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CAIN AND ABEL: TWO ARISTOCRATS AND THE EARLY VICTORIAN FACTORY ACTS*

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In November 1844 the young Lord Ashley, not for 16 years to become the seventh earl of Shaftesbury, was in search of a public school for his son and heir, Anthony. 'I fear Eton,' he confided to his diary:

> ...it makes admirable gentlemen and finished scholars, fits a man, beyond all competition, for the dancing-room, the Club, St James' Street, and all the mysteries of social elegance; but it does not make the man required for the coming generation. We must have nobler, deeper, sterner stuff; less of refinement, and more of truth; more of the inward, not so much of the outward gentleman; a rigid sense of duty, not a 'delicate sense of honour'; a just estimate of rank and property, not as manners of personal enjoyment and display, but as gifts from God, bringing with them serious responsibilities, and involving a fearful account; a contempt of ridicule, not a dread of it; a desire and a courage to live for the service of God, and the best interests of mankind, and by His grace, to accomplish the baptismal promise... Unless we have such men as these for our successors, goodbye to the British Empire.[1]

It is hardly surprising that Anthony was ultimately enrolled, not at Eton, but at Rugby.

The antitheses laid out by Ashley are familiar: the style of the eighteenth-century aristocrat – sceptical, ostentatious, worldly, irresponsible – was yielding to a Victorian style typified by Ashley himself – evangelical, inward-looking, seeking in vocation a union of spirit and substance. It was also an antithesis which had for Ashley quite specific political implications. The history of neglect of 'the duties of... property and station' was the history of the whig party. By their concessions to radicalism the whigs had driven forward 'the chariot of revolution'; by subordinating religion to politics, they had sapped both of their capacity for good; by fetishizing constitutional reform, they had abandoned social reform and thus their aristocratic responsibilities to the

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[1] Historical Manuscripts Commission, Broadlands papers SHA/PD/3, Ashley's diary, 21 Nov. 1844.

underprivileged.[2] Worst of all, in Ashley's view, the whigs epitomized in their private lives the immorality of the Georgian generation and by their miserable personal examples undermined popular confidence in the aristocracy as a class and in government as a whole.[3]

This verdict on the whigs, inheritors of an eighteenth-century moral–political tradition hopelessly ill-suited to the social burdens of 'the coming generation', has been largely echoed by historians of the early Victorian period. At worst, the whig aristocrats who led governments for roughly 17 of the 22 years between 1830 and 1852 have been portrayed as time-servers, patronage-mongers, ideological empty vessels into which could be poured whatever principles were needed to unite a political coalition with them at the head.[4] Although more recently the continuing political vitality of the whigs up to 1850 has been acknowledged, the core of Ashley's critique remains intact.[5] By abandoning the poor and oppressed to the depredations of the free market and the doctrines of political economy, the whigs are seen to have abandoned their responsibility as governors. They are credited with little or no interest in social legislation, except in order to dish opponents or avert violent disorder. In the construction of the early welfare bureaucracies and the so-called 'Victorian revolution in government', they are assigned fourth or fifth place behind Ashley and the evangelicals, tory paternalists, Benthamites, and even 'middle-class humanitarianism', whatever that may be.[6]

The one whig aristocrat most closely associated with the cause of social reform was also the whig who drew Ashley's most concentrated fire. This was George Howard, styled Viscount Morpeth until he succeeded his father as earl

[2] Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/3, 26 Oct. 1844; SHA/PD/4, 31 Oct. 1846; SHA/PD/5, 5 June 1848.

[3] His epitaph for Lady Holland, the whig *doyenne* of the 1820s and 1830s, was: 'a long life of sensual indulgence, of violated obligations, and bitter and scornful infidelity'. Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/3, 17 Nov. 1845.

[4] For a few recent examples, see Oliver MacDonagh, *Early Victorian government 1830–1870* (London, 1977), pp. 59–61; Ursula Henriques, *Before the welfare state: social administration in early industrial Britain* (London, 1979), pp. 88–9; Joseph Hamburger, 'The whig conscience', in Peter Marsh (ed.), *The conscience of the Victorian state* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1980), pp. 20–1, 26–32. See also Donald Southgate, *The passing of the whigs, 1832–1886* (London, 1962), for an earlier but still respected verdict.

[5] For recent views on the whigs' purely political importance, see Abraham D. Kriegel (ed.), *The Holland House diaries* (London, 1977), introduction; Leslie Mitchell, *Holland House* (London, 1980); Abraham D. Kriegel, 'Liberty and whiggery in early nineteenth-century England', *Journal of Modern History*, LII (1980), 253–78; Ian D. C. Newbould, 'Whiggery and the dilemma of reform: liberals, radicals and the Melbourne administration, 1835–9', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, LIII (1980), 229–41.

[6] For negative verdicts, see Kriegel (ed.), *Holland House diaries*, xxxii–xxxiii; Cecil Driver, *Tory radical: the life of Richard Oastler* (New York, 1946), p. 426; J. T. Ward, *The factory movement, 1830–1855* (London, 1962), pp. 418–26, 476–7. An exception to this general rule has been David Roberts, *Victorian origins of the welfare state* (New Haven, 1960), pp. 98–9, 138–9, and *Paternalism in early Victorian England* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1979), pp. 229–31, 263–5. Peter Dunkley's analysis of whig attitudes to the new Poor Law takes the whigs more seriously as whigs, and not simply as empty vessels, but still argues that on this issue whig leaders accepted all the crucial assumptions of the political economists. 'Whigs and paupers: the reform of the English Poor Laws, 1830–1834', *Journal of British Studies*, XX (1980–1), 124–49.

of Carlisle in 1848. To Ashley's mind, Morpeth typified all that was most unprincipled and amoral in the whig tradition. He characterized him variously as irreligious, power-hungry, vain and lazy; his verdict in 1846, after a 25 year association, was that '[h]umbug is always unpleasant, successful humbug disgusting'.[7] Morpeth was singled out in this way because his early years closely paralleled Ashley's: they moved together from Oxford to Westminster, and, once in parliament, both launched their political careers on the issue of factory reform. If Ashley directed a torrent of abuse at Morpeth, it may have been because he viewed him as a rival, and a successful rival at that.

Although they hailed from the same class and rooted their lives in the same institutions, the two men represent two quite different traditions of aristocratic politics. Ashley's evangelicism made him an atypical tory, but a tory nonetheless who was also a vigorous crusader for moral and social regeneration. Morpeth's whiggery was perhaps more characteristic of his party, and it made him, if not a fire-breathing missionary, a professional legislator, a parliamentarian well suited to the age of reform.

The sharp contrast between these two styles of aristocratic politics is evident in the history of the two men's antagonism, from youth to mid-career, and especially in their involvement in the factory question. This vexing social problem – whether and how far government should limit the hours of labour in textile mills – was not only the initial preoccupation of these two young aristocratic politicians, but also a key stumbling block for both the whig and tory parties, seeking to reorientate themselves in the new political circumstances of the reform era. For the tories the factory question posed a clear choice between the revived paternalism of Young England and the laissez-faire-orientated conservatism of Peel. The whigs, too, were torn, but not between such easily distinguishable poles as Peel and Disraeli represented. For the whigs the question was to what extent their alliance with middle-class liberals on constitutional questions need be extended to social questions as well. Must whig aristocrats accept the social doctrines of classical political economy to retain their place at the head of the liberal coalition? Or could they develop an independent social policy in the tradition of Charles James Fox, judiciously interventionist, enlightened and popular: to educate, and liberate, and ultimately to elevate the people?

Ashley's and Morpeth's *pas de deux* on the factory issue provides some partial answers to this question and gives us a glimpse of a genuine whig tradition of social reform.

I

Although Morpeth and Ashley first met at Oxford in 1819, the origins of their subsequent political trajectories can be traced back even further. For two contemporary British aristocrats of ancient family, their lives could not have been more dissimilar. The Howard family into which Morpeth was born in

[7] Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/2, 1 and 24 Oct. 1840, 25 Jan. 1843; SHA/PD/3, 27 Dec. 1843; SHA/PD/4, 10 Jan. and 8 Oct. 1846.

1802 was at the heart of the whig *beau monde*. Politics, literature and the arts were the substance of private life, not simply its embellishment. Morpeth's father, a whig M.P. for 25 years until he succeeded as sixth earl of Carlisle in 1825, had been an active if moderate whig reformer throughout the emotionally charged 'wilderness years' of whig opposition since 1794. From a brief fling with the future Lady Holland while on the grand tour in the 1790s to minor service in the reform cabinet of 1830, the sixth earl was a lifelong favourite of Holland House, where was kept the sacred flame of pure whig liberalism.[8] He married in 1801 Georgiana, eldest daughter of the duke of Devonshire, and in 1823 married off his own eldest daughter to the duke of Sutherland, thus binding his family closely to two of the most illustrious whig families and two of the most brilliant salons, Devonshire and Stafford Houses.[9] Whether in country retreat at Naworth in Cumberland or Castle Howard in Yorkshire, or in the city home in Grosvenor Place, the young George Howard must have been impressed from an early age with the thin partitions which divided home life from public life, private conversation from political dialogue, family management from national governance.

Ashley's childhood was quite different. His father, the sixth earl of Shaftesbury, although married to a whig lady, was a tory dictator who ruled his home much as he ruled the house of lords, where he was chairman of committees. Although the rest of his family were said to be 'amiable and warm-hearted', their good company and entertainment were denied the young heir except during his father's absences, and then permanently after 1823, when his father refused him residence at St Giles, the family seat in Dorset.[10] The earl evidently shared with his family little of his political preoccupations, was more concerned with his place at the head of the Dorsetshire agricultural community than with London society, and did not encourage visitors or even private conversation. When Morpeth visited St Giles in 1823 he was appalled at the contrast with his own home and at the plight of Ashley and his eight siblings: 'The awe in which they stand of the Earl their father exceeds my power of description... literally Ashley and brother William never on any occasion open their mouths before him.[11] Fortunately, Morpeth was able to enjoy three days of 'extreme license' during his stay while the earl was absent on county business.[12]

But opposites often attract. Morpeth and Ashley struck up a curious friendship while at Oxford between 1819 and 1823. Lady Carlisle evidently had much to do with encouraging Morpeth to take Ashley under his wing, and the two spent the summer of 1820 together in Scotland, followed by a fortnight's visit at Castle Howard in October. Ashley responded well at first to this influence, and appeared to look upon Lady Carlisle as a surrogate

[8] Mitchell, *Holland House*, p. 17.

