

THE STRUCTURE OF POLITICS IN LIVERPOOL 1780-1807

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THE CORPORATION

IN early modern times, the borough of Liverpool was governed by burgesses or freemen, sitting with elected officers, a mayor and two bailiffs, in an assembly called the Common Hall. But as Liverpool grew, the freemen, who held the parliamentary as well as the municipal franchise, lost direct control of the borough. By the terms of the 1695 charter, and even more by the way in which its imprecise clauses were legally interpreted, the powers of the large and cumbersome Common Hall passed to a smaller body, the Common Council. The freemen retained the right to elect the mayor and bailiffs, but only from among the councillors, and the Council was otherwise self-elected and self-perpetuating. This 'close corporation' made and applied by-laws, and it also admitted freemen. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the town was small enough for an informal relationship to exist between the burgesses, i.e. virtually the whole adult male population at that time, and the small group of councillors who enacted business on their behalf. But during the century population grew from 6,000 to 80,000, and since the Council tended to restrict the freedom of the town to those who were sons of freemen or apprentices of freemen, the burgesses became increasingly unrepresentative of the booming port. The ever-widening gap between the corporation and the citizenry was to be a continual source of friction and discontent.²

Membership of the Common Council was almost exclusively confined to certain well-established mercantile families. As members could be removed only by death, retirement or being voted out of office by their fellow councillors, in effect they were appointed for life. When a vacancy did occur, the council not infrequently selected a merchant whose economic and political interests were in close accord with the majority of councillors. Often it suited the Council to leave the vacancy unfilled for years. The Common

Council also showed a pronounced bias in favour of the African trade, and continued to do so until the end of the century in spite of the great expansion and diversification of the Liverpool economy. When the African Company was founded in 1750 well over half the members of the council were freemen of the Company. In 1787, at the start of the abolitionist campaign in Parliament, 37 of the 41 councillors were slaveship owners or major investors and suppliers to the trade. In 1797, when the African trade was declining in importance in relation to the general development of Liverpool commerce, 34 out of 38 councillors were similarly connected with the slave trade. All of the 20 mayors of the borough between 1787 and 1807 were at some time slaveship owners or held shares in slaving ventures.³

In retrospect one may be tempted to overstate the exclusiveness of such an eighteenth-century corporation. In Liverpool the Common Council was abused by its enemies as a family compact; and it is certainly the case that families like the Gildarts, Crosbies, Gregsons, Poles and Blundells were always well represented during the latter half of the century and that they and other members of the council were related by marriage. But these were amongst the leading merchants of the town and would have exercised great influence whatever the system. Liverpool was a seafaring town *par excellence*⁴ and, since it was not subject to external patronage by the Crown or by local magnates to any significant extent,⁵ it was inevitable that merchants should control its political life. Obviously those of the merchant community—mainly the comparative newcomers—who were excluded from the charmed circle that controlled the corporation were resentful of their situation: yet essentially the Outs were the same sort of people as the Ins, sharing the same economic and political objectives, prominent in Liverpool society and associated with local charities and good works. On important commercial issues the corporation and the merchants at large almost invariably spoke with one voice and co-operated closely in sponsoring petitions to Parliament or memorials to the government. The corporation's remarkable achievement in developing the finest modern dock complex in Britain and in contributing to the road and canal network in the hinterland of South West Lancashire demonstrates that it acted efficiently in the interests of merchants and manufacturers. On important political matters there was a similar correspondence of interest. Naturally, the corporation would concede little in respect of its control of local administration; but on such issues as parliamentary reform, the abolition of the slave trade, political repression and defence of the realm during the French Wars, most merchants followed the official line. Only those few who sup-

ported a Foxite brand of Whiggism or a more extreme radicalism got the worst of both worlds and were abused and ostracised in times of crisis, when feelings ran high in the town.

THE ELECTORATE

A considerable brake on the Common Council's ability to act to the limit of its pretensions was the jealously guarded right of the burgesses to elect the mayor and bailiffs. These offices were not invariably contested because they involved onerous duties and heavy expenses. In the late eighteenth century the mayor received an annual allowance of 500 guineas, but even this was not regarded as sufficient recompense. In 1782 John Brown, an African merchant of Hanover Street, though elected by acclamation of the burgesses, refused to serve as mayor and consequently prevented the council from meeting.⁶ However, the mayoralty conferred the kind of social prestige which usually induced industrious and practical merchants to set aside their immediate economic interest for the honour of being acclaimed the chief magistrate. In the event of a contest they and their friends might spend hundreds of pounds to secure the allegiance of the freemen.

Naturally the council sought to avoid contests whenever possible, and for long periods was able to establish an understanding that councillors should be elected on a rota basis by seniority. But when the anti-corporation party challenged its authority there was always someone on the council who was prepared to emerge as the champion of the 'independent freemen'. A candidate assured of a large part of the popular vote could only be brought down by massive bribery of the electorate, in which case the councillors had to choose between expending their fortunes or swallowing their discomfiture. Should the new mayor also secure the election of bailiffs sympathetic to his cause, which was likely, he could bring normal council business to a standstill by refusing to attend meetings. Sir Thomas Bootle, mayor in 1726/7, Lord Derby in 1707/8 and 1734/5, Foster Cunliffe in 1716, 1729/30 and 1735/6, secured election against the corporation interest and circumvented the council by holding meetings of the Common Hall to pass bye laws and create freemen from among their supporters. Such tactics had a limited success only, for a mayor could not be re-elected the following year, nor could a retiring bailiff be nominated for the mayoralty.⁷ The council could bide its time until the opposition ran out of candidates and/or cash and then take reprisals by cancelling the bye laws and disfranchising the new freemen.⁸

After much litigation in the 1750s, mayoral contests were

avoided for many years. In any case, the crisis of war united the councillors and distracted the town from its recurrent parochial disputes. The same applied during the American War of Independence, when the commerce of the town was hard hit by foreign privateering and enemy naval patrols. But during 1790-3 factionalism reached its zenith when the burgesses made a determined assault on the pretended powers of the Common Council. The period coincided with the most vital years of the French Revolution, yet the dispute was not conducted on conventional party lines. The leaders of the burgesses included Tories and Anglican Whigs as well as dissenters and radicals: the events in France acted as a catalyst for the latter, but for most it was an extension of the traditional fight between the merchants and manufacturers excluded from a share in municipal authority and the supporters of the corporation. Meeting in the Common Hall the freemen demanded the right to inspect the corporation books, audit the accounts, pass bye laws and elect freemen to fill the five vacancies on the council.⁹ It is characteristic of the commercial bias of the leaders of the popular party that the five nominees were all merchants with strong interests in the African and West Indian trades. In 1792 their lawyers secured a judgment against the corporation at the Court of King's Bench; but the corporation continued to resist until the funds of the popular party gave out.¹⁰ The following year the outbreak of war and the threat of invasion, plus a severe financial crisis in the town, effectively put a stop to these activities, and the contending parties buried their differences for the time being.

