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ATTEMPTS AT GENERAL UNION

1818-1834

ATTEMPTS AT GENERAL UNION

A Study in British Trade Union History

1818-1834

BY

G. D. H. COLE

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PREFACE

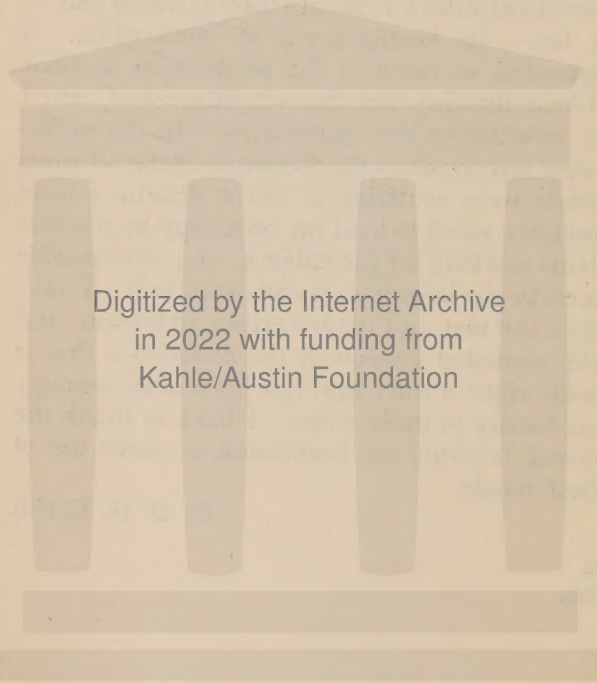
THIS study was first published in 1939, in the *International Review for Social History*, the journal of the International Institute for Social History, which had — and still has — its headquarters at Amsterdam. I always intended to revise it for publication in book form in Great Britain; but the war intervened, and I have only now found the opportunity. In the meantime, as very few copies of the *Review* or of the offprints of my article were available in Great Britain, I have been constantly asked to lend my own copy by scholars and students working on the subject, who were unable to get access to the information embodied in it. I have now revised the text and made certain additions; and I offer the amended version in the confidence that it puts broadly right a story that has been often wrongly told, so as hardly to make sense. I have to thank the International Institute for permission to make use of the original article.

G. D. H. COLE

OXFORD,
October 1952

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I

INTRODUCTION

THE best-known episode in the early history of British Trade Unionism is the dramatic rise and fall of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union in 1833-1834. Robert Owen's sudden emergence as the leader of a mass movement reported to number a million adherents, the trial and transportation of the unfortunate Tolpuddle Martyrs for the crime of administering unlawful oaths, the presentation of the 'document' demanding renunciation of Trade Union membership by masters in many parts of the country, and the complete eclipse of the Grand National within a year of its first foundation, make a story which has been told many times with effect, and would not need telling over again if previous narrators had got the story quite right. But though this particular story is well known, and known correctly up to a point, there is a good deal that remains obscure in Trade Union history both during this critical year or so and, still more, during the previous years when the idea of an all-embracing 'General Union of Trades' was taking hold of one section after another of the British working class.

The purpose of this small book is to throw some light upon these dark places, and especially on the development of the idea and practice of 'General Union' in the North of England for some years before Robert Owen launched the 'Grand National Consolidated Trades Union' on its brief and stormy voyage.

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A part of this story has been told in Mr. and Mrs. Webb's *History of Trade Unionism*, and in Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's two books, *The Town Labourer* and *The Skilled Labourer*. But the story as they tell it is incomplete, and at certain points I have found it puzzling. I do not pretend that this essay clears up all the difficulties: indeed, the writing of it is in part a request that students of the subject who have easy access to local collections of material and files of local newspapers in Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and other northern towns will follow up a great deal farther some of the paths I have begun to explore.

Briefly, the story hitherto accepted runs like this. In 1829 John Doherty, the leader of the Manchester Cotton Spinners, having first organised the spinners into a General Union which attempted to cover all parts of the United Kingdom, set to work upon the more ambitious project of creating a 'General Union' of all trades. To this body, which was formally constituted at the end of June 1830, Doherty gave the name of 'The National Association for the Protection of Labour', or, sometimes, 'The National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Labour'. For the next year or so, recruitment went on briskly all over the Northern and Midland Counties; but by the end of 1831 the Association was breaking up in face of the discontent of groups which held that the central body was giving them inadequate support. Doherty, so the story runs, having quarrelled with the Lancashire Committee, 'tried to build up the Yorkshire branches of the Association into a national organisation with its headquarters in London'.¹ He did not succeed in this;

¹ Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 124.

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but, again according to the traditional version, the Yorkshire branches of the N.A.P.L. held together as the Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield District Union, and played their part, alongside Robert Owen's 'Grand National', but not as members of it, in the decisive struggle of 1833-34.

I am certain that in some important respects this story, which I have repeated myself more than once, is wrong. Doherty did not try to build up the Yorkshire branches of the N.A.P.L. into a national organisation centred upon London, for until after he had resigned all connection with the N.A.P.L., it had hardly any membership in Yorkshire. If the Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield District Union existed at all — about which I shall have something to say — it certainly cannot be regarded as a survival of the Yorkshire organisation of the N.A.P.L. The form of Trade Union organisation which existed in the Yorkshire towns during these years remains exceedingly obscure; but I think it can be made clear that the body or bodies commonly referred to by contemporaries as the 'Leeds Trades Union' or the 'Yorkshire Trades Union' came into being quite independently of Doherty's N.A.P.L., and worked along substantially different lines.

II

THE BEGINNINGS— THE PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY AND THE PHILANTHROPIC HERCULES

IT will be easiest to begin by retelling, with amplifications and corrections where they are required, the story of the movement in Lancashire that began under Doherty's leadership. John Doherty was born at Buncrana, Co. Donegal, either in 1799 (according to himself)¹ or in 1797 (according to his son, Austin Doherty).² He began work at Larne, and migrated to England in 1817³ or in 1814,² rising speedily to prominence among the Manchester Cotton Spinners, whose secretary he became. According to his own testimony, in a speech made at the famous Wibsey Low Moor meeting of 1833, he 'began the struggle in 1819';⁴ and it can be taken as certain that from then onwards he was continuously active in some form of Trade Union organisation, or in the struggle for factory reform. At some period in the eighteen-twenties — possibly in 1824 or 1826 — he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for his share in the 'general turn-out'. This is his own statement: he complains that his character has been violently and virulently

¹ Doherty's evidence before the Committee on Combinations, 1838.

² *Manchester Notes and Queries*, vol. 7, 1887-88, p. 228, from which much of the evidence for his life is taken.

³ Doherty's evidence before the Committee on Combinations, 1838.

⁴ *Leeds Intelligencer*, July 6, 1833.

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assailed', and that '146 are leagued against one individual'.¹ The only further light on this episode is thrown by Tufnell, the Factory Commissioner, who said in his 1834 report that Doherty was 'imprisoned for two years for a gross assault on a woman'.² What this probably means is that Doherty got into trouble over some picketing incident in the course of the strike. That he was at that time one of the principal leaders of the Spinners we know: there is preserved among the Place Papers a placard of 1826, signed by Doherty, Foster and Hodgkins, urging the cotton spinners to refrain from machine-breaking during the power-loom riots of that year.³

The Lancashire Cotton Spinners, the first new skilled trade created by the Industrial Revolution, had formed Trade Societies well before the end of the eighteenth century. The Manchester Spinners had a printed Book of Rules as early as 1795,⁴ and in 1792 an attempt was made to create a Federated Association of Cotton Spinners in Stockport and other towns in Lancashire and Cheshire under the rules applying to Friendly Societies.⁵ By 1810 the Spinners were strongly organised in Trade Clubs over a wide area. The well-known pamphlet on *The Character, Objects and Effects of Trades Unions*, written by Henry Tufnell and published in 1834, gives a long description of the widespread spinners' strike of 1810 — 'the most extensive and persevering strike that has ever taken place'. On that occasion, 'all the spinners in all the mills in the neigh-

¹ *Conciliator*, Nov. 22, 1828.

² Factory Commission, Parl. Papers, 1834, vol. 19, D. 2, p. 210.

³ Place Papers, vol. 16, p. 123. Also Home Office Papers, 44-16.

⁴ Webb, *History*, p. 81.

⁵ Hammond, *Skilled Labourer*, p. 83.

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bourhood of Manchester, including Stockport, Macclesfield, Stalybridge, Ashton, Hyde, Oldham, Bolton and as far north as Preston, simultaneously left their work, and had the strike continued a little longer, the whole of Scotland would have joined it'. The author paints a lurid picture of the strikers holding the streets, masters going in fear, blacklegs imprisoned in the factories. 'The government of this strike', he adds, 'was carried on by a congress at Manchester, which was formed of delegates sent from all the principal mills.' The chief leader was a man called James Shipley, who later saw the error of his ways, and gave evidence against the Ten Hours Bill. 'This man', says the pamphlet, 'is and has long been a respectable mechanic.'¹ The 'turn-outs' were supported during the strike by contributions from those who were still at work in other places. For a long period nearly £1500 was subscribed weekly, and 12s. a week was paid to the men on strike. But gradually the contributions fell off, and after four months the spinners were compelled to give way. Wages were heavily reduced — in some cases by 50 per cent — and the power of the Unions was broken for the time.²

¹ *Character, Objects and Effects of Trades Unions*, p. 13.

² This is fairly well borne out by G. H. Wood's *History of Wages in the Cotton Trade*. Wood gives the following estimate of cotton spinners' average weekly wages for 1810 and the next few years, distinguishing three grades of spinners:

	1810	1814-22
Grade 1 . . .	42s. 6d.	32s.
Grade 2 . . .	33s.	28s.
Grade 3 . . .	24s.	24s.

Wood also gives some figures of average earnings for Manchester only, showing an even more startling fall from 42s. in 1810 to 18s. in 1811, 30s. in 1812, 27s. in 1813 and 32s. from 1814 to 1822. He says that the

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This was before Doherty's day; but when he came to Manchester some years later, he found the Spinners' organisation ready to rebuild its forces for a new struggle during the troublous years after the Napoleonic wars. The 1810 strike had been conducted by a General Union of Spinners formed by linking up the various local societies; and its object had been to raise the wages in the smaller centres up to the Manchester level. This object, which the workers called the 'equalisation of wages' — that is, a levelling up to the rates paid by the best firms — runs through the whole history of Trade Unionism in the textile trades in the early nineteenth century. But the next struggle — that of 1818 — turned, not on 'equalisation', but on the attempt of the spinners to recover, with the return of prosperity, some part of the big wage reductions which they had suffered since 1810.

In 1818 weavers as well as spinners were involved. The movement began with a strike of the jenny spinners at Stockport. These workers had no regular Union, and went back to work on the basis of a compromise. Next came the turn-out of the Stockport power-loom weavers — the first case we know of among this new class of workers. The strike was met by bringing in blacklegs from Burton-on-Trent; and when this led to rioting, soldiers were called in, and the strike leaders arrested under the Combination Acts. The weavers' strike was broken; but in June there began in both Manchester and Stockport a further wave of strikes. The brickmakers and joiners came out first; then the dyers struck; and these three groups got what they figures for 1811, 1812 and 1813 were affected by short time (pp. 22 and 28).

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wanted without the law being invoked against them. Meanwhile the spinners had been getting ready; and they too turned out. At this point the hand-loom weavers were also busy organising their forces; and in July, while the spinners' strike was in progress, the weavers got together a delegate conference covering most of the Lancashire towns, and began to prepare for a general turn-out.

Meanwhile, under the leadership of the Spinners' Union, an attempt was being made to organise a 'General Union of Trades'. In accordance with the common practice of those times, the Spinners' Committee had been appealing to other trades and districts for financial help; and amid the general excitement of the time there was a ready response to the appeal for an inclusive body capable of acting on behalf of the working classes as a whole. The Weavers' Delegate Conference, just on the point of calling its members out, refused to have anything to do with the General Union, and on August 22 definitely rejected an invitation to join; but the delegates who were sent to London to enlist support met with a favourable reception from John Gast, the leader of the London Shipwrights, and at that time the most influential figure in the London Trade Union movement. Probably Gast was already at the head of some sort of Metropolitan Trades' Committee loosely linking together a number of the Trades Societies in the London area. The Spitalfields silk weavers applied for membership of the General Union; and Henry Swindells, one of the Lancashire delegates who had been sent to London, was appointed as Grand Secretary for the United Trades of England. Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, who give the best account of

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the movement, based mainly on the evidence given before the 1824 Select Committee on the Combination Laws, quote the letter sent out by James Fielding, Secretary of the Stalybridge Spinners, inviting the colliers to join the new inclusive Union.

‘The Spinners of Manchester have authorised me to solicit you to join in their new union of trades, as all trades in England are uniting in one body for Trade and Reform, and you are desired to send a delegate to all Meetings to consult matters over, and to inform you that you will be supported in your Trade in turn.’¹

This ‘Union of Trades’ was presumably the body known from other sources as the ‘Philanthropic Society’. Its resolutions, adopted at a ‘General Meeting of Trades’ held in Manchester, are preserved in the Home Office Papers, and are reproduced in an appendix to this volume.² The meeting, though made up mostly of delegates from the various branches of the cotton industry, included also Hatters, Bricklayers, Sawyers, Machine-makers, Colliers and Shoemakers. From the textile group there were Mule Spinners, Jenny Spinners, Weavers, Fustian Cutters, Calico Printers, Dyers and Dressers and Slubbers. The meeting resolved to set up a ‘Union of All Trades, to be called the Philanthropic Society’. There was to be a monthly delegate meeting, to which each trade was to send a delegate. Every trade was recommended to raise a fund of its own ‘for the general benefit of all the Trades joined in the Union’, and in particular of any trade ‘engaged in resisting oppression’ or suffering from special distress. Any trade wishing to demand a wage advance was to report its intention to the Delegate Meeting, and, if the

¹ Hammond, *Skilled Labourer*, p. 104.

² Appendix I, p. 161.

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delegates approved, was to receive general support. Similarly, any trade wishing to strike because of 'the oppression of their employers' was to report to a meeting of the 'general representatives'; but care was to be taken that the general representatives 'be not overpowered with too much business at one time', and accordingly 'no Trade shall leave their employ without first calling the other Trades together, and then act with their consent in taking the most favourable time for resistance'.

In addition, the Philanthropic Society was to support any body of workmen 'in obtaining legal redress' against oppression. There was to be a Committee of eleven persons 'chosen out of the different Trades', and the Committee was to 'go out by regular rotation every month, so that the whole may be changed every three months'. Political and religious arguments were to be wholly excluded from the proceedings, 'under a forfeit threepence for the first offence, and sixpence for the second, which must be paid the night it is forfeited'. Each town was to have an 'Auxiliary Society' of its own — *i.e.* a federation of the local trades; and each Auxiliary was 'to act in conjunction with the resolutions of the Central Philanthropic Society'.

This is clearly the constitution of a regional body, designed to cover a number of places not too far apart for monthly delegate meetings to be practicable. The *Gorgon*, the journal of the London Trades, with which both John Gast and Francis Place were closely connected, published in January 1819¹ an announcement that a similar body, which it called the 'Philanthropic

¹ *The Gorgon*, Jan. 23, 1819.

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'Hercules', had recently been set up in London — presumably in imitation of the Manchester Society. The announced object of the 'Hercules' was 'to provide a fund by weekly penny subscriptions; which fund is to preserve the workmen of every trade from degradation, by enabling them to resist the encroachments of avarice and oppression'. The organisation was to be broadly the same as at Manchester: 'Every Trade which joins the Union appoints a deputy to a general committee; these deputies are appointed for six months, and go out in rotation'. Any trade with more than 100 members was to be allowed to appoint an additional deputy for each 250 members. There was to be a sub-committee for each trade 'for the management of its particular concerns'. Each trade was to retain possession of its own fund, but was to make a regular return to the committee, 'who have the power to direct its application to any purpose they deem expedient'.

The Articles of the Philanthropic Hercules, preserved in the Place MSS., are also reproduced in the Appendices to this volume.¹ How close its connections were, either with the Manchester Society or with some ancestor of John Gast's Metropolitan Trades' Committee of 1831 (for even as early as 1818 there was probably some sort of informal joint committee of the London trades), is unknown. In any event, no more is heard of either the 'Society' or the 'Hercules'.

These first attempts at a General Union were stillborn. By August the Spinners' funds were running low, and, as the men's sufferings increased, there were

¹ Appendix 2, p. 164.

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serious riots arising out of attempts to stop blacklegs from working. On August 29 the Spinners' Committee of five members was arrested and charged with conspiracy. John Metcalf, the Treasurer, absconded with £150, and under the double blow the strike collapsed, and the General Spinners' Union with it. Thereupon the arrested leaders, having been persuaded to plead guilty, were let off lightly, being merely bound in recognisances of £100 to come up for judgment if they were called upon. The weavers, who had struck on August 31, fared worse; for their leaders, similarly charged with conspiracy, got sentences of one or in some cases two years. But, before they were sentenced, the strike had been broken by the removal of the leaders, and a similar fate befell the bleachers, who followed them with a turn-out in October of the same eventful year.

What part John Doherty took in these movements we do not know. But clearly, if he did not inspire, he was inspired by this first attempt to build working-class unity through a General Union of Trades. Its collapse did not destroy the Spinners' movement. Defeated in their attempt at industrial action, the Spinners in 1819 turned their energies to petitioning and organising in support of the Factory Bill introduced into Parliament by the elder Peel, and embodying, for the cotton factories only, a greatly modified version of Owen's scheme put forward some years before. Doherty said in his evidence before the Combinations Committee of 1838 that 'in the year or two following that [the strike of 1818], when the men contributed nothing to the funds of the Union, they contributed regularly for the purpose of procuring an Act of

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Parliament upon that question, which was secured in 1819'. He added that the Spinners' Controlling Committee met regularly for the purpose of securing the passage of the Factory Bill.¹

Soon afterwards, however, we find the Spinners back at their attempt to secure an 'equalisation of wages'. 'In the year 1824', says the pamphleteer already quoted, 'all the spinners in Hyde turned out much against their own wishes, but at the persuasion or dictation of the heads of the Union.'² The Hyde spinners were working at lower piece-rates than were paid in the neighbouring towns, the masters alleging that the superior machinery enabled them to earn as good wages despite the lower rates. The strike cost the Union several thousand pounds, and ended in failure. Two years later, in 1826, it was the turn of the hand-loom weavers, whose wages were being steadily reduced by the rapidly growing competition of the power loom. Mr. and Mrs. Hammond have described the widespread power-loom riots of that year, and the sequel in the transportation for life of ten of the leaders, and the gaoling of thirty-three others.³ Mr. and Mrs. Webb say that during this year a second attempt was made at Manchester to form a 'General Union of Trades'; but we have no detailed knowledge of it, and in any case it was abortive.⁴

¹ Doherty's evidence before the Select Committee on Combinations of Workmen, 1838.

² *Character, Objects and Effects of Trades Unions*, p. 18.

³ Hammond, *Skilled Labourer*, p. 128.

⁴ Webb, *History*, p. 115.

III

THE SPINNERS' UNION AND THE UNION OF TRADES

OF what was happening in the Spinners' Union between 1824 and 1828 we have little knowledge. We know that in the middle of 1828 Doherty, as secretary, issued an appeal¹ for unity to the members of a body called 'The Imperial Union', but what this body was I do not profess to know. We have it on Doherty's own authority that he started the first of his numerous newspapers, the *Conciliator*, in November 1828, on account of 'the unhappy difference which has existed in our body for the last eight or nine months';² but we are told nothing of the cause of the quarrel, except that Doherty had been criticised in the course of it on the score of his 'violent and unruly conduct at the general turn-out'.³ Whatever it was, it was settled amicably, for a week or two later Doherty was able to say of his paper that 'as the disputes which gave rise to the *Conciliator* are likely to be brought to an amicable termination we intend to turn it to other and more useful subjects'.⁴ Clearly the settlement of the dispute put Doherty back at the head of the united spinners, and prepared the way for the big developments of the following year.

Not content with his work in building up the Union,

¹ This address, dated Aug. 2, 1828, is reprinted in the *Conciliator* of Dec. 6, 1828.

² *Conciliator*, Nov. 22, 1828.

³ *Ibid.* Nov. 29, 1828.

⁴ *Ibid.* Dec. 13, 1828.

SPINNERS' UNION AND UNION OF TRADES

Doherty was also active in 1828 in a body called 'The Society for the Protection of the Children employed in Cotton Factories'¹ — the forerunner of the Lancashire Short Time Committee of a few years later. He was secretary of this earlier society, and remained in that position in 1830, even when he was absorbed in the wider affairs of the Spinners' Union and the N.A.P.L.² Probably he stayed in office until the society was transformed into the Short Time Committee.

No sooner had the Spinners settled their differences than they embarked upon an extensive strike movement. In January 1829 the spinners of Stockport, and also the power-loom weavers, came out on strike, mainly on account of an attempt to reduce their piece-work rates, the masters having introduced improved machinery which made possible a larger output. This stoppage, which lasted until June, when hunger drove the men back to work, threw idle 22 mills and about 10,000 workers.³ Meanwhile, in May, 1000 fine mule spinners in Manchester had struck against a proposal to reduce their wages. This cut, according to a manifesto issued by the masters, was 'rendered necessary by the current rates in the neighbouring districts being 15 to 40 per cent lower than in Manchester'.⁴ This strike closed nine mills, and the men were supported mainly by contributions from the coarse spinners, who remained at work. In July, however, the masters spinning the coarser counts joined forces with their fellow employers, and threatened to reduce their workers' wages unless they would pledge themselves to withdraw all support from

¹ *Ibid.* Nov. 29, 1828 and Dec. 13, 1828.

² See cutting in Place MSS. 16, vol. 2, f. 36.

³ *Poor Man's Guardian*, Dec. 14, 1833, quoting Brougham.

⁴ Doherty's 1838 evidence.

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the fine spinners who were on strike — any man giving such support to forfeit a fortnight's wages. This attempt to break the Union led to the coarse spinners joining the strike, and both groups thus found themselves without financial resources. The leaders of the Union appealed first to the magistrates (in August) and then to the churchwardens (in September) to arbitrate upon the dispute, but the masters refused to compromise, and in October the strike collapsed.¹

It was out of this series of disastrous strikes that the third attempt to form a 'General Trades Union' arose. Again the movement began with the Spinners, who, under Doherty's leadership, held a district delegate meeting in Manchester on September 22, 1829, and formed a 'Grand General Union of Spinners', from which went forth soon afterwards two 'Addresses to the Operative Spinners of England', inviting their adherence to the new body.² Thus the formation, at any rate on paper, of an All-England Spinners' Union preceded by some months the famous Isle of Man Conference at which Doherty launched his larger Union.

In October, when the strike was on the point of collapse, we find Doherty actually attempting to launch a 'General Union of Trades' in the hope of retrieving the situation. That the idea had been for some time in his mind is shown by a letter which he had written early in May 1829 to the Liverpool Sailmakers, expressing the hope that a 'Grand General Union of All Trades' would speedily be brought into existence.³ Through June and August he had been busily issuing

¹ Doherty's 1838 evidence; Hammond, *Skilled Labourer*, p. 129.

² Place MSS. 16, vol. 2, f. 96 and Home Office Papers, 40-27.

³ Webb, *History*, p. 120.

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addresses on behalf of the Spinners to other trades and to the general public;¹ and in September, as we have seen, he had persuaded the Spinners to consolidate their forces into a single Union. In the following month, it appears, he actually launched some sort of 'General Trades Union', at any rate in a provisional form. In his *Letter to the Members of the National Association*, written in 1831, after his severance from that body, he speaks of 'the time I have been connected with the Association, from its humble origin in October 1829'.² In his *Address to the Public*, written at the moment of the collapse of the Spinners' strike (Oct. 3, 1829), he writes, 'Had a union of all Trades been formed six months ago, it might have saved the spinners from the reduction'.³

Even if some sort of 'General Union' was formed in October 1829, as seems likely, its further development had to wait upon the issue of Doherty's other project of the moment — an enlargement of his English Spinners' Union to embrace Scotland and Ireland as well. The story of the Isle of Man Spinners' Conference of December 1829 has been often retold from the published report of the proceedings. At this conference Preston moved, and Manchester seconded, 'That one grand general union of all the operative spinners in the United Kingdom be now formed, for the mutual support and protection of all'. Upon this resolution there arose a difference, Thomas Foster urging that there should be three separate committees for England, Scotland and Ireland, whereas Doherty wanted a single governing committee, and urged that 'they had come there for the purpose of forming one union and not three'. At the end of a long

¹ Place MSS. 16, vol. 2, ff. 66-9.

² Doherty, *Letter*, p. 11.

³ Place MSS. 16, vol. 2, f. 96.

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and confusing discussion, Doherty got his way by a majority of four, and the Grand General Union of the Operative Spinners of Great Britain and Ireland was founded as a unitary body, subject to a single governing committee with its seat in Manchester.¹

Foster, who thus appeared as the opponent of Doherty's plan for a single centralised Union, seems to have been his principal rival in the leadership of the Spinners' movement, though from the tone of the discussion they were clearly on terms of mutual respect. I know of no evidence that supports the statement in *The Character, Objects and Effects* that Foster 'appears to have been an interloper, attending the meeting at his own expense',² or the Webbs' statement that he was 'a man of independent means',³ if these expressions mean that he was not a spinner. At all events he was active in the affairs of the Spinners' Union, and actually succeeded Doherty as secretary when he resigned in order to concentrate on the building up of the N.A.P.L.

From the Ramsey, Isle of Man, Conference Doherty went back to Manchester with every intention of making his Grand General Union of Spinners the nucleus of a much wider movement. In February 1830 he got together some sort of representative Trade Union Conference at which it was decided to start recruiting for the General Union of Trades, and to begin formal operations as soon as twenty trades had enrolled. Each trade joining the new body was to pay an entrance fee of £1, and in addition there was to be a subsequent

¹ The resolutions of the Spinners' Isle of Man Conference are reproduced from the Home Office Papers (40-27, 1829) in *British Working Class Movements: Select Documents*, pp. 247 ff.

² *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 3.

³ Webb, *History*, p. 118.

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payment of 1s. per member to form a fighting fund. The regular subscription thereafter was to be 1d. per week, in return for which strike pay was to be given at the rate of 8s. per week. This payment, however, was to be made only in case of strikes declared in resistance to wage reductions, and the new Association was to take action only where trades were threatened with reductions, each affiliated society being left to finance other disputes out of its own funds or through special appeals for help. Affiliated bodies were to become eligible for benefit only after three months' contributions had been paid.¹

During the next few months the recruiting campaign was actively pursued. On March 6, 1830, Doherty started the *United Trades' Cooperative Journal* as the organ of the new movement; and on March 20 this paper reported a meeting held at Chorley for the purpose of considering 'the propriety of establishing a Union of Trades in Chorley, to cooperate with the General Trades' Union already established in Manchester, Bolton, etc.'² In April Doherty issued a circular stating that 'A General Union of Trades has been formed in several towns in Lancashire'. Just before that, in replying to the critics who were asking why the new body was doing nothing ('What are you about? You have been united so many months and let us see what you have done'), Doherty wrote that 'a resolution was passed at the formation of the Union of Trades that no subscription shall be paid, until twenty trades

¹ These particulars are from the rules formally adopted in June 1830; but I have assumed that these principles were accepted at the February meeting. It is at all events clear that from the outset the association was meant to be used only in resisting attempts to reduce wages.

² *United Trades' Cooperative Journal*, Mar. 20, 1830.

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had joined the society, and paid their entrance fee'.¹ Possibly this resolution was the result of memories of the earlier abortive attempts to create a General Union.

It seems clear that at this stage the new body was practically confined to Lancashire, and that it took the form of local Unions of Trades in particular towns, linked up with a central body in Manchester. In April we find Doherty announcing a change of name. The new body, hitherto called the 'Union of Trades', would, he wrote, 'be much more fitly and adequately designated "the National Association for the Protection of Labour"'.² The following week he acknowledged an entrance fee in the new name. A month later he announced that a Conference would be held at Whitsuntide to approve the proposed laws of the N.A.P.L.,³ and early in June he was writing that 'the Association is succeeding beyond our most sanguine expectations'.⁴

By this time the required twenty trades had given their adhesion. The supporters were mainly cotton operatives; but the Coal Miners and the Engineers of Bolton had joined;⁵ and the Association had spread into Derbyshire to the extent of enrolling there a society of (presumably textile) printers.⁶

On June 28, 1830, the proposed conference was duly held at Manchester, and the rules of the National Association for the Protection of Labour were formally approved.⁷ The opening resolution provided 'That

¹ *United Trades' Cooperative Journal*, Mar. 27, 1830.

² *Ibid.* Apr. 10, 1830.

³ *Ibid.* May 15, 1830.

⁴ *Ibid.* June 12, 1830.

⁵ *Ibid.* June 5, 1830.

⁶ *Ibid.* Apr. 24, 1830.

⁷ They are printed in full in Appendix 3 of a pamphlet, *On Combinations of Trades*, published by J. Ridgway in 1831, as well as in the *United Trades' Cooperative Journal*, Aug. 10, 1830.

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a Society shall be formed consisting of the various organised Trades throughout the kingdom' — *i.e.* the N.A.P.L. was to be a federation of existing societies. Its supreme government was to be in the hands of a General Committee, consisting of one delegate for every thousand members, and meeting every six months. A Provisional Council, consisting of seven persons, returned from as many districts, was to meet once a month in Manchester; and one of these seven was to retire each month, and to be replaced by a member drawn from a different district. In other words, the local societies were to group themselves on a regional basis for the purpose of representation, and each region was to take its turn to be represented on the Provisional Council.

The subscription was to be 1d. per week per affiliated member, after payment of an entrance fee of £1 per society and 1s. per member for the central fund. Contributions from the districts were to be regularly transmitted to Manchester, and banked in sums of £25. The cheques were to be 'held half at the Centre, half by a District, till each District is supplied'.¹ The funds, as we have seen, were to be applied only to preventing wage reductions, and the strike benefit of 8s. per week was to become payable only after three months' contributions had been received. Doherty was appointed as salaried secretary of the Association.

¹ This method, of dividing cheques or bank notes into halves, each half to be held by a different person, was common at a time when Trade Unions had no legal protection for their funds, and it was easy for dishonest treasurers to abscond with them. The same reason lay behind the frequent practice (see p. 33) of keeping funds divided among the branches, rather than accumulating them at a single centre, even when they were at the disposition of the central body.

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During the next few months the new body rapidly extended its influence. In July a speaker from Rochdale was founding a branch among the textile workers of Newtown, Montgomery — Robert Owen's birth-place.¹ Nottingham and Derby were enrolled in August,² and Lancaster in September;³ and a meeting was held at Birmingham,⁴ where it probably founded the United Trades Association which was still active there in 1832.⁵ Sheffield had been represented by a delegate at the June conference; and in November 1830 we find General Sir Henry Bouverie writing to tell the Home Secretary that many of the smaller Unions in Yorkshire from such places as Bradford and Huddersfield have joined the National Association.⁶ It is, however, clear that at this stage the N.A.P.L. had very little strength in Yorkshire: at any rate it received very few subscriptions from that source. The Yorkshire position will be fully discussed later on. In effect, by the end of 1830 the N.A.P.L. had spread from Lancashire mainly into the textile areas of the Midlands, and also into the Staffordshire Potteries.

Except in this last case, the N.A.P.L. was enrolling existing societies. But in the Potteries, on October 18, the N.A.P.L. missionaries appeared at a meeting of potters called to protest against the prevalence of truck, and endeavoured to persuade them to form a regular Union and link up with the general body. This led to a further meeting on November 15, addressed by Doherty, Foster and Hodgkins — the three chief

¹ *United Trades' Cooperative Journal*, July 24, 1930.

² *Ibid.* Aug. 14, 1830.

³ *Ibid.* Sept. 18, 1830.

⁴ *Ibid.* Aug. 28, 1830.

⁵ *Poor Man's Guardian*, Oct. 20, 1832.

⁶ Letter dated Nov. 6, 1830. Home Office Papers, 40-26.

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leaders of the spinners as well as of the N.A.P.L. — for the purpose of forming a Union, which took the name of the China and Earthenware Turners' Society, but does not appear to have formally joined the N.A.P.L. till February or March 1831. A few months later, in August 1831, this Society was transformed into the larger and better-known National Union of Operative Potters, which set out to enrol all sections of the industry, and played a leading part in the Trade Union struggles of the next few years.¹ It is interesting, in the light of what will be said later on the question of Trade Union secrecy, to find the Potters, in the early months of 1831, speaking of their 'secret order'.²

During this period Doherty was again faced with critics who thought that the N.A.P.L. ought at once to embark on a general forward movement. In July we find him writing that 'if they attempted to try their strength too soon they would be defeated, and all hopes of establishing a general union would be lost for ever'.³ In August, however, he was promising that 'they would support every trade to contend for the prices which they had when they entered the Association'.⁴

Possibly the reason for this reassurance was that the cotton spinners, who had been quiet all through the first half of 1830, were again becoming active. At any rate, in October the Manchester and District Spinners' Union embarked on a series of strikes for the restoration of the rates of wages received before the reductions of 1829. The Union's method was to strike one or two

¹ Warburton, *Trade Unionism in the Staffordshire Potteries*, p. 53.

² *Ibid.* p. 61.

³ *United Trades' Cooperative Journal*, July 17, 1830.

⁴ *Ibid.* Aug. 21, 1830.

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mills at a time, supporting the strikers by levies on the men still at work. Already in May, the Boroughreeve and Constables of Manchester had been writing to Sir Robert Peel in alarm at the rapid recovery of the spinners after their defeat of 1829;¹ and on November 17 we find a Manchester manufacturer following this up with a further letter in which he says, 'Since our former letter to you [which I have not found], the operatives of no other factories in this place have turned out, the system of the Union being to attack a few Factories at a time, and when the masters of them have given way to their demands to attack others in a similar way'.² From this and from other evidence it is plain that at the outset the spinners' selective policy was meeting with success.³

But in December the masters hit back. Fifty-two firms in Ashton-under-Lyne, Stalybridge and Dukinfield decided to enforce a general reduction of wages by way of answer to the men's demands. The movement is misleadingly described in a contemporary pamphlet. 'The operatives turned out from fifty-two mills at once, and it was no fault of their committee that they did only throughout South Lancashire cease to work in all factories spinning the common number (40s) of twist, on December 27, 1830. The endeavour was to raise wages, and not to prevent a reduction, and consequently the master giving the increased price worked at a disadvantage, as compared with other districts. The millowners, for a few weeks, were, for the first time, and owing to the unreasonableness of

¹ Webb, *History*, p. 118.

