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Henry Hunt: The "orator" of the radical agitation in England, 1815-1819

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HENRY HUNT: THE "ORATOR" OF THE RADICAL AGITATION
IN ENGLAND, 1815-1819

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of History
and the
Faculty of The Graduate College
University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
William S. Nelson
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Accepted for the faculty of The Graduate College of the University of Nebraska at Omaha in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

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June, 1969

William S. Nelson
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CHAPTER I

HENRY HUNT AND THE MOVEMENT FOR RADICAL REFORM IN POST-WATERLOO ENGLAND

The Battle of Waterloo which marked the end of England's monumental struggle with revolutionary and Imperial France ushered in a series of critical domestic crises, along with the long-sought peace. The brilliant accomplishments of the Duke of Wellington and the British Squares had not sufficed to stifle the long-smoldering desire for reform within the island. The movement for reform, begun in the 1780's, and at first nourished and then terribly weakened by the French Revolution, had been a victim of both the fear of revolutionary action and the need to crush Napoleon's ambitions. As a result, the cause of Parliamentary Reform remained largely dormant for nearly three decades, yet needed, after 1815, only the fertile soil of worsening economic and political conditions to burst forth anew.

By late 1815 the economic distress which often follows a victorious war was becoming apparent. The Corn Law of 1815 did not keep a bountiful harvest from forcing prices down. The price of a quarter of wheat fell from
7s. 9d. in March, 1815, to 53s. 6d. by January, 1816. 1

The landlords began to complain loudly, and their complaints were usually well-heeded in Parliament, especially as British exports were already declining in the face of continental resurgence. The absence of a demand for war goods caused distress in both the iron mining areas and in the foundries. Likewise, wholesale demobilization of sailors and soldiers had a depressing effect on wages and employment. As a result, British manufacturers and the laboring classes both joined the landlords and farmers in demanding a change in government policies and a lessening of the burden of taxation.

The February 12, 1816, budget introduced by the Tories ignored the demands. Military commitments made a real cut in the budget untenable; therefore it was felt that the hated "wartime" income tax could not be abolished although the rate was to be dropped from 10% to 5%.

Violent reaction against continuing the income tax flared throughout the country. Public meetings were called in many localities and the House of Commons was swamped with petitions to end the tax. The Government

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was defeated not only on the income tax, but also on continuance of the malt tax. To make even a makeshift budget, the Government was forced to negotiate a loan of £11,500,000 from the Bank of England.

The Whig Opposition, however, was too weak to carry a vote of censure in spite of the support it enjoyed on the tax issue. Neither political party had a wide-spread, popular appeal. The deepening economic distress of the 1816 summer, largely the result of the bad weather, caused a wave of lower class discontent which created a severe domestic crisis for England.

The expectation of a bad harvest caused grain prices to rise to 82s. 1d. per quarter by August, 1816, and to 103s. in December. Landlords and farmers were now happy but both rural and town labor joined in common cause against dear bread. To compound the difficulties, the higher food prices were accompanied by lowered wages and high unemployment. Sporadic rioting and machine-breaking, commonly called Luddism, broke out, first among the rural poor, then in the manufacturing districts. In the face of such terrorism by the lower classes, the landed gentry and the manufacturer tended to forget their recent differences with the Tory government and the aristocrats. The result was that the laborers, both

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Ibid., p. 9.
industrial and agricultural, tended to look upon
Parliament as a tool of the idle rich, and the stage
was set for class warfare in England. In this situ-
ation, the workers were convinced that their salvation
lay in a reformed parliament. Largely unfranchised,
they felt that mass public meetings provided the only
effective way for venting their feelings. Such meetings
gave rise to a class of demagogic, emotional public
speakers. The most popular of these speakers was Henry
Hunt, known as Orator Hunt.

What manner of man was this gentleman-farmer who
became an important voice for Radical reform in the years
between 1815 and 1819? Henry Hunt was born November 6,
1773, at Widdington Farm, in the parish of Upavon, in
Wiltshire. Of solid yeoman farmer stock, Hunt traced
his descent to an attendant of William the Conqueror.
His great, great grandfather, Colonel Thomas Hunt, had
been jailed and suffered confiscation of his estates by
Cromwell. Commenting on Charles II's refusal to return
the estates, Hunt wrote in his Memoirs: "Put not your
faith in Princes."3 His father, a reasonably successful
farmer, had sent Henry to several schools, and at each,
the youngster had disciplinary problems because he

3Henry Hunt, Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq.
hereafter as Memoirs.
disliked accepting the announced rules. In his Memoirs Hunt chronicled his experiences and wrote that the punishment he received would have broken any spirit but his. 4

In his adult years Hunt venerated the memory of his father and mother. Of his mother he wrote that she was a "gentle, virtuous, amiable, charitable, and truly pious Christian," and he said that his father was "an intelligent, industrious, strictly honest, honourable, high-spirited Englishman." 5 The death of his mother, when he was sixteen, Hunt described as the most important event of his life, while he called the death of his father in 1797 "a great misfortune" and eulogized him as "the best of fathers." 6 Yet such respect did not keep young Hunt from exhibiting his quarrelsome nature. His father's advice that he go into the church irritated him and he resented the older man's criticism of his propensity for rich living. After one serious quarrel, Henry left home briefly and very nearly went to sea aboard a slave trader. 7 His father also unsuccessfully opposed Hunt's marriage to an innkeeper's daughter. The marriage, which Hunt maintained was marvelously compatible until a separation in 1802 after he became

4Ibid., p. 70.  
5Ibid., p. 57.  
6Ibid., p. 393.  
7Ibid., pp. 160-68.
charmed by another woman, resulted in the birth of two sons and a daughter. In all his writings, Hunt said not a single ill word of his wife. In fact, he always shouldered full blame for the separation.

Hunt became, according to his own testimony, a working farmer who took great pride in his ability to perform the skills requisite in farming. He wrote much in his *Memoirs* of his prodigious feats, and his farming success is indicated by the property he listed as available in case of an invasion in 1801: 1600 sacks of wheat, 1500 quarters of barley, 400 quarters of oats, 250 tons of hay, 30 cart-horses, 10 oxen, 20 cows, 4200 sheep, and 50 pigs. Hunt proudly claimed he never wanted for money, and his extensive holdings were indicated by fellow Radical James Wroe, who wrote in 1819 that Hunt was a free-holder in Somersetshire and Wiltshire, a housekeeper at Hampshire, a Liveryman of London, and that he often lived and paid taxes in Westminster. While in prison in 1822, Hunt was not only the proprietor of a Roasted Corn Beverage business in London but also claimed to be Lord of the Manor of

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9 *Peterloo Massacre* (Manchester, England: James Wroe, 1819), No. 6, p. 195.
Glastonbury.\textsuperscript{10} As a prosperous farmer in the years preceding Waterloo, he had lived in Wiltshire in the summer and fall and had taken his winters in Bath.\textsuperscript{11}

In 1800 Hunt was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment for issuing an illegal challenge to a duel. He served his term in King's Bench Prison and described his "apartment" as "a very spacious room, nicely furnished, with a neat bureau bedstead."\textsuperscript{12} Hunt enjoyed the catered meals, and he had much freedom of movement since he had given a £5000 bond not to escape. He mixed with all types of men and wrote, "... I should never have taken the lead (such a lead!) in the political affairs of my country ... but for the sentence of the Court of King's Bench."\textsuperscript{13} It was here, Hunt continued in self-appraisal, "I began not only to think, but to act, for myself."\textsuperscript{14}

E. P. Thompson claims that Hunt's first contact with Jacobin ideas was when he visited Colonel James Despard in the Tower where Despard was awaiting execution for treason.\textsuperscript{15} However, while he admitted visiting

\textsuperscript{10}Hunt's Correspondence (London: W. Molineux and T. Dolby, n.d.), January 12, 1822. Cited hereafter as Correspondence.
\textsuperscript{11}Memoirs, II, 428. \textsuperscript{12}Ibid., I, 445.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 514. \textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 543.
Despard, Hunt credited a barrister, Henry Clifford, for making him politically aware while at King's Bench. Hunt's contact with Clifford came through a Mr. Waddington. Hunt was suspicious because Waddington was a "democrat," but he was a good prison host, and Hunt spent many hours in discussion with Waddington and Clifford.

Clifford talked to the somewhat unsophisticated farmer, Hunt, about "rational Liberty, of freedom as the natural rights of man, and as the law of God and nature." Cautioning Hunt to be tolerant and not to mix religion and politics, Clifford told him that the "English Constitution . . . in its purity, was quite good enough for Englishmen." Hunt liked what he heard and wrote:

In this opinion I then concurred with him, and from this opinion I have never once in my life swerved, up to this hour. A government of Kings, Lords, and Commons, so that the latter are fairly chosen by all the Commons, would secure to us the full enjoyment of rational liberty. I am for that liberty which is secured and protected by the government of the laws, and not by the government of the sword. But those laws must be such as are made by the whole Commons, the whole people of England, and not the arbitrary laws that are made by the few for the government of the whole; not the laws that are made by the few, for the partial and unjust benefit of the few, at the expense and cost of the whole.

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16 Hunt called the Despard plot a "pop-gun plot" and wrote that Despard was "in no degree guilty." Memoirs, II, 86 and 91.
17 Ibid., I, 448. 18 Ibid., p. 505.
19 Ibid.
Clifford proved to Hunt's satisfaction that attorneys were tricksters and deceivers and that clergymen were the embodiment of cant and hypocrisy. He instilled in Hunt

a deep-rooted never-ceasing antipathy to that tyranny which is perpetrated under the disguise, under the false colour, the mere forms of law and justice, and sanctioned by the hypocritical mummeries of superstition, instead of real religion.20

Clifford, a brother-in-law of Hunt's fellow Radical, Sir Charles Wolseley,21 took Hunt to Sunday parties at Horne Tooke's home in Wimbledon. Hunt, writing of the event much later, claimed that he had had little desire to attend because he considered Tooke "a violent Jacobin," and he was afraid he would meet Sir Francis Burdett, whom Hunt claimed to have considered "a political madman." Hunt also met Francis Place, "an avowed republican by profession."22 In his Memoirs twenty years later Hunt wrote:

The real fact was that I was afraid to trust myself... I had no wish to become a politician, and as I found that the principles of liberty, which Mr. Clifford inculcated, had made a considerable impression upon my mind,

20Ibid., p. 500.

21Hunt claimed that both Wolseley and he were political disciples of Clifford.

22Ibid., pp. 501-03. Tooke, a proponent of householder suffrage, sat for Old Sarum. He was excluded from Commons in 1801 for having once taken priestly orders.
I was afraid to encourage too far my natural propensity to resist injustice, oppression, and tyranny. I did not wish to fan the flame... in my breast.23

By 1805 Hunt was a self-professed politician who studied politics and absorbed many ideas expressed in William Cobbett's Political Register.24 Both G. D. H. Cole and E. P. Thompson agree that Hunt was first receiving national notice in 1806 and 1807,25 and for the next fifteen years the five most articulate leaders of Radicalism were Sir Francis Burdett, William Cobbett, Major John Cartwright, Francis Place, and Henry Hunt. Cobbett's was "the most insistent journalistic voice" while Hunt possessed the "most compelling voice on the hustings."26 These two, along with old Major Cartwright, the venerated "Father of Reform," tended to occupy the middle ground between the conspirators on one hand and the cautious constitutionalists on the other.27

23 Ibid., p. 501.  
24 Ibid., II, 178.


26 Thompson, p. 603.

who spent much time in London, the seat of Radicalism, during these years, practiced the art of mass oratory in opposition to the government. Showing contempt for the Whigs and exposing alleged corruption by the Tories, he described the virtues of political liberty and strongly supported parliamentary reform.