[9] That the Devonshire House circle of the age of Fox receives attention denied the Stafford House circle of a later generation is a minor example of the phenomenon described below, pp. 104–5. Henry Lonsdale, *The worthies of Cumberland* (London, 1874), pp. 126–8.

[10] Geoffrey B. A. M. Finlayson, *The seventh earl of Shaftesbury, 1801–1885* (London, 1981), p. 19.

[11] [British Library], Add[itional] MSS 52010 (Holland House papers), fo. 158: Morpeth to Henry Fox, 16 Jan. 1823.

[12] Ibid.

mother, confiding in her with glimpses of his private passions and scrupulously avoiding the potentially controversial topics of religion and politics.[13]

Unfortunately for the Howards' schemes, Ashley found other sources of consolation while at Oxford. Religion in particular provided a means by which he could simultaneously obey his father's strictures to seriousness and, in the new expressiveness of evangelicalism, find a kind of personal release. Ultimately, this devotion became almost a full-time pursuit. Morpeth was sadly disappointed. '[T]wo young clergymen pour it into him all night', he complained to Henry Fox, 'and he takes 2 grains of calomel a day instead of exercise.'[14]

Ashley's departure on the grand tour, after taking a first-class degree in classics in 1823, hardly retarded this process. Even more isolated from friends and definitively shunned by his father, he began to reconcile himself to sorrow and develop a belief in the regenerative effect of pain. These tendencies are abundantly clear in the diary which he began in 1826, and especially in the moral scrutiny to which he subjected himself on his birthday in that year. His most recent biographer has identified this birthday stock-taking – the first of what became an annual practice – as a turning-point in Ashley's career. Henceforward, he would blame his unhappiness, not on circumstance, but on his own 'vices' and 'errors'; in other words, precisely the opposite lesson to the one which the Howards had tried to teach.[15]

It would be easy to over-state the political significance of these early experiences. Only a few tentative conclusions can be drawn. Morpeth drew his first political principles from a whig tradition rooted in a community for which he had a genuine psychological affinity. The good humour, carefreeness and amiability for which he became noted were at this early date intimately connected to a *Weltanschauung* which we identify with Holland House: personal and political liberalism, an intellectual appreciation for and an emotional faith in progress, cosmopolitanism, free thought (if not irreligion), a belief in the leading but also the liberating role of the aristocracy. On the other hand, Ashley inherited, uncomfortably, from his father a rather conventional toryism, now in tension with evangelical impulses which were increasingly encroaching on his political thinking. This tension bred an extreme over-sensitivity to criticism as well as an exaggerated self-critical sense. For Morpeth, the personal was political. He had been born to govern; his education was to equip him for government; his childhood friends were to be his colleagues in government. For Ashley, on the other hand, politics was personal. Principles could not be refined in negotiation or consultation, but must be sought from within. His own flawed personality reflected a fundamentally flawed humanity, for whom God's government, not that at Westminster, was the only salvation. Yet he was by no means immune to the temptations held out by Morpeth and his family. Their self-assurance, their devotion to public service, and the great potential

[13] Finlayson, *Shaftesbury*, pp. 18–19; Add. MSS 52010 (Holland House papers), fos. 95–6: Morpeth to Henry Fox, 4 Oct. 1820.

[14] Ibid. fos. 150–1, Morpeth to Henry Fox, 3 Oct. 1822.

[15] Finlayson, *Shaftesbury*, pp. 20–21.

for doing good which the public service offered, still beckoned. Ashley's ambivalence about the practice of politics and the wielding of political power was already evident in his youthful ambivalence about the Howards.

The same tension was evident in the two young men's early parliamentary careers. Both entered parliament in the general election of 1826, Ashley coming in for Woodstock through his mother's family interest and Morpeth installed *in absentia* – he was in Russia with his uncle Devonshire – for the borough of Morpeth.[16] Morpeth's election exemplifies the dual nature of whiggery: on the one hand, the heedless sense of *noblesse oblige* which thought nothing of automatic elevation to parliament; on the other, the genuine educational value of the 1826 excursion, a veritable study in despotism taking in the coronations of Charles X in France and Czar Nicholas I in Russia.

Morpeth was immediately touted as a future party leader and launched his career with a strong maiden speech in March 1827 backing Francis Burdett's motion for Catholic emancipation.[17] With this speech he quickly marked out for himself a position on the radical side of whiggery. The prominent whig-radical John Cam Hobhouse took notice of this debut and saw it at the time as an auspicious sign for the future of a whiggery free from trimming and hesitation, restoring faith in the aristocracy as leaders of popular causes.[18] This first impression was not dispelled in the tumultuous years preceding the first Reform Act. Although confining himself to issues of political reform acceptable to the whig leadership, Morpeth took strong stands for the Catholics, against the Six Acts, and for an independent whig opposition. With Hobhouse, he avoided meetings of the whig inner circle before July 1830 on the grounds that Grey and Althorp's stand had not been 'sufficiently hostile to Ministers'.[19]

Ashley made less of a first impression than did Morpeth, but prominent tories hoped to mould him into something more like his father's son. His first significant intervention came in a debate on lunatic-asylum reform in February 1828, and predictably he was not encouraged by his own performance. Earl Bathurst wrote in consolation:

> ...I know you to be mighty sensitive, and may therefore take it into your head that there had been a failure, which I can assure you is not the case.... Peel said that if your speech had been uttered with as loud a voice as that of Lord Morpeth, everybody would have said it was an excellent speech.[20]

All the same, Ashley was offered minor office in Wellington's government and accepted a post on the Indian board of control. He found the burdens of office

[16] Ibid. p. 28; Lonsdale, *Worthies of Cumberland*, pp. 134–5.

[17] *Hansard*, 2nd ser., XVI, 849–54; Lord Broughton (John Cam Hobhouse), *Recollections of a long life*, 4 vols. (London, 1909–11), III, 173.

[18] Hobhouse drafted a memorandum, unaddressed but apparently meant for Morpeth, urging just such a course so that Morpeth 'would be able in an emergency to direct the people and to dictate to the sovereign'. Add. MSS 47226 (Broughton papers), fos. 90–1, n.d.

[19] Broughton, *Recollections*, IV, 36. See also the *L[eeds] M[ercury]*, 29 May 1830, for an early recognition of Morpeth's potential.

[20] Edwin Hodder, *The life and work of the seventh earl of Shaftesbury, K.G.*, 3 vols. (London, 1887), I, 96–8.

agonizing. So conscious of his own insufficiencies – 'I shall never be able to do that Empire a Service' – he was as aware of the enormous possibilities in public service, and in his birthday analysis of 1828 asked himself: 'Can mortal man be raised to a nobler Pinnacle here on Earth?'[21] Ambition warred with self-abasement; desire to elevate 'India with her hundred millions in the Compass of my Mind's Survey' conflicted with a yearning for private contemplation and 'patriarchal duties' in Dorset.[22] It is small wonder that Ashley made an indifferent M.P. – opening day 1829 was dubbed 'the beginning of sorrows' – and that Morpeth, for whom domestic pleasures and political pressures were one, viewed the house of commons as a second home.[23]

Ashley's career at the India board was cut short by the reform crisis and the whigs' accession to power in 1830. Although Morpeth's father took a place without portfolio in the new cabinet, the son was not yet in line for even a minor post. Both Ashley and Morpeth entered the political terrain of the reform era without any binding political commitments, which accounts in part for their subsequent foray into unexplored territory. Within three years they had both – independently – taken up what had not yet come to be known as 'the factory question'.

II

Although preceded by limited factory legislation of a paternalist cast, the factory *movement* was essentially an outgrowth of the popular reform agitations of the 1820s. The call for a 'normal day' – of ten or twelve hours – for women and children, but *de facto* for adult males as well, was first raised by Manchester-based cotton operatives led by the trade unionist John Doherty. Doherty's connexions with parliamentary radicals led him to the Westminster M.P. John Cam Hobhouse, who in 1825 introduced a bill to limit the labour of child operatives in the cotton mills to eleven hours and to tighten enforcement of existing legislation, hitherto a virtual dead letter.[24]

Hobhouse's own motives for accepting the cotton operatives' charge included a desire to broaden the appeal of political radicalism for industrial workers by extending its purview from constitutional to social questions. Like other radicals who kept lines open to the whig leadership, he cast about throughout the 1820s for issues which could rally the reform side of the house against an entrenched tory government.[25] The experience of 1825, when Manchester millowners

[21] Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/1, 24 Sept. and 28 Apr. 1828.

[22] Ibid. 28 Apr. and 25 Dec. 1828.

[23] Ibid. 5 Feb. 1829. Morpeth's treatment of the house was notoriously casual. On one occasion he played leapfrog with Spring Rice in the lobby; on another he sat on a table in the house 'in a decidedly unparliamentary position' until called to order by the Speaker. *Illustrated London News*, 15 Oct. 1842; *M[anchester] G[uardian]*, 3 Apr. 1847.

[24] *Hansard*, 2nd ser., XIII, 451. For Doherty's involvement and connexion with Hobhouse, see note 29.

[25] In this, he differed from Francis Place, who was both more sceptical of aristocratic independence and more attached to Ricardian political economy. Robert E. Zegger, *John Cam Hobhouse: a political life, 1819–1852* (Columbia, Mo., 1973), pp. 88–95, 168–70.

combined with the tory front bench to emasculate his factory bill, only reinforced his dislike of liberal tory austerity and of the laissez-faire policies which united industrialists and young liberal tories such as Peel and Huskisson.[26]

Hobhouse's growing respect for the whigs, and his appreciation of the dynastic antipathy the heirs of Fox had for the heirs of Pitt, drew him close to Morpeth soon after this young whig entered parliament.[27] When Morpeth abandoned his family borough in 1830 and won a stunning victory in the most populous constituency in England, the county of Yorkshire, his appeal to the metropolitan radicals became still greater.