In these and other disputes the number of freemen was a critical factor, since the greater their number the less effective corporation influence at election time. In theory any son or apprentice of a freeman was automatically entitled to admission on payment of a small fine; others might be admitted at the council's discretion. In practice, however, the council showed a considerable reluctance to allow new admissions to keep pace with the growth of the town. Thus the burgesses, who were once the bulk of the adult male population, became a rapidly diminishing proportion. One estimate puts them at 20 per cent of the total in 1734, 8 per cent in 1761 and only 3 per cent in 1812. Complete lists of freemen have not survived; the freemen's registers were not kept up to date; the poll books contain only the names of those who voted and of course these vary from election to election. In at least two parliamentary contests - those of 1780 and 1802 - less than half the electorate seems to have voted. All that can be said with confidence is that the electorate varied from under 2,000 early in the eighteenth century to about 3,500 by 1800.¹¹

Although the Common Council showed a marked reluctance to increase the number of freemen, every contested parliamentary election was preceded by a spate of new admissions. Sir Thomas Bootle complained to the Duke of Somerset in 1734 that his electoral defeat was entirely due to the creation of 600 new freemen sympathetic to the corporation party.¹² In 1760, 137 freemen were admitted in anticipation of the dissolution of Parliament and a further 171 in March 1761, just before the election. There followed a long period without contests during which the council frequently expressed alarm at the growth of the electorate and in 1777 ruled that in future no freeman might be admitted except those entitled by law and tradition. It is difficult to understand this concern since relatively few were admitted during the period and even mayoral contests were not preceded by a significant increase in the freemen. There was, however, an obligation on parliamentary and mayoral candidates to treat the freemen with drink and food, contest or no contest, and the burgeoning cost of this was resented by all parties. But in spite of these precautions, almost invariably the prospect of a contest produced its new crop of admissions. During 1780 there appears to have been some restraint, but in March 1784 there were sworn in 284 new freemen, in June 1790 515, and in May 1796 480. Indeed, during the exceptionally keen 1790 poll, freemen were voted in before the council was quorate, so great was the pressure to swell the electorate.¹³ Between 1780 and 1800, over 1,600 freemen were admitted under, to say the least, somewhat unusual circumstances.

Bootle's protest, and these exceptional pre-election admissions, have been considered *prima facie* evidence of the corporation's manipulation of the electorate. In Bootle's case this may be a correct interpretation, for the electorate was fairly small in 1734 and an additional 600 voters could have swung the contest. However, for the later period the new admissions were not so large, while some of them applied to elections which did not experience a particularly high turnout. The voting behaviour of a random sample of 100 freemen admitted on 20 June 1790, i.e. one day before the poll opened, has been investigated and was as follows:

Tarleton plumpers	27	Split vote Gascoyne and Penrhyn	14
Gascoyne plumpers	12	Split vote Tarleton and Gascoyne	14
Penrhyn plumpers	6	Split vote Tarleton and Penrhyn	12
Did not vote	15		

Another random sample, of 50 admitted between 24 and 27 May 1796, shows that 15 did not vote and the rest divided their votes

fairly evenly between the three candidates. Of 56 admitted on the 31 May none seem to have voted: they may have been registered too late to participate as the poll closed the following day.¹⁴ Thus for two elections at least the charge of corruption seems unproven, perhaps unmerited. Throughout the later eighteenth century the council maintained a standing committee charged with the oversight of applications for the freedom of the borough. Its membership denoted its importance; the mayor, bailiffs, borough treasurer and town clerk were permanent members and any councillor could attend any meeting. Since the council could not rely on the discretion of all its members and since the mayor was not infrequently a member of the popular party, it is unlikely that serious malpractices could have remained unpublished.¹⁵ Furthermore, during the 1780s and 1790s the various parties submitted to this committee names of their supporters entitled to the freedom (and perhaps they paid their entrance fines); very few of the submissions were rejected.¹⁶

For the merchant and trader, freedom of the borough was a prized possession. Apart from the prestige, it absolved him from payment of town dues and of half the market tolls, and it made him eligible for election to the Common Council.¹⁷ Yet for most burgesses it meant nothing unless there was a contested election. When Clayton Tarleton heard that the freemen were shouting his name at the mayoral hustings in 1794, he remarked sourly that the only reason for their enthusiasm was they wanted something to drink.¹⁸ It increased the discontent of wealthy non-freemen and disillusioned them with local politics that the bulk of the burgesses were men of humble origin who could so easily be influenced by bribes, free drink or other undue pressure. The freemen were labourers, seamen, artisans, small traders and clerks; something like a third or more were directly involved in seafaring activities – mariners, shipwrights, boat-builders, sailmakers, ropers, coopers, etc.; only one-tenth or less were classified as gentlemen, bankers and merchants.¹⁹ Their venality gave the candidate with the largest purse the best chance of success; but the Liverpool electorate was probably no worse than that of those other ‘popular’ constituencies where the mass of voters were ‘free’ because they were not in the pocket of a local magnate or the corporation. Comparatively few Liverpool freemen seem to have been directly controlled by the corporation party by virtue of their employment or their dependence on charity. Most were any party’s game, provided they could obtain, in the words of one contemporary, ‘a season of recreation, drunkenness and delight’.²⁰

PARTY POLITICS

In terms of party politics (in so far as this has meaning in the eighteenth century), the councillors may be categorized as predominantly Whig before the accession of George III and predominantly Tory thereafter. Liverpool was the only loyal borough in Lancashire during the Jacobite rising of 1715. It rallied to the Hanoverian cause again in 1745, when the corporation met much of the cost of raising the Liverpool Blues in defence of the town. Indeed, Liverpool appeared to be wholeheartedly behind the government that there is no reason to doubt the general popularity of the Whig cause in the town. It was equally loyal to the Tory administration when the government changed its political complexion after 1760, a switch of allegiance which apparently imposed no strain at all on the corporation's supporters. Although occasionally a dissenter or a political reformer gained admission to the council, overall the corporation was steadfast in its loyalty to the Church, King, and Constitution; and it expended much effort and money to ensure that no one doubted that this was the case. It maintained this stance through successive changes of ministry, through foreign wars severely damaging to the town's commerce and overseas investments, and in spite of the influence of the French Revolution. It is true that later in the century there was a flirtation with whiggish ideas on the part of some members, but this was only of a very mild kind. From 1793 even this disappeared, leaving the council uncompromisingly Tory. It may be that its unswerving attachment to the king's government proved an effective insurance against too close an examination of corporate affairs by Parliament or later by the Home Office.

The authors of the poll book for 1806 pointed to the existence of three main political parties in late eighteenth-century Liverpool.²¹ The first, the most consistently successful in terms of local and parliamentary elections, was the 'Old Corporation'. This mainly comprised the old families and the well-established wealthier citizens of the town: the Gildarts, Aspinalls, Cases, Gregsons, Clarkes and Branckners, and their supporters. They could always command at least a two-thirds majority of the Common Council and therefore they had effective control of the corporation and its patronage. In parliamentary elections they could usually secure the return of at least one candidate in their interest.