Hunt had given his first public speech in 1797 urging the members of his troop to agree to serve outside the county in case of invasion. When the vote went against him, he resigned. In 1807 Hunt resisted when he was attacked while speaking at a Bristol election meeting, and he wrote, "... I was no chicken." By 1808 Cobbett was warning others away from Hunt and in an April 10, 1808, letter to his agent, John Wright, Cobbett cautioned: "... he rides about the country with a whore, the wife of another man, ... ."

On May 17, 1809, Hunt chaired the first non-elective public meeting ever held in Wiltshire. The purpose was to thank Colonel Wardle for his efforts in effecting the Duke of York's resignation as Commander-in-chief, and the meeting was naturally obnoxious to the government and its supporters.

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28Memoirs, I, 342.  
29Memoirs, II, 239.  
30Cole, p. 183.  
31Memoirs, II, 369.
Hunt was imprisoned for three months in King's Bench prison for assault in 1810.\(^{32}\) This was at the same time Burdett was in the Tower, and Cobbett had been sentenced to a term in Newgate. The following year, Hunt, apparently very little subdued, was living at Rowfant, thirty miles west of London. In March, 1811, Hunt petitioned for and chaired a meeting at Wells which about 5000 attended. Noting that resolutions were carried to petition the Prince Regent for reform of Parliament and abolition of sinecures, Hunt wrote that he prevailed despite the efforts of Whig and Tory gentry and the "mongrel curs" of "black cormorants."\(^{33}\) During this period Hunt was a member of the Bath and West of England Agricultural Society, which he labelled the "most respectable society of agricultural asses in the kingdom."\(^{34}\)

Keeping a promise which he had made in 1807, Hunt stood for election from Bristol in 1812. In this riotous affair, in which troops were summoned to maintain order, Hunt had Cobbett's support, but he ran a poor fourth in a field of four and yet had the gall to claim that the troops were there to prevent his election. Casting all

\(^{32}\)Hunt's original sojourn in King's Bench Prison had been lengthened by three months. The charge was assault.

\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 448.

\(^{34}\)Ibid., p. 470. Hunt was later expelled for non-payment of dues. He considered it unjust.
about him, the incipient Orator also blamed the corrupt merchants, the clergy, the corporation, both parties and their over-spending, and the absence of vote by ballot. Hunt nonetheless claimed that he had won his "grand object": banishing any reputation for sincerity and purity that the Whigs had possessed.  

After 1812, Hunt and the other Radicals were relatively inactive until Napoleon's defeat, economic distress, and the proposed Corn Bill galvanized them into action. In 1815, Hunt caused a Wiltshire meeting to be called at Salisbury where he moved to petition the House of Commons against the Corn Bill. Cobbett seconded it, the petition carried, and 21,000 signatures were gathered. Later the same year, Hunt led a strong agitation in Bristol in which cordwainers and glass-makers played a prominent role.  

To Hunt, Napoleon was the greatest contemporary political figure, and when he heard of Napoleon's return to Paris from Elba, Hunt lit up his Middleton Cottage from top to bottom so that "every pane of glass could boast a light." The Orator also spoke at Westminster

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35 Memoirs, III, 17. Hunt claimed that his hair had turned gray during this three week election. Ibid., p. 40.

36 Ibid., pp. 236-43.

37 Thompson, pp. 610-11.
following Napoleon's return favoring a petition to keep England out of any renewal of war with France, and Hunt reported that he pleased the crowd so much that they drew his carriage to his inn, then, on his request went home peacefully. 38

From the story related by Hunt in Volume III of his Memoirs, it appears that he was a victim of a rather severe stroke in late July, 1815. An attending physician bled him regularly for what he diagnosed as high blood pressure and ordered Hunt to a strict regimen. Both Hunt and the doctor despaired for his life, and the patient lost the use of his arms and legs temporarily, and for some time he had very little sight or speech. 39 However, by February, 1816, Hunt had recovered enough to speak at Westminster against sinecures, pensions, and Whigs, 40 and he was now ready to embark into what E. F. Thompson calls "the heroic age of popular Radicalism." 41 For the next four years Hunt, in his own inimitable, demagogic way, roused his unenfranchised listeners to a fine emotional pitch. With his white hat,

38Memoirs, III, 256-60.
39Ibid., pp. 268-75.
41Thompson, p. 603.
the badge of liberty, firmly upon his head, this
"Champion of Liberty" emotionally exposed corruption,
sinecures, boroughmongering, fund-holding, taxes, fiscal
abuses, venal landowners, and clerical pluralism. His
nostrum was simple and constant: Universal Suffrage,
Vote by Ballot, and a Reformed Parliament.

A new urban radicalism was on the rise, and two of
the primary shapers were Cobbett and Hunt, both of whom,
ironically, had been working farmers. Hunt, especially,
was from the old Wilkesite school: the workers should be
led by gentlemen who had the proper manners and education.
Hunt's activities caused a Tory periodical to suggest that
Titus Oates was the first Roi de Halles in England, then
Dr. Sacheverel, then John Wilkes, then Lord George Gordon,
and finally Henry Hunt.

Long after he had developed a severe distaste for
Hunt, fellow Radical Samuel Bamford described the Orator
as a mesmerizing physical specimen who was over six feet
tall, "extremely well-formed," with firm and neat legs.
Bamford described Hunt as a man who was gentlemanly in
manner and dress and who wore no wig to cover his moderate
amount of gray hair. Hunt had regular features that had
an "agreeable expression," even though his lips were

\[42\text{Ibid.}\]
\[43\text{Ibid., p. 623.}\]
\[44\text{The Quarterly Review, XVI, No. 32 (1817), p. 532.}\]
delicate and receding and his blue or light gray eyes were neither very clear nor quick. When speaking his eyes became protruding, and when he was furious, they became "blood-streaked and almost started from their sockets." His kind smile curled to scorn or curse, his voice would bellow as his face became swollen and flushed, and "his griped hand beat as if it were to pulverise; . . . ."45

This, then, was the forty-two year old farmer turned reformer who received a letter from a complete stranger, Arthur Thistlewood, September 1, 1816. The letter was an invitation to attend and speak at a proposed rally to be held at Spa Fields in November. Hunt did not reply to the letter but he did meet with Thistlewood and Dr. James Watson November 13. Hunt warned them that their proposed resolutions were treasonous and too Spencean and insisted that the first priority should go to a Reformed Parliament. When Hunt was sure that Thistlewood had agreed to enough changes to make the resolution legal, he accepted the invitation.46


46Memoirs, III, 327-33. The Spencean Society, named after Thomas Spence, was a rather harmless group of radicals who considered the private ownership of land to be un-Christian. The Society never had more than fifty members. The Dictionary of National Biography, XX, 921. Cited hereafter as DNB.
Hunt was the only political figure who appeared; both Cobbett and Burdett considered this November 15, 1816, Spa Fields meeting too dangerous to attend. After all, it was to be the first unlimited demonstration of Radicals since 1795, and whispers that the government would consider any participation treasonous were abroad in the city.

Hunt saw more people at Spa Fields than he had ever seen before. He was surrounded by strangers, and he was shocked when a red, white, and green flag was raised. Since the organizers had not even erected a hustings, Hunt was forced to speak from a window. He spoke for an hour on the cost of the Civil List, the expense of the army, the Royal Family allowance, the secret service, and the clergy. After reading a list of sinecurists and placentmen, both Whig and Tory, Hunt turned to the subject of taxes:

What was the cause of the want of employment? Taxation. What was the cause of taxation? Corruption. It was corruption that had enabled the borough-mongers to wage that bloody war which had for its first object the destruction of the liberties of all countries but primarily our own. . . . Everything that concerned their subsistence was taxed. Was not their loaf taxed? was not their beer taxed? was not everything they ate, drank, wore, and even said, taxed? They taxes were imposed by the authority of a borough-mongering faction who thought of nothing but oppressing the people, and subsisting on the plunder wrung from their miseries.

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47 Thompson, p. 633. 48 Memoirs, III, 335-43.
49 Thompson, pp. 603-04. Quoted from Examiner (Manchester), November 17, 1816.
He then warned of the folly of physical force and suggested that such force was not only unworthy of Englishmen striving for Reform, but also foolish, because the only cure, according to Hunt, was Parliamentary Reform. After Hunt's resolutions and the petition to the Prince Regent carried, the rapturous crowd drew him in his carriage to the Black Lion Inn, Water-lane. This was the first successful attempt to petition for universal suffrage, and Hunt later wrote: "I had the honour, and I shall ever feel pride in the reflection, of being the first man who publicly proposed at a meeting of the reformers this measure."

Sir Francis Burdett had been named by the huge crowd to present the petition to the Prince Regent, but Burdett refused and Hunt willingly took up the task. After he tried twice and both times was turned away, a second meeting was called at Spa Fields to protest the actions of the Regent in refusing the petition.

This was the meeting from which some broke away to create the famous December 2, 1816, riot. The Annual Register, which wrongly claimed that the November 15 meeting had been "chiefly at the instigation of Mr. Henry Hunt," reported that the riots had no connection with the

50 Memoirs, III, 335-43.
51 Memoirs, I, viii.
political meeting. 52 Hunt himself reported that he was accosted on the way to the meeting and urged to join an attack on the Tower. Hunt refused and continued to the meeting, where, he reported, "The cheers ... were almost insupportable; I never heard such before." 53 Among the resolutions Hunt urged was one stating the necessity of peaceful conduct, while another called for the reform of parliament based on universal suffrage, annual parliaments, and vote by ballot. After the resolutions carried, Hunt urged the crowd to go home and not join in the disturbances, and, according to him, they followed his advice. 54 Hunt was convinced that the riots were the work of the spy, Castle, 55 and he considered them a plot "for the purpose of SPILLING MY BLOOD, ... ." 56 Hunt wrote later that he had been convinced Castle was a spy before the December 2 meeting. Since most authorities agree that the rioters had left the field before Hunt's arrival, it is difficult to excuse this assessment of Hunt's role by Lord Sidmouth's

52 Annual Register, Chronicle, LVIII (1816), pp. 190-91.


55 Hunt called him Castles and reported a toast offered by him after the November meeting asking that kings be strangled with the guts of the last priest. Hunt said that he considered the toast not only brutal but also unoriginal, "I remonstrated against such blackguardism ... ." Ibid., p. 344.

56 Ibid., p. 366.
biographer: "... certainly no one can doubt his patent inadequacy to control or even direct the forces he worked so hard to create."57 This statement ignores all evidence that meetings chaired by Hunt were generally peaceful.

