his own definition of being in favour of a wider franchise, and of gradual change to the nation's institutions. We have seen (chapter four) that he

did not subscribe to a universal franchise, or to the secret ballot, yet he could foresee a time when, by virtue of education, the working population would attain its political voice. Grey had put through a reform bill that admitted a greater number of middle class voters and communities, and removed representation from a number of 'rotten' boroughs, but in the final analysis it still resembled an extension of 'virtual representation'. Whilst Losh was anxious that no immediate amendments be made to the Bill, he was able (unlike Grey), to see it as the first step in a wide range of much needed reforms both social as well as political.

Losh never tried to ape the social pretensions of his so-called 'betters'. Yet at the same time it could be argued that he did not see them as his 'betters', but rather as being more fortunate in the position in which they had been placed by the Almighty. We find him ascribing the misfortunes that occurred to him to a benign Deity, who was visiting him with these calamities for the good of his soul, and his prospect of a future spiritual existence. He was not without his moments of doubt about:

February 3, 1825.

...the foreknowledge of God, and the free will of man; but these doubts and scruples most probably are not intended to be removed in this state of our existence, and perhaps form part of that state of trial which the Supreme Being has placed us in...³

His diary reveals that his was a life of constant accountability to God. It was not fear that drove him, so much as the desire to achieve a state of greater mental and spiritual well-being. Yet his efforts towards self-

improvement, to the betterment of the state, were tinged by his Necessarian belief, that all was working towards a greater good. We appreciate his humanity when we find him constantly struggling with what he described as his unfortunate habit of 'castle building', yet if any man could excuse a few moments of day dreaming, it was Losh.

Losh was proud to be an Englishman, but did not see England's role as one of saving the world for civilisation, even though he was proud of its constitution. His admiration of the United States was ungrudging.

'September 19, 1825.

...America has the best government now existing and the fairest prospects of future prosperity...Indeed everything has an obvious tendency to improve, literature, manners, and clear ideas of political economy are steadily and rapidly extending themselves, and even slavery in the Southern States (where it is the cause of much corruption and misery) must ere long give way to the united efforts of humanity and self interest...'

The British treatment of the Irish - as we saw in chapter three- was totally unacceptable to him, not only on the score of religion, but on the wider issues of commercial and economic restrictions. He read all the books of Maria Edgeworth and found her descriptions of the condition of the peasantry revolting. He was convinced it would eventually lead to a national calamity.

In the debate on Catholic Emancipation, whilst Sydney Smith challenged public fears regarding Irish Catholics taking arms against the state, or peacefully submerging the established

church by weight of numbers, Losh dwelt on the immorality of discrimination on religious grounds, and on the injustice of inequality before the law. It is the sort of argument one would expect from a Unitarian lawyer. Losh and Smith were at one in believing that it was wiser to give relief from the restrictions freely, than to rely on an army and an expenditure of millions of pounds to suppress mass discontent. What better argument than that to an audience groaning under the burden of tax?

This same argument from Losh had equal relevance to the question of plantation slavery, although the moral grounds for emancipation were unquestionable (as was discussed in chapter five). Losh was also able to point to the cost of the subsidies on West Indian sugar. Why he argued were they necessary when East Indian sugar had none? They were even less defensible when it was considered that East Indian sugar was produced by free men. Here again Losh was sensitive to the rising tide of reforming zeal among his middle class audience, eager to have a voice in national affairs. Yet he remained an advocate of gradual change, not only for the slaves, but for their overseers and plantation owners.

The wider world always attracted his attention. Movements, changes, struggles for greater freedom, are mentioned regularly in his diaries. Although he was a confirmed provincial, his views were never short-sighted. The reluctance of the current administration to acknowledge the

new administrations in South America, or the success of Bolivar, made him impatient. He applauded the British merchants and traders who anticipated that acknowledgment.

25 April, 1829.

...[Bolivar] The great effects produced by apparently inadequate means, his sacrifice of fortune, his long series of difficulties and dangers, and privations of all kinds, and his unbounded ascendancy over his countrymen all lead me to hope that he is a real patriot.

America he saw as offering an example, a lead to the older monarchies of Europe, although he eschewed the bloody and irreligious revolution in France. Losh was committed from an early age to further the struggle for religious and political freedom. Not only because he wanted it for his own sect, but for all religions, and for all peoples. When his son, Baldwin, an officer in an infantry regiment, was sent with his regiment to Portugal to offer assistance to a nationalist government under threat from Spanish aggression, he applauded it.

Losh recognised the broad nature of the struggle for social justice, and saw that it was bigger than just issues. As Richard Davis puts it:

...the greatest political problem of the period roughly bounded by the American Revolution and the Great Reform Bill was the struggle between the traditionally privileged and the rising new talent, ability, and wealth - between the old oligarchy based on land, and the aggressive and expanding middle classes produced by the tremendous commercial and industrial growth of the country. Dissenters were bound to be in the thick of the struggle. Partly it was because the Church, whose members' virtual monopoly of political power the Dissenters sought to break, was an integral part of the oligarchical system in society and politics. Partly, it was because, through a close connexion between the Dissenters' religious principles and commercial and industrial success, they formed a large and influential element in the new middle class...Religion was a constant

theme in political controversy, but, more than that, it served as a fundamental basis for the emergence of a broad new division in English politics...'

Losh's Unitarian Christianity was broad enough to accept the right of others to pursue the religion of their choice. His criticism of the Church of England was on the score of its dominance in public and political affairs. We have seen that his commitment to Christianity was an active one. Typically, when a Bible Society was formed for the distribution of copies of the New Testament, he often chaired its meetings.

1 December 1814.

Annual meeting of the Bible Society which was well and numerously attended between 500-600 persons, principally of the middle classes of society with many of their wives and daughters. I was in the chair but feeling languid and far from well..."

However, although Losh believed in the Scriptures, when a group of missionaries went overseas without anything other than the 'good book', he was scathing in his condemnation of their unpractical attitude.

Losh became a Unitarian at Cambridge, moving away from his family's Anglican view. He had originally, as the second son, been intended for the church. However, it was there that he changed his religious convictions, and found himself in sympathy with William Frend, who appears from time to time in the diaries. They remained friends for the rest of Losh's life:

20 October, 1832.

...I drank tea this evening with William Frend, whom I had not seen for many years. He is now an old man, but his faculties seem perfect, and he is cheerful and much interested as he used to be in all public and literary improvements, moral and political. Frend is certainly an able man and possessing much learning and information'

After Cambridge, Frennd and Losh, as we saw, attended the circle that met in the early '90s at the home of William Godwin. It was because he was a member of that select group of radicals around William Godwin that one looks for an early influence on Losh's ideas. Although Losh's social and political attitudes found some points of contact with Godwin's philosophy, Losh himself could never be described as sharing Godwin's anarchistic views, or indeed any ideas of a changed society that were less than practical. Godwin was more of a theorist for whom politics was

...the application of the fundamental principles of morality to certain issues of broad social concern. To answer questions such as the nature and extent of political obligation, the relationship between freedom and order, the desirability of various forms of government, and so forth, one must have recourse in all cases to the principle of utility...¹⁰

One can see how Losh might have found himself at least sympathetic to the idea of politics being a branch of ethics, of morality. But rather than a principle of utility, he applied a standard based upon 'justice' in the Christian sense of according to each man what was right, and expecting from him in return the exercise of a social responsibility. A responsibility not to individuals so much as to the society, in which he lived. Individual relationships, for Losh, were grounded in the Christian rule of loving one's neighbour, and we find in his diaries many instances of his kindness to, and concern for, his neighbours. His idea of political justice, quite different from that of Godwin, always recognised the necessity of the state.

J.P.Clark writes that for Godwin:

Society results from the need for 'mutual assistance'. Human beings interact with one another because they have needs which they cannot fulfill in isolation. Government as part of society, arises from one of these needs. Some resort to the use of force to achieve their needs, and it is therefore necessary for the other members of society to protect themselves against this force. Government is the means by which this process of self-defense is institutionalised...the injustice and violence of men in a state of society, produced the demand for government".

Losh never expressed himself in these terms. He saw the first responsibility of the government, as that of preserving property, all kinds of property, not just land and bricks and mortar. The second was preserving order, so that people could go about their business unmolested. In order that these objects could be achieved, religious and political freedom were necessary, and government had a responsibility to act even-handedly so that social turmoil could be avoided. The government had the power to support these objectives, but not the right to compel acquiescence. Thus Losh was horrified by the Peterloo Massacre, and supported a petition of Brougham's to protest at the mishandling of it. Losh wrote a pamphlet critical of the government, under the pseudonym of 'an Observer', which has unfortunately not survived".

Losh's attitude could be summed up by saying that government was there because it had been found necessary by previous generations. If it did not work as it should, it should be modified. The businessman in Losh made him both pragmatic and reflective. The way he saw the consequences of political decisions points to his often penetrating analysis of situations. For example, his forecast of eventual universal suffrage; or his anticipation that it would need a gradual

emancipation to free the slaves. For Losh, no government was sanctioned by Divine right, although he was always conscious of the presence of God in all human affairs. He saw the miseries of the Napoleonic wars as a divine visitation upon Europe for its sins and corruptions.

We can also imagine Losh having difficulty with the principle of utility as expressed by Godwin. Obedience, and social subordination to government, were implicit in the way Losh lived his life, but it was not unquestioning. He was a barrister from choice, having turned away from a career in the established church because of his Unitarian views. Where the weight of government bore unfairly, unjustly upon anyone or any section of the community, Losh held that that weight had to be removed by peaceful political means. He was opposed to any form of civil disobedience, believing that the end results of violent behaviour were counterproductive. Those who 'had', had a responsibility to help those who 'had not'. We have seen how Losh lived his life exercising this philanthropic responsibility. He demonstrated this in his concern for the striking miners and seamen.

9 April 1831.

I attended a meeting of the coal owners and, after endeavouring in vain to reason with them, I left them to their own deliberations...the pitmen are, no doubt, to blame for the manner in which they have conducted themselves...[but]I much fear they have not always been dealt with fairly...¹³

In pursuing the goal of an increased suffrage, Losh was not seeking 'democracy'. To him, as it was with most thinking men of property, it was synonymous with the have-nots deciding

what to do with the property of the haves, in other words, the rule of the mob. Losh saw universal suffrage being achieved through the education of the masses to be able to exercise the responsibility of the vote. Universal suffrage, like one-year parliaments, were to Losh in the 1820s and 1830s far too radical. He must have found Godwin's argument for individual civil disobedience, ridiculously impractical. Rights for Losh, bred responsibilities. We saw this in his speech of January 1820 (chapter four).

The last time Godwin is mentioned in the diaries is early in 1798:

- March 7. Called on Godwin at lodging of Dr. Moyse.
- 8. Call from Godwin looking over a bond for Mrs Godwin. [This is a curious entry, as Mary Wollstonecraft died in September 1797. Perhaps it refers to the settling of her estate]
- 10. Godwin breakfasted with us, talked a good deal, spoke with much contempt of the 'pursuit of literature'. Thought Miss Lee [Harriet Lee whom Godwin wanted to marry] had talents but was too constantly acting a part. He is of the opinion that Tooke will never have sufficient exertion to finish his other two volumes...¹⁴

After these entries there is no more mention of contact with Godwin. In the light of Losh's involvement in the great issues of the early nineteenth century and the views he expressed, it is not unreasonable to suggest that he found himself unsympathetic to Godwin's increasingly bizarre views. Godwin appeared to have a greater influence on Wordsworth. One biographer notes that:

Godwin who lived in Somers Town, records no less than nine meetings with Wordsworth between February and August 1795. All except two of these were unaccompanied calls on Godwin by Wordsworth, sometimes for breakfast, and must have been for the purpose of tete a tete

conversations...¹⁵

If one were to seek a more nationally known parallel for one of Losh's views on Church and State, perhaps the Rev. Christopher Wyvill is close. Though he had pronounced Unitarian views Wyvill hoped that by remaining an Anglican minister

'his sentiments in favour of a moderate Ecclesiastical Reform...might be more likely to meet a candid reception, and consequently to produce a beneficial effect'. Wyvill saw reform of Church and State as two sides of the same coin...Wyvill was a firm believer in politics as the art of the possible...his cautious approach to reform increasingly alienated him from the reformers of the early nineteenth century...Wyvill's commitment to religious toleration extended to support for Catholic Emancipation¹⁶.

Losh knew him, and in a diary entry describes him:

May 14, 1799.

[Meeting] at Bigge's. Mr Wyvill appears to be a mild and good man, very earnest and very honest in his endeavours to produce a parliamentary reform as the only means to save the nation from ruin. His understanding seems rather plain and useful than comprehensive and vigorous. His manners are good, because natural and wholly without pretence. He read us some letters from Erskine and Fox, the latter seems almost to despair of the salvation of the country¹⁷.

The foregoing indicates how close Losh and Wyvill were in their attitudes towards reform and their dislike of more radical views.

* * * * *

To further the causes that were so important to reformers, dissenters, and educationalists, the middle class (of whom Losh was a vocal example), sought to become more influential through organisations. I would argue that it was through these associations, societies, and action groups that the

emerging middle class acquired a unity of purpose, furthered a greater visibility, and acquired a stronger voice in the affairs of the nation. Losh as we have seen was very much in the forefront of this struggle for political power and social status, welcoming a role in those long-term organisations such as the Literary and Philosophical Society, with more than local objects, and those others whose purpose was to petition parliament, to arouse middle class support in the struggle for reform, for Catholic emancipation, for the emancipation of the slaves.

A recent study of these pressure groups at national level comments:

Before 1832, such groups were thought to be illegitimate, and unnecessary as they disturbed the deliberate role of Parliament, and unnecessary as they spoke for no recognizable corporate or community interest... [However]parliament became increasingly responsive to public opinion, and increasingly tolerant in its definition of it. Pressure from without then, is used here in the sense that contemporaries used it, to refer to those more or less radical and mainly middle class pressure groups pursuing specified goals and working for legislative change by putting pressure on parliament and government; possessing a sophisticated organization over a defined period of time; invoking a moral language, by claiming to speak for the People, the Nation or the Country¹⁴.

The formation of groups for furthering causes, and for mutual support, were an early feature of Tyneside Unitarian life. Before 1800, as we have seen, local organisations such as the Literary and Philosophical Society were considered respectable and influential bodies. Losh had no hesitation in promoting and using pressure groups whether they were directly organised for a specific purpose such as anti-slavery, or

organised for another purpose and used as a sounding board for political activism, for instance the Bible Society already mentioned. To him they were also a means of gathering names for his frequent use of petitions. As we saw in the three major issues of this thesis, Losh organised meetings to petition parliament, even when the issues were not currently being debated. The petitions reminded parliament that the public had not forgotten even when the metropolis was politically slumbering. As Hollis writes, pressure groups were effective:

Nineteenth century pressure from without did have some effect on legislation; had a marked effect on class harmony and social tranquillity; and both enlarged the realm of government and the breadth of the base of government. Much of this is due... to the limited concept of government, to the lack of ideologically powerful political parties... Within central and local government... there [was] the same unease at the unauthorized nature of pressure from without, at its critical stance and its populist claims. Finally, pressure groups... seem to be a continuing source of ideological change, forcing flexibility into existing political organisations, casting political parties as umbrellas over a bundle of more or less minority and more or less welcome concern¹⁹.

To Losh the purpose of these groups was to gather together the 'respectable' people in support of both local and national objectives. His diary reveals that Losh became involved very early upon his arrival in Newcastle.

June 11, 1799
Spoke a few words at the Literary Society, but not well²⁰.

I suspect that this followed his association with the Unitarians like Turner, who had been active as we have seen from the middle of the eighteenth century. It would be a natural involvement considering how politically aware he was

following his inclusion in the group about Godwin; his active part in the Friends of the People along with Tierney and Grey; and his discussions with Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey in the 1790s, when they were still very radical.

Despite the acceptance of pressure groups in the Tyneside area, we find the antagonism of the governing classes to such middle-class meetings still very apparent years later. Thomas Attwood, leader of the Birmingham Political Union, told a meeting on 7 May 1832:

The enemies of the people have told their Lordships that the country is indifferent to this great cause. If we hold no meetings, they say we are indifferent; if we hold small meetings, they say that we are insignificant; and if we hold large meetings, they say we are rebellious and wish to intimidate them. (laughter) Do what we will, we cannot do right it seems²¹.

Whatever the size of these meetings, on a traditionalist account of the House of Commons, they could never be legitimate.

To give pressure groups respectability, the titled were sought as presidents, gentlemen as corresponding secretaries, magistrates and local councillors as branch chairmen, and clergy to give their moral authority to the whole. As we know Losh was often the chairman at such meetings, along with other local men of substance. That they found resistance from Tory men on the local council, can be seen from the following diary entry:

December 16, 1830.

I accompanied Messrs Headlam, Charnley and Doubleday to the Mayor (A Reed) with a requisition, signed by above 150 most respectable persons, for a meeting in the

Guildhall for the purpose of petitioning Parliament for a Reform. We were most graciously received and a meeting was fixed for next Tuesday at 12 o'clock. It is somewhat remarkable that the same gentleman is Mayor who refused to call a meeting upon a precisely similar requisition in 1820!²²

Clearly this goes much further than Hollis' argument for the acceptance of pressure groups suggests.