Morpeth's return for Yorkshire coincided with the spread of the factory movement to the woollen districts of that county. The woollen operatives' experience had differed substantially from that of their brethren in the Lancashire cotton mills. They constituted a less homogeneous workforce; the hours and conditions of labour varied between woollen and worsted mills; they had a more recent experience with mechanization, and in general a shorter history of workplace politics.[28] John Doherty's attempts to evangelize for the factory movement in Yorkshire had met with little success, but the issue suddenly caught fire in the autumn of 1830 with the entry of the celebrated Richard Oastler on to the scene.[29] A native Yorkshireman, land agent to a tory squire, Oastler himself embraced an unalloyed toryism which looked to 'the Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage' as pillars of national strength. His evangelical style offered a lowest-common-denominator approach to the factory question better suited to the Yorkshire operatives than Doherty's trade unionism, and his evangelical politics tapped a middle-class Yorkshire constituency unmobilized since the death of Wilberforce. At least at first, Oastler was able to separate his style from his politics in appealing to the textile workers and overcome the handicap posed by his explicitly anti-democratic views.[30]

His 'Yorkshire Slavery' letters to the Leeds press, a series launched in October 1830, were a direct challenge to the reform coalition which had triumphed in the general election of that year. What kind of man, Oastler asked, could pontificate on the evils of colonial slavery (as the whigs had) and ignore the greater evil of 'child slavery' in the woollen mills of his own county. 'Oh Morpeth,' he appealed in his first letter: 'listen to the cries and count the

[26] Hobhouse approached Peel about new factory legislation in March 1825. Peel fobbed him off to Huskisson, who fobbed him off to Mark Phillips of Manchester, who fobbed him off to the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. Broughton, *Recollections*, III, 95.

[27] Zegger, *Hobhouse*, pp. 109–10.

[28] Woollen mills traditionally ran a shorter workday than worsteds, although even this could mean 13 hours labour. *LM*, 30 Oct. 1830.

[29] R. G. Kirby and A. E. Musson, *The voice of the people: John Doherty, 1798–1854, trade unionist, radical and factory reformer* (Manchester, 1975), pp. 364–7. Manchester and Bolton operatives had attempted to arouse interest in Leeds for a 10½-hour day in April, but without notable success. *LM*, 17 Apr. 1830.

[30] 'Alfred' (Samuel Kydd), *The history of the factory movement*, 2 vols. (London, 1857), I, 88–91; Driver, *Tory Radical*, pp. 188–9.

tears of these poor babes, and let St Stephen's hear thee swear – "they shall no longer groan in slavery!"'[31] Oastler's campaign was not initially seen as antagonistic to Hobhouse's efforts for factory legislation. The first by-product of the Yorkshire slavery letters was a meeting of sympathetic manufacturers, both radical and tory evangelical, who petitioned Morpeth and Hobhouse to introduce new legislation along the lines of Hobhouse's original 1825 bill, but extended also to the woollen industry.[32] The two M.P.s complied immediately, and an operatives (or 'short-time') committee was established in Leeds to provide support.[33] Given Hobhouse's trouble with millowner opposition in 1825, he and Morpeth were particularly 'glad to see any legislative measure that may be thought expedient originate with the manufacturers', and hoped that on this basis the new bill would not suffer the fate of its predecessor.[34]

Another general election, in the spring of 1831, permitted Oastler and his tory allies to indicate that they disapproved of the course adopted by Morpeth. In June he sealed an agreement with the short-time committee – the so-called 'Fixby Hall Compact' – for a united tory–radical extra-parliamentary campaign on the factory issue, a deal catalysed by the reluctance of two of the four Liberal Yorkshire M.P.s to embrace a full measure of factory reform.[35] When the Morpeth–Hobhouse bill finally emerged from the house of commons in September, again mutilated by the manufacturers' lobby and still restricted in its coverage to the cotton mills, Oastler gained further credibility.[36] The connexions between the whig parliamentary leadership and the growing short-time movement, already delicate, were finally severed in late 1831 on Oastler's personal initiative, when he asked the tory evangelical M.P. Michael Sadler to introduce a new bill in the next session. This bill was to demand, not an eleven, but a ten-hour day, on Sadler's reasoning that the previous bill's failure was due, not to its impracticality, but to the betrayals of its whig sponsors.[37]

Morpeth tried anxiously to retrieve the situation, and decried the escalation of demands as the purest fantasy.[38] But for the time he and Hobhouse had lost the parliamentary initiative to Sadler. Sadler, for his part, was no more successful than had been his whig rivals, and his bill was shunted into a select committee, where Oastler and his tory evangelical ally Parson Bull expounded their new parliamentary strategy. An eleven-hour bill, they declared, would be worse than no bill at all, or indeed any bill from a reformed parliament,

[31] *LM*, 16 Oct. 1830. [32] *LM*, 20 and 27 Nov. 1830.

[33] Driver, *Tory radical*, pp. 58–61; 'Alfred', *History of the factory movement*, I, 106–8.

[34] *LM*, 20 Nov. 1830.

[35] As late as April the short-time committee was still passing motions of support for Hobhouse and Morpeth's 'manly, independent, and humane' conduct of the matter. For the role of the factory question in the Yorkshire general election, see reports in *LM*, 27 and 30 Apr. 1831. For the compact, see Driver, *Tory radical*, pp. 86–9.

[36] Hobhouse's efforts for the bill are detailed in Add. MSS 56555 (Broughton papers), Hobhouse's diary, 29 and 30 July 1831. Hobhouse was 'very angry' with ministerial indifference and flip-flops. See also Driver, *Tory radical*, pp. 90–5; 'Alfred', *History of the factory movement*, I, 114–15. [37] 'Alfred', *History of the factory movement*, I, 127, 130–1.

[38] See his open letter in *LM*, 5 Nov. 1831.

because, said Bull, 'many Members of the new Parliament will be returned by those persons...who are generally under the influence of the manufacturers'.[39] In this fashion, Oastler and Sadler cut the short-time movement off, not only from the whigs, but from the very broad coalition of the parliamentary reform movement. The failure of their ten-hour bill and the success of parliamentary reform in 1832 only fuelled Oastler's hatred of the reform side of the political fence, and of aristocrats on that side in particular.

I hate Whig politics with a most perfect hatred [he declared in the autumn of 1832], because I believe the Whigs to be the enemies of my country, and if not stopped that they will be the ruin of the nation. They are the great enemies of the Factory Bill – the great supporters of the Factory system – which is fast destroying the *Landed interest* and the *Labouring classes*.[40]

But Morpeth felt cheered, not discouraged, by his party's successes in 1832, and launched a new campaign for factory legislation in the first session of the reformed parliament.[41] Sadler had been defeated in his bid at Leeds in the last general election, and the short-time movement decided in January 1833 not to entrust its leadership to a single M.P., but to judge independent bills on their merits. The way appeared clear for Morpeth to redeem his and his party's reputation in the factory question.[42] He did not, however, count on the partisan spirit of the Oastlerites. Parson Bull, still secretary to the short-time committee, rushed to London and on his personal authority vested Sadler's legacy in another young tory evangelical.[43] This was Lord Ashley.

If the cause had not come to the man, the man would surely have come to the cause. Ashley had been in search of a mission since leaving government in 1830, and cannot have been satisfied with such idleness after his brief brush with India's millions. As M.P. for Dorset since a by-election in 1831, he had been rediscovering his tory paternalist roots and, through a new friendship with Robert Southey, had been grafting them to his deepening evangelicism to develop a more serious political philosophy. He admitted having 'heard nothing of the factory question' before reading extracts from Sadler's report in *The Times* in late 1832, but Southey had urged the cause upon him in January as a stick with which to beat the millowners.[44] In retrospect, the match seems

[39] *Parliamentary papers* 1831–2, xv, 9806 (Oastler), 9361, 9371 (Bull). Morpeth, Hobhouse, Strickland and other whigs and liberals sat on this select committee, but it was Sadler's show and they played little part. The *MG* blamed the committee's imbalance on 'some kind of house of commons manoeuvre which we do not clearly understand' (31 Mar. 1832) and urged the appointment of a royal commission (7 Apr. 1832). The *LM* placed itself firmly between the ten-hours party and the hard-line manufacturing lobby centred in Halifax (5 May 1832).

[40] Quoted by Driver, *Tory radical*, pp. 192–3.

[41] A *LM* editorial had urged such a course upon him in December 1832 (29 Dec. 1832).

[42] Hobhouse, preoccupied with new ministerial duties, had entrusted his interest in the question to Morpeth. Add. MSS 47226 (Broughton papers), fos. 169–72: Morpeth to Hobhouse, 19 and 20? Jan. 1833; Carlisle MSS, Castle Howard, J19/1/6/66, Lady Carlisle to Morpeth, 23 Jan. 1833.

[43] Despite Driver, *Tory radical*, pp. 209–10, it does not appear that Bull had any authorization from the January short-time congress. See the report of the congress in *MG*, 19 Jan. 1833.