² Home Office Papers, 40-27.

³ On this point, and for the subsequent dispute, see Hammond, *Skilled Labourer*, p. 132.

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their opponents, true to each other. A bond, with a £500 penalty, was however obtained from each member, in order to ensure fidelity. The losses sustained upon this occasion were very serious, and were especially heavy upon those who, uniting weaving with spinning, had to obtain yarn from great distances, and at enhanced prices.¹

In truth, as we have seen, the spinners were trying to regain the wage rates lost the previous year, whereas the masters were trying to withdraw the concessions they had been compelled to make on account of the strikes at separate mills.

While the Ashton dispute was still new, the Grand General Union of Spinners held its second delegate conference in Manchester. The Manchester Spinners urged that the masters' counter-attack should be met by the declaration of a general strike by all the spinners of the United Kingdom who were getting less than 4s. 2d. per thousand hanks of the common 40s, or in proportion for other counts — the strikers to be supported by those getting at least this wage. Actually the rates paid at various mills in Lancashire ranged from 3s. 4d. to 5s. per thousand.²

But the Irish and Scots Spinners' delegates refused to support the movement, and it was accordingly left to the Lancashire spinners to issue a general strike call only to the English branches. All spinners in England, getting less than the prescribed wages, were called upon to turn out on December 22. Even this more limited call was not fully obeyed. Preston and Lancaster in the North, and Stockport and Bolton nearer the scene of conflict, refused to come out.

¹ *On Combinations of Trades*, p. 22.

² *Ibid.*

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In Ashton and the neighbouring towns there were serious disorders. Thomas Ashton of Hyde, son of one of the leading millowners, was murdered on January 3, 1831. 'On this occasion, such was the spirit of riot and insubordination displayed, that it was found necessary to send 1000 additional troops to that part of the country to preserve order.'¹ The murderers were not disclosed until some years later, when their trial gave rise to a *cause célèbre*.²

Unsupported by other areas, and running short of funds, the spinners were gradually forced back to work, and by March 1831 the strike had collapsed. The N.A.P.L. was due to hold its second delegate conference at Manchester in December, while the strike was at its height; but I can find no trace of this meeting, or of the Association having intervened on the Spinners' behalf. Probably, as the strike was not technically against a wage reduction, the help of the 'Trades Union' was not invoked; and from the fact that the N.A.P.L. held a conference at Nottingham in March 1831, it seems possible that the meeting planned for December had to be postponed. In any case Doherty would have had his work cut out if he had at the same time had to conduct the strike, and to be responsible for delegate meetings of both the Grand General Union of Spinners and the N.A.P.L.

The abortive appeal for a general spinners' strike led, at the December conference, to substantial changes in the constitution of the Grand General Union — amounting in effect to its disappearance as a more than

¹ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 20.

² For the trial see *Annual Register*, 1834, pp. 290 ff. There is an account of the affair in Hammond, *Skilled Labourer*, pp. 134-5.

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English body. It was resolved 'That each nation shall manage its own affairs, always subject to the decisions of a general meeting of delegates from each district, who choose to send representatives to such meeting'. Thus Foster got his way against Doherty, the conference accepting his proposal of the previous year for three separate national committees in England, Scotland and Ireland. Moreover, the conference appointed Foster to succeed Doherty as Secretary of the Union.¹

It is true the conference also adopted resolutions laying down that the power of the Union should be used not only in preventing wage reductions, but also 'in procuring advances in those prices that are below average rate'¹ — thus supporting the policy on which the Lancashire Spinners had embarked in October. But it also resolved that 'turn-outs should be limited to the number the Association can support, and those with lowest wages to have the right to strike first for advances'¹ — thus rejecting the policy of a general strike. The meeting also passed a resolution which was clearly intended to weaken the masters' opposition by showing a conciliatory front. 'That it is not the intention of the Association, either directly or indirectly, to interfere with or in any way injure the rights and property of employers, or to assume or exercise any control or authority over the management of any mill or mills . . . but to uphold the just rights and reasonable authority of every master.'² This language suggests that perhaps the Spinners wished to dissociate themselves from some of Doherty's other ideas beside that of centralisation; for Doherty was an ardent Owenite who

¹ *On Combinations of Trades*, p. 37.

² *Ibid.* pp. 37 ff.

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believed that the distinction between master and man was destined to be swept away by the advent of the Cooperative Commonwealth.

The Spinners' Grand General Union, under its revised constitution, was to be administered by a Council of three members drawn from Manchester — one member to retire each month, and no councillor to hold office in his local society during his period of service. The centre was to receive a contribution of 1d. per week for every member, and was to pay 10s. a week to men on strike against reductions. In other disputes each district was to support its own members, at least to the extent of a levy of 1s. per week on those at work, with the right to ask other districts for help if more than this were needed. Members were to be fined for taking jobs 'under rate', and the society was to enforce restrictions on spinning being done by piecers, and on teaching anybody except a relative of a spinner or master to spin.¹

This conference of December 1830 was virtually the end of the Grand General Union. Doherty, in his 1838 evidence, said that the Lancashire spinners were in combination with those of Belfast 'up to 1831'. Foster, the new Secretary, died in 1831; and the third member of the group which had been leading the movement, Patrick McGowan, returned to Glasgow and resumed his connection with the movement there. The *Poor Man's Advocate*, in 1832, paid tribute to McGowan's influence on the Union, and attributed its decline largely to his removal from the leadership.² The Lancashire movement, too, languished after the

¹ *On Combinations of Trades*, Appendix 2.

² *Poor Man's Advocate*, June 23, 1832.

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defeat of 1831. Doherty said, in the same article, that the Spinners' Union had 'sunk into almost complete insignificance'.¹ It remained inactive, except in connection with the Short Time Movement, until the Preston Spinners' Conference of 1835.²

¹ *Ibid.* June 23, 1832.

² *New Moral World*, Oct. 3, 1835.

IV

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF LABOUR

DOHERTY, released from his office in the Spinners' Union, was free to devote his whole energy to the task of building up the National Association for the Protection of Labour. On January 1, 1831, the *United Trades' Cooperative Journal* was replaced by the *Voice of the People* as the official organ of the N.A.P.L. In February the Association suffered a serious blow when Hynes, the newly appointed secretary, absconded with £100.¹ Up to about this time money had been coming in to the centre in substantial amounts, a total of more than £1800 having been received during the seven months from August 1830 to the beginning of March 1831. But of this total nearly £1500 had come from Lancashire and Cheshire, and nearly all the rest from the Midland textile districts — Nottingham being by far the largest contributor outside the cotton area. Yorkshire had contributed practically nothing — only two very small payments from Shipley and Knaresborough having been made. Sheffield had paid nothing, although it had been represented at the June conference. The Potters had paid only a £1 entrance fee.²

From the list of subscriptions, given in full in the pamphlet *On Combinations of Trades*, it is possible to get

¹ Webb, *History*, p. 122.

² *On Combinations of Trades*, Appendix. And see Appendix 4 to this book, p. 176.

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some idea of the organisation of the N.A.P.L. at this stage. In Manchester, the centre of the Association, there were twenty separate Trade Societies paying directly to its funds; and a number of neighbouring places also paid directly to the centre. Up to March 5, 1830, the Manchester Societies had paid £187 10s. From Ashton-under-Lyne twelve societies had paid £127 9s.; from Oldham four societies had paid £38 13s.; from Lees, also in Lancashire, two had paid £26 12s.; and smaller payments had been made by societies in Hyde, Middleton, Morley, Irwell, Radcliffe and Stockport. Some societies in places rather more distant also paid directly to Manchester, either because there were only one or two Unions affiliated from the same place, or because, even if there were more, there was no district organisation or 'Union of Trades'. Thus, nine Clitheroe Societies sent a total of £32 11s. in small sums.

In general, however, the N.A.P.L. was based on the affiliation of 'Districts' — presumably the local 'Unions of Trades' which its missionaries had begun founding the previous year. There were in March 1831 nine districts in Lancashire, not counting Manchester. These were, in the order of magnitude of their subscriptions, Rochdale (£180), Blackburn (£164), Bury (£100), Bolton (£67), Chorley (£54), Horwich (£24), Preston (£11), Stalybridge (£4) and Edenfield (£3). In some cases the smallness of the sum was doubtless due to the affiliation being recent, or to local funds having been absorbed by local disputes.

Outside Lancashire, Nottingham, with sixteen affiliated societies, was still in March the only organised 'District'. It had paid £178. The other societies in

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the Midlands were still paying directly. Thus, from Derby thirteen societies sent £57, from Leicester twelve sent £65, from Mansfield four sent £20, and from Belper four sent rather over £2. Loughborough, Basford, Kirby-in-Ashfield, Arnold, Babwith and Sutton-in-Ashfield were other contributing areas.

The trades represented were predominantly, but not exclusively, textile. The list includes fourteen Spinners' Societies in Lancashire and Cheshire, and twelve Societies of Weavers, including silk, linen, flannel and woollen as well as cotton weavers. Four of the latter are explicitly described as 'Power-Loom Weavers', and there is also a Society of Power-Loom Overlookers from Stalybridge and Dukinfield. Dressers, Sizers, Stretchers, Block Print Cutters, Engravers, Calico Printers, Dyers, Card Grinders and Strippers are among the other textile trades represented in the Lancashire area. Of other trades we find Mechanics, Moulders, Smiths, Farriers, Sawyers, Paper Makers, Tobacco Pipe Makers, Shoemakers, Basket Makers, Joiners (in one case only), a number of Societies of Hat Makers, and one Society of Tailors. Quarrying is represented by one Union at Bollington in Cheshire, and there is a Society of Day Labourers—actually coal-miners—from Blackrod, near Bolton. There are no other miners, and no builders, except the solitary Joiners' Society at Clitheroe.

In the Midland districts most branches of the hosiery and lace trades seem to be well represented, and there is a similar sprinkling of societies from non-textile trades—Iron Moulders, Smiths, Frame-Smiths, Needle Makers, Fender Makers, Paper Makers, Cabinet Makers, Tailors, and one Society of Plasterers from Nottingham. Finally, from Burslem we have the

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China and Earthenware Turners — forerunner of the Potters' Union.

Thus, in March 1830 the N.A.P.L. in effect represented most of the Lancashire textile towns, and a large section of the hosiery and miscellaneous textile trades of the Midlands. It had practically no foothold in the Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries, and none at all in the textile areas in the South of England. Sheffield had dropped away, and the organisation set up at Birmingham had not joined. Nor had any link been established with the miners, except in one small district in Lancashire, or with London or the North-East.

This was the situation when the delegate conference met at Nottingham on March 14, 1831; and in face of the default made by the absconding secretary, the Conference decided to alter the financial basis of the movement. 'Small sums of money', says the *Voice of the People* in reporting the proceedings, 'will no longer be forwarded to Manchester for the purpose of the Association, but each will hereafter have the privilege of keeping its own money, placing it in a convenient bank, in sums of £25, and one half of the cheques to be transmitted to Manchester.'¹ But it is plain that this arrangement did not work smoothly, for in May, at a meeting of the Manchester Committee, we find the new secretary, Cheetham, answering a complaint that no proper monthly return had been made, and Doherty intervening to promise that a new and up-to-date account should be drawn up.² Incidentally, Doherty blamed the muddle on Hynes's disappearance.

The Nottingham meeting of March further resolved 'that a voluntary subscription should be made through-

¹ *Voice of the People*, Mar. 26, 1831.

² *Ibid.* May 14, 1831.

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out all the districts connected with the National Association, for the purpose of relieving those men who are now suffering in consequence of turn-outs for the protection of wages¹ — presumably a last desperate attempt to save the Ashton strikers from collapse.

During the next few months it is plain that Doherty was making a great effort to widen the basis of the N.A.P.L. As we have seen, General Sir Henry Bouverie reported in November 1830 that many of the smaller Yorkshire Unions were joining it, but its accounts show that, even if this was the case, they paid practically nothing to its funds. However, in April 1831 we find the new secretary, Cheetham, reading to the Committee 'a letter from Leeds, expressive of the rapidity with which the Association was spreading in that quarter; that upwards of 9000 were already enrolled, and that their numbers would in probability ultimately amount to 20,000'.² But, when a delegate meeting was held in June, the only Yorkshire place to send a representative was Knaresborough — the Linen Weavers of that place having been affiliated from an early stage. The delegates at this meeting came mainly from Lancashire towns — Accrington, Ashton, Blackburn, Bolton, Bury, Chorley, Clitheroe, Oldham, Preston and Rochdale. The Macclesfield Silk Weavers were also represented; and so were Derby, Mansfield, Nottingham and Sutton-in-Ashfield. The only fresh recruit from the Midlands was Birmingham³ — and there is no sign that the Birmingham area ever paid a penny to the funds of the Association. The N.A.P.L. missionaries were clearly more successful in persuading the Societies

¹ *Voice of the People*, Mar. 26, 1831.

² *Ibid.* Apr. 23, 1831.

³ *Ibid.* June 25, 1831.

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in certain areas to set up their own 'Unions of Trades' than in getting them to affiliate to the Manchester body.

There were, however, some successes. The Potters, as we have seen, joined in February or March 1831; and at the end of April a delegate meeting of colliers held at Bolton, and representing 9000 men in Staffordshire, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire and Wales, voted in favour of joining the Association.¹ The North Staffordshire Miners actually joined in May,² but there is no sign of any subscription either from them or from the other areas. The Blackrod Coalmen did pay £2 7s. in June,³ but they may be the same as the Blackrod Day Labourers who had joined up before March. Between March and September the Association received about £400 from Societies or Districts not listed in the earlier accounts, and about £200 from those which had contributed already; but some of this £400 was not really from new affiliations, but from Districts formed where previously the Societies had made separate contributions. The Bradford Woolcombers and the Dewsbury Blanket Weavers each paid £1 entrance fee; and Bradford also sent £2 as a contribution to the special fund in aid of the *Voice of the People*; but Yorkshire contributed no more than this. New Districts were formed in Lancashire at Accrington, Clitheroe, Haslingden and Rossendale — only Accrington, which paid £25, being a new area; for in the other places the Societies had previously paid separately. Leicester, which paid £50, and Loughborough, which paid £13 10s., were the remaining new Districts; and contributions had been received previously from

¹ Webb, *History*, p. 123.

² Warburton, *Potteries*, p. 61.

³ *Voice of the People*, June 18, 1831.

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both these areas. A Society of Printers (presumably of calico) from Carlisle represented the only other breaking of really fresh ground.¹

Thus Doherty's active touring of the country in search of new recruits was not proving very productive. In August we find him saying that 'Leeds had been visited — so had Sheffield and many other places; yet they had not been enrolled'. He went on to say, 'We are at present confined in our exertion to a few towns in Nottinghamshire, Lancashire and Derbyshire. In all Yorkshire we have not one Committee [*i.e.* District] and are but partially organised in four out of the forty counties of England.'² In view of the mention of 'four counties', it seems likely that the reporter omitted either Cheshire or Leicestershire from his account of what Doherty said. It will be observed that he did not include the Potteries or Birmingham among the areas effectively covered; but the Potters' Union was not fully established until August.³

In September 1831 the N.A.P.L. held an important delegate meeting at Derby. It seems that Doherty had by this time become convinced that he could not succeed from Manchester in building up an effective national movement, and was eager to shift the scene of operations to London, in which the Association had so far no foothold at all.⁴ He managed to persuade the delegates

¹ These particulars are gleaned from the file of the *Voice of the People*. They are only approximate, as there were four issues missing from the file consulted.

² *Voice of the People*, Aug. 27, 1831.

³ Warburton, *Potteries*, p. 56.

⁴ The London Trades had, however, established in March 1831 a federal Metropolitan Trades' Union, which was appealing to the London workers to make a common effort to secure both parliamentary reform and a reduction in the hours of labour. 'Let us henceforth adopt and

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to transfer to London the printing and publishing of the *Voice of the People*, on the ground that only there could he hope to build up a satisfactory circulation or revenue from advertisements. He was also instructed to attempt to establish contacts with the workers in London, in order to establish there an effective District of the N.A.P.L.¹

When Doherty returned to Manchester and reported these decisions to the Manchester Committee, which was still the Executive of the Association, the trouble began. He describes it as follows: 'I was on the best of terms with the Manchester Committee until the Derby Delegate Meeting decided to transfer the *Voice* to London. It then became the duty of the Manchester Committee to make arrangements for the transfer. Instead, at their next meeting, on September 20, they requested the officers to withdraw and went into secret session. Then, on September 22, they issued a circular criticising the proposal to transfer the *Voice*, as it would cost £100 to do so, and suggested that it would be better to run a monthly magazine as this would not lose money. I wrote to the Derby and Nottingham Districts about this, and they sent in protests to the Committee. And, when some of the Manchester Committee met on practise a new principle: instead of every man living for himself exclusively, let us, in future, be ALL for EACH, and EACH for ALL. . . . It is therefore proposed that a Metropolitan Trades' Union be formed. Its first object, to obtain for all its members the right of electing those who make the laws which govern them, unshackled and uninfluenced by any property qualification whatsoever. Its second object, to afford support and protection, individually and collectively, to every member of the Metropolitan Trades' Union, to enhance the value of labour by diminishing the hours of employment; and to adopt such measures as may be deemed necessary to increase the domestic comforts of working men.' *Penny Papers for the People*, Mar. 26, 1831.

¹ *Voice of the People*, Sept. 17, 1832 and Sept. 24, 1831.

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October 1, 1831, only a few answers to the circular had come in. These endorsed the removal of the *Voice* . . . so the Committee eventually decided to send me to London.’¹

Accordingly, Doherty set out for London, visiting Yorkshire on the way. He spoke at a public meeting at Bradford, and also visited Halifax, Leeds, Huddersfield, Dewsbury and Barnsley, in the hope of collecting sums owing from these places — presumably for copies of the *Voice of the People*. But the results disappointed him. He ‘did not get, in all, to the amount of £20’.¹

Doherty ‘arrived in London on October 7, 1831’, and on the following day the Reform Bill was rejected by the Lords, ‘so I spent three days in a study of the feelings of the people, as I thought that, as the prospective editor of a London newspaper, this was essential. I also spent time in seeing Bowring, Place, Cobbett, Carpenter, etc. . . . and spent a lot of time on business calls on printers, etc. And I tried to get a committee formed in London (to support the National Association and the *Voice*) but this fell through, as I had to go North, after fifteen days in London.’¹

Just before Doherty’s visit, the National Association had issued an ‘Address to the Workmen of London’, which he doubtless wrote.² This duly appeared in the *Voice of the People*, but on Doherty’s leaving for London publication of the *Voice* was suspended, with the announcement that it would reappear shortly as a London journal. This it never did. The *Voice* came to an abrupt end on September 24, 1831.

The Webbs say in their *History* that the *Voice of the People* reached a circulation of 30,000.³ But this state-

¹ Doherty, *Letter to the Members of the National Association*.

² *Voice of the People*, Sept. 10, 1831.

³ Webb, *History*, p. 123.

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ment seems to rest on a misunderstanding. In April 1831 there appeared a paragraph headed 'Unprecedented Advantage to Advertisers', giving the circulation at that time as 3359, which is described as 'unprecedented'. The paragraph went on to say that 'of this circulation upwards of 1000 weekly are at inns, public-houses and reading-rooms. At a moderate estimate it may be safely calculated that five persons *per diem* visit these houses, by which this 1000 will be seen by at least 35,000 persons. Of the other 2359 more than two persons will read each paper. . . . Thus it will appear that 39,718 see the *Voice of the People* weekly.'¹ Of course, the circulation may have risen after April, but it seems most unlikely that it rose to anything like 30,000. One of the reasons given by Doherty for the removal to London was that a provincial paper could not get a big enough circulation to pay its way. In September Doherty was saying that 'a paper established for such a purpose as that which called this into existence, instead of being confined to two or three thousand a week, should be at least 50,000'.² He had large ideas, but the circulation seems in fact to have fallen rather than increased between April and September.

From references in the *Voice of the People* it appears that Doherty's hopes in London were fixed mainly on the body called 'The National Union of the Working Classes and Others', which had been formally constituted at 'a public meeting of delegates, held at the Bazaar Coffee House, Castle St., Oxford St., on May 21st, 1831', where 'a series of resolutions, embodying "A Declaration of Rights"', as well as "The Objects and

¹ *Voice of the People*, Apr. 2, 1831.

² *Ibid.* Sept. 24, 1831.

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Laws" of the Union, were unanimously adopted'.¹ While Doherty was in London, the N.U.W.C. had met to adopt a 'Declaration on behalf of the Working Classes, put forward . . . on the day the Lords rejected the Reform Bill', and had affirmed the sacredness of 'the rights of property of every description, acquired by honest industry'.²

The London N.U.W.C., though it was formed by a delegate meeting at which Trade Unions were represented, was a political and not an industrial body, and consisted of individual members grouped in small 'classes', and not of affiliated societies. But the line of division between political and industrial organisations was not at this time at all clearly drawn. The N.A.P.L., at its conference in June 1830, had adopted a declaration protesting against 'the unrepresented situation of the working classes', and it appears from the pages of William Carpenter's *Political Magazine* that the N.U.W.C. regarded the N.A.P.L. as working in the North of England on much the same lines as itself. Doherty clearly had hopes of making the N.U.W.C. the basis for a London section of the N.A.P.L. But his fortnight in London dashed his hopes. He went back to the North to face his Manchester Committee with nothing achieved.

As early as April there had been critics of Doherty's ambitious projects. An anonymous letter printed in the *Voice of the People* conveyed a warning that an attempt to create too many new Districts would prove fatal to the unity of the Association.³ From the date of Hynes's default it had been increasingly difficult to collect

¹ *Political Magazine*, Jan. 1832.

² *Ibid.* Jan. 1832.

³ *Voice of the People*, Apr. 9, 1831.

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money from the Districts. Doherty wrote in August that 'the districts were shut up and they kept the money contributed from us, and only occasionally sent us a return of what they had subscribed in certain districts. . . . The fact is they have kept the money from us since last March.'¹

When Doherty got back from London, the Manchester Committee promptly laid a series of charges against him. These were, according to his own statement,

1. That I had stated in the *Voice* that it could be removed for £20 or £10, and here was an expense of £13 10s. before the removal was started.
2. That I had carried on a secret correspondence with some of the districts to the great injury of the National Association and the Manchester Committee.
3. That I stayed too long in London.
4. That my expenses were too heavy.
5. That I had written to Birmingham and other places about the establishment of the paper in London without the authority of the Committee.
6. That I had lost the confidence of the trades of Manchester.
7. That I had persuaded the Committee to send me to London last summer to canvass for advertisements, and got none.
8. That I had upset some decisions of the Committee.'²

In plain words, the Manchester Committee was against the move to London, whereas Doherty regarded the

¹ *Ibid.* Aug. 27, 1831.

² Doherty, *Letter*.

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Association as lost without it. The upshot was that Doherty 'finally withdrew'¹ from the N.A.P.L., and wrote his *Letter to the Members of the National Association* in order to vindicate his conduct. The first phase of the attempt to create an inclusive Trades Union was at an end.

What happened next? The Webbs say in their *History* that Doherty attempted 'to build up the Yorkshire branches of the Association into a national organisation with its headquarters in London'.² But in fact the N.A.P.L. had at this stage hardly any members in Yorkshire, and Doherty's effective following was not in Yorkshire, but in the Midland hosiery districts. The real story of what followed Doherty's resignation is substantially different.

On January 7, 1832, Doherty launched a new paper, the *Expositor*, which on January 21 became the *Poor Man's Advocate*. On January 14 the Manchester Committee started the *Union Pilot and Cooperative Intelligencer*, 'printed and published by H. N. Bullock (a member of the Committee) at the Operatives' Establishment, 88 Oldham St., Manchester'. The *Union Pilot* published in March an 'Address to the Trades of Manchester', appealing for unity,³ and announced a delegate meeting of the N.A.P.L. to be held in Manchester. This was apparently attended by delegates from Bradford and perhaps other Yorkshire towns, as well as by local delegates,⁴ and, in commenting upon it, the Manchester Committee expressed its hopes of retrieving the fortunes of the Association by building up its membership in Yorkshire and elsewhere.

¹ Doherty, *Letter*.

² Webb, *History*, p. 124.

³ *Union Pilot*, Mar. 10, 1832.

⁴ *Leeds Mercury*, Mar. 4, 1832.

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The Midland areas seem at this point to have dropped their connection with Manchester; and the Committee there was trying to make what was in effect a fresh start. The *Union Pilot* wrote: 'We have before recorded our opinion that the National Association will, despite the difficulties it has had to contend with, yet find a favourable reception from the people. It was in Manchester the Association commenced its career — here it once flourished; but after it had extended about one hundred miles round this town, a fatality came upon it that almost threatened its extinction, the course of which our members are already acquainted with. But though it declined in Manchester, it spread and flourished in other places; and, we rejoice to say that the resolute example set by Yorkshire and other places is likely once more to revive the drooping energies of those trades who had the honour of originating and establishing the Association. The appeal recently put forth to the trades of Manchester has had its effects.'¹

The following week the *Union Pilot* announced the formation of a branch of the National Association at Wakefield;² and the week after that it published, under the heading 'Leeds', the following paragraphs:

Too much praise cannot be awarded to the zeal and resolute spirit of the people of Yorkshire. Every day the Association becomes stronger and stronger in that great county, and we fully believe that, however this and other districts may acquit themselves in the cause of union, Yorkshire will soon furnish us a splendid example of the power of union, and prove a burning and shining light to the operatives all over the nation. The following is an extract from a letter just received from Leeds:

¹ *Union Pilot*, Mar. 24, 1832.

² *Ibid.* Mar. 31, 1832.

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‘We have applications from two manufacturing villages, this week, for information respecting the National Association: they wish to join the Leeds District, though one place is fifty miles from Leeds. We have acknowledged them and given them instructions how to proceed: they are a part of our own branch. I believe the linen weavers will join along with them as soon as they receive our approbation. We are in a very prosperous way in Leeds: several trades are on the eve of joining the Association. Two other societies waited upon me for instructions, and are determined to unite with us. Part of the mechanics joined about a fortnight ago, and we expect several other trades shortly.’¹

A month after this, the *Leeds Patriot*, John Foster’s paper, reported ‘an adjourned meeting’ of the Bradford branch of the National Association;² and the *Union Pilot* asserted that ‘it is a source of real gratification to hear of the determined and persevering spirit which is manifested by the members of the Trades Union in Yorkshire. The complete organisation and rigid adhesion to the rules which govern the society have already created an alarm, though an unnecessary one, in the minds of merchants and manufacturers.’³ Moreover, there are in Doherty’s *Poor Man’s Advocate* a number of references to the growth of Trade Unionism in Yorkshire. In January 1832 we find him saying, in reply to a correspondent from Bradford, ‘We rejoice sincerely to learn that the Association for the Protection of Labour is prospering there’.⁴ But in general Doherty avoided references to the N.A.P.L. as such. He said in June, in his paper, ‘We have carefully

¹ *Union Pilot*, Apr. 7, 1832.

² *Leeds Patriot*, May 5, 1832.

³ *Union Pilot*, May 5, 1832.

⁴ *Poor Man’s Advocate*, Jan. 28, 1832.

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abstained from speaking of it'.¹ On the other hand, the *Union Pilot* contained numerous attacks on Doherty.

What does this evidence come to? Clearly the Manchester Committee was trying hard to build up the Yorkshire connection; and it also announced in March that Newcastle had joined the N.A.P.L.² Clearly, there was a great stir of Trade Unionism going on in Yorkshire. Of that we shall see more later. The Bradford Woolcombers had joined the N.A.P.L. in its early days, though they do not appear to have paid more than an entrance fee to headquarters. There had been a few other tenuous connections. I think we may conclude that in the early months of 1832 organisation was proceeding in Yorkshire to some extent in the name of the N.A.P.L., but that the Manchester Committee had no authority over, or close contact with, the Yorkshire movement, or it would certainly have reported its activities in the *Union Pilot*.

Doherty, it seems clear, had no more to do with the Yorkshire movement than the Manchester Committee. We know that he visited Yorkshire early in March,³ and spoke at Halifax.⁴ But that was at a meeting on the Short Time question, in support of Sadler's Factory Bill.⁵ Indeed, it is plain that Doherty, after his withdrawal from the N.A.P.L., had transferred his main activity to the factory reform agitation, and was concerned principally with organising the Lancashire Short Time Committee, and building up contacts between it and the parallel committees in Yorkshire and elsewhere. Quite definitely, he was not leading the Yorkshire branches of the N.A.P.L.

¹ *Ibid.* June 2, 1832.

² *Union Pilot*, Mar. 24, 1832.

³ *Poor Man's Advocate*, Mar. 10, 1832.

⁴ *Leeds Patriot*, Mar. 10, 1832.

⁵ *Leeds Mercury*, Mar. 11, 1832.

V

THE MOVEMENT IN YORKSHIRE — FACTORY SLAVERY

IT will be most convenient at this stage to leave for the time being the Lancashire movement, and to retrace our steps a few years in order to pick up the story of the simultaneous developments in Yorkshire. These are very much more obscure, partly because the Yorkshire Unions found no chronicler such as Doherty and produced no newspapers devoted mainly to Trade Union affairs, and partly because the Yorkshire movement, unlike that of Lancashire, was carried on with a great deal of deliberate secrecy. So much was this the case that the Yorkshire Unions were often referred to as the 'secret order'; and the mystery attending their activities caused wild exaggerations of their numbers and power to gain widespread belief.

The trades which predominated in the Yorkshire textile towns were the making of woollen goods, known as 'cloth', and worsted goods, made of combed wool and known as 'stuffs'. In general the woollen and worsted trades were later than the cotton trade in feeling the influence of power-driven machinery, and of the two the worsted trade was mechanised considerably ahead of the woollen trade. But the first power looms even for worsteds did not appear until the early 'twenties. There were riots against their introduction at Shipley in 1822; and only in 1824 were they introduced at

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Bradford.¹ But long before this the Woolcombers, who had maintained a powerful Union through most of the eighteenth century, had been putting up a vigorous fight against attempts to introduce combing machinery, which was being gradually improved upon the foundations laid by Cartwright's patents of 1790 and 1792. In 1794 we find the Woolcombers petitioning against the new machines, and procuring the introduction of a Bill to forbid their use; and in the same year a Nottinghamshire worsted manufacturer, by name Toplis, was complaining of the activities of the various independent Woolcombers' Societies in restricting employment. In 1812 the Woolcombers held a National Congress at Coventry in order to close their ranks.

There was a parallel struggle in the woollen trade on the part of the shearmen, whose ancient craft was threatened by the spread and improvement of the gig-mill. In 1802 the shearmen were said to have a nationwide Union, with its seat of government at Leeds; and in 1805 they too procured the introduction of a Bill designed to restrict the use of machinery and to enforce a rigid system of apprenticeship. The Shearmen's Union was strongly attacked by Wilberforce's Committee which reported on the Woollen Manufacture in 1806. But their craft was doomed in any case. After the introduction of Lewis's shearing machine in 1820 hand shearing rapidly died out.²

In the cotton industry, the introduction of machinery led rapidly to the rise of a new skilled craft — mule spinning. But though worsted was first spun on the water-frame in 1784, at Dolphinholme, and water and

¹ Hammond, *Skilled Labourer*, p. 194.

² For all the above see Hammond, *ibid.* pp. 167 ff.

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steam spinning mills were spreading rapidly by about 1800, worsted spinning never became a highly skilled craft. It was done mainly by women and children on water-frames or other relatively simple machinery. On the other hand, the spinning of woollen yarn became mainly a male craft; and Trade Unionism therefore developed in the woollen trade among the spinners, who were machine operators, whereas in the worsted trade it was strongest among the combers, who were hand workers desperately opposing the machine. One great difficulty in following the history of Trade Unionism in Yorkshire lies in keeping the two main branches of the industry distinct, especially as the woollen and worsted trades were not nearly so separate in their localisation in the early part of the nineteenth century as they came to be later.

The developments with which we need to concern ourselves began in 1819 in the woollen trade. P. H. Rathbone wrote in 1860: 'The Cloth-workers of Leeds and of the towns of that district appear to have had no combination until 1819, when the weavers struck for wages both at Leeds and at Dewsbury, about eight miles from Leeds. The wages at Leeds are stated to have been from 20s. to 25s. per week, and the strike was to prevent a reduction of about 5s. per week; it lasted six months, and was entirely unsuccessful. The strike at Dewsbury, at the same time, was on the other hand successful, but it should be mentioned that a different kind of cloth was made there.'¹ Rathbone does not mention that spinners as well as weavers took part in this strike movement,² but he goes on to say that 'in

¹ *Report of the Social Science Association on Trade Societies*, 1860, p. 359.

² Hammond, *Skilled Labourer*, p. 155.

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1821 there was another strike which lasted till the end of 1823, one mill only being called out at a time'.¹ This series of movements led to the definite formation at Dewsbury in 1822 of a General Union of Woollen Spinners and Weavers, with the aim of 'equalising' wages, and in 1824 this Union was said to have 5000 members.¹ Rathbone says of this body that 'during this period the men were perfectly aware of the illegality of their proceedings, but seem to have observed very little secrecy; yet not one master, during their prolonged struggles, availed himself of the Combination Laws, and the magistrates, besides discouraging any idea of doing so, exerted themselves to bring about an arrangement. No violence or intimidation was used on the part of the workmen, nor was any workman countenanced who left his work suddenly, without finishing what he was about.'²

At Wakefield also, there were strikes in the cloth trade in 1822 and 1824, and some sort of Union was in being, at any rate at the later date.³ We are told also of a powerful Union of 5000 members at Huddersfield in 1824, covering a radius of 30 miles, and strong enough to compel a master who had discharged his Union employees to reinstate them.⁴ But this may possibly be the Dewsbury Union under another name. Rathbone says of it that members paid 3d. a week, till their subscription reached £1; then the subscription ceased, except in the case of a strike. The Union aimed at securing uniformity of wages, but did not object to the

¹ *Report of the Social Science Association on Trade Societies*, 1860, p. 359.

² *Report of the Committee on Combinations*, 1824. Evidence of Joseph Oates.

³ *Social Science Report*, p. 773.

⁴ *Report of the Committee on Combinations*, 1825.