Religious groups like Losh's Dissenters often couched their message to the populace in moral or religious language, and we have seen how Losh himself used the language of morality when speaking on the slavery issue. Public opinion generally, was beginning to see public issues in these terms.

Anti-slavery etc. all involked in a language of sin, of the identity of public and private morality, of a distaste for expediency and mere party consideration. Ministes, and especially Dissenting Ministers of religion, were in frequent demand to support campaigns given their imprimature of moral immediacy. Taxes on newspapers became a tax on knowledge; taxes on soap a tax on cleanliness. Whatever was morally wrong could not of course be politically right. Essential to enlightened opinion were respectable journalistic outlets; the philosophic radicals' *Westminster Review*, the *Examiner*, Cobden's founding of the *Economist* and financing of the *Sun*; Baine's *Leeds Mecury*, Miall's *Nonconformist*, Urquhart's *Free Press*.²³

Losh, we know, was a habitual reader of the national press and of his own local papers. He regularly read the great reviews, particularly the *Edinburgh Review*, which he frequently commented on, not always uncritically. We saw that he referred in his diary to re-joining a club of business men where the papers were read and discussed:

14 January, 1809.

I became some days ago, a subscriber to the Coffee House in the Exchange²⁴.

The size of local meetings (estimated as high as 10,000, by Losh and the reforming Newcastle Chronicle), suggests that pressure was not only exerted upon Parliament but upon local communities. Losh is often seen whipping up support with local organisations from both the middle and the artisan classes. The Schoolmasters' Association and the Mechanics Institutes welcomed his talks and they often asked him to reprint them.

30 April, 1832.

I was chairman of a great meeting of the Mechanics' Inst. and acquitted myself to my own satisfaction and I believe to that of a numerous assemblage. Mr Dunbar presented a cast of my bust to be placed in the library of the Inst.

Losh was one who identified the 'industrious' classes as the business and industrial middle class, although he was a determined 'improver' of the lower professional and artisan classes. He garnered their support for the major issues of the day, and whenever they appeared in force at his meetings did not treat them with disdain. Often he drew the sting of their antagonism and welcomed their support. On the whole the tactics of pressure groups such as those formed by Losh and his middle-class associates had served them well, and would be adopted by the working class in their turn as trade unions, thrift clubs, co-operatives.

* * * * *

We will now move to consider Losh's status as a provincial leader, bringing regional opinion to national figures and returning to his peers with the latest information on the metropolitan scene. Throughout his business life on Tyneside,

Losh frequently had to visit London. He had a wide circle of friends in the metropolis, many of them men of national stature in science, law, and politics. Though he commented on the advantages of being a practising barrister in London, and the obvious advantages of enjoying the patronage that his relationships would provide to him, he never expressed regret at his decision to establish himself in the provinces. He always returned home from London with a sense of relief. Typical entries in his diaries demonstrate his welcomed involvement in the most influential metropolitan circles, and throw light on the differences between a metropolitan and a provincial point of view. His characterising his provincial life as a 'retirement' is almost laughable, when one considers the breadth of his political, professional and social interests:

February 12, 1802.

Seven years since been to London as a man of business and four since been at all. I am returned with a view of improving my knowledge of Chancery law and proceedings. called on a number of friends...disgusted with London already and shall be glad to return to my retirement. The bustle, the profligacy, the artificial state of society, and above all the gross selfishness which seems to pervade everything, have me sick of what is called the world. Even now when the whole civilised world is shaking to its foundations. When the very existence of this and all the other European governments is threatened, it is dreadful (and at the same time almost ridiculous) to see the miserable scramble for places and for wealth in all departments of law, politics, and the church. Dinner...Southey appears to be what he always appeared to me, amicable, interesting, and displayed much ability.

Davy's lecture at the Royal Institution - 2 hours. After-wards dined at the Prince of Wales coffee house with Coleridge and Davy, and went with them to Sharp's in Mark Lane with Mackintosh and Paley...I had much pleasant interesting conversation at and after dinner with Davy and Coleridge on metaphysics chiefly²⁵.

Although he mentions meetings with men of national importance, there is no element of name-dropping, of seeking reflected glory in his diary entries. Losh only went to London on business, as on this occasion. The reception he got from his friends might have encouraged others to live in the metropolis, but Losh found too much about the London scene to cause him disquiet. Nevertheless, his pleasure in renewing old acquaintance is obvious:

March 1, 1802

Tea and supper at Southey's.²⁶

March 6, 1802.

Barry and I called on Tierney [co-author with Losh of the reform proposals put before the Commons in 1793]. He thinks a war probable and agreed with me in considering rigid economy the only possible mode of saving the country (without it war may be renewed at any time to our ruin, without it there can be no ameliorating our condition at home). He says he is as much and as ardently a friend to Parliamentary Reform as ever, that he reflects upon his exertions in the cause of it with peculiar pleasure and would renew them with eagerness were there any chance of success, but that all thought, all interest upon the subject seem dead among the people - indeed that the very name of people seems to be forgotten...²⁷

As we saw in chapter on parliamentary reform, Losh alone among the group we have been considering, kept the subject alive in 1820, when even Grey had lost heart. Losh gives one the impression of this being a discussion between two political equals rather than that of a provincial at the feet of a metropolitan lion:

March 6, 1802 [continued]

Tierney spoke with considerable bitterness of Fox, said that he was never a friend of Parliamentary Reform, and that he and his friends checked all hope of success by preventing the Society of Friends of the People from persevering when there seemed to be a favourable feeling in the nation (this I believe to be true from my own knowledge).

We had then much talk of the state of the country which Tierney said he thought very desperate whether in war or peace. That a junction of the parties, keeping out Pitt and the Grenvilles, might have saved it by establishing a rigid plan of economy; by gradually proceeding to reform of every kind, and that even Parliamentary Reform might that way have been attained...

An interesting speculation. But for the stubborn attitude of the King on the Catholic question Pitt would not have resigned, and he was poised already to return to power. Losh goes on:

March 6, 1802 [continued].
After a very unreserved conversation on my part (and as much apparently on Tierney's) in which I told him what the country would have thought of Grey had he joined the Administration; my opinion that Parliamentary Reform should always be kept in view. I came away with these conclusions in my own mind, that Tierney would have taken a place could he have obtained it upon safe terms, and in an administration economical and generally friendly to liberty. That he would have made no stipulation for Parliamentary Reform.

Being familiar with both the provincial and metropolitan tenor of opinion, Losh points to the self-deceiving attitude of the latter in the same entry:

March 6, 1802 [continued].
It appears to me that all people who attend to politics in London are deceived as to the real state of the people of England [my italics. One can understand why people in politics like Grey, found Losh's comments of value] They seem to think them willing to be slaves from principle, or rather from want of principle, and from a kind of stupor which has taken possession of their minds. In my opinion the indifference of the nation arises from a different cause. The enormous patronage of the Government silences a great number. The fear of prosecution prevents publications on the side of liberty, and above all the general ignorance of the mass of the people as to the principles of liberty, will always enable any cunning administration to go on to a certain point. As soon as, however, any outrageous violation of the law of the land, or any clear intelligible confusion (derangement) of the finances takes place, the spirit of the people will be roused and all resistance to that spirit will be ineffectual.

Losh evidently felt that matters had to take an extreme turn

before the nation would exert itself and make its opinion known. In this same diary entry he reveals how far he is in the confidence of the powerful:

March 6, 1802 [continued].

Mackintosh told me many curious anecdotes: Fox told him that he was at loss what to make of James 2nd, but was inclined to think him overabused. Mackintosh mentioned this to Henry Dundas, who said that he believed that history seldom assigned true causes for historic events, for instance he added 'No one would believe that we were dismissed from the King's service merely 'upon the Catholic question, and yet nothing is more true'. Dundas said that though he had always been opposed to Fox, he admired him, and had great kindness for him. He also related the following circumstance: 'soon after the Union the king said to me one day 'I hope we are in no way engaged to the Irish romanists'. I answered 'certainly not engaged, but it will be right to do something for them'. The King said 'But what of my coronation oath?' I drew a distinction between the King's situation as the executive power, and as part of the legislation, and showed that he though he may be bound as to his power capacity, yet he was not so in his other. His Majesty said 'None of your Scottish metaphysics Mr.Dundas' and went out of the room.'

Losh's visit is, of course, one of business that had to be attended to.

March 8, 1802.

Business at Lincoln's Inn hall...I had a long and interesting conversation with Whishaw...

Losh spent some time with Whishaw, indicating that he was an old friend of this prominent jurist:

March 12, 1802.

Looking over Locke's mss. at Whishaw's...The letters are also very valuable... particularly a great many from the immortal Newton, who appears to have written to him in the most unreserved manner. Generally on religious subjects. It appears from these letters both Newton and Locke were most sincerely interested in the illustration of the Scriptures and they had both a great tendency to Socinianism. Sir Isaac seems to have been engaged in religious pursuits 40 or 50 years before his death, which contradicts the idea that religion only engaged him in the dregs of his age...²⁸

Losh, with his own commitment to Unitarianism, obviously appreciated that Newton and Locke had been down the same road before him. Losh was not one to need to have the approval of the great for his philosophy, but since his early days at Cambridge, and his move to Unitarianism, he had nurtured his religious views and must have taken comfort from the views of Newton and Locke. Like them, Losh as a man of strong religious views, was always interested in science, and his early diary entries make reference to the time [before he became a married man] he spent on mathematics, and with Davy and Dr. Beddoes. On this visit to London he took the opportunity to follow this interest:

March 16, 1802.

Davy lecture 1 hour. Heard a good and clear lecture from Davy on chemical effects of heat, light and electricity. Experiments on a concave metallic reflector showing that it will, when a crucible with charcoal is placed so as to have the heat reflected, produce a great deal of heat at the focus. This shown by a thermometer (with ink) Other experiments with two reflecting metal mirrors with charcoal and ice.²⁹

On the following day of his visit he is immersed in legal matters with the great lawyer, Erskine. Losh was at the treason trials of the 90s when Erskine defended Horne Tooke and the others, and was now even more eminent. Their relationship had withstood the test of time. Losh refers to a private conversation with him in this 1802 entry:

March 17, 1802.

Dinner...Erskine was witty and amusing part of the time...He spoke well of Tierney and defended his [Tierney's] late conduct, blamed Fox much for speaking against him at the Whig Club. Complained that Fox had not mentioned him when he praised Grey. He said the same thing of Fox's ruining the cause of Parliamentary Reform as Tierney did when I talked to him. Indeed there seems great similarity between the sentiments of Tierney and Erskine upon the whole. I have no doubt that

Erskine is anxious to be Chief Justice and would not be too scrupulous as to the means...³⁰

Losh took the opportunity to call at the home of Horne Tooke.

Losh found him a man of talent but doubtful integrity:

March 27, 1802.

...went to Wimbledon to call upon Horne Tooke with whom we sat two hours...Tooke's real character still appears to me very doubtful, but I am inclined to think him an honest man though so vain and confident of his own powers, as to have often engaged in schemes from which he had not distinct or determined views. This same turn of mind induces him, in company and in private life to converse and act rather with a view to effect of the moment than from his judgement and sentiments... From his want of solid principles of religion and morality, however, he seems to me deficient in sound judgement and delicacy of taste³¹.

Losh later referred again to attending the treason trial of Horne Tooke and the others, and he recounted in his diary an amusing tale about Mrs Opie, the fashionable women's writer. She claimed that she ran up to Horne Tooke after the verdict and kissed him on the cheek. Losh wrote that this was a fiction.

August 9, 1818.

...for instance the assertion that Miss Opie (the Miss Alderson) kissed Horne Tooke on his acquittal. I was there, and no such thing took place³².

We can see how Losh summarised his visit in his month-end comment. He tended to evaluate every gain and loss in his personal achievement/morality stakes, as well as his reactions to the month's events. He acknowledged that the visit had been valuable but not to be repeated too frequently:

End March 1802.

The entertainment and instruction which I have derived from the society of very able men with whom I have principally lived are very considerable. London is undoubtedly the place where everything mental and mechanical is, in point of appearance, at least carried to great perfection. I am far from thinking, however, that the constant and unvaried habits of London life,

are favourable for the cultivation of the highest powers of the human mind. I am inclined to think that a residence of two or three months in the capital every year, would be amply sufficient for all the purposes of improvement and even pleasure...³³

Whilst it is true that Losh came to live in Newcastle primarily because his brothers were in business there, a better choice, considering the above comments, would have been hard to make. Of course, Newcastle at this time was an important provincial centre. It supplied most of the coal used in the metropolis; it had iron foundries, glass works, and machine shops. Its ships were serving the continental markets.

We can sense his relief to be home from the following:

April 1, 1802.

This evening I took leave of my friends. They all appeared sorry to part with me, but Davy had most the manner of a man who regretted the loss of a person for whom he had a regard.

April 10, 1802.

Home at 1 o'clock. once more in my quiet and happy home...I trust I have profited by my absence, but I sincerely hope that no cause for so long a one from my family may ever again occur³⁴.

On his visits to the capital, Losh found the place-seeking of the great surprising, and their standards of behaviour to each other, reprehensible. Though by no means naive, one can almost feel him standing back and looking and listening with his provincial commonsense.

One might argue that Losh remained a provincial because he was unable to compete in the London scene, that he was considered of little standing or competence. This proposition is, I feel refuted by the evident respect with which he is received by many eminent men. The frequency with which he was consulted

by people of the stature of Brougham, Grey and Irvine, on not only political and legal matters, but on personal issues. Losh counselled Brougham against an unwise action against the press, and Grey had occasion to be grateful for his intercession in a matter relating to a local magnate, as we saw.

23 November 1821.

Sir Robert Wilson called upon me with a letter from Brougham and a request that I would prepare two affidavits for the purpose of proceeding against the editors of two newspapers. After a good deal of conversation, however, Sir Robert agreed with me in thinking it was better not to proceed at all ...³⁵

We find in the following 1822 extracts from the diaries, further evidence of his standing in London, and of his continuing disenchantment with the London scene:

June 14, 1822.

...[Gurney]Scarlett, Brougham etc all gave me invitations which I was obliged to decline...My residence in London has answered the purpose I had in view viz. renewing my acquaintance with such persons and such families as seem likely hereafter to be useful to my children. I have also had much pleasure in meeting some of my best and earliest friends, but I am quite satisfied to leave the metropolis, and sincerely do I rejoice I am not condemned to the necessity of visiting it frequently. I did not call upon any of my old political friends, such as Tierney, and Mackintosh, nor upon Lord Grey, Lambton, Curwen etc my time was too short...³⁶

Losh recognised the importance of regular visits to the capital, and his visits were always for a particular purpose. For instance, he sought patronage for his sons. He made representation to parliamentary committees for the furtherance of the Newcastle to Carlisle Railway (see below). A valuable outcome of his re-aquaintance with political leaders kept him visible to them and made his opinions as a provincial leader valuable to them and theirs to his local peers. And of

course, he sought increased legal knowledge from his professional colleagues in London, and at the Inns of Court.

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Losh, the determined provincial and reformer, was also a pillar of his profession, a practising barrister for most of his adult life. At that time it was not uncommon for a younger son in a landed family to be educated in law, there being a natural and desirable connection between both landed and commercial property and legal expertise. We have already seen how important Losh's legal knowledge was to the family's commercial undertakings. With that thought in mind it is illuminating to consider his legal career in its provincial dimensions, and to see the relevance of it in the wider context of the ideas he shared with his peers.

Losh's professional career was devoted almost entirely to the counties embraced by the Northern Circuit and particularly those towns that were the scene of the assizes that he attended: Newcastle, Durham, Alnwick and Carlisle. From those early days when he sat in the court learning his trade without briefs, to the later years when he represented farmers, landed gentry, other professionals, railways, and dealt with criminal cases, arbitrations, bankruptcies, wills and probates, to his final days as Recorder of Newcastle, he was heavily engaged in his profession. A profession that was closely integrated with

his business interests, interests that reflected those of his class, and the local aristocracy such as Lord Lambton and Lord Londonderry. They increased their local economic power through their investments.

As the part-owner of a coal mine, and as a shareholder in several businesses on Tyneside, Losh was therefore familiar and sympathetic to all sides of the legal/owner/employee problems of his day. This was very apparent during his involvement in the seamens' strike, and his reaction to the cavalier treatment of the miners by certain coal owners. That he acted not only in a legal but also in an advisory capacity, suggests that his opinion was sought and valued.

There are innumerable references in the diaries to the reception of his views and his ability to identify with the opinions of his peers. The following have already been quoted:

January 24, 1812.

Most principal Catholics and Dissenters attended...
There still remains in this nation much good sense
and right feeling...

July 22, 1821.

...the middling classes of the people thought more of
the taxes and difficulties...than either of the King
and Queen...

End April 1829.

...But the state of public opinion has slowly but
steadily undergone a complete change upon the subject of
religious restrictions, and I am greatly mistaken if it
be not found ere long, to have done the same upon many
other subjects...

May 14, 1823.

Slavery Abolition Committee. I was in the chair...and
had the satisfaction to see much zeal and unanimity
amongst a set of the most respectable men...

We have seen from the obituaries that Losh was considered the local leader of the Whigs. We have also seen from the visit of 1802 to his London friends and acquaintances, the reception to his opinions, and his identification with his local milieu. When Grey was in residence in Northumberland, Losh was a frequent visitor, particularly when his law practice took him to Alwick. Grey's welcome to Losh at Downing Street during the Reform crisis, underlines the value he placed upon Losh as being representative of local political opinion. A value also to Brougham as their correspondence shows³⁷. For the better part of thirty years Losh was completely immersed in the local cultural and political scene, and his diary demonstrates how much he was at one with the attitudes of his fellow citizens.