Thistlewood, Watson, and two others were jailed on charges of high treason. Hunt claimed that his testimony about Castle caused Watson's acquittal, and the evidence was so inconclusive that the others were not even tried. When the four were released, Hunt chaired a dinner to celebrate.58 Hunt was never formally charged with complicity in the riots.

On December 26, 1816, Hunt was the main speaker at a Bristol public meeting where he was forced to speak from his gig because the magistrates had forbade the erection of hustings. Troops were called out, but, according to Hunt, the 10,000 there "unanimously" petitioned for Annual Parliaments, Universal Suffrage, and Vote by Ballot.59

As a result of the Spa Fields meetings, public meetings were held in towns throughout England to petition for Reform, and Major Cartwright was instrumental


59 Ibid., pp. 379-99. A similar public meeting heard Hunt in Bath, the first public meeting ever held in that city. Ibid., pp. 401-09.
in the formation of Hampden Clubs in the North of England whose purpose was to petition for householder suffrage. At a Delegate Assembly which was held in London January 23, Hunt, a delegate from Bristol, urged Cobbett to continue his recent support of manhood suffrage. According to Hunt's version, "... Mr. Cobbett turned to me and said very earnestly, 'What! do you support the ballot too?' I answered, 'Yes, most certainly, to its fullest extent.'"60 After the Hampden delegates swung to his way of thinking and accepted universal suffrage, Hunt, apparently recognizing the national unrest, successfully urged that the delegates abandon daily meetings that were "not only useless but a dangerous proceeding."61

Sir Francis Burdett and Lord Thomas Cochrane, both active Radicals and Members of Parliament, each refused to present the Hampden Club petitions calling for universal suffrage. Hunt attempted to convince Cobbett that "desperate cases require desperate remedies" and urged that he be allowed to raise a crowd of 10,000 to besiege Cochrane at home and convince him to present the petitions.62 This happened on January 28, 1817, the day Parliament opened, and Samuel Bamford described the scene:

60 Ibid., p. 421. 61 Ibid., p. 422. 62 Ibid., p. 424.
We were crowded around, and accompanied by a great multitude, which at intervals rent the air with shouts. Now it was that I beheld Hunt in his element. He unrolled the petition, which was many yards in length, and it was carried on the heads of the crowd perfectly unharmed. He seemed to know almost every man of them, and his confidence in, and entire mastery over them, made him quite at ease. A louder huzza than usual was music to him; and when the questions were asked eagerly, "Who is he?" "What are they about?" and the reply was "Hunt! Hunt! huzza!" his gratification was expressed by a stern smile. He might be likened to the genius of commotion, calling forth its elements, and controlling them at will.  

When Cochrane buckled to this show of strength and agreed to present the largest petition, the one from Bristol, he was carried in his chair and deposited at the door of Commons. Hunt wrote that he then successfully urged the crowd to go home peacefully.  

This was the same day that the Prince Regent was hissed on the way to Parliament, and on his return a window in his carriage was shattered. Was it a bullet; or two bullets? Was it a pebble? Hunt was convinced it was a potato thrown by "Mr. John Castles" which the Regent had "miraculously" escaped. Lord Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, was sure it was an attack on the Regent's life and considered England to be on the brink of revolt. Members of Parliament became somewhat panicky and quickly responded to the Government request for action. By

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63 Bamford, II, 22.  
64 Memoirs, III, 428-29.  
65 Ibid., p. 462.  
66 Ziegler, p. 347.
March 1, the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act was law and by March 25, the Lords had passed the last of the repressive bills, the Seditious Meetings Bill.67

Sidmouth now directed what he considered to be a counter-revolutionary program. No more public meetings were held, the Hampden Clubs either broke up or resorted to secret meetings, and Cobbett fled the country to admire in safety the customs in America. Bamford claimed that Hunt was "still somewhat turbulent" but was powerless with Cobbett gone.68 By the end of 1817 Hunt thought that the "prospect was most gloomy" with the poor distressed by much unemployment in an economy in which "provisions were dear." Hunt described the time as one of a general trade depression, a general feeling of disgust toward the government, a low moral tone, and general wretchedness. Hunt believed that every honest man was "injured and insulted" by the suspension of habeas corpus, and he complained that the poor rate was four times that of 1797, forgery was rampant, and a standing army of 133,539 was in the land.69

67 While the Parliament was hurrying this legislation, Hunt chaired a third Spa Fields meeting in February, 1817. The field was surrounded by troops, a small crowd was in attendance, a few arrests were made, and calm prevailed. Major Cartwright later told Hunt that Castlereagh had wanted to break up the meeting with military force. Memoirs, III, 443.

68 Bamford, II, 44. 69 Memoirs, III, 513.
In 1818, Hunt was active in two Westminster elections. His goal in both was to embarrass Sir Francis Burdett, who he thought had been less than constant in the Radical efforts of 1816 and 1817. In the first election Hunt claimed success when Burdett received 5239 votes to the Whig Romilly's 5538. In November Romilly killed himself, and Hunt claimed his activities caused the defeat of the Burdettites in the ensuing election. Hunt also took charge of Cobbett's unsuccessful campaign in Coventry the same year. Cobbett, of course, was still in the United States and would not return until November 20, 1819.

Although Hunt rather accurately considered the 1817 Derbyshire and Nottingham riots "contemptible" and "diabolical machinations of the villain, Oliver, the spy," he voluntarily went to the provinces to give the defendants what help he could at their trial. Most Radicals tried to disassociate themselves from these events, but Cobbett, safely in America, approved this attempt by Hunt to expose the government spy system.

Hunt made his first Lancashire public appearance in Manchester, January 18, 1819, when he presided over a

\[\text{\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., pp. 541-42. Hunt received eighty-four votes.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{71} Cole, p. 224.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{72} Memoirs, III, 492-96.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{73} Cole, p. 222.}\]
meeting of some 8000 operatives at St. Peter's Field. Among the signs noticed by the reporter for the Annual Register were "Hunt and Liberty," "Rights of Man," "Universal Suffrage," and "No Corn Laws." Bands were present, and Hunt spoke confidently, almost threateningly, despite the fact that soldiers were present. Hunt said that soldiers were always around when he spoke, and he expected that the soldiers would join the people like brothers when the crucial time arrived. At this meeting, a change in strategy took place as the Radicals decided that they would no longer petition an unreformed Commons, instead a Remonstrance to the Prince Regent was voted. The meeting disbanded peacefully.

Some 10,000 heard Hunt speak at Smithfield July 21. A cautious Hunt not only warned the crowd


75 Annual Register, General History, LXI (1819), p. 103.

76 Read, p. 106.

77 When Lord Sidmouth refused to present the petition to the Regent, Hunt wrote him that another way would be found to make the plight of the people known. Read, p. 108.

78 Hunt claimed that 70,000 were there, and 6,000 constables. Memoirs, III, 595-96.
against disorder but also warned them away from electing a "legislatorial attorney" as Birmingham had recently chosen Sir Charles Wolseley. Hunt later claimed that the Government had wanted a riot, but he prevented it.79

In an August 5 letter "To the Reformers of Manchester and Its Neighbourhood," Hunt accepted an invitation to speak at St. Peter's Field August 9. In the letter he noted that the proposed meeting was legal and that no existing law authorized the magistrates to break up such a meeting. Yet Hunt warned that if force were used, "the Reformers will . . . know what they have to trust to, . . . ."80 The date of this letter, August 5, lends credibility to Hunt's claim that he had no knowledge that the magistrates had declared the first meeting illegal. Hunt wrote he did not know of the cancellation of the August 9 meeting and the setting of the August 16 date until he was within ten miles of Manchester at Stockport. He claimed that his first inclination, upon hearing of the change in plans, was to refuse to chair the August 16 meeting and return to Hampshire, but Joseph Johnson "could not have been more

79 Ibid., p. 593 and pp. 596-97.
anxious to detain me. He begged, he prayed, he implored . . . ," and Hunt decided to stay to promote "tranquility and good order."81

The Radical Orator, who received a tumultuous welcome in Manchester August 9, spent the week being waited upon by local Radicals and lending advice on how to conduct what promised to be a huge meeting, perhaps the largest ever held in England. There is no evidence that Hunt observed the lower classes drilling for the march to St. Peter's, and on Friday, August 13, Hunt had time to sit while Tuke, a portrait painter, touched up his picture.82 Hunt was concerned lest violence break out at the meeting; he told Manchester weaver Samuel Bamford that the people should be "armed only with a self-approving conscience" and that if legal means were followed "all would be well on our side."83

Saturday, when Hunt went to the New Bailey to surrender to any possible charges, he was told there were none. Hunt wrote later that he was satisfied that he had done all possible to guarantee a peaceful meeting.84

81Memoirs, III, 603-05. 82Bamford, II, 144-45.
83Ibid., pp. 145-46.
84Donald Read's Peterloo: the "Massacre" and Its Background is the best work available on the conditions leading to the terrible events of August 16, 1819. Read absolves the Ministers, including Lord Sidmouth, of planning the attack. He says that the bloodshed exemplified a type of class war and that the Manchester Magistrates were terrified by Hunt's popularity. P. 122.
A few years later Hunt wrote, "Monday arrived, and a beautiful morning it was .... I beheld the people, men, women, and children, accompanied by flags and bands of music, cheerfully passing along towards the place of meeting." Hunt was astonished by the size of the crowd at St. Peter's Field, estimated at 180,000 to 200,000. Hunt arrived about 1:15 p.m., over an hour late, was rapturously greeted, and went directly to the hustings. Hunt wrote, "I had scarcely uttered two sentences" when the Yeomanry galloped to the edge of the field. He then "caused three cheers to be given," but the troops charged in "sabring right and left, . . . sparing neither age, sex, nor rank." Hunt seemed to show at his best during this crisis, and when he was approached by a sword-brandishing officer, he asked the people for tranquility and said he "would readily surrender to any civil officer showing his warrant." Within ten minutes the field was

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86 Ibid., p. 613. Read and Halévy suggest that about 60,000 attended, but The Quarterly Review estimated the crowd at between 100,000 and 130,000.
88 Ziegler dissents from this point of view. He says that the crowd was orderly, but "Henry Hunt was neither sober nor decorous." P. 372. Ziegler's statement has more basis in bias than in evidence.
89 Annual Register, General History, LXI (1819), p. 106.
cleared except for the dead, the wounded, and "victorious" soldiers, and Hunt and several others were in custody marching to New Bailey Prison.

Before the week was out the sobriquet, Peterloo Massacre, was being used in describing the incident, and the countryside was in a state of severe agitation. William Wilberforce expected "something nearer to civil war than this land has exhibited since 1646."90 Rumors were rampant and soldiers were everywhere. Parliament was galvanized into action, the famous Six Acts were passed before the end of the year, and the golden age of Radicalism had been irrevocably tarnished by the frightening violence. Hunt always thought that the Peterloo action was a "diabolical, atrocious conspiracy" and wrote in his Memoirs:

... this was done in cold blood, ... without the slightest provocation ... , and without one act of resistance, without ONE STONE, ONE STICK, or ONE FINGER having been raised even to resist, much less provoke, such a bloodthirsty, such a cowardly, wanton, cruel, and murderous act.