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masters getting rid of a man who worked badly. Unionist and non-Unionist men worked together in the same shop, without annoyance being inflicted on the latter. There were no secret oaths, meetings or bye-laws. Wages, and alleged unfairness in measurement on the part of the masters, formed the principal subjects of grievance among the men.¹

The worsted trade, except for the combers, does not seem to have been much organised until 1824, when the Woolcombers and Weavers formed a joint Union with John Tester as secretary.² We shall meet Tester again after he had become a member of the N.A.P.L. early in 1832.³

The flannel trade of Rochdale, which was much more closely connected with the Yorkshire than with the Lancashire trades, was also early in the field with a Union. In 1819 this Union agreed with the manufacturers on a scale of wages, which both parties undertook to cooperate in enforcing. In 1825 it was said to have two or three thousand members, including both spinners and weavers.

In 1827 the agreement broke down, and the men struck against an attempt to reduce their wages.⁴

Before that, in 1825, the worsted trade had been plunged into its most extensive and calamitous struggle. This movement began with a strike of the combers at three firms for an advance in wages. The employers, representing fifty firms, thereupon met and pledged themselves to employ no members of 'the Trades

¹ *Social Science Report*, p. 381.

² Hammond, *Skilled Labourer*, p. 200.

³ *Leeds Mercury*, July 5, 1834.

⁴ Hammond, *Skilled Labourer*, p. 165.

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Union', and also to discharge all children whose parents were in the Union. The dispute began at Bradford, but spread to Halifax, Keighley and other towns, and even as far as Darlington. About '20,000 woolcombers and weavers were out of employment for twenty-two weeks, and were compelled to resume work without gaining their object'.¹ Another authority puts the number thrown out at 30,000,² and says that arrangements were made for exporting the children of strikers in order to secure their maintenance elsewhere; and it is said that £20,000 was raised in subscriptions in aid of the strikers.³ But in November, after five months' struggle, the men were forced back to work on the employers' terms, after enduring 'sufferings and privations which were terribly severe'.⁴ The collapse of the men's resistance was followed by the widespread introduction of machine combing. According to Burnley, 2000 combers were replaced by machines;⁵ and Baines observes that 'the condition of the woolcombers, after the extinction of their trade by the introduction of machine combing, would supply materials for one of the most melancholy chapters of Yorkshire history'.⁶

This declaration of war by the masters on the principle of Trade Unionism had a decisive effect on the subsequent development of the Yorkshire Unions. Outlawed by the employers, the Unionists in the worsted trade were compelled to resort to secrecy for the maintenance of their organisation. The adoption

¹ Baines, *Yorkshire Past and Present*, vol. 2, p. 679.

² Burnley, *Romance of Modern Industry*, p. 197.

³ Hammond, *op. cit.* p. 208.

⁴ Baines, *op. cit.*

⁵ Burnley, *op. cit.*

⁶ Baines, *op. cit.*

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of oaths and secret ceremonies of initiation seems to date from the boycott of Trade Unionism by the worsted employers in 1825.

The Woolcombers were not the only sufferers. Power looms for worsted weaving were extensively introduced after the strike. In 1826 there were serious power-loom riots in Bradford. 'A number of hand-loom weavers attacked the mill of Messrs. Horsfall, of Bradford, who first employed the new loom, and a sharp conflict between special constables and the mob ended in the death of two persons, the wounding of many, and the ultimate punishment of many who took part in the outbreak.'¹ Baines adds that 'great distress was endured by the hand-loom weavers'.¹ In 1830 we find the Leeds hand-loom worsted weavers petitioning Parliament for the imposition of a special tax on the products of the power loom, and on the rejection of their demand striking for an advance in wages.² Sadler, the sponsor of the Factory Bill, presented their petition.³

It was at this point that Richard Oastler, inspired by his friend John Wood, one of the principal employers in the worsted trade, wrote his famous letter on 'Factory Slavery' to the *Leeds Mercury*, and initiated the Yorkshire movement for factory reform.⁴ The effect of Oastler's letter was to create the Yorkshire factory reform movement, and to revive the parallel agitation in Lancashire, of which John Doherty was the leader. From 1829 the Lancashire operatives, under Doherty's leadership, had been organised in a Short Time

¹ Baines, *op. cit.*

² Mayhall, *Annals of Yorkshire*, vol. 1, p. 358.

³ Mayhall, *Annals of Leeds*, s.v., Feb. 1830.

⁴ *Leeds Mercury*, Sept. 29, 1830. See also Wood's letter, Oct. 27, 1830.

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Committee of four members — Doherty, Philip Grant, James Turner and Thomas Daniel;¹ and when Oastler's letter had created a similar movement in Yorkshire the two groups promptly got into touch with each other. This development, coming just at the moment of Doherty's withdrawal from the N.A.P.L., provided him with an alternative sphere of activity.

Up to 1830 the leadership of the movement for factory reform had been almost exclusively in the hands of the Lancashire operatives and of such employers as the Fieldens, who were favourable to their claims. But now Yorkshire began to take the lead. On November 22, 1830, a meeting was held at Bradford, with the support of a number of employers, such as Wood and Marshall, to demand an Act limiting the hours of labour in worsted mills. Cooperation was secured with some Lancashire employers; and the two groups put their united support behind Sir John Cam Hobhouse's Bill, which was also sponsored by Lord Morpeth as one of the Yorkshire Members of Parliament. But other employers speedily got up a counter-agitation in the name of freedom of trade. There were strong protests against the Bill from the Scottish millowners; and on March 5, 1831, the Yorkshire employers held a great protest meeting at Halifax, with James Ackroyd in the chair.² Under pressure from these powerful interests, Hobhouse was induced, not to withdraw the Bill, but to agree that, like the previous Factory Acts of 1819 and 1825, it should be limited to cotton mills; and in this limited form it became law before the end of the year. Its chief effect was to extend from 16 to 18 the age

¹ Grant, *History of Factory Legislation*, p. 15.

² Alfred, *History of the Factory Movement*, vol. 1, pp. 105 ff.

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limit up to which the restriction of working hours to 12 (*plus* an hour and a half for meals) was to apply. The Act also forbade night work for persons under 21, and provided for summary conviction if an owner worked his mill at night, unless he could prove that no persons under the permitted age were employed.¹

The Yorkshire operatives, and their supporters such as Richard Oastler and G. S. Bull, vicar of a parish near Bradford, were naturally furious at the exclusion of the woollen and worsted trades from the Factory Bill. Oastler wrote an angry letter to the newspapers protesting against the betrayal of the factory children. At a meeting at Huddersfield, Oastler and the delegates of the Yorkshire Unions entered into an agreement, known as the 'Huddersfield Compact', for the promotion of a new Bill.² Hobhouse was approached with the request that he should introduce a Bill providing for a Ten Hours Day; but he at once answered that he regarded such a measure as politically impossible, and saw no prospect of securing further legislation. Michael Thomas Sadler, who had been a supporter of Hobhouse's Bill in its original form, was then approached, and agreed to take charge of the proposed new measure. On December 15, 1831, he was given leave to bring in a Bill; but the second reading was not actually taken till March 1832.³

Against this background of agitation over Hobhouse's Bill the Yorkshire Trade Union movement was spreading during 1830 and 1831. This time, the outstanding development was in the woollen rather

¹ Hutchins and Harrison, *History of Factory Legislation*, p. 32.

² Oct. 10, 1831. See Alfred, *op. cit.* p. 120.

³ Grant, *op. cit.* p. 29; Alfred, *op. cit.* pp. 150-51.

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than the worsted section of the industry. The trouble began on February 15, 1831 with the famous strike of the weavers at Gott's woollen mill at Leeds. 'One of the largest manufacturing establishments in Leeds, that belonging to Messrs. Gott, was the first to feel the power of the Union. The proprietors had at that time just completed an enormous building intended for the weaving of fine woollen cloth: all the costly machinery adapted to this purpose had been purchased and erected . . . when all the weavers, to the number of 210, turned out. The men declared that they were paid lower wages than were given by other Leeds manufacturers, which was positively untrue, as the wages given in the establishment were not exceeded by any other in the town, and averaged 17s. weekly.' So writes an unfriendly critic of the men, who goes on to say that the real object of the Union was to raise the general rate of wages, by first coercing one firm, and then compelling others to follow suit. The Union, he says, selected Gott's for the first attack because of the large capital invested in the mill, and the consequent loss in closing it. In the end, he says, Gott's never reopened their new factory, but dismantled it on account of the Union's opposition. It stands idle, 'a melancholy monument of the disastrous effect consequent on the first exercise of power by the Leeds Union'.¹

¹ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 48.

VI

THE YORKSHIRE TRADES' UNION

THE words just quoted are our first mention of the famous 'Leeds Union', or 'Clothiers' Union', or 'Yorkshire Trades' Union', as it was called indifferently by contemporary writers. One main purpose of this book is to throw light on the real character of this body, and on its relations both with other Unions in Yorkshire and with the Lancashire movement already described, and also, later, with the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. It was commonly stated that the 'Trades Union' originated with the strike at Messrs. Gott's mill. Indeed, we have this statement on the first-hand authority of Major Scholfield,¹ who was undoubtedly for some time Assistant Secretary of the Leeds Clothiers' Union, and who definitely attributed 'the existence of the Trades Union to the strike of Messrs. Gott's men'.² Simeon Pollard, who was General Secretary of the 'Trades Union', similarly attributed its origin to the strike at Gott's.³

On the other hand, Joseph Threppleton (or Threapleton), who was at one time a paid collector on behalf of the 'Trades Union', but was discharged for pocketing the money, and became the central figure in a long controversy about it in the *Leeds Mercury* during

¹ Major is a Christian name. The surname is sometimes spelt 'Scholefield'.

² *Leeds Mercury*, May 31, 1834.

³ *Crisis*, Jan. 18, 1834.

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1834,¹ asserted that he had been a member of the Union, but had lapsed until he was persuaded to rejoin at the time when the strike began at Gott's mill.² Clearly, then, even if the 'Trades Union' arose out of this strike, some sort of Union had existed before.

What seems most likely is that the Union or Unions of woollen workers which had organised the strikes of 1819, 1821-23 and 1824-25 had remained in being, though they had declined in membership and influence, and that either just before or in consequence of the strike at Gott's, some wider combination came into existence. The strike lasted thirty-three weeks, from February till October, and branched out into a number of other strikes. At the outset, the movement was peaceably conducted; but in May Messrs. Gott reopened their older mills with blackleg labour, and serious rioting occurred. The hostile critic already quoted says that 'When the Leeds Combination commenced its operations by causing a strike of Messrs. Gott's workmen, the other manufacturers, so far from lending any assistance . . . seemed to rejoice that a rival establishment was stopped'.³ In other words, they were alarmed at the competition of Gott's newer and more efficient machines, and were not sorry that the operatives should put up Gott's costs by demanding higher wages. Large sums, amounting to £5000 or £6000, were collected in Leeds for the relief of the strikers,⁴ doubtless mainly from the workers in the other mills, but also, it appears, with some help from rival

¹ *Leeds Mercury*, Mar. 19, 1834 and subsequent issues.

² See note 1 to p. 69.

³ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 101.

⁴ Mayhall, *Annals of Leeds*, s.v. Feb. 15, 1831.

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employers. The strike movement originated with the weavers, but the finishing trades soon joined in and became members of a common Union with the weavers¹ — doubtless the Leeds Clothiers' Union.

This clearly is the body referred to in the following passage from the pamphlet so often quoted in this essay. 'On the repeal of the Combination Laws in 1824, the Yorkshire workmen employed in the woollen cloth trade endeavoured to establish a Union. They, however, failed to accomplish their object at that time as the society they formed died or fell into insignificance shortly after its birth. The combinations that have lately been doing such extensive mischief in that part of the kingdom were not set on foot till about three years ago, and at first only embraced those workmen employed in what is technically called the "manufacturing" of woollen cloth, viz. slubbers, spinners and weavers.'² Thus the Leeds Clothiers' Union, at the time of the Gott strike, was definitely confined to the woollen trades, and did not extend to worsted, much less to non-textile occupations.

But clearly the 'Trades Union' which the employers were so vigorously and continuously denouncing during the next few years was something much more extensive and formidable than this. It seems evident that the Leeds Clothiers' Union of 1831 became the nucleus for the creation of a much more extensive body. We have seen already that in April 1831 — that is, while the Gott strike was at its height — Cheetham, the Secretary of the N.A.P.L. at Manchester, was reporting that upwards of 9000 at Leeds were already enrolled in that

¹ Ward, *Workmen and Wages*, p. 94.

² *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 47.

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body.¹ This strongly suggests that in March or April, following upon the establishment or reorganisation of the Clothiers' Union, an attempt was being made to form a General Union of Trades in some sort of association with the N.A.P.L. We have seen that in fact Leeds did not enrol in the Manchester body — at any rate to the extent of contributing to its funds; and I think we may conclude that the 'Leeds Trades' Union' was set up as an independent body early in 1831, just as a similar 'Trades General Union' had been set up in Sheffield in 1830,² and that the Leeds Clothiers' Union was its principal constituent, just as the Spinners' Union was the principal constituent of the Manchester N.A.P.L. It is further clear that Simeon Pollard, who was secretary of the Clothiers' Union, was also secretary of this wider 'Leeds Trades' Union'; for he was continually signing documents, speaking and writing letters to the newspapers in that capacity.³

The Clothiers' Union, having made a beginning with the strike at Gott's, proceeded to initiate a more general movement for the regulation of wages and conditions throughout the woollen trade. 'The next step of the Union was to draw up a list of wages to be paid for spinning, weaving, etc., which was published in the newspapers, and also on sheets of paper, for the purpose of being transmitted to the millowners and small manufacturers. . . . The workmen were then ordered by the Committee of the Union to demand of their respective employers compliance with this scale of wages, care being taken that the manufacturers should be successively applied to for this purpose, in order that there

¹ *Voice of the People*, Apr. 23, 1831.

² *Social Science Report*, p. 538.

³ *Leeds Mercury passim*.

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might be less chance of any general resistance on their part, and that the committee might not have too many on its hands at once. . . . The far greater part of the masters acceded to these demands, and their names were carefully set forth in the three newspapers published at Leeds.¹ . . . The workmen claimed that this scale was not a rise of wages, but only what they termed an "equalisation" of them, it being a principal object of their association to compel the masters to pay every operative, good or bad, an equal sum for his labour. But in reality the scale did sanction an increase in wages' — because the Union picked out for each process the best rates it could find being paid by any master.²

The Leeds employers began meeting this policy by sending out cloth to be woven in neighbouring villages, where wages were lower, and 'a great many of the men were thrown permanently out of employment, who of course had to be supported by those who got work'. Some employers introduced technical changes, reducing the quality of the cloth in order to offset the rise in cost. 'The Union made new regulations to meet this contrivance, which were counteracted by fresh evasions on the part of the manufacturers.'³

The Union, our author continues, 'now commenced a system of interference in the management of the manufacturers' businesses, by requiring them, in case of a contraction of their scale of production, not to discharge any of the workmen, but to keep every loom and jenny going, dealing out the work, however

¹ *i.e.* *Leeds Mercury* (Whig), *Leeds Intelligencer* (Tory) and *Leeds Patriot* (Radical). The *Leeds Times* was not started until 1833.

² *Character, Objects and Effects*, pp. 49-50.

³ *Ibid.* p. 51.

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slight might be its quantity, in equal proportions to their men'. [It must be borne in mind that 1831 was a year of intense depression in the woollen trade.] This demand was partially complied with; and the Unions then demanded that the employers should sign a promise to stop sending work to the villages and to spin and weave all cloth made on their own premises at Union rates.

'One of the latest strikes originated in an attempt of the Union to compel a master to get all his cloth woven in Leeds, and on his refusal the Committee declared that they would stop his country weavers as well as his town ones, by ordering a turn-out of all the men who were employed by him in Leeds in preparing the wool previous to its being sent into the country.' The master retaliated by replacing the spinners with work-house children; but the Union was strong enough to secure their withdrawal by threatening the responsible parish overseer, who was a butcher, with a boycott of his shop. The Union then decided to abolish piecework in favour of 'a weekly allowance of their own fixing'.

'The most effectual mode of compelling every workman to join the combination consisted in proscribing any factory where one of these "*black sheep*", as the non-Unionists are called, was employed. . . . Various rules were laid down with respect to the admission of apprentices to any manufactory. . . . The number of boys was also limited on a similar principle. . . . The leaders of the Association are frequently aware of the injustice and impolicy of the course they are pursuing. . . . But the constitution of the body is essentially democratic: the authority of the Committee is little more than nominal, and they are perpetually controlled by

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the clamour and violence of their constituents. A strike is always popular.¹

That is how the activities of the Leeds Clothiers' Union appeared to a commentator who saw everything through the eyes of the manufacturers. That the Union was strong and met with considerable successes is sufficiently plain. Early in 1832 it won an important strike against Messrs. Bruce, Donnington and Walker, who were endeavouring to reduce wages. Slubbers, spinners and weavers all came out, and after a fortnight the employers gave way.² It was about that time, as we have seen, that the Manchester Committee of the N.A.P.L. was congratulating itself upon the rapid spread of the Association in Yorkshire. All through the summer and autumn of 1832 the Clothiers' Union continued to meet with success. We find it spreading rapidly into the villages around Leeds, and succeeding in one place after another in getting the employers to agree to wage scales. In August, for example, it was meeting the employers for this purpose in Pudsey, Bramley, Stanningley, Farsley, Rodley, Calverly, Eccleshall, Idle, Shipley, Bolton, Guiseley, Yeadon, Rawston and Horsforth.³ In September there was an important joint meeting of employers and 'a deputation from the Leeds Committee of the Trades Union' to negotiate for a continuance of the wage agreements;⁴ and on this occasion Simeon Pollard was one of the Union's spokesmen. In October we find the Leeds shopkeepers holding a meeting to protest against the tyranny of the 'Trades Union', which was said to have

¹ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 59.

² Mayhall, *Annals of Leeds*, s.v. March 1832.

³ *Leeds Mercury*, Aug. 27, 1832.

⁴ *Ibid.* Sept. 24, 1832.

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20,000 members. Pollard and Thomas Buckley, another of the Union's leaders, appeared at the meeting to defend its actions.¹ Following this, there was a prolonged controversy in the *Leeds Mercury*, a writer calling himself 'Mercator' attacking the Union, while Edward Edwards, its President, and one 'John Powlett' defended it.²

The 'Trades Union' which was at the centre of this controversy was clearly a wider body than the Clothiers' Union. By this time, at any rate, the workers in the worsted trade were also part of the movement led by Simeon Pollard. This does not mean that they belonged to the Clothiers' Union, but that they had a parallel organisation, which was also part of the 'Leeds Trades' Union'.

'The organisation of the workmen in the stuff and worsted trades,' writes the author of the *Character, Objects and Effects*, 'the manufacturing processes in which are totally distinct from the woollen, is as perfect . . . as that which has been described [*i.e.* the Clothiers' Union].'³ He then describes the organisation of this Worsteds Operatives' Union, which he says is typical of the forms of Union which exist in other trades in the clothing area. 'For the purpose of this Union, the country is divided into "districts", each of which contains a certain number of "lodges", or separate clubs of workmen. Every district elects a governing committee, and also sends delegates, whose numbers are proportioned to the quantity of "lodges" it comprises,

¹ *Ibid.* Oct. 6, 1832.

² *Ibid.* Oct. 20, 1832, Oct. 27, 1832, Nov. 3, 1832, Nov. 10, 1832, Nov. 17, 1832, Nov. 24, 1832, Dec. 1, 1832, Dec. 22, 1832, Jan. 19, 1833, Jan. 26, 1833, Feb. 2, 1833.

³ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 59.

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to what is called the "grand lodge", held twice a year. At this "grand lodge" meeting, the "grand committee", or council of direction, is chosen, consisting of seven delegates, which forms in theory the governing power of the Union, and which has alone the power of deciding upon strikes, when the object is to raise wages; to prevent reductions, the district authorities are empowered to order strikes. The place of meeting of the "grand lodge" is annually changed: the delegates who form it are paid according to the distance they have to travel. . . . Full members of the Union are required to pay 1s. entrance money, and 3d. weekly, and are entitled to receive, when they have struck work, a weekly allowance of 7s., besides 1s. for a wife, and 1s. for each child under ten, that is unemployed.¹

The writer goes on to say that in practice these rules cannot be enforced. 'The members pay 1s. 2d. and even sometimes 5s. a week, and allowances in time of strike often fall to "the merest pittance".' He adds that 'the power, which the rules give to the Committee of deciding upon strikes, is perpetually encroached on by the men; and even when the Committee have openly declared that a turn-out has been wholly unjustified by the circumstances of the case, and contrary to the rules, the men have been allowed to draw their subsistence from the Union'. The leaders dare not enforce the rules, for fear of blacklegging by men disqualified from receiving benefit.² Trade Unions were not without their 'rank and file movements', even in these early days.

It was this Worsted Section of the Leeds Union which, towards the end of 1832, became involved in

¹ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 63.

² *Ibid.* p. 65.

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the well-known Dolphinholme strike. The mill at Dolphinholme, near Lancaster, belonged to Messrs. Hindes and Derham, who had also mills at Leeds and Bradford. The strike at Dolphinholme centred round the woolcombers, who are said to have been getting about 16s. a week, and with their families to have averaged earnings of £87 19s. 6d. per year. 'John Powlett', writing from 'the Committee Room, Bradford' — Bradford was the chief centre of the worsted trade — stated that the cause of the strike was that the firm had discharged 100 men for joining the Trades Union. Messrs. Hindes and Derham's contention, however, was that they had retaliated on being required to dismiss some men to whom the Union objected. They replied to Powlett, giving the wages mentioned above, and were answered by 'John Pollard, President', writing this time from Leeds.¹ This seems to establish the fact that Leeds and Bradford were in the same Union — a point to which I shall come back later.

The Dolphinholme men lived in cottages owned by the firm, from which they were forcibly ejected by order of the magistrates. Large sums were raised on their behalf in other areas. Most of the money came from Bradford, which sent £1822. Leeds sent only £58, Halifax £85, Kendal £28, and so on. The Union transferred the Dolphinholme strikers to Leeds after their eviction, in the hope of getting them work there. In all the Union is said to have spent £4000 on the Dolphinholme affair, which spread to the firm's mills at Leeds and Bradford. It has often been stated that this strike was the cause of the invention of machine

¹ *Leeds Mercury*, Nov. 10, 1832, Nov. 17, 1832, Nov. 24, 1832, Dec. 1, 1832.

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combing, 'which wholly superseded the labour of that class of men, who were the chief ringleaders in the affair, and which has struck a blow at their combination, that it can never recover'.¹ But actually the combing machine was coming in fast before 1832, even if it came in faster afterwards.

While the Bradford section of the Trades Union was busy with the Hindes and Derham affair, the Leeds section was also getting into serious trouble. In December 1832, in the course of a strike of members of the Clothiers' Union at Farsley, near Leeds, a blackleg was murdered, and it was alleged that the Union was responsible for the murder. But even the author of *Character, Objects and Effects* admits that there was no proof of the charge against the Union.² The jury, indeed, expressed its fear that the Clothiers' Union was behind the murder,³ but Pollard strongly denied the charge.⁴ Incidentally, it was stated at the inquest that a person called 'John Powlett', whose real name was Pollard, had been at the inn which was the headquarters of the Union, and the landlord said he had heard that more than one person went by the name of 'John Powlett'.⁵

It will be convenient, before we proceed further, to consider the implications of this use of fictitious names. Certain leaders of the Leeds Union appear and act throughout the period with which we are dealing quite openly under their own names. This is true of Simeon Pollard, the Secretary, Edward Edwards, the President,⁶ Major Scholfield, the Assistant Secretary,⁷ Thomas

¹ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 61.

³ *Leeds Mercury*, Dec. 15, 1832.

⁵ *Ibid.* Dec. 15, 1832.

² *Ibid.* pp. 75-6.

⁴ *Ibid.* Dec. 22, 1832.

⁷ *Ibid.* July 13, 1833.

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Buckley¹ and William Halliwell,² committee members, and John Sutton, described as Deputy Grand Master — possibly only of one of the sections.³ But we also find 'John Powlett' appearing as Secretary on a number of occasions, and we know that the Huddersfield leaders also on occasion used this name.⁴ As an alternative President we have another fictitious character, John Bolland.⁵

I think it is clear that, whereas men who were paid servants of the Union, and doubtless some others, could use their names fairly freely, many active Unionists were afraid to put their names publicly to demands addressed to employers, and that this was one reason for the use of fictitious names. But I think there is more in the matter than that; for there is no doubt that the Yorkshire Trade Union movement did at this time develop a strong element of secrecy. When the Clothiers' Union began its campaign in 1831, as we have seen, it published openly in the newspapers its 'Scale of Prices to be Observed by Millowners and Manufacturers', and negotiated quite openly with the employers about wages and conditions. But when disputes had arisen over the application of the scale, and when further the Union was seeking to regulate apprenticeship and the types of labour to be employed, it did not publish its revised regulations, but issued its orders to its own members in the various factories, telling them on what conditions they were to insist.⁶ As its relations with the employers grew worse, and the outcry in the newspapers against its proceedings and

¹ *Ibid.* June 10, 1832. ² *Ibid.* Nov. 17, 1832. ³ *Ibid.* April 20, 1833.

⁴ *Ibid.* May 24, 1834. The authority is Threppleton.

⁵ *Ibid.* Nov. 24, 1832.

⁶ Ward, *Workmen and Wages*, p. 94.

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those of the other sections of the Trades Union increased, it grew more secret in its methods, and Trade Unionists themselves began to speak of the Union as 'the secret order'. In 1833, when we know that the Yorkshire Union was sending out missionaries and trying to enlist members in other parts of the country, we find the Nottingham Bobbin Net Makers' Committee stating 'that (by desire) they have enrolled themselves in the secret order of the Operative Trades Union'.¹ From Northampton, early in 1834, came the following letter to Morrison's *Pioneer*: 'We have for some years past been struggling along against a host of oppressors, by a sort of Local County Union. . . . We fortunately heard of the rapid progress and higher pretensions of the secret order of Trades Unionism . . . and we were led to suppose that all trades were united under one and the same order.'² It appeared subsequently that these Northampton Unionists were shoemakers, and that 'the whole of the workmen in the shoe trade of Northampton had joined the Manchester Order in mistake for the London Consolidated'.³ On discovering their error, they promptly transferred to the G.N.C.T.U., but a little later their leaders were arrested on a charge of having administered unlawful oaths according to the practice of the Union they had originally joined. They were subsequently put on trial, but they were luckier than the Dorchester Labourers, for the Grand Jury threw out the Bill, and they were acquitted.⁴

¹ *Poor Man's Guardian*, Nov. 2, 1833.

² *Pioneer*, Mar. 15, 1834.

³ *Poor Man's Guardian*, May 17, 1834.

⁴ *Northampton and Leamington Free Press*, May 10, 1834, June 7, 1834, June 14, 1834, July 12, 1834.

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Presumably these Northampton Unionists joined some remnant of the N.A.P.L., still operating from Manchester — or perhaps it was merely the Manchester Order of Cordwainers, once a section of the N.A.P.L., to which they became attached.¹ The Nottingham Bobbin Net Makers may have done the same; but, as they had already belonged to the N.A.P.L. in Doherty's day, it seems more likely that what they joined was some section of the Yorkshire movement. I think it can be taken as definite that most of the references to the 'secret order' are to the Yorkshire Unionists and to their proceedings. A somewhat similar case is reported from Banbury, where the 'working people' are reported as having joined the 'Bradford Order of Weavers', but subsequently changed over to the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union.² This looks as if the Banbury textile workers had joined the Stuff and Worsted Union, which was one of the constituents of the 'Yorkshire Trades' Union'.

¹ In the Home Office Papers for 1834 (52-25) there is a communication from a Huddersfield magistrate, Joseph Walker, forwarding evidence given by Joseph Threppleton and George Beaumont concerning the oaths and ceremonies in use among the Yorkshire Unions. Threppleton and Beaumont are there stated to have been members of the Huddersfield Cordwainers' Union, as well as of the 'Trades' Union'. This may mean that either the Manchester Order of Cordwainers as a whole, or its Yorkshire branches, joined the 'Yorkshire Trades' Union', or were somehow associated with it.

² *Leeds Mercury*, May 31, 1834, quoting from *The Times*.

VII

SECRECY AND 'UNLAWFUL OATHS'

THE common allegation at the time was that the members of the 'Trades Union' were bound by a ceremony of initiation containing the most horrible oaths, and were threatened with dire penalties if they divulged any of the proceedings of the Union. The author of *Character, Objects and Effects* has much to say on this subject. He cites the following oath, which he says was taken by a member of a 'Yorkshire Union':

'I do, by Almighty God and this Loyal Lodge, most solemnly swear that I will not work for any master that is not in the Union, nor will I work with any illegal man or men, but will do my best for the support of wages: and most solemnly swear to keep inviolate all the secrets of this Order: nor will I ever consent to have any money for any purpose but for the use of the Lodge and support of the trade: nor will I write, or cause to be wrote, print, mark, either on stone, marble, brass, paper or sand, anything connected with this Order, so help me God, and keep me steadfast in this my present obligation: and I further promise to do my best to bring all legal men that I am concerned with into this Order: and if ever I reveal any of the rules may what is before me plunge my soul into eternity.'¹

This particular oath is from the building trade, and it seems more appropriate, in view of the reference to

¹ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 42.

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money, for administering to officers or delegates than to ordinary members. It is not after all a very terrible affair; but the author resorts for better effect to an oath alleged to have been administered by the Glasgow Cotton Spinners in 1823.

I, A. B., do voluntarily swear, in the awful presence of Almighty God, and before these witnesses, that I will execute, with zeal and alacrity, as far as in me lies, every task or injunction, which the majority of my brothers shall impose upon me in furtherance of our common welfare: as the chastisement of knobs, the assassination of oppressive and tyrannical masters, or demolition of shops that shall be deemed incorrigible: and also that I will cheerfully contribute to the support of my brethren as shall lose their work in consequence of their exertions against tyranny, or renounce it in resistance to a reduction of wages: and I do further swear, that I shall never divulge the above obligation, unless I should have been duly authorised and appointed to administer the same to persons making application for admission or to persons constrained to become members of our fraternity.¹

This reads very much as if it had been touched up by an informer, who added the references to assassination and the like in order to gain greater credit. When the Glasgow Cotton Spinners' leaders were put on trial in 1837, it was alleged that their form of oath had been stiffened up in 1822, by the insertion of references to 'knobs', *i.e.* blacklegs. But the authenticity of the oath was absolutely denied by the leaders of the Union, and many of the witnesses denied that they had ever been asked to take any oath at all, even though they had been members at the time when it was alleged to have been regularly administered. I think there clearly was

¹ *Ibid.* p. 74.

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an oath, but very likely only office-bearers took it, and I see no evidence that it included the criminal provisions cited above.¹

The author of the *Character, Objects and Effects* quotes in full the ceremonies used at the initiation of members into the Woolcombers' Union in Yorkshire — a section of the Worsted and Stuff Operatives' Union which had its centre at Bradford. This elaborate performance, which bears internal evidence of having been adapted from a ritual employed by some Builders' Society, is quoted in Appendix 5. It is very mild after the oath attributed to the Glasgow Spinners. But the author of the pamphlet makes up for the mildness by the tone of his comments. He writes that 'the ceremonies of admission into the Yorkshire Unions are of the most awful description: oaths are administered, binding the takers of them in the strongest terms that language can supply, to forward to the utmost of their power the objects of the combination: every accessory device is employed to strike terror into those who go through these inaugural rites, and with such success that workmen have been sometimes unable to regain their proper senses and usual composure of mind for some weeks after their admission. . . . A short time back the magistrates at Exeter made a forcible entry into an apartment in that city, where the rites of a Builders' Union were proceeding, where men were discovered with their eyes bandaged, and also a skeleton, sword, battleaxe and all the other paraphernalia, exactly as described in the following scene.' Follows the text of the Woolcombers' ceremony, with the comment that recently a workman

¹ *Trial of the Glasgow Cotton Spinners*, 1837, and *Report of the Committee on Combinations*, 1838.

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in London was so overcome that he 'died in the agonies of raving madness'.¹

Undoubtedly the Trade Unions of the early 'thirties often employed ceremonies of initiation, and administered oaths which were unlawful under the Act of 1797. This issue became of the first importance when the Dorchester Labourers were convicted in 1834. Nor need it be doubted that ceremonies of this kind were particularly prevalent in the Yorkshire societies, or that secrecy of proceedings was more extensively practised in Yorkshire than in most other parts of the country. The Builders, Woolcombers and other old-established crafts were specially addicted to these practices. They seem to have been largely adapted from ceremonies in use among the Oddfellows and other Friendly Societies which used a ritual resembling that of the Freemasons. Ceremonies closely resembling those alleged to have been used by the Yorkshire Unions are known to have been used by Friendly Societies which had certainly no sinister economic or political purposes.²

I do not, however, find any evidence that, until quite late in 1833, the proceedings of the Yorkshire Unionists were conducted with any high degree of secrecy, apart from the use of fictitious names on certain occasions. The *Leeds Mercury* — no friendly witness — wrote, in April 1834, that 'we have heard with great pleasure that the Leeds Trades' Union does not administer oaths'.³ There is, indeed, no evidence at all that it ever did; for the only oath from Yorkshire that

¹ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 66.

² See J. E. Frome Wilkinson, *The Friendly Society Movement*, p. 29, and the opening chapters of the same writer's *Mutual Thrift*.

³ *Leeds Mercury*, Apr. 12, 1839.

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the author of the *Character, Objects and Effects* was able to discover came from a Society of Woolcombers, who may have been part of the 'Stuff and Worsted Operatives' Union, which was in turn a constituent of the 'Yorkshire Trades' Union', but probably had a ceremonial of its own dating from long before its absorption into the larger body. I think, though absolute proof is not possible, that the administration of oaths was for the most part confined to societies of skilled craftsmen which had existed before the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824, and was in no sense characteristic of the new movements which grew up in Lancashire, Yorkshire and the Midlands after the repeal. Probably some of the craft societies which joined the Leeds Trades' Union still kept their old ceremonies; and certainly oaths and initiation rites were common in the constituent bodies of the Operative Builders' Union, which was strong in Yorkshire. The N.A.P.L. — and probably the Leeds Union too — had a ceremony of initiation, but there is no real evidence that it included an oath. It is true that the leaders of the Northampton Shoemakers who joined the 'Manchester Order' were charged with administering unlawful oaths. But these were probably taken under the ceremonies of the Cordwainers' Union which had its centre at Manchester, and not of the N.A.P.L. or any General Trades Union. That oaths were common in the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union is true enough; but such oaths were clearly those of particular societies which joined the 'Grand National', rather than of the 'Grand National' itself.