One of the ways that Losh, as the lawyer/business man, demonstrated his understanding of the concerns of the members of his own class, was the manner in which he chose to attack government policy as being not only immoral but expensive. Local business men, investors, were acutely aware of the financial state of the nation, and their own burden of taxation. His speeches reveal in their reference to the cost of government e.g. the cost of compensating the slave owners; the cost of the standing army in Ireland; the continuation of heavy taxes after the end of the war with France, how he expressed the opinions of his local professional and business audience.

It has to be remembered, as T.J.Nossiter points out:

[That]the north-east was isolated from the rest of the country; it diverged from the national pattern in both the structure of land ownership and the nature of the agriculture; its main industry was coal mining, in which the landed magnates were themselves deeply involved, and it was one of the leading nonconformist areas of England...the course of politics, locally, was in part a response to the initial choice of political leadership offered by the two major parties in the 1830s, Radical Jack or the reactionary Londonderry. Politics was still highly local in substance and character. Constituencies generally sought - often in vain - for local representatives of local interest in preference to tried party men...³⁸.

One of the many examples of Losh being chosen to represent local interest, and expressing that interest in his words and actions, was the struggle for the Newcastle-Carlisle railway. Peter Cadogan, in his excellent account, writes that a meeting was called in February 1829 to petition for a Newcastle-Carlisle Railway Bill. A company had been formed in 1824 of which Losh was elected Chairman, and its first application to the House of Commons had been refused. At this 1829 meeting Losh made the major speech, pointing out that the all-round gain that would follow the Petition's success: increased trade with the Baltic, Holland and Hamburg; the import of timber, hemp, and other produce of northern European countries, and the export to them of coal and lead from the interior of Northumberland, Cumberland and Durham.

Finally he said:

'I now, Sir, come to the consideration which induced me in the outset, to anticipate a more than ordinary support from His Majesty's Ministry...Suppose there was a necessity of removing troops from this side of the country to the other, it would occupy about four days, whereas were a railway established, it would be effected in eight hours! Is that not itself sufficient to recommend the measure to the favour of the Government'.

The more delicate sensibilities of the landed interests were mollified by the assurance that no locomotives would disturb their rustic peace. Losh, himself the son of the laird of Woodside, near Carlisle, was clearly master of the technique of achieving new ends under old forms.³⁹

How typical of Losh to be so familiar with the financial and social arguments that would mean so much to his audience, and so represent their interest, and how typical also of him to see the enterprise in national political terms. As a lawyer Losh represented not only this enterprise but other local railway projects.

Whilst Losh often expressed the desire for a life of literary leisure, he never undervalued law's contribution to a democratic society. His attitudes are therefore worth considering, particularly in their local context. Whilst he often expressed criticism of his own legal ability, of the law that demanded severe penalties for relatively petty crimes, he recognised that it maintained the institutions of the nation. He often expressed his dismay at the poor quality of advocates and their undisciplined and sometimes immoral behaviour in his diaries and letters.

Losh was frequently employed as an advocate in industrial disputes, at different times both employers and men entrusted him with their causes. This was a great compliment to his even-handed reputation as both a business man and a liberal-minded lawyer. On one occasion we find him mitigating the severity of the law, with his usual humanity:

March 19, 1824.

After an early breakfast, I went to Sunderland with C. Cookson...I attended on behalf of the shipbuilders of Sunderland. Our arrangement of last Friday having [failed] of success from the obstinacy of some and the ignorance of others of the working shipwrights. We were under the necessity therefore of proceeding to the conviction of the committee consisting of 7...

March 30, 1824.

I went to Sunderland with Cookson...8 of the refractory ships carpenters were sent to gaol. This I was very sorry for, but the conduct of the body at large continues to be such that it has become necessary to make an example of these men who were clearly convicted and who have been the committee and ring leaders of a very dangerous association⁴⁰.

Losh, whilst compassionate towards the men, did not excuse threatening behaviour, nor did he anticipate the legality of trade union activity. Perhaps this is too much to expect of him in 1824, the year of the repeal of the Combination Acts, when recognition for unions was still some years away.⁴¹

On the other hand, Losh has nothing but contempt for a government misusing law for its own ends, and fearful of the consequences of suspending its proper processes. Here we have an earlier entry on this sensitive subject:

June 21, 1817.

Watson's trial. The acquittal of this man appears to me a thing of essential importance to the well-being of this nation. It proves that the plots so much talked of, are perfectly contemptible and if existing at all, confined wholly to the lowest and most miserable of people excited by the spies of the Government, and made desperate by misery. This surely makes the folly of suspending the Habeas Corpus very apparent. It cannot be wise or patriotic to punish the whole nation because there are few desperate wretches amongst us, and it is very dangerous to permit any government, even the best (which I do not consider our present to be) to suspend our liberties at its own will and pleasure⁴².

We see that Losh had a keen sense of justice, often at variance with the existing state of the law. (We might wonder

what Losh must have thought of the surveillance of Wordsworth by Pitt's secret police, in those early days in Bristol⁴³).

However, Losh was often concerned with less momentous matters.

This local arbitration case shows something of the workaday life of a provincial barrister:

November 12, 1819.

...slept at Belford. Thankful I have finished one of the most troublesome arbitrations I ever had. Two respectable but not rich men, contending about a piece of ground not intrinsically worth twenty pounds, at an expense of five times that sum to the winning party, and at least ten times to he who must be the loser. To say nothing of the heat and ill humour to which the dispute seems to have given rise, and the strange contradictions, not to say perjury, which has taken place amongst a host of witnesses..."

We can almost see Losh shaking his head at the folly of some of his clients. Later in the month, he comments on the 'freedom of the press' trial of Richard Carlile, the printer. Losh was in favour of the freedom of a 'responsible' press, but never of an unrestricted press. Freedom, without responsibility, was anathema to Losh:

November 15, 1819.

Mr Benson entered most vehemently into the subject of the prosecution for blasphemy. It is absolutely necessary to protect both the laws and the religion of the country from indecent and scurrilous attacks, but it appears to me imprudent and even tyrannical to prevent free discussion with respect to either of them by the interference of state prosecutions. Besides the publicity and wide circulation given by such proceedings to the very opinions sought to be checked, should be well weighed before resorted to..."⁴⁵

The legal community was not just a professional body but a social one too. Whilst Losh was not averse to sharing a bottle or two of wine, he found the extreme drunkenness of the younger barristers, and their tumultuous behaviour, disagreeable. These entries taken from 1821, when Losh was

58, shows that his attitude to this ribald behaviour has not changed, and also his feelings about being the senior barrister:

August 24.

Business in and out of court, 10 hours. Coffee at home with a large circuit party - Brougham, Raine, Scarlett etc. Cecilia did not dine with us as we were so large a party, but everything went off as well as possible...as comfortable and well satisfied as it is possible for a law party to be without venison and claret. I went to the ball for an hour at night.

August 25.

Business in and out of court 12 hours. Dinner with a large circuit party at Williamson's. As venison had been kept too long, and the wine corked, I do not think our dinner, tho' a very handsome one, gave great contentment to many of the black coats".

* * * * *

Our last perspective of Losh is to consider him as a representative of the upsurge of professionalism in the early decades of the nineteenth century. This affected not only law, but medicine, science, engineering, and numerous other occupations. As we saw in the Introduction, historians like W J Reader and Bryerly Thomas agreed on the importance of the professions and the professional classes in the early nineteenth century. Losh himself throughout his life, was aware of the importance of the professions to social improvement. Firmly committed to his own profession, he endeavoured to improve his knowledge of law and his performance in court. The following are typical entries:

End July 1800.

My profitable business has not been considerable but I have daily more reason to believe it will regularly increase; to acquire more accurate knowledge of Chancery proceedings; my plan is to spend a few weeks in Bell's

chambers reading at the same time nothing but Chancery law.⁴⁷

Here Losh is referring to his friend the eminent chancery lawyer. We know he went to London in 1802 for a similar purpose, as we saw above. He is ever critical of his own performance:

January 1 1801.

...I am ashamed, however, to find myself so ignorant of what as a practising lawyer I ought certainly to know⁴⁸.
February 12, 1802.

Seven years since been to London...I am returning with a view of improving my knowledge of Chancery law and proceedings.

End of August 1802:

The London practitioners of the law effect to despise those settled in the country, as a London tailor and dancing master despises his country brethren. The fact is, however, that in everything depending upon practice, we must labour under disadvantage⁴⁹.

Being paid is often a problem:

November 25, 1804.

It is mortifying to be embarrassed as a professional man about fees, and subject to the sneers and discontent of attornies and their clients. Nesfield or his attorney after all paid me very shabbily⁵⁰.

Losh was not above being critical of his fellow lawyers, even one as close to him as Brougham:

March 11, 1823.

...whilst I consider his talents among the very first (probably the first) among the great men now living, I cannot approve of many parts of his character. He is vain...and is too apt to indulge in sarcasm...⁵¹

It would appear, however, that Losh recognised his need for a friend's affection, and concludes a most accurate portrait:

...he often causes himself to be feared when he might be loved...I am quite sure ...he is upon reflection sincerely sorry⁵².

By 2nd November 1824, with more than twenty years experience, Losh was a more confident professional:

Cookson, Williamson...and I had a good deal of business and got through it to my own satisfaction. The new Insolvent Court is in all respects an improvement upon the old mode of referring the discharge of insolvents to a tribunal of Justices of the Peace...⁵³

The changes to the profession, a consequence of the increasing recognition of solicitors and its effect on barristers, is reflected in Losh's next diary entry.

December 4, 1827.

... We (the barristers resident in Newcastle, Williamson, myself, Cookson, and Askew) had a meeting with the solicitors, who complained of our conduct in availing ourselves of the power (under the new Bankruptcy Act) given for two barristers to act under every commission. This seemed to us a most unreasonable complaint and we had all of us the same views of the proper conduct to be pursued: we stated calmly but firmly, that we thought we owed it to ourselves and our families and the profession to which we belonged, not to refuse those duties and those advantages which the legislature had thought proper to give us and also that we only acted in this respect as was done by barristers in all the towns of the kingdom. After a long conversation, in which the subject was fully and quietly discussed, we parted upon the most friendly terms and I trust that we shall have no further altercation as to this matter⁵⁴.

Finally, Losh at the age of 65 and after nearly thirty years of experience, is still uncomfortably self-critical:

March 8, 1828.

There was one cause tried today (before a special jury) which I led for the defendants, and I believe to the satisfaction of my clients tho' they were not successful. After the business was over, I saw a mode by which I might have managed it better (tho' I do not think the result would have been different) and I was more mortified than I ought to have been by a matter of such little importance...[Later] I was very fortunate in obtaining verdict but I by no means attribute these to dexterity of my own, tho' I think I was equal to any of our Spring Leaders. I still retain my opinion that to be what is called a leader...requires no great talents. It depends more upon practise, easy and collected manners, and a certain tact, than either knowledge or abilities⁵⁵.

Losh was not alone in his criticism of his own profession.

Charles Dickens pilloried the lawyers Dodson and Fogg in

Pickwick Papers (1837), and painted a devastating picture in *Bleak House* (1853) of the money grabbing barristers in Chancery. The ludicrous trials of William Hone for treason, personally conducted by the Attorney General, Lord Ellenborough, made the whole legal process a laughing stock. (Hone won to the great satisfaction of the populace, and the humiliation of the legal establishment.⁵⁶)

Looking back on Losh's life it is astonishing that such a busy man was able to devote so much time and energy to political and public affairs. He had a family of ten to support; a extensive law practice; business interests that included mining, brewing, chemicals, and railways; a active social life that involved entertaining, balls, theatres, concerts; a deep commitment to Unitarianism and his church; a perpetual programme of self-improvement that required much reading and study from the classics to the latest ideas in science. Reference was made in the Preface to his extensive library, sufficiently unusual to cause newspaper comment. He appeared to be completely altruistic in politics, unlike his friends whose careers we have mentioned in previous chapters - including Creevey, Brougham, or even Sydney Smith. Creevey fostered his charm and talent for dinner-table speaking, so that he was able to support his life style at other peoples' boards. Brougham was always ambitious for high position and power, even if some of his interests such as the University of London and Mechanics' Institutes were credit-worthy public works. And of course the Rev. Sydney Smith sought not only to

influence the government and the middle class with his article on Reform and the other questions of the day, but probably also to keep himself visible to those who could influence his preferment.

Losh, in his many social schemes, considered he had a responsibility to promote the well-being of his fellows, and that he was answerable to God to discharge this responsibility. His religious principles cost him dear, and even if he was at times something of a snob, he never lost sight of those poorer than himself. He could be accused of avarice in seeking the capital of dying relatives, yet it should be remembered that to him the provision for relatives from family money was sacrosanct, and whatever he acquired in this way was ultimately for the benefit of his children and never for self-indulgence.

When one considers the differences between Losh and his fellow professionals in the metropolis, one might feel that similar contrasts still exist to this day. He found them too self-seeking, persuaded of their own superiority, too selfish and inward looking, and too ready to assume that their viewpoints represented the country at large. Those differences we have seen expressed in the earlier sections, and touched upon in this conclusion, help us to understand to what extent the provincial professional middle class differed from their metropolitan counterparts. That they emerged and became a force to be reckoned with, was largely a consequence of their

own efforts.

This thesis has compared Losh's ideas with a group of like-minded acquaintances who were all in some sense middle-class professionals: Brougham, Creevey, Smith, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and O'Connell. With the exception of Brougham and Creevey they were provincial (though even these two were often in the provinces). Though not totally alike in their views - the Lakeland poets became very 'establishment' in their mature years - they were all well-educated, vocal reformers.

All of these men were born in the provinces, but Losh was the most determined of them in identifying himself as a provincial. He never had any personal aspirations to locate himself in London, although he recognised the importance of the capital in his profession. He sent his eldest son to a legal practice in London to further his career. All the others assayed their fortune in the capital at one time or another.

Losh as we have seen represented the views of responsible 'respectable' people who were unrepresented elsewhere, whenever an audience would listen or a magazine would print an article. As he was free to express his own opinions, support his causes, follow his own religion (albeit at a cost), he struggled to improve that freedom, not only for himself, but for those same respectable people. He wanted freedom with

responsibility -not freedom to destroy the institutions of the state (a demand which Losh identified with radicalism, and the extreme press). One might say that from a position of privilege he sought to improve the freedom of his fellows, and through an enlightened paternalism to improve their lot and their right to be heard.

Losh was not blind to the injustices of society, and whilst obliged to live in it and to enjoy the advantages of his station, was sufficiently conscious of the need to spend his energies to improve it. He frequently expressed his distaste for a system that depended so much on the patronage of those with power and influence, and worked incessantly to secure the independence of his sons and daughters. There is no evidence of his seeking that influence for himself, and he rarely looked for a return in kind for the effort he expended in the service of other's causes. His approaches on behalf of his sons and others, are his only occasions for seeking advantage from his relationship with the many powerful men in his life.

His diary reveals how little he relied upon the assistance of others:

End December, 1803:

...My late experience has taught me...(though I trust it has not made me misanthrope) not to rely on the 'children of men'...independence is the only basis of virtue and happiness in the world, and of a rational preparation for the next. This independence can be ensured by nothing but piety and resignation towards God, gentleness united with firmness in all our dealings with mankind, and regularity and economy in pecuniary matters...to be flexible in my adherence to truth and justice...laying out all I can spare on works of charity...never to indulge my appetites to dress neatly but with economy...to read law at least

2 hours every day...to enlarge my mind on moral and religious subjects⁵⁷.

If Losh could be accused of being snobbish, it was rather because he was critical of the drunken behaviour of many of his peers, especially those barristers and judges with whom he dispensed the law. It was also the lack of integrity of those in public life, the lack of education of those with the opportunity for improvement, and the irreligion of some of those supposed religious. We have seen what he had to say about some of those he met during his visits to London, and he resented Byron's lampooning of Southey as an attack on revealed religion⁵⁸. But if his standards were high, he applied an even higher standard to himself, continually taking himself to task for lethargy, irritation, ill-humour. He was as penetrating about his own weaknesses as he was frequently compassionate about other people's.

A typical diary entry:

September 21, 1801.

...called upon Mr Wyvill who seems to think that Mr Fox may be induced to return to public business, and that he is sincere in his wishes for reform. His account of Sheridan is very unsatisfactory...I am not inclined to hope much either from Sheridan and Grey. The former is a profligate and the latter an aristocrat⁵⁹.

Again on May 12, 1803:

Barry told us many anecdotes about public men and public measures at home and abroad. All tending to prove what I fear is too true, the almost vicious profligacy of men in power and of those seeking it⁶⁰.

But he is more critical of himself:

May 13, 1803.

I am now reaping the bitter fruit of my own follies, may I henceforth so conduct myself as not to give way to vicious habits but to become wise unto salvation⁶¹.

Losh believed in the association of like-minded people for

their own and other people's betterment. He energetically supported those pressure groups that were formed for political purposes, as well as chairing several that were cultural. From 1799 when he arrived in Newcastle, until his death in 1833, one can see the increasing number that were formed in Newcastle, and their burgeoning influence in local and national affairs. It is, I think, fair to say that much of this influence was a direct consequence of Losh's involvement, and the evidence for it is recorded in letters, minutes and newspaper reports.