The second was a party of merchants and gentlemen who were just as conservative in their social and political outlook, who tended to vote Tory in parliamentary elections, but who by virtue of their long exclusion from the inner circles of the municipality

had developed into an anti-corporation interest group. The Drinkwaters, Hollinsheads, Harpers, Parrs and Tarletons, together with moderate Whigs like the Earles and Hodgsons, were quite capable of combining with the more radical element in the town to overturn the candidates of the 'Old Corporation'. They were conspicuously successful during the early 1790s in securing the return of mayor and bailiffs in their interest. But in parliamentary elections the anti-corporation party lost its coherence, since the majority of its members were regular Tory voters while the candidate in opposition to the corporation's nominee(s) was almost invariably a Whig. This helps to explain why so many anti-corporationists split their votes between Whig and Tory.

The third party consisted of the better-educated workers and traders, men of little social consequence but articulate, in alliance with 'Dissenters and Sectarists of every description', some of whom were of genuine radical persuasion and a few of whom were men of substance. They called themselves the Reformers. They were pledged to the banner of Charles James Fox and supported the removal of civil and religious disabilities and the reform of Parliament. But they were a motley lot. Respectable and prosperous merchants like the Heywoods, Boltons, Booths and Fletchers were chiefly interested in the reform of the Test and Corporation Acts and in gaining access to the patronage of the municipality. They did not sit easily with the more outspoken opponents of the slave trade, men such as William Roscoe and William Rathbone; and even less so with radicals of the conviction and tenacity of James Currie, Edward Rushton and the Rev. William Shepherd. Nevertheless, the group achieved some notable successes against the corporation.

Over much of the country at this time party labels were not very meaningful. The various Liverpool factions hardly ever made use of the terms 'Whig' and 'Tory' in their electioneering except as terms of abuse—implying that Whigs were disloyal or Tories mere placemen. And though the factions were sometimes able to raise large and even violent demonstrations in their favour, no party or candidate emerged that could be remotely regarded as radical or revolutionary. There was some nostalgia for the old Stuart cause early in the century, and some flirtation with Jacobinism in the early 1790s, but nothing of any potency. For example, in the 1761 election, which many contemporaries regarded as a breakthrough in Liverpool's parliamentary history, and in which one of the candidates (Sir William Meredith) was accused of Jacobite sympathies, the result was not a change in political alignment in national terms but only a change in terms of local politics, in that it ended a long period of corporation

domination.²² But them, in the country at large, in spite of the change of government brought about by the accession of George III and the subsequent purge of the old administration, no seats were won or lost in the 1761 election.²³

As for Jacobinism, this never had a significant following in the town. There was a small group of reformers who had an importance far in excess of their numbers in carrying the standard of Liverpool political heterodoxy through years of crisis and reaction; but for them 'Jacobin' is a strained epithet. They were moderate men on the whole: a coterie of merchants and professionals who attended Renshaw Street or one of the other Nonconformist chapels, finding an outlet for their energies in literary and cultural activities and only making occasional sallies into the political arena.²⁴ The fall of the Bastille briefly raised their hopes of reform at home and encouraged them to speak out. Yet there is no evidence that they played a major part in the Whig revival of 1790; they merely provided the corporation squib-writer, Sylvester Richmond, with an opportunity to attack the opposition with more venom than usual. During the anti-Jacobin crusade in the years that followed the arrest and execution of Louis XVI the reformers were very subdued. They could still make their mark on 'safe' issues like the continuing struggle against the closed corporation or the campaign against the East India Company monopoly, but until Joseph Birch stood for Parliament in 1802 and, more notably, William Roscoe in 1806, they lacked a candidate to whom they could rally with enthusiasm.

It is characteristic of Liverpool elections throughout the eighteenth century that the candidates consistently denied they belonged to a political party: their standard was the King and Constitution, their interest the well-being of the citizens of Liverpool. They denied that they belonged to the corporation faction; they denied they were in coalition with another candidate against the claims of a third; they denied that if elected they would become place-seekers with the government or support a particular faction at Westminster. Reality, however was often otherwise. Sir Ellis Cunliffe, for example, secured a monopoly over Crown appointments in the town; young Bamber Gascoyne dutifully followed the dictates of his father in support of Lord North; General Banastre Tarleton switched parties late in his career in an earnest hunt for preferment.²⁵ The sharp contrast between actual and stated intent is seen at its clearest in the 1790 election. Here two ostensibly opposing candidates, Bamber Gascoyne and Lord Penrhyn, secretly joined forces to forestall a contest. (In fairness to the candidates, their chief consideration was probably to avoid the expense.) The mayor, Thomas Smyth,

called a meeting of the burgesses at the Exchange where he asked for a show of hands in favour of these two in order to discourage a third contender, Banastre Tarleton. The stratagem succeeded. Tarleton withdrew and left town. But his supporters sent a deputation to prevail on him to return, insisting that the vote had been rigged. In the ensuing contest Penrhyn suffered the penalty of incurring the charge of coalition and was defeated.²⁶

Liverpool's sensitivity over the question of coalition reflects some credit on the independence of mind of the electorate. This seems to have originated in the 1761 election, when Cunliffe and Pole made little attempt to hide the fact that they were running in harness as the corporation men. The hostile reaction of a large part of the freemen gave Meredith so many double votes ('plumpers') that he was able to dislodge Pole at a time when the council interest seemed likely to make a clean sweep. Candidates were more cautious thereafter. Even as late as 1806 it was necessary for Isaac Gascoyne and Tarleton to give vigorous denial to the charge that they were in league against William Roscoe, which of course they were.²⁷ The fear of the consequences of coalition was not finally exorcised until the election of 1812 when there was a clear coalition of two Whig candidates against two Tories; but by that time the character of Liverpool elections had changed considerably.

Yet Liverpool, in protesting its independence of faction, was only reflecting the national scene. Most of the leading politicians of the period tended to assert that they were their own men (and the king's) and not mere adherents to a particular party. Lord North denied Fox's claim that he ran a Tory administration; Chatham described himself as a man without a party. Similarly, politicians deprecated the idea of a 'formed opposition', i.e. a combination of men out of power, because it was considered to be dishonest, factious and disloyal to the king.²⁸ In this respect the unofficial opposition centring round the Prince of Wales was an ideal vehicle for expressing opposition to the king's ministers without the implication of disloyalty to the Crown. Carlton House became the focus for discontents. Thus Tarleton, who during his Whig phase was accused of Jacobinism and lack of patriotism, defended himself by reference to his close association with the Prince of Wales, as well as with the Earl of Derby, the Duke of Bedford and other aristocratic worthies.²⁹

THE CONDUCT OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

'I . . . do swear, I have not received, or had, by myself, or any person whatsoever, in trust for me, or for my use and benefit,

directly or indirectly, any sum or sums of money, office, place, or employment, gift or reward, or any promise, or security for any money, office, employment, or gift, in order to give my vote at this election; and that I have not before been polled at this election'.

This, the freeman's oath, was sworn by each voter, in front of the magistrates, the candidates and their supporters, and the attendant public, before he cast his vote. The oath was often printed in the local press and it appeared in the Minutes of the Common Council prior to an election. Nevertheless, in every contested election during this period, the candidates—particularly of course the unsuccessful ones—accused their opponents of bribery. Yet apparently no one was prosecuted in Liverpool for this offence. The law was quite specific: legislation of 1696, 1710 and 1729 provided a comprehensive definition of bribery—direct, in the form of financial inducement, indirect, in the form of provision of food, drink and entertainment—and provided draconian penalties as a deterrent: disfranchisement for life from voting or holding office, with a fine of up to £500. These laws, which were renewed at intervals, seem to have had no effect. At each election the elaborate farce of swearing in the voter was enacted, though all the participants knew that bribes had been offered and taken, that patrons had exercised undue pressure, and that free drinks and hospitality were being lavishly provided.