[44] Hodder, *Shaftesbury*, 1, 146, 148.

perfect. Sadler, Oastler and Bull needed one of their own to take up the factory cause in parliament. Ashley's only disability was his representation of a notoriously backward agricultural constituency. But this consideration – and the vulnerability it inflicted upon Ashley – did not weigh heavily with the movement's evangelical leaders.[45]

Ashley was, even without Southey's urgings, temperamentally well suited to the cause as fashioned by Oastler and Sadler. He shared their hostility to industrialism, a hostility obscured by his antipathy on personal and religious grounds for the 'Young England' M.P.s.[46] A growing conviction of basic human depravity and the centrality of the atonement in his religious thought was bound up with an early distaste for the city and a burgeoning horror of industrial society. He found in the book of Ruth

> a beautiful picture of agricultural life, a happy Peasantry, and a good landlord... a simplicity of intercourse, arising from and coloured by religion, such as this country *now* can never enjoy![47]

The beauty of the factory cause in his eyes was threefold. It would, first, help redress the imbalance between the landed and manufacturing interests. It would, secondly, through his leadership help rehabilitate in popular eyes the paternalism of the landed aristocracy. It would, finally, help rehabilitate the tory party in industrial districts where its stock had fallen so low. Furthermore, an independent crusade such as the short-time cause was compatible with both his strong ambition *and* his ambivalence about the compromises of practical politics. Thus part of its appeal was that it offered responsibility without power – the prerogative of the martyr throughout the ages.

Morpeth and Ashley both announced their intention to introduce factory legislation in the commons on the same day. Ashley believed, from Bull's information, that Morpeth was acting as the millowners' tool to frustrate the ten-hours movement. Morpeth believed, given his experience of 1831, that something like an eleven-hours compromise, with the support of sympathetic millowners, was the only hope for factory legislation in the current session.[48] There ensued a heated contest, a battle of the bills. Oastler led a press campaign designed to smear Morpeth as the operatives' bitterest enemy, and reached new heights of abuse:

[45] Finlayson, *Shaftesbury*, pp. 74–6, suggests that Ashley's aristocratic blood was in Oastler's eyes a disability, but the reverse must have been true. Oastler shared with Cobbett at the time the view that the tory aristocracy were better practical reformers than middle-class Liberals and Radicals. He became somewhat disillusioned with the tory *party* after it capitulated to the New Poor Law in 1834, but his faith in the aristocracy remained unshaken. Ward, *Factory movement*, pp. 130–134, 136; Driver, *Tory radical*, p. 294.

[46] Ashley was amused by Lord John Manners' feudal posturing, but also saw him as a tractarian rival for popular affections: Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/3, 4 Sept. and 7 Oct. 1844. Morpeth's verdict was that '"Young England" has rather too much of Old England for me': *LM*, 22 Feb. 1845.

[47] Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/2, 4 July 1841. Ashley sought part of this vision in the 'primitive simplicity' of his own St Giles. Ibid. 25 Dec. 1841.

[48] Hodder, *Shaftesbury*, I, 148–9; Finlayson, *Shaftesbury*, pp. 72–3.

The sleek and oily Morpeth like Judas enters, and at his season too – the midnight hour – supported like his great and wicked prototype by bands of murderers (mill-owners) and would betray the infants' sacred cause – like Judas, with a kiss.[49]

In the end, because he lacked parliamentary precedence over Ashley by a few hours, Morpeth was forced to withdraw his bill.[50] He judged correctly that this was the end of comprehensive factory legislation, for at least that session. An immediate consequence of his withdrawal was a sudden unleashing of manufacturer activity, led by the *Manchester Guardian* and even the moderate *Leeds Mercury*, which had hitherto held back in hopes of an eleven-hours compromise.[51]

A Factory Act did emerge from the 1833 session, but it pleased none of the parties implicated in the factory question. The bill, dubbed 'Althorp's Act' after the whig minister who commissioned it, was hastily cobbled together from proposals advanced by a royal commission patterned after the poor law commission and masterminded by the same Benthamite, Edwin Chadwick. The new bill proposed an eight-hour day for the 'truly unfree' agents – children under 13 – but by leaving persons over 13 covered by previous legislation, opened the door for a relay system by which two shifts of children working eight hours could be combined with one shift of adults working 16.[52] The 'normal day' – whether Morpeth's eleven or Ashley's ten hours – was lost. Gone with it was the enforcement mechanisms proposed by Hobhouse, and, to supervise the complicated relay system, a Benthamite central inspectorate with awkward provisions for local enforcement was substituted. The course of legislation pursued by Hobhouse and Morpeth was simpler and more practicable than the complicated machinery erected by the Act of 1833.[53] If it did not go the lengths required by Ashley and Oastler, it nonetheless represented the greatest degree of restriction feasible in this parliament.[54] Ashley's refusal to

[49] Quoted by Driver, *Tory radical*, pp. 214–15. Oastler's view was echoed by *The Times* (7 Feb. 1833) and even by Donald Southgate, *Passing of the whigs*, pp. 146–7, who 'spontaneously applauds' Oastler's outburst. Southgate goes further, implicating Morpeth in a mill-owner plot – 'an entirely discreditable design', unless he genuinely believed that ten hours would ruin the textile industry. Morpeth certainly did not believe this in 1833 – his position was a parliamentary one – although he may have changed his mind by 1847 when he voted against the 2nd reading of the Ten Hours Act.

[50] Morpeth was very unwilling to withdraw, but a freak of scheduling made it impossible for him to receive leave from the house before Ashley. *LM*, 9 Mar. 1833.

[51] *LM*, 16 Mar. 1833; *MG*, 23 Mar. 1833.

[52] It is not my intention to draw conclusions on precisely how and why Althorp's Act resulted from the foregoing conflict. Suffice it to say that I agree with Ursula Henriques' conclusion that Althorp deserved no personal credit for the Act that bears his name: Henriques, *Before the welfare state*, p. 89. More work needs to be done on the relationship between pro- and anti-factory reform elements within the cabinet, and between whigs and Benthamites.

[53] See Ashley's and Brotherton's observations to this effect in 1839. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., XLV, 892; XLVIII, 1067.

[54] It was often alleged after 1833 that manufacturers had supported Althorp's Act because they knew it to be unenforceable. This may indeed have been the case, but Morpeth and many other whigs cannot be implicated. It might with some justice be added that Ashley's personal intransigence in 1833 was as responsible for the form the Act took as any positive initiative on the ministry's part.

support such a course led to an Act which no one desired and which whig ministers spent eight years unenthusiastically enforcing, defending and improving. It would be fourteen years before the normal day could be restored by a quite different whig ministry.

III

The course of this little drama – a duel for the initiative on factory reform which the *Leeds Mercury* likened to a horse-race – suggests that Morpeth was not the manufacturers' tool of Oastler's stereotype.[55] Personally, he was hardly more friendly with the Yorkshire mill-owners than was Ashley. His relations with even the most prominent commercial families, such as the Marshalls of Leeds, were in general confined to public political occasions where the relationship was one of M.P. to prominent constituent. Privately, he found them socially uncongenial and politically harsh. He complained of the Marshalls' 'taciturn ungraciousness' and ridiculed, in almost Dickensian fashion, Manchester's insensitivity: 'here all is solid, philanthropical, above all statistical; a rage for *facts*'.[56] On both counts, social and political, he did indeed find Charles Dickens more to his taste, and, in later life, the two men struck up an intimacy. By 1846, Dickens had come to view Morpeth as the man in government most sympathetic to his own peculiar brand of social reform.[57]

As a conscientious constituency M.P. – first for Yorkshire, and then after 1832 for the new division of the West Riding – Morpeth could not and did not let his indifference to the manufacturers spill over into a neglect of their industry. He made his first fact-finding tour of the woollen and worsted districts as early as January 1831, and by the time of his joust with Ashley in 1833 it was reputed, at least in whig circles, that 'nobody knows so much about all the different textures and qualities of the Cloth'.[58]

Precisely because he was the standard-bearer of the liberal interest in the West Riding, Morpeth was of course to a certain extent beholden to the chief county families, in those days mainly commercial. Election management was in the hands of a committee in Leeds, directed by Edward Baines of the *Mercury* in association with Morpeth's personal representative T. W. Tottie. Between elections, the minimal level of party business could be sustained by the loosely organized West Riding Reform and Registration Association.[59] Morpeth's

[55] *LM*, 9 Mar. 1833.

[56] Carlisle MSS, J19/8/6, Morpeth's journal, 20 Feb. 1845; J18/3/–, Morpeth to Lady Carlisle, n.d. but probably autumn 1837. This latter judgement was repeated on his next visit, in January 1839, when he deplored 'Manchester Society's' lack of interest in popular agitation: J18/3/–, Morpeth to Lady Carlisle, 14 Jan. 1839.

[57] Morpeth and Dickens first met at a banquet given for Dickens by leading whig social reformers before his departure for the Continent in June 1844. In 1846 Dickens approached Morpeth about a job in some branch of the education or public health service. Morpeth's journal, J19/8/3, 18 June 1844; Carlisle MSS, J19/1/42/12, Dickens to Morpeth, 20 June 1846.

[58] Morpeth's mother, quoting a dinner party of notables, including Hobhouse, Brougham and Macaulay. Carlisle MSS, J19/1/6/66, Lady Carlisle to Morpeth, 23 Jan. 1833.

[59] F. M. L. Thompson, 'Whigs and liberals in the West Riding, 1830–1860', *English Historical Review*, LXXIV (1959), 220–3.

intercourse with such men was, therefore, pretty strictly confined to formalities. They infrequently petitioned him even on political matters, and, although in rare face-to-face meetings some resentment could spill over, Morpeth seems to have taken remarkably little pressure on the factory question in this period.[60]

Despite these weak personal bonds the liberal industrialists of the West Riding were tied to the political careers of their whig aristocratic leaders. Their electoral fortunes – and the fortunes of important measures of institutional reform (parliamentary, church, municipal) – depended on the whigs unique ability to bring with them a sizable portion of the Yorkshire landed interest.[61]

It was a delicate connexion and it could bend or break on social issues like factory reform. Defections on the 'left' threatened if the whigs hedged on social reform; such defections were the stuff of the jury-rigged tory-radical alliances around social issues, as in the Leeds election of 1832 when some radicals backed Sadler against Marshall and Macaulay.[62] Defections on the 'right' threatened if the whigs placed too great an emphasis on social questions to the exclusion of economic security, as occurred in 1841 when the tories swept the West Riding elections by playing up to fears of radicalism.[63] To keep this fragile coalition alive, both whig aristocrats and liberal industrialists tended in their public utterances to emphasize their common attachment to institutional reform and to civil and political liberty. It is these political considerations which made both sides anxious to exclude divisive social and economic issues from electioneering, and which gave the semblance of whig indifference to these issues. It is these same considerations which have given whigs like Morpeth the historical appearance of being mere centrists, or trimmers.