A diary entry of 1799, when Losh was newly arrived in Newcastle, seems to betray an uncharacteristic uncertainty about his future, in the light of our knowledge of his life. Comparison with his earlier free-wheeling life seems to suggest the fears of a newly-married man:

May 2, 1799.

Vaughan, Ward and I went to summer circuit together in 1794. We excited great dread among the creatures of the administration and were, I believe, generally considered as three men likely to make a noise in the political world, and to be as successful in our profession as many of our contemporaries...I am the only one remaining, (I suspect the other two died from the excesses of youth) and by wholly changing my mode of life and by steady perseverance in temperance and retirement I have supported and perhaps amended a broken constitution. [He was receiving treatment from Dr. Beddoes during his time in Bristol in the 90s] Politics I have wholly abandoned, and from the law I seek for nothing but a very moderate increase in my income. A distinguished situation in either one or the other line would now be as irksome and even disgusting to me as it would formerly have been the subject of joy and exultation⁶².

By 1801, Losh's confidence had sufficiently improved for him to buy his own property which included four acres of land. He was also a figure in the lately formed Literary Society:

End March 1801:

I was elected this month to be one of the Vice Presidents of the Literary Society...a mark of respect from those who live in my neighbourhood...⁶³

The identification of Losh with this society and its influence beyond the north east, is suggested by the following diary entry:

March 7, 1807.

...Sir J Banks called upon me and gave me an invitation to his father's in consequence of my taking him the reports of the Literary Society in Newcastle⁶⁴.

Losh saw the formation and development of literary clubs going hand-in-hand with the emergence of an educated, informed middle class:

February 24, 1824. Literary Club.

This is the 10th anniversary of this respectable society which upon the whole had been well supported, and it is indeed creditable to the state of literature in this place. It is curious to observe how few of the clergy and of those who consider themselves the highest class, have become members of this club. The truth is that here at least, probably all over England, information and activity of mind are confined in a great measure to the middling ranks⁶⁵.

Losh as we have seen always identified the most valuable members of society as being the middle class. They were the ones who had 'information' on the issues of the day; who read books and became knowledgeable. During the Reform debates Losh saw the middling classes having to unite with the lower orders. He saw the middle classes not only as the vanguard, but of being acutely aware of being that vanguard:

November 18, 1830.

...The lower orders are rapidly becoming conscious of their strength, and the middling classes must unite with them, both from inclination and prudence. On the other hand, the Aristocracy, tho' they are not deficient either in talents or courage, are miserably so in physical strength. They no longer have numerous trains of ignorant and dependent followers...⁶⁶

It is clear from this that Losh saw the need to recruit the support of the lower classes in pressing forward with reform. Aristocrats like Grey were to recognise the need to give the middle class the representation they desired, rather than have such an alliance. On this view the middle classes would be the balance between the two extremes of the nation:

October 28, 1832.

...I am more satisfied that the Reform will work well, and that even the first registration will give a good and sufficiently numerous constituency. I mean sufficient to give what are called the middle classes of the people an interest in and a control over the government of the nation which will counterbalance the power of either the aristocracy or the mob⁶⁷.

The esteem of his peers meant a great deal to Losh, an esteem he valued, but which he obtained without the need for currying favour. Because of his dissenting views, that acknowledgment and acceptance of his standing had to wait until after the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts:

May 23, 1832.

I was today unanimously elected Recorder [of Newcastle] without canvassing, indeed expressly declined to canvas. After being a Reformer and an avowed Unitarian all my life it is somewhat singular that I should be so chosen to be Recorder⁶⁸.

January 12, 1833.

Mr J Clayton [Newcastle Town Clerk] yesterday communicated to me a unanimous vote of the Common Council conferring upon me the personal Freedom of the Town and County of Newcastle. This is considered a high honour, and gives me the privileges of a Freeman during my life⁶⁹.

There is, in some ways, a parallel between Losh and William Smith MP in that they both courted respectability, and the acceptance of their peers. As Davis describes Smith in this short extract:

The fact was that Smith could not do without that badge of respectability, which in his own eyes, a connexion with the active commercial life of the country gave

him...Whatever the facts of the case, he had to identify himself with the interests of the class into which he was born and whose political interests he spent his life championing, and could no more have withdrawn from commerce than he could have rejected his religious principles...⁷⁰

Losh identified himself with the rising professional middle classes both locally and in the metropolis, and many of their petitions to the Houses of Parliament, were either inspired by him or vigorously supported by him.

Though always ready to pay his respects to those whose situation in life required them to carry heavy responsibilities, Losh was never overawed by, nor envious of, others wealthier than himself. Losh's low opinion of the education of the upper class, is reflected in his view of Grey:

October 24, 1818.

...Lord Grey is no doubt a man of great vigor of mind and very considerable eloquence. He seems to me, however, to be deficient in reading and in general information. I mean deficient for so considerable a statesman and orator...he is not a steady and systematic reader, and he is apt to take his information on all subjects from those about him (who are generally persons entertaining the same opinions as his own) without the benefit of comparing it with that derived from other sources, hence tho' generally right in principle, he often mistaken in facts and in practise...⁷¹

Whilst Losh himself went to Cambridge, many of his fellows were educated at schools and colleges which were created to supply the needs of the rising middle class. The school run by Priestley is a typical example. Losh, however, had his two eldest sons educated at Cambridge, with the object of their following him into law. It should be noted too, that Losh was very involved in supporting London University and the

foundation of the University of Durham, and eventually a college at Newcastle. All of these institutions were open to students whatever their religious beliefs, and provided greater opportunities for the dissenting middle classes.

We have seen how far Losh identified with the rising middle class, and something of his pride in them and his town can be read into the following entry:

August 15, 1819.

...the Prince of Coburg...was well received by the people and the bustle and gaeity[sic] of an Assize Sunday at Newcastle must have given him a high idea of the power and opulence of this country when a remote provincial town could produce so many splendid equipages, and such a crowd of well-dressed persons⁷².

Whilst Losh describes Newcastle as a 'remote' town, it is probably a description chosen to make a point of the affluence of the inhabitants. His own business interests, his pride in the achievements of the region, are a conscious theme throughout his diaries.

As we saw, Losh's opinion of this same rank of people at the time of the coronation of George IV, is manifested in his diary:

July 22, 1821.

The mob was in favour of the Queen...and I suspect that the middling classes of people thought more of the taxes and difficulties under which the country labors than of the King and Queen...⁷³

This pragmatic attitude of his peers Losh always appreciated, and frequently demonstrated himself. Their support for Losh was personally pleasing, as we can see in this entry on the anti-slavery movement, which was to take so many years to

reach fruition:

May 21, 1823.

Slavery Abolition Committee. I was in the chair...and had the satisfaction to see much zeal and unanimity amongst a set of most respectable men in a most excellent and almost sacred cause...⁷⁴

* * * * *

Having displayed Losh in all his various guises, and considered his ideas as expressed on all the multitude of occasions when he found the opportunity to do so, we may now begin to assess, how typical Losh was of the emerging middle classes. The middle classes came in many varieties, and Losh speaks of them in different ways. We have seen how Losh identified with them, how he represented them, how different he saw himself from his metropolitan peers, yet how he, and his provincial middle class kind found a voice in national affairs. That voice becoming more powerful in the first three decades of the century, and wrung from the ruling class a share in the government of the nation. The evidence of the foregoing, through not only the great movements of Losh's time, but also in his day-to-day practice of law, and his constantly generous paternalism, suggests that at the very least in Losh we have an interesting example. Not only Grey, but Lambton, Brougham, Mackintosh, Erskine, and others sought his opinion. To them he represented an important element in the expression of national opinion, and that opinion not just his own, but that of his peers. His reception on the many occasions upon which he spoke during the first three decades

of political turbulence, demonstrated the rapport he had with his middle class audience.

We have seen Losh as a determined reformer, even when the issue in question has been a long way from resolution; the lawyer, who often found himself mitigating the severity of the law on those upon whom it bore down hard; the business man, who valued negotiation between principles and fairness with work people; the Unitarian, the local leader, the paternalistic neighbour, and the good friend to his peers and to many national figures. We have seen him an avid listener, and also one who was listened to: a man who admired the literary talents of others, and had similar aspirations he never found time to further. Losh was well educated, well read, and politically aware. He was a man of wide-ranging abilities, like several others among the early nineteenth century professionals considered in this thesis.

If there is one description that seems to fit Losh it is that of a seeker after justice: for the Catholics, the slaves, and the unfranchised middle classes. His commitment to this object was lifelong, intense, and unselfish. It is the more remarkable when one remembers that Losh was born into a privileged county family, and already had voting rights, yet chose to spend a lifetime representing his less fortunate middle-class professionals, and fellow Dissenters.

I propose that the argument and the evidence of this thesis

supports the contention that in James Losh we have a provincial middle class professional, whose life and ideas - as expressed in his letters, diaries, articles and speeches - can fairly be said to represent and be representative of the emerging class to which he belonged. In the first decades of the nineteenth century they, with Losh as a valuable and articulate member, became a force in the political and social life of the nation.

Losh, was a man who was capable of attracting the loyalty and affection of his associates. Perhaps the final word should be left to one of these, the Reverend William Turner, so long Losh's Unitarian minister but also friend and ally in so many educational and social improving schemes. In Losh's obituary sermon in 1833 he described Losh as:

...a cordial associate, and able adviser in the management of temporal concerns: a liberal co-operator in any schemes which might be proposed of more extended usefulness, whether by schools, or libraries, or other modes of Christian instruction. As an individual who found in him the faithful friend, the kind adviser, and the judicious helper, and all here have known him, or at least have heard of him as the polished gentleman, the active philanthropist, and the exemplary Christian.

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APPENDIX ONE

The Newcastle Chronicle reported the meeting on the March 14, and we see Losh holding himself aloof from the noise and provocation from the floor:

Mr. Losh came forward and was received with immense cheering from the right, and great clamour and hisses from the left. I am entirely in your hands, and will wait just as long as you please. When you are disposed to hear me I will go on. [renewed tumult]

Mr. Losh. That clamour which commenced at the beginning of this meeting, and I am sorry to say has continued without much interruption, arose from the most extraordinary instance of misconception, or rather, I may say intentional misrepresentation, ever exhibited at any public meeting. [cheers and hisses]

We, the requisitionists, called together a public meeting...to know whether it was your will and pleasure to petition Parliament in order to remove the Catholic disabilities...We did not attempt to take you by surprise. We wished not only to say that we desired to petition, but to tell you what we intended to say to Parliament, in order to remove the Catholic disabilities [uproar] Now what did we do? We appeared here true to the appointment made for us by our worthy chief magistrate, an appointment which, though it was not in accordance with the original arrangement, was yet, I doubt not, made for the best, and was considered by him the most preferable, right, and proper on the occasion [great confusion on the left]

What I say did we do? We did not mean to take you by surprise; it was never our intention [here there was a violent waving of the crowd, caused by the party on the left]. We did not attempt to take you by surprise. We wished not only to say that we desired to petition, but to tell you what we intended to say to Parliament. That course is always taken in public meetings. It has been my lot to attend many public meetings, and this is the first instance I have ever known of an attempt having been made by one party to dictate to another. We coupled in one resolution, two objects - that it was desirable to petition, and that a certain petition should be adopted. Where was the inconsistency? But that was made a handle of, and it was attempted to beat us down by clamour [cries of 'no' 'no' from the hustings on the left and cheers on the right]

Such is the deep impression on my mind and no denial of it shall weigh with me, when I see men seated up aloft making signals to a large body of men below [cries of 'no' 'no' from the left, and 'yes' 'yes' from the right] I repeat it making signals to drown my voice, as they did that of my excellent friend Dr Headlam, who must be known to most of you, and who has a right to address you from this place. [cheers from the right]. I say one cannot misunderstand the meaning of it - it is impossible to

mistake the object of such conduct. But you seem now by degrees to be recovering your senses, and if you will hear me, I will state as shortly as I can, the grounds upon which I recommend the petition to your adoption. I should certainly have been better satisfied if any of these gentlemen had been pleased to state a single argument, or anything like an argument on this subject. [cries of 'not one' from the right].

I listened to three speeches - and three long speeches as they appeared to me [a laugh] from my friend Mr. Chapman, and, another from a learned gentleman here, but in vain, to endeavour to find an argument to reply to. From one I heard a disclaimer of any intention to discuss the question, and from the other a letter from Mr. Bell. I heard him at least ten times name his children, and also heard the name of Lord Eldon - and these are the only reasons I have heard advanced against your doing that which as honest men, as christians, and as Englishmen, I call upon you to do [great cheering on the right, and waving in the crowd on the left] But it seems we are to be borne down by the weight of authority. We are told that Mr Bell, whom I know, and whose character I respect, perhaps as much as Mr Chapman - because he forsooth, entertains particular opinions, we are to entertain the same. Out of what book, out of what system of theology or politics has this doctrine been taken? But since they rest upon authority, we will try it by that test. Look around here - see the gentlemen around me. Who are they? Are they unknown to you? ['No', 'No'] We will try them throughout. There is a gentleman well-known in this town - I mean the Recorder of Newcastle [hear] his authority upon a subject like this is better than any that has been adduced here. Of myself I will not speak; but I have lived among you thirty years, and I suspect that during that period I have made more friends than enemies. I trust that I may at least be considered as good an authority as any of these gentlemen. My friends standing near me, have no objection to be tried, all round, by this test. Where are we to look for authorities on subjects like this, but amongst men who have studied them? But I shall go further. Look to the representatives of this county You have two members for this town - men of your own electing, and whom you have chosen to that high situation, and they are united in opinion with us: upon this question no two men can be more decided. If we are to be told Mr. Bell is on one side - I have a letter from Mr Liddell, on the other side, and which I might read, if I thought it necessary to read letter [cheers and hisses]. Therefore we are three to one.

Every man amongst you knows Sir Matthew White Ridley and Mr. Ellison, are your favoured and valued representatives. You know their opinions and their opinions are with us. [cheers and hisses] At the late

Northumberland election, there was a third candidate, who was of the same opinion as ourselves. Mr Beaumont who is a favourite with many of you, is of the same opinion as Mr. Liddell [cries of 'and Howick too'] and therefore we have an immense majority in this county, in favour of Catholic Emancipation. But I will go further, and say to the gentleman who mentioned Mr Bell, that if Mr Bell had not been supported by the friends of Catholic Emancipation, he would not now have been the member for the county of Northumberland [great applause and tumult].

But let us look higher still in the county. Look to your respected Lord Lieutenant. If we are to be dictated to by authority, I ask what are the opinions of the Duke of Northumberland? He has been chosen by his Majesty to the distinguished post of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He has been selected by the King to do what? Why according to these gentlemen, to destroy the Protestant religion, and subvert the Constitution of this country. A fit person, forsooth, for such a task! Are you to believe that all these persons whom I have mentioned to you, with the King and his Ministers, are united to destroy the constitution of this country? [great cheering on the right] Look into the adjoining county of Durham. Look around you. Do not be deceived by these persons. Look around you and what do you find in the County of Durham? You find both members for the county, the members for the city, and the Lord Lieutenant all of one mind. All the considerable persons in the country - all the considerable persons of this time - are of the same opinion on this question. We have been told much of the venerable nobleman alluded to by Mr Chapman; but there is a Nobleman who is the chief pride and glory of this county, and the most eloquent man now living, and if we are to be taught by names, I mention the name of Earl Grey - a name no Northumbrian can ever forget which no man with a drop of Northumbrian blood in his veins, can ever hear without feeling of the greatest exultation [loud cheers] But if we are not to be taught by names, I will meet these persons on the merits of the question itself. When however, we are told there is a plan to destroy the Constitution of the country - when we are told that the King surrounded by evil Ministers, has joined in that plan - then it is, that the authority of the great names may with propriety be appealed to.

Is there a person, eminent for talents and knowledge, now living, or who lived in the last century - though many respectable men no doubt have thought otherwise - who has not entertained our sentiments on this subject? Every Lord Lieutenant who has gone to Ireland, from the time of Lord Cornwallis to that of Lord Anglesey, however, strongly he might feel against the Catholics, after a residence there, and, after he had seen the state and condition of that country has returned a decided friend to Catholic Emancipation...

Can you draw from that fact any inference that we intend to destroy the Constitution of the country? When you see your King with eight or ten Lords Lieutenants, one after another [here there was a loud expression of disapprobation from the left] Mr Losh turned to the left. Whenever you have had enough Gentlemen, I will give over; make your signal and I am done. Gentlemen [to the meeting] I was addressing myself to you, to shew you the utter absurdity of the grounds these persons take in opposing the petition (clamour) I am not afraid to call them so, because I believe, and know them to be absurd. They are contrary to the commonest principle of justice. Contrary to all ideas of policy, and contrary to what is more dear and sacred to us all - to the spirit of the Gospel. [great clamour on the left] In that sacred Book, which I heard so frequently alluded to on the other side, I find it said, that we are not to judge each other, but that each person is to be judged by a being much higher than ourselves. We are told also, that we are poor fallible creatures, and when we attempt to dictate to others the course and current of their conscientious feelings, that we do wrong. We are told that we should do unto others as we wish others to do unto us. [great cheering and clamour]

We have heard much talk about the word Protestant. I should like to ask these Gentlemen what they mean by Protestant. My meaning is, that every man should judge for himself. I know no other meaning of Protestant [great clamour on the left] Gentlemen, nothing is so easy as by a name, or watchword, to mislead a multitude of people. When individuals are told from authority, that every man who dissents from them, is a wicked person, they are too apt to believe it. But do not you be deluded into such a belief. The true meaning of Protestant is, that no man shall be molested for his religion (great clamour on the left) I perceive the gentlemen do not like this definition. But so it is, and you may take my word for it.