In the country at large the effect of bribery was to make elections so expensive that contests were the exception rather than the rule. That this was not quite so much the case in Liverpool in the late eighteenth century was probably due to the somewhat fine balance of power between the corporation and anti-corporation factions. In 1761 Liverpool was one of only 41 boroughs where a contest was held.³⁰ However, there were no further contests here until 1780, though this was partly because of the council's failure to find a suitable candidate to run against Sir William Meredith. But lack of contests does not necessarily imply that the parties escaped expense. Possible opponents had to be bought off, or otherwise dissuaded; and the townspeople expected to receive largesse in the form of free ale and food in order to toast their representatives in the customary style. When Cunliffe died in 1767 and Richard Pennant (later Lord Penrhyn) was returned unopposed in his place, Meredith heard that his expenses were under £300 and thought that he had got off lightly.³¹

Contests tended to be more expensive for the opposition than for candidates with the backing of the corporation. Those freemen who were dependant on the corporation for work, or who lived on council property, or who looked to the corporation for employment or charity, were unlikely to oppose its interests. These were

votes that did not require purchase, though it was expedient to provide them with entertainment during the course of the poll.³² Further, in the later eighteenth century the corporation usually managed to run two candidates against the opposition's one. To counter this built-in disadvantage, the opposition candidate appealed to the freemen to plump for him. Inevitably, the strength of this appeal depended on the size of the candidate's purse; for a freeman, by instead splitting his two votes, could hope to pick up bribes and other perquisites from two sources. Indeed, freemen frequently did split their votes (the temptation to play off one side against the other being too strong), with the result that candidates complained that the promised double votes did not materialise.

Obviously it could work both ways. Meredith accused Cunliffe and his friend Bryan Blundell of using their positions in the government of Bluecoat School and Infirmary to deny relief to families of freemen who voted for him. There are frequent references to this type of pressure. In 1790 an anonymous burgess claimed that 'some of the Master Tradesmen, it seems, have theratened to turn out of their employ such of their men as vote contrary to the directions of their employers'. It was suggested that Lord Sefton and Lord Stanley, both opposed to the council, illegally influenced their tenants' voting.³³ In Lord Stanley's case such action would have constituted a breach of privilege of the House of Commons, his father being a peer of the realm. But these allegations were not pursued; after all, both sides were technically in breach of the law.

According to one authority, a freeman's vote was worth £20 at the end of the century, exclusive of free eating and drinking during the poll. But contemporaries were prone to exaggerate the extent of bribery, and this figure seems grossly inflated.³⁴ On an average turnout of about 2,000 and on the generous assumption that roughly half would not receive pecuniary inducement, an election would still have cost at least £20,000 in bribes alone. Only the 1806 election (with its poll of 2,345) seems to have had expenses which come anywhere near the figure.³⁵ And in addition to food, drink and entertainment, the overall expenses of an election of course included normal costs—the payment of officials, the transport and lodging of outvoters, the cost of canvassing, printing and distribution of election material, the hiring of coaches, bands, and regalia.

The only available figures which purport to show all the expenses of an election are for 1806. In the heaviest poll for the period under consideration, General Isaac Gascoyne is said to have spent £3,000, General Banastre Tarleton £4,000 and

William Roscoe between £11,000 and £12,000. Although the source of this information is from the Tory camp, Roscoe himself admitted spending the sum stated.³⁶ This was an exceptional election, long and keenly contested. Roscoe was standing for the first time against two well-established representatives. His opponents were supported by the corporation, so that he needed to buy more votes than both combined; they expected to split their votes between them, whereas Roscoe needed plumpers in order to succeed. Unfortunately, there is little evidence from other elections to compare with this. Meredith had complained that his political career had been the cause of his financial ruin. Certainly, he was a great entertainer of the freemen during the course of the 1761 election, roasting oxen on the streets and distributing 30 barrels of beer at a single party; but he only had to face one major contest in Liverpool, so his debts can hardly have been wholly attributable to this.³⁷ Lord Penrhyn, too, had a reputation for being a big spender. He is said to have spent £50,000 during his parliamentary career on 'the grateful Electors of Liverpool', a benevolence regarded as greatly to his credit.³⁸ If correct, this was presumably spread over five elections, including the one from which he withdrew early in the poll. By contrast, John Tarleton, who achieved notoriety by fighting the 1796 election against his brother, was reckoned to have paid out £3,000 in contesting Seaford in 1790.³⁹

Elections of course involved the whole town, not simply the freemen. An average of 2,000 votes shared between three or four candidates was hardly sufficient to demonstrate a large popular following. So candidates hired bands of musicians, gave out favours, mounted stands of colours, employed dozens of canvassers, distributed pamphlets, songs and squibs, held parades through the town and generally produced an air of festivity and keen rivalry. The votes were taken in tallies, or tens, each tally marching separately to the hustings, showing its colours: in the 1790s blue for Gascoyne and the corporation, green for Tarleton, and pink for the reformers.⁴⁰ The polling was slow, and spectators could follow its progress exactly. In the late afternoon the parties might have to root out their supporters in order to make up the tallies and so keep their colours flying bravely to the end of the day. This was the best time for picking up hefty bribes. Meanwhile, town affairs were virtually at a standstill and a considerable part of the population in an almost constant state of inebriation. Even when the poll closed the festivities continued, for the successful candidates were expected to provide toasts for all who came to congratulate them. It was said that 10,000 people attended Roscoe's victory rally in 1806, marching ten or twelve

abreast through Castle Street and the Old Dock, along Duke Street to Mount Pleasant, then on to the party headquarters in Islington.⁴¹ No doubt most of these were hangers-on, who would demonstrate noisily for any candidate whose party provided food and ale.

In vain did magistrates request candidates not to distribute ribbons or other marks of distinction, on the grounds that these practices invariably led to brawling in the streets. Candidates, too, made the customary (and futile) appeals to their supporters to avoid any show of disorder, though they seldom did so as naively as did Tarleton in 1790 when he requested his followers not to carry sticks or other offensive-looking weapons in case their purpose was misconstrued. When Lord Penrhyn withdrew from the poll in this election his disillusionment with Liverpool politics was complete. '[Since] my Re-election is now attended with the same Contest, Disorder, and Confusion that I have experienced at every Dissolution of Parliament for these Twenty-two years past, though I am first on the Poll, and have no doubt of Success, I beg leave to retire.' Gascoyne, who would surely have lost had not his partner withdrawn, agreed wholeheartedly: 'no one can lament more than myself, the unavoidable Anarchy and Confusion, which has prevailed.' But Tarleton, who was behind much of the mischief, demonstrated an injured innocence. In his opinion, 'amidst the numerous Elections throughout this extensive Empire, none will be more distinguished for Harmony, Independence, and Patriotism, from Commencement to Conclusion.'⁴²