The view here expressed does not quite square with that of a writer in James Morrison's *Pioneer* — the organ

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first of the Builders' Union and later of the G.N.C.T.U. In June 1834, when the Union was collapsing right and left, there appeared in the *Pioneer* 'A Dialogue on the Trades Unions'. This described the existence of

many separate associations of unions of several trades united, called 'Orders', such as the builders' order, including all the separate branches connected with building: the Bradford order, which includes a great variety of different trades; and the Consolidated Union, as well as others. Of these some are more secret than others: but until now all were more or less secret in their general proceedings. Secrecy was necessary in their early stages; it was their strength and only security; now, however, their secrecy is no longer necessary: and all that remains of it is their chief cause of weakness.¹

This was presumably written either by Morrison himself or by J. E. Smith, his principal collaborator, who had also edited the Owenite *Crisis*. But I am inclined to believe that, as far as Yorkshire was concerned, apart from the Builders and the Woolcombers, and perhaps the Bradford Stuff and Worsted Union of which the Woolcombers were the leading members, secrecy, except of a very mild sort, developed only as the outcome of the decisive struggle with the employers which began in the latter half of 1833. In September 1833 we find the *Voice of the West Riding*, the organ of the Yorkshire factory reformers, saying that 'there seems to be a new secret union'.² Why a 'new' one, if the already existing Trades Union had been secret all along?

¹ *Pioneer*, June 28, 1834.

² *Voice of the West Riding*, Sept. 28, 1833.

VIII

THE SHORT TIME MOVEMENT AND THE FACTORY ACT OF 1833

IN order to explain the reference just cited we must pick up the story of the Yorkshire movement where we left it — at the close of the Dolphinholme struggle of 1832-33. But at this point we may note that Sadler, the Tory sponsor of the Ten Hours Bill, who had been invited to stand for Leeds in the election following the Reform Act, had been defeated by Baines and Macaulay, who were both strong opponents of the Bill. Oastler and his collaborators had therefore to discover a new champion in Parliament; and on February 6, 1833, Lord Ashley agreed to take over Sadler's Bill, with John Fielden, the Radical cotton employer, as his principal helper. All through the following months the struggle over the Factory Bill and the struggle between the Trade Unions and the employers were proceeding side by side.

Sadler's Bill had been read a second time in the Unreformed Parliament on March 16, 1832, and the Yorkshire campaign in its support had reached its height on April 24, when a huge county meeting was held at York, with the High Sheriff in the chair and a large attendance of gentlemen from all parts of the county.¹ Processions, mainly of operatives, marched to York from all the West Riding textile towns in order to

¹ Alfred, *History of the Factory Movement*, vol. 1, p. 235.

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attend the meeting, which was addressed by Captain Wood of Sandal, Oastler, Sadler and other speakers.¹ Ralph Taylor, the secretary of the Yorkshire Short Time Committee, in his notice to the *Leeds Mercury* calling the meeting, announced that 'the Halifax, Huddersfield, Bradford, Keighley, Bingley, Dewsbury, Batley, Heckmondwike, Holmfirth and Gomersal lads will most likely join your ranks'.² A few months later, on August 8, we find Oastler, Wood and Bull being entertained at a public dinner, preceded by a monster procession, at Manchester, under the auspices of the Lancashire Central Short Time Committee.³ As we have seen, Doherty had been in Yorkshire in April 1832, in connection with the campaign for the Bill, and we find him back there in January 1833, when, after Sadler's defeat, the Yorkshiremen were meeting to plan out a new campaign. From January 11 to 15 there was meeting in Bradford, with W. Halliwell in the chair and G. S. Bull as secretary — a gathering of delegates from Short Time Committees in the manufacturing districts; and this conference set to work to organise new committees and to work up a renewed agitation for the Ten Hours Bill.⁴ It was also responsible for the delegation which went to London and persuaded Ashley to take charge of the Bill.

In Yorkshire, the organ of the Short Time Movement was the *British Labourer's Protector and Factory Child's Friend*, a halfpenny paper started on September 21, 1832, and printed first at Leeds and then at Bradford. It circulated, as its files show, in Lancashire and

¹ Mayhall, *Annals of Leeds*, p. 386.

² *Leeds Mercury*, Apr. 21, 1832.

³ Alfred, *op. cit.* vol. 1, p. 254.

⁴ *British Labourer's Protector*, Jan. 18, 1833 and Feb. 1, 1833.

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Scotland as well as in the Yorkshire towns. On June 8, 1833, it was replaced by the *Voice of the West Riding* — a title reminiscent of Doherty's *Voice of the People* — and this new journal lasted for at least a year, running parallel with Doherty's *Herald of the Rights of Industry* — the Lancashire organ of the National Regeneration Society and the Eight Hours Movement.

Ashley's adhesion to the cause was followed, on February 23, 1833, by a big meeting in London, called by the Society for the Improvement of the Condition of Factory Children. The Duke of Sussex took the chair, and Ashley, Sadler, Bull and Oastler were among the speakers.¹ But the new Whig Government would have nothing to say to Ashley's Bill, which was being loudly denounced by the manufacturers as a device of the Trades Unions to secure a reduction in men's hours of labour by sheltering behind the factory children. The Trades Unionists, it was said, were themselves in many cases the employers of the children (*e.g.* at that time the spinner paid and employed his own piecers), and were responsible for the long hours worked and the brutality sometimes employed. In seventy Lancashire mills half the children under eighteen were employed by the adult operatives.² But the agitation was too strong for the Government to do nothing; on April 3 it decided to appoint a body of Commissioners, including Edwin Chadwick, to visit the factory districts and bring back a first-hand report on the condition of the children. There was great indignation at this in the factory towns, for it was regarded as a device to shelve the Ten Hours Bill. On April 25 the Lancashire

¹ Alfred, *op. cit.* vol. 1, p. 321.

² Hutchins and Harrison, *History of Factory Legislation*, p. 37.

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Central Short Time Committee issued an 'Address of the Operatives of England and Scotland to all Ranks and Classes', denouncing the Commissioners and demanding the enactment of the Ten Hours Bill.¹ This purported to come from a national body, and very likely did. The Yorkshire operatives, however, made a similar declaration of their own.²

Contrary to expectations, the Commissioners, impelled by Edwin Chadwick, got promptly and energetically to work. Early in May they were in Manchester, hearing evidence. The Short Time Committee delivered to them a public protest against the Government's action, and organised, on May 5, a vast procession of factory children to the hotel at which they were staying. On May 13, when the Commissioners arrived in Leeds, they were greeted by a similar protest and procession. Clearly the Lancashire and Yorkshire movements were at this stage acting closely together.³

The Commissioners reported on June 28, endorsing most of the statements about factory conditions which had been made by the reformers. Meanwhile, on June 17, Ashley's Bill had been given a second reading. The Government, having received the report, announced that it would introduce its own Bill to take the place of Ashley's; and Althorp, who had spoken strongly against the Ten Hours, took charge of the new measure.

This was the situation when, on July 1, the Yorkshiremen organised their huge demonstration of protest on Wibsey Low Moor. The purpose announced was

¹ Alfred, *op. cit.* vol. 2, p. 37; Grant, *History of Factory Legislation*, p. 40.

² Alfred, *op. cit.* vol. 2, p. 45.

³ Grant, *op. cit.* p. 45.

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‘To consider proposals of petitioning Parliament to reject the proposition of limiting the labour of factory children under thirteen years of age to eight hours per day, and two sets, and to have without delay the Ten Hours Bill, which extends its merciful restrictions to persons under eighteen years of age, but allows them to work ten hours per day’.¹

This statement makes plain the essential difference between the Sadler-Ashley measure and the expected provisions of the proposed Government Bill. The reformers, and especially the operatives, wanted a ten-hour day for all under eighteen — which would have meant in practice a ten-hour day for most of the adults as well. The Government, they feared, would retort by offering eight hours, but only up to the age of thirteen — which would have meant the possibility of a sixteen-hour day for the adults, with two relays of children.

The Wibsey Low Moor meeting was chaired by Wood of Sandal, and addressed by Oastler, Bull, Pitkeithly and Cavey Richardson from Yorkshire; and by George Condy, representing the Lancashire Short Time Committee. Doherty also spoke, having been sent by Ashley and the London leaders, upon whom he had been in attendance in connection with the definition of the movement’s attitude to the recent developments. It was said that there were 120,000 persons present. The Yorkshire speakers wanted, in connection with the Ten Hours, personal punishment of offenders against the law, and not merely fines; but Doherty, who realised the parliamentary position far better than they did, urged them to drop that part of the Bill in the hope of improving its chances. This was Ashley’s advice,

¹ Mayhall, *Annals of Leeds*, p. 403.

THE SHORT TIME MOVEMENT

but it was not taken, and Doherty's speech got a very unfavourable reception.

Ultimately, the 1833 Factory Act was not so bad as the operatives had feared; but it did not concede them their main demand — the Ten Hours — which was not won until 1847. The Act differentiated between children under and over thirteen. For those under thirteen there was to be a maximum working day of nine hours, and a maximum week of 48 hours. This was to become operative gradually — up to eleven years of age in the first year, twelve in the second and thirteen in the third. For workers between thirteen and eighteen years of age the twelve-hour day already applied to cotton mills in 1831 was to remain; and as the new Act applied to all textile mills except in lace and certain subsidiary trades, this meant some gain outside the cotton areas. Moreover, for the thirteen-eighteen age group the working week was now to be limited to 69 hours. These hours throughout exclude meal-times, which were fixed at an hour and a half as under Hobhouse's Act of 1825. Night work was forbidden to all workers under eighteen — a retrogression from the limit of twenty-one set in Hobhouse's Act of 1831. The minimum age of factory employment was to remain at nine, as fixed for cotton mills in 1819; but silk was exempted from this provision, and was also given the privilege of working children under thirteen a ten-hour instead of a nine-hour day. Finally, there were to be four itinerant Government inspectors, with the powers of Justices of the Peace, entitled not only to make but also to enforce rules and regulations under the Act, including the enforcement of school attendance.¹

¹ Hutchins and Harrison, *History*, p. 41.

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It will be seen that the Act finally fixed the hours for the younger children at nine, and not at eight. To some extent this may have been an advantage to the adults; for it made the working of relays of children less profitable, though it did not prevent the practice. The employers, for their part, objected to the eight hours on the ground that there would not be enough factory children to meet their needs.

IX

THE STRUGGLE IN YORKSHIRE, 1833

SIDE by side with the factory movement of 1833 ran the struggle of the Unions with the employers. There were extensive weavers' strikes at Leeds in January, in addition to the dispute with Hindes and Derham.¹ At the end of March a strike of worsted weavers at Messrs. Green's ended in an agreement to refer future disputes to a joint Committee of Arbitration.² Thereafter came a lull, partly no doubt because the factory agitation was occupying the centre of the stage, and also perhaps because in April the leaders of the Worsted Operatives' Trades Union were being tried for a libel on Messrs. Hindes and Derham. The libel was contained in a handbill signed 'John Bolland'; and a true bill was found against John Smith, Deputy Grand Master of the Worsted Operatives' Trades Union, and James Morgan, District Delegate of No. 5 Lodge.³ In May the *Leeds Mercury* was congratulating its readers that 'we have fewer disputes between masters and their workmen, the former being inclined to give fair wages, and the latter to abstain from dictation'.⁴ But the peace was short-lived. On May 30 the Leeds carpet weavers, who may have had a separate Union, came out on the wage issue, and ten of the weavers were sent to the House of Correction for the crime of leaving

¹ Mayhall, *Annals of Yorkshire*, vol. 1, p. 397.

² *Leeds Mercury*, Mar. 30, 1833.

³ *Ibid.* Apr. 20, 1833.

⁴ *Ibid.* May 11, 1833.

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work unfinished.¹ On their return on June 12 they were escorted in procession through the town. There was also a big strike of coal-miners at Wakefield, in the course of which eleven leaders were sent to prison. There was a procession to celebrate their release in July.² The worsted weavers also came out, and during their prolonged strike the Mayor issued a placard containing a special warning against intimidation.³ In July there were more strikes, especially in the villages round Leeds. A manufacturer of Apperley Bridge wrote that 'for the past month the woollen manufacturers of the neighbourhood have been pestered by a set of idle fellows going from mill to mill, calling themselves by the name of Jack Strike, *alias* John Powlett, with a form or list of prices, which they insist should be paid by the mill masters to their slubbers without in any way consulting the masters as to the scale of wages'. The writer said he was told that, unless he signed, 'John Powlett would be under the necessity of exercising his power'. He refused, and his men struck. 'Seven mills are now either actually at a stand or will speedily be in that condition in the townships of Idle, Eccleshall, Esholt, Guiseley and Shipley.'⁴

Hard on the heels of this came the decision of the Leeds master dyers of worsted stuffs to discharge all Trade Unionists from their employment. These men were members of a special Union, the Society of Stuff Singers, Dyers, Pressers and Finishers, with 550 members, centred at Leeds.⁵ The *Leeds Mercury* presciently

¹ Mayhall, *Annals of Leeds*, p. 402.

² *Working Man's Friend*, Aug. 3, 1833.

³ Mayhall, *Annals of Leeds*, p. 402. ⁴ *Leeds Mercury*, July 13, 1833.

⁵ For this affair see *Leeds Intelligencer*, July 4, 1833, July 21, 1833 and Aug. 3, 1833.

observed that 'a great struggle between the master manufacturers and the Trades Union in the different branches of the woollen trade is at hand'.¹ The battle over the right to belong to the 'Trades Union' was beginning.

In the early days of August the Leeds papers were full of accounts of assaults by Trades Unionists on blacklegs and non-members;² and in August came a second warning against intimidation.³ On August 10 the *Mercury* reported that a meeting of merchants, manufacturers, dyers and others, representing a number of firms, had drawn up a Memorial on the subject of Trades Union tyranny for presentation to the Government. To this Lord Melbourne sent, on September 3, a reply which must have greatly encouraged the manufacturers to persist in their campaign. His secretary wrote:

I am directed by Viscount Melbourne to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th of August, together with the memorial of the merchants, manufacturers, etc., of the West Riding of the County of York, and to express his Lordship's regret that the great importance of the subject to which his attention is called thereby, as well as the general pressure of public business, has prevented him from sending an earlier reply.

As his Lordship has often before expressed it in Parliament, he considers it unnecessary to repeat the strong opinion entertained by his Majesty's ministers of the criminal character and the evil effects of the Unions described in the Memorial, upon the interests of the masters, the workmen themselves, and the country in general.

Many of the acts mentioned are in themselves actual

¹ Quoted in *Working Man's Friend*, July 27, 1833.

² e.g. *Leeds Mercury*, Aug. 3, 1833.

³ *Ibid.* Aug. 10, 1833.

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breaches of the law, and no doubt can be entertained that combinations for the purposes enumerated are illegal conspiracies, and liable to be prosecuted as such at common law.

In reply to the request of advice and council, his Lordship has only to observe that proceedings of this nature can only be successfully encouraged by concession and weakness. You may rely that the Government will take the most prompt and efficient measures to repress disorder, to punish crime, and to secure the effectual execution of the law; but the local knowledge and experience of the memorialists themselves will better suggest to them the precise measures which they should adopt, and the course which it will be most expedient for them to pursue.¹

In effect, Melbourne was giving the utmost encouragement to the masters all over Yorkshire to declare war on the Trades Unions and endeavour completely to wipe them out.

On September 21 the *Leeds Mercury* was able to report that the worsted dyers had gone back to work on the masters' terms, thus renouncing the Union.² On the same day, the *Pioneer* was announcing a Leeds spinners' strike against reduced wages, and a strike of Nottingham cut-up hosiery and glove workers for an advance.³ At about the same time, the Rochdale wool spinners and weavers held an open-air meeting to consider joining the 'Yorkshire Trades' Union'. The meeting adjourned to a public-house 'for the purpose of communicating the rules of the Union', which presumably could not be read out in a place where informers might be present.⁴ Rochdale, though in

¹ Quoted in *Poor Man's Guardian*, Sept. 14, 1833.

² *Leeds Mercury*, Sept. 21, 1833.

³ *Pioneer*, Sept. 21, 1833.

⁴ *Poor Man's Guardian*, Oct. 5, 1833.

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Lancashire, had closer connections with the Yorkshire movement. The Journeymen Shoemakers there also belonged 'to the Yorkshire Trades' Union'¹ despite the presence of the Cordwainers' Grand Lodge at Manchester.

In the same month — September — great excitement was caused when an overlooker, by name Joseph Radcliffe, was committed on a charge of manslaughter for causing the death by ill-treatment of a boy of fourteen employed in a Leeds flax factory. A huge crowd attended the boy's funeral, which was made the occasion of a demonstration by the factory reformers. The overlooker was later sentenced to a year's imprisonment.²

On September 28 the master manufacturers, having received Melbourne's reply, met to consider their further action. At this meeting they drew up their famous 'Bond' under which each employer was to pledge himself to employ no member of the Trades Union. This meeting seems to have represented the woollen cloth, but not the worsted, trade; for its declaration dealt specifically with 'a union of operative woollen manufacturers' which had for some time existed in Leeds, with corresponding branches which dictated to the 'merchants, master manufacturers, millowners and master cloth-dressers'.³ Even before this the 'document' was being presented in a number of cases; for in September Simeon Pollard and Major Scholfield wrote a joint letter to the *Leeds Times* 'for the Committee' enclosing a paper which men were being

¹ *Wakefield and Dewsbury Journal*, Oct. 4, 1833.

² Mayhall, *Annals of Leeds*, p. 406.

³ *Leeds Mercury*, Oct. 5, 1833.

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ordered to sign, promising that they would not support 'certain Societies or Associations at Leeds or elsewhere, respectively called or known by the names of "The Trades Union" and "The National Association", or any other such society'.¹ The *Pioneer* wrote: 'In Leeds, 20,000 of our fellow-operatives are denounced — proscribed — because of their adherence to the laws of our common right; and they are threatened with worse than the guillotine — "loss of bread" — unless they denounce the holy compact of defensive association'.² Baines's *Mercury* became alarmed, and pleaded for moderation. 'A great struggle, which sagacious men have long foreseen, is about to take place in the manufacturing districts of the West Riding of Yorkshire. . . . If we are rightly informed, the cessation from labour of manufacturers, employing 2000 horse-power, would throw out of employment 20,000 adults and 10,000 children. It is true that the struggle, if to the extent contemplated, must be of short duration; but however short, the danger from such a state of things is imminent, both to the interests of both masters and workers, as well as to the permanent interests of the trade, and to the tranquillity of the district, and we hope that such measures of reconciliation will take place immediately as to prevent the necessity for encountering these dangers. At what period the masters will begin to require the renunciation of the Union is, we believe, not yet fixed, but if no reconciliation takes place, it is probable that it will be in the course of the present month. . . . Our advice to the masters is, to require nothing from the men that will infringe upon their liberty, or that will interfere with their obtaining

¹ *Leeds Times*, Oct. 28, 1833.

² *Pioneer*, Oct. 12, 1833.

a fair remuneration for their labour . . . and our advice to the men is, to renounce all dictation in the management of their masters' concerns, and to let all differences which may arise between any master and his workmen as to the rate of wages be settled by the parties themselves, without any interference from persons who are ignorant of the peculiar relations in which they stand to each other — and above all, entirely and punctually, to abandon that system of intimidation and annoyance which has been so notoriously exercised towards workmen who have thought fit to determine for themselves the price at which they will sell their labour.'¹

But the Leeds masters were in no mood for compromise; and it was soon announced that the masters at Halifax, Huddersfield, Dewsbury and other towns were also adopting the 'Bond', and deciding to force their workers to renounce the Trades Union.² The workers, meanwhile, held a full-dress delegate conference 'from the various districts and provincial committees connected with the Trades' Union',³ and proposed to put up a stiff resistance to the employers' attack. Owen's friend, William Clegg, writing to him from Cheetham Hill on October 17, reported that 'the men make partial failures in their attempts to establish a general union, but they will carry their point at last. . . . The state of trade hereabouts is as bad as it well can be.'⁴

¹ Quoted in *Poor Man's Guardian*, Oct. 12, 1833.

² *Leeds Mercury*, Oct. 12, 1833.

³ *Voice of the West Riding*, Oct. 12, 1833.

⁴ Owen Correspondence, Holyoake House, Manchester, No. 623.

X

THE GRAND MORAL UNION OF THE PRODUCTIVE CLASSES

AT this point the story of the Trades Unions in Yorkshire merges into the general history of the struggle of the Unions all over the country. For on October 9, under the auspices of the Owenites, an 'extraordinary' conference of delegates from Cooperative and Trade Societies all over the country met at Owen's Institution of the Industrious Classes, and to this gathering Owen put forward his proposal to form a 'Grand National Moral Union of the Productive Classes of the United Kingdom'.¹ The *Poor Man's Guardian*, announcing the meeting, wrote, 'We hope the parties who will meet on this occasion will see the necessity of all their societies falling into one general compact union'.² Three weeks later, the *Guardian* was writing enthusiastically about the success of the conference, which it called the 'Cooperative and Trades Union Congress'. 'On Tuesday, the Congress was occupied in receiving the reports of the several delegates. . . . If they do not record many practical proofs of the success of cooperation, they show at least that a *spirit of combination has grown up among the working classes of which there has been no example in former times.* A grand national organisation,

¹ For Owen's intention at this point see his speech, reported in the *Crisis*, Oct. 19, 1833; this is reproduced in *British Working Class Movements Select Documents*, p. 270.

² *Poor Man's Guardian*, Sept. 28, 1833.

THE GRAND MORAL UNION

which promises to embody the physical power of the country, is silently, but rapidly progressing; and the object of it is the sublimest that can be conceived — *to establish for the productive classes a complete dominion over the fruits of their own industry.*'¹ [The italics are in the original.]

In effect, Owen had launched a 'Grand National Union', and was appealing to every section of the productive classes to join. He was not, let it be clear, appealing only to the Trades Unions, or merely for the formation of new Trade Union branches. He envisaged an organisation wide enough to include all the Co-operative Societies and all persons of every class who were prepared to join with him in the attempt to establish suddenly and at a blow the 'New Moral World' of which he had been dreaming so long. The Congress, or Conference, was not confined to Trades Union delegates. Indeed, it was largely made up of delegates from Co-operative and Owenite Societies from all parts of the country. For some years the Owenite Co-operative movement had been growing fast, and Owen had been calling, at six-monthly intervals, national Congresses of the Owenite and Co-operative Societies. The first of this regular series had been held in Manchester in May 1831; the second at Birmingham in October 1831; the third in London in April and May 1832; the fourth at Liverpool in October 1832; the fifth at Huddersfield in April 1833.² The London Congress of October 1833 was the sixth; but it became an 'extraordinary' congress because

¹ *Ibid.* Oct. 19, 1833.

² Holyoake, *History of Cooperation*, p. 120. But Holyoake wrongly dates the Manchester Congress 1830.

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Trades Unions as well as Cooperative Societies were invited, and because its object was to establish an inclusive 'Grand General Union'. This is probably why Holyoake omits it from his list of the early Cooperative Congresses. But he includes in his list the next of the series, held at Barnsley in March and April 1834 — calling it the sixth; and he also includes, as the seventh, the Halifax Congress of April 1835. Thereafter, with the collapse of the movement, the Cooperative Congresses ceased. The Owenites in the following month founded in London the Association of All Classes of All Nations, which continued to hold Annual Congresses in various parts of the country until the collapse of Owen's Queenwood Community in 1846.¹

Doherty's connection with the Owenites had been close from the first. At the Birmingham Congress it was proposed to make the *Voice of the People*, then on the point, it was thought, of establishing itself in London, the official organ of the movement. At the London Conference of 1832 the United Kingdom was divided into nine districts — Metropolitan, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Belfast, Dublin, Cork, Edinburgh and Norwich — and in each of these centres some sort of regional organisation was set up.² The absence of Yorkshire from this list seems to show that the Owenites had as yet no official organisation in that region. There, was, however, undoubtedly a good deal of Owenite activity, especially in Huddersfield. At the Birmingham Congress of 1831 we find one Heaton, a delegate from Huddersfield, reporting the formation of

¹ Holyoake, *op. cit.* p. 137.

² Holyoake, *op. cit.* p. 123.

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Cooperative Societies in his area. 'They subscribed a small sum each, weekly, which they employed in trade, first by buying the necessaries of life at wholesale prices, and retailing them out again to themselves and the public at retail prices, the difference being put into a common fund. In this manner it accumulated, until they were able to employ their own shoemakers, tailors, etc.; and at length, as in his own society at Huddersfield, their profits and subscriptions united enabled them to set their members to work at their own trades. They had now fourteen of their own members at work for the society on its own capital. They were manufacturing woollen cloth, waistcoatings, etc. They were also doing the same at Dewsbury. At Leicester and Loughborough they were making stockings of all sorts. At Pemberton, in Lancashire, they were making linens, checks, etc. All these societies were exchanging with each other, and thus forming a certain market for their produce. And thus they would go on increasing in wealth, until they were enabled to rent, and ultimately purchase, land whereon they could raise their own food, and erect dwellings and manufactories, and become perfectly independent — that is, they would be always certain of the necessaries and comforts of life, aye, and its allowable luxuries too, by the exertion of their own moderate labour, without the intervention of capitalists.'¹

Huddersfield continued to be the Yorkshire stronghold of the Owenites. The *Poor Man's Guardian*, announcing the Cooperative Congress to be held there at Easter 1833, said that it had recently received communications from Huddersfield 'giving a very favourable account of the societies in that town'. 'They

¹ *Political Magazine*, Oct. 1831.

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seem convinced from the first acts of the Reformed Parliament that little will be done to benefit the working classes — indeed they feel confident that no plan of reform can *permanently* benefit them, unless such as shall place them beyond the grinding influence of commercial competition, surplus capital and increasing productive powers. And, notwithstanding their feelings against taxation of monopoly, they feel certain that if the quartern loaf was sold for a penny, and they were suffered to be the victims of these powers, and to compete with one another for employment, that their wages would soon be reduced to the price of food. They, therefore, aim at being their own masters, and uniting capital and machinery in their favour. Many of these societies have already their own machinery, and are employing several of their members, especially in the manufacture of cloth. . . . Many Trade and Benefit Societies are making arrangements for employing their members with their funds, instead of paying them to do nothing, or, what is worse, to invest them in Savings Banks and the funds.’¹

I think it is clear that this Cooperative Congress at Huddersfield brought the Owenites into touch with the Yorkshire Trade Union movement; and the germ of the ‘Grand General Union’ was very possibly engendered on this occasion in Owen’s mind. At all events, he decided to go straight to Yorkshire very soon after the London Congress had instituted the ‘Grand National Union’, and on November 1 he addressed at Huddersfield a specially summoned Congress of ‘delegates and others from the various Societies and Trades Unions in the neighbourhood of Huddersfield’, and the

¹ *Poor Man’s Guardian*, Mar. 30, 1833.

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following resolutions were thereupon unanimously approved:

That this meeting earnestly recommends to all Trades Unions, Cooperative Societies, Commercial Orders, Benefit Societies, and all other associations intended for the improvement of the working classes, to form themselves into Lodges, make their own laws and regulations to unite under the 'Grand National Moral Union of the Productive and Useful Classes', as proposed by the Congress held in London at the National Equitable Labour Exchange from the 7th to the 14th of August 1833, for the purpose of emancipating the industrious and useful classes from the difficulties which overwhelm them.

That this meeting recommend to the delegates of the Unions meeting in Leeds to take into consideration the Grand National Moral Union as proposed by the Congress in London in order to unite all the industrious and useful classes.¹

These resolutions make it plain that the Huddersfield workers regarded Leeds as the headquarters of their Trades Union; in fact, the body sometimes called the Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield District Union was identical with the 'Leeds Trades' Union' whose activities have been described in this study, and the Clothiers' Union, often spoken of as a separate body, was a section — the most important section — of this larger amalgamation.

The Huddersfield meeting was part of a Yorkshire tour undertaken by Owen in order to bring the Yorkshiremen into the 'Grand National Union'. He spoke also at Halifax and perhaps elsewhere. And from Yorkshire he went on to Lancashire to pursue a similar mission.

¹ Owen Papers, Holyoake House, No. 260.

XI

THE END OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF LABOUR

WE left the story of the Lancashire Trade Union movement at the point at which the National Association for the Protection of Labour, bereft of Doherty's leadership, was attempting under Bullock to build up connections in Yorkshire and the North-East in order to compensate for the loss of most of its Midland supporters and for the decline of activity after the quarrel in Lancashire itself. Mr. and Mrs. Webb say that the reason for the falling-away of the Midland areas was the refusal of the Lancashire areas, exhausted by the Spinners' struggles, to support the strikes of the Nottingham framework knitters which followed shortly upon the conference of the N.A.P.L. in Nottingham in March 1831.¹ Clearly this attempt of the Manchester Committee to recapture the leadership of the movement completely failed, in the sense that neither Yorkshire nor any other of the areas from which the *Union Pilot* was presenting such hopeful reports in the early months of 1832 ever joined the National Association to the extent of recognising Lancashire's leadership or giving financial support to the Manchester Committee. Though the name 'National Association' continued, as we have seen, to be used fairly often, the various county movements carried on quite independently.

¹ Webb, *History*, p. 123.

THE END OF THE N.A.P.L.

The N.A.P.L., as a separate federal organisation, simply flickered out. The *Union Pilot and Cooperative Intelligencer* died out (the latest issue I know of was on May 5, 1832). There remained the Yorkshire Trades' Union, with its centre at Leeds, and a number of rather shadowy 'General Trades Unions', sometimes still describing themselves as branches of the National Association, in the Midland textile areas, Nottingham, Sheffield, Northampton and doubtless other towns. Also, there remained some sort of organisation in Lancashire itself; for we find occasional references to the 'Lancashire Trades' Union', and occasional meetings of delegates representing, or claiming to represent, the Lancashire movement. But this Lancashire organisation was much more shadowy than the Yorkshire movement; for with the collapse of the Spinners' Union, of which Doherty said in June 1832 that it had 'sunk into insignificance',¹ the life had gone out of Trades Unionism in the cotton industry.

Doherty, meanwhile, had transferred his activities to the organisation of the Lancashire Central Short Time Committee, and from the beginning of 1833 was in close touch with Lord Ashley and the London factory reformers, and was also acting to some extent as a liaison officer between London, Lancashire and Yorkshire. We find him at a Bradford conference in January as the delegate of the Manchester Short Time Committee,² at the Wibsey Low Moor meeting on July 1 as a delegate from the committee that had been sitting in London to help with the advocacy of the Ten Hours Bill,³ and at Halifax in August, this time as delegate

¹ Webb, *op. cit.* p. 120, quoting the *Poor Man's Advocate*.

² *Leeds Mercury*, Jan. 19, 1833.

³ See *ante*, p. 79.

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from the Lancashire Central Short Time Committee.¹ In Bronterre O'Brien's *Destructive* we find him referred to in June as 'a delegate from the operatives of Lancashire and Yorkshire in support of Lord Ashley's Factory Bill'.²

Throughout 1832 the Lancashire textile workers had no important strike. There were cotton strikes in the Glasgow area that year, and the Macclesfield silk weavers came out in November, and were given help by the Silk Weavers' Union at Manchester.³ But the Lancashire cotton industry remained quiet. This condition of things continued all through 1833; and there was no response in Lancashire to the resolution of the Glasgow Weavers 'That it be recommended to the united weavers in England, Ireland and Scotland, also the various united operatives of these realms, that they take into early consideration the propriety of fixing a day when the whole shall simultaneously suspend work for a month, or till the rights of labour and property are properly ascertained and adjusted, a certain provision of the real necessaries of life established for the truly industrious to the extent of our national resources, and till every sane and active member of the community be invested with the elective franchise'.⁴

This, of course, is a version of William Benbow's 'Grand National Holiday', to reappear later as the 'Sacred Month' of the Chartist. But it also bears witness to the strength of Owenite influence in Glasgow, where Alexander Campbell, Secretary to the 'United Trades', was an ardent supporter of Owen's ideas. The

¹ *Poor Man's Guardian*, Sept. 7, 1833.

² *Destructive*, June 8, 1833.

³ *Poor Man's Guardian*, Dec. 1, 1832.

⁴ *Ibid.* Oct. 5, 1833.

THE END OF THE N.A.P.L.

Scottish section of Doherty's Grand General Union of Cotton Spinners had by no means shared in the decay of the Lancashire movement. It was during these years at the height of its power, so that, according to the employers, wages for spinners were higher in Glasgow than anywhere else and the Union was accused of tyranny and interference with the masters' business in much the same terms as the Yorkshire Union. The Glasgow Spinners had reorganised their Union in 1827, and had remained strong ever since. They kept their power till the arrest and trial of their leaders in connection with the great dispute of 1837 broke the Union up. That, however, falls outside the limits of this study.¹

In Glasgow in 1833, one of the many strikes arose among the steam engine makers; and we find the Steam Engine Makers of Manchester — the headquarters of one of the principal Unions — declaring their support of their Scottish brethren, and resolving as follows:

That this meeting views with deep regret that by the existing principles of the Association of Master Machine and Steam-engine Makers of Glasgow, together with the dictatorial manner they assert their determination of employing at our business what men they choose and for what length of time they think proper, in defiance of the long-established rights and privileges of the trade, the ultimate destruction of that honourable dependence which ought alike to influence the motives and regulate the actions of employers and employed.²

The Glasgow masters were acting in the same way as

¹ See the *Trial of the Glasgow Cotton Spinners*, 1837, and the evidence given to the 1838 Committee on Combinations.

² *Poor Man's Guardian*, Oct. 5, 1833.

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those of Leeds, locking out all members of the 'Trades Union', on the ground that it was interfering with the conduct of their business, and were also prosecuting pickets who attempted to stop the blacklegs from working.

XII

THE BUILDERS' UNION

IN Lancashire, and also in Birmingham, the centre of the stage was occupied in 1833 by the Operative Builders' Union. The story of the O.B.U. has been told fully by Mr. R. W. Postgate in his *Builders' History*, and there is no need to repeat it here.¹ What is relevant to the general story is that in June 1833 there began a big lock-out of builders in Lancashire in order to compel them to renounce membership of the O.B.U. 'In the spring of 1833', writes the author of *Character, Objects and Effects*, 'this body commenced operations in Manchester, Liverpool and the neighbouring towns, by serving a requisition on the masters, which demanded an abandonment of the practice of erecting buildings on the system of contracts.'² The Corresponding Secretary of the Operative Societies of Bricklayers in Liverpool (note the plural, and the fact that the various craft societies preserved their identity as units within the O.B.U.) called his men off a contract job, and demanded that the employer should show the Union the terms of the contract. The writer states that 'the masters had no particular desire to continue this system, and most of them complied with the request of the

¹ Postgate reproduces from the records preserved at the Cooperative Union headquarters in Manchester the only surviving circular of the Builders' Union. An extract from this will be found in Cole and Filson, *British Working Class Movements: Select Documents*, p. 266.