[Here Mr Losh's voice was drowned by the tumult on the left, and he exclaimed 'There's the fogleman again!']

When order was restored, he said:

Now I repeat what I said before. I say the meaning of Protestantism is, that no man shall be disturbed for his religion. Then are Catholics disturbed for their religion? ['They are not' from Mr Grant, who had elevated himself as near Mr Losh as possible, apparently with the intention of replying to him - and a great noise] They are not, this Gentleman says. Yet I take it, that if he were a Catholic, and had 5 or 6 children, he would be rather puzzled to know what to do with them. If he was in a situation to put them to the Bar, he would find he was injured by their exclusion; and if in any other line of life, he would find he could not hold office - and yet we are told that this is not persecution. Persecution does not depend upon the length to which it is carried,

or upon it being carried to the utmost extent. A man may be wasted or put to death in many ways. But to tell me that it is not persecution to deprive our fellow creatures of those advantages which ought to belong to every honest man, I say this is a mockery and delusion. I say that, at this moment, the Catholics are under very heavy persecution. I say that they are enduring greater persecution than is endured by Protestants in any other civilised country. If these gentlemen will look to France, a Catholic country, they will find that the Protestants are infinitely better treated than the Catholics are here [here, hear, from the right] If they refer to Holland, a Protestant country they will find they are not afraid of the Catholics, who are as well treated as the Protestants. If they look to America, they will find that all religions go hand in hand, and that men live in peace and love with each other. There is in that country no exclusion for differences of opinion. Indeed, men may as reasonably quarrel for the difference of their faces as for differences of opinion.

But these persons tell me that all Protestants are unworthy of that name who do not think alike [cries of 'no' 'no' on the left hustings, and great clamour] There is one other topic (Mr. Losh continued) on which I should wish to say a few words, if it be your pleasure to hear me - If not I am content.

We are told that this measure will do no good - that it is folly. That the country is quiet. [hear hear from Mr Walters] I thank Mr Walters for cheering me. I will tell you how it is. It is quiet by an army of 30,000 men in Ireland. It is quiet by an annual expenditure of four million sterling, which is literally thrown away; and will it be no saving, then, to obtain a settlement of the Catholic question? [cheers on the right] It will be a saving to every man amongst you. There is no person who pays taxes in this country who will not be benefitted by it. I say it advisedly, and on the assurance of those who are in authority, that if the Catholic question were settled, there would be a direct yearly saving of three millions sterling [hear, hear] Is that no advantage? but as regards our feeling as men and as Christians, there will be a yet greater saving.

Look at the state of Ireland. A man must have nerves of iron who can look at that country without being sorry and grieved. You see a people brought to the lowest level of degradation [hisses and great tumult on the left] I say that an immense majority of the brave and gallant people of that country - a country beautiful in itself, and which enjoys the finest climate and richest soil of any in the world - are degraded to the state of cattle. And what do you say? Why, that they are Catholics. You have made them what they are, you grind them to the earth, you destroy them,

and then you say it is no matter, they are Catholics. Are those the feelings of Christians? ['No!' from the right].

But a brighter day dawns upon them. You, probably, many of you, feel the inconvenience of wages being reduced in this country, and how difficult it is to maintain your families by those which are received. Those wages are affected mainly by the absurdities of the persons who resist the question of concession to the Catholics. Irishmen are compelled by those laws and necessities to which all humanity is subjected, hunger and thirst, to come to this country to seek employment, which they take at the lowest rate that is offered; and then we are told these persons are Catholics. Is no harm done by this? [great confusion and clamour on the left] Mr Losh seeing the impatience of the party on the left, said - I am nearly done; in a very short time I shall conclude. You will best show yourselves Protestants (he continued) by allowing every man to think for himself. You will best show yourselves Christians by acting kindly to your fellow creatures. You will best show yourselves Englishmen by treating your Irish brethren with kindness and humanity. You will best prove yourselves prudent fathers of families - of whom Mr Chapman talked so much - by endeavouring to save the taxes of the country, and prevent a wanton and idle expenditure of the public money; and the time is approaching when Ireland, instead of being a loss will become a benefit to this country. When the Irish labourers instead of swarming among you, as manufactories rise up, be able to maintain themselves at home. When that country instead of being the weakest, will become the strongest portion of the empire, and when the people, instead of weighing you down by discontent will give you strength, and assist you in any struggle with foreign nations in which you may be engaged [cheers and disapprobation].

They have fought and bled for us - not more than, certainly, we have done, as was observed by some witty gentlemen on the other side; but they did as much, though with this difference, we were fighting for ourselves. These gallant persons on my left, are not afraid of a rebellion, forsooth. They will not be threatened into concession. These brave-hearted men are, however, afraid, tremulously afraid, of a few hundred Catholics burning us all with faggots. They are nervously afraid of having their own religious opinions taken from them; they are greatly afraid of being over-persuaded. It is somewhat strange of these good persons - these learned gentlemen of all parties; for I must observe that there is rather a singular mixture among them. But a great poet has told us that 'misery makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows!' They are certainly a sufficiently singularly arranged party. Look at the consistency of this motley crew. Look at them, gentlemen. [renewed clamour]. When their religious

opinions are in danger, they tie up the right hand of their enemies. Are they afraid of Catholics? Are they afraid of them? They must be afraid of them. They are afraid of argument. They are afraid of their own conversion [loud laughter on the right] They are afraid the Catholics will deceive you and them. There was a time when Protestants were not afraid of the Catholics.

In the times of Luther and Calvin they met them bravely, and struggled manfully and successfully with them, in the face of the Pope, and against the power of the Church of Rome! [a person on the left hustings 'and so we will yet'] If, then, the Catholics were defeated when Protestants were few in number, why should they be afraid to meet them now, when the church is strong in wealth and power, and with all the advantages of education on its side? They dare not let them have their right hand at liberty. If I met a man in the field - at least when I was in my younger days - I should be ashamed to tie up his right hand! [cries from the right 'they are afraid of them'] But if they are afraid in that respect, they are bold enough and make ample amends for their courage in others. They care nothing foresooth, for a rebellion, or for putting many thousand persons to death every 10 or 12 years. They are gallant in the field, and cowards in the closet. They are not afraid of battle. And why? Because they do not go into it [laughter] These gallant champions do not fight, gentlemen, and, therefore, they do not care how many are killed [much laughter on the right, and great clamour on the left]. They do perfectly right too, in making this disturbance, they are afraid of argument, and, therefore, raise a clamour to prevent us being heard.

The Duke of Wellington, Gentlemen, is as good a soldier as any of those who take a different view of the question. He is willing to meet the Catholics in argument; he is not afraid of them there; but though he has fought for us in many a battle abroad, and done as much for this country as any of our opponents, he is afraid of a civil war, though these gallant gentlemen think nothing of that! He has set our enemies at defiance; but he is afraid of murdering his fellow-countrymen [loud cries of 'hear' from the right, and clamour on the left]

I am led too far; perhaps, but, I confess, I feel indignation rise within me; when I see such conduct amongst a set of men who ought to be the ministers of peace, and who ought not to mix themselves up with politics at all [loud cries of 'question' from the left. Gentlemen rely upon it you will find the true Protestants amongst those who are friendly to liberty. In all times I believe, it has been observed, that religious bigotry has united itself with slavery. Whenever I see any persons, under whatever pretence, setting up their

doctrines as infallible, whether Pope or Priest, Protestant or Catholic, or anything else, and telling me that they know better than I do, I say they are not true Protestants. You have every one of you as much right to judge on this subject as any of us. If you, in your consciences, believe, that a rebellion in Ireland every 10 or 12 years is for the good of the nation [great uproar]. If you think that swarms of starving Irishmen do good to your country. If you think it better to pay high prices than low prices, for everything you consume. And if you think it better to follow these leaders, instead of your King, and the greatest and best persons in the country, then you will say so - you will say, that you wish Ireland to remain miserable, taxes to accumulate upon us, and to maintain an immense standing army to put to death every person who complains in that country [loud cheers from the right]. If that be not your opinion - if you be not influenced by the 'No Popery' stuck up on these walls [pointing to those words inscribed on the Spital walls] trash and trumpery which means nothing - you will shew them that you will not answer their appeal. Do they tell you what they mean by 'No Popery'. I will explain what they mean. Perhaps many of you take in a newspaper in this town, called the *Courant*. A fortnight ago there came a singular paper enclosed in it. I had not the curiosity to read it myself, but I have been told by those who did, and on whose assurance I can rely, that this notable thing which was considered the grand support of the party, which was drawn up by a great Dignitary of the church, and of course meant to contain in one or two pithy sentences, all that could be said on their side of the question. And what was it? You will be amused when I tell you. It was a new reason for roasting Catholics [a laugh]. It was a new art of cookery Gentlemen [renewed laughter]. They are great logicians, though I will not attempt to introduce logic to you. It is said, that the Catholics are idolators; they then found some passage in Scripture - I suppose in the Old Testament - that it was fit and proper to destroy idolators, and, therefore, that all Catholics ought to be destroyed [great laughter]. This is the way we are dealt with. But see, if you pursue this mode of reasoning, where it would lead you to. There is a certain creed in the service of the Church of England, called the Creed of St. Athanasius, which says that all persons who do not believe in it, are to be everlastingly damned. Now it so happens, that no reasonable man can believe in it, and therefore, according to their reasoning, their major, minor, and consequence, it follows that all reasonable men are to be damned [laughter]. Again, in one of the 39 articles of our church it is said, and said truly perhaps, that good works partake of the nature of sin. Now we all know that Mr. Mayor in his Magisterial capacity, punishes sin, and therefore it follows, according to this argument, that all good works, must be punished as partaking of sin. I

only mention this to show, the monstrous absurdities into which men run, when they mix up metaphysical speculations and abstruse principles, with the common affairs of life.

Mr Losh concluded by calling on the meeting to act on the precept of the Gospel, which taught them to do unto all men as they would all men should do unto them. If, he said, you follow that rule, Gentlemen - if you were Catholics would you not wish for liberty? Then I say do unto them as you would wish them to do unto you. The learned Gentleman retired amidst the warmest plaudits from the right of the hustings.

APPENDIX TWO

Speech delivered by James Losh at a public meeting held in Newcastle on Wednesday Jan. 26, 1820

to petition for Parliamentary Reform.

Mr. Chairman.

In consequence of the very honourable situation in which I have been placed by the gentlemen around me, it becomes my duty to lay before this meeting certain resolutions which we have prepared for their consideration; but before I do this, I feel that it is right to say a few words as to the nature of Parliamentary Reform, and the advantages which may be expected from it; and also to notice some of the objections which have been made to its adoption and its use.

During a residence of more than 20 years in this neighbourhood, I have carefully abstained from interfering with political discussions and the various party questions which have agitated the country; and this I have done as well from inclination as from a regard to the nature and duties of the profession to which I belong. But it gives me sincere pleasure and satisfaction to see, and to join with, the great and respectable meeting now before me, because I know its object to be, not the triumph of a party, not any measure of doubtful policy, but one which involves in it the safety of the Constitution, the well-being of the country, and the morals and happiness of every individual in the United Kingdom. Such are the grounds upon which I stand forward today, and upon which I confidently rely that this assembly will go along with me in sentiment and in feeling.

In order, Sir, to perceive clearly the necessity of that Reform for which we seek, it may be well to consider what the House of Commons is, what situation it holds in our Constitution, and what advantages may be reasonably expected from it. That House then ought to be, and must be, to be of use, the fair representation of the feelings and the opinions of the people at large. I take this to be true in theory, and I am sure that it ought to be the case in practice. When we look around us to other countries in all ages and all parts of the world, we see Emperors, Kings, Nobles, Judges - everything but the representation of the people. And what has been the consequence in those countries? There has been no lasting union between the Government and the people, but a perpetual jarring between those who govern and those who are governed: and this must always be the case when the people have no delegates to act for them, and when their rulers are deaf to their complaints, and inattentive to their interests. Imperfect, Sir, and full of defects as our representation is, that alone has distinguished this nation from all others, raised it to its high and lofty situation, and enabled us to sustain that enormous weight of taxation under which we now labour. If this be so, will any man say that the subject of a Reform in the Commons House of Parliament is a matter of indifference? If it be that organ without which the country cannot exist for good; if it be that institution upon which its vigour, its strength, and happiness depend, then I say that the House of Commons should be pure, and if not so already that it should be reformed.

Let us then consider whether the House of Commons be or, be not a fair representation of the people; if we are satisfied that it is already what it ought to be, then indeed we have met together in vain. But will any man say that it is so? Will any man who considers what that House now is, what it should be, and what it originally was, say that it requires no Reform? Can it be right that the majority of that House should be elected by a few individuals, by the basest means, by gross corruption, and thus composed of persons who have no common interest with the people whatever? These, Sir, may be said to be strong expressions, but they are nevertheless true. It is notorious that members are returned by individual proprietors of boroughs, whose interests are not those of the people they must be bound to protect. Nay, is it any secret that the Crown, by its influence, sends a considerable number? And is it a matter even of doubt, that a majority of the whole House is returned by such means, or by places fallen into decay; by some, indeed, where the electors are fewer than the elected? Can this be for good? or can it be consistent with the original use and intention of the House of Commons? Gentlemen it is impossible.

It has always been my opinion, Sir, that a minute enquiry into the history and origin of Parliament, is not necessary upon occasions of this kind; because it is much less important to know what it formerly

was, than what it is, and what it ought to be at present. Some points, however, seem to be clear upon this subject, as that the Members for counties were in early times elected by all free persons possessed of property within the county; and that the large towns returned members chosen by the freemen, or principal inhabitants and owners of property within those towns. Indeed, as Members were then paid by their constituents, the right of sending them to Parliament would have been a burthen to the smaller and less opulent boroughs. The object then originally no doubt was, to make the House of Commons represent the vigorous, the free, and the opulent part of the population, so that it might form, on the one hand, a barrier against the power of the Crown, and on the other protect the people against the over-weening influence of the aristocracy. One great object, indeed, of our present meeting, and of the resolutions which I shall soon have the honour to submit to your decision, is that these principles should be recognized - that the elective franchise should be taken from such places as have become decayed, dependent, or corrupt, and given to the great and populous towns which have a right to be represented, and whose exercise of that right would give dignity and weight to the popular part of the legislature. With respect to the counties also, it would be a most desirable improvement that the right of election should be more extended than it is at present. Is it reasonable that the great county of York, which may more fitly be called a province than a county, should only send two Members to Parliament, whilst Old Sarum sends the same number? Is this right or consistent, or can it be reconciled with any principle whatever?

Another great object, Sir, which we have in view, is the shortening of the duration of Parliament; and both upon principle and original practice, it is quite obvious that seven years is too long a period for delegating such a trust to any one whatever. It is not my object here to enter into nice distinctions or historical references, but it will not be denied that the Septennial Act was passed for a temporary purpose, and that it was neither meant nor argued that it should be the permanent law of the country. But once passed, however, it was found too convenient an instrument in the hands of the Government to be given up, and it remains in the Statute Book until this day. To remove this, then, is one part of our plan. And were the principles once recognised and established, that the duration of Parliament should be shortened, that the elective franchise should be taken from the small, the corrupt, and the dependent boroughs, and given to the populous towns and larger counties, then I say that we should have obtained all that moderate and rational men can desire. We might safely leave the details and the manner of best carrying them into effect to the House of Commons itself, and the whole might be done without danger, and almost without inconvenience.

But in saying this, Sir, I do not mean to blame or interfere with the speculative opinions of any one; every person has a right to judge for himself, and draw his own conclusions on this as well as upon all other subjects. Indeed, I well know, than many men of great ability and vigorous understanding, many men whom I have long known, and for whom I have the highest esteem, entertain opinions on this question very different from mine, and I do not find fault with them for doing so, I readily extend the same charity to them which I claim for myself. But it does seem to me that in considering Parliamentary Reform, too much violence, too much dogmatism have been made use of. All advocates for practical Reform should defer to each other; no man should lay down inflexible rules, and contend that his plan is right and all others wrong. Every man is bound to pay due respect to the honest opinions of others, and not presume upon his own infallibility, and say, thus far will I go, and I neither will go farther nor stop short of that precise point which I have in view. I say this, Sir, with reference to certain doctrines which have of late made much noise in the country, and in consequence of a hand-bill, which has this day been circulated amongst us. The three great points which distinguish this system of Reform, are Annual Elections, Universal Suffrage, and Election by Ballot, and I will briefly notice each of them in their turn. That a person may think and argue that Annual Parliaments are the best I readily admit, but it does appear to me strange, that any one should contend that their being so is a clear and undoubted principle. It is certainly desirable that Parliaments should not be elected for too long a period, but what that period should be, must always be argued as a question of utility and not as a principle, for what but utility can make a year better than any other division of time? There is no magic in the word one year, and the principle, as it is called, would apply equally well to a month as a year. If you dare not trust your representative for more than one year, why trust him with any delegation at all?