By report the most disorderly election was that of 1806 when the celebrated affray of the 'Butchers' took place. Tarleton, who was the particular favourite of the market people, had a gang of supporters known as the Butchers, though they were not all of that occupation. Their provocative behaviour was a frequent cause of complaint and on this occasion Roscoe claimed that they were interfering with the conduct of the poll by blocking the road to the hustings to his supporters. He implied that the magistrates either connived at the illegality or were impotent, since they did nothing. So on the third day, as the Butchers paraded in mock-military fashion in front of the hustings, Roscoe's supporters met them in force and a large-scale brawl ensued. The Butchers were put to flight, with some broken heads. The incident unleashed a flood of accusations from all sides. It had been a riotous election throughout; earlier, a mob had rampaged through Bridge Street and gutted several houses, again with all parties vociferously denying any responsibility.⁴³

Yet such affairs were small beer when compared with the dis-

turbances in other constituencies, in Nottingham or Westminster, for instance. A contest in Liverpool, as elsewhere, provided an excuse for gratuitous rowdiness. When one considers the high rate of immigration into the town by the end of the century, the large number of seamen, many of them strangers or foreigners, the presence of soldiers and sailors under arms, the lack of an effective police force, and particularly the amount of liquor flowing freely, one is surprised that there was so little serious violence.

ELECTORAL ISSUES

The main issue in all the parliamentary elections of the later eighteenth century was not one of party or principle, but was one of access to municipal authority and hence to municipal patronage. At no time was this conflict between the corporation interest and its opponents submerged, whatever the nature of the periodic national and local crises which affected the town. Indeed, it is remarkable how the crises produced by war, depression, or political upheaval were expressed in terms of this basic conflict. It is almost as if the factions, by common consent, decided to ignore the larger issues in order to clear the decks for the battle that really mattered—the struggle for power in the municipality.

This is not to deny that national issues played some occasional part in Liverpool contests. For if the balance between the parties was fairly even, a major national controversy, such as the conduct of the American War or the reaction to the French Revolution, might well swing sufficient votes to decide the outcome of an election. However there is little evidence that such decisive swings were regular or even common. For instance, one might have expected that in the elections of both 1780 and 1784 a crisis produced by a war severely damaging to Liverpool commerce would have strengthened the hand of the conservatives in rallying support to the government of the day. This indeed seems to have happened in 1780, when Bamber Gascoyne flayed Richard Pennant (M.P. since 1767) for his record of 'treacherous disloyalty against the government during the previous Parliament. Pennant came bottom of the poll, a long way behind the two corporation men, Gascoyne and Henry Rawlinson. But if this analysis is correct, why was Pennant returned for Liverpool in 1784, when controversy over the war still ran high and Whig candidates elsewhere fared badly? In fact a local decision benefited Pennant: the corporation ran only one nominee. Also Pennant was sponsored on both occasions by some of the leading merchants of the town—the Heywoods, the Lakes, Nicholas Ashton, Jonas Bold, George Dunbar, Thomas Leyland, Gill

Slater—all of whom had important interests in the hard-hit African and West Indian trades.⁴⁴

In 1784 Pennant—he had now become Lord Penrhyn—was aided by the withdrawal of Henry Rawlinson through ill-health. Gascoyne, the corporation nominee, came top of the poll and Penrhyn narrowly scraped home against the claims of a third contender, Banastre Tarleton. This election, called by Pitt after the miserable failure of the Fox-North coalition, has been described as one of the most momentous events in eighteenth-century British politics. It was also one of the most bitterly fought and expensive of national elections. In Liverpool, however, it was more run-of-the-mill, and surviving references to the contest are slight. There was some violence, but apparently not as much as in 1790 or 1806. Tarleton, who came bottom of the poll, though closely associated with the Prince of Wales, cannot fairly be considered one of 'Fox's martyrs', since this was his first contest, he entered it late, and his financial backing was less than that of Penrhyn.⁴⁵ As in the preceding election there was a low poll, indicative, perhaps, of lacklustre opposition.

More of a case for a national issue determining the outcome of a local election can be made for 1790, when Tarleton triumphed, with a record majority over his two rivals. According to Muir's interpretation, he was elected as the undisputed champion of the anti-corporation faction, coming in on a wave of pro-Whig euphoria in a very turbulent contest.⁴⁶ Yet initially Tarleton withdrew from the poll, when he heard that Penrhyn had made a deal with the council and was working in coalition with Gascoyne. These two 'turned off the taps' on the first day of the poll, which produced a howl of rage from the supporters of both parties, thus deprived of their regular bacchanalia. Tarleton had already left town, but one of his wealthy friends immediately revived his cause, partly by distributing free beer in the streets. A message was sent to Tarleton and he returned with promises of support that exceeded all his earlier expectations. He was now without doubt the people's hero. His hand was further strengthened by Penrhyn's withdrawal. Although Penrhyn protested that he could no longer face the disorder in the town, this is unconvincing; more likely the council put pressure on him in order to salvage its favourite, Bamber Gascoyne.⁴⁷ The interpretation of Tarleton's victory as a product of the national Whig revival is not without some plausibility, but parochial demand for a contest—and its accompanying perquisites—clearly also influenced the turn of events.

In spite of the corporation's discomfiture in 1790, the political balance in the town remained generally in its favour because the

opposition was prone to internal dissension and division. Before the French Wars the anti-corporation faction inclined towards a mild form of whiggism, but for tactical reasons rather than ideological convictions. The weakness of its position was exposed in the reaction that followed the news of the French Revolution. Government moves to strengthen the forces of law and order could not have come at a better time from the point of view of the corporation party. For the 'popular' party was in the ascendant in 1790, pressing forward its attack on the privileges of the Common Council, and about to secure a favourable judgement at King's Bench on the rights of the Common Hall. The national political crisis, which aided Tories everywhere by making all innovation suspect as insidious Jacobinism, assisted the corporation in holding off this assault on its authority. Just as at Westminster the so-called 'Old Whigs' deserted Fox in droves, so in Liverpool quondam Whigs were converted into true-blue Tories, as the leaders of the anti-corporation faction leant over backwards to vie with the council in demonstrating their loyalty to the government.