² *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 29.

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workmen to lay it aside'. But this concession, he continues, only led to further demands. 'The Committee of the Union issued a series of regulations, requiring the masters to abide by certain rules respecting the equalisation of wages, the number of apprentices they were to take, the use of machinery and a variety of other matters, all more or less restrictive, and consequently injurious to the free transaction of business.'¹ Masters who rejected the Union's terms were fined by it, or deprived of labour. The case is cited of a master mason who was ordered to appear before the committee of the Union on the ground that he had discharged a workman because of his Union activities. The master denied that this had been the cause of the man's discharge; but his men all struck work. At Manchester a strike took place because of the discharge of Union men who refused to work with non-Unionists.

The exalted mood of the Builders at this time can be judged from the following declaration, which a builder correspondent of the *Pioneer* suggested for adoption and for sending to the masters, not only in the building trades, but generally:

To the Editor of the *Pioneer*,

I send you enclosed a copy of a Form of Declaration of Independence, which it appears to me would be well to be adopted by the members of the Lodges of the Trades Unions generally.

FORM OF A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

We, the delegates of several lodges in the Building Trades, elected for the purpose of correcting the abuses which have crept into the modes of undertaking and

¹ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 31.

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transacting business, do hereby give you notice that you will receive no assistance from the working men in any of our bodies, to enable you to fulfil an engagement which you have entered into, unless you comply with the following conditions.

Aware that it is our labour alone that can carry into effect what you have undertaken, we cannot but view ourselves as parties to your engagement, if that engagement be ever fulfilled: and as you had no authority from us to make such an engagement, nor had you any legitimate right to barter our labour at prices fixed by yourself, we call upon you to exhibit to our several bodies your detailed estimates of quantities and prices at which you have taken the work: and we call upon you to arrange with us a fixed percentage of profits for your own services in conducting the building, and in finding the material on which our labour is to be applied.

Should we find upon examination, that you have fixed equitable prices, which will not only remunerate you for your superintendence, but us for our toil, we have no objections, upon a clear understanding, to become parties to the contract, and will see you through it; after having entered yourself a member of our body, and after your having been duly *elected* to occupy the office you have *assumed*.¹

The anti-Trades Union writer already cited proceeds as follows: 'The commands to cease working, issued by the Committee of the Union, were in every case implicitly obeyed. . . . The masters, finding that concession was of no avail, and only served to encourage fresh and more unreasonable demands, while serious impediments were placed in the way of their business, determined to employ no workmen, except such as should sign a declaration that they did not belong to a Trades

¹ *Pioneer*, Sept. 14, 1833.

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Union. The men, as might have been expected, refused to comply with this demand, in consequence of which a general turn-out ensued, and for more than six months the vast building operations, commonly carried on amidst the immense and increasing population of Manchester, Liverpool and places in the vicinity, was almost entirely suspended.¹

The form of declaration required by the Liverpool masters ran as follows:

We, the Operative Masons [or Carpenters, etc.] of Liverpool, hereby announce to the public that we have withdrawn from all connection with the General Trades Union, and that we renounce altogether the restrictions which it has recently imposed upon us with regard to our employers.²

The origins of this contest, and of the form subsequently taken by the Builders' Union, lay in the development of the contract system, whereby a customer requiring a factory, or a group of houses to be built, instead of entering into separate agreements with the working small masters in the various building trades — masons, carpenters, plumbers and so on — entered into a single contract with a 'general contractor', who then either employed the working masters under sub-contract, or took on wage-labour directly, to the exclusion of the small masters. This system, long established in London, was developing fast in the industrial areas about this time; and it was intensely disliked by the skilled craftsmen, partly because it tended to deprive them of the chance of becoming masters, and partly because the 'general contractor'

¹ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 34.

² *Pioneer*, Oct. 19, 1833.

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was apt to be intolerant of the traditional rules and customs of the various trades, which the small masters, being themselves mostly apprenticed craftsmen not far removed in status from the skilled workmen, were accustomed to observe. Indeed, under the old system the line of division between master and man was not at all clearly drawn; for a 'master', finding himself without a contract for the time being, might often go to work for another 'master', who might a few months later be working in his turn under his late employee.

The small masters commonly had belonged, and often still belonged, to the local Trade Clubs or Societies which had joined up in the Operative Builders' Union and its constituent national craftsmen's societies. The intense hostility to the 'general contract' system made the builders listen very readily to Owen's plans for cooperative production; and when, on September 24, 1833, the great national 'Builders' Parliament' met in Manchester, with 275 delegates from all over the country,¹ Owen was easily able to persuade them to adopt his grandiose scheme for a 'Grand National Gild of Builders', designed to take over the entire building industry of Great Britain, and replace the capitalist 'general contractor' by a collective agency representing the whole body of workers.² At the Builders' Parliament there was another issue of outstanding importance before the delegates. One party in the O.B.U., strongly supported by the Owenites, stood for 'universal government' against 'the exclusives'. The latter wanted each craft section of the

¹ *Ibid.* Oct. 19, 1833.

² See Postgate, *Builders' History*, p. 92, and Cole, *Life of Robert Owen*, p. 271.

O.B.U. to be organised as an independent Union, the general body being only a federation with limited powers; whereas the 'universals' stood for a single centralised Union, under a single Executive and Conference — which was a plain necessity if the plans for a Builders' Guild were to be realised.

This struggle between 'universals' and 'exclusives' continued throughout the life of the O.B.U. In November we find the *Pioneer* rejoicing over the defeat of the 'exclusives' at London and Leeds. 'The exclusives are outwitted. London and Leeds, we thank you.'¹ In December Morrison was rejoicing over the victory of the 'universals' at Birmingham.² The strength of the 'exclusives' came in fact mainly from Lancashire, and was dictated by the fact that the employers there were not outlawing Trade Unions as such, but only the 'Trades Union' — *i.e.* in this case the O.B.U. For the resistance of the O.B.U. in Manchester and Liverpool was being gradually worn down, and by the end of the year the men were drifting back, and agreeing to renounce the O.B.U. Thereafter, in 1834, the Builders' Union was dragged down in the general collapse. The Stonemasons seceded as a national body in September, and by the end of the year the O.B.U. had melted away.³ At the height of its glory, in 1833, it is said to have had 40,000 members.⁴

During the earlier stages of the Lancashire dispute, the master builders made many attempts to bring in blackleg labour from other districts, but 'with little success, owing to the intimidation practised by the

¹ *Pioneer*, Nov. 16, 1833.

² *Ibid.* Dec. 7, 1833.

³ Postgate, *op. cit.* p. 111.

⁴ *True Sun*, quoted by Postgate, *op. cit.* p. 58.

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Union workmen'.¹ But later they were more successful, as the Union's power began to wane. Finally, says the same writer, 'the combination was voted a nuisance, and forsaken by all, and they returned in penitence to their employers requesting work on the old terms'.² That is to say, they did not give up their separate societies, but only the O.B.U.

At the height of its glory, the great Builders' Union seemed to many the first fully organised national section of what was destined to become the one inclusive army of labour on the march. James Morrison wrote: 'The Union is a well-organised body of working men, bound together by wise and discreet laws, and by one common interest. . . . The building branches form one grand division, and the other trades unite as best suits their habits and previous associations. These trades are formed into separate lodges each having its own bye-laws, but all in unison with the grand laws of the Union.'³ And again: 'Our Union Bark is once more safely out at sea. The new arrangements which have been made at the Grand Delegates Meeting [of the O.B.U.] are likely to ensure the permanent prosperity of the Union. . . . Intelligence of different Unions is continually reaching us, but having formed one district [? misprint for 'distinct'] division, the builders are yet in advance.'⁴ These sentences were written before Owen had announced to the October Conference in London the advent of the 'Grand National Moral Union'. Immediately after that event, Morrison became yet more enthusiastic. 'The Union is spreading with a rapidity that is truly astonishing: the men have

¹ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 37.

² *Ibid.* p. 40.

³ *Pioneer*, Oct. 7, 1833.

⁴ *Ibid.* Oct. 5, 1833.

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discovered that Local Unions are not competent to effect any permanent advantages and all minds are now directed to the formation of a great National Union. We hear tidings every day of new Branch Unions, consisting of the different trades and handicrafts whose habits and interests are most nearly allied. . . . We have been requested by several of the delegates from the Yorkshire, Leicestershire, Lancashire and Staffordshire divisions to espouse their interests, as well as the builders' . . . and we cannot do any other.'¹

¹ *Pioneer*, Oct. 26, 1833.

XIII

THE SOCIETY FOR NATIONAL REGENERATION

MEANWHILE Owen, after his visit to Yorkshire already described, had proceeded to Lancashire, where he promptly added yet another to the irons he had already in the fire. On November 25 a conference at Manchester, inspired by Owen and John Fielden, and supported by the Lancashire Radicals and factory reformers, established the Society for National Regeneration. The full title of this body was the Society for Promoting National Regeneration,¹ and it had for its specific and immediate object the establishment of the eight-hours day — in the words of its own declaration ‘to obtain for eight hours’ work the present full day’s wages, such eight hours to be performed between the hours of six in the morning and six in the evening’. This reform was to be put into force by a general refusal to work for more than eight hours, on March 1, 1834; branches of the Society were to be organised all over the country, and deputations were to go from the workers to the master manufacturers in each trade and district ‘and recommend to them the adoption of the new regulation’. The conference which formed the Regeneration Society also passed a resolution in the following terms:

That Messrs. Oastler, Wood, Bull, Sadler and others, be urgently requested to desist from soliciting Parliament for a

¹ For the text of the resolutions adopted, see Appendix 6, p. 193.

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ten hours bill, and to use their utmost exertions in aid of the measures now adopted to carry into effect, on the 1st of March next, the regulation of 'eight hours work for the present full day's wages'.

The Committee appointed by the delegates who formed the Society for National Regeneration included Fielden, Owen, Clegg, Philip Grant, George Condy of the *Manchester Examiner*, William Hodgetts and John Doherty, who took from the outset a very active part in the new movement.¹ Doherty started a new paper, the *Herald of the Rights of Industry*, to advance its programme; and in the early months of 1834 he went on an extensive tour of the old Midland strongholds of the N.A.P.L., and founded branches of the National Regeneration Society in Derby, Nottingham, Loughborough, Leicester, Mansfield and Chesterfield — practically all the Midland Districts in which the N.A.P.L. had possessed any real strength.² Also, in conjunction with Robert Owen, he founded a branch at Sheffield,³ and he took a leading part in a delegate conference which the Society held in April.³ A letter preserved in the Home Office Papers describes him as 'one of the travelling agents of the Regeneration Society'.⁴ The Society was also active in Yorkshire, a Leeds Auxiliary Committee being established in February 1834.⁵

In Yorkshire, however, considerable differences arose over the activities of the Society for National Regeneration. There was general dissatisfaction in the

¹ *Pioneer*, Dec. 7, 1833.

² *Herald of the Rights of Industry*, Feb. 22, 1833.

³ *Ibid.* Apr. 16, 1834.

⁴ Home Office Papers, 40-32. Dated May 3, 1834.

⁵ *Pioneer*, Mar. 1, 1834.

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factory districts over the failure of Parliament to pass the Ten Hours Bill, and Althorp's Factory Act was generally denounced as likely to be quite ineffective. But there were two rival opinions about what ought to be done. The principal middle-class leaders in Yorkshire were strongly of the view that the right course was to persist with the attempt to get the Ten Hours on the statute book, whereas Owen and Fielden, despairing of getting any solution of the factory problem by parliamentary methods, were now advocating an industrial campaign for the Eight Hours Day, to be enforced by a simple refusal of the workers to work for more than eight hours. The Society for National Regeneration was created as the instrument of the Owen-Fielden party, and not only Doherty and the leaders of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Unions, but also William Cobbett, hitherto a strong critic of Owen and his schemes, rallied round the campaign for the Eight Hours.¹ On the other hand, the Rev. G. S. Bull and other leaders of the Yorkshire Factory movement, regarding Owen's projects as sheerly impracticable, refused to have anything to do with the Society for National Regeneration. Bull wrote a long letter explaining his attitude, which was widely published in the *Radical papers*.²

We have seen that, after the collapse of the N.A.P.L. in 1832, the workers in the Midland textile areas had remained united in a number of county or local Unions of Trades, which loosely linked up the various

¹ See Cole, *Life of William Cobbett*, p. 402. Cobbett published the Rules, Resolutions and 'Catechism' of the Regeneration Society in his *Political Register* of Dec. 7, 1833. He also wrote a long article in support of it in the issue of Dec. 14, 1833.

² *Pioneer*, May 24, 1834.

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local societies in particular trades. In 1833 there was a widespread revival of Trade Union activity throughout the Midland areas. The early issues of the *Pioneer* were full of reports of successes in the Midland towns. In October it was reported from the Potteries that most masters had conceded hours between six and six, and a minimum wage of 5s. a day, and that the Unions were drawing up a tariff of prices.¹ Three weeks later we find 'An Open Letter to the Ladies of Leicester' congratulating them on their entry into the ranks of Trade Unionism.² The next week Morrison was recording the formation of Unions in Derby by 'the framework knitters of plain silk hose, and the shoemakers, and the rallying of the bricklayers and plasterers to the Builders' Union'.³ A week later we learn of the activities of the Glovers and Potters of Worcester — at this period a strong Owenite centre — and also of the refusal of the Leicester Master Spinners to employ any member of the Trades Union.⁴ Early in December we find the Stone Masons, Plasterers, Bricklayers, Carpenters, Labourers, Plumbers, Painters, Glaziers, Slaters, Wood Sawyers, Coopers, Silk Hatters, Pearl Button Makers, Heavy Steel Toy Makers, United Locksmiths, Tailors, Combmakers and Shoemakers marching in procession at Birmingham to resume the interrupted building operations at the Guildhall of the O.B.U.⁵

But, in the Midlands as elsewhere, this revival of Trade Union activity was provoking retaliatory action on the part of the employers. Early in the year 1833,

¹ *Pioneer*, Oct. 5, 1833.

² *Ibid.* Oct. 26, 1833.

³ *Ibid.* Nov. 2, 1833.

⁴ *Ibid.* Nov. 9, 1833.

⁵ *Ibid.* Dec. 7, 1833.

many branches of the hosiery trade at Nottingham won wage advances by the mere threat of a general strike.¹ But in September there were serious strikes for advances in the cut-up hose and glove branches.² In October, at a meeting of the bobbin net journeymen, we find the committee stating 'that (by desire) they have enrolled themselves in the secret order of the Operatives' Trades Union, and propose to define, in their report, the general principles of that order; and to bring forward business of an extraordinary nature'.³ And in November, first at Leicester and then at Derby, the employers declared war to the death on the Trades Unions, by then loosely associated with Owen's Grand National Moral Union.

Before this, in September, the shoemakers in Manchester had come out for a wage advance and against working with non-Unionists.⁴ In October the indefatigable Owen was addressing the delegates of the newly formed Potters' Union, which had been instituted in September on the basis of the earlier China and Earthenware Turners' Society, and was inducing them to embark on a scheme of cooperative production.⁵ The Union's 'Cooperative Pottery' actually started in June 1834, at the height of the excitement following the conviction of the Dorchester Labourers: it closed down, amid the general *débâcle*, by the end of the year.⁶ The Potters' Union was reported in 1833 to have 8000 members, of whom 6000 were in the Staffordshire Potteries, and the rest in the 'Outpotteries' in Yorkshire, Newcastle, Worcester and other places. In

¹ Felkin, *History of Machine-wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufacture*, p. 450.

² *Pioneer*, Sept. 21, 1833.

³ *Poor Man's Guardian*, Nov. 2, 1833.

⁴ *Pioneer*, Sept. 28, 1833.

⁵ Warburton, *Potteries*, p. 72.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 77.

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October 1833 the Potters were reporting that most masters had conceded 'hours of labour between 6 and 6' and a minimum wage of 5s. a day. 'The Unions were drawing up a tariff of prices.'¹ In November the Worcester Potters were declaring their solidarity with the locked-out spinners of Leicester.²

¹ *Pioneer*, Oct. 5, 1833.

² *Ibid.* Nov. 9, 1833.

XIV

THE DERBY TURN-OUT

THE Leicester trouble was the beginning of an extension of the anti-Trade Union policy already adopted by the master builders in Lancashire, and projected by the clothiers at Leeds. At the beginning of November the master spinners at Leicester declared their determination to discharge all members of the Trades Union.¹ This resolution was directed especially against the Woolcombers, always a source of trouble. But by the end of the month the centre of conflict had shifted to Derby, where the masters met the growth of Trade Union activity reported earlier in the year by a general lock-out of all Trades Union supporters. The resolutions adopted by the masters at Derby so well represent the common attitude of the employers at this stage that it seems worth while to quote them in full.

That this meeting acknowledges the right of workmen to give or withhold their labour, and asserts the equal right of masters to give or withhold employment; and that, when workmen unite to impose terms upon their employers, the latter must either submit to their dictation, or resist it by a similar union.

That experience at Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Huddersfield, Wakefield, Leicester and Liverpool has proved that the powers of the Trades Union are injurious to the interests of the masters, by putting a stop to their several trades; to the commerce of the country, by the

¹ *Pioneer*, Nov. 9, 1833.

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suspension of work, and consequent inability to execute domestic or foreign orders; and ultimately to the members themselves.

That to regulate the price and hours of labour; to abolish piece-work, and to substitute day-work in lieu of it (thus placing the industrious and skilful upon the same level with the idle and unskilful workers); to dictate to the masters whom they shall or shall not employ, and the number of apprentices or learners they shall be allowed to take; and, in case of disobedience to the mandate of the Union, to withdraw his work-people simultaneously from the service of the party disobeying, and prevent any other workmen from entering his *employ*; are notoriously the objects and practice of the Trades Union.

That these objects have not only been unequivocally displayed by acts in the towns above referred to, and by similar proceedings in other places, but are avowed and advocated in the *Pioneer, or Trades' Union Magazine*.

That the members of the Union are bound by a secret oath, and their admission is accompanied by mystical ceremonies, calculated and designed to impose upon and overawe the minds of credulous and unsuspecting men, and render them the unconscious slaves and ready tools of their more crafty leaders.

That the Derby Branch of the Trades Union is yet in its infancy, but that its principles and objects are identical with those exhibited in other towns; and some of its members have not hesitated to declare that they are only waiting until the increase of its numbers and the augmentation of its funds shall enable it to act with more decisive effect.

That, as great numbers of the workmen in Derby have joined the Trades Union, with a view to control their employers, and for purposes which the latter believe to be destructive to their interests and utterly subversive of that free agency which the Unionists claim for themselves, these employers are compelled by necessity to unite in their own defence, and do now resolve, unanimously.

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That each of them will immediately cease to employ every man who is a member of the Trades Union, and will not receive or take back into his service any man who continues to be a member of that Union, or of any other Union having similar objects.

That this resolution is adopted on the deliberate conviction that a prompt, vigorous and persevering resistance to the Trades Union is absolutely necessary, to protect the just rights of the masters, to preserve the commerce of the country, and to secure the true interests of the workmen themselves.¹

These resolutions had appended to them the signatures of twenty firms, mainly personal names, but including one ' & Co.'²

The 'Derby turn-out' immediately occupied the centre of the stage in the struggle over the right to belong to the 'Trades Union'. In the same issue of the *Pioneer* as reported the masters' resolutions, we find one, 'J. W. D.', on behalf of the Derby Trades, appealing for help. The following week the Birmingham Trades were recorded as tendering their support at a General Delegate Meeting.³ The week after that came similar resolutions from Sheffield and Loughborough.⁴ Next came a report from a special committee appointed by the 'Birmingham District of the Trades Union' to take charge of the Derby movement⁵ — which appears to show that the Derby movement had been organised from Birmingham, then the chief stronghold of the Owenites. The Birmingham Committee proposed that the Derby turn-outs should be set to work in factories started and controlled by their

¹ *Pioneer*, Dec. 14, 1833.

² *Ibid.* Dec. 14, 1833.

³ *Ibid.* Dec. 21, 1833.

⁴ *Ibid.* Dec. 28, 1833.

⁵ *Ibid.* Jan. 4, 1834.

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Union, and that the Trades Unions throughout the United Kingdom should be appealed to in order to start Cooperative factories in Derby.¹ From December onwards the *Pioneer* was announcing week by week the sums collected for the Derby Fund from Societies all over the country. At the beginning of December Henry Hetherington was writing in the *Poor Man's Guardian* that 'there are now upwards of one thousand of the operatives associated, nearly the whole of whom have been dismissed, or have left their work, in consequence of a resolution of the masters and manufacturers not to employ any member of the Union. . . . A number of special constables have been sworn in, and a troop of the Second Dragoon Guards, or Queen's Bays, arrived in this town from Nottingham on Friday. . . . Loud complaints were made by some of the female hands that they had nothing whatever to do with the Union, yet they were deprived of the only means they possessed of providing bread for themselves.'² The next week the same paper was reporting that at Glasgow and Greenock all the cabinetmakers and chairmakers had been discharged for their Trade Union activity, and refused re-employment until they renounced the Union.³ The anti-Trade Union movement, encouraged by Lord Melbourne's letter, was spreading fast over the country. During the same month, three Scottish calico printers were sentenced to one month in Stirling gaol for attempting to compel a foreman to contribute to the Association of Calico Printers of Scotland, 'for the support of calico printers who had struck, or were out of work'.⁴

¹ *Pioneer*, Jan. 4, 1834.

² *Poor Man's Guardian*, Dec. 7, 1833.

³ *Ibid.* Dec. 14, 1833.

⁴ *Ibid.* Dec. 21, 1833.

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Meanwhile the Birmingham Committee — presumably based on the Birmingham 'United Trades' and now forming a regional section of the 'Grand National' — had been put in charge of the Derby movement; and at the end of the year this body again reported in favour of an attempt to employ the locked-out operatives in Cooperative factories, for which capital was to be raised by means of an appeal to Trade Societies throughout the kingdom.¹ At the same time James Tucker wrote in the *Pioneer* urging a nation-wide attempt to get Benefit Societies to invest funds in the proposed Derby enterprises.² In mid-January Simeon Pollard, as a delegate from the Yorkshire Union, was attending a Trades Union conference at Derby designed to organise further help.³

The number of lock-outs continued to grow. In Glasgow the masons and carpenters joined the cabinet-makers, who had already been locked out. Owen's missionaries were active in Scotland; they were zealously aided by Alexander Campbell, the Sawyers' leader and secretary of the Glasgow United Trades, who vigorously upheld the movement in his newspaper, the *Tradesman*, and was prosecuted about this time for selling it without a stamp.⁴ Campbell had taken part earlier in the Owenite colony at Orbiston, and was the most important Owenite Trade Unionist and Co-operator in Scotland. On January 28, 1834, a meeting of 500 delegates was held in Glasgow to organise support for the workers who had been locked out, and it was resolved to follow Birmingham's example by building an Operatives' Hall. It was also reported at this

¹ *Pioneer*, Jan. 4, 1834.

² *Ibid.* Jan. 4, 1834.

³ *Crisis*, Jan. 18, 1834.

⁴ *Pioneer* Mar. 1, 1834.

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meeting that the female power-loom weavers, tenters and dressers of Glasgow had 'entered into a Cooperative Union'.¹ There were widespread disturbances in Glasgow in connection with the weavers' strikes. Blacklegs were brought in; and the Calico Printers retaliated by breaking into the workshops and compelling the new hands to stop work. Soldiers were called out, and there were many arrests.²

Sheffield also was proposing at this time to build a Guildhall under the auspices of the United Trades.³ Leicester was still holding out against the 'document', and subscriptions were being received there from many lodges of 'the Union'.⁴ But fresh troubles arose when the glove workers at Worcester and Yeovil, and certain other trades at Worcester, were presented with the 'document' by their employers.⁵ The Worcester Trades had been particularly active in sending subscriptions to Derby, and it was a serious blow when they in their turn needed help. Moreover, a fresh danger threatened the Unions when fifteen Trades Unionists were arrested at Exeter in the course of a missionary meeting.⁶ The charge against the missionaries of the Union was that of 'administering unlawful oaths'. The arrests were made at a meeting at which local workers were being initiated (probably into the Builders' Union). Wooden axes and various other paraphernalia were seized by the magistrates, and the men spent twelve days in gaol before being admitted to bail in £20, together with two sureties in £50.⁷

The Unions, wherever their members were locked

¹ *Pioneer*, Mar. 1, 1834.

² *Ibid.* Feb. 22, 1834.

³ *Ibid.* Feb. 1, 1834.

⁴ *Ibid.* Jan. 15, 1834.

⁵ *Ibid.* Feb. 8, 1834, and *Poor Man's Guardian*, Jan. 25, 1834.

⁶ *Pioneer*, Feb. 8, 1834.

⁷ *Ibid.* Feb. 22, 1834.

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out, attempted to retaliate by organising Cooperative production. Worcester set to work to manufacture a 'Union' glove: it was announced in February that 'Derby is nearly ready with her wares to meet the markets'.¹ The Leicester turn-outs were making good broad- and narrow-ribbed hose.² In Yorkshire, writes James Parsley, 'ever since the 2000 horse-power Union was attempted to be framed, the Union saw the necessity of a general union, and of taking their affairs into their own hands: since then they have opened several lodges, under the title of the "Commercial Order", the object being to raise a capital, and commence for themselves; and I am happy to say they are all in a very flourishing state, and expect soon to have some union cloth to send out to our friends'.³ The '2000 horse-power Union' here referred to is of course the Union of the Leeds masters.⁴ We have previously met with the 'Commercial Order' in the resolutions passed by the Huddersfield conference which Owen addressed at Exeter, 1833.⁵

These lock-outs imposed a severe strain on the resources of the Unions. On February 22 the *Pioneer* was reporting that at Yeovil want was driving many of the operatives to accept the masters' terms, though a number were still standing firm. The Yeovil Trades had been driven from their headquarters at the Greyhound Inn, because the landlord had been threatened with the loss of his licence.⁶

¹ *Ibid.* Feb. 15, 1834.

³ *Ibid.* Mar. 1, 1834.

⁵ See *ante*, p. 94.

² *Ibid.* Mar. 1, 1834.

⁴ See *ante*, p. 87.

⁶ *Pioneer*, Feb. 22, 1834.

XV

THE GRAND NATIONAL CONSOLIDATED TRADES UNION

THIS was the situation when, on February 13, 1834, a conference of Trade Union delegates met in London with the object of consolidating all the Trades Unions throughout the country into a single united body. It is clear that the resolutions put before this gathering differed substantially from those which had been approved the previous October, when Owen had secured the approval of his proposals for a 'Grand National Moral Union of the Productive Classes'. On that occasion the conference had included delegates from Cooperative Societies and Owenite propagandist bodies as well as Trade Unions; and the 'Grand National Moral Union' had apparently been intended to comprehend every type of society capable of helping to create the 'New Moral World'. But the conference of February 1834 seems to have consisted exclusively of Trade Union delegates; and the 'Grand National Consolidated Trades Union' to which it gave a formal constitution was purely a Trade Union body, in which the various Cooperative and propagandist societies had no place. Owen himself, the founder of the 'Grand Moral Union', was at the outset not even a member of the formally organised G.N.C.T.U., though he continued to be closely connected with it as a friendly adviser, or even patron.¹ He did not actually join the

¹ See Owen's own account in *New Moral World*, Oct. 17, 1835.

THE GRAND NATIONAL

G.N.C.T.U. until after the conviction of the Dorchester Labourers.¹

The Constitution adopted by the G.N.C.T.U. delegates in February 1834 is reproduced in the Appendices to this volume.² The general resolutions passed by the conference are of importance as indicating the lines on which the Unionists were hoping to proceed. The report presented to the delegates began with the words 'The Committee deem it here proper to observe that they do not consider a consolidation of the funds of the different Trades Unions necessary, or even expedient'. All they wanted was unity of action and the same rules of general government and organisation — and also agreement that the committee had power to impose emergency levies in aid of particular groups attacked by the masters.³ The first resolution of the conference laid down 'That as many different Trades Unions as possible do mutually agree under a perfect understanding with each other to maintain a unity of action in all their proceedings, with respect to their general laws and government, and also with regard to the levying and disposing of all funds reserved for objects of presumed permanent utility'.⁴

On this basis the conference went on to propose, on thoroughly Owenite lines, the settlement of workmen on the land and the establishment of strikers in Union workrooms for Cooperative production. Each Lodge of the Union was to have its own workroom, and each district lodge was to set up its own sick and aged fund. Each district or branch lodge was to set up a depôt for provisions and articles in general domestic use to

¹ *New Moral World*, Oct. 17, 1835.

² See Appendix 7, p. 194.

³ *Pioneer*, Mar. 1, 1834.

⁴ *Ibid.* Mar. 1, 1834.

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supply unadulterated goods at little over wholesale prices. Each lodge was to inaugurate arrangements for 'mental improvement', and 'Lodges of Industrious Females' were to be formed everywhere, on the model of those already in being at Derby, Nottingham and other places; 'District Miscellaneous Lodges' were to be started for small trades which had no organisations of their own. Morrison's *Pioneer*, hitherto the organ of the Builders' Union, was to be recognised as the official organ of the G.N.C.T.U. as a whole.¹ Accordingly the *Pioneer* was removed in February from Birmingham to London, and Morrison resigned from the Birmingham Committee in charge of the Derby turn-out, of which he had been the most influential member.¹

In preparation for this conference, Robert Owen had been issuing, during the previous weeks, a series of memorials and addresses. His 'Address to the Trades Unions and to all the producers of wealth and knowledge throughout Great Britain and Ireland'² was followed by his memorial entitled 'Progress of Civilisation. National Objects of the Productive Classes'.³ In the latter he presented seventeen objects, which he commended to the calm consideration of all Governments and all classes, and especially of the British Legislature. They included a graduated property tax, 'equal in the amount to the full exigencies of government when wisely administered'; abolition of all other taxes and duties, national or local; complete free trade and freedom of emigration; the abolition of war, and the adjustment of all differences by an annual international congress; unlimited freedom for the expression of

¹ *Pioneer*, Mar. 1, 1834.

² *Ibid.* Jan. 11, 1834.

³ *Poor Man's Guardian*, Feb. 8, 1834.

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conscientious opinion; no encouragement of any religion by wordly temptation, and complete protection of the rights of conscience; universal education, 'scientific, physical, intellectual and moral'; national employment for all who cannot otherwise find productive or beneficial occupation; and so on. He also urged that 'the present property of all individuals, acquired or procured by the wrongs and privations of old society, should be held sacred, until the possessors shall discover that it can be no longer of any use or exchangeable value, from the facility with which a surplus of wealth will be produced for all, thus destroying the *motive* to accumulate individual wealth, as the *motive* to accumulate *water*, when it is in abundance, has been destroyed'. Finally, Owen advocated 'a congress of the nations to determine on some one language, which shall be taught to all children of each state in addition to their mother tongue'.¹

On February 22 Morrison was announcing in the *Pioneer* that 'the grand consolidated National Trades Union exists in all the vigour of moral strength. Our little snowballs have all been rolled together, and formed into a mighty avalanche.'² The first action of the Consolidated Union was to decree a levy of 1s. per member in aid of the 'turn-outs' at Derby and Worcester.³ Morrison also announced with pride that 'the Union has also made another advance, in the establishment of depôts for goods, the erection or renting of workshops, and, above all, the means of education'.⁴ The Equitable Labour Exchange in London was offering to sell Union goods from Derby, Worcester,

¹ *Ibid.* ² *Pioneer*, Feb. 22, 1834.

³ *Ibid.* Feb. 22, 1834 and Mar. 1, 1834. ⁴ *Ibid.* Feb. 22, 1834.

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Yeovil and other places at a commission of 5 per cent.¹

The February conference was followed by a further inrush of workers into the Trades Union. The Northampton Cordwainers joined, with 500 members.² The Sawyers had 19 Lodges in February.³ The London Stove-makers and the London Coopers both joined, and came out on strike.³ The Westminster Gas Stokers formed a Union in February, and enrolled 147 members at their first meeting.³ A week or two later they were out on strike, and several gas companies were discharging men for belonging to the Union.⁴ On March 7 the author of *Character, Objects and Effects* was reporting, in scandalised tones, that 'Part of London is now in darkness from a strike amongst the workmen at the gas establishments. Scarcely a town in England has escaped the infliction of a turn-out.'⁵

The governing classes, headed by *The Times*, were by this time clamouring for a re-enactment of the Combination Laws. Lord Althorp said in the House of Commons that 'he did not think any alteration of the law necessary; for he believed that if the Government did their duty, by upholding the masters when contending for their just and legal rights, such a system of combination as that to which he had last alluded must be put down'.⁶ The Government, in fact, was willing to do all it could to support the masters by the use of the existing law; but it was not willing to follow Nassau Senior's advice to pass a new repressive measure virtually re-enacting the laws repealed in 1824 and 1825.⁷

¹ *Pioneer*, Feb. 22, 1834. ² *Ibid.* Feb. 22, 1834. ³ *Ibid.* Mar. 1, 1834.

⁴ *Ibid.* Mar. 15, 1834.

⁵ *Character, Objects and Effects*, p. 140.

⁶ *The Times*, Mar. 14, 1834.

⁷ See Webb, *History*, pp. 139 ff., and Senior's *Essays*, vol. 2, p. 116.

XVI

THE TOLPUDDLE MARTYRS AND THE ABOLITION OF THE OATH

AN opportunity for the Government to show its practical sympathy for the employers was speedily forthcoming when the six Dorchester Labourers were convicted for the crime of administering unlawful oaths, and in due course sentenced to transportation across the seas.¹ Much less fortunate than the Trades Unionists arrested at Exeter, these unfortunate agricultural labourers were offered no bail. It is clear that they were quite deliberately made an example of — at any rate when the Trade Union protests against the sentences began to pour in, and Lord Melbourne, as Home Secretary, had to make up his mind what line to take. From the beginning of April, Dorchester protest meetings were being held all over the country — Bradford leading off with a big demonstration on April 4.² The Yorkshire Unionists followed this up with further demonstrations on Hunslet Moor, near Leeds, at which Pollard and Scholfield were among the speakers,³ and at Huddersfield.⁴ Newcastle-on-Tyne was the scene

¹ For the fullest account of the Dorchester Case, see the memorial volume, *The Martyrs of Tolpuddle*, published by the Trades Union Congress in 1934. This includes my essay on the repressive Acts passed after the French Revolution. This essay is also printed in my volume *Persons and Periods*.

² *Leeds Mercury*, Apr. 12, 1834.