It appears to me as plain that one year is too short as it is that seven years are too long a period, but this is a question of practice and not of principle. It is indeed found, that even in the management of

parish business, one year does not afford sufficient time either for acquiring necessary information or for carrying useful plans of improvement into effect, and this has always been considered to be a serious objection to the annual appointments of overseers of the poor, and other parochial officers. By annual elections, then, the people most frequently injure themselves, by dismissing their Representatives before they were competent to discharge the various duties entrusted to their care. Again, Annual Elections would necessarily be attended with much inconvenience and expense, and few men of free and independent spirits, with moderate fortunes, would seek for a situation, so difficult to be attained, so precarious in its duration, and which held out such slight hopes of being of service to their county. None, therefore, but men of immense fortune, or mere trading politicians, would offer their services at all - none but men to whom expense was of little importance, or men who were willing to lay out money with the hope of future profit.

I therefore repeat, that when it is said that one year is *obviously and beyond all question* the only period for which Members of Parliament ought to be elected, the assertion is unfounded in truth and unsupported by argument.

The second point, and that too considered to be essential, is Universal Suffrage, which seems to me, Sir, wholly unfit for the present state of society, and for the moral habits and degree of knowledge of mankind in general. A period no doubt may arrive, when from the diffusion of knowledge and virtue Universal Suffrage might be safely adopted, but I do not expect that it will do so in my time, though if it should, no one would hail it with more satisfaction than myself. No person will be so absurd as to contend that every freeman has not a right to do whatever may be done without injury to others. This is a general truth, but constituted as society now is, I am persuaded that Universal Suffrage would produce effects directly contrary to those expected from it. The whole Representation would be thrown into the hands of the powerful, the rich, and the dealers in parliamentary influence; because the poor must always, in a great degree, be dependent upon those by whom they are employed, and because the ignorant and the profligate must always be liable to be corrupted and misled. All, or nearly all, men of landed property having a right to vote in counties, and all respectable householders in the larger towns, what farther could be wished for? They would fully and fairly represent the feelings and the interests of the people at large, and the elective franchise would be within reach of such industrious persons as might wish to obtain it. What then would be the advantage of Universal Suffrage? It might (and I in my conscience believe it must) do much harm, and it could do no good. Such is, and such has always been, in my opinion, but I blame no one for holding the opposite. I have known many excellent men who held it, and I only find fault with their asserting it to be a self-evident proposition. Were it so, why not extend it to minors and to women? Have they not rights, and where is this principle to stop and how is it to be restrained? The third doctrine held to be infallible, I think more mischievous than either of the others: I mean Election by Ballot. This would lead to every species of meanness, and degrade us from that manly character which I hope Englishmen will always maintain. That a difference of opinion also exists on this subject I am well aware, and I am anxious that every man should enforce his opinions by argument; for freedom of enquiry and the public avowal of our sentiments, form the basis of that liberty which we have had, and which I trust we shall have again. But I think it must degrade the character of Englishmen to do that secretly, which they ought not to be ashamed to do openly.

If I am a freeman, I will exercise my freedom in the face of the world! Were ballot to become the mode of electing Members of Parliament, we should cease to be honest and honourable men, for in practise it would lead to bribery and corruption of the worst kind. Few men, except in the most corrupt boroughs, would even now endure to be asked to vote openly against their consciences; but if they were to vote by ballot, they would be told 'You may do this with perfect safety, no one will know whether you put in a white or a black ball'. It may indeed be said, that the briber would have no security, that the elector would vote as he was bribed to do; but what would be the effect of this, but to make the man taking the bribe add to first crime the still worse crime of a direct and deliberate lie. In short, this species of sneaking corruption would either introduce bribery to the greatest extent, or bribery with the addition of falsehood: I beg pardon for taking up so much of your time, but, having thus answered the arguments of these intolerant but calumniated Reformers, I would now, before I offer to your consideration the resolutions proposed, briefly state what have appeared to me the principal arguments against all Parliamentary Reform, and what are the obvious answers.

We have been told that Reform is rash, innovating, and dangerous. How is this? Are we the innovators, or are they so, who, together with the operation of time, have reduced the free representation of the people to what it now is? Lord Bacon says 'Time is the greatest innovator; and if time of course alter things to the worse, and wisdom and counsel shall not alter them to the better, what shall be the end?' We are said to be rash and hasty speculators - hasty, surely the friends of Reform have not been, for they have been at least fifty years engaged in their object. In 1770 the great Lord Chatham brought it forward, and ever since that period the question has been repeatedly agitated. Surely then we are not hasty. And what is the rashness of which we are accused? Do we not propose that to which reason leads? Is it not for the good of our country? Is that rash and dangerous which Lord Bacon recommends, and which Lord Chatham thought essential to the safety of our Constitution; without which, indeed, he was deliberately of opinion that could not much longer exist? And are we to be branded as wild and idle speculators, because we petition for the self-same object? Mr. Pitt also began his career as a Parliamentary Reformer, and I have the greatest reason to believe, that this, perhaps the most extraordinary man the political world ever knew, held the same opinions until the day of his death. He was unfortunately placed in a situation where his principles were at variance with his interest, and the maintenance of his power. He always believed Reform to be necessary, but he could never find an opportunity of carrying into effect without hazarding what was more dear to him than his country. Mr. Fox also, whose opinions are more important upon this as well as all other subjects, because he was a wiser and more enlightened man, was the sincere friend of Parliamentary Reform. His sentiments too, on this question, are the more valuable, because, from his education and family connexions, they must at first have been unfavourable to it. But as his wonderful intellect expanded, he saw the necessity of a Reform in the Commons House of Parliament, and he became its honest and avowed advocate; had his life been spared, I have no doubt he would have brought it forward whilst he was Minister, and as things were then constituted, been turned out of office for doing so. Amongst the many great authorities upon this subject, I will only mention one other - that of Blackstone, the celebrated commentator on the laws of England - that learned and eminent person, though all his feelings, and all his prejudices were in favour of what is called the Tory party, had sagacity enough to see, and honesty enough to confess, his wish for a 'more complete representation of the people'.

A Right Honourable Gentleman, Mr. Canning, has said, that the Parliamentary Reformers ought not to be attended to, because they cannot agree in any precise and specific plan of Reform. Now, Sir, this does appear to me to be miserable sophistry.

Let them remove those abuses which all men admit to exist, give us those rights which no one denies to be our due, and then they may perhaps argue rationally against our further demands, should any be made. But if no Reform is to take place until all men are agreed, it is obvious that none can ever be obtained, and it is equally obvious 'what will be the end!'.

This unanimity has never been attained upon any other important question. When the great Reformation in the religion of this country took place, were all the Reformers agreed as to a specific plan? No, they differed in many points, and the Pope gave them the same answer which the Right Honourable Gentleman does to the Reformers of the present day. 'There may be corruptions and abuses, but as you cannot agree what to substitute in their room, it is safest and best that things should remain as they are'. But the Reformers of that time had too much firmness and good sense to be so dealt with: they agreed in removing the great and palpable abuses, and afterwards settled their own disputes by mutual concession.

But our Right Honourable opponent has still another argument in store - he says, that Parliamentary Reform has never been asked for except in times of temporary pressure and difficulty, and is forgotten as soon as tranquillity returns. To this we have two answers - first, that it is not true in fact, and in order to prove that assertion, we need only refer to Mr. Pitt's motion in 1785, and Mr. Flood's in 1790, both made in the time of peace and growing prosperity. But if it were true, what does it prove, except that the people feel Parliament Corruption to be the main cause of their misfortunes, and Parliamentary Reform their best hope in the hour of distress?

But it has been said by sensible and moderate men, that Reform is of little use, as we should have the same, or nearly the same, members returned, were it even to take place. This we by no means admit,

and it is with them to support their assertion. A moderate and constitutional Reform would bring forward, as candidates, many well educated and well informed men, whose fortunes are not sufficient to support them against influence and corruption, and who have not family connexions to bring them into Parliament according to the present system. But even supposing the men to be the same, would their conduct be so? Would they have the same feelings toward us, and the same regard for our interests? Is it the same thing to me or to you, to have our affairs managed by an agent appointed by ourselves, and responsible to us alone, as it would be were he appointed, and perhaps paid, by other persons, strangers, or even men with interests directly contrary to ours? I can only say that I should prefer a steward chosen by myself, to one forced upon me by a stranger or an enemy. Such are the arguments which have been used against us, and such are the plain answers which may be given to them.

But we have been told, sneeringly, that we do not deserve to have a Reform, because we have not courage to ask for it. Gentlemen, it is for you to answer this taunt, by the petition which will be proposed to you, and I trust that similar answers will be given from one end of the kingdom to the other. We have still, and we have shewn it practically to-day, we have still the liberty of meeting to deliberate on our rights; and whenever this can be done it should be done openly.

Speech of James Losh in the Guildhall, Newcastle upon Tyne on the 31st March, 1824 ...for the purpose of Petitioning Parliament for the Improvement and Gradual Emancipation of The Slave Population of the British Colonies.

Sir,

In rising to propose the resolutions which I hold in my hand, for the consideration of this meeting, I desire, in the first place, and in the name of the gentlemen who signed the requisition, to return you our most sincere thanks for the polite and handsome manner in which you acceded to our wishes, by granting us the use of this hall, and accepting the situation of our chairman. I by no means intend this as an empty compliment, a mere matter of course; for I do think it highly proper that all meetings of this kind should be open to the public, and have the sanction of the magistrates of the places in which they are held.

At the present moment, in particular, when the most strenuous exertions are made to degrade the characters of the friends to the abolition of slavery, and to impute improper motives to all their actions, it is of the utmost importance that we should thus have an opportunity of publicly stating our views, and of freeing ourselves from those imputations which have so unjustly been cast upon us.

We have, indeed, upon all occasions avowed our readiness to meet those who differ from us in opinion; and, as we have nothing to conceal or to be ashamed of, we have always been willing, both publicly and privately, to explain the objects which we have in view, and to defend the principles upon which we act.

Of the public press we perhaps have no great reason to complain. I know but of two newspapers, indeed, which have decidedly undertaken the defence of Negro Slavery, and of these two I do not feel it necessary to say much. One of them is conducted by a person of distinguished talents, and I can only lament that those talents have not been applied to better purposes; as to the other, I am sure that no good and honourable man can wish to be noticed by it at all; but if one must have the misfortune to appear in its pages, its abuse is certainly infinitely preferable to its praise.

But the charges which have been brought against us by the persons immediately connected with the West Indies, though I lament that they have not been conducted with more calmness and with less of personal altercation, no doubt deserves our most serious attention.

In their public documents, such as the Declarations of the West India Proprietors residing in London, and the Resolutions of the Island Legislatures, they tell us that we are meddling in what we do not understand, and that our interference is uncalled for, inasmuch as the negro slaves are better provided for and more comfortable than the peasants of Great Britain. I confess Sir, that this assertion does rouse my indignation more perhaps than is fit on a subject of such infinite importance. Were it true, even, which I do not believe to be generally the case, that they are better lodged, and clothed, and fed, then, indeed, they might be considered as better provided for and more comfortable, in the same sense, Sir, in which your dogs and your horses are comfortable; they, too, being, I have no doubt, kept dry and warm, and abundantly fed!

But surely the slaveholders forget that the negroes are men - that they are reasoning and affectionate beings - that they have the feelings of fathers, husbands, sons, and brothers; and they seem to be equally ignorant of the real situation of the peasants and artisans of England. Too many of these, no doubt, work hard, and live sparingly, but they are all free and independent - all have the reasonable hope of raising themselves in society by industry and good conduct - and they all are protected by equal laws from tyranny and oppression. And shall we be seriously told, that English peasants are more to be pitied than men, and I am ashamed to add, than women, who are liable to be flogged with the cart whip at the will of their owners - than persons who may be sold and separated from their wives and children, at the caprice or for the debts of their masters?

Again, the planters say, that at all events the slaves are their own absolute property, and that they are the best, nay the sole, judges as to the management of that which belongs to themselves. I am far from denying, Sir, that the laws of this country have guaranteed their right to this strange species of property; and I most freely admit, that they ought to have a fair compensation for any direct loss

which they may sustain by the acts of the legislature, however wise and salutary those acts may be. It is not my wish to speak harshly of our opponents, but surely they should express themselves with some degree of humility and reserve, when they talk of having property in their fellow creatures; and they should bear in mind, that the two most enlightened nations of the world have declared that act to be piracy by which alone this could have been originally obtained; and that those from whom they derive this boasted property, must have procured it by crimes by which they would now suffer ignominious death. In granting a compensation, too, it is to be considered, that the principle upon which alone it can be claimed does not extend beyond the clear and direct injury which they may sustain. In a great nation like this, all general laws and regulations must collaterally affect the interests of many individuals: the operation of the corn laws, to take a single instance, must often lessen the comforts of a class of persons ten times more numerous than all the slave holders of the West Indies.

And when we are told, Sir, that no power upon earth has the right to interfere between the master and his slave; we must remind the persons who hold such language, that the Parliament of Great Britain has perpetually interfered for the regulation and protection of the labouring classes of the community; and surely they need not be reminded that laws have been passed in this country to secure even our horses and cattle from ill treatment and cruelty.

The friends of the abolition of slavery have been stigmatised as 'dealers in cheap charity'; that is, I suppose, as men desirous of shewing their humanity at the expense of others. But we are not to be diverted from our purpose by such taunts as these; we are persuaded that slavery is an evil, not only to the slaves themselves, but to their masters also, and we have pledged ourselves to contribute our share to compensate these masters, should they suffer any pecuniary loss by the change - how then do they make out that our humanity is shewn at their expense?

They forget too, that we are already taxed to support this very system of slavery, and that they actually receive two millions a year from the inhabitants of Great Britain; for the tax on East Indian sugar operates as a bounty for that which is produced by slave labour in the West, to nearly, if not quite that amount.

Such, Sir, are the charges brought against us by the West India planters and their friends, in themselves, as it seems to me, by no means formidable; but I am sorry to be compelled to state, that Mr. Canning has lent his powerful aid to give them force and effect, and that, too, upon an occasion, when his great talents and brilliant eloquence were displayed in bringing forward a plan which we, upon the whole, approve, and which, if carried generally and vigorously into effect, would remove most of the evils and oppressions which we lament and seek to redress. And yet at the moment when he was acting upon their own principles, he thought proper to allude to the friends of the abolition of slavery as 'wild theorists and rash speculators'.

Perhaps he might think, that by speaking thus harshly of the abolitionists, he could reconcile the slaveholders in some degree to the measures which he proposed: and that we, on the other hand, might forgive a little severity towards ourselves, in consideration of the contempt which he poured upon our opponents. I fear, however, that the Right Honourable Gentleman fell into a common error, and that, by attempting to please both parties, he gave satisfaction to neither. I think I may safely say, that few of the real enemies to slavery felt any gratification in seeing the weakness of the legislative bodies of the West India Islands held up to ridicule. And I strongly suspect that those assemblies would scarcely be reconciled to the bitter scorn with which their arrogance was repelled, and their feebleness exposed, in consideration of a few sarcasms against the friends of emancipation.

On our parts, Sir, we have a plain and simple answer to give to the charges of theory and wild speculation. We have uniformly, and from the first, had one distinct and practicable object in view, and have never concealed this object from the public - 'the gradual, but final emancipation of the slave'. We hold slavery in abhorrence in every form, and we consider ourselves bound, as men and christians, to put an end to it; and those who think differently on this subject, cannot be actuated by any moral or religious principles of a very lofty nature.

Let us next consider, Sir, what the means are by which we seek to attain this good end. We have never thought of a hasty emancipation. We know that men who have long been exposed to slavery and ignorance are not in a fit condition to be immediately set free. But we have proposed no such thing. If we had done this, we should indeed have deserved the name of rash speculators. But we have assumed, and trust we deserve, the title of 'friends to gradual emancipation'. In what single petition presented to either House of Parliament, or pamphlet, or declaration issued by any society, has an *immediate* abolition been proposed, or even hinted at, except to be disclaimed?

We say that slavery is a bad thing, injurious alike to the master and slave, but that, like most other inveterate evils, it cannot be removed at once - can only, indeed, be removed by slow degrees. But then, though we mean to advance only step by step towards our great object, we hold that we should never for a moment cease to advance, until it is finally accomplished.

And who, Sir, are the persons with whom our plans have originated? Do our calumniators forget that the greatest men in all times - but not to go back to distant times - that Montesquieu, Blackstone, and a greater name than either, Paley, (greater at least, in this respect, because he excelled all men in cool and cautious intellect, and was the farthest possible from a rash speculator) - that these men held the same views upon which we propose to act, and were the open and determined enemies of every species of slavery. I trust, Sir, that I may be forgiven, if I, on this occasion, express my personal gratitude to that great and good man Dr. Paley, to whose early and continued friendship I feel myself in every way under the deepest obligation.

Again, if we speak of the statesmen of our own times and country: was Pitt a rash and hasty speculator? Surely such a charge comes ill from Mr. Canning - and yet that cautious politician asserts, that 'slavery is an abomination, and that it should always be kept in view, that it must be ultimately abolished'. Then Fox, whose noble exertions put an end to that trade which is now declared to be piracy - must he too, and Burke, and Sheridan, and almost every man of distinguished talents - must they all be involved in the sweeping charges which have been brought against the friends of the emancipation of the negroes?