This conception of the 'centre' has, however, little meaning in this context. On political issues, the whigs certainly stood between radicalism and toryism: this was the key to their alliance with other liberals. But in economics, they no longer had a monopoly on liberal sentiments; Peel's record in the late twenties and his promises for the early forties had a strong attraction to socially conservative industrialists. Here the whigs stood with the Peelites and middle-class liberals against ultra-radicals and ultra-tories. On social issues – essentially questions of state intervention in public health, safety and morals – whigs like Morpeth genuinely stood alone. Both Peelites and middle-class industrialists were drifting towards a harder laissez-faire position. Even some radicals and Chartists adhered to the doctrine of classical political economy. But many

[60] Baines's only contact with Morpeth came with electoral matters. See, for instance, his letters to Morpeth, Carlisle MSS, J19/1/7/39, 71; 27 Dec. 1834 and 15 Apr. 1835. On a visit to a Manchester silk mill in January 1834, Morpeth seemed surprised to find the proprietor 'very cross, very sore about the Factory Bill and the abuse of the Masters – would talk of nothing else': Carlisle MSS, J18/3/–, Morpeth to Lady Carlisle, 18? Jan. 1834.

[61] In 1837 Morpeth polled what was reputed to be the highest total vote ever for an M.P. D. Fraser, 'The fruits of reform: Leeds politics in the eighteen-thirties', *Northern History*, VII (1972), 104; Thompson, 'Whigs and liberals', p. 216.

[62] Ward, *Factory movement*, pp. 47–8.

[63] The issue of the 1841 election is complicated by the fact of defections on the left as well, in the form of a Chartist candidate. Some whigs blamed the West Riding defeat on this. Carlisle MSS, J19/1/32/44, Lady Palmerston to Lady Carlisle, 17? July 1841.

whigs, imbued with an old Foxite sense of aristocratic responsibility, had an unfashionable yen for interventionism. They exhibited great impatience with endless debates over the *abstract* question of state intervention.[64] They preferred a case-by-case judgement on the merits. If they agreed that the nation's weal was wedded to wealth, they would never go so far as to subordinate completely the former to the latter. They preferred an even-handed approach to securing both.

Rhetorically, this preference expressed itself in fairly conventional talk about the community of interests. But this idiom, too, must be examined closely. In the hands of mill-owners 'the community of interests' meant that what was good for John Marshall was good for England. On the hustings and in the house of commons, manufacturer M.P.s hammered away on the immutable truths of political economy, chiefly that the operative's interests were best pursued by the master. Morpeth's words were more carefully chosen. Political economy was less of a referent in his speeches than those even of other whigs like Macaulay. His nose was for the political, not the economic. Social and economic decisions were to be made by mediating 'claims' – the claims of labour, the claims of capital, the claims of land – none necessarily inferior to any other. Speeches were crafted to imply an equality of sorts between the various interests, and in the West Riding labour received its due as often as industry and more often than land. Had he lived in pagan times, Morpeth once said, 'the first power to which I should have been willing to pay divine honours would have been labour'.[65]

The ability to mediate these claims even-handedly was, in Morpeth's own view, a chief asset of the whig aristocratic tradition. He saw himself as a 'representative of the people', both as an M.P. for the largest and most diverse constituency in the land *and* as the heir of the Howards. He was only following a lifelong habit in so conflating public and private duties. The great whig families were, in his eyes, true national symbols 'on the side of the people in whose greatness they have so large an inheritance'.

This contention had some meaning in the realm of practical politics. It sheds a little more light on the contrast between Morpeth and Ashley's approaches to social reform. Ashley sought no political ratification for his moral crusades; upon the contrary, unpopularity in the service of God could be crucial to true atonement. As a consequence, he had trouble maintaining good relations not only with his parliamentary colleagues but also with the objects of his crusades, the textile operatives. He was openly contemptuous of Morpeth for courting and receiving 'publicity'. Turning his own self-doubts and ambivalences back on his old schoolmate, he saw in Morpeth's public conduct only 'vanity and interest'.[66]

[64] Many instances could be given. The *Spectator* was fond of criticizing whig leaders for this foible; see, for instance, its celebrated editorial on 'The new faith' in state intervention, 13 Apr. 1844. There is much evidence of whig frustration with the straitjacket of political economy in early factory debates; a minor example is Lord Nugent's parting shot in March 1832, *Hansard*, 3rd ser., XI, 398.

[65] Speech at Leeds, *LM*, 22 Feb. 1845.

[66] Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/3, 27 Dec. 1843; SHA/PD/4, 6 May 1846.

Here Ashley seriously underestimated the value of 'publicity'. The eighteenth-century whig may have employed conspicuous display and presence to cow the lower orders or simply to elicit routine deference. Morpeth's efforts in this line served more specifically political ends. He practised politics in the age of the platform, and his effort to prove the continuing superiority of the aristocracy as a political elite had to include proof of its superiority on the platform. Furthermore, his claim to be a popular leader rested in part on appearances in the public forum. The platform – literally six feet above the crowd – was a supremely appropriate position for a whig leader.

More personal to Morpeth were his visibility and accessibility. These traits were valuable tools in the newly crucial field of lobby politics. Oastler aside, all parties were impressed with Morpeth's accessibility, and in particular with traits known favourably as 'amiability' and 'condescension': an openness and ease with all classes uncommon enough in an age of political Podsnaps and Pecksniffs.[67]

Both Morpeth and Ashley, of course, expected their personal conduct to reflect on the popular image of their class; but due to their distinct differences, they wished very different conclusions to be drawn from it. Ashley placed emphasis on deeds, and deprecated the attention paid to style and manner. He took his place at the head of the short-time movement simply by virtue of his unswerving commitment to the single issue of ten hours. However much he agonized over his personal awkwardness, he never imagined it affected his political relations with the working class. If he could show 'that men of rank and property can, and do care for the rights and feelings of all their brethren', there would be no need for mass movements. 'Sympathy and generous legislation' would suffice.[68] In the static social order exemplified for him in the Book of Ruth, relations between the classes would be philanthropic and even personal, but not social or political.[69]

Morpeth took a different view, and lived a different life. Although no democrat, he needed to feel chosen – even delegated – by the people. He rejoiced in representing so populous a constituency. Though he delighted in the cut-and-thrust of London political society, he was not a devotee of the standard aristocratic frivolities. 'I must say', he commented in 1845,

> that I have generally found these very polished amusements to be rather listless, unmeaning, and unsatisfying things, where people seemed to come because they had nothing better to do, and to find it a great relief when it was time to go away.[70]

[67] See profiles in *Illustrated London News*, 15 Oct. 1842, 24 Mar. 1855; Harriet Martineau, *Biographical sketches* (New York, 1869), pp. 369–80; J. Grant, *Random recollections of the house of commons* (London, 1836), pp. 209–13; G. H. Francis, *Orators of the age* (New York, 1864), pp. 159–66.

[68] Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/2, 24 Aug. 1840; SHA/PD/5, 21 Mar. 1848.

[69] On rare occasions he claimed stature as the representative of the operatives. But a more 'virtual' representation it is hard to imagine. Such language was not Ashley's natural idiom.

[70] Speech at Leeds, *LM*, 22 Feb. 1845. Morpeth was not an enthusiast for the amateur theatricals which were a common country-house amusement. Morpeth's journal, J19/8/6, 1 Jan. 1845.

Nor was this mere rhetoric. He was pleased to receive a delegation from the Yorkshire short-time movement on the very day he announced his intention to stand again for the West Riding in an 1846 by-election; that they descended unannounced on Castle Howard was no impediment to a frank discussion between the people and their prospective representative.[71] He was notoriously casual with the Castle Howard tenantry, and during the mesmerism craze of the 1840s took to dropping in on nearby tea parties to demonstrate the technique on startled village women – so much so that his mother had to remonstrate with him to be 'sufficiently on your guard to avoid ridicule', although, she added, 'I know that you rather glory in this'.[72] While Ashley found local administrative duties embarrassing during his father's lifetime, Morpeth took them very seriously; while in residence at Castle Howard he made weekly journeys to nearby Malton to sit on the bench and poor law board, and to score for the Malton cricket club.[73] All of these traits tended to make Morpeth 'popular' in a way that Ashley was not, though he represented a 'popular' movement's cause in parliament.

This is not to deny Ashley's great power as a moral tribune; he commanded a respect and exercised a magnetic influence which helped mobilize middle-class opinion and galvanize popular movements behind his chosen causes. But Morpeth had a political popularity denied Ashley, personally impressed constituents of all classes, and, equally importantly here, made him a more considerable figure within the gentleman's club at Westminster.

Among his parliamentary colleagues, of all parties, Morpeth had a reputation for a broad intellectual range and a technical competence which made him a respected legislator. It has already been noted that Ashley's Dorset background put him at a disadvantage in grasping the technicalities of factory regulation, and although he gave up his early disinclination for first-hand inquiry, his was not a truly scientific nature. He continued to fear the moral effects of certain kinds of experiences. Morpeth took a different view. He read widely – from Dickens and Austen and Brontë to the liveliest contemporary controversies. Unlike the elder whigs, he found Chambers' *Vestiges of Creation* 'able, startling, striking'. Although he did 'not care much for the notion that we are engendered by monkeys', he liked the *Vestiges*' vision of a universe of riotous diversity, of other worlds unlike his own.[74]

Like Ashley, he found it useful to explore the poorest London rookeries to inform his legislative and charitable efforts at housing reform and – what

[71] *LM*, 10 Jan. 1846.

[72] Carlisle MSS, J19/1/39/66, Lady Carlisle to Morpeth, 7 June 1845; also Morpeth's journal, J19/8/7, 20 Apr. 1845; J19/8/8, 10 Aug. 1845.

[73] Morpeth's journals for 1844, J19/8/4, 5 passim.