Hunt and the other arrested Radicals received heroes' welcomes when they got out on bail, and on all sides they heard the cheer, "Hunt and Liberty." On September 13, Hunt received the greatest welcome London

had ever given anyone as he was greeted by a crowd estimated to have been over 300,000 people.\textsuperscript{91}

At Hunt's request, the trial of the arrested Radicals was moved to York where it began on March 16, 1820. Among the eight charges were conspiring to disturb the peace, conspiring to excite discontent and disaffection, and conspiring to arouse hatred and contempt of the government and the constitution. They were also charged with unlawful assembly, but the charge of high treason was dropped. Popular interest was high, the courtroom was always crowded, and the defendants tried to exemplify model subjects.\textsuperscript{92} During the ten day trial, Hunt at times became so impassioned in his own defense that tears rolled down his cheeks. In his charge to the jury, Mr. Justice Bayley narrowed the case to the fourth charge of "unlawful and seditious assembly for the purpose of exciting discontent."\textsuperscript{93} Five of the defendants were found not guilty, but Joseph Johnson, John Knight, Joseph Healy, Bamford, and Hunt were judged guilty on the one count.

\textsuperscript{91}MacCoby, p. 358.

\textsuperscript{92}Young Sam Bamford was surprised that only he had worn a white hat to court; even the Orator had abandoned his "badge of liberty" for more sedate headwear. Bamford, II, 224.

\textsuperscript{93}Read, p. 152.
On May 15 the others were sentenced to one year in prison, but Hunt, considered somewhat more responsible, was sentenced to two years and six months in Ilchester jail in Somerset. At the end of his term he was to be required to put up £1000 security for his good behavior for five years plus two sureties of £500 each. Hunt thought that it was a severe sentence and often complained about it to his associates.  

In the spring of 1820 the Radical forces were in disarray. Hunt had been convicted for his part in Peterloo, and Sir Charles Wolesley was imprisoned for "seditious words" in relation to his Birmingham "election" as a legislative attorney. Sir Francis Burdett was found guilty of "seditious libel" for his writings following the St. Peter's Field meeting, while Cobbett, who had returned from America, was being extremely cautious. The working class accepted the victory of the Government so calmly that it would appear that Henry Hunt and the other Radical leaders had had but a weak hold on the working class mind. A lessening of economic distress, the engrossing affair of Queen Caroline, and harsh government counter-measures had caused the lower class to betray a fickleness which

94 Bamford, II, 295 and 300.

95 MacCoby, p. 363. MacCoby wrote somewhat inaccurately that Hunt was found guilty of "conspiracy to overturn the state."
was disappointing to their embattled leaders. Radical Reform's moment of success had been postponed.
CHAPTER II

THE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HENRY HUNT

What were the personal characteristics that transformed Henry Hunt from a gentleman farmer into a leading spokesman of the Radicals? The motto on his family crest was "Persevere," yet he felt that a desire to recall and relive the past was a sign of weakness. Throughout his writings, Hunt's egotism and boastfulness are glaringly exhibited. Without embarrassment he wrote, "I was now the complete master of farming," and continued, "I had sown more acres... with corn in one day than any other man." Of his success in another field he claimed, "If any one could have brewed beer from malt and hops, to have made a profit from it, I could have done it. I brewed excellent beer, but I lost money by every brewing." Describing his enlistment in the Everly Troop of Yeomanry, Hunt wrote that he could learn more in one day than the "stupid, heavy fellows" could learn in a year, and that he had wanted to repel invasion while

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1 Correspondence, May 24, 1821.
2 Memoirs, II, 30.
3 Ibid., I, 180.
4 Ibid., II, 265.

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they were only interested in keeping the price of corn high.\textsuperscript{5} Happiness came to him when his birthday was widely celebrated, when bonfires were lighted to honor his release from prison,\textsuperscript{6} and when he was flooded with complimentary letters.\textsuperscript{7}

Honesty and sincerity were important to Hunt:
"... I have always found that ... honesty is the best policy ...,"\textsuperscript{8} and "... my errors have sprung from the head and not the heart."\textsuperscript{9} He claimed that he wanted to "promote the welfare and happiness of my fellow creatures by a bold, straight forward, public, open course," and added, "My safety has ... arisen from my political honesty."\textsuperscript{10} Hunt preached temperance in personal habits and claimed to have stopped taking part in "carousals and feasts" after he separated from his wife.\textsuperscript{11} Hunt considered the greatest moral and political sin to be drunkenness.\textsuperscript{12} In this, Hunt was within the Jacobin and Radical tradition as well as being on common ground with the Methodists. Hunt was proud of his

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., I, 197-222
\textsuperscript{6}Correspondence, June 10, 1822.
\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., July 14, 1822.
\textsuperscript{8}Memoirs, I, 45. \textsuperscript{9}Ibid., III, 93.
\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 100. \textsuperscript{11}Ibid., II, 83.
\textsuperscript{12}Correspondence, November 24, 1821.
financial success, both in farming and in the production of Hunt's Breakfast Powder. He saw no inconsistency in justifying the high prices he received for corn in 1801, and then, a few pages later, decrying the high cost of bread.\footnote{Correspondence, Final letter from prison (n.d.). While in Prison Hunt had forced an investigation into Ilchester Prison and the Chief Jailer, William Bridle. The Jailer was found guilty of malpractice and the prison was ordered razed.} Hunt wrote that he had plenty of money at all times and argued that he was no "careless squanderer" who forgot the poor.\footnote{Correspondence, October 9, 1821.} As a result, he deeply resented the public stories that he had been forced to borrow from the wealthy Radical, Sir Francis Burdett.\footnote{Ibid., II, 283-84.} Likewise, his frugality allowed him to complain about his expenses in Ilchester Prison, which he set at £1580, while incoming subscriptions totaled only about £900.\footnote{Ibid., p. 399.}

Hunt prided himself on his courage and never tired of reminding his readers that he was, indeed, the "brave and intrepid Henry Hunt."\footnote{Memoirs, I, 477-78 and 539.} He wrote in a tone of self-amazement that such a man as he could exist and devoted eight pages in his Memoirs to a description of how he had leaped into water to save a stag from the
hounds. Of the inconvenience of jail he commented, "I esteem it a trifle, light as air," and earlier: "I ask not—I want no mercy. I demand justice, and I do not want one jot of my sentence abated." Hunt honestly thought he had met the kind of obstacles in life that would, in the case of any other man, "overwhelmed and driven from the field of politics." Thus, he said, unlike Cobbett ". . . I will never fly my country, never desert my countrymen in the hour of peril." He assured his listeners in a speech at Spa Fields on November 15, 1816, that, if the "fateful day" came, "he would not be concealed behind a counter, or sheltering himself in the rear."

Hunt claimed the qualities of kindness and compassion along with that of courage. He wrote that he had a proverbial reputation for being a good master, that he was a friend to the poor, and that he always for aid to widows, orphans, the aged, and the infirm. Henry Andrews, for seven years Hunt's servant,

19 Correspondence, October 29, 1822.
20 Ibid., March 11, 1822.
21 Memoirs, II, 82. 22 Ibid., III, 472.
23 Thompson, p. 655. Quoting Examiner (Manchester), November 16, 1816.
24 Memoirs, I, 400.
testified at Hunt's York trial that he had never seen Hunt drunk, and that his master was known as "the poor man's friend." Hunt mentioned many instances when he resorted to violence to prevent cruelty to asses: "I gave him, as quick as lightning, a blow from my fist, ... and made him bite the dust;" or to oxen: he stripped and beat the man "blind;" or to ladies threatened with a knife: he hit the man and "laid him sprawling upon the pavement." Hunt claimed that such instances gave him a reputation as a violent man, but he said, nineteen out of twenty times he was violent for humanity or while protecting the weak and helpless against the rich or powerful. Hunt was often in court for assault, and his Memoirs have many tales of physical contests. Much of his time was taken up either suing or being sued, but Hunt considered the suits against him political harassment and wrote that the natural tendency of his disposition was always to avoid intentionally giving offense!

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27 After one such fight Hunt had a pillow made of 250 "hare's scuts" and sent the pillow to the victim, one Michael Hicks, "as a mark of contempt." Ibid., p. 427.

28 Ibid., I, 353. Later Hunt admitted that he had tended to be abusive when he was young. Ibid., II, 263.
the fact that jealousy often divided the Radicals, and
his claim that "I was never jealous of anyone myself,
and I had no suspicion that my friends were jealous
of me"²⁹ is not supported by the evidence.

Hunt's intemperance was reflected in his spoken
and written words. He was polemical in an age of polemics,
but the rhetoric in which he spoke was probably essential
to attract his franchiseless listeners.³⁰ While Hunt could
say of another, "I . . . heard with horror his beastly
epithets and dreadful imprecations,"³¹ the Orator was
capable of some interesting phrasings too. The Bristol
corporation was "a gang of little dirty toad-eaters,"³²
and the merchants and gentry of Bristol were the "most
selfish, the most corrupt, the most vulgar, the most
ignorant, the most illiberal, and the most time-serving
race . . . in Europe." Bristol men were "underhanded,
tricking, over-reaching, sharper-like [Who are] always
sleeping with one eye open."³³ In like fashion Hunt
characterized his opponents as monsters, mean, dastardly,

²⁹Ibid., III, 435.

³⁰Thompson, p. 625. At Spa Fields Hunt stayed
within "the usual limits of popular declamation." Annual
Register, Chronicle, LVIII (1816), p. 191.

³¹Memoirs, III, 626. ³²Ibid., p. 466.

³³Ibid., p. 41. He disagreed with the saying that
Bristol women were "proverbially ugly." Ibid., p. 42.
selfish, degenerated, detestable, cowardly, and base
scoundrels. At other times he wrote of "diabolical
acts of violence and malice," "despicable opponents," and
"cowardly wretches," while another opponent was a
"cavilling, quibbling, empty-headed, testy, old-womanish
chap" whose face "resembled a piece of cold, dirty,
honey-combed tripe" with eyes like "leaden bullets
stuck in clay." On the other hand, Hunt described
his supporters as fine people who "acted from principle"
and "love of country." They were full of "patriotism"
and acted "manfully" with "courage and honesty" while
responding to the "conscientious dictates of a noble
heart" with the "purest motives."