But on whom, Sir, in particular, are the calumnies meant to fall? On Mr. Wilberforce? Is he supposed to be fond of *cheap charity*? He, who has devoted a long life to this good cause without fee or reward - who has devoted to it, talents and eloquence which might have brought him forward to the highest stations in the country. On Mr. Clarkson? A man who, instead of receiving fee or reward, has withdrawn himself from all secular pursuits, and not gained a shilling, but sacrificed an excellent constitution, and dedicated very considerable mental powers to the pursuit alone of this benevolent object.

When they talk of *cheap charity* as a reproach to the Society of Friends, there are surely no words in the English language less justly applicable to those who are ever the most forward in acts of benevolence and charity, who devote a large portion of their money and (what they know the value of better than any others) their time, to every humane and useful purpose; who, without any poor of their own, contribute largely to the maintenance of all other poor; without any uneducated children of their own, assist in providing for the education of every religious sect - how unfounded, rash, and unjust, is this kind of general abuse!

I state these things, Sir, merely that we may stand fair with the public, and that our real object may not be misunderstood. The 'total but gradual abolition of slavery', then, is the object which we have in view; and this great end we will, by all fair and honourable means, steadily and without relaxation pursue until it is finally, accomplished. The House of Commons last year unanimously passed some strong and excellent resolutions, which gave universal satisfaction to all friends of emancipation; and we then met, without knowing precisely what plans Government meant to adopt, in order to call upon them for vigorous measures, and to assure them of our support. They have now brought forward their measures - measures which approve themselves in principle to the minds of all, and which are drawn up with great skill, humanity, and caution. It may then be fairly asked, why are we called together today? If Government have adopted measures which we all approve, of what do we complain? We do not, Sir, meet to complain; but, in common with almost every district of this great country, we have assembled to tell them that we approve, and will give our aid to the wise and salutary career which

they have determined to pursue. I, for one, see no reason to doubt the sincerity of his Majesty's Ministers, but I am fully and deeply persuaded, that they could not have gone so far as they have done, had they not been urged on and supported by the feelings and by the voice of the people. And they have still many difficulties to encounter, which cannot be overcome, unless those feelings and that voice continue to be distinctly expressed.

But whilst we approve the principles which the Government has laid down in conducting this great question, and approve also most of its measures in detail, as stated in the orders in council, still we may be permitted respectfully to point out some things which seem to be defects, some even likely to be dangerous, when carried into execution, and which it may not yet be too late to remedy, should our objections appear to be well founded.

The slaves in the West Indies are computed to be 800,000, whilst the colonies to which the orders in council are meant to extend, do not contain, at the utmost, more than 200,000. Now, Sir, there seems to be a formidable and decisive objection to thus narrowing their application, viz - the frightful consideration that thus there will be formed two distinct classes of slaves - one, and that by far the most numerous, excluded from the benefits extended to the other. Will not they naturally say, 'How is this?' We are told that it is wise, and right, and proper, that slaves should have the privileges conceded to our neighbours, and yet they are denied to us, and that without any fault of our own'. Could there be devised a more dangerous experiment? You cannot reason with these men. Their masters have taken care that they should be immersed in ignorance; but they can *feel* that they are excluded, because their owners have, in their legislative assemblies, refused to extend these measures to them. What plan could there be thought of more likely to create disaffection, than directly to point out to these ignorant beings, that it is owing to their masters that they are not permitted to enjoy what has been given to their fellow slaves?

I trust, therefore, that Government may reconsider this part of the subject, and determine to extend the proposed regulations to the whole of the West India colonies. Mr. Canning, through the whole of his masterly address to the House of Commons, endeavoured to keep this part of the subject as much out of sight as possible; and hinted that it was dangerous to raise the question of our right to interfere with the powers of the island legislatures. I, Sir, have no desire to raise any such state questions - I have no wish to meddle with such high matters. I do not even recommend any interference with their commerce, which this country has undoubted right to regulate. But there is one measure so obvious, that nothing but the skill of Mr. Canning could have kept it from view. I have already stated, that there is a tax upon East India sugars, which operates as a direct bounty upon those of the West Indies. What then, hinders Government from saying to these colonists, 'Gentlemen, if you consider slavery to be a good thing - if you think slaves make better labourers than freemen - you can have no objection to enter upon a fair competition with the sugars of the East Indies, as they are not raised by slave labour: if you think your own methods so much superior, meet them fairly in the market, and give up those bounties which you have hitherto enjoyed'. What objection could there be to this proposal? They must answer either yes or not to so plain a question. If they refuse to adopt the proposed alterations, and determine to continue the system of slavery, we believe, and I have no doubt they know themselves, that they must sink into utter and irretrievable ruin; for it is quite clear that the labour of slaves is more expensive than that of freemen. I have no hesitation, therefore, Sir, in saying, that these assemblies, had this plain question been put to them, would have answered 'No; we cannot do without this bounty, and we will therefore adopt the regulations prepared for the ceded colonies'. Surely, then, this is a proper object for a petition. We do not wish to take from the planters a single fair advantage - we do not wish to decline the sacrifice we make in their favour by this bounty, nor even refuse them whatever compensation they may be justly entitled to - but we do say, that if we give up so much, we ought to have something in return. Let us have East India sugars upon equal terms, or let these West Indians act like men and christians. What then, have they to complain of? Let the odium, if there be any, fall where it ought.

Again, Mr. Canning said, in his eloquent speech, that the first part of his plan was, that the slaves should be so far improved in condition, as 'at once to raise the mass of the negro population from brute state, to that of man'; and that this was to be done by first of all abolishing the horrid practice of beating women in a state of nakedness with the cart whip - by prohibiting the use of the cart whip in all cases as an emblem of authority - and finally, by making it necessary to have witnesses present at

the punishment of a slave, and to have the nature and extent of that punishment recorded. When all these things were done, and not till then, he considered that the slaves were 'fit for religious instruction'. But the remainder of his plan seems to be inconsistent with this beginning, for he proceeds at once to form a clerical establishment for Jamaica, and to send out a bishop, an archdeacon, clergy and schoolmasters - and all this, before any of the preliminary requisites have been extended to that island. Thus this whole institution, excellent as it may be, must be useless; because the slaves for whom it is intended continue to be in the 'state of beasts', and consequently not 'fit for religious instruction'. The planters of Jamaica may say to the bishop upon his arrival 'You have no business here. What right have you to interfere with our property? Your best plan is to return quietly home to those who sent you'.

May we not, then, be permitted to suggest to Government, that it would be well to raise the negroes to the rank of reasonable beings, before we send them bishops and clergymen to teach them their duties as subjects and as christians! Would not it be proper, in the first place, to encourage marriages, to prevent the separation of families, and above all, to protect the female slaves from the brutal punishments to which they are now liable.

But, Sir, the whole slave system with respect to women in our West India Colonies is abominable, and must excite horror and disgust in every well-regulated mind. They are considered as being created solely to gratify the avarice or the brutal appetites of their masters - indeed, never treated as women, except for some vile purpose. And yet, to women in this state, bishops are to be sent to teach them religion! At one moment they are to be instructed in the principles and duties of christianity, and at the next, perhaps dragged out by their overseers to be flogged with the cart whip, or to undergo shameful and disgusting pollution! This cannot be longer endured - I call upon the assembly of Jamaica - upon every assembly - to put an end to these abominations. All that we can do is, respectfully to petition our own legislature, to adopt such further measures as may be most effectual for that purpose.

But our opponents tell us that we have no examples to produce of the good effects of emancipation. Nay, they even assert that all the great examples are against us. They say, for instance, that Sierra Leone has failed: but on the other hand, we assert that it has been a successful experiment. That colony, no doubt, at first had many difficulties to contend with, such as the nature of the climate, and the intrigues of the slave dealers amongst the African tribes which surround it - but any person who will compare the official returns for several years past, must perceive, that it is not only an improving, but actually in a thriving state.

Again, they say that St. Domingo is a failure also. Had that even been true, Sir, great allowances should have been made for the dreadful struggle which took place in that noble island before its inhabitants achieved their freedom. But it is not true; and notwithstanding the fatal and exhausting effects of that struggle, Hayti is fast rising to prosperity, and already shows to mankind, that the negroes are as capable of improvement in all respects as any of their fellow men. We do not know so much as we ought to do of St. Domingo, but we know enough to enable us confidently to assert, that it is better governed, is happier, more enlightened, than the kingdoms of some members of the Holy Alliance. That its present President is a man of a more vigorous and cultivated understanding, than many of the persons who govern what are called the civilized nations of Europe - and that it has a legislative assembly elected by the population at large. To speak, then, of such a country with contempt, is not a proof either of much information or much candour! But Lord Bathurst is said to have asserted, that this great island has not of late exported any sugar, and that it has even been compelled to lay restraints upon the importation of that article. I certainly, Sir, speak with much deference in opposition to what I cheerfully admit to be high authority, but I think if his Lordship would refer to the official returns, he would find that Hayti has exported a considerable quantity of sugar, not only to the United States, but even to this country also. What restrictions its government may have laid upon the importations of some particular kinds of sugar, I know not - perhaps, indeed, they may have been misled by the example of Europe, and hoped to derive benefit from restraining the freedom of commerce. Be that as it may, they have established schools, have provided for the instruction of all classes of society, and are fast improving in all things which are calculated to raise them to the rank of a powerful nation. They shew what negroes can do when restored to the rank of men. And it is curious to observe, that their state papers are as well written as any which have come

from Verona! We might point out hundreds of instances of the attainments of individual negroes, but these two examples are upon a large scale, and have been selected by our opponents themselves; and they form a triumphant refutation of the unfounded assertions of the inferiority of the negro race, and of their incapacity for improvement and civilization.

But I have trespassed upon your patience too long. If, indeed, the orders in council be wise and salutary in all respects, except their want of universal application. If there be a safe and obvious mode of enforcing such application, and if the negroes be capable of enjoying the rights of men, and of improving the privileges of education and religion to their own and the general benefit - then, Sir, I again earnestly call upon this meeting, to declare such to be their conviction; and respectfully to urge his Majesty's Government, not to confine its benevolent regulations to the ceded colonies alone, but by firm, though conciliatory measures, to extend them to all our settlements in the West Indies.

APPENDIX FOUR

Two examples of petitions from the Common Council minutes of the City of Newcastle upon Tyne as preserved in the archives of the city:

1. Common Council 1829.

Petition to both Houses of Parliament for the removal of the disabilities under which His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects labour on account of their religious opinions.

'To the Right Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The humble petition of the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, Sheriff and Common Council of Newcastle upon Tyne. Sheweth, that your petitioners observe with great concern that many insidious attempts are now making to excite in the public mind, and unfounded alarm, in consequence of His Majesty's gracious recommendation to Parliament to review the laws which impose disabilities on His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects and your Petitioners earnestly pray that your Lordships will be pleased to adopt such measures, consistent with the security of the Protestant succession, and the established church, as may be the most expedient for the removal of those disabilities under which a numerous and unoffending portion of the people of the United Kingdom has long laboured on account of their religious opinions; and the further continuance of which your Petitioners consider as altogether unnecessary...Ordered that they be engrossed and sealed and handed by the Mayor to the Duke of Wellington and Cuthbert Ellison, respectively. Signed Robert Bell, mayor.

2. Common Council 1831.

Petition to the House of Commons.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, Sheriff and Common Council of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Sheweth,

That the free burgesses of Newcastle upon Tyne in whom the elective Franchise has been hitherto vested are upwards of 4000 in number and the Franchise by the Constitution of the Town descends to the Children of Freemen or is acquired by serving an apprenticeship of seven years.

That the free Burgesses of this town are not charged with having on any occasion abused the elective franchise which your petitioners sincerely believe they have always exercised purely.

That your petitioners cheerly assent to the admission of the Householders of Newcastle upon Tyne to the Elective Franchise in common with the Free Burgesses nor do they object to the exclusion of non-resident burgesses but as guardians of the rights of their brother burgesses your petitioners beg respectively to express to your Honourable House their decided dissent from the proposition for depriving the children and apprentices of the existing free burgesses of their right of voting for members of parliament when they shall be admitted to their freedom.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray your Honourable House that the plan for Parliamentary Reform now before your honourable house be so altered that resident free burgesses as well as those now existing as those hereafter to be admitted may vote in common with the householders for members to represent this town in Parliament.

Note. The usual method of petitioning in the city, seemed to have been to hold a meeting with the approval of the Lord Mayor. To seek the approval of the meeting to the terms of the petition. To submit it via the local MP to Parliament. In Losh's diary, there is recorded the occasion when a public meeting was refused by the Lord Mayor (see chapter four)

APPENDIX FIVE

The following are additional entries in his diaries relating to his income:

End of 1801. My business has greatly increased of late and now is nearly as profitable as I wish it to be. I think I can reckon upon £300 a year, if I could make £500 it content me... By the death of my wife's father I have acquired an addition to our fortune of £5000 which makes us perfectly independent...After paying all our debts, I consider us to have an income of £800 per annum, a sum equal to all reasonable wants - £300 from my profession, £200 interest of money - debts being £1000 - and £300 business.

State of my property - June 1802.

Remaining of Cecilia's fortune in Mr Clayton's hands	£3100
Remaining ditto in my 3 brothers' hands	£1122
	4222
In Mr.Liddle's hands	1800
	6022

This £1800 I reckon in the following way. When my father died, my uncle, Mr Liddle, proposed to me I should live with him, desiring me to consider myself in all respects his eldest son. He took my fortune £2000 and agreed to give me 10% interest for it. At the same time he told me that I might draw on him at all times for ever I might want. From May 1789 I continued to do this till my marriage, and I believe in all received upwards of £2000 during that period without reckoning any since, would amount to what would reduce my receipts from Mr. Liddle to £200. Deduct this from my original £2000 and it leaves £1800 upon my marriage, or rather a few months previous to it, Mr L who had always promised me to make me independent and comfortable in all circumstances, gave me a share in the Hexham Brewery, and a share in the Tyne Main colliery. These I conceive to be entirely independent of any fortune as there was no bargaining between us, and I do consider it very doubtful whether the above gifts were equal to the money due to me from Mr.L.

Hexham Brewery value at	£1000
Tyne Main	£2000
	3000
	6022
	£9022

This I consider as my whole property except my business which I value at £300 per annum.

Debts to T Bigge	525
ditto R Ward	100

ditto C P Crawford

120

Total debts: £745 besides one account with George and several considerable bills.

Besides Mrs Baldwin gave me £100 to accumulate for our little Celia. I lent this to the Alkali Co. they agreeing to add the interest to the principal every year.

June 23, 1803. Present state of my property: In the bank Carlisle £2000. On bond to John £2000. Brewery £1200. Colliery £1500. Due from Mr Liddle say £1500. Furniture and lease at Jesmond £1200. Total £9400. Money due about £800. Net total £8600. My business worth about £600 per year.

End December 1803. ...FOR MYSELF. I have no reason to be discontented with any future prospects. My profession may be fairly reckoned at from £500 to £600 per year. My income from other sources at from £300 to £400 more...

End December 1808. The year 1808 has passed without any serious calamity and my profession (as well as my concerns in business) have been more than commonly productive. My income not being less than £2600.

End December 1809. My own affairs are prosperous and my income this year above £2600.

End December 1812. Pecuniary matters have been fortunate and I hope prudent. I have sold a share which I had in Hexham Brewery for £1800 with a little more than £1000 of which I have purchased the premises which I before held by lease, and if I am not deceived made what was not worth more than £500 of the value of at least £2000. I have also laid out above £1000 in the payment of old debts, and about £150 in useful improvements about the house, office etc. My income this year was:

Profession	£1400		
Profits of colly	£1000		
Interest on money	£ 200	Total	£2600

End December 1813. Profession this year £1607
 Profits from colliery £ 250
 Interest on money £ 200 Total £2057
 Our building and other improvements this year have cost about £800.

End December 1814. I consider my income this year is about:

Professional	£1200		
Receiverships	500		
Fittage 1/2 year	150		
Tynemain	600		
Interest on money	150	Total	£2600

November 27, 1815. I today signed an agreement with Mr. Warwick for the purchase of his farmhouse and above 25 acres adjoining my present property. Paying £160 acre for the good ground and

£60 for the banks. £150 for the farmhouse. A sum for the coal mines to be fixed by Mr. Easton.

End May 1820. I found my Cumberland property (inherited from his uncle Mr. Liddle) of nearly the value I first calculated viz. about £15,000, but of a kind to produce no very considerable present income.

End August 1821. My private affairs are comfortable and promise to be more so.

End December 1831. My pecuniary matters still continue to tease me, and I have not the resolution to take those decisive steps as to my mode of living which would gradually remove this source of anxiety. Still, however, I have great reason to hope for a favourable change without any exertion of that kind - to which I fear I am not equal.

No further income entries were made in his diaries after this date. With eight children to provide for - in a manner appropriate to their station - he never achieved the freedom from work that he craved. He was seventy when he died in 1833 and still working as an observing barrister in Yorkshire elections.

Appendix Six

Religious works that Losh read and/or owned.

(a) Religious works recorded in the diaries:

June 3, 1809. Campbell *On Miracles*...excellent and may I safely add triumphant answer to the very ingenious and subtle (but in my opinion overrated) sceptic David Hume.

July 3, 1811. Paley's *Evidences*...

May 18, 1815. Paley's *Moral Philosophy*.