[74] Morpeth's journal, J19/8/7, 7 Apr. 1845. The geologist Adam Sedgwick, who reviewed the *Vestiges* for the Edinburgh Review, wrote: 'From the bottom of my soul I loathe and detest the *Vestiges*.' For this and other interesting comments on whig and tory reactions to the *Vestiges*, see Milton Millhauser, *Just before Darwin: Robert Chambers and Vestiges* (Middletown, Conn., 1959), pp. 119–24.

Ashley would not concede – in doing so displayed no more 'refinement' or 'delicate sense of honour' than did Ashley himself.[75] Although closer to the whig *beau monde* of the Devonshire set than to the more serious intellectual atmosphere of Holland House, his table-talk ranged equally widely, and he was as comfortable discoursing on communism and public health as on gambling and politics.[76]

Most important, his unswerving commitment to his party – and his political career – were not in his mind incompatible with efforts for social reform. It is unnecessary to labour this point. Unlike Morpeth, Ashley took positive pride in his independence of party ties. 'I have opinions and feelings, strong and deep,' he concluded in 1847, 'they may be right or wrong; but right or wrong, they can never lead a party, because no party would follow them'. There was much truth in this. Certainly the conservative party as shaped by Peel would never be comfortable with his ten-hours stand. Even after the party split over free trade in 1846 his contempt for the shallowness of the protectionists prevented him from healing his breach with old associates: reliance on corn – 'the miserable rope of sand that bound men together' – had 'materialized and degraded' 'the great conservative party of the Realm'.[77] Ashley's separation from this degraded party may have suited him intellectually; it may indeed have served his cause. But it did so because Ashley turned away from Peel's conservative party, not because he turned away from party altogether.

IV

It was a legislative reality of the time that hardly a single measure of social reform, factory legislation pre-eminently, was enacted between 1830 and 1852 without the support (active or passive) of the whig leadership. Even the Factory Act of 1844, a conservative measure which reduced the child's day further but left those over 13 under the *status quo ante*, was simply a re-modelled whig measure.[78] Ashley did reluctantly come to accept the centrality of the whigs to his concerns. His experience of 1833 had made clear that government control over the commons schedule – and, if whipped, a majority of the votes – meant that government's position on any given piece of legislation was crucial. The whigs, in or out of government, were most important to the future of factory legislation due to their position between hostile mill-owners and Peelites. The Lancashire short-timer John Doherty had renewed Morpeth's old

[75] Morpeth's journal, J19/8/14, 7 Jan. 1847; J19/8/16, 14 Jan. 1848; Carlisle MSS, J18/3/–, Morpeth to Lady Carlisle, 23 Mar. 1846.

[76] Metaphysics, he admitted, was somewhat 'bewildering'. Morpeth's journal, J19/8/3, 1 May 1844, but see also J19/8/17, 31 May 1848.

[77] Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/5, 23 Aug. 1847; SHA/PD/4, 26 Mar. 1846.

[78] M. W. Thomas's conclusion – that Graham was committed to 'reform on the grand scale' – is difficult to square with Ashley's own verdict. Graham's chief asset was a thumping parliamentary majority, but he was personally antagonistic to factory reform. M. W. Thomas, *The early factory legislation* (Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, 1948).

appeal in the midst of the 1833 contest: that every effort should be made to find a bill acceptable to whig ministers, or else the mill-owners' tyranny and parliament's ignorance would triumph and 'the Ten Hours Bill would be lost'.[79] But Oastler and Bull, rallying the Yorkshire operatives behind them, deplored any negotiation as a sign of weakness; and they blamed the 1833 defeat on Ashley's very limited cooperation with ministers. Under this kind of pressure, Ashley only gradually came to appreciate the whigs' value.

Although between 1833 and 1841 the whigs concentrated on improving enforcement of the Act of 1833, they remained open to the possibility of further limitation on the hours of labour, even, *de facto*, for adults. As early as 1840, Ashley had sadly to admit to himself that Peel's conservative party no longer acted on truly religious motives and that

> the factory-question, and every question upon what is called 'Humanity', receive as much support from the 'Men of the World', as from the men who will have nothing to do with it.[80]

The subsequent performance of Peel's ministry between 1841 and 1846 only completed this process of disillusionment. His hatred for Peel knew no bounds:

> All Peel's affinities are towards wealth and Capital – his heart is manifestly towards the mill-owner; his lips occasionally for the Operative – What has he ever done or proposed for the working-classes?[81]

In 1842 it became 'manifest that this Government is ten times more hostile to my views than the last'; in 1843 it was acknowledged that the 'Whig Government understood the value of popular feeling; the least difficulty was sufficient for them – they soon collected their troops, put the minister on the Rostrum, and acquired strength from the confession of their weakness' – an acute observation on parliamentary tactics one could not have expected from the Ashley of 1833.[82]

Even Ashley's effective use of shocking royal commission reports on factory conditions to rally public opinion, which resulted in a parliamentary majority for ten hours in 1844, was of no avail against a determinedly hostile government. Peel's whips produced a 138-vote majority to reverse the ten-hours division, and Ashley knew he had again met his match: 'Such is the power, and such the exercise of Ministerial influence.'[83]

The Ten Hours Bill did finally pass in 1847. Ashley was no longer in the house to lead the fight – he had gone with Peel against the Corn Laws and in good conscience resigned his seat – but the Bill was ably stewarded by the radical John Fielden. A whig government, over liberal objections friendlier to

[79] See Doherty's appeal at the Wibsey Low Moor rally, 1 July 1833, in *LM*, 6 July 1833, and 'Alfred's' verdict, *History of the factory movement*, II, 58–64.

[80] Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/2, 4 July 1840.

[81] Ibid. 24 Feb. 1842.

[82] Ibid. SHA/PD/3, 8 July 1843. In 1844, when Ashley won his short-lived victory against the government on a ten-hours amendment, these political considerations were put aside, all glory again going to God. Ibid. 19 Mar. 1844.

[83] Ibid. 14 May 1844.

the factory movement than its tory predecessor, was now in control of the parliamentary schedule. Many of the new ministers preferred an eleven-hour compromise, but were less offended than had been the Peelites by the adult regulation which would result in practice from either ten or eleven hours for women and minors. Government could not, of course, lend official sanction; there were liberals in the Cabinet unalterably opposed to further regulation. But Russell cleared parliamentary space for the bill's progress; declared a free vote in his own party; gave personal support to the spirit of further regulation; and in the end gracefully accepted the impossibility of eleven hours and voted for ten in the division which, by a majority of 63, finally gave the Ten Hours Bill its third reading.[84] From outside the House, Ashley worked closely with Russell to speed the Bill's passage and gave him and the home secretary Sir George Grey due credit; for 'the Peel-party', nothing but contempt.[85]

Morpeth's conduct in this final skirmish of the ten-hours war shows how the whig–liberal balance had shifted since 1833. He had become gradually less committed to the factory cause since his defeat in the general election of 1841.[86] That defeat had made him especially sensitive to the delicacy of his position as an aristocrat, however liberal, leading a predominantly middle-class and commercial constituency. He took the extraordinary step, in February 1844, of coming out for total repeal of the Corn Laws and affiliated himself with the Anti-Corn Law League, hoping other leading whigs would follow his lead to shore up their relations with middle-class liberals.[87] This was to be his chief political occupation while outside parliament, and he celebrated his return in 1846 with the purchase of a new horse which he named 'Free Trader' to symbolize his commitment. He was therefore positively relieved not to have a seat in the house when Ashley renewed the ten-hours challenge in 1844. His brothers Charles and Edward, not similarly embarrassed because they sat for rural constituencies, both voted for Ashley's last ten-hours amendment in May, when it went down under ministerial pressure by 138 votes.[88] It is not at all clear how Morpeth would have voted if he had been seated. Charles reported him variously for and against; Morpeth himself still preferred eleven hours, but when push came to shove might have voted for ten.[89]

When the question next came up, Fielden's first (unsuccessful) attempt at

[84] *Hansard*, 3rd ser., XCII, 306–13. Russell was joined in this division by seven other whig aristocrats, including Morpeth's brother Charles.

[85] P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], Russell papers, P.R.O. 30/22/6B, fos. 180–3, Ashley to Lord John Russell, 2 Mar. 1847 (2); Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/4, 10 Feb., 9 and 22 Mar., 23 Apr. 1847.

[86] Indeed, since his appointment as chief secretary for Ireland in 1835, his political energies had been absorbed in Irish questions. He admitted, shortly after his 1841 defeat, that 'I have not thought much of Yorkshire during the last 6 years, and have had little to do with anything but Irish concerns.' Carlisle MSS, J20/2/–, Morpeth to Charles Howard, 13 July 1841.

[87] *LM*, 3 Feb. 1844 echoed this hope. The move surely made Russell's 'conversion' easier. P.R.O., Russell papers, P.R.O. 30/22/4C, fos. 146–8, D. Le Marchant to Russell, 22 Jan. 1844.

[88] *Hansard*, 3rd ser., LXXIV, 1020–1108. Charles sat for East Cumberland, Edward for Morpeth. Morpeth was himself agonized, and 'rejoiced that I had no vote to give on so immensely difficult a point'. Morpeth's journal, J19/8/2, 18 Mar. 1844.