While using such immoderate language, Hunt could
still write of his efforts before a large assembly: "I
shall do my duty, and I hope to keep them firm and quiet." In
times of stress he usually implored, "Come, lads! cheer,
cheer; don't be ill-natured, but cheer." M. Fitzpatrick,
a prosecution witness, testified at Hunt's 1820 trial that
he had "never observed any tumult or riot" at any meeting

34 Ibid., p. 40. 35 Ibid., p. 5.
36 Ibid., II, 531. 37 Ibid., pp. 456-57.
38 Read, p. 123.
39 Annual Register, Appendix to Chronicle,
chaired by Hunt.\textsuperscript{40} Hunt, along with Cobbett, was a rather cautious Radical who kept almost entirely clear of insurrectionary movements and was too wise to be fooled by government agents like Castle and Oliver.\textsuperscript{41}

Hunt claimed an unrivalled constancy to the cause of Radical Reform. He said he would ever continue to fight for freedom,\textsuperscript{42} that he "had never turned my back upon the people,"\textsuperscript{43} and that he "was ever inflexible" doing his duty "without looking to the right or to the left."\textsuperscript{44} He wrote that he "could never be bamboozled, silenced, or bribed,"\textsuperscript{45} and he described his attitude with these words:

All . . . I ever considered was, how best to perform my duty, when I was before the public, whether at a meeting of the people, or in the Palace-yard, or at a meeting of my fellow Liverymen at the Guildhall. I never personally cared whether my motions carried, or whether they were rejected, my main object being to perform my duty boldly and conscientiously.\textsuperscript{46}

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\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 864. \\
\textsuperscript{42}The Trial of Henry Hunt (n.p.: T. Dolby, 1820), p. 174. \\
\textsuperscript{43}Memoirs, III, 607. \\
\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., p. 250. \\
\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., II, 81. \\
\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., III, 487-88.
\end{flushright}
shooting, and the rural setting, wrote that only his constant sense of public duty could have forced him to live in the city. In addition, he claimed to gain much enjoyment from reading about England's history and of her heroes and legislators.

Hunt always defended his estranged wife and exhibited a high degree of loyalty to his family. The estrangement apparently began when his wife and family failed to accompany him to London during his first imprisonment at King's Bench, and, in the last pages of Volume I of his Memoirs, Hunt detailed some of the indiscretions with young ladies which led to the separation. After the separation, the two boys lived with Hunt, and the daughter stayed with his wife. Hunt claimed he adequately supported his wife, and he deeply resented being heckled on the hustings, "You turned your wife out of doors to starve."

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47 Ibid., p. 43. Hunt liked to portray himself as a country squire. He claimed that obesity had forced him to give up fox-hunting because a horse big enough to carry him at the head of the pack "where I always rode" would be too expensive. Ibid., II, 428.

48 Ibid., II, 179. 49 Ibid., I, 479.

50 Ibid., pp. 549-52.

51 Ibid., II, 59. Hunt also objected to the rule at Ilchester Prison which limited his female visitors to his estranged wife and his daughter. Correspondence, August 27, 1820. (Also dated: "the 12th day of the 2nd year after the Manchester Massacre without enquiry.")
Hunt was sure that he had a fatal charm for women. When the Female Reformers of Manchester wrote him an October 25, 1820, letter saying "we have enshrined you in our hearts," Hunt responded:

Your heroic example inspires me to action. That man who is insensible to the influence of female charms and female virtue, is placed beneath the character of a savage—he who would not risk his life to protect a female in distress, and to rescue her from brutal and cowardly violence is unworthy the name of man; but he who is dead to the call of female honour, female courage, and female patriotism, to stand forth the champion to vindicate her rights and revenge her country's wrongs, is a wretch undeserving a female smile, and may such, if such there be, never be blessed with the virtuous and chaste embrace of her he loves.\(^\text{52}\)

Hunt also thought it was boorish for men to ask women to leave their company after dinner, and of questionable and obscene language Hunt commented:

What a disgrace to the national character! What a blot upon the very name of polished society! What an everlasting stigma upon British hospitality! What an indelible stain upon English manners!\(^\text{53}\)

According to Hunt, products of Oxford and Cambridge were the most often outside "the bounds of decorum."\(^\text{54}\)

During his stay in Ilchester Prison, Hunt became more and more obsessed with the need for retribution. He wanted "to be even" with his persecutors\(^\text{55}\) and wrote that he had "hopes of living to see the enemies of my country

\(^{52}\text{Correspondence, November 7, 1820.}\)
\(^{53}\text{Memoirs, I, 325.}\)
\(^{54}\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^{55}\text{Ibid., II, 401.}\)
and the persecutors of my suffering countrymen brought to justice."\textsuperscript{56} By July, 1821, Hunt was asking for the names of all the soldiers, "the wise-acres," and the jurymen so they could suffer retribution in a day that "must and will come,"\textsuperscript{57} and later he wrote in a barely-veiled warning that "the time will come when this muster-roll will be most valuable, and highly useful." Lord Sidmouth must be tried for murder, and all of the other names needed to be in "one Grand National Indictment; one Great Public Impeachment. And if the people of England will place me . . . where I can do this with effect, IT SHALL BE DONE."\textsuperscript{58}

Hunt revelled in adulatory titles and often referred to himself as the "Champion of Reform" in his Memoirs and in his letters to the Radical Reformers. In his letter of December 20, 1820, he proudly published a two and one-half page poem sent to him for his birthday. It began with these lines:

"Hail, generous Champion of a sacred cause, 
Undaunted advocate of Freedom's laws!"

In the same letter he wrote somewhat plaintively that

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., p. 33.

\textsuperscript{57}Correspondence, July 26, 1821. In the October 29, 1822, letter, he listed all of those involved in his prison sentence.

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., June 10, 1822.
"the captive of Ilchester will be locked in his solitary
dungeon." A Tory periodical thought a better appel-
lation was "the Malignant Principle himself." In
November, 1820, Hunt announced the creation of the Order
of St. Henry of Ilchester and promised that he would
make all true Radicals "Knights of the sublime order of
the Cross of Ilchester." Hunt suggested "pilgrimages"
to visit him and thought that the plan would help detect
spies, but most Radicals were rather cool to the idea
of canonizing Hunt, and the plan was not a success. He
had more success in promoting the symbolic caps of
liberty. At his trial he proclaimed, "Liberty was the
boast of an Englishman, and its emblem was always held
dear." Of his own white hat he wrote with a certain
inconstancy, "I will wear one as long as I live, at
least in summer." Hunt's election campaign flag
had a red field with Universal Suffrage as a motto,
surmounted by a Cap of Liberty surrounded by "Hunt and
Liberty."

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59 Ibid., December 10, 1820.
60 The Quarterly Review, XXII, No. 44 (1819),
p. 502.
61 Correspondence, November 17, 1820.
63 Correspondence, November 17, 1820.
64 Memoirs, III, 528.
Hunt found the limelight irresistible and thrived upon signs of the working class hero worship of him. Such indications abounded. He drew crowds like no other speaker, his horses were often unhitched and his carriage drawn by the people, and at times villagers carpeted the road with flowers for his arrival. The Orator proudly pointed out that at Burdett's 1812 victory dinner he and Burdett were the only two toasted. In Manchester in 1819, the Union Sunday School monitors had replaced crucifixes with locket-portraits of Hunt. Hunt was so incensed by placards claiming "Hunt was hissed out of Bristol" that he petitioned Commons for an investigation. He proudly wrote that nine children were christened "Henry Hunt" at Manchester on the first anniversary of Peterloo, and that the birthday presents he received in prison made him happier than George IV among "his dear Hanoverian pig-butchers." A year earlier he had made the unheeded

65 Thompson, p. 629. Bamford wrote that he was embarrassed when Hunt ordered a companion to encourage the crowd to cheer when they showed signs of fagging. This was in Lancashire upon his release from bail after Peterloo. Bamford, II, 200.

66 Memoirs, II, 270.

67 Read, p. 54. Quoted from Manchester Observer, January 29, 1819.

68 Memoirs, III, 440-43.

69 Correspondence, August 24, 1821.

70 Ibid., November 24, 1821.
suggestion that 30,000 or 40,000 "able-bodied, unemployed Lancashire lads" should march to see him and make the "west-country cuckoo magistrates stare!" Hunt, who urged a carefully-planned celebration of his release, wrote that thousands cheered him as he left "the Bastile" and that the inn was full for the breakfast honoring him. He repeated the entire adulatory engraving on a silver flagon and salver presented by the "people of Somerset," and of the crowd that greeted him in London two weeks later, Hunt commented:

Heaven and all nature appeared to welcome me with smiles and cheers: never did mortal man receive more spontaneous and unbought homage than Henry Hunt received from his fellowmen on the 11th of November, 1822. The repressive measures of the Ministers, combined with the Massacre and his Ilchester imprisonment fostered a feeling of persecution in the famous speaker. He expressed a belief that his letters were opened at the post-office and claimed that his life was meant to be sacrificed August 16, 1819. He thought his sentence was unnecessarily harsh and claimed his

71Ibid., November 17, 1820.
72Ibid., December 6, 1822. Hunt proudly estimated the value of the flagon and salver at £110 and the size of the London crowd at 500,000.
73Memoirs, III, 610 and 616. Hunt claimed that a retired General "C**y" tried to fracture his "skull" after his arrest. Ibid., p. 615.
1812 stand for election in Bristol was the primary cause. Hunt also claimed that he was mistreated at Ilchester and wrote that "some . . . are praying for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act," but, he continued, "I will laugh at their torture." To point up his prison conditions, Hunt wrote that Bamford and Healy were better off in jail than in their own homes, and they, but not he, had their wives to sleep with whenever they wanted.

In what was probably a natural extension of his persecution complex, Hunt suggested that he was to play the role of a martyr. He enjoyed the comparison the ladies of Preston made of him to Wallace, Hampden, Sidney, and Bruce. After his first year in Ilchester, Hunt was claiming that since the authorities intended that neither he nor Napoleon should leave jail alive, he was taking a carving knife to bed every night and had bequeathed his heart to "the Radical Reformers, Male and Female, of the North." He wrote that an attempt had been made to poison him, and that a deputy turnkey had spoken of shooting him. Two weeks later

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74 Ibid., p. 80.  
75 Ibid., I, 541-42.  
76 Correspondence, July 26, 1821.  
77 Ibid., June 22, 1822.  
78 Ibid., July 9, 1821.  
79 Ibid., December 10, 1821.
he wrote of "the wretched place in which I am entombed alive." Upon his release the Leicester Reformers almost deified Hunt in a letter referring to his "emancipation, or . . . resurrection." Hunt's martyrdom did not come about, but he did claim a great share of credit in all Radical successes. Whether it be making Breakfast Powder, shooting, jail-reforming, or orating, Hunt considered himself the best. He wrote that he, and he only, was responsible for the working class enthusiasm after 1815. In 1823 Hunt reminded his readers, "I have never lost an opportunity of asserting your cause, the cause of the People, and the Rights of Man." He wrote of the effects of his

80Ibid., December 24, 1821.
81Ibid., January 23, 1822.
82Ibid., December 6, 1822.
83In Memoirs, I, 417, Hunt boasted of once killing twenty pheasants with twenty shots. Later he proudly wrote that he published in Sporting Magazine a challenge to "any gentleman sportsman" to shoot game for five mornings at fifty guineas a morning. Memoirs, II, 266.
84Ibid., I, 546. 85Correspondence, July 8, 1823.
activities: his petitions made Parliament "foam at the mouth;"\(^{86}\) "our enemies are writhing . . . and groaning;"\(^{87}\) and the remedies that he alone had proposed in 1812 were "universally" accepted in 1822.\(^{88}\) He demanded credit for the speeches and public papers which he had begun in 1806 urging people to defend their "rights and liberties."\(^{89}\) It was he, Hunt wrote, who had uncovered the unheard of fraud and chicanery of the Bristol corporation,\(^{90}\) and only his quick thinking, he claimed, had kept Burdett's candidate, John Cam Hobhouse, from winning the second 1813 Westminster election.\(^{91}\)

Hunt defended the oft-attacked mass public meetings and pointed to the results he claimed that they achieved. He wrote that the Spa Fields meetings had resulted in £4,000 for the Spitalfield poor, the sinecures of the two Tellers of the Exchequer being abolished, a Mr. Ponsonby resigning his annual Chancellor's pension, and the Prince Regent giving an annual £50,000 for "public exigencies."\(^{92}\) Besides claiming he chaired the only public meeting under the Seditious Meetings

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\(^{86}\)Ibid., May 26, 1821. \(^{87}\)Memoirs, III, 3.