On 25th November 1792 the mayor, Clayton Tarleton, so recently a champion of the 'free burgesses', but now acting with the full approval of the Common Council, ordered one thousand copies of certain anti-Jacobin resolutions to be printed and distributed free in the town. Within a few days a reply appeared in the form of a handbill entitled 'Equality'. This was the work of William Rathbone, the prominent local timber merchant and Quaker, and was based on an article by his friend William Roscoe which the local press had refused to print. Rathbone also spoke and wrote to the mayor, to warn him that he would be held responsible if rioting followed his provocative action. The mayor next called a special meeting of the council, to consider a loyal address to the king to express the grateful thanks of the town for preserving the safety and happiness of the realm against its enemies without and within. By this time feelings were running so high that Tarleton was obliged to hold a general meeting in the Exchange to test public opinion in the matter. Here the reformers won a small victory. With the support of the Whigs they persuaded a crowded assembly to agree to a modified form of address drawn up by Joseph Birch, a Nonconformist merchant of their company. Tarleton cooled down when he saw that the main body of merchants was not to be pressed to extremes, though he managed a dig at his opponents by saying that although the country was in peril from subversion he was glad that in Liverpool so few people were disaffected.⁴⁸

Clayton's brother, Banastre, the Liverpool M.P. who had once

sung the praises of the *sans-culottes* and had his hair cropped in the French fashion, also trimmed his sails, though not so drastically. He publicly dissociated himself from Fox and declared that he was not totally opposed to the ideas of the French Revolution and, indeed, to any political innovation. Nevertheless, he was alarmed by the vehemence of his brother's reaction and wrote to advise him to play it cool: 'A good citizen, a good Whig and a good subject ought to look at all Measures with calmness and moderation and strive to balance the political machine'. As mayor of Liverpool Clayton ought to be working for compromise, not stirring things up.⁴⁹ Tarleton's fear that the Liverpool mob might get out of hand was not unjustified. As at Leeds, but in contrast to Manchester and Sheffield, the popular demonstrations were in favour of the government. The mob marched to the Exchange with a much-abused effigy of Tom Paine, shouting 'God save the King', jostling the reformers and breaking windows. Perhaps from fear of worse to come the mayor called no further meetings of the town or the council to attack Jacobinism. Early the following year he wrote obsequiously to Lord Chatham: 'I judged it expedient with the advice also of many Loyal Subjects, to discontinue all Ideas of Associations & Resolutions, and to have recourse to the more constitutional one of an Address.'⁵⁰

The outbreak of war marked the end of a brief spell of active involvement in local and national politics by that small group of dissenters who were dubbed the 'Liverpool Jacobins'. Free traders all, and abolitionists as well, they and their friends trebly damned Pitt for his attitude to reform, for his mercantilism, and for his alleged indifference to the cause of the slaves.⁵¹ But they were generally circumspect in making overt attacks on the government. William Rathbone, the most impassioned of the group, did attempt to raise a petition in town asking for the dismissal of Pitt. But the war which he bitterly deplored lost him his remaining influence with the independent freemen and for a time made him a marked man in Liverpool. James Currie had more success with an open letter to Pitt early in 1793, which he wrote under the pseudonym of 'Jasper Wilson'. This protest against the war and against Pitt's attitude to free trade and political reform was the last fling of a beleaguered group of intellectuals who could get no support from the Liverpool Whigs now that 'folly and fanatical bigotry' had taken over.⁵²

Whilst the reformers immersed themselves in their businesses, their domesticity and good works, the cause of peace did not entirely disappear from view. Banastre Tarleton, notwithstanding his desertion of Fox and his recent promotion to major-general, was still prepared to appeal to the government to negotiate with

France. But the damage done to Liverpool commerce by the depredations of French privateers did not outweigh the popular association of the peace party with political subversion. Early in 1795 Clayton Tarleton warned that Rathbone and his friends 'by Division and Dissension wou'd bring us into the Situation of our neighbour Frog'. He wrote to his brother Thomas in February: '...it mortifies me to the Heart to see the Presbyterians & Democrats engrafting with the utmost Cunning their Cause upon General Tarleton's & that he suffers his Popularity & Interest here to be made a Stalking Horse for their Measure'.⁵³ The general had agreed to present a petition favouring negotiations with France, but the mayor, John Shaw, refused to let the peace party call a public meeting because, he said, there was insufficient support in the town. The more active Whigs of the anti-corporation faction—the Earles, Hodgsons, Heywoods, Joseph Birch, Joseph Brooks, William Clarke and Stephen Backhouse—took up the challenge by publishing a notice signed by 50 prominent merchants in favour of a meeting. The corporation interest retaliated with an even more impressive notice against a meeting, signed by 199 merchants including many members of the Common Council.⁵⁴ The disposition of local forces in this short-lived contest indicates that Liverpool politics were beginning to return to normal, in spite of the war.

In November 1795 a royal proclamation against unlawful and treasonable assemblies was published, and the mayor and council lost no time in congratulating the monarch on his ministers' justifiable reaction to the recent attempt on his life. Later the same month, when the provisions of the Seditious Meetings Bill became known, the Whigs drew up a petition against it and the Common Council responded by petitioning both Houses in support of the bill.⁵⁵ The corporation petition to the Commons was presented by two Lancashire M.P.s, since Bamber Gascoyne, who would normally have performed this task, was absent from the House. Tarleton of course presented for the other side. With a nice touch of irony, the alderman chosen by the council to deliver its petition to the M.P.s was Clayton Tarleton.

The events of November 1795 may be considered as a run-up for the parliamentary election, since a dissolution of Parliament was then in prospect. The corporation naturally hoped to capitalize on the anti-Whig mood in the nation at large; but the recent Whig revival in the town promised no easy victory. Meanwhile, Bamber Gascoyne's decision to retire from active politics involved the corporation in a search for two candidates to stand in its interest against General Tarleton. The solution to this problem produced one of the strangest contests in Liverpool's parlia-

mentary history. Colonel Isaac Gascoyne, a soldier of no great political talent but of considerable wealth and influence, was persuaded to stand in place of his brother. John Tarleton, one of the town's leading African merchants and a former delegate against abolition, offered to stand against his brother. Isaac preserved the long-standing connection between Liverpool and the Gascoyne family; John maintained the interest and amusement of the town in the feuding Tarleton family. The election provided a field day for the talented Liverpool squib-writers and pamphleteers.

The public statements of the candidates and their supporters give the impression that the French Wars and anti-Jacobinism were the main issues in this election. But the heat these issues generated was somewhat forced. By no stretch of the imagination could General Tarleton be considered a radical, even though his enemies portrayed him as a potential English Robespierre, a fire-eating demagogue who was prepared to sell his country to the French.⁵⁶ The reformers supported him mainly *faute de mieux*, as the only candidate who could offer any serious challenge to the corporation interest. Meanwhile Gascoyne described himself as 'an avowed Enemy to all Jacobins, Republicans and Levellers, and a firm Friend to the King and Constitution.'⁵⁷ John Tarleton stood on the same platform.⁵⁸ Gascoyne, however, did not welcome his support; a contrast entailed great expense and he feared that Liverpool's traditional sensitivity towards coalition might encourage the moderates to plump for General Tarleton instead of splitting their votes between himself and John Tarleton. He need not have worried. The contest proved to be a tepid affair. The clash between two uninspiring novices and a Whig of dubious credentials aroused little enthusiasm. In any case, the prevailing political climate inhibited a free expression of views on the subject of reform. The turnout was low, the poll ending on the fourth day with the withdrawal of John Tarleton, who had received 317 votes as against 506 for his brother and 672 for Gascoyne. It was a limited victory for the corporation interest and the Tories: General Tarleton, pushed into second place, polled less than half his 1790 figure.⁵⁹