[89] Carlisle MSS, J18/9/–, Charles Howard to Lady Carlisle, 19 and 22 Mar. 1844. Morpeth's journal, J19/8/2, 24 and 27 Mar. 1844.

a ten-hours bill in spring 1846, Morpeth did have a vote, having come in for the West Riding in a February by-election. His Anti-Corn Law League associations had put him under unprecedented pressure to declare against further legislative interference. Cobden and Bright, bitter enemies of factory legislation, hailed him as the leader of a future free-trade ministry 'if the old politicians, of the one school or the other, chose to hesitate or to oppose us'.[90] Edward Baines of the *Leeds Mercury*, having engineered Morpeth's free-trade activism and then his successful by-election return, took the opportunity of renewed contact to press against 'an unnecessary and unjustifiable restriction both on capital and industry'.[91] There followed a delicate but obvious pressure campaign, launched by the one manufacturer with whom he was intimate, his fellow-mesmerizer W. R. Greg.[92] Morpeth was gently separated from his fellow whigs who had declared for ten hours by reminders of his special constituency responsibilities. The mill-owners were convinced, wrote Edward Akroyd, that

> the friends of the Manufacturing Interest in the House are about to legislate on a Question of whose practical bearings they are in great ignorance... The responsibility of Legislation does not rest with the Mill Owners but it certainly is incumbent upon them to give every information in their power to Members *more especially their local Members* in the hope that through them every information may be conveyed to the House.[93]

A few weeks after receiving this letter, Morpeth announced in the house his decision to oppose ten hours, in favour of the eleven hours compromise.[94] He was on this occasion much concerned to appear 'practical', but his private comments indicate less that he was convinced of the case against ten hours, than that he feared the long-term effects for the whigs of so openly defying the manufacturers. When Fielden had opened the question in April, he had still been 'in sad perplexity as to what is really right'; by 22 May he had perhaps not determined what was right, despite any number of mill-owners' promptings, but he had certainly determined what was expedient. If Peel chose to resign on the factory question, he wrote his mother, it

> will leave the Whigs divided, and Lord John at present not much trusted by the Land, bitterly distrusted by the larger portion of the Manufacturers. This is not a very pleasant prospect.[95]

[90] Cobden's speech at a Leeds Free Trade rally, *LM*, 29 Nov. 1845.

[91] Carlisle MSS, J19/1/41/19, Baines to Morpeth, 30 Jan. 1846. This is part of a regular correspondence between the two during the by-election campaign.

[92] Greg had met Morpeth through Harriet Martineau, while on holiday in the Lake District in July 1845. Morpeth's journal, J19/8/8, 21 Jul. 1845; Carlisle MSS, J19/1/41/43, 49, W. R. Greg to Morpeth, 14 and 20 Feb. 1846.

[93] Emphasis mine. Ibid. J19/1/41/86, Edward Akroyd to Morpeth, ? May 1846. Another manufacturer, probably James Marshall, pressed Morpeth to lead 'a decisive and authoritative rejection' of ten hours in favour of an 11 hours compromise; then, having secured his agreement, began to urge a retreat even from 11. J19/1/41/81, 86, James Marshall? to Morpeth, 2 and 8 May 1846.

[94] *Hansard*, 3rd ser., LXXXVI, 1023–8.

[95] Morpeth's journal, J19/8/11, 29 Apr. 1846; Carlisle MSS, J18/3/–, Morpeth to Lady Carlisle, 15 May 1846.

It was in this frame of mind that a week later he gave a 'very cautious balancing sort of speech' against ten hours.[96] A year later, when Fielden reintroduced what was now to become the Ten Hours Act, Morpeth was no less perplexed, but stuck to his guns, voted with Russell and Grey for eleven hours, but then against them and the entire bill with ten hours intact.[97]

Morpeth had come a long way since leading the factory question in parliament in 1831, but on both occasions – 1831 and 1847 – he was pointing the way forwards for his party. What, then, does Morpeth's association with the factory question in these years tell us about the whigs in the 1830s and 1840s?

V

When Morpeth launched his political career on the factory question he was taking up a rather distinctive position. The aristocratic heirs of Fox had for the past twenty years played down all but the most consensual constitutional questions – moderate parliamentary reform, modification of the Six Acts, civil liberties for dissenters and catholics – to keep together their fractionary coalition. As an opposition, the whig leadership could confine its commitments thus. As a government, after 1830, it could not. The task of younger whigs was to rediscover a distinctively whig social policy.

The older generation responded nervously, if at all, to the first stirrings of this challenge. Lord Brougham joked in 1833 to Lady Carlisle that he hoped her son was not about to 'turn all the great wing of Castle Howard into a vast manufactory' to indulge his factory enthusiasm.[98] A more common reaction was indifference: thus Lord Holland's well-known boredom with factory debates.[99] Increasingly, as friction with middle-class liberals sharpened, the older generation demonstrated resentment that social issues should come between them and their old middle-class allies. Earl Fitzwilliam, who as Lord Milton had won an historic victory for liberalism in the Yorkshire elections of 1807, was appalled by Russell's commitment to ten hours in 1844. 'No government could be formed upon this principle,' he fumed, 'or, if there could, I would do my best to get rid of it as soon as possible.'[100]

These reactions of the older generation are the basis for harsh historical judgements on the attitudes of the whigs to social reform. The main thrust of pre-1830 whiggery was indeed a defence of political liberty against arbitrary

[96] Morpeth's journal, J19/8/11, 22 May 1846. He had at least the shame to dread a dinner the next evening, where Ashley was present and 'looked sorrowfully grave' at their encounter. Ibid. 23 May 1846.

[97] Morpeth's journal, J19/8/14, 17 Feb., 3 and 17 Mar. 1847.

[98] Carlisle MSS, J19/1/6/66, Lady Carlisle to Morpeth, 23 Jan. 1833.

[99] Kriegel (ed.), *Holland House diaries*, pp. xxi–xxii.

[100] Fitzwilliam had the added interest of a Yorkshire landowner, but his violence on the issue stands in even sharper contrast to the younger Morpeth's as a result. He realized, as Russell surely did, that the normal day for all women and minors meant in practice the normal day for all, whereas the 1833 Act had not. P.R.O., Russell papers, P.R.O. 30/22/4C, fos. 178–80, Earl Fitzwilliam to Duke of Bedford, 1 Apr. 1844.

rule by the executive. If there was any social vision lying behind this political platform, it was a vague one of a static, hierarchical society.[101] Even the more intellectual elements in whig circles – whether the *Edinburgh Review* or Holland House – articulated a 'progressive' ideology with remarkably little social content.[102]

This state of affairs yielded, gradually and inexorably, with every year after 1830. The old guard aged and dropped away from political life: first Grey and, prematurely, Althorp; then Holland and Melbourne; and with them their lesser contemporaries. The two figures of an intermediate generation (between Grey and Morpeth) who came to dominate whig politics after 1840 perhaps partook as much from the new as from the old. Certainly, on the single issue of factory reform, both Lord John Russell and Palmerston were among the first-rank politicians most consistently favourable to the short-time movement. Russell, we have seen, made a key commitment to the cause in 1844 which, Fitzwilliam lamented, was 'calculated to carry the great body of the party in [his] wake'.[103] With this contribution, he must share the credit for the achievement of ten hours. To Palmerston must go the credit for the salvation of ten hours. He voted for the principle throughout the 1840s, and, in 1853, the ten-hour day for adults having been circumvented by a complex series of child relays, he used his power as home secretary to end the relay system and restore the normal day which had been all but abandoned by the short-time movement.[104]

The older Russell and Palmerston aside, historians have not treated the younger whigs well. It comes as something of a surprise, today, to read that in the late 1830s Lord Morpeth and Grey's heir Lord Howick were regarded as the future leaders of the whig party.[105] But if we look forward from, rather than backward to 1836, this supposition seems more reasonable. Who would then have imagined that the leaders of the liberal interest in the 1850s and 1860s would be an ageing Russell, a very old Palmerston, a Peelite high churchman (Gladstone) and a radical mill-owner (Bright)?

Although Morpeth was fairly typical of this younger generation of whigs in his political principles, he was untypical in representing a constituency deemed to be industrialists' terrain. This exposed political position made him something

[101] See Kriegel, 'Liberty and whiggery'.

[102] It has become common to speak of 'Whig ideology' solely with reference to these more articulate elements. Hamburger, 'The whig conscience'; Kriegel, 'Liberty and whiggery'; Kriegel (ed.), *Holland House diaries*, introduction. But Holland House in particular, if it 'represents' whiggery, does so primarily for the pre-1830 generation.

[103] See note 100 above.

[104] Ward, *Factory movement*, pp. 396–7. See also David Roberts, 'Lord Palmerston at the home office', *The Historian*, XXI (1958–9), 63–81.

[105] See Holland's judgements, Kriegel (ed.), *Holland House diaries*, pp. 347, 357. Morpeth and Howick were crucial figures in the abortive Russell ministry of December 1845. It was thought that Morpeth was to be home secretary, although Russell preferred to promote George Grey and assign Morpeth to the Woods and Forests, the public works department of the time. This is the office which he held in the ministry which Russell did form in 1846. In 1845, Howick even proposed Morpeth as foreign secretary. *LM*, 13 Dec. 1845; Morpeth's journal, J19/8/10, 19 and 20 Dec. 1845; 3rd Earl Grey's papers, University of Durham, C3/12, Howick's journal, 18 Dec. 1845.

of a predictive barometer of whig fortunes. His political behaviour reflected, not necessarily personal ideological developments, but the shifting balance within the liberal coalition, towards the new middle-class activism of the Anti-Corn Law League and the 'liberal conservatism' of the Peelites. Whig liberalism was yielding its pride of place to the Manchester School and to Gladstone.