\(^{88}\)Ibid., p. 93. Hunt overstated the case.

\(^{89}\)Ibid., II, 221. \(^{90}\)Ibid., III, 131.

\(^{91}\)Ibid., pp. 569-76.

\(^{92}\)Ibid., pp. 432-33. See also Ibid., pp. 362-63.
Hunt also took credit for forcing the 1817 resignation of the ailing Combe as a Member from London. Hunt claimed forcing Combe to step down was his most glorious achievement, but he wrote, "I only did my duty." Then there were his Ilchester accomplishments: "I have brought my Gaoler to justice," and "the Gaol ... is ordered to be razed." On February 11, 1822, he wrote:

... the benefits which I have accomplished in this Gaol and in this country, will hang on the lips of the babe that is yet unborn. The name of Hunt will last longer than the walls of this Bastile.

Hunt seldom practiced understatement.

Hunt wanted in Commons badly, but he was discouraged by the personal expenses of his previous unsuccessful attempts. Commenting that "all the imps of Hell" and all the power of England had opposed him, he wrote that it was up to the friends of liberty to decide whether to make the effort because "... I will never spend a shilling to obtain a seat in Parliament." He professed a belief that if he were in Parliament he could "vanquish this mighty mass of corruption;"

I am ready to brave the power of the people's greatest enemies; "no compromise" shall be my

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93 Ibid., p. 514. It was held in the Palace Yard, London, on September 17, 1817.
94 Ibid., p. 491.
95 Correspondence, Final letter from prison (n.d.).
96 Ibid., February 11, 1822.
motto, "justice to the people, or death to their enemies," shall be our watchword.97

Hunt firmly believed that the working class had little in common with those people he admitted deserved the degrading term, "the lower orders," in 1794.98 He saw a great contrast between the "drunken, riotous Church-and-King mob of 1791 to 96" and the "peacable, sober, rational, constitutional assemblies of the people in 1816, 1817, 1818, and 1819."99 Before 1816 "the people . . . never thought for themselves,"100 and the people of Sussex were ignorant and "quite as uninformed and in as perfect state of nature as the natives in the wilds of America."101 But, according to Hunt, "The people had been enlightened; the people had read Cobbett,"102 and "I warned them thus early," beginning in 1806.103

Still, Hunt could not hide his class consciousness. He described Bandreth, the leader of the 1817 Derbyshire uprising, as "nothing more nor less than a contemptible pauper."104 Hunt scathingly mentioned "a greasy weaver"

97Ibid., June 10, 1822. Hunt realized his dream when Preston returned him in 1830 in time to play an ineffectual role in the passage of the Great Reform Bill.
98Memoirs, I, 141. 99Ibid., p. 223.
100Ibid., II, 177.
101Ibid., p. 487. Hunt attacked 1814 Luddism as "lawless and unwarrantable." Ibid., III, 211.
102Ibid., II, 209. 103Ibid., p. 220.
104Ibid., III, 506.
in one of his letters, and Bamford criticized Hunt for refusing, despite Bamford's urging, to shake hands with a woman witness at the York trial. Bamford claimed that this was an example of a "contemptible feeling of classism, the curse of England and Englishmen" among the witnesses of "broad cloth" and those of "narrow cloth." Nonetheless, except in moments of pique, Hunt expressed faith in the laborers and wrote, "The people of England never deserted a public man, unless that man deserted them first." Later, he insisted that they always decide right: . . . the most honest and upright judges in the world. Hunt's nationalism is apparent throughout his writings, words, and deeds. Even as he detested the long war with France and lionized Napoleon, he could glory in Lord Nelson's "splendid victory" at Trafalgar. Hunt, who believed that only defensive wars and wars for liberty were just, wrote that "Every real lover of liberty

105 Correspondence, March 11, 1822.
106 Bamford, II, 247-48. Arthur Bryant, The Age of Elegance 1812-1822 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 322, claims that the woman was a weaver's wife, but Bamford's account seems to indicate it was the weaver Bamford whom Hunt was shunning.
107 Correspondence, November 17, 1820.
110 Correspondence, July 8, 1823.
deprecated" the 1812 war with America. Hunt considered it to be an unjust war, and he "always wished success to the Americans, who were fighting for their rights and liberties against the invader."\textsuperscript{111} Yet several times Hunt joined the Yeomanry to help defend England, and in 1801 he offered the government himself, his horses, and £20,000 of worldly goods to repel invasion.\textsuperscript{112} Hunt was a self-professed patriot:

A patriot I consider to be a man who is devoted to the laws and constitution of his country in their purity; a defender of the rights and liberties of the people and one who does his best to promote their happiness and welfare.\textsuperscript{113}

Following his definition of a patriot, Hunt's desire to defend his country in 1797, 1801, and 1803 could quite easily lead to his position as a peace candidate in the 1812 Bristol election.\textsuperscript{114}

As part of his patriotic stance, Hunt claimed that all he wanted was a restoration of the Constitution in its original purity:

The Radicals have always said, and honestly said, that they want nothing new, they only want the

\textsuperscript{111}Memoirs, III, 174. See also Ibid., pp. 215-17.


\textsuperscript{113}Memoirs, I, 401-02.

\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., II, 83. In his "Letter to the Independent Voters of Bristol," August 11, 1812, Cobbett stated that he thought Napoleon's terms were fair. Quoted in Ibid.
Hunt said at his trial and reiterated in his Memoirs, "No Englishman should be taxed without his consent." He disagreed with those who claimed universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and annual parliaments would completely subvert the Constitution; on the contrary, according to Hunt, universal suffrage was "as old as the Constitution of England."

Hunt denied any intention to overturn the throne, and he expressed doubt that succession to the throne was even worth spilling blood over. Sounding unlike a republican, he wrote that if England developed good laws the monarch would sit upon "an imperishable rock." Hunt denied that a Reformed Parliament would necessarily lead to a republic and wrote that all he wanted was majority rule. However, he admitted that many people hoped that majority rule would result in an end to the monarchy.

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115 Correspondence, July 27, 1820.
117 Memoirs, I, vi.
118 The Trial of Henry Hunt, p. 148.
119 Correspondence, July 1, 1820.
120 Ibid., April 24, 1822. Hunt would have denied only one bill to any Reformed Parliament: a bill to abolish universal suffrage. Ibid.
Hunt professed abhorrence at the idea of a violent revolution coming to England, but he warned that it was a lack of justice that had driven the French to revolt. He went on to write that "taxation without representation is the very acme of tyranny and despotism" and caused revolution in America, South America, Spain, and Portugal.\footnote{Memoirs, II, 485.} His thought was that if men are deprived of protection of the law, ". . . you drive them to desperation; . . . and they become remorseless, cruel, and vindictive."\footnote{Ibid., p. 483.} Hunt thought that the English Government was oppressive enough to advise his readers from prison, "Let us have a reformed House of Commons, without a revolution if we can, and justice will be done to the whole nation."\footnote{Correspondence, July 27, 1820.} To Hunt the difference between liberty and slavery was simple: the presence or absence of universal suffrage.\footnote{Ibid., October 9, 1821.} Hunt, sure that nine out of ten of the finest men in the world would become tyrants if given the chance, wrote, "Possibly all mankind are by nature tyrannical," and suggested that this explained Napoleon's despotic actions.\footnote{Memoirs, III, 191.} The only salvation was rational liberty
and he wrote in his last letter from Ilchester Prison:

I fearlessly and deliberately now proclaim myself the inflexible and uncompromising advocate of Universal Rational Liberty, which can never be obtained without Universal Suffrage and Vote by Ballot; for these I will contend as long as I draw breath. ¹２⁶

¹２⁶ Correspondence, Final letter from prison (n.d.). Whether Hunt at this time deliberately omitted a call for annual parliaments can only be conjecture.
CHAPTER III

HUNT'S EVALUATION OF RELIGION, JUSTICE, THE PRESS,
AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN ENGLAND

Although his parents had reared Hunt in the
Christian faith, he seldom exhibited any overt religious
piety, and parsons of the Church of England were often
among the favorite targets of his wrath. His father,
while on his deathbed, had urged Hunt not to leave the
established church; however, the elder Hunt had warned
his son not to believe all the mummeries and superstition
but, at the same time, to remember that "the moral
precepts of the Christian faith are wise and good."¹
Hunt claimed that his religious beliefs became deeper
and more thoughtful when his first child, a girl, died
before she was baptized.² While comforting his bereaved
wife, Hunt had argued that any doctrine which condemned
a two-month-old baby to damnation was "not only pre-
posterous but impious."³ His daughter's death and his

¹Memoirs, I, 388.
²Ibid., p. 317. In Ibid., pp. 308-13, Hunt explained why he had insisted that his wife suckle the baby.
³Ibid., p. 318.
dying father's words tended to confirm Hunt's thinking that private acts of devotion pleased God more than public acts of worship.  

Hunt was often suspected of accepting the atheistic ideas of the free-thinking pamphleteer, Richard Carlile, but at his trial he strongly objected to his being linked with Carlile's irreligious views. In denouncing those who doubted his Christianity, Hunt tearfully cried, "Good God, is it not enough to charge reformers with treasonable designs, but they must be also reproached with disbelieving in their Creator!" He later claimed to believe that Jesus had been "the greatest Reformer" and stated his position on religion in these words:

I can most solemnly declare, that I never entertained any wish to destroy it; . . . but I will, as long as I live, contend for the justice of placing all religions upon the same footing, and to establish full political liberty. I abhor priesthood as much as the great Reformer, Christ, did; I abhor all intolerance; I would have every one worship his Maker in his own

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4Ibid., p. 384.

5Bamford, II, 244-45. He also claimed never to have read one line of the theological works of Thomas Paine. Ibid., p. 245.

6Annual Register, Appendix to Chronicle, Abstracts of State Trials, LVI (1819), p. 870. Bamford wrote that Hunt complained that Radicals were "designated as infidels against our religion and our God." Bamford, II, 245.

7Memoirs, II, 67.
way, and I shall certainly never trouble myself whether Mr. Carlile worships God or mammon. Hunt firmly maintained that the large majority of Reformers were religious, despite their recurring attacks upon organized religions.