³ *Ibid.* Apr. 19, 1834.

⁴ *Ibid.* Apr. 26, 1834.

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of another big protest meeting,¹ and a little later between 20,000 and 30,000 were said to have attended a protest demonstration at Manchester.²

But the centre of the movement was in London, as the principal object was to bring pressure to bear upon the Government to annul the sentences. The Trade Unions from all over the country were invited to send delegates to London to confer with the Executive of the Consolidated Union concerning the action to be taken; and early in April a further national Trades Union Conference was held.³ It was decided to organise a monster petition to Lord Melbourne against the sentences, and to present this by means of a mass procession to the Home Office through the streets of London.

It was at this stage that Robert Owen resumed his formal connection with the Grand National Union. In his own words, 'Mr. Owen was aware that the Trades Unions were too much in their infancy and too much under the control of inexperienced guides, in their ever-changing officers in their Lodges, to be prepared to act with any great continued efficiency, and he, therefore, remained a spectator of their gradual progress. But, when the non-productive classes, alarmed by the number uniting, and by their gradually growing intelligence, attacked them unjustly, with so much severity, in the persons of the six poor Dorchester Labourers, he became a member of the Union, that he might the more readily and effectually assist the re-productive class to arrest the progress of further violence.'⁴

¹ *Poor Man's Guardian*, Apr. 19, 1834. ² *Pioneer*, May 10, 1834.

³ Webb, *History*, p. 147. ⁴ *New Moral World*, Oct. 17, 1835.

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Owen's method of entry to the Consolidated Union was by way of the 'Grand Miscellaneous Lodge', organised in April, with Samuel Austin, a well-known Owenite organiser, as secretary, and its headquarters at Owen's Charlotte Street Institution of the Industrious Classes.¹ Of this 'Grand Lodge', by way of which the middle-class Owenites were able to join the Consolidated Union, Owen became 'Grand Master', and he was delegated from the 'General Lodge' to the Council set up to remodel the Union constitution.¹

Owen's first action, on resuming active connection with the Union, was to take a large part in making the arrangements for the great London protest against the Dorchester sentences. It was he who negotiated with Lord Melbourne about the receiving of the Petition, and he who led the great Trades Union procession through the streets to present it. But Melbourne absolutely refused to receive the Petition if it were to be presented in this manner, and Owen strongly advised the Executive of the Consolidated Union to give up this point, and to present the Petition in the ordinary way. He claimed, a year later, that, if his advice had been taken, the Dorchester Labourers would have received a free pardon.² But the Executive rejected his advice, and the procession of 40,000 to 50,000 London Trades Unionists duly marched upon the Home Office, where it was met with a flat refusal on Melbourne's part to meet the deputation which had been appointed to interview him.³ The procession was compelled to disperse; and Owen had to return and present the Petition on another occasion, without any accompany-

¹ *Pioneer*, Apr. 12, 1834.

² *New Moral World*, Oct. 17, 1835.

³ *Pioneer*, Apr. 26, 1834.

ing demonstration. The King, on the advice of his Ministers, promptly rejected the Petition,¹ and the Dorchester 'Victims' were hustled out of the country at full speed.

By this time the resistance of the operatives at Derby was seriously weakening. In March William Holmes of Nottingham, who had been appointed to attempt to open negotiations with the Derby masters, reported that they refused to enter into any discussions unless the men would consent to give up the Trades Union.² A little later the *Pioneer's* Derby correspondent was reporting that workers were beginning to drift back, and that the magistrates were searching the houses of Unionists and making many arrests.³ But the struggle was not yet over. Some weeks later the same correspondent stated that 900 Unionists in Derby had never been discharged and that others were still resisting stoutly.⁴ The end, however, was very near. On June 7 the *Pioneer's* leading article began with the words 'Derby has fallen'.⁵

Well before this the problems of the Consolidated Union had been multiplying apace. The Yorkshiremen had their own troubles; but they had been among the most generous supporters of the levies in aid of the Derby turn-outs. The subscription lists published regularly in the *Pioneer* showed large contributions from the Yorkshire towns, except Leeds, which was fully involved in its own struggle against the 'document' presented by many of the master clothiers. The Midlands and London had also contributed heavily;

¹ *Pioneer*, Apr. 5, 1834.

² *Ibid.* Mar. 22, 1834.

³ *Ibid.* Apr. 26, 1834.

⁴ *Ibid.* May 17, 1834.

⁵ *Ibid.* Aug. 7, 1834.

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but with the multiplication of strikes and lock-outs elsewhere support inevitably fell off. It was a particularly severe blow when the London Tailors, who in December 1833¹ had formed a Grand Lodge linking up their numerous separate Trade Clubs, embarked upon a big general dispute with the masters by announcing their refusal to work for more than ten hours a day in summer, or eight in winter, and at the same time demanding an 'equalisation' of wages.² The masters promptly held a meeting at which they rejected all the Union's demands. The Tailors thereupon struck, and placarded London with the announcement that they were setting up Union establishments of their own.³ A week later they stated that they had already several hundreds of their members at work, and issued an 'Address of the Journeymen Tailors of the Metropolis' asking for general support.⁴

This move was widely criticised. The *Pioneer* expressed its doubt of the Tailors being strong enough to carry the day, and pleaded for a general 'national cessation of labour', after due preparation, as against further strike movements in separate trades.⁵ The Executive of the Consolidated Union, of which John Browne, the Tailors' leader, was an outstanding member, announced a levy of 1s. 6d. per head in aid of the Tailors, on top of the heavy demands still being made from Derby and elsewhere.⁶

Apart from this additional claim on the Union's resources, serious trouble had arisen over the collection

¹ Webb, *History*, p. 149.

² *Pioneer*, May 3, 1834 and *Poor Man's Guardian*, May 3, 1834.

³ *Poor Man's Guardian*, May 10, 1834.

⁴ *Pioneer*, May 10, 1834.

⁵ *Ibid.* May 3, 1834.

⁶ *Ibid.* May 10, 1834.

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and distribution of funds on behalf of the Derby 'turn-outs'. The *True Sun* wrote early in May that out of 2400 originally discharged, including women and children, nearly 1000 had gone back to work, but without either agreeing to give up their Union, or, as had been alleged, to have £1 deducted from their wages by way of fine. There remained out of employment 323 men and the same number of women and children, but within a few days the Union would have provided employment for 250 of them in its own establishments. 'So far this affair has been successful; though we are bound in justice to admit that it would have been more successful had the people of Derby placed themselves under the entire direction of the Executive of the Consolidated Union, or of the Birmingham Committee. Their ignorance and inexperience has made them the easy prey of a number of idle and rapacious fellows, who, taking advantage of the circumstances of the turnout, have been living upon the funds, upon the plea of rendering service in the collection of subscriptions, and other needless occupations. From these men we implore the operatives to stand aloof. . . . No agent from Derby will be recognised unless he be immediately delegated, either by the Executive of the Consolidated Union or the Birmingham Committee.'¹

These charges provoked a denial from James Hall, the delegate of the Consolidated Union in charge of the Derby affair,² and also a letter from J. P. Robinson, one of the local leaders, explaining that the Derby turn-outs were now in a distressing condition, and that many were being compelled to sign the 'document'.² Evidently the accusations caused changes in the control of

¹ *Poor Man's Guardian*, May 17, 1834.

² *Ibid.* May 31, 1834.

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the Derby affair; for Morrison announced that it was now entirely in the hands of the Executive of the Consolidated Union.¹ James Hall, who was later to abscond with a part of the Union's funds, but was trusted at this stage, seems from this point to have been in charge of the finances of the Derby movement.

Nor was this accumulation of troubles uncomplicated by serious differences of opinion. The Dorchester case raised as a serious practical issue the question of oaths and ceremonies of initiation; for the conviction of the Dorchester Labourers had been formally, not for belonging to the Trades Union, but for 'administering unlawful oaths' under the statute passed at the time of the Naval Mutinies of 1797.² Immediately after the conviction, Morrison, then a leading member of the Executive of the Consolidated Union, advocated the abolition of all oaths throughout the movement. 'Let us dispense with all oaths. There is no use of an oath from an honest man, and a rogue will not regard it. . . . Mr. Morrison has resigned his office as a member of the Executive upon the position of resistance to the oath; and we have no doubt that the whole National Union will accord with him in the propriety of abolishing the useless ceremony. The Unions are now strong enough to declare themselves openly. Mr. Morrison proposed that the Executive should recommend an abolition of the oath to the Unions. He got no support; and consequently he voluntarily withdrew. The sense of the nation must now be taken upon the subject. The Unions profess to

¹ *Pioneer*, May 17, 1834.

² For the legal aspects of the case see my essay, 'A Study in Legal Répression', referred to on p. 127.

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be legal; shall they resist upon a trifle such as this, when that trifle is declared illegal? Is it not better to yield, when nothing is to be gained by resistance?'¹

The Builders' Parliament, meeting this time at Birmingham, actually abolished the oath at the end of the same month.² But the Consolidated Union was slower to take action, despite Robert Owen's insistence. Early in April the oath was still in force, at any rate in some sections; for we find the Gilders' Trade Union deciding to join, despite the objection of a minority to the oath.³ But it disappeared quite soon; for in May we find that the Northampton Boot and Shoe Workers had transferred from the 'Manchester Order' (either the Cordwainers' Union or a surviving remnant of the N.A.P.L.), which they had joined by mistake some months earlier, to the 'London Consolidated Trades' Union, who had previously abandoned the oath'. Nevertheless they were being locked out by the employers.⁴

The Executive of the Consolidated Union attempted to meet these accumulating troubles by trying to divert the Trades Unionists from strike action towards Cooperative production. Early in April the Executive issued a circular in which it urged that all the trades should 'open shops and offices for dealing with each other, and profitably employing their unemployed members'. No Unionist should buy elsewhere what could be supplied from Union sources. Any general strike on the wages question, it was argued, was bound to be fruitless unless these measures were taken first. In addition, Unionists were urged to refuse to make any

¹ *Pioneer*, Mar. 29, 1834.

² *Ibid.* Apr. 5, 1834.

³ *Ibid.* Apr. 19, 1834.

⁴ *Poor Man's Guardian*, May 17, 1834.

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goods for the army or the police, and the builders were to refuse to build or repair barracks, prisons or work-houses. The Lodges were to institute 'lectures and schools, mechanics' club-houses, coffee-houses, etc.' which should be kept under their sole control, and the Unions were to establish newspapers, and to 'support only those which advocate the producers' cause'. In addition, the circular stated that 'it is greatly to be desired that the following five (viz. the Builders' Union, the Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield District Union, the Cotton Spinners' Union, the Potters' Union and the Clothiers' Union) associated bodies of the Unionists should each elect and send a delegate to represent their interests in the Council now sitting in the metropolis'.¹ This was signed by John Browne, the Tailors' leader, who was, up to the outbreak of the Tailors' strike, acting also as secretary of the Consolidated Union.

In the following month, when E. C. Douglas had become secretary, Browne being fully occupied with the affairs of the Tailors, the Executive returned to the charge with a further circular. 'Until the full and perfect plan of united labour can be carried into execution', the Unionists are urged to adopt the following measures: 'to continue to subscribe a weekly sum, to form a fund . . . which fund should be accumulated to become the foundation of a general bank for the working classes, and not to be touched for any other purpose', and 'to engage the most honest and experienced butcher, baker, cheesemonger, grocer, etc., to become their agents or tradesmen on a commission basis'.

In addition it was laid down 'that all the operatives

¹ *Pioneer*, Apr. 19, 1834.

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should keep in constant employment, upon the best terms they can obtain, until such terms can be made by the Consolidated Union with the non-producers of wealth and knowledge as shall liberate all the producing classes from the slavery and degradation in which they have hitherto been and now are', and 'that no more violent language or angry proceedings take place on the part of the operatives to their employers'.¹

Thus the Consolidated Union floundered along, trying to prevent strikes from multiplying yet further, and continuing to regard Cooperative production as the key to an almost immediate inauguration of a completely new social system. A week later, Morrison was urging the Executive not to be so highfalutin.² But Owen's influence was by this time paramount, as the Derby turn-out collapsed and the London Tailors' strike was seen clearly to be doomed to failure. As at both places the men drifted back through the early weeks of June, and as bad news came in from the North, it became plain that the Consolidated Union would speedily break up unless its fortunes could be retrieved by a new start based on an essentially different policy.

¹ *Pioneer*, May 24, 1834.

² *Ibid.* May 31, 1834.

XVII

THE STRUGGLE IN THE NORTH

IN order to measure the magnitude of the difficulties confronting the Trades Unions at this time it is necessary to return to what was happening in the North of England. Lancashire had become the centre of the campaign of the Society for National Regeneration for an Eight Hours Day to be won by a refusal to work beyond this limit — that is, by industrial action, since further help from Parliament was despaired of. As we have seen, John Doherty was active on behalf of the movement both in Lancashire and in the old N.A.P.L. strongholds in the Midlands.¹ In April 1834 Oldham became the centre of a tumultuous affair arising out of the demand. Matters were brought to a head when constables entered a Trade Union Lodge meeting and arrested two Union leaders. On the following morning a huge crowd rescued the prisoners while they were being escorted to the magistrates' office, and followed up this achievement by attacking the premises of an obnoxious master, by name Thompson, whose servants shot one of the attackers dead. The crowd thereupon sacked the building, and further troubles followed, including a widespread turn-out. The arrested men were surrendered to the authorities, but the strikes continued.² A week or two later, we find Oldham

¹ See p. 111.

² *Pioneer*, Apr. 19, 1834 and *Poor Man's Guardian*, Apr. 19, 1834.

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delegates at a Trades Union conference at Huddersfield, possibly under the auspices of the Society for National Regeneration, proclaiming that they will remain on strike until they get the prisoners set free and the Eight Hours Day conceded. The conference recorded its support, but, as we have seen, added that Leeds, Halifax and Bradford must be consulted. This suggests a connection between the Oldham movement and the 'Yorkshire Trades' Union'.¹ The Webbs have given an account of this Oldham affair, and there is no need to reproduce it here.²

Yorkshire was speedily to become the centre of a much more decisive struggle. We have seen how, in September 1833, the Leeds master clothiers had inaugurated the policy of the 'Bond' — an agreement, backed by penalties, on the part of all who signed it to refuse to employ any member of a Trades Union.³ Speedy action had then been expected on the masters' part; but except for a few sectional lock-outs, the movement had hung fire. In May 1834, however, it was suddenly and actively resumed. By the 17th, the *Leeds Mercury* was announcing that 'owing to a resolution of master manufacturers and cloth dressers in Leeds not to employ Trades Unionists . . . about 3000 refused to sign the document, and were out on strike'.⁴

Simultaneously with this lock-out of the Trades Unionists, the Leeds employers continued to press their demands for legislation to break the power of the Unions. Edward Baines, the proprietor of the *Leeds Mercury*, who had just been elected M.P. for Leeds in succession to Macaulay, presented petitions against

¹ *Leeds Mercury*, Apr. 26, 1834.

² Webb, *History*, p. 151.

³ See p. 87.

⁴ *Leeds Mercury*, May 17, 1834.

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Trades Union tyranny from manufacturers in a number of industrial villages round Leeds, and also from 'certain operatives' in Headingley and Cleckheaton, who said they stood in fear of intimidation from the Trades Union.¹ The employers at Batley, who in January had offered a committee of seven a side to negotiate with the Union, joined the Leeds employers in presenting the 'document', though this was only after negotiations had broken down and a partial strike had been called at the end of March.²

The Leeds masters, in presenting the document, denied that they had any desire to reduce wages, and maintained that they were making war only on 'Trades Union tyranny'. But it is clear that they were strongly opposing the 'equalisation' — that is, the system of standard wage rates — for which the Union contended.³ They maintained that the Union, by holding up wages in Leeds, was compelling the cloth trade to move to the neighbouring villages, where wages were lower. 'The weaver', wrote 'A Manufacturer', 'has lost . . . employment and therefore he has had to go into the country and seek employment from the domestic manufacturer at wages lower than he received previously to his trade being touched by the withering hand of Messrs. John Powlett and Co.'⁴

Faced with determined action by the majority of the Leeds employers, the Trades Union leaders realised that they were in a difficult position. At a great mass meeting of 10,000 persons on Hunslet Moor, Pollard and his fellow-leaders put forward a series of counter-

¹ *Ibid.* May 10, 1834.

² *Ibid.* Jan. 18, 1834, Jan. 25, 1834, Mar. 29, 1834, May 17, 1834.

³ *Ibid.* May 17, 1834 (letter from Pollard). ⁴ *Ibid.* May 10, 1834.

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propositions for presentation to the masters. The masters were urged to form a Union of their own, and to draw up a scale of wages 'equal to that now paid by respectable firms in Leeds', and to agree that, where any firm paid below this scale, their workers should be free to strike and to receive support from those who were being paid in accordance with it. As an alternative, the masters were asked, if they refused to form such a Union of their own, 'Will you consent to the existence of an Operative Trades Union, based on the following fundamental conditions? — That the laws and regulations of the Union be made public, and that all meetings shall be open to the public, as well as to the masters. That all grievances shall be discussed, and their remedy proposed and adopted, in such open meetings.'¹

This declaration was drawn up in the name of 'The Woollen Trades' Union of Leeds', which seems to indicate that at this stage only a section of the Leeds Trades' Union was involved in the lock-out.² The master clothiers rejected the men's overtures, and persisted with the lock-out. At Gott's, the leading firm, round which had centred the strike which had given rise to the Union in 1831, the majority of the workers signed the 'document', and went back to work.²

The Leeds workers' resistance was crumbling, and a week or so later the leaders recognised their defeat and proceeded to save what they could from the wreck. At a further mass meeting on Hunslet Moor, Pollard advised the men to give way and go back to work on the best terms they could get even if this meant signing the 'document'.³ He announced the dissolution of the

¹ *Pioneer*, June 14, 1834.

² *Leeds Mercury*, June 7, 1834.

³ *Ibid.* June 14, 1834.

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Leeds Union, so as to comply with the letter of the employers' demand. 'Mr. Pollard, the leader, recommends their signature of a declaration, promising to abandon the present Union, because it puts them under no moral obligation not to join or found another Union of a similar nature.'¹ The *Pioneer* sadly observed, 'Our friends at Leeds have at last succumbed to a vital law of necessity, returned to work, and dissolved the old Union. Many of them have also signed the Masters' declaration.'¹ The *Leeds Mercury* said that the Union had been 'melting away with great rapidity, and yesterday its complete dissolution took place', and went on to urge the masters to use their victory with moderation.²

Further dissolutions of societies connected with the Trades Union followed. 'The Trades' Union Lodge which met in Kirkstall Road and the Union of Cloth Dressers which met at the Brunswick Tavern, Camp Road, Leeds' were among the casualties.³ The manufacturers at Elland, Sowerby Bridge, Halifax and Greetland presented the 'document' and compelled their workers to sign.⁴ 'John Powlett' was solemnly interred at some sort of mock funeral ceremony at Meltham.⁵

Almost at once allegations of bad faith were being made against the employers. They had promised, it was said, to fix fair wage scales as soon as the men had given up the Trades Union. But in violation of this undertaking wages were being reduced.⁶

Henry Hetherington, in the *Poor Man's Guardian*,

¹ *Pioneer*, June 21, 1834.

² Quoted in *Pioneer*, June 21, 1834.

³ *Leeds Mercury*, June 21, 1834.

⁴ *Ibid.* June 28, 1834.

⁵ *Ibid.* July 5, 1834.

⁶ *Poor Man's Guardian*, July 2, 1834.

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pointed the moral of the Leeds defeat from the standpoint of the Radicals. 'The contest has therefore terminated (at least for the present), and terminated, like all former ones of the kind, in the discomfiture of the unfortunate workmen, and the triumph of their oppressors.' He went on to urge the workers to resort to Cooperative production, and quoted from a letter, apparently written by one of the Leeds leaders. 'These Trades Unions will rise again when the trumpet is blown. The Unionists in Leeds are still united amongst themselves, and with their brethren at large. . . . But no more separate strikes and no more tinkling with little hammers on their chains — the big hammer, a universal strike, must next fetch a blow, and then the chain will be broken from their necks and trampled under their feet.' Hetherington's own conclusion was rather different. He drew the moral that nothing less than universal suffrage would avail to break the workers' chains.¹

In Bradford the course of events was not quite the same as in Leeds. At the end of May, while the Leeds men were still standing out, Bradford Trades' Union Lodge No. 1 — presumably the central organisation of the worsted workers — announced its dissolution;² and apparently this action was coupled with the advice to its sections to join the Consolidated Union. At any rate Peter Bussey, the Bradford leader, was announced as having transferred to the Consolidated Union.² There was clearly an active campaign at the time to bring the Yorkshire Unionists formally into the national body. The *Poor Man's Guardian* quotes an 'Address to

¹ *Poor Man's Guardian*, June 21, 1834.

² *Leeds Mercury*, May 31, 1834.

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the Labouring Classes', 'extensively circulating in the West Riding' in May, in support of an all-inclusive 'General Union' covering the whole country.¹ In effect, however, the Yorkshire movement was at an end. Peter Bussey was to reappear as a leader of 'physical force' Chartism in Yorkshire in 1839.

¹ *Poor Man's Guardian*, May 31, 1834.

XVIII

THE FALL OF THE GRAND NATIONAL TRADES UNION—THE AFTERMATH

WITH the collapse in Yorkshire went the hope of building up a really national organisation around the Consolidated Union. In London, the Executive of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union continued its search for a way out of its difficulties. Failures were already causing secessions, even in the South. William Lewis, giving an account of the Tailors' defeat, laid the blame on the failure of the levies imposed by the Consolidated Union. 'Some trades', he says, 'are withdrawing themselves from the Consolidated; this is wise; let each trade act on a reciprocity of interest, but let each trade be governed by its own executive.'¹ William Hoare, Grand Master of the Operative Cordwainers' Union, which had joined the Consolidated, wrote to the *Pioneer* lamenting 'the secession of many London brothers'. He explained this by saying that 'the ill-advised and premature strike of the tailors having prevented one taking place in our trade, many of the men (who have no idea beyond a strike) became discontented, and expressed their dissatisfaction with the Committee in no measured terms. . . . They raised a cry against the Consolidated Union . . . 782 voted for leaving the Union, 508 for continuing.' The rules, however, required a three-

¹ *Pioneer*, June 28, 1834.

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quarters majority for secession: nevertheless the London Committee was carrying on the secessionist movement. Hoare and his supporters proposed to maintain their position in the Consolidated Union.¹

Meanwhile the London master tailors were refusing to re-employ the strikers unless they renounced the Trades Union; and a meeting of small masters got together by the men to support their claims was promptly repudiated by a big assembly of the master tailors, at which Francis Place put up a vain fight against the masters' policy of smashing the Union.² The masters' committee carried the day against him by 532 votes to 8, and the tailors began drifting back to work. The Cambridge master tailors³ and the Wellingborough master bootmakers⁴ also joined in the demand for the 'document' from their employees.

Early in June Robert Owen, as Grand Master of the 'Miscellaneous Grand Lodge', met the Executive of the Consolidated Union and submitted to it large proposals for reorganisation. As the outcome of these discussions he demanded that Morrison should place the *Pioneer* completely under the control of the Union Executive. Since Morrison's resignation from this body, his paper, though still the official organ of the Union, had been taking an independent line, and, as we saw, had protested against the highfalutin language used in its pronouncements under Owen's guidance. Morrison refused to give up his paper to the Executive, and in reporting the incident commented on the adverse effect of Owen's religious views on the Trades Union and

¹ *Poor Man's Guardian*, June 31, 1834 and *Pioneer*, May 31, 1834.

² See Graham Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, p. 201.

³ *Pioneer*, May 24, 1834.

⁴ *Ibid.* June 14, 1834.

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asserted that Owen's projected communities were at present impracticable. Morrison said that he looked to 'progressive amelioration' rather than to the sudden advent of a new society.¹

Owen's influence was to be seen in the elaborate 'Prospectus of the National Consolidated Union Bank', issued to all Lodges at the beginning of June.² Funds were to be raised by subscription throughout the Union, and to be used for purchasing land to be cultivated by the members, erecting factories, and so on. The scheme was thus a development of the proposals embodied in the Union's circulars issued in April and May.³

In face of Morrison's refusal to surrender the *Pioneer*, the Union Executive proceeded to establish its own organ — '*The Official Gazette of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union*'. Owen addressed a Conference of London Trades' Unionists at the Charlotte Street Institution and a resolution was passed recognising that 'brothers' were being compelled to sign the 'document', and demanding that a full conference of all trades and professions throughout the United Kingdom should be called 'to take into their consideration the whole interests of the Unions, and of the operatives generally, in consequence of the new position in which they were placed, by the employers over the kingdom refusing to employ any member of a Trades Union'.⁴ In consequence of this resolution, the 'Metropolitan Consolidated Central Committee' recommended to the National Executive the convening of a national

¹ *Pioneer*, June 7, 1834.

² For full text see *Pioneer*, June 7, 1834.

³ See p. 134.

⁴ *Poor Man's Guardian*, June 14, 1834.

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delegate conference for the first Monday in August.¹ The National Executive at this time consisted of four members (John Browne, James Hall, John Douthwaite and David Watkins, with E. C. Douglas as secretary). Owen was not a member.² On June 26 Douglas issued a circular summoning delegates from every Lodge of the Consolidated Union.³ In the hope of stemming the tide of secessions, the Grand Miscellaneous Lodge (*i.e.* Owen) issued 'An Address to the Lodges in Union and to the Operatives of Great Britain and Ireland', strongly urging the need for a single Consolidated Union.⁴

From the ensuing National Conference, attended, I fancy, by a mere rump of delegates, emerged a series of 'Propositions for the Consolidation of the Productive Classes', clearly drafted by Owen. 'There is but one remedy for all the evils springing from the sources we have pointed out; and this is the conversion of the labourers from the *employed* into the *employers*. . . . The possession of land is all that is necessary to transform the labouring classes from dependants into proprietors, and thus secure for them the enjoyment of their own produce. Having this land, machinery would be employed for their own benefit instead of, as now, against their only means of subsistence. Idleness and dissipation would necessarily cease, because wealth would only be obtainable by *personal* exertion.'⁵

Owen, without being a member of the Executive, had been acting before the August conference as Chairman of a committee appointed to remodel the

¹ *Pioneer*, June 14, 1834.

² *Ibid.* May 30, 1834.

³ Owen Correspondence, Holyoake House, No. 706.

⁴ *Poor Man's Guardian*, July 5, 1834.

⁵ For full text see *Poor Man's Guardian*, Aug. 16, 1834.

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Constitution of the Consolidated Union. The conference, such as it was, accepted this committee's proposals; and, according to Owen, 'a constitution was adopted which, if it had been followed up and acted upon with integrity, would have speedily placed the productive classes in their proper situation, and insured to them a fair return for their labour'.¹

Owen went on to say: 'The laws, rules and regulations, which were unanimously passed at this Congress, were more advanced in real civilisation than any code which had been previously adopted by any public assembly. But Mr. Owen was conscious that they were too far in advance of ordinary minds for their value to be understood by many members of the Trades Union or yet to be acted upon with integrity to the extent necessary to ensure immediate success; but the members of this Congress, who were present when they were developed and discussed, thought that the promulgation of such an improved Constitution would prove highly beneficial, open the eyes of many among the Unions to their true interests, and be ultimately acceptable to all of them.'²

Owen says that, at the conclusion of the Congress, the delegates earnestly solicited him to accept the office of President of the reconstructed Union. He at first refused, but when the delegates expressed their inability to agree on anyone else, he ultimately accepted the office, on condition that all the debts incurred by the former officers should be discharged, and that, whereas he should receive no salary, the persons elected as 'Deputy Grand Master' and 'Home and Corresponding Secretaries' should receive their salaries regularly 'and

¹ *New Moral World*, Oct. 17, 1835.

² *Ibid.*

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sufficient means to enable them to discharge the requisite expenses of the establishment without incurring debt'.¹ Considering the circumstances of the Union these were large hopes. In addition, Owen required that his election should be confirmed by a majority of two-thirds of the Trades Union Lodges in connection with the Consolidated Union.¹ But by this time it was impossible to say which societies were still in the Union and which were not.

Owen speedily found himself in difficulties with the colleagues chosen for him by the Conference. 'The delegates', he writes, 'proved themselves not good judges of character; for, very unfortunately, they filled one of the most responsible and important offices by appointing to it a man who was not only intemperate, but who, in a short time, proved to be unworthy of trust or confidence. As soon as Mr. Owen ascertained the qualifications of his colleagues for their offices, and the support given to them by the Union, he discovered that it would be useless to attempt to carry on the National Consolidated Trades Union, to attain the great object which he had in view, until they were better instructed . . . he resigned the office of Grand Master of the Order, that he might adopt other measures better calculated to promote this object.'¹

The defaulting officer in question was James Hall, who had been appointed Treasurer — the same man as had been put earlier in charge of the funds collected in aid of the Derby 'turn-outs'. When, at the end of 1834, Hall left the country with such of the Union's funds as he could lay hands on,¹ the Consolidated Union came to an abrupt end.

¹ *New Moral World*, Oct. 17, 1835.

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But for a few months after the August conference, the new Executive made some attempt to carry on. In October we find them announcing as premature current rumours concerning the Union's demise, and requesting 'the members of the Union to suspend any conclusion respecting the actual condition of the Union until we shall be authorised to give an official statement on the subject'.¹

In December John Douthwaite, as Secretary of the British and Foreign Consolidated Association — the new name imposed on the Union by Owen in August — was asking for subscriptions in aid of the wives and families of the Dorchester Victims.² If any money was collected, Hall probably took it with him on his travels. The rest is silence.

The Builders' Union, which had never joined the Consolidated Union, shared in its fall. The Stonemasons, its best organised section, seceded from it in September, and managed to keep their national organisation intact.³ After that, the Builders' Union quickly disappeared. Owen, in his retrospect, strongly censured the Builders for their refusal to throw in their lot with the 'General Union'. 'It was a fatal error for themselves and for the working classes generally; for had the builders, in the first instance, cordially united with the Consolidated Union, the builders would have had the chief influence in the election of the officers and in directing all its measures. And as the Consolidated Union, inexperienced as its officers were, did, under the great disadvantages against which it had to contend, make a considerable progress towards success, it is most

¹ *New Moral World*, Nov. 1, 1835.

² *Ibid.* Dec. 13, 1834.

³ Postgate, *Builders' History*, p. 111.

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probable that, by the union of both parties, such confidence would have been created among all the trades throughout the kingdom, that the Union might have been nurtured to full maturity, and the great good which, under a wise direction, it might have effected, would have been now in a happy train of accomplishment.¹ Owen possessed an unconquerable optimism, even in the hour of utter defeat. In fact, he never knew that he had been defeated. He simply collected a fresh audience, and went on saying the same thing. His connection with the great Trades Union uprising of these years had been, in a sense, an accident. He was by nature neither a Trade Union organiser nor a revolutionary leader, but a prophet.

At this season of defeat Trade Unionism scored an isolated success. In November 1834 the Potters struck for an advance of 35 per cent in wages, and won after fifteen weeks.² They maintained the strength of their Union for two years longer, until they struck again, and were defeated, in 1836-37. But for the most part the Unions, where they survived, kept quiet and set to work to rebuild their organisation on less ambitious lines, reverting to the local Trade Clubs of an earlier period, or at the most to loose federal Unions in which the real power was vested in the local sections. The Lancashire operatives, when the Society for National Regeneration had been dragged down in the general collapse, returned to the agitation for factory reform under the auspices of the Short Time Committees or to attempts at peaceable negotiation with the employers. The

¹ *New Moral World*, Oct. 17, 1835.

² Burnley, *Romance of Modern Industry*, p. 208; Warburton, *Potteries*, pp. 80 ff.

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Spinners' delegate meeting, held at Preston in October 1835, issued an Address in which it declared 'We are not for *confusion* and *bloodshed*, and therefore we speak thus plainly. Let not the trumpet of reasonable warning be disregarded, because it is sounded by a few plain Lancashire workers. We would despoil no man of his rightful property; we dream not of any absolute equality of condition; we entertain no visions of a paradise below. We expect that the "brow" of man must "sweat" for his maintenance; but we expect also, according to the promise of the Most High, to live by it, to eat our bread by it.'¹ A month or two later, in December 1835, Spinners' delegates from Bolton, Bury, Ashton, Preston, Oldham, Chorley and Manchester met a body of Lancashire Members of Parliament in order to draw up plans for a renewed campaign for factory legislation. Charles Hindley, the leading master spinner, who was M.P. for Ashton and a supporter of the Ten Hours, attended, and promised to introduce a Bill including a restriction on the 'motive power', that is, on the hours of operation of the machinery.² At this meeting, Doherty, who had unsuccessfully re-started the *Poor Man's Advocate* in October 1834, and was now in business as a printer and bookseller in Manchester, reappeared as the leader of the Spinners' delegates.³ In January 1836 he was Chairman of a Delegate meeting at Manchester to consider the proposed Ten Hours Bill.⁴ Right up to the time of his death in 1854 Doherty maintained his activity in the cause of factory reform. Lord Ashley

¹ *New Moral World*, Oct. 3, 1835.

² Alfred, *History of the Factory Movement*, vol. 2, pp. 87 ff.

³ *Manchester Advertiser*, Dec. 5, 1835.

⁴ *Ibid.* Jan. 2, 1836.

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said of him when he died, 'Poor Doherty was one of the most faithful to a cause that ever existed'.¹ Francis Place's comment, at a much earlier date, was in a different tone. Place wrote in a letter to James Turner, another leading Lancashire factory reformer, 'Doherty has, I see, been at Derby, has been shouted at and applauded for a speech like all his speeches, a curious mixture of sense and nonsense, of reason and folly. *I* have no doubt *he* thinks he shall succeed; and he is one of those who learns nothing from repeated failures. He is so doggedly sure that he is right, that nothing can convince him he is wrong, so I have no hopes of making a convert to reason of him.'²

James Morrison, the Builders' leader and editor of the *Pioneer*, died in 1835, leaving a widow without resources.³ What became of Simeon Pollard, the Yorkshire leader, I do not know.

Robert Owen, after the death of the Consolidated Union, proceeded to create a new organisation for the inauguration of the 'New Moral World'. 'As the Trades Unions through their late experience have attained the knowledge of their actual position in society, and as they have now ascertained that it is impracticable for them to better their condition by any means within their power to adopt, so long as their labour, well-being and happiness shall be made an article of commerce on the present system of individual competition for wages and a money profit, they must now apply all their spare time and means to acquire the knowledge of what is necessary to be done to relieve

¹ *Manchester Notes and Queries*, vol. 7, p. 229.