One other national issue most pertinent to the fortunes of Liverpool was mentioned at this election: the slave trade. Locally abolition was a non-issue, in the sense that no Liverpool candidate from the inception of the parliamentary campaign for abolition in 1787 to its conclusion in 1807 ever presented himself as an advocate against the trade. It is true that all the leading abolitionists in town came from the ranks of the reformers, and hence it was normal for the Tories to accuse the Whigs of being

less devoted to anti-abolitionism than themselves. But Tarleton, who was generally supported by the radicals and dissenters until 1802, and who belonged to a family heavily engaged in the African and West Indian trades, made no bones about his own position and the same was true of most of his followers.⁶⁰ Just as the Liverpool Tories regretted Pitt's abolitionist 'fanaticism', so Tarleton played down Fox's devotion to the cause; and later, after deserting Fox and the peace party, he became a leading anti-abolitionist spokesman in the House. In the 1802 election, when the radicals rallied behind the Unitarian trader Joseph Birch (who failed at Liverpool but was returned for Nottingham), the question of the slave trade was hardly raised at all.⁶¹

Finally, in 1806 William Roscoe, leader of the Liverpool abolitionists, stood for Parliament in opposition to the two anti-abolitionist M.P.s, Tarleton and Gascoyne. Here was a contest tailor-made to test the opinion of the independent freeman on the issue of abolition. But the national issue fell stone-dead. Apart from Roscoe's victory speech, there were not half a dozen significant references to the slave trade or abolition in one of the best documented elections of the period. What really decided this contest and Roscoe's notable victory was his prodigious bribery of the electorate and the controversy surrounding Tarleton's desertion to the Whigs.⁶² But ironically, in the following year, when abolition was a reality, national issues did intrude and did for once dominate a Liverpool election, with the result that Roscoe suffered from the severe reaction in the town. When he returned to Liverpool he was set upon by a mob of unemployed seamen who gave him a blunt reminder of his failure to honour his pledge to support abolition by gradual stages. He also met an equally formidable charge, that he had spoken in favour of Catholic Emancipation. Discouraged, he withdrew from the contest, though his supporters continued to canvass for him. It proved to be a scurrilous election. Roscoe's friends alleged that Tarleton campaigned under the slogan, 'The Church and the Slave Trade for ever!', and he and the other corporation candidate won handsomely. Roscoe retired from active politics. But only eight years later, forgiven, he was presented with the freedom of the borough.⁶³ Which may serve to point up the dominant feature of Liverpool political life in this period, its cosy parochialism.

NOTES

- 1 This article is a slightly reduced version of the opening chapter of a thesis which Frank Sanderson left uncompleted when he died in December 1976. It has been prepared for publication by Dr P. E. H. Hair, who acknowledges the advice of Dr Ian Sellers.

- 2 *Report of the Commission on Municipal Corporations*, PP 1835 XXVI, nos. 665-708 (printed nos. 2689-2741); R. Muir and E. Platt, *A history of municipal government in Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1906); R. Muir, *A history of Liverpool* (1907).
- 3 Liverpool Record Office (hereafter LRO), Committee Book of the African Company, 1750-1820, 352 MD 1. At Bristol, the pattern of corporate life was not dissimilar and African Company merchants were influential at least until the 1780s: see J. Latimer, *The Annals of Bristol* (Bristol, 1893), pp. 476-7; W. E. Minchinton, *Politics and the port of Bristol in the eighteenth century* (Bristol, 1963), pp. xiv, xxviii; C. M. MacInnes, *Bristol and the slave trade* (Bristol Historical Association, 1968), p. 5.
- 4 W. Enfield, *An essay towards the history of Liverpool* (2nd ed., 1774), pp. 26-8 (estimated population in 1770, 34,000 of whom 6-10,000 were seamen); *Gore's Liverpool Directory*, 1800 (listing 1,500 householders connected with the sea).
- 5 L. Namier and J. Brooke, *The House of Commons 1754-90* (1964) I, p. 317.
- 6 J. Touzeau, *The rise and progress of Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1910), II, pp. 580-3; cf. LRO, Tarleton Papers, 920 TAR 4/32-3, 36-9.
- 7 LRO, Minutes of the Common Council, 21.5.1804.
- 8 On mayoral contests, see Muir, *op. cit.* pp. 167-9; Touzeau, *op. cit.* pp. 376, 413, 438-42.
- 9 LRO, Minutes of the Common Council, 10.9.1790.
- 10 LRO, Tarleton Papers, 920 TAR 4/30; cf. Muir and Platt, *op. cit.* pp. 130-2.
- 11 The Freeman's Register 1733-1812 (LRO, 352 CLE/REG 2/2) lists 5,557 names, but a spot check shows names missing (e.g. Peter Baker and James Clemens, mayors, not shown as freemen in 1790). The Freeman's Committee Books record admissions but not wastage by death, resignation or disqualification. According to *Report from the Select Committee on Liverpool borough elections*, PP 1833 X, p. 207, there were 3,628 freemen in 1832. The estimate cited, and apparently based on voting in elections with high turnout, is from B. Whittingham-Jones, 'Liverpool's political clubs, 1812-30' *THSLC*, 111 (1959), p. 117.
- 12 R. Sedgwick, *The House of Commons 1715-54* (1970), I, p. 271.
- 13 LRO, Minutes of the Common Council, months cited: cf. Touzeau, *op. cit.* II, pp. 606-7 (slightly different figures by faulty adding).
- 14 LRO, Minutes of the Common Council, June 1790 and May 1796; Liverpool Poll Books, 1790 and 1796; Liverpool Committee Book, 1795-1811.
- 15 Cf. E. M. Menzies, 'The freeman voter in Liverpool, 1802-35', *THSLC*, 124 (1972), p. 87; and note that the petitions against the corporation in 1834 did not refer to admission malpractice.
- 16 LRO, Freeman's Committee Book, 352 CLE/REG 1/1 (3,957) applications between February 1756 and October 1795, only 102 rejected or postponed).
- 17 For a disqualification for abuse of privilege, see LRO, Minutes of the Common Council, 3.12.1794, case of Nicholas Robinson, brother-in-law of the Tarleton brothers.
- 18 LRO, 920 TAR 4/67, letter to T. Tarleton, 18.10.1794.
- 19 G. W. Mathews, 'Some notes on the Liverpool election of 1806' *THSLC*, 79 (1927), pp. 80-1 (based on the incomplete occupational information in the Poll Books).