Hunt attacked the practice of tithing as one of the major causes of the people's distress, and he circulated a table which purported to show that the people of England and Ireland paid more to an Established Church than all the other Christians in the world combined. For clergymen, Hunt reserved his special scorn, claiming that they did nothing for six days of the week "but hunt, shoot, and fish by day, and play cards and win the money of the farmers' wives and children by night." His father had thought that the best of them were "drones of society," and Hunt claimed that the clergy were disgraceful, debauching, canting hypocrites and cormorants who spoke in blasphemy, obscenity, and lewdness. On the other hand, Hunt claimed that

8Correspondence, March 11, 1822.
9Ibid., August 10, 1822.
10Memoirs, I, 95.
11Ibid., p. 97. Yet Hunt had been urged by his father to become a minister. Cf., p. 5.
12Ibid., p. 326.
there were exceptions, and wrote, "I believe there are many, and know there are some" who are not guilty of "debauchery, seduction, and desertion." Those churchmen who also happened to be magistrates Hunt scathingly referred to as "that anomalous hermaphrodite race." One saving grace of depressed times, according to Hunt, was that clergymen and lawyers were also suffering.

The Radical movement had benefited to a large extent by the organization and fund-raising techniques it had copied from the Methodists. In addition the efforts of the Church Sunday Schools had been rather successful in increasing the literacy of the working class. Between 1815 and 1819, many of the religious sects had been strongly pro-Radical; however, after Peterloo most of them joined the Anglicans in hostility toward the Radicals. Methodists were forbidden to use Radical emblems, and Anglican children were ordered not to wear white hats or badges. Quakers showed their loyalty to the government by discouraging Radicalism among their members, and, despite the fact that the Radicals favored Catholic Emancipation, Radical Catholics were often threatened with excommunication.

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13 Ibid., II, 70. See also Ibid., III, 73-74.
14 Ibid., III, 323.
15 Correspondence, September 25, 1822.
Almost the only exception to this hurried defection was the Unitarians, the sect whose members included most of the middle class Radicals.16

Hunt was critical of the state of justice as he saw it in England. Judges, juries, jailers, and attorneys were often his targets, and he thought that many of the laws were unfair or unconstitutional and that most of the jails were terrible. He credited his King's Bench friend, Henry Clifford, with convincing him that "of all tyrannies, that which is carried on under the forms of law and justice is the worst."17 Hunt, who questioned whether or not the laws were the same for the rich and the poor,18 complained that justice was "slow, very slow, in reaching the minions of power."19 Yet, when Mr. Justice Bayley ruled in 1819 that Hunt could not legally move a criminal information against the Manchester magistrates, Hunt claimed that it was the first time a prosecution had been so impeded. Hunt's unsuccessful

16 Read has an interesting discussion of the religions' various responses to Peterloo, pp. 201-05.

17 Memoirs, I, 476.

18 Ibid., p. iv. See also Ibid., II, 484. Hunt disliked the system of jailing debtors and claimed that he effected the release of an old man and a young woman, both debtors, while in Ilchester. Correspondence, February 22, 1821; March 11, 1822; and March 25, 1822.

19 Memoirs, II, 37.
argument was that if no law or precedent prohibited it, an action, no matter how novel, must be legal. 20

Attorneys, Hunt advised his readers, were sharks and cormorants who were "the muckworms that eat out all the happiness of kingdoms," 21 and he claimed that he had made up his mind early in his life "never to trust my life or my liberty in the hands of a counsel!" Hunt was sure that he would have been convicted of treason after Manchester had he used a lawyer, 22 because, he claimed, nineteen out of twenty were tools of the magistrates. 23 Bamford challenged the claim that Hunt never used legal counsel and explained that Hunt performed so well at the trial because he had had secret legal counsel every night. 24

Hunt wrote that packed and corrupt juries were the most effective agents of tyranny, 25 and he considered that most verdicts with which he disagreed had been

20 Annual Register, Appendix to Chronicle, LXI (1819), p. 272. Hunt and his friends also tried to no avail to bring criminal charges against two policemen and several of the Yeomanry. Read, p. 145.

21 Correspondence, January 12, 1822.

22 Memoirs, II, 93.

23 Correspondence, November 24, 1821.

24 Bamford, II, 235.

25 Correspondence, October 26, 1821. Hunt claimed that the Sheriff had picked the jury for his trial after Manchester. The Trial of Henry Hunt, p. 146.
bought. He traced the end of "the struggle for the right of English Juries to give their verdict agreeable to the evidence" to a trial in which Hunt had been assessed a farthing damage for trespassing. 26 Bamford disliked the existing jury system too, and he suggested doing away with juries entirely. Until this was possible Bamford suggested that juries should have an odd number elected by ballot and paid for by the county. He further thought verdicts should be reached by majority vote. 27 Along the same line, Hunt thought that Cobbett's term in Newgate had been determined by:

. . . the tyrannical proceedings of the Borough-mongers, assisted by a packed special jury, always the best ally of tyranny and tyrants, because it enables them to carry on a most nefarious despotism, and inflict death, loss of liberty, and torture upon its victims, under the assumed forms of law and justice; the very worst species of tyranny, and the most horrible of all despotisms. 28

Hunt contended that juries, even if they wanted to be honest, were usually forced to follow the arbitrary will of corrupt judges. 29 He professed a great difficulty in finally accepting the fact that judges could be such hypocrites and base tools, 30 in their turn, of the Government. Often critical of the harsh treatment he

26 Memoirs, II, 404. 27 Bamford, II, 280.
28 Memoirs, II, 480-81. 29 Ibid., p. 405.
30 Ibid., I, 476.
received in court, Hunt suggested that his own judges would have been hanged for such verdicts in King Alfred's time. 31

Jails, in Hunt's view, were "sinks of misery, filth, and immorality," 32 and in his letters from prison he was continually complaining of the conditions. He bewailed the injustice of his solitary confinement for forty days and wrote that his jail song was, "Let me see my family." 33 While at Ilchester, Hunt was occupied for some time with getting the jailer, William Bridle, dismissed from his job, tried for torture, and finally convicted. His success against Bridle was a proud moment for Hunt because he considered jailers men of great power who knew and exploited the petty corruptness of both judges and sheriffs. 34 As a result of his intimate jail experiences, Hunt developed a life-long interest in prison reform. He was convinced that inmates did not dare to complain and that formal

31 Correspondence, July 26, 1821. A year earlier Hunt had expressed disgust because, he claimed, a man had been sentenced at York to thirty months imprisonment for crying, "Hunt and Liberty." Ibid., July 25, 1820.

32 Memoirs, II, 287.

33 Ibid., p. 36.

34 Correspondence, July 26, 1821. On the other hand, Hunt had many compliments for his King's Bench jailer. Memoirs, I, 480.
visits by magistrates after the jailer had been notified would never bring adequate change.  

Hunt's favorite word for most of the press of his day was "venal." He claimed with some accuracy that "all those who belong to the public press, the liberal press, have been the agents or the tools of one or the other of the two great political factions," and he estimated that ninety-five percent of the English press was controlled by the Tories, by the Whigs, or by the Burdettites. Hunt violently attacked the "venal" press for "their cowardly ..., unmanly, obscure and unfounded insinuations" against Queen Caroline. According to Hunt, the principal object of newspapers was to keep the people in ignorance, and he blamed them for the "ignorant" actions of the Luddites in 1812. Likewise, Hunt felt that he had been unfairly attacked many times and claimed that the press in Bristol and the "whole press of England" was hired to vilify him.


38Correspondence, July 1, 1820.

in 1812. Hunt wrote that he had been attacked as a traitor after the Spa Fields meetings in 1816, and that some papers had urged his assassination, others had claimed that he was insane and had been sent to Bedlam, and some had even announced that he had died in a drunken stupor. Hunt claimed that he and Cobbett had been more grossly attacked than any others since the invention of printing, and he wrote, "There was no falsehood too gross to serve their turn."  

Despite all of the attacks upon his character, Hunt became even angrier at the press when he thought it was ignoring him. He complained of the unfair way the papers had reported observances of his birthday: they hadn't mentioned his name enough. He was violently upset by what he considered a conspiracy by the press to keep his name out of the papers or to underplay his popularity, and when the Taunton Courier somewhat inaccurately reported, "Poor Hunt is quite forgotten," Hunt described the editor as a "dirty, time-serving hack."  

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40 Ibid., p. 4.  
41 Ibid., p. 363.  
42 Ibid., p. 418. See also Ibid., p. 448.  
43 Correspondence, December 23, 1820.  
44 Ibid., October 9, 1821.  
45 Ibid., April 8, 1822. Earlier he had described the same man as a "base, dirty, time-serving, pimping scoundrel." Ibid., February 11, 1822.
The Courier was also attacked by Hunt for spreading "infamous falsehoods" and adding to the "millions of lies that were then circulated against me." The Morning Post joined in the attack upon Hunt, exulted in his long sentence, and called him "the great green-eyed Radical Hunt." In addition the Quarterly Review labeled Hunt an anarchist, "a notable mountebank," a "trumpet-hornet," and sarcastically called him "this man of peace." Two years earlier, in 1817, the same publication had commented:

And Mr. Hunt, the Orator, pathetically, yet heroically observed, that if the Habeas Corpus were suspended, ministers would have a right to drag him to a dungeon and imprison him until the act expired. They might torture his flesh, he said—they might impair his constitution—but he gloried in the idea that they could not destroy a noble mind! Heroic Mr. Orator Hunt!

Toward The Times, Hunt portrayed an uncertain ambivalence. Even while attacking the editor as "Dr. Slop, alias Stoddart," and as a man who worshiped money, Hunt wrote that The Times was a friend of the Radical Cause and attacked him only to sell newspapers. In November, 1821, Hunt wrote of The Times next editor, "I

despise him!" Yet, only a year earlier, he had claimed that the paper was accepting Radical ideas and was about as valuable as the Rights of Man, and while discussing Queen Caroline's vindication, Hunt had written, "The Times is now our best ally." 

Hunt was aware that most of the press was controlled by political factions, and he saw the need for the Radicals to have their own press. The finest example for Radicals to follow, he advised, was Cobbett's Political Register, but Hunt also praised the Black Dwarf and the Weekly Register for their efforts after Cobbett defected to the United States in 1817. When Thomas Wooler closed the Black Dwarf in the face of Radical apathy in 1824, he was bitter at the apparent death of the reform movement, and Wooler acidly described the orators and writers of 1816 to 1820 as "bubbles thrown up in the fermentation of society." Hunt also recommended the Catholic Advocate.

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52 Correspondence, November 24, 1821.
53 Ibid., November 17, 1820.
54 His opinion of the Register depended upon how well Cobbett and he were getting along at any given moment. Hunt was often quite critical of Cobbett and was especially angry when Cobbett showed a lack of enthusiasm for aiding in the distribution of Hunt's Memoirs. Ibid., May 25, 1822.
55 Memoirs, III, 478.
56 Thompson, p. 810. Quoting the Final Address, prefacing Black Dwarf, xii (1824).
57 Correspondence, December 23, 1820.
and the *Stamford News* as good Radical organs for his followers to read. Hunt and the more moderate Leigh Hunt of the *London Examiner* did not always agree on the issues, and after an 1812 disagreement, Hunt was pleased to quote Burdett as saying "that the editor of the *Examiner* was not worthy to wipe the shoes of his friend Hunt." However, during most of the period of active Radical agitation an uneasy truce existed between Leigh Hunt and the *Orator*.59

Hunt was especially fond of James Wroe's *Manchester Observer*, which had begun printing in 1818. Hunt proudly called it the only paper devoted to a reform that would give the people all their rights.60 In 1822 the *Observer*, like the *Black Dwarf* two years later, was forced to close down. Its last editor was John T. Saxton, who also was forced to quit by a general lack of Radical interest. Reporting that it was "absolutely necessary" that the Radicals have a means of communication to raise the lagging spirits, Hunt announced his own plans to continue his letters after his release from prison. He announced that he would issue an "Address to the Radical Reformers

58Ibid., October 14, 1822.