² Place MSS., Hendon, vol. 51, f. 47.

³ For a short obituary notice see *New Moral World*, Oct. 3, 1835.

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themselves, and all other classes, from the physical, intellectual, and moral degradation in which the principles of moral evil, the monetary system, and individual competition for profit, have placed them . . . an Association will be formed of those only who receive the principles of the New Moral World in all their extent and purity, and who will devote their hearts and souls to prepare the means to carry them as speedily as possible into practice throughout society. . . . The time is arrived for new measures to be adopted because the mania of Radicalism has ceased, the excitement of the Trades Unions to force up, or even maintain, the money value of labour, in opposition to the overwhelming power of individual competition, is dying a natural death.¹

Owenism was reconstructing itself as a sect, and ceasing to attempt to lead a mass movement, even before the Consolidated Union had been finally disposed of. At the beginning of March 1835 Owen put forward the complete draft of a constitution and rules for the Association of All Classes of All Nations, together with an explanatory letter and manifesto.² In May the new Association was duly constituted in London at a Congress of the faithful; and thereafter there were annual congresses of the A.A.C.A.N., and some special congresses, up to the collapse of Queenwood, or Harmony Hall, the last Owenite community, in 1846.³ Under the auspices of this body, Cooperative or Social Institutions were established in a number of towns, the Salford Institution, opened at the end of

¹ *New Moral World*, Nov. 1, 1834.

² *Ibid.* Mar. 7, 1835.

³ See Holyoake, *History of Cooperation*, p. 129, and my *A Century of Cooperation*, Chapter II.

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1835, being the pioneer.¹ Lancashire, Yorkshire and Birmingham were the chief Owenite strongholds; and the movement went on, barely affected by the excitements of Chartism, and becoming less and less concerned with Trade Unions or even Cooperative Societies, and more and more with education in accordance with the principles of the new 'Rational Religion'. It was, however, no unimportant service that the Owenites were always willing to provide, in their 'Social Institutions' or 'Halls of Science', meeting-places for unpopular bodies excluded from other places of assembly.

Thus the attempt of the workers, partly inspired by Robert Owen's teaching and partly by the anti-capitalist economists such as William Thompson and Thomas Hodgskin, but mostly by sheer hunger and revolt against the competition of the new machines and the intolerable discipline of the new factory system, to create a 'General Union of All Trades', and make of it an instrument of sudden and complete emancipation, ran its course and ended in defeat — to give place to the next attempt at unity, on a purely political programme, under the banner of Chartism. In January 1834 General Sir Henry Bouverie, in command of the Northern District, declared in a letter to the Home Office, 'I believe that generally throughout the manufacturing districts every Trade almost has its Union, which Unions act under very solemn Oaths, and consequently their proceedings are kept very secret. . . . The organisation of the Working Classes is so complete and their correspondence and intelligence by means of their Unions so systematically arranged that at any

¹ *New Moral World*, Jan. 2, 1836 *et passim*.

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moment of excitement vast multitudes may be called from their occupations, to take part in any scheme or enterprise which their leaders may choose to engage in.'¹ A month later, Bouverie wrote of 'a most complete system of communication . . . all over England and Scotland'.²

This was no doubt exaggerated language; for the 'correspondence' of the Unions was in fact very far from complete; and the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union never became really national, and certainly fell a long way short of consolidation. Nevertheless the vogue of Trades Unionism was very great, even if the organisation, hampered by legal obstacles, difficulties of communication, lack of education and resources, and the sheer novelty of the attempt, was quite absurdly inadequate in relation to the declared aims of the movement and the magnitude of the hopes and fears which it aroused. This small book does not attempt to give a complete picture of its rise and fall, but only, as I have explained, to supplement earlier narratives. It omits almost entirely the story of the Builders' Union, which has been told by Mr. Postgate,³ and it touches hardly at all on the contemporary movements of the colliers on the North-East Coast and in South Wales, which have been recorded by Fynes⁴ and by Mr. Ness Edwards,⁵ as well as, in part, by Mr. and Mrs. Hammond.⁶ Nor does it deal with the contemporary history of the movements for political

¹ Home Office Papers, 40-32, dated Jan. 5, 1834.

² *Ibid.* 40-32, dated Feb. 25, 1834.

³ Postgate, *Builders' History*.

⁴ Fynes, *Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham*.

⁵ Edwards, *History of the South Wales Miners*.

⁶ Hammond, *Skilled Labourer and Town Labourer*.

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reform, or with the Owenite Labour Exchanges, or, except incidentally, with the numerous experiments in Cooperative production and store-keeping during these eventful years.¹ It is not so much a history as an attempt at partial elucidation of a record which has remained at many points obscure. Such as it is, it has to chronicle mainly failure; for the working classes, in this period of rising industrial capitalism, were far too weak to win, and were, to a large extent, merely kicking against the pricks of the new age of machine production. That they achieved what they did, and not that they were beaten, is remarkable; and it is also noteworthy that they were so speedily able to re-form their forces into the political mass-movement of Chartism, to find new leaders for a new crusade, and, when that too had gone down to defeat, to set to work again, more slowly, building up their 'Rochdale model' Cooperative Societies and their 'new model' Trade Unions into the beginnings of a more durable organisation for the defence of working-class interests within a capitalist system to which the workers of the second half of the century, unlike their forerunners, had become inured.

¹ See Podmore, *Life of Robert Owen*; Cole, *Life of Robert Owen*; Cole, *A Century of Cooperation*; Holyoake, *History of Cooperation*; Benjamin Jones, *Cooperative Production*.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

THE PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY

(From the Home Office Papers, 42/181)

AT a Meeting of Deputies from the undermentioned Trades from Manchester, Stockport, Ashton-under-Line, Oldham, Bury, &c., &c., &c.

Calico Printers, Dyers and Dressers, Hatters, Blacksmiths, Jenny Spinners, Cotton Weavers, Bricklayers, Frishan¹ Cutters, Colliers, Sawyers, Shoe Makers, Slubbers, Mule Spinners, Machine Makers, &c.

The following Address and Resolutions were unanimously agreed to :

AT a GENERAL MEETING OF TRADES convened to take into consideration the Distressed State and Privations to which the Working Class of Society are reduced, by their avaricious Employers reducing wages to less than sufficient to support nature or purchase the bare necessities for our existence with great economy and hard labour: therefore, to render redress in such cases of distress to any Body or Party reduced as aforesaid.

RESOLUTIONS

FIRST. That there be a Union of all Trades, called the PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETY, to be held in Manchester on the second Monday in every Month, when all TRADES shall send a *Delegate*, with proper credential for admission.

SECOND. That every Trade be recommended to raise a FUND amongst themselves, for the general Benefit of all TRADES joined in this Union: and in particular any Trade

¹ *i.e.* fustian.

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that may be engaged in resisting Oppression or to alleviate distress, and to enable the labouring part of the Community to live in comfort and decency.

THIRD. That any Trade feeling the necessity of an Advance of Wages, that Trade shall be bound to give notice to a Meeting of Delegates convened for that purpose; and their concurrence being obtained, all other Trades will support them.

FOURTH. That if any Trade be under the necessity of leaving their Employ through the Oppression of their Employers, They shall first call the General Representatives together and inform them; provided that such Representatives be not overpowered with too much business at one Time, that they may be prepared for supporting the cause and provide for the same; in short, no Trade shall leave their employ without first calling the other Trades together, and then act by and with their consent in taking the most favourable time for resistance.

FIFTH. That any body of Workmen being Oppressed, or illegally used, this Society will support them in obtaining legal redress.

SIXTH. That all Printing of Notices, &c., with all Delegations, or any other necessary expences, shall be paid out of their separate Funds.

SEVENTH. That a Committee of Eleven Persons be chosen by Ballot, out of the different Trades who form this Society, and shall be regularly enrolled on the list kept for that purpose. The Committee to go out by regular rotation every month, so that the whole may be changed every three months.

EIGHTH. That in order to preserve decorum in this Society or Meeting of Representatives, no person shall be allowed to advance any Political or Religious argument, under a forfeit threepence for the first offence, and sixpence for the second, which must be paid the night it is forfeited.

NINTH. That there shall be an Auxiliary Society of the

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different Trades in each town, that each Trade shall have its own By-Laws, and each Auxiliary to act in conjunction with the resolutions of the Central Philanthropic Society.

TENTH. That the Representatives be empowered to alter or amend, add or diminish any Rule or Rules for the benefit of this Society, provided it does not infringe upon or act against any Trade or division belonging to the General Philanthropic Society.

G. CAVE, PRINTER, EXCHANGE BUILDINGS, MANCHESTER.

APPENDIX 2

ARTICLES OF THE PHILANTHROPIC
HERCULES INSTITUTED DECEMBER
2, 1818

(From the Place MSS., 27/779/f. 143)

FOR the mutual Support of the Labouring Mechanic, and the Maintenance of the Independence of their Trade against the Infringements too generally made upon their just Rights and Rewards, by the Hands of Avarice and Oppression.

I. That this association shall consist of an indefinite number of members.

II. That this Society shall consist of persons from any mechanical branch or trade who are desirous of maintaining their reputation in society, and supporting their own independence, by a just, equitable, and legal demand for their labour.

III. That every person or persons desirous of becoming a member must come voluntary, and on his or their own part, and from a just sense of his or their respectability, and who is not a companion of the low and vulgar part of the community.

IV. That this association is open to receive any persons answering the description of article the second, without any consideration of age or infirmity; and all persons joining shall pay weekly and every week into the joint stock of this association, the sum of one penny as hereinafter mentioned.

V. That every mechanical trade belonging to this association shall be allowed to appoint one of their body to act as their representative with the several other trades in

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the regulating and managing all the concerns of the Union and that every such person so appointed shall continue in office six calendar months, at the expiration of which another shall be elected by the body to take his place, in the way and manner hereinafter stated.

VI. That in consequence of this association having been formed by a number of Deputies from several trades, and therefore have formed rules and regulations for the election and duration of the Union.¹ One of which is, that at the expiration of six calendar months, such deputy to go out of office and another to be elected in his room; and to prevent inconvenience to the association in carrying into effect article the fifth, it is to be understood that the present number of deputies that may be collected together on the beginning of this association, is to continue in office six calendar months from the date of the Union; and at the expiration thereof, the whole shall draw lots for one half to go out, and the other half to remain for the other six months, then to go out in regular order.

VII. That from the time of every deputy joining this Union, it shall be considered the commencement of his six months, and every deputy shall, on the fifth monthly night, receive of the secretary a written order to his trade to elect and appoint another deputy in his room, which deputy shall attend with the old deputy on the sixth monthly night for to take his instructions and seat for the trade he represents.

VIII. That every trade do elect its own deputy, and send by such deputy the credentials of his election and place of abode to the general meeting of deputies which shall be entered in a book for that purpose, and that such election of deputy shall be in any way and manner as may be agreed upon by the trade, most convenient for themselves.

IX. That if any trade consider the conduct of their

¹ This sentence reads in the original as printed here. The sense is clear, though the grammar is amiss.

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deputy worthy of their continued confidence, they shall be at liberty to re-elect such deputy as often as circumstances require, and on his re-election, such deputy must bring his credentials of re-election, the same as a fresh deputy, which shall be entered in the book kept for that purpose.

X. That the disproportion of numbers of any branch of trade, members of this Union, will not make any difference as to the claims of any one individual member; as the whole body united, stand on the principles of reciprocal equality; and that no individual of any trade will dispute or insinuate improperly to the injury or repose of the Union, on account of their numbers, so as to discompose or hurt the feelings of others, whose numbers may be less, but not less in zeal or purity of conduct.

XI. That the representatives for each trade shall be in proportion to the actual number of good members, at the expiration of every six months of the deputy of the trade; that is to say, for every hundred members or less, one deputy; and for every two hundred and fifty members, over and above the first hundred, an extra deputy, which extra deputy shall be elected and regulated according to the eighth article. But no trade to be allowed to have more than one vote on the committee.

XII. That every deputy, regular or extra, be considered as collectors to receive the penny contributions from the several members, and to avoid as much inconvenience as possible, it is ordered that every member do either by himself or proxy, pay weekly and every week into the hands of the deputy or deputies of his trade, his penny towards the general stock, which deputy or deputies will enter the same in his book, and on every monthly night report the sum collected to the general committee, and the secretary for the time being shall enter the report into the general account book.

XIII. That in case the number of subscribers in any one branch should exceed the possibility of one man collecting or receiving the contribution, it shall be proper in that case,

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on the part of any number of subscribers, not less than forty, to appoint an assistant collector, who shall be duly qualified to receive each contribution and transmit the same to the committee of his own trade.

XIV. That exclusive of the general committee, every trade to appoint a private committee of their own, who shall regulate all their own concerns, [collect money],¹ put the same out to interest, and such other concerns not entrusted to the general committee.

XV. That for the better establishing the mutual as well as the general confidence of every trade that composes the Union, each trade shall retain their own collection, and whenever it amounts to a sufficient sum to put out to interest, their own private committee shall invest the money in such persons' hands as the trade may approve of, under such restrictions of securities as may be deemed sufficient by the trades, and the deputy for that trade shall report the names of the trust, and the sum put out, to the general committee, and the general secretary shall enter the same, together with the sum in the book against the trade, who makes such report.

XVI. That the whole or part of the money, so collected by the several trades, and invested by them in the hands of trustees appointed by themselves shall always be at the command and power of the general committee, who when they think it necessary to call in any part or all of the stock of the several trades belonging to the Union, the general committee shall give orders for that purpose to the general secretary, who shall write such orders and address the same to the private committee, which orders shall be signed by the deputy of the trade it is addressed to.

XVII. That all disputes between the mechanic and his employer be submitted to the joint Committee, respecting the just, legal, and customary price for his labour, a book of prices belonging to such trade shall be given in to the

¹ Handbill torn here.

ATTEMPTS AT GENERAL UNION

committee for the purpose of their guidance, which upon a fair examination, and hearing the evidence of the mechanic aggrieved shall determine as to the rectitude of the mechanic's conduct making such complaint, but should such trade have no book of prices, the committee should summon four of the oldest men, or such proficient persons, members of the society who can give every information to elucidate the dispute, and should the cause or complaint be just, then the committee shall afford such support to the complainants as they may think just and necessary, and the funds allow. But the better to elucidate any subject of dispute that may come before the committee where there arise any doubts as to the rectitude of the differences between the working party and their employers, the secretary, if the committee think proper, be ordered to write to the employer, requesting a just reason and cause of the dispute. And the answer received to be laid before the committee who shall judge impartially on the matter contained in such letter. But should such employer not think proper to answer the secretary's letter, then the committee shall determine according to such evidence before them respecting the dispute. But no trade not members of the Union can be admitted to any of the Benefits.

XVIII. That for the quicker dispatch of all business that may be necessary to be submitted to the general committees, the complainant or complainants shall, in person or by letter, make known the grievances to the general secretary, who shall, if he considers the complaint of sufficient importance, immediately summons the joint committee for that purpose on any evening, within three days from the time of receiving such complaint. But should the Secretary have any doubts of the propriety of summoning the joint committee from the nature of the complaint, he shall consult personally the *four* senior committee-men, who, with the secretary, shall determine on the propriety of calling the committee together, if the

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time of the regular meeting of the committee exceeds one week.

XIX. That a person duly qualified be appointed secretary by the general committee, at such salary by the year, or otherwise, for such time and under such restrictions, as the committee shall think proper, who shall answer all letters, direct all the concerns and disputes in writing that may be brought under the consideration of the committee, and that he do attend all meetings on their monthly nights, sign all letters, memorials, and all orders of the committee, and provide all books of account, and other stationery, for the use of the society, at the society's expence, and by orders from the general committee.

XX. That should any trustee be obliged from any circumstances, to leave London, and go to reside more than twenty miles in the country, such trustee shall make known the same to the committee of his trade, who shall appoint a fresh trustee; and the whole of the monies in the name of the trustee going to the country, shall be transferred to the new trustee, appointed by the committee of that trade, and a report of the same shall be made to the general secretary.

XXI. That any member of this Union Society shall be eligible to become or continue a member of any other society of whatever name or denomination.

XXII. That at any time the committee may think proper, for the purpose of keeping the bond of Friendship and Union, and giving an opportunity to the several members to see, converse, and associate with each other, they may call a general meeting of all the members, at such time and such place, as may be determined upon, and such other regulations attending the general meeting, as may be considered for the general as well as the mutual good of the several members, notice thereof being given in any way that may be agreed on by the general committee.

XXIII. That for the better enabling the secretary to

ATTEMPTS AT GENERAL UNION

perform the duties of his office, in case of necessity he be allowed a clerk, to be also appointed by the said committee, which shall attend all meetings of the committee; and in default thereof be fined one shilling and sixpence. And that the general secretary shall inspect the accounts of the clerk, and if right, shall sign the same; and that no such accounts shall be deemed valid until so signed.

XXIV. That a strong box with three locks and three keys, be provided for the general committee, in which the current cash bonds, and other securities of this society (the bond for the production of the said box excepted) shall be deposited, that one of the said keys shall be in the custody of the landlord for the time being, at whose house the meeting shall be held, and the other two keys in the custody of the two senior committee-men, who, at the expiration of one month, shall deliver the same to the two next committee-men in seniority; it being the intention of this society, that each of the said regular committee-men shall, in rotation and according to seniority, have possession of one of the said keys for one month; and in case the landlord shall neglect to produce his key of the said box at any meeting of the committee, or within thirty minutes after the time appointed for holding such meeting, he shall forfeit two shillings and sixpence, to be deducted and retained out of the first rent that shall become due to him for the room in which the said meeting shall be held; and if either of the said committee-men having the care of the other keys shall neglect to produce the same at the place and within the time last aforesaid, such committee-men so neglecting shall be fined two shillings and sixpence. That the committee-man having the custody of the keys of the said box, shall previous to the close of every meeting of the committee, see that all the monies, deeds, papers, vouchers, and other matters and things which ought to be deposited in the said box, be duly deposited therein, and that the said box be locked and carefully put away in some convenient and safe place; and

APPENDIX TWO

for any default therein, that he or they be fined two shillings and sixpence.

XXV. That the said landlord shall, if required so to do by the committee, enter into bond with sureties, to be approved of by the said committee, in sufficient penalty for the production of the box and all the contents thereof, in such way and manner, at such time and place, and to such person or persons as the committee shall, by writing under the hand of the general secretary for the time being, direct or require.

XXVI. That for the purpose of the general committee having at their own immediate use funds for such purpose of emergency as may casually take place, it is ordered, that every deputy do bring from their several trades each monthly night, one quarter of their penny collection, and deposit the same in the general committee box; and that the general secretary shall give a receipt for the sum received, and enter the amount thereof in the cash-book for trades.

XXVII. That the general committee for the time being shall be in full power to alter or amend any of the articles or regulations of the General Union to such extent, for general good, as may be considered by the majority of the several trades, necessary. That before such alterations shall be considered binding, a copy be laid before the several private committees by their deputy, who shall take their opinion on the alteration, and report the same to the general committee, who shall then decide according to the returned report from the several trades on the proposed alterations, which decision shall be final.

JOHN GAST, President

APPENDIX 3

RULES OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF LABOUR¹

RESOLUTIONS AND LAWS

Agreed by the meeting of Delegates, held in Manchester, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, the 28th, 29th and 30th of June 1830

RESOLVED, 1. That the miserable condition to which, by the repeated and unnecessary reductions of wages, the working people of this country are reduced, urges upon this meeting the imperative necessity of adopting some effectual means for preventing such reductions and securing to the industrious workman a just and adequate remuneration for his labour.

2. That to accomplish this necessary object a Society shall be formed consisting of the various organised Trades throughout the kingdom.

3. That this Society be called 'The National Association for the Protection of Labour'.

4. That the general laws and government of this Society be formed and conducted by a general Committee, consisting of one Delegate from every 1000 members.

5. That such general Committee shall meet every six months, and decide upon all subjects affecting the interests of the Association.

6. That a Provisional Council, consisting of seven persons, returned from as many districts, meet once a month, at Manchester, and be empowered to watch over

¹ From *United Trades' Cooperative Journal*, July 10, 1830.

APPENDIX THREE

the interests of the Association, between each meeting of the general Committee, one of such council to retire every month, and another appointed in his stead from a different district.

7. That in order to raise an effectual fund, each member of this Association shall be required to pay 1s. as an entrance subscription, at the earliest possible convenience of the members, on or after the 12th of July 1830.

8. That each member of this Society shall subscribe one penny per week to the funds.

9. That every trade, on being enrolled as members of the National Association for the Protection of Labour, shall subscribe, as an entrance fee, the sum of £1 at least, to the funds of the Association.

10. That a suitable box, with four locks and keys, be provided for the use of the general Committee.

11. That Mr. Doherty be appointed to act as Secretary to the Association and be remunerated for his services.

12. That the contributions from the various districts be regularly transmitted to Manchester: where they shall be deposited in some bank, or other place of security, to be agreed upon by the general Committee, in sums of £25 each, the cheque for such sum or sums to be divided, one half of which shall be deposited in the box of the general Committee, the other half in the box No. 1 District. The next, and every succeeding sum, to be disposed of in the same way to No. 2, 3, &c., District, until all have been put in possession of one half of a cheque or cheques: and then, commencing at No. 1 District, as before, and so on progressively, as often as the same may be required.

13. That the first payment of one penny per week be commenced and made on Monday, the 12th day of July 1830.

14. That the funds of this society shall be applied only to prevent reductions of wages, but in no case to procure an advance. Any trade considering their wages too low

ATTEMPTS AT GENERAL UNION

may exert themselves to obtain such advance, as they may think necessary and can obtain it by their own exertions.

15. That each member of this society shall be entitled to 8s. per week, during the continuance of a strike against a reduction of wages — the money to be paid into the hands of the officers of the trade whose wages may be attempted to be reduced.

16. That each trade shall continue to pay for three months, before they can be entitled to the benefits of this association.

17. That no trade can be admitted members of this Association that is not regularly organised and united to itself.

18. That no person shall be allowed to pay his subscription individually, but through the regular constituted authorities of his trade: but that friends, who may be desirous to uphold the comforts and independence of the labouring man, may contribute any sum they please, either weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually, through any trade they may choose to entrust or honour with their subscriptions.

19. That each trade society shall, upon their depositing their entrance fee, return a correct report of their number of effective members, as well as the number of non-payers, in their respective bodies: and that trades shall not receive pay for more members in case of a strike against a reduction of wages than they return as regularly paying members, averaged for the three months preceding the application of any trade to receive the benefits arising from this association.

20. That every trade society, on applying to be admitted members of this Association, be required to produce a copy of their articles for the inspection of the committee, and if approved of to be admitted at their next meeting.

21. That as soon as the funds of the society will permit, an office shall be taken, and a printing press, types, &c., purchased for the use of the Association.

APPENDIX THREE

22. That the person to whose care this property may be entrusted, shall give to the general Committee sufficient and satisfactory security to the full amount delivered to his charge.

23. That the general Committee shall have power to make such additional laws or regulations for the government of the association as may be considered necessary, and that all laws and regulations sanctioned by them, shall be held equally valid and binding, as if passed by the General Meeting of Delegates, until the assembling of such meeting, when all such laws shall be submitted to, and reconsidered by them, and altered or amended as may appear necessary.

24. That the Committee of the Manchester District be empowered to appoint stewards, for depositing in or withdrawing money from the bank or other place where it may be deposited, and to make such other minor arrangements as may be considered necessary before the next meeting of Delegates.

25. That the next general meeting of delegates shall be held in Manchester in six months from this date.

APPENDIX 4

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF LABOUR

THE following tables record the names of the societies which contributed to the funds of the National Association for the Protection of Labour from July 31, 1830 to September 10, 1831. These have been compiled partly from a pamphlet *On Combinations of Trades*, published by Ridgway in London (1831), and partly from the files of the *Voice of the People*. Four issues, however, were missing from the files of the *Voice of the People* consulted in London and Manchester; and these may have contained further records of affiliations or subscriptions paid. As far as I know, there are no surviving records of sums received after September 10, 1831.

In the tables, the columns headed 'A' give the subscriptions recorded in the pamphlet, up to March 5, 1831, whereas the columns headed 'B' give later subscriptions, from the *Voice of the People*. The division has been preserved in order to show how Lancashire was ceasing to give the same financial support after March, and how the Association was faring in the various districts before and after March. It will be seen that very little financial support came at any time from Yorkshire, and that such areas as Birmingham and Sheffield sent nothing to Manchester. Alexander Campbell's Scottish National Association for the Protection of Labour was not established until the autumn of 1831: but it is unlikely that it ever sent any contributions to the Manchester Committee.

I. CONTRIBUTIONS TO CENTRE

Districts	District Contributions						Total Contributions		
	A			B					
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE									
Accrington		—		25	0	0	25	0	0
Blackburn	164	10	0	10	0	0	175	10	0
Bolton	67	0	0	—			67	0	0
Bury	100	0	0	50	0	0	192	8	11
Chorley	54	1	0	—			63	11	0
Clitheroe	—			1	3	0	33	15	10
Edenfield	3	6	2	—			4	6	2
Haslingden	—			2	0	10	11	17	6
Horwich	24	10	0	—			24	10	0
Preston	11	2	0	—			15	2	0
Rochdale	180	0	0	—			363	18	0
Rossendale	—			2	0	0	42	14	5
Staleybridge & Dukinfield	4	3	6	—			40	10	6
MIDLANDS									
Leicester	—			50	0	0	115	8	0
Loughborough	—			13	10	0	71	18	0
Nottingham	60	10	0	50	0	0	228	10	4

Other areas contributing Large Sums through Individual Societies:
 Ashton-under-Lyne (£130), Manchester (£246 3s. 9d.), Derby (£60 15s. 2d.).

Newton	1	—	—	—	—	1 0 0	—	—	1 0 0	
Oldham	4	—	—	39 13 6	—	—	39 13 6	—	—	
Preston	4	11 2 0	—	4 0 0	—	—	15 2 0	—	—	
Radcliffe	1	—	—	1 0 0	—	1 17 16	1 0 0	—	1 17 6	
Ramsbottom	1	—	—	9 12 0	—	—	9 12 0	—	—	
Ribblesdale	1	—	—	11 0 0	—	—	11 0 0	—	—	
Rochdale	2	180 0 0	—	183 18 0	—	—	363 18 0	—	—	
Rossendale	7	—	2 0 0	32 3 4	—	8 11 1	32 3 4	—	10 11 1	
Shepley	2	—	—	6 19 7	—	—	6 19 7	—	—	
Spoondal	1	—	—	0 17 0	—	—	0 17 0	—	—	
Staleybridge & Dukinfield	4	4 3 6	—	36 7 0	—	—	40 10 6	—	—	
Stockport	1	—	—	7 0 0	—	—	7 0 0	—	—	
Wigan	4	—	—	3 1 9	—	1 0 0	3 1 9	—	1 0 0	
(B) MIDLANDS										
Arnold	1	—	—	1 0 0	—	—	1 0 0	—	—	
Babwith	1	—	—	1 0 0	—	—	1 0 0	—	—	
Belper	4	—	—	2 6 8	—	—	2 6 8	—	—	
Derby	15	—	—	56 14 4	—	4 0 10	56 14 4	—	4 0 10	
Kirby-in-Ashfield	1	—	—	1 5 0	—	—	1 5 0	—	—	
Leicester	13	—	50 0 0	65 8 0	—	—	65 8 0	—	50 0 0	
Loughborough	6	—	13 10 0	2 0 0	—	56 8 0	2 0 0	—	69 18 0	
Mansfield	4	—	—	19 15 6	—	—	19 15 6	—	—	
Nottingham	17	60 10 0	50 0 0	117 16 4	—	0 4 0	178 6 4	—	50 4 0	
Old Basford	1	—	—	1 0 0	—	—	1 0 0	—	—	
Potteries	1	—	—	1 0 0	—	1 10 0	1 0 0	—	1 10 0	
Quorn	1	—	—	—	—	4 6 8	—	—	4 6 8	
Sheepshead	1	—	—	—	—	6 17 7	—	—	6 17 7	
Sutton-in-Ashfield	1	—	—	17 4 8	—	—	17 4 8	—	—	
(C) OTHER AREAS										
Bradford, Yorks	1	—	—	3 0 0	—	—	3 0 0	—	—	
Carlisle, Cumberland	1	—	—	—	—	7 7 0	—	—	7 7 0	
Dewsbury, Yorks	1	—	—	—	—	1 0 0	—	—	1 0 0	
Knaresborough, Yorks	1	—	—	1 0 0	—	—	1 0 0	—	—	

ATTEMPTS AT GENERAL UNION

III. BY TRADES

	Aug. 1830- March 5, 1831			March 1831- Sept. 1831		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
(A) LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE						
1. <i>Spinners</i>						
Ashton-under-Lyne	83	11	5	—		
Chorley	7	10	0	—		
Clitheroe	3	2	1	—		
Hyde	1	0	0	—		
Lees	14	0	6	—		
Manchester	25	11	4	—		
Mossley	10	7	6	—		
Oldham	21	0	0	—		
Preston	1	0	0	—		
Rochdale	13	18	0	—		
Rossendale	1	2	0	0	10	1
Shepley	0	4	9	—		
Staleybridge & Dukinfield	31	16	8	—		
Stockport	7	0	0	—		
2. <i>Weavers</i>						
Ashton, Staleybridge & Dukin- field Power Loom	16	13	9	—		
Blackrod Nankeen	10	11	6	—		
Chorley Smallware	—			1	0	0
Clitheroe Power Loom Cotton	3	2	1	—		
Edenfield Woollen	1	0	0	—		
Haslingden Woollen	9	15	0	—		
Macclesfield Broad Silk	21	16	8	—		
Macclesfield Smallware	1	0	0	—		
Macclesfield Power Loom Cotton	4	9	4	—		
Macclesfield Power Loom Fustian	3	2	8	—		
Manchester Smallware	12	10	7	17	14	8
Rochdale Flannel	170	0	0	—		
Rossendale Smallware	—			0	11	6
3. <i>Cotton Yarn Dressers</i>						
Ashton	1	10	8	—		
Blackburn	1	0	0	—		
Clitheroe	1	11	3	—		
Manchester	7	4	1	1	19	9
Staleybridge & Dukinfield	2	10	4	—		

APPENDIX FOUR

III. BY TRADES (*contd.*)

	Aug. 1830- March 5, 1831	March 1831- Sept. 1831
4. <i>Printers, Dyers, etc.</i>	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Ashton Calico Printers	0 4 9	—
Aspull Engravers	1 8 0	—
Bury Dyers	39 17 11	—
Catterall Printers	3 0 0	3 0 0
Chorley Machine Calico Printers	1 0 0	—
Clitheroe Block Printers	5 4 9	—
Clitheroe Block Print Cutters	2 2 1	—
Haslingden Engravers	0 1 8	—
Irwell Printers	15 10 0	—
Manchester Printers, Dyers, etc.	1 0 0	2 17 6
Manchester, Stockport & Mottram Machine Printers	3 16 0	4 3 4
Manchester Printers	15 8 2	14 1 3
Manchester Silk Dyers	7 4 4	10 9 7
Manchester Block Print Cutters	5 8 11	—
Mossley Printers	3 10 10	—
Newton Bleachers & Finishers	—	1 0 0
Ramsbottom Printers	9 12 0	—
Ribblesdale Printers	11 0 0	—
Rossendale Calico Printers	11 16 1	—
Rossendale Apprentice Block Printers	5 5 6	1 13 0
Rossendale Block Printers	—	4 0 8
Rossendale Dyers	10 17 3	0 12 4
Shepley Block Printers	6 14 10	—
5. <i>Other Textile Trades</i>		
Ashton Card Grinders & Strippers	1 0 0	—
Clitheroe Card Grinders & Strippers	1 4 0	—
Lees Twisters	12 12 0	3 19 4
Manchester Sizers	3 8 2	1 9 2
Manchester Stretchers	4 1 11	—
Manchester Card Grinders & Strippers	21 2 4	—
Middleton Crofters	10 13 3	—
Preston Flax Dressers	1 0 0	—
Rossendale Crofters	3 2 6	1 3 6

ATTEMPTS AT GENERAL UNION

III. BY TRADES (*contd.*)

	Aug. 1830— March 5, 1831	March 1831— Sept. 1831
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
<i>Other Textile Trades—contd.</i>		
Staleybridge & Dunkinfield Power Loom Overlookers	2 0 0	—
6. <i>Mechanics, Moulders, Smiths, etc.</i>		
Adlington Engineers	—	1 5 0
Ashton Mechanics	9 12 11	—
Ashton Moulders	1 17 0	—
Aspinall Smithy Makers	0 14 0	—
Aspull Engineers	—	1 12 7
Blackrod Blacksmiths	1 0 0	—
Clitheroe Mechanics	1 11 0	—
Manchester Mechanics	11 1 0	—
Manchester Moulders	8 9 2	—
Manchester Friendly Smiths	4 3 6	—
Manchester Farriers	3 12 6	3 5 0
Manchester Spindle & Flyer Makers	12 17 2	—
Preston Spindle & Flyer Makers	1 0 0	—
Preston Iron Founders	1 0 0	—
Wigan Blacksmiths	1 2 0	—
7. <i>Carpenters, Sawyers, etc.</i>		
Blackrod Carpenters	—	2 9 7
Clitheroe Sawyers	1 10 8	—
Clitheroe Joiners	2 0 0	—
Manchester Sawyers	22 6 0	—
Wigan Carpenters	0 18 0	—
8. <i>Hatters</i>		
Ashton Hat Ruffers	1 8 0	—
Bury Hat Body Makers	1 11 0	—
Denton Hat Body Makers	4 2 9	—
Droylsden Hat Body Makers	1 3 0	—
Gorton Hat Body Makers	0 12 0	—
Hollinwood Hat Ruffers	1 10 0	—
Hooley Hill Hat Body Makers	0 19 0	—
Oldham Hat Body Makers	5 5 10	—
Oldham Hat Ruffers	8 17 8	—
Oldham Hat Finishers	4 10 0	—
9. <i>Other Trades</i>		
Ashton Tailors	1 6 2	—
Ashton Shoe Makers	3 1 8	—