- 20 *Poll Book and Addresses*, Wright and Cruikshank, 1806, p. vii.
- 21 *Ibid.* pp. iii-iv.
- 22 *Poll Book and Addresses*, 1780, pp. 14-15.
- 23 R. J. White, *The age of George III* (1968), pp. 30 et seq.
- 24 S. G. Checkland, 'Economic attitudes in Liverpool, 1793-1807', *Ec. H.R.* 5 (1952), pp. 63-5; I. Sellers, 'William Roscoe, the Roscoe circle and radical politics in Liverpool, 1787-1807', *THSLC*, 120 (1968), pp. 45-62; F. E. Sanderson, 'The Liverpool abolitionists', in R. Anstey and P. E. H. Hair, eds., *Liverpool, the African slave trade, and Abolition* (*THSLC* Occasional series 2, 1976), pp. 196-238.
- 25 Namier and Brooke, *op. cit.* II, p. 285; cf. Sedgwick, *op. cit.* I, p. 484.
- 26 *Poll Book and Addresses*, 1790, II, pp. 5-9, 23-5; *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, 21.6.1790.
- 27 *Poll Book and Addresses*, Jones and Wright, 1806, p. 5.
- 28 I. Jennings, *Party politics* (1960-2 ed.) II, p. 45; A. S. Foord, *His Majesty's Opposition, 1714-1830* (1964), p. 306; L. Namier, *England in the age of the American Revolution* (1961 ed.), pp. 48-51; I. Bulwer-Thomas, *The growth of the British Party System* (1967 repr.) I, pp. 29 et seq.
- 29 *Poll Book and Addresses*, 1790, I, pp. 34-5, 46 et seq.; 1796, pp. 16, 19, 54-9.
- 30 W. B. Gwyn, *Democracy and the cost of politics* (1962), p. 13.
- 31 Namier and Brooke, *op. cit.* I, p. 318; II, p. 262.
- 32 *Poll Book and Addresses*, 1790, I, p. 39; Wright and Cruikshank, 1812 p. iv; Touzeau, *op. cit.* pp. 522, 606-7.
- 33 *Poll Book and Addresses*, 1761, pp. 104-5, 108-9; 1790, II, p. 45; Wright and Cruikshank, 1806, p. xi.
- 34 Muir and Platt, *op. cit.* p. 135; Richard Brooke, *Liverpool as it was* (Liverpool, 1853), pp. 309-10 (any bribery 1796-1812 only on small scale); James Stonehouse, *Recollections of old Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1863), p. 76 (1812 complaint by freeman that vote only worth £5-10).
- 35 That the 1790 election cost Penrhyn £30,000 is stated in E. Porritt, *The Unreformed House of Commons* (1963 ed.), p. 76. But the reference given (to Picton's *Memorials*) is incorrect; and since Penrhyn withdrew after the second day's poll and only two-thirds of the electorate turned out this amount of expense on this occasion is highly unlikely.
- 36 *Poll Book and Addresses*, Wright and Cruikshank, 1806, pp. viii-ix; Menzies, *op. cit.* p. 98; LRO, Roscoe Papers, 920 ROS 3474-8 (subscription list for £9,322, with further £2,968 promised).
- 37 *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, 10.4.1761.
- 38 *Poll Book and Addresses*, Wright and Cruikshank, 1812, p. iv.
- 39 *Poll Book and Addresses*, 1796, p. 51.
- 40 J. Aspinall, *Liverpool a few years since* (Liverpool, 1852), p. 129; Brooke, *op. cit.* pp. 302-22.
- 41 *Poll Book and Addresses*, Jones and Wright, 1806, pp. 29-30.
- 42 *Ibid.* 1790, II, pp. 55-6, 70-2, *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, 28.6.1790-8.7.1790.
- 43 *Poll Book and Addresses*, Wright and Cruikshank, 1806, p. x; Jones and Wright, 1806, pp. 16-22; *Liverpool Chronicle*, 5.11.1806.
- 44 *Poll Book and Addresses*, 1780, pp. 33-4; *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, 1.4.1784 (43 merchants supporting Pennant); and note that in 1784 Pennant did not rate his own chances highly since he also ran at Windsor: A. Aspinall, *The later correspondence of George III* (1962), I, p. 48.

- 45 J. H. Plumb, *England in the eighteenth century* (1950), p. 190; Muir, *op. cit.* p. 225; LRO, Tarleton Papers, Hq 920 TAR 5(11) and (12).
- 46 Muir, *op. cit.* p. 225; but cf. J. A. Picton, *Memorials of Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1873), I, pp. 259-62.
- 47 *Poll Book and Addresses*, 1790, II, pp. 10-15; *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, 21.6.1790, 28.6.1790; for another interpretation, see Picton, *op. cit.* I, p. 262.
- 48 Liverpool University Library, Rathbone Papers, II. i. 162; LRO, Tarleton Papers, 920 TAR 4/44; LRO, Minutes of the Common Council, 7.12.1792, 31.12.1792; Sellers, *op. cit.* pp. 51-2.
- 49 LRO, Hq 920 TAR 37, 'Hasty Sketch of Colonel Tarleton's Speech'; Hq 920 TAR 10c, letter to C. Tarleton, 6.12.1792. For Tarleton in Paris in 1791, see L. G. Mitchell, *Fox and the disintegration of the Whig party, 1782-94* (1971), p. 168.
- 50 *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, 31.12.1792 (cf. E. P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (1968), pp. 112-14); LRO 920 TAR 4/65.
- 51 For details of their activities against the East India Company monopoly, religious tests, and the slave trade, see Sellers, *op. cit.* pp. 50-1; Sanderson, *op. cit.* pp. 217-18.
- 52 R. I. and S. Wilberforce, *The correspondence of William Wilberforce* (1840), I, pp. 95-9, letter from Dr James Currie, 23.4.1793.
- 53 LRO, 920 TAR 74, 3.2.1795.
- 54 *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, 9.2.1795.
- 55 LRO, Minutes of the Common Council, 7.11.1795, 28.11.1795; *Williamson's Liverpool Advertiser*, 16.11.1795, 23.11.1795, 30.11.1795; *Gore's General Advertiser*, 19.11.1795.
- 56 *Poll Book and Addresses*, 1796, pp. 16, 19.
- 57 LRO, Mayer Papers (uncatalogued), vol. 2, p. 9.
- 58 John Tarleton, a tight-fisted, hard-working businessman and citizen, provided a contrast with his brother, Banastre, an unreliable politician and M.P. but talented orator, who mirrored his one-time leader, Fox, in public virtues and private vices (for instance taking over Mrs Perdita Robinson from the Prince of Wales); on John as a Liverpool delegate, see F. E. Sanderson, 'The Liverpool delegates and Sir William Dolben's bill', *THSLC*, 124 (1973), pp. 62-3; and as M.P. for Seaford. LRO Mayer Papers, vol. 2, p. 22.
- 59 Cf. Sellers, *op. cit.* p. 55.
- 60 *Liverpool Guide* (1801 edition), pp. 130-1.
- 61 For Birch and the election see *ibid.*, p. 56.
- 62 *Poll Book and Addresses*, Wright and Cruikshank, pp. vi et seq.; *ibid.*, 1812, p. vi. For fuller descriptions of this election, see Sellers, *op. cit.* pp. 56-8; Sanderson, *op. cit.* (1976), pp. 221-3. Roscoe's backers, mainly old-fashioned Liverpool Whigs, included a number of freemen of the African Company, LRO 920 ROS 3873. There is nothing in the Roscoe Papers to suggest that Roscoe himself thought that abolition was a major factor in 1806; and Lord Holland's congratulations significantly referred to the religious issue but not to abolition, LRO 920 ROS 2090.
- 63 Sanderson, *op. cit.* (1976), pp. 226-7.

F. E. SANDERSON RESEARCH NOTES

Frank Sanderson had been researching for several years on the political and economic aspects of the later Liverpool slave trade when he became seriously ill in 1975; he died in late 1976. His publications included an important guide to sources for the history of the Liverpool trade, *THSLC*, 124 (1973). His research notes have been deposited in Liverpool University Library and are available to bona-fide researchers. They refer to many archive sources, mainly in Liverpool and London; and include material assembled on a large number of Liverpool shipping and trading families.