December 23, 1816. Cove on *Tithes*. Moderately written and petulant book which, however, contains much curious and useful information, and no doubt many sensible observations and ingenious arguments. It seems to me that the whole argument about the commutation of tithes may be reduced to two points: 1st. whether or not the tithes to a considerable extent make quarrel between the clergy and their parishioners. 2nd. whether or not tithes tend to discourage improvements in agriculture.

August 18, 1817. Hartley *On Man*

December 23, 1819. Reading Paley's *Theology* with the children.

July 1, 1821. Priestley's *Letters to Horsey*.

November 16, 1823. Carpenter on *Unitarianism*. I have read a good deal lately on Unitarianism, and certainly am persuaded that the arguments in its favour are so clear and the proofs from Scriptures so decisive, as to make its success rapid could the public's attention once be drawn to the subject. Its success would also forward the spread of Christianity very greatly, for I perfectly agree with Paley that 'whatever renders religion more rational, renders it more creditable'.

April 23, 1824. A very absurd and most intolerant High Church publication upon the subject of Trinity, St. Athanasius's Creed etc. by a person of the name of Oxlee.

April 1, 1825. Butler's book of the Roman Catholic church.

July 15, 1825. Butler's *Reminiscences*.

February 24, 1827. *Christian Pioneer*. Finished one number of this publication which seems to me well conducted and likely to do good. The doctrines are Unitarian but temperate and both the matter and manner are good. It is published in 6d numbers and both the paper and type are good.

Religious works etc. offered in the sale after Losh's death:
(shown verbatim as offered in the sale catalogue)

Harvey's *Meditations*, 2 vols.
Butler's *Posthumous Works*, 12mo
Miscellaneous tracts.
Greek Testament.
Holy Bible, and *Psalms of David*, with Professor Dickinson's analysis.
Four copies of the *New Testament*, Ox.ed.
Taylor's *Doctrine of Original Sin*.
Prideaux's *Eccliaistical Tracts*.
Watson's (Dr.) *Sermons*.
Watson's *Theological Tracts*, 6 vols.
Sermons and Tracts, Ibid 1813.
Shepherd On Prayer, 2 vols.
Apthorpe's *Letters on Christianity*
Law's *Serious Call*
Chalmer's (Dr.) *Discourses on the Christian Revelation*
Volume of Religious Tracts, and Turner's *Discourses etc.*
Price's *Sermons on the Christian Doctrine*
Murray on *The Religion of the Mind*, Rowe's *Letters*, and
Sherlock's *Discourses*.
Fleming's *Discourses*, Gilpin's *Lectures on the Catechism*.
Butler's *Sermons*, and Waterland's *Tracts*.
Leland's *View of Deistical Writers*, 2 vols.
Wollaston's *Religion of Nature*.
Hebrew Bible.
Locke's *Paraphrase on the Epistles of St. Paul*.
Richie's *peculiar Doctrines of Revelation*, 2vols.
Chillingworth's *Religion of Protestants*.
Hooker's *Eccliaistical Politie*
Wakefield's *Translation of St. Matthew's Gospel*
Cambridge Concordance.
Carpenter's *Unitarianism the Doctrine of the Gospel*.
Barclay's *Apology for the Quakers*.
Life of King David.
Godwin's *Moses and Aaron*.
Hoadley's *On Conformity*.
Hoadley's *Measures of Submission*, and Cave's *Government of the Ancient Church*.
Middleton on the Bishop of London's *Discourses*.
Butler's *Analogy*.
Volume of Religious Tracts, containing Priestley's Farewell Sermon etc.

✓ 105

✓ THE POLL BOOK 137

OF THE

Free Burgesses and Householdors,

✓ WHO VOTED AT THE

CONTESTED ELECTION

✓ FOR THE TOWN AND COUNTY OF

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE.

AND THE TOWNSHIPS OF

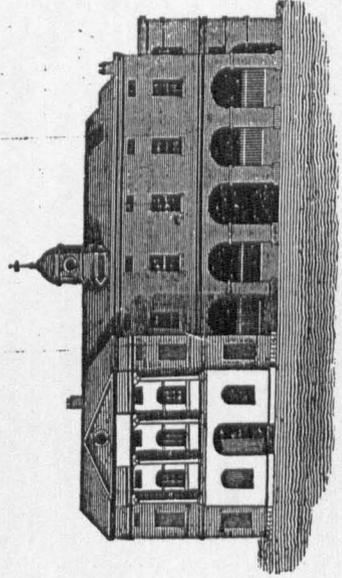
BENWELL, BYKER, HEATON, JESMOND, & WESTGATE,

TAKEN BEFORE

HENRY BELL, ESQ., SHERIFF,

ON

Thursday & Friday, the 13th & 14th Days of Dec., 1832.



CANDIDATES.

50 PERSONS WHO VOTED AS INHABITANT HOUSEHOLDERS.

Names of Voters.	Profession, &c.	Place of Abode.	Candidates.	
			R. H.	A.
Iago, Ormond Orlando	grocer	Side		X
Inness, George	tailor	Head of the side		X
Inness, John	spirit merchant	Great market		
Innes, Alexander	captain in the navy	Lovaine row		
Ions, John	tailor	Close		
Irison, Richard	grocer	Cross street		X
Jackson, C. Forster	merchant	Eldon street		
Jackson, Edward	wine merchant	Eldon square	X	
Jackson, John	grocer	Pilgrim street	X	
Jackson, Joseph	clogger	Castle yard		
Jackson, Thomas	farmer	Todd's nook		
James, Charles	cabinet maker	Erick street		
James Edward	lead manufacturer	Deckham hall		
James, Edward	miller	High bridge		
James, John	paper stainer	Westgate street	X	
James, John	upholsterer	Pilgrim street		
Junie-on, Thomas	draper	Pilgrim street		
Jefferson, Charles	tanner	Ridley villas		
Jeffrey, Alexander	publican	Bell's court		
Jobling, John	broker	Eldon place		
Johnson, Edward	farmer	Eldon street	X	
Johnson, Forster	gentleman	William street	X	
Johnson, George	countryman	Elswick	X	
Johnson, Mark	farmer	William street	X	
Joby, Joseph	flower maker	High bridge		
Joel, Trylle	silver smith	Westgate street		
Johnson, Anthony	miller	Pandon Dean		
Johnson, Benjamin	agent	North Edswick		
Johnson, Culbert	tobacconist	Union street		
Johnson, George	colliery viewer	Willington		
Johnson, George	gun maker	Northumberland court		
Johnson, John, Jun.	shop keeper	Love lane		
Johnson, Joshua	merchant	Ayton cottage, Gateshead		
Johnson, Robert	coal owner	Byker		
Johnson, Robert	grocer	Pilgrim street		
Johnson, William	brewer	Strawberry place		
Johnson, William	shop keeper	Villa place		
Johnson, William	shoe maker	Low Friar street		
Johnston, John	straw hat maker	Pudding chare		
Jopling, Joseph	draper	Bridge end		
Jopling, John	surgeon	Dean street		
Jude, Nabban	publican	Bigg market		
Justice, Hugh	livery stable keeper	Westgate street		
Kay, Robert	agent	Fenkle street		
Kay, Thomas	gentleman	William street		
Kent, John Hall	hafter	Spital terrace		
Kent, Newbegin	attorney	Westgate street		
Kent, Robert	hafter	Westgate street		
Kendall, Robert	painter	Pilgrim street		
Kidd, Samuel	linen draper	Greenfield place		
Kimptoner, John	coffee house keeper	Great market		
King, Charles	grocer	Gateshead		
Kirk, Richard	publican	Pandon street		
Kirtup, George	grocer	Traillgar street		
Kirkley, Isaac	victualer	Catterick buildings		
		Castle yard		

Names of Voters.	Profession, &c.	Place of Abode.	Candidates.	
			R. H.	A.
Kirson, John	publican	Close		X
Kirton, William	watch maker	Postern		X
Kitchen, William	flour dealer	Pilgrim street		
Knot, Joseph	smith	Forth street		
Knox, William	millar	Forth terrace		
Ladzrite, Paul	labourer	Prudhoe street		
Laidlaw, William	tailor	Gallowgate		
Laidler, David	gentleman	Gloucester house		
Laidler, George	grocer	Head of the side	X	
Laidler, William	millwright	South street	X	
Laidman, Charles	gentleman	Villa place		
Laing, John	hostler	Quayside		
Laing, John	surgeon	Higham place		
Lamb, James	shopkeeper	King street		
Lamb, Joseph	esquire	Forth house		
Lamb, Robert	innkeeper	Butcher bank		
Lambert, George	grocer	Shieldfield		
Lambert, G. Anthony	solicitor	Shieldfield		
Lambert, Mark	engraver	Westgate		
Larby, James	publican	Broad chare		
Larremont, George	blacksmith	Pilgrim street		
Larkin, Charles	surgeon	Camberland row		
Lattimer, William	grocer	Northumberland street		
Lattimer, John	china merchant	Newgate street		
Laws, Robert	tea dealer	Blackett street		
Lawells, James	baker	Castle yard		
Lawrence, James	coach guard	St. Martin's court		
Lawson, George	farmer	Minoros		
Lawther, John	grocer	Albion street		
Leadbitter, Robert	attorney	Westgate street		
Learmouth, Andrew	bricklayer	Barras bridge		
Lee, William	grocer	Claremont place		
Leighton, Robert	publican	North shore		
Leighton, Thomas	surgeon	Westgate street		
Lewis, Geo. Samuel	jeweller	Mosley street		
Liddell, Christopher	wine merchant	Shieldfield		
Liddell, John	surgeon	Pilgrim street		
Liddle, Henry	cork manufacturer	High bridge		
Lindsay, Forster William	broker	Gateshead		
Linn, Thomas	clerk	Garth heads		
Lister, William	silver smith	Mosley street		
Little, John	clogger	Side		
Lockey, Robert	baker	Sandgate		
Loebart, John	minister	Jesmond place		
Loftus, William	gentleman	Collingwood street		
Lorraine, James	watch maker	Side		
Loah, James	esquire	Jesmond grove		
Lowes, Ralph	gentleman	Northumberland street		
Lowes, Wilkinson	grocer and flour dealer	Sandgate		
Lowndes, James	gentleman	Branding place		
Lowrey, Edward	ship broker	Lovaine place		
Lowrey, Stephen	ship owner	New road		
Lowrey, Thomas	ship broker	Prudhoe street		
Luckley, George	butcher	Newgate street		
Lumley, Philip	foregman	Collingwood street		
Lumsdon, James	cabinet maker	Great market		
Lunn, James	ship and insurance broker	Ridley villas		
Lunn, John	publican	Quayside		

This is the last will of me James Losh Esq. Barrister
 at Law of longed years in the County of Northumberland
 I give and bequeath to my dear Wife all my Household
 Furniture, Horns, Carriages, and Wine - and I direct
 that my Books may be divided between her and
 my eldest son in such way as they may mutually
 agree upon. I also give and bequeath my Horn and Garden
 at Formby Green and as much land at that place
 as is included in Mr. Atkin's Mortgage of the said
 Horn & Gardens, to my said dear Wife for her life, if
 she think proper to pay the interest of the said
 Mortgage.

Then being by different family settlements a
 provision made for my Wife & children to a
 considerable amount -

I give and bequeath to my son Baldwin and
 2. John Joseph eight hundred pounds each, to my sons
 Robert Henry and William Septimus fifteen hundred
 pounds each and to my two unmarried and dear
 Daughters, Margaret Catherine and Jane
 Christophora, five hundred pounds each, and
 to my granddaughter Cecilia Sal (the
 daughter of my beloved daughter Cecilia)
 two hundred pounds, and I direct that
 all these legacies bear interest from the day
 of my death.

All the rest and residue of my property
 3. both real and personal of what ever nature

James Lock of Lincoln³²² in Barister at Law his
Heir and Assigns for ever

I appoint my said sons James and William Legti-
mes Executors of this my last will. And I appoint
my dear Wife, my son James, and my son
Robert Henry, to be Guardians of each of my
4 Children as may be under the age of twenty one
Years at the time of my death

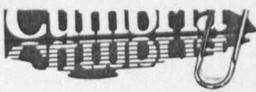
James Lock

Signed sealed published and
Declared by the said Testator
James Lock as and for his
last will and Testament in
the presence of us who at his
request in his presence and
in the presence of each other
subscribed our names as

Witnesses thereto this twelfth
5th day of March in the year of our Lord
1830

John Stafford (Clerk to the Testator)
James George Bailey (Clerk to Mr. Asher)
Abraham Lees

b^{ps}



18 Book sale 1
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80 years old and extremely infirm, but his faculties and memory are quite perfect. Should my life be spared ten years longer, I should fervently pray that mine might be as much so. From Sunderland I proceeded to Durham, where I drank tea, and Grey and I set out upon our Revising Circuit. I had a comfortable carriage from Newcastle, and Grey and I travelled together with our clerks, leaving Durham about eight in the evening, and arriving at Greta Bridge at one in the morning.

James Losh "Crosses the River."

Sept. 19th.—Business, five hours; diary, one hour. Mr. Bailey having his wife with him travels and lives entirely separate from Grey and me. We went in our carriage to Ronald Kirk, where our revising duties did not detain us above two hours. The drive to Barnard Castle, and from Barnard Castle to Ronald Kirk, on the Yorkshire side of the river, is very fine. The day was beautiful and the scenery picturesque. Many of the trees were beautiful of their kind, particularly the ash and the holly. On our return to Greta Bridge we crossed the river.

The foregoing characteristic sentences that end the diary were the last ever penned by Mr. Losh. At Greta Bridge, before dining, the party took a walk in Rokeby Park. After dinner Mr. Losh complained of feeling unwell, but did not send for assistance until the following morning, which was Friday. His son James, and nephew-in-law, Dr. Hutchinson, hastened to attend him, and arrived on Saturday night. He was able to recognise them, but soon after became unconscious, and died at three o'clock on Sunday morning.

THE HISTORY OF THE DIARY.

A few notes remain in conclusion. It may be desirable to explain, for it is little known, how the diary of James Losh became public property. After his death it was transferred from Jesmond Grove to the library at Woodside, where it remained for about seventy years.

During that time the estate passed in turn from one member of the Losh family to another, beginning with Sara Losh and ending with a grandson of the diarist, the Rev. James Arlosh. He died about a generation ago, and the astounding fact was revealed that, ignoring the claims of his relatives, he had bequeathed the entire estate to the Unitarian College of Oxford. Legal proceedings against this unnatural will were seriously contemplated but finally abandoned, and Woodside passed into the hands of strangers.

At the sale of the library the diary of James Losh was bought by the Carlisle Corporation and placed in Tullie House, where it has been added to the valuable collection of local books and documents made by the late William Jackson, F.S.A., and known as the "Bibliotheca Jacksoniana." The whole diary consists of about thirty closely-written volumes, in which the more interesting items are concealed by the numerous business and domestic records.

The diary appears in the catalogue of the Jackson Collection, but has received little attention, and until extracts from it began to appear in the "Carlisle Journal" the descendants of James Losh, including several grandchildren, were unaware of its existence. That it was not intended for publication is very evident; but that it was to be drawn upon for an autobiography is equally clear. There is a retrospective passage which Mr. Losh concludes by saying: "I will not pursue the subject further at present as I intend to write fully upon it in the sketches of my life which I intend sometime or other to write."

Unfortunately he did not live to carry out this project. It would probably have added to local literature a more complete picture of eighteenth century Carlisle than any that exists, for his parents had a residence there in addition to Woodside, and the fullest description of the wild, little-frequented country that lay beyond its pleasant surroundings, the field of his youthful explorations: The recollections of his life in London at the time when Boswell was writing his great biography, and of many of its distinguished inhabitants and of the part he played in the struggle for Parliamentary Reform, of which it was suggested he should write a history, must have provided material for some of its best pages.

It is disappointing to find Mr. Losh making no reference in his diary to his Continental travels, and especially to his experiences in Paris during the great French Revolution, and it is certain this omission would have been made good in the autobiography. And his recollections of the breakfasts at Bristol with the young poets Coleridge, Southey, and Lloyd might have inspired a chapter to vie with Hazlitt's Winterslow essay, "My First Meeting with Poets." And those of his long friendship with Wordsworth must almost certainly have solved the vexed question where and when he first met Coleridge.

Readers of the diary cannot fail to be impressed by the sterling character and the ability of James Losh. They can never be in doubt of his sincerity and benevolence, or of the soundness of his judgment. He deprecated over-praise in biography, for, he said, what man is without his foibles? But, judging by the diary we may with confidence adopt from the inscription on his statue the estimate of his contemporaries:—

"Zealous in promoting the moral and intellectual improvement of mankind, distinguished in private society for the gentleness of his manners and the kindness of his heart, his life was marked by benevolence and integrity."

To which may be added the testimony of one of his closest friends, John Bell, K.C.:—

"I have known men of greater genius, but never one possessed of more honourable and amiable qualities accompanied by a most excellent fund of common-sense, more useful than splendid talents. I could never persuade him of his own powers, and this diffidence lost him much valuable time, which if duly employed would have placed him over the heads of many he declined contending with. I used a wrong term when I spoke of his as common-sense—it was uncommon, as such a portion falls to the lot of few, but it was so tempered with mildness and kindness that to a casual observer for the first time he might have passed as an ordinary man, but the more he was seen the more he was honoured and respected."

A.R.D.

- 13 Feb 10
for £50