APPENDIX FOUR

III. BY TRADES (*contd.*)

	Aug. 1830- March 5, 1831	March 1831- Sept. 1831
<i>Other Trades—contd.</i>	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Ashton Basket Makers	6 16 8	2 11 0
Basket Makers in Union in Ashton, Sheffield, Stock- port, Rochdale & Bolton	0 6 0	—
Blackrod Day Labourers	7 5 9	1 16 0
Blackrod Coalmen	—	2 7 0
Bollington Quarry Union	2 12 5	0 6 0
'A Trade at Bury'	1 0 0	—
Johnston Hill Day Labourers	0 18 4	—
Radcliffe: Mr. Hampson's Hands	1 0 0	1 17 6
Spoondal (no trade specified)	0 17 0	—
Wigan Cordwainers	1 1 9	—
Wigan: Dickinson's Mill	—	1 0 0
 (B) YORKSHIRE AND CUMBERLAND		
Bradford Woolcombers	1 0 0	—
Bradford (for Newspaper)	2 0 0	—
Dewsbury Blanket Weavers	—	1 0 0
Knaresborough Linen Weavers	1 0 0	—
 (C) CUMBERLAND		
Carlisle Printers	—	7 7 0
 (D) MIDLANDS		
1. <i>Textile Trades</i>		
Arnold Two-needle Cotton Cut-up Branch	1 0 0	—
Babwith	1 0 0	—
Belper Silk Smallware Hands	1 1 8	—
Belper Sewing Silk Twisters	0 15 4	—
Derby Plain Silk Hose Hands	25 12 8	—
Derby Fancy Hands	2 14 8	—
Derby Fancy Labourers	—	0 8 0
Derby Plain Labourers	—	0 5 0
Derby Machine Hands	0 10 0	—
Derby Smallware Branch	1 7 1	2 3 0
Derby Ribbed Branch	1 0 0	—

ATTEMPTS AT GENERAL UNION

III. BY TRADES (*contd.*)

	Aug. 1830- March 5, 1831	March 1831- Sept. 1831
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
<i>Textile Trades—contd.</i>		
Derby Tape Weavers	1 0 0	0 7 0
Derby Silk Smallware Weavers	6 1 5	—
Derby Silk Twisters	2 1 8	0 2 4
Derby Sewing Silk Twisters	3 2 8	—
Derbyshire Calico Printers	6 10 0	—
Kirby-in-Ashfield Two-needle Cotton Cut-up Branch	1 5 0	—
Leicester Framework Knitters	19 16 4	—
Leicester Sock Branch	14 9 4	—
Leicester Wool Combers	7 15 4	—
Leicester Bobbin Net Makers	1 6 0	—
Leicester Lace Hands	1 0 0	—
Leicester Warp Lace Hands	0 8 4	—
Leicester Glove Makers, Trimmers & Dyers	—	(no sum given)
Loughborough Framework Knitters	1 0 0	—
Loughborough Bobbin Net Hands	—	25 0 0
Loughborough Net Trade	—	20 8 0
Loughborough Two-needle Hands	—	1 0 0
Loughborough Worsted Knit Hands	—	10 0 0
Mansfield Silk Knitted Hose Branch	14 19 6	—
Mansfield Fancy Silk Hose Branch	2 16 0	—
Mansfield Fancy Machine Hose Branch	1 0 0	—
Mansfield Bobbin Net Makers	1 0 0	—
Nottingham Plain Silk Hose Branch	23 18 4	—
Nottingham Silk Knitted Hose Branch	10 9 7	—
Nottingham Fancy Machine Hose Branch	4 12 6	—
Nottingham Fancy Silk Hose Branch	4 17 4	—

APPENDIX FOUR

III. BY TRADES (*contd.*)

	Aug. 1830- March 5, 1831	March 1831- Sept. 1831
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
<i>Textile Trades—contd.</i>		
Nottingham Half Hose & Glove Branch	—	0 4 0
Nottingham Pantaloon, Drawers, etc., Branch	21 10 0	—
Nottingham Silk Glove Branch	16 12 6	—
Nottingham Two-needle Cotton Cut-up Branch	3 15 0	—
Nottingham General Warp Trade	9 13 2	—
Nottingham Warp Brace Trade	2 6 0	—
Nottingham Bobbin Net Makers	1 0 0	—
Old Basford Plain Silk Branch	1 0 0	—
Quorndon Warp Lace Hands	—	4 6 8
Sheepshead Two-needle Branch	—	6 17 7
Sutton-in-Ashfield Two-needle Cotton Cut-up Branch	17 4 8	—
2. <i>Other Trades</i>		
Belper Moulders	0 2 8	—
Belper Paper Makers	0 7 0	—
Derby Iron Moulders	2 5 8	—
Derby Friendly Smiths	1 0 0	—
Derby Paper Makers	3 8 6	0 5 6
Leicester Lock Hands	8 6 8	—
Leicester Needle Makers	2 16 2	—
Leicester Sinker Makers	1 0 0	—
Leicester Frame Smiths	2 9 0	—
Leicester Tailors	4 3 4	—
Leicester Cabinet Makers	1 17 6	—
Nottingham Bobbin & Carriage Makers	5 10 0	—
Nottingham Iron Moulders & Labourers	3 14 0	—
Nottingham Smiths, Filers, Turners & Labourers	4 14 5	—
Nottingham Fender Makers	2 6 0	—
Nottingham Cabinet Makers	1 0 0	—

ATTEMPTS AT GENERAL UNION

III. BY TRADES (*contd.*)

	Aug. 1830- March 5, 1831	March 1831- Sept. 1831
<i>Other Trades—contd.</i>	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Nottingham Plasterers	1 17 6	—
Potteries, China & Earthen- ware Turners & Labourers	1 0 0	1 10 0
(E) MISCELLANEOUS		
National Associated Smiths	—	1 0 0

APPENDIX 5

INITIATION CEREMONY, ENACTED ON THE RECEPTION OF MEMBERS INTO THE WOOLCOMBERS' UNION¹

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

OUTSIDE TILER, a member of the Union who keeps guard on the outside of the room in which the members are assembled.

INSIDE TILER, ditto, on the inside.

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR, the person who conducts to the Lodge those who are to be initiated into the mysteries of the Union.

PRESIDENT, VICE-PRESIDENT, WARDEN, SECRETARY, MEMBERS OF THE UNION, WORKMEN ABOUT TO BE MADE MEMBERS.

Members say the following prayer:

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord,

¹ The text here given is taken from a hostile source, being quoted from the pamphlet *The Character, Objects and Effects of Trades' Unions*, so often cited in this book. The pamphlet gives the following explanation: 'The scene is usually the first floor of a tavern, which is doubly planked throughout, and the interstices filled with wood shavings in order to prevent anyone overhearing the ceremonies. The time is 8 or 9 o'clock in the evening, at which hour the above-named *dramatis personae* with the exception of the principal conductor, and those who are about to enter the Union, are supposed to be collected together for the performance of the following drama. On one side of the apartment is a skeleton, above which is a drawn sword and a battle-axe, and in front stands a table upon which lies a Bible. The principal officers of the Union are clothed in surplices. Cf. *Character, Objects and Effects of Trades' Unions*, published by J. Ridgway & Sons, London (1834), p. 67.

ATTEMPTS AT GENERAL UNION

defend us in this our undertaking, that we may not fear the power of our adversaries, through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Outside Tiler knocks at the door

INSIDE TILER: Who comes here to disturb the peace and harmony of this our most worthy and honourable order?

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR (*from without*): I am not come here to disturb the peace and harmony of this your most worthy and honourable order. I am a brother, with strangers who wish to be admitted into your most worthy and honourable order.

INSIDE TILER: Most worthy President, Vice-, Secretary, and brothers all, a brother stands at the door with strangers, who wish to be admitted into this your most worthy and honourable order.

PRESIDENT: In the name of the Lord, admit him.

Enter Principal Conductor followed by the strangers with their eyes bandaged. Members salute, and then sing a hymn

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR: Strangers, within our secret walls we have admitted you,

Hoping you will prove honest, faithful, just and true,

If you cannot keep the secrets we require,

Go hence, you are at liberty to retire.

Are your motives pure?

STRANGERS: Yes.

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR: Do you declare they are?

STRANGERS: Yes.

PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR: Then, brethren, to initiate these strangers we will now proceed,

And our most worthy master may proceed to read.

Members sing a hymn

WARDEN: Stand, ye presumptuous mortals, strangers' steps I hear,

And I must know your trade and business here.

APPENDIX FIVE

By my great power, there's nothing can from vengeance
stay us,
If you come here intending to betray us.

PRESIDENT: Most worthy guardian of our sacred laws,
They're woolcombers, and wishful to protect the united
cause.

WARDEN: Then all is well.

VICE-PRESIDENT: Strangers, you're welcome, and if you
prove sincere,

You'll not repent your pains and labour here.

We have one common interest, and one common soul,

Which should by virtue guide and actuate the whole.

Our trade requires protection, by experience sad we know;

Our duty is to prevent recurrence of our former woe.

Our commonwealth was like some savage land,

Where the weaker slaves, and stronger bear command,

Where tyrants rule with uncontrolled sway,

And degraded subjects do their will obey.

Such was our domestic lot, our suffering and our care

Enraged our minds with sadness and despair.

And when we'd united and our rights obtained,

We found that only half our point was gained,

Our interests were so many and so various,

The tenure of our rights so frail and so precarious,

That had we not invented Lodges our protection to ensure,

All, all would have come to nought, as it had done before.

Strangers, the design of all our Lodges is love and unity,

With self-protection founded on the laws of equity,

And when you have our mystic rights gone through,

Our secrets all will be disclosed to you.

We deem you worthy our friendship, trust and confidence
to share,

See that you make the prosperity of our cause your constant
care.

Let your tongue be always faithful, your heart conceal its
trust,

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Woe, woe and dishonour attend the faithless and unjust.
Guards, give the strangers sight.

*The bandages are removed from the eyes of the
strangers, and they are placed opposite the skeleton*

PRESIDENT (*pointing to the skeleton*):

Strangers, mark well this shadow, which you see,
It is a faithful emblem of man's destiny.
Behold that head, once filled with pregnant wit,
These hollow holes once sparkling eyes did fit;
This empty mouth nor lips nor tongue contains,
Of a once well furnished head, see all that now remains.
Behold this breast, where a generous heart once moved,
Filled with affection, loving and beloved,
Mark well these bones, the flesh hath left its place;
These arms could once a tender wife embrace.
These legs in gay activity could roam,
But, alas! the spirit's dead, the life is gone.
O death! O death! Thy terrors strike us with dismay.
Only the spirit just, which hath left its empty clay,
Can set thee at defiance and in triumph say,
O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
The sting of death is sin — are we not sinners all?
Then upon us one day the heavy stroke of death must
fall.

VICE-PRESIDENT: Strangers, hear me; and mark well what
I say,

Be faithful to your trust, or you may rue this day.
You are now within our secret walls, and I must know if
you can keep a secret.

STRANGERS: Yes.

VICE-PRESIDENT: And will you do it?

STRANGERS: Yes.

VICE-PRESIDENT: Then amongst us, you will shortly be
entitled to the endearing name of brother,
And what you hear or see here done, you must not disclose
to any other;

APPENDIX FIVE

We are uniting to cultivate friendship as well as to protect
our trade,
And due respect must to all our laws be paid.
Hoping you will prove faithful, and all encroachments on
our rights withstand,
As a token of your alliance, — give me your hand.

And now, shouldst thou ever prove deceitful, remember
thy end, remember. Guards, put these strangers into
darkness, and conduct them to our most worthy master, to
be further instructed in this our most worthy and honourable
order.

*The eyes of the strangers are again bandaged, and
they are then made to walk several times round the
room, while the members stamp on the floor with their
feet. They are then led to the table, upon which the
Bible is placed; the right hand of each is placed upon
the sacred volume: the bandages are then removed
from their eyes, and they take the following oath:*

I, A. B., woolcomber, being in the awful presence of
Almighty God, do voluntarily declare that I will persevere
in endeavouring to support a brotherhood, known by the
name of the Friendly Society of Operative Stuff Manu-
facturers, and other Industrious Operatives, and I solemnly
declare and promise that I will never act in opposition to
the brotherhood in any of their attempts to support wages,
but will, to the utmost of my power, assist them in all
lawful and just occasions, to obtain a fair remuneration for
our labour. And I call upon God to witness this my most
solemn declaration, that neither hopes, fears, rewards,
punishments, nor even death itself, shall ever induce me
directly or indirectly, to give any information respecting
any thing contained in this Lodge, or any similar Lodge
connected with the Society; and I will neither write nor
cause to be written, upon paper, wood, sand, stone, or any
thing else, whereby it may be known, unless allowed to do
so by the proper authorities of the Society. And I will

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never give my consent to have any money belonging to the Society divided or appropriated to any other purpose than the use of the Society and support of the trade, so help me God, and keep me steadfast in this my most solemn obligation; and if ever I reveal either part or parts of this my most solemn obligation, may all the Society I am about to belong to, and all that is just, disgrace me so long as I live; and may what is now before me plunge my soul into the everlasting pit of misery. Amen.

VICE-PRESIDENT: Guards, put these strangers into darkness. Rise and stand. (*To the strangers.*)

The strangers having been blindfolded, the members sing a hymn, and then salute. The strangers are then led out. Members then say the following prayer:

O God, who art the author of peace, etc. (*same as at the commencement*).

PRESIDENT: In the name of King Edward the Third,¹ I declare this Lodge to be now duly closed, and so it is.

God save our noble King,
William the Fourth let's sing.

Brethren, ere we depart, let us join hand and heart
In this our cause;

May our next meeting be blest with sweet harmony,
Honour, and secrecy in the Mechanic's cause.

Exeunt

¹ Because the woollen manufacture was supposed to have been introduced in Edward III's reign.

APPENDIX 6

RESOLUTIONS OF THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING NATIONAL REGEN- ERATION, NOVEMBER 25, 1833

(From the *Pioneer*, p. 109)

It was unanimously resolved:

1. That it is desirable that all who wish to see society improved, and confusion avoided, should endeavour to assist the working classes to obtain 'for eight hours work the present full day's wages', such eight hours to be performed between the hours of six in the morning and six in the evening; and that this new regulation should commence on the 1st day of March next.

2. That, in order to carry the foregoing purposes into effect, a society should be formed, to be called 'The Society for Promoting National Regeneration'.

3. That persons be immediately appointed from among the workmen to visit their fellow-workmen in each trade, manufacture, and employment, in every district of the kingdom, for the purpose of communicating with them on the subject of the above resolutions, and of inducing them to determine upon their adoption.

4. That persons be also appointed to visit the master manufacturers in each trade, in every district, to explain and recommend to them the adoption of the new regulation referred to in the first resolution.

5. That Messrs. Oastler, Wood, Bull, Sadler, and others, be urgently requested to desist from soliciting parliament for a ten hours bill, and to use their utmost exertions in aid of the measures now adopted to carry into effect, on the 1st of March next, the regulation of 'eight hours work for the present full day's wages'.

APPENDIX 7

CONSTITUTION OF THE GRAND NATIONAL CONSOLIDATED TRADES UNION

(From the Printed Rules of a copy in the Goldsmiths' Library, University of London)

RULES OF THE CONSOLIDATED UNION

Rules and Regulations of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union of Great Britain and Ireland, instituted for the purpose of the more effectively enabling the working classes to receive, protect and establish the rights of industry.

(1834)

I. EACH Trade in this Consolidated Union shall have its Grand Lodge in that town or city most eligible for it, such Grand Lodge to be governed internally by a Grand Master, Deputy Grand Master, and Grand Secretary, and a Committee of Management.

II. Each Grand Lodge shall have its District Lodges, in any number, to be designated or named after the town or city in which the District Lodge is founded.

III. Each Grand Lodge shall be considered the head of its own particular trade, and to have certain exclusive powers accordingly; but in all other respects the Grand Lodges are to answer the same ends as the District Lodges.

IV. Each District Lodge shall embrace within itself all operatives of the same trade, living in smaller towns or villages adjacent to it, and shall be governed internally by a president, vice-president, secretary, and a committee of management.

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V. Each District Lodge shall have (if necessary) its Branch Lodge or Lodges, numbered in rotation; such Branch Lodges to be under the control of the District Lodge from which they sprung.

VI. An unlimited number of the above-described Lodges shall form and constitute the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

VII. Each District shall have its Central Committee, composed of a Deputy, or Deputies, from every District Lodge of the different trades in the district; such Central Committee shall meet once in every week to superintend and watch over the interests of the Consolidated Union in that District, transmitting a report of the same, monthly, to the Executive Council in London, together with any suggestions of improvements they may think proper.

VIII. The General government of the G.N.C.T.U. shall be vested in a Grand Council of Delegates from each of the Central Committees of all the Districts in the Consolidated Union, to be holden every six months, at such places as shall be decided upon at the preceding Council; the next meeting of the Grand Council of the Consolidated Union to be held on the first day of September, 1834, and to continue its sitting so long as may be requisite.

IX. During the recess of the Grand Council of Delegates, the government of the Consolidated Union shall be vested in an Executive Council of five; which executive will in future be chosen at the Grand Delegate Council aforesaid.

X. All dispensations or grants for the formation of new Lodges shall come from the Grand Lodge of each particular trade, or from the Executive Council. Applications to come through the Central Committee of the District or by memorial, signed by at least twenty operatives of the place where such new Lodge is proposed to be founded.

XI. The Executive Council shall act as trustees for all funds provided by the Consolidated Union, and for the adjustment of strikes, the purchasing or renting of land,

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establishing provision stores, workshops, etc.; or for any other purpose connected with the general benefit of the whole of the Union.

XII. All sums for the above purposes to be transmitted from the Lodges to the Executive Council through some safe and accredited medium.

XIII. District and Grand Lodges shall have the control of their own funds, subject to the levies imposed on them by the Executive Council.

XIV. The ordinary weekly subscription of members to be threepence each member.

XV. No strike or turn-out for an *advance* of wages shall be made by the members of any Lodge in the Consolidated Union without the consent of the Executive Council; but in all cases of a *reduction* of wages the Central Committee of the District shall have the power of deciding whenever a strike shall or shall not take place, and should such Central Committee be necessitated to order a levy in support of such strike brought on by such reduction of wages, such order shall be made in all the Lodges; in the first instance, in the District in which such reduction hath taken place, and on advice being forwarded to the Executive they shall consider the case, and order accordingly.

XVI. No higher sum than 10s. per week shall be paid to members during a strike or turn-out.

XVII. All Lodges shall be divided into local sections of twenty men each, or as near that number as may be.

Miscellaneous and Auxiliary Lodges

XVIII. In all cases where the number of operatives in a particular Trade, in any District, is too limited to allow of such Trade forming a Lodge of itself, the members of such Trade shall be permitted to become Unionists by joining the Lodge of any other Trade in the District. Should there be several trades in a District thus limited with respect to the number of their Operatives, they shall be

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allowed to form together a District Miscellaneous Lodge, with permission, in order to extend the sphere of the brotherhood, to hold out the hand of fellowship to all really useful labourers employed productively.

XIX. And, in order that all acknowledged friends to the productive classes may attach themselves to the Consolidated Union, an Auxiliary Lodge may be established in every city or town in the kingdom. The members of each Lodge shall conform to all the rules and regulations herein contained, and be bound in the same manner, and subject to all the laws of the G.N.C.T.U.; and shall not, in any manner, or at any time or place, speak or write *anything* in opposition to these laws or the interests of the Union aforesaid. The Auxiliary Lodge shall be liable to be dissolved according to Article XXII.

XX. Lodges of Industrious Females shall be instituted in every district wherein may be practicable; such Lodges to be considered, in every respect, as part of, and belonging to, the G.N.C.T.U.

Employment of Turn-Outs

XXI. In all cases of strikes or turn-outs, where it is practicable to employ members in the making or producing of such commodities or articles as are in demand among their brother Unionists, or any other operatives willing to purchase the same, each Lodge shall provide a workroom or shop in which such commodities and articles may be manufactured on account of that Lodge, which shall make proper arrangements for the supply of the necessary materials; over which arrangements the Central Committee of the District shall have the control, subject to the scrutiny of the Grand Lodge Committee of the trade on strike.

XXII. The Grand Lodge of each Trade to have the power of dissolving any District Lodge, in that Trade, for any violation of these laws, any outrage upon the public peace, or for gross neglect of duty; all Branch, Miscellaneous or

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Auxiliary Lodges to be subject to the same control.

XXIII. The internal management and general concerns of each Grand or District Lodge are vested in a Committee of twenty-five members, each to be chosen by ballot, and elected by not having less than three-fourths of the votes of the members present, at the time of his election, in his favour. The whole of the Committee to go out of office quarterly, eligible, however, to re-election. The Grand Master, or President, and the Secretary, or Grand Secretary, of a Grand or a District Lodge, to be considered members of its Committee of Management by virtue of their offices.

XXIV. Each Grand Lodge, in this Consolidated Union, to be considered the centre of information regarding the general affairs of its particular Trade; each District Lodge to communicate with its Grand Lodge at the end of each month, and to give an account to it of the number of people Members in the District Lodge — the gross number of the hours of labour performed by them in that district — the state of its funds — and any local or general intelligence that may be considered of interest to the Grand Lodge.

XXV. The Committee of Management in each Lodge shall sit at least on one evening in every week for the despatch of business — and oftener if necessary.

XXVI. Each Grand or District Lodge to hold its meetings on one evening in every month; at which meeting a report of the Proceedings of the Committee, during the past month, shall be laid before the members, together with an abstract of the state of the funds, an account of the prospects of the Society, and any other propositions or by-laws which the Committee may have to suggest for adoption, and any other information or correspondence of interest to the members. All nomination of fresh officers to be made at the Lodge meetings, and all complaints of members to be considered and discussed therein.

XXVII. The Grand Master or Deputy Grand Master, President, or Vice-President, or both, shall preside at all

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meetings of Grand or District Lodges, to keep order, state or put questions according to the sense and intention of the members, give effect to the resolutions, and cause them to be put into force; and they shall be addressed by members, during Lodge hours, by their proper titles.

XXVIII. No subject which does not immediately concern the interest of the Trade shall be discussed at any meetings of Committees or Lodges; and no proposition shall be adopted in either without the consent of at least three-fourths of the members present at its proposal — the question to be decided by ballot if any member demand it. No less than five members of Committee of Management to constitute a Quorum, provided the rest have all been duly summoned: no Grand or District Lodge to be considered open unless at least thirty members be present.

XXIX. Each Grand or District Lodge shall have the power to appoint sub-committees to enquire into or manage any affair touching their interests, of which Committees the head officers of the Lodge are always to be considered members.

Of Secretaries

XXX. The duties of a secretary to a Grand or District Lodge are:

To attend Lodge and Committee Meetings and take minutes of the proceedings, entering the same in a book to be kept for that purpose.

To conduct all the correspondence of the Society. To take down the names and addresses of parties desirous of being initiated into the Order; and upon receiving the initiation fee from each, and entering the amount into a book, he will give each party a card, by which they may be admitted into the place appointed for the ceremony.

To receive subscriptions of members, entering the same into a small account book, numbering the subscribers from No. 1, and following up the sequence in regulation order,

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giving to each subscriber a card, on which his contribution or payment shall be noted.

To enter all additional weekly payments and all levies into separate small books; all subscriptions and payments to be afterwards copied into a ledger, ruled expressly for the purpose.

The Secretary to be paid an adequate weekly salary; and to be allowed an assistant if the amount of business require it.

The Secretary of each Grand or District Lodge shall balance his books once every fortnight, and the Managing Committee shall audit them, going over each item of receipt and expenditure with strict attention, checking the same with scrupulous care; and if found correct, three of the Committee shall verify the same by affixing their signature to the page on which the balance is struck.

Initiation

XXXI. Any of the officers or members of a Lodge may be appointed by the Committee of Management to perform the Initiation Service; and to have charge of the Robes, etc., for that purpose; for which the Committee may allow him a reasonable remuneration.

Any party applying to be initiated must bring forward two witnesses as to character and the identity of his trade or occupation.

Of Branch Lodges

XXXII. Branch Lodge Meetings shall be held on one evening in every week, in the respective localities; at which Lodges any motion, proposed by law, etc., may be discussed and considered by the members previous to its being finally submitted to the Grand or District Lodge Committee.

XXXIII. The members of each branch may elect a president to preside at the Branch Lodge, and a secretary

APPENDIX SEVEN

to collect subscriptions or levies for their Grand or District Lodge; who shall also attend meetings of the Committee of Management, for instructions and information, and to submit suggestions, complaints, etc., from his Branch Lodge. No salaries or fees to be allowed to officers of Branch Lodges, unless by the unanimous consent of their members.

Wardens, etc.

XXXIV. In addition to the officers before mentioned in these regulations, there shall be, in each Grand and District Lodge, a Warden, an Inside Tyler, an Outside Tyler, and a Conductor, whose principal duties are to attend initiations, and to see that no improper persons be admitted into the meetings. These officers to be elected in the same manner, and at the same time, as other officers.

Miscellaneous Articles

XXXV. Any member shall be liable to expulsion from the Lodges for any improper conduct therein; and shall be excluded from the benefits of the Society if his subscriptions be more than six months in arrear, unless the Committee of Management shall see cause to decide otherwise.

XXXVI. The *G.N.C.T.U. Gazette* to be considered the official organ of the Executive Council, and the general medium of intelligence on the affairs of the Union.

XXXVII. Each Lodge shall, as soon as possible, make arrangements for furnishing the means of instituting libraries or reading-rooms, or any other arrangements, affording them every facility for meeting together for friendly conversation, mutual instruction, and rational amusement or recreation.

XXXVIII. In all cases, where it be practicable, each Lodge shall establish within its locality one or more depôts for provisions and articles in general domestic use, in order that its members may be supplied with the best of such commodities at little above wholesale prices.

ATTEMPTS AT GENERAL UNION

XXXIX. Each District and Grand Lodge shall endeavour to institute a fund for the support of sick and aged members, and for defraying the funeral expenses of deceased members, on a similar principle to that of Benefit Societies, such fund to be kept up by small monthly contributions from those Unionists who are willing to subscribe towards it.

XL. Each Grand or District Lodge to have the power of making its own by-laws for purposes not comprised in these regulations; but such by-laws or laws must not be in opposition to, or in counteraction of, any of the Articles herein specified.

XLI. No member can enter Lodge Meetings without giving the proper signs, and producing his card to prove his membership, and that he is not in arrears of subscription for more than one month, unless lenity has been granted by order of Committee.

XLII. That a separate treasurer be appointed for each £20 of the funds collected; and that such treasurers shall not suffer any money to be withdrawn from their hands without a written order, signed by at least three of the Managing Committee, and presented by the secretary, or one of the other officers of the Society.

XLIII. All sums under £30 shall be left in the hands of the secretary for current expenses; but no outlay shall be made by him without an express order from the Managing Committee, signed by at least three of its members.

XLIV. That every member of this Union do use his best endeavours, by fair and open argument, and the force of good example, and not by intimidation or violence, to induce his fellows to join the brotherhood, in order that no workmen may remain out of the Union to undersell them in the market of labour; as, while that is done, employers will be enabled to resist the demands of the Unionists, whereas, if no operatives remain out of union, employers will be compelled to keep up the price of labour.

XLV. That each member of the Consolidated Union

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pay a Registration Fee of threepence to defray the general expenses; which fee is to be transmitted to the Executive once in every month.

XLVI. That, although the design of the Union is, in the first instance, to raise the wages of the workmen, or prevent any further reduction therein, and to diminish the hours of labour, the great and ultimate object of it must be to establish the paramount rights of Industry and Humanity, by instituting such measures as shall effectually prevent the ignorant, idle, and useless part of society from having that undue control over the fruits of our toil, which, through the agency of a vicious money system, they at present possess; and that, consequently, the Unionists should lose no opportunity of mutually encouraging and assisting each other in bringing about A DIFFERENT STATE OF THINGS, in which the really useful and intelligent part of society only shall have the direction of its affairs, and in which well-directed industry and virtue shall meet their just distinction and reward, and vicious idleness its merited contempt and destitution.

XLVII. All the rules and regulations herein contained be subject to the revision, alteration, or abrogation of the Grand Delegate Council.

APPENDIX 8

RESOLUTIONS OF THE GRAND NATIONAL CONSOLIDATED TRADES UNION

(Extracted from a Report of the Proceeding of a Special Meeting of Trades Union Delegates, held in London on the 13th, 14th, 15th, 17th, 18th and 19th of February 1834¹)

1. THAT as many different Trades' Unions as possible do mutually agree, under a perfect understanding with each other, to maintain a unity of action in all their proceedings, with respect to their general laws and government, and also with regard to the levying and disposing of all funds raised for objects of presumed permanent utility.

2. As land is the source of the first necessities of life, and as without the possession of it the producing classes will ever remain in a greater or less degree subservient to the money capitalists, and subject to the deterioration of the money value of their labour consequent upon the fluctuations of trade and commerce, this committee advise that a great effort should now be made by the Unions to secure such portions of it on lease as their funds will permit, in order that, in all such instances as the case of the Derby turned-outs — and which are now becoming frequent — where the men cannot be otherwise profitably and per-

¹ *The Pioneer, or Grand National Consolidated Trades' Union Magazine*, March 8, 1834. This meeting of delegates also adopted the 'Rules and Regulations of the Grand National Consolidated Trades' Union of Great Britain and Ireland'. These are quoted in Appendix 7.

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manently employed, they may be so employed in rearing the greater part, if not the whole, of their subsistence, under the direction of practical agricultural superintendents — which arrangements would not have the effect of lowering the price of labour in any trade, but, on the contrary, would rather tend to increase it by drawing off the at present superfluous supply in manufactures.

3. In all cases of strikes and turn-outs, where it is practicable, that the men be employed in the making or producing of all such commodities as would be in demand among their brother unionists, or any other parties; and that to effect this each lodge should be provided with a workroom or shop, in which those commodities may be manufactured on account of such lodges which shall make proper arrangements for the supply of the necessary materials.

4. That great advantages would accrue to unionists by the formation, in each district lodge, of a fund for the support of the sick and aged, and for defraying the funeral expenses of deceased, on a principle similar to that of benefit societies, but attended with less expense to individuals, by reason of the large number of contributors which it may be supposed a district lodge would comprise: the fund to be kept up by small monthly contributions from those unionists who desire to avail themselves of its benefits. It is hoped that the members of the various houses of call of trades in the metropolis, and in other large towns, who have collected funds for the support of their sick members, might be prevailed upon to unite them for the purpose of establishing, in the first instance, this fund in the lodges to which they belong.

5. That in all cases where it be practicable, each district or branch lodge should establish within its locality one or more depôts for provisions, and articles in general domestic use; by which means the working-man may be supplied with the best commodities at little above wholesale prices, and he would then not be exposed, as at present,

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to the extortions and adulterations of petty retailers and dealers.

6. That each lodge do make arrangements for furnishing the means of mental improvement to their members, and for the cultivation of good habits among them, by affording them every facility for meeting together for friendly conversation, mutual instruction, and rational amusement or recreation; which arrangements might be rendered in a short period infinitely more enticing and agreeable than the delusive, pernicious, and dearly bought gratifications sought after in the tap-room or the gin-shop.

7. As a very large number of females among the industrious classes are exposed to great hardships and oppression in the disposal of their labour by the competition for employment which at present exists among them, and as our union would be manifestly incomplete without their good will and co-operation, it is highly desirable that every effort should be made to induce them to follow the example, already so nobly shown to their sex by the females of Derby, Nottingham and other places; and that, consequently, we should offer them every encouragement and assistance to form themselves into lodges, for the protection of their industry, in every city or town where it is practicable.

8. That as the central committee of the building trades in London have refused to recognize the special delegate meeting, or to be identified with any of the measures arising out of the same, and that, as the delegates feel conscious that the majority of their brethren belonging to the building branches would coincide with them in the arrangements proposed, a memorial should be addressed to the builders' central committee, expressive of the regret of the delegates that they were deprived of the committee's assistance and co-operation on this important occasion; but that, nevertheless, the result of the meeting should be made known to it in the most friendly manner:

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Also, that a copy of the above-mentioned memorial should be addressed to all the central committees throughout the country.

9. That the delegates having examined all the documents relating to the manner in which the funds collected for the turned-out operatives of Derby have been managed, and having had the testimony thereon of several witnesses, do express their conviction that the strictest economy has been observed in the disposal of the sums which have been handed over to the Birmingham and other committees for that purpose, and, also, their high approval of the unflinching fidelity and peaceable conduct of the men of Derby throughout their trying struggle.

10. That, in cases where the number of operatives in a particular trade in any district is too limited to allow of such trade forming a lodge of itself, the members of that trade be permitted to become unionists by joining the lodge of any other trade in the district. Should there be several trades in the district thus limited in numbers, they be allowed to form together a District Miscellaneous Lodge, with permission; in order to extend the sphere of the brotherhood, to hold out the hand of fellowship to all really useful labourers employed productively.

11. That a levy of one shilling each member be immediately ordered upon all the lodges in the Consolidated Union, for the purpose of raising a fund to employ the men of Derby and other places in the most profitable manner that can be devised; and that the Birmingham Committee be requested to act in conjunction with the executive Council in London in the disposal and management of such funds.

That the levy be paid within one month from the date of the order.

12. That lodges of Industrious Females be introduced in every District where it may be practicable; and that such lodges be considered, in every respect, as part of, and

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belonging to, the Grand National Consolidated Trades' Union.

13. That the *Pioneer* be considered the official organ of the Executive Council of the Grand National Consolidated Trades' Union.

APPENDIX 9

DISSOLUTION OF THE GRAND NATIONAL AND FORMATION OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN CONSOLIDATED ASSOCIATION OF INDUSTRY, HUMANITY AND KNOWLEDGE

(From *The Crisis*, vol. iv, p. 52)

OFFICIAL DOCUMENT

TO THE UNIONS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

London, 20th August 1834

THE Grand National Consolidated Trades Union of Great Britain and Ireland having experienced much more opposition from the employers of industry, as well as from the Government, than its promoters anticipated, deemed it prudent to call an especial meeting of delegates from all parts of England, to consider what would be the wisest course to adopt to save honest industry from the most injurious and unjust oppression, and to put an end to the unnatural feelings of hatred and hostility which have arisen through the ignorance alone of both parties, between masters and operatives from one end of the kingdom to the other. . . .

Among other conclusions, which, with the reasons for them, will be hereafter given to the public, they came to the following:

1. That the name of the Union should be changed from that of the 'Grand National Consolidated Trades Union' to that of the 'British and Foreign Consolidated Association of Industry, Humanity and Knowledge'.

ATTEMPTS AT GENERAL UNION

2. That the interests and objects of the producers of wealth and of all the industrious ought to be the same, and that if the subjects bearing on this conclusion were fairly and fully developed, it would be demonstrated that the employers and the employed have precisely the same interest.

.

7. That the business of this Association shall be directed under one mind, to insure unity of design and promptness of execution, but that the person exercising this high trust, and his immediate official assistants shall be at all times responsible to the Great Metropolitan Council of the Association.

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