Morpeth came under fire from his manufacturer constituents on the specific issue of factory reform, but he was still free to fight his own battles on issues less close to their pocketbooks. He remained a spirited defender of public education and public health reforms, and stuck by Lord John Russell in cabinet conflicts after 1846 between whigs and liberals on issues of social interventionism. The adherence of the Peelites to the coalition in 1852 finally tipped the balance against the whigs. The combination of Gladstonian fiscal austerity and the older liberal tory tradition of 'Christian political economy' – market forces as prudential restraints, 'goading men to be good' – put the *coup de grâce* to whig interventionism for social progress.[106] In 1852, for the first time, whig social reformers had to choose between the survival of their party and the survival of an independent social tradition. On the whole, they chose the former, accepting union with the Peelites, and abandoning plans for further political reform, for relief for Ireland, for universal public education and for urban renewal. Many whigs reverted to the administrative and non-legislative roles at which they had long excelled. Thus the two whigs of Morpeth's generation who were to lead the most healthy political careers were diplomats – the earl of Clarendon and Earl Granville – while Morpeth himself accepted, with some relief, exile in Ireland, as lord lieutenant almost continuously between 1855 and 1864.[107]

It is not my intention to generalize very boldly on the ideological content of the whig social reforms. There is much more work to be done on the social policies of the whig governments of 1830–52. A few conclusions can be drawn on what it was not. It is not, for instance, sufficient to say that men like Morpeth were simply 'more Victorian' than their elders.[108] If by more Victorian we mean more earnest, more pious, less worldly, then we must explain Morpeth's violent conflicts with obvious Victorians such as Ashley. Morpeth was more

[106] For this view of Peel and liberal toryism as progenitors of an anti-interventionist Gladstonian liberalism, see Boyd Hilton, 'Peel: a reappraisal', *Historical Journal*, XXII (1979), 585–614. Hilton's understanding of the Peelite moral and political sensibility tacitly underscores its contrasts to the whig world-view. I share this view and not the contrary view sketched out in Newbould, 'Whiggery and the dilemma of reform.'

[107] Between them, Clarendon and Granville served as foreign secretary for 16 of the 24 years of liberal governments between 1852 and 1885. Clarendon was two years Morpeth's senior, Granville somewhat younger. Granville was Morpeth's cousin and entered parliament in 1837 for the same family borough of Morpeth. In 1855, he was approached to lead his party in the house of lords after Morpeth (then Carlisle) refused the honour, and but for one brief interlude held the post until 1891. Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, *The life of Granville George Leveson Gower, second earl Granville*, 2 vols. (London, 1905), I, 26, 96–7.

[108] See, for instance, Kriegel, 'Liberty and whiggery', 273–4, where Morpeth and Howick are pigeon-holed under 'earnestness and sobriety'. There was nothing sober about Morpeth.

religious than the agnostics of Holland House.[109] But he did not often feel called upon to make direct connexions between his personal religion and politics in the way that Ashley, or for that matter Gladstone, did constantly. Certainly I can find no trace in Morpeth's early career of the kind of religious or even strictly moral motivations which inspired Ashley's entry into the factory question.

It is, on the face of it, more plausible to attribute the new whig interest in social reform to a resurgent paternalism which we can see clearly present in many contemporaries. Paternalism, however, seems a very wide umbrella if both Morpeth and Ashley can be placed beneath it. Both men were responding as aristocrats to the social displacement of the landless, whom they considered in different senses under their care. They both also wanted to make political hay from their efforts. But Morpeth's was at best a demi-paternalism. His intellectual heritage was too firmly rooted in enlightenment notions of individualism for it to be otherwise. He favoured a society which was hierarchic, but not over-authoritarian; pluralist, but not organic. His accessibility was based on a frank and 'manly' attitude to his social inferiors because they were, in some abstract sense, his 'equals'. The local role of the landed aristocracy was obviously moot in this new scheme, as the whigs were paternalists more as governors in the capital than as landowners in the country. Indeed, younger sons (or heirs awaiting their patrimony) must have channelled their paternalist instincts into politics when denied the chance to practise paternalism on their fathers' estates: this would be a very natural path for whigs whose public–private distinctions were so vague.

On the other hand, neither did Morpeth accept the orthodox liberal view of a self-regulating society populated by economic free agents. It may be that he accepted the *ideal* of free agency. But working men and women still required protection if they were to equip themselves – materially and spiritually – for the awesome responsibility which this independence implied. The 'deep stagnant mass of poverty', as Morpeth once put it, '... needs to be moved, and sifted, and uplifted'.[110]

Thus the 'ruling', 'guiding' and 'helping' roles of the noble paternalist remained, but the ends towards which subordinates were to be guided and helped had changed, and with them the style of rule. The moral dicta – obedience, humility, sobriety, and right conduct – of the old organic society had begun to yield to liberal ideals of self-determination, advancement, improvement, innovation.[111] By cultivating these new values in their sub-

[109] In a characteristically intellectual approach, Morpeth once urged upon Lady Holland 'a fair hearing to the pretensions of revelation... to help you make up your mind whether you consider the Gospels authentic'. Add. MSS 51583 (Holland House papers), fos. 111–12: Morpeth to Lady Holland, 20 Mar. 1844.

[110] Speech at Leeds, *LM*, 22 Feb. 1845. Morpeth thus demonstrates less faith in the principle and practice of free agency than his seniors responsible for the earlier poor-law reform. Dunkley, 'Whigs and paupers', pp. 140, 146.

[111] Note, for example, the mixture of discourses in Morpeth's equation of the millowners' responsibilities with 'the Lords of Blenheim and Belvoir'. *Hansard*, 3rd ser., XIX, 231–2.

ordinates, liberal whigs were of course helping themselves out of a job. Obedience yields to co-operation, and co-operation implies a greater degree of social equality.[112] But, if the logic of 'progress' led inevitably to these ends, that did not mean that its exponents lifted their heads to glimpse them. Whigs of any generation were not well known for ordering or codifying ideology.[113]

Unlike middle-class liberals like Baines, Morpeth did not insist that assistance and protection for working people should be supplied voluntarily. As a citizen of the West Riding, he did indeed patronize such charitable efforts as the Bradford committee providing lodging houses for single female operatives. But as a whig, he moved almost reflexively to extend the sphere of government, again blurring the public–private divide.[114] In this paternalism of government, the liberal aristocracy fulfilled their old functions as landed proprietors in their new role as parliamentary governors. Ashley saw the Corn Laws as a miserable rope of sand which bound the aristocracy together; he hoped to revive the old paternalism with an infusion of piety and nobility. Morpeth also hoped to revive the heroic days of the aristocracy, of the whig heroes whose names he so often evoked, with a new paternalism animated by the liberal values of the new industrial age. It was a creed which lay between the extremes of radicalism and toryism, but not in the 'centre'. Radical political reform might satisfy the democrats, but in the whig view democracy would not necessarily result in enlightenment or good governance. Conservatism might avert political upset, but it would not meet the needs of the people or advance 'the march of intellect'. Morpeth's project was, as Russell wrote him in consolation of his 1841 defeat, 'to keep together in this country a sound body of Whigs who will keep aloof alike from the principles of Roebuck and Inglis'.[115] This was not to be achieved by the means of pale echoes of either the radical or the reactionary. For Morpeth and other whigs of his generation, the times required a bold lead from the liberal aristocracy to march all the classes together along the road of spiritual and material improvement.

Granted a predisposition to social reform among many younger whigs of the 1830s and 1840s, what must be examined elsewhere is to what degree that predisposition manifested itself in their legislative programme. In theory, all things fell within the ambit of parliament – Ashley complained that Russell regarded even popery as a political system susceptible to political solutions.[116] But in practice the independence of ministers was compromised by the polarization of classes they strove to avoid. Each enactment naturally embodied a shifting balance of extra-parliamentary pressures, conflicts within the liberal parliamentary bloc, and the convictions of whig ministers. There is also to be

[112] See his speech at Wakefield, in which he did glimpse some hint of this future. *LM*, 4 May 1844. [113] See Roberts, *Paternalism*, pp. 2–5, for definitions of paternalism used here.

[114] See Morpeth's speech at Bradford at the height of the ten-hours agitation, *LM*, 10 Oct. 1846. His interest in mechanics institutes also arose in the period after 1841 when he was forced to re-evaluate his legislative position *vis-à-vis* the factory question. For an example of blurred distinctions between public and private aid, see his speech at Leeds, *LM*, 22 Feb. 1845.

[115] Carlisle MSS, J19/1/32/22, Lord John Russell to Morpeth, 11 July 1841.

[116] Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/4, 31 Oct. 1846.

considered the relationship of ministers to the new machinery of government – select committees, royal commissions, Benthamite bureaucracies. Did the cabinet use the machinery, or did the machinery use the cabinet, as some of the 'Victorian Revolution in Government' controversialists would contend?

I have not attempted to answer these questions here. I have simply tried to restore some content to the whig element of the liberal troika, so long neglected while the people outdoors and the middle class newly indoors occupied centre stage. I have gone one step further in suggesting that this whig social policy and the privileged position whigs held in the political system were parliamentary assets at least as important to the extra-parliamentary factory movement as were Ashley's contributions.

It is only fair to Ashley to close with the reminder that, once the factory question was behind them, he and Morpeth were able to collaborate more closely and combine their talents in advancing the social questions dear to them both. The public-health issue was such a question: an obvious evil (urban sanitary conditions); a clear need for parliamentary action; no invidious class distinctions; but a pressing need to overcome laissez-faire prejudices among both tories and liberals in the towns. Morpeth had been instrumental in the passage of the Public Health Act, a measure which Ashley had actively supported, and as first commissioner of woods and forests he was empowered to name the members of the new central board of health.[117] It must have been with some relief that Morpeth extended an early invitation to Ashley to join him on the board. Ashley's response, in the affirmative, was gratifying:

> I may have lamented, as I have done, that our views on great social questions seemed to be so wide apart, but I have, at all times, received from you, and with real satisfaction, unmistakable testimonies of personal respect and affection... It will be no small gratification to me, after many years of political difference, to be at last associated with the friend of my youth in a labour for the happiness of the nation.[118]

In engineering this reconciliation, Morpeth at last redeemed a pledge he had made to himself thirty years before, showing an early understanding of their affinities and their antagonism. 'I have myself made the magnanimous resolution,' he wrote jocularly of Ashley in 1820, 'of always sticking to him, or he will be really like Cain in the world.'[119] Who was Abel? Who was Cain? I hope that this is now at least an open question.

[117] Finlayson, *Shaftesbury*, pp. 276–8.

[118] Carlisle MSS, J19/1/45/56, Ashley to Morpeth, 9 Sept. 1848. Ashley was not being quite honest. On at least one occasion he had suspected Morpeth of personal dishonesty in their relations. Ashley's diary, SHA/PD/4, 6 May 1846.

[119] Add. MSS 52010 (Holland House papers), fos. 95–6: George Howard to Henry Fox, 4 Oct. 1820.