59Memoirs, III, 19. The two Hunts were not related.

60Read, pp. 55-56. See also Correspondence, October 26, 1821.
of the United Kingdom" to be published either once or
twice a month. It was to cost six pence; and would be
called Hunt's Union; or the Radical Recorder. 61 Hunt
published the paper until July, 1823; then he, too, quit
in the face of an overwhelming public apathy.

Hunt wrote and talked as immoderately of the two
political parties as he did of the newspapers which
supported them. He warned the laboring class that it
was foolish to trust "any political professions," 62
and impartially described "all the art and cunning of
the Tories, and all the cant and hypocrisy of the
Whigs." 63 Hunt accused the two parties of attacking
each other for ruining the country, and then joining
against the public interest when the people began to
act and think for themselves. 64 Hunt credited the
Whigs with just one good act: stopping the slave
trade; 65 but he accused them of deserting the Catholics
to save their places, 66 and he concluded, "The Lord

61 Correspondence, October 14, 1822.
62 Memoirs, II, 212.
63 Correspondence, July 8, 1823.
64 Memoirs, II, 462.
65 Ibid., p. 286.
George IV kicked these "pretenders to patriotism" out
anyway. Ibid., p. 211.
deliver us from the tender mercies of the Whigs, I say!"\textsuperscript{67} Hunt also wrote that his "persecutors" in Ilchester Prison were usually Whigs, "the dirty, filthy, mean-spirited dogs called Whigs."\textsuperscript{68} The Radical tendency to defect to the Whigs was a constant concern to him, and early in 1821, when he thought that the Whigs were wooing the Radicals, Hunt warned that the Whigs had no record to show that they could be trusted. He reminded his readers that the Radicals were the people and need not make terms with the Whigs.\textsuperscript{69} Two months earlier he had urged the Radicals not to let the Whigs ride them into power for they were little better than the Tories.\textsuperscript{70} During his career, Hunt's direct attacks on the Tories were largely confined to abusive remarks about the Ministers who "merited the hatred and execration of the people"\textsuperscript{71} and were "the most corrupt, and . . . most contemptible set of ministers."\textsuperscript{72} Claiming to have fought both parties all his life, Hunt wrote, "I have honestly opposed the peculations, the plunderings, \begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid.}, III, 637.
\item \textsuperscript{68} \textit{Correspondence}, July 8, 1823.
\item \textsuperscript{69} \textit{Ibid.}, January 23, 1821.
\item \textsuperscript{70} \textit{Ibid.}, November 20, 1820.
\item \textsuperscript{71} \textit{Memoirs}, II, 269.
\item \textsuperscript{72} \textit{Correspondence}, July 14, 1822.
\end{itemize}
and the frauds of the boroughmongers of both these factions upon the people, upon the earning of the poor . . . .”

One way Hunt chose to attack the political parties was by standing for election. By 1820 he had stood twice for Bristol, once for Westminster, and once for Preston. Although he had won none of these contests, he claimed that he had been favored ten to one by the people. He wrote, "I was baited like a bull," but "I tore the mask from all parties." Hunt complained that the Government hired people to put down those who attacked government policies and that all those in opposition were heckled and labeled as Jacobins. Hunt thought it was against the Constitution to canvass, solicit, or bribe voters, but he took great pride in extending the elections in which he took part the full fifteen days. Hunt maintained that all Members bought their seats in one way or another and suggested that contested elections cost more than purchasing close or rotten boroughs. While estimating that every Ilchester elector received £30, Hunt claimed that his 1818 Westminster campaign had cost £800 plus contributions,

73Memoirs, I, 458. 74Ibid., III, 529.
75Ibid. 76Ibid., II, 43-44.
77Ibid., III, 528.
although he had not bought a single vote, "not the value of one pot of porter was ever given to one of the voters."\(^7\)

Since Hunt was always confident that universal suffrage would result in the election of a large number of Radicals, including himself, he strongly opposed any restrictions on suffrage, whether it might be freeholder, householder, or rate-payer limitations. He estimated that freeholder suffrage excluded eighty percent of the men,\(^7\) and he was sure that universal suffrage was the direct road to economic well-being.\(^8\) Hunt, who decried the principle of virtual representation, greatly admired the suffrage at Preston, where he had received 1127 votes while losing the 1820 elections.\(^9\) If Preston could only have dropped its short residence requirement, its suffrage would have been what Hunt considered every Englishman's "constitutional and legal right."\(^10\)

Hunt castigated the 1812 Parliament for being "corrupt, profligate, \(\text{and}\) Boroughmongering,"\(^11\) and a

\(^7\) Correspondence, August 10, 1822.
\(^8\) Ibid., October 26, 1821. \(^9\) Memoirs, II, 80.
\(^9\) Correspondence, October 9, 1821. On the other hand, Hunt complained of "the rottenest of rotten boroughs, Marlborough and Great Bedwin." \(^10\) Memoirs, I, 352.
\(^11\) Correspondence, October 26, 1821.
\(^12\) Memoirs, III, 136.
later Parliament he characterized as "a band of venal, corrupt, profligate, dishonest, and merciless oppressors." Hunt always insisted a Radical Reform of Commons was an absolute necessity, and he often boasted that he was the first to stand for election on a platform of "Universal Suffrage, Annual Parliaments, and Vote by Ballot."

\[\text{Ibid., p. 245.}\]
CHAPTER IV

HUNT'S VIEWS ON POLITICAL PERSONALITIES
AND CONTEMPORARY CONDITIONS

Henry Hunt reserved some of his most bitter comments for attacks upon the political leaders of England who were his contemporaries. He referred to Lord Liverpool as the grandson of a "Scotch pedlar," Lord Sidmouth as the "Gaoler General of England," and Lord Eldon as the son of a coal merchant. In nearly every reference to George Canning, Hunt mentioned that he was "the son of Mother Hunn," while Viscount Castlereagh was named as the "most deadly enemy of the liberties of Englishmen," who, according to Hunt, "played second fiddle" to Prince Metternich at the Congress of Vienna. Hunt claimed that these British Ministers did nothing to aid the cause of humanity or liberty, and specifically asserted that Lord Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, had grown wealthy in office by picking

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1 Correspondence, July 25, 1820.
2 Ibid., November 24, 1821.
3 Ibid., August 24, 1822.
4 Memoirs, III, 211.
5 Correspondence, April 8, 1822.
the pockets of suitors of the Court of Chancery, "mostly consisting of infanta, widows, bankrupts, and lunatics."

Despite his many references to Sidmouth as the "Gaoler General of England," Hunt seemed to exhibit an unusual understanding of the Home Secretary's role in maintaining law and order throughout England. Despite his rhetoric, Hunt's writings appear to indicate that Sidmouth, hateful as the results of his policies were, was only doing his lawful duty in administering the government's repressive measures. In fact, he credited Sidmouth with a sincere, if unsuccessful, effort to present Reform petitions to the Prince Regent. Hunt proudly quoted Sidmouth's remarks to him praising Hunt's peace-keeping efforts and saying that "His Majesty's Ministers are greatly indebted to you... you have prevented the spilling of human blood." Sidmouth was in a difficult position, and his biographer claims that the Home Secretary failed to appreciate that a shift from Luddism to a clamor for parliamentary reform had taken place between 1812 and 1816.

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8Ibid., pp. 361-62. Hunt was also pleased when Sidmouth compared him with the leaders of the French Revolution. Correspondence, January 23, 1821.
9Ziegler, pp. 341-42. Ironically, the year Hunt began his first term in Parliament, Sidmouth's influence had faded so greatly that he was not even asked to speak on the Great Reform Bill. He voted against it to the end. Ibid., pp. 415-16.
It was upon Castlereagh, not Sidmouth, that Hunt placed the major blame for the repressive measures of 1817 and 1819. He wrote from prison, "We only want a Radical Reform, and a Reform we shall have, or a Revolution, which will, I hope, when my Lord C. and the farcical Duke--D. of W.--please to bring it about, come without bloodshed."\(^\text{10}\)

Hunt's first reaction upon hearing of Castlereagh's 1822 suicide was a lamentation that "C. has slipped through our fingers."\(^\text{11}\) Two weeks later Hunt claimed that Castlereagh "cut his own throat with a knife" to escape the vengeance of the tortured, robbed, and plundered people. Wrote Hunt:

\[\ldots\text{the most deadly enemy of the liberties of Englishmen--the great sanctioner and defender of the murders committed at Manchester--the apologist of tyranny all over the world--having become his own murderer--\ldots\text{may every enemy of the human race meet the same fate \ldots.}\]\(^\text{12}\)

Hunt, in fact, was so elated over Castlereagh's death that he did not wear his customary mourning on August 16, 1822, in observance of the anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{10}\) Correspondence, March 25, 1821. Earlier Hunt scoffingly referred to Wellington as the "greatest captain of the age." \textit{Ibid.}, July 25, 1820.

\(^{11}\) \textit{Ibid.}, August 10, 1822.

\(^{12}\) \textit{Ibid.}, August 24, 1822.

\(^{13}\) \textit{Ibid.}\]
Likewise, both William Wilberforce and Lord John Russell came under attack by Hunt and other Radicals. Wilberforce, the great advocate for abolition of slavery, adamantly refused to join the Radicals. He maintained that criticism of the unreformed Constitution was sedition, and he wrote of Hunt and Cobbett, "Hunt is a foolish, mischief-making fellow, but no conspirator, though the tool of worse and deeper villains. Cobbett is the most pernicious of all."\(^\text{14}\) It was no wonder that Cobbett exulted in a letter to Hunt that the United States had no Wilberforces, "Think of that! No Wilberforce!"\(^\text{15}\) Young Lord John Russell's tentative calls for Reform were deprecated by Hunt, and he called Russell a "little pert dandy thing"\(^\text{16}\) who falsely accused the Radicals of using anarchy and murder. He pointed out that Russell's father, the Duke of Bedford, still held Crownlands that George III had long before turned over to the public, and Hunt urged that the Radicals ignore Russell's "prattling" about Reform.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{14}\)Coupland, pp. 412-13.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 422.

\(^{16}\)Correspondence, December 10, 1820.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., August 27, 1820. Russell did not forget Hunt. In the debate on the Reform Bill of 1867, he raised the ghost of Orator Hunt and Hunt's defeat of Lord Derby at Preston in 1830. Briggs, p. 513.
As illustrated by the suicide of Castlereagh, death did not spare political figures from serving as targets of Hunt’s venomous attacks. The deceased Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox, and William Pitt the Younger all came under his fire. Hunt claimed to have been an early, and enthusiastic, admirer of Fox, but said, "my fond hopes were soon blasted" when Fox, he claimed, deserted the cause of Reform. He concluded that Fox’s reputation would have been great had he died in 1805 instead of a year later. Hunt considered that Burke had deserted the cause of liberty, but he was especially bitter in his attacks upon Pitt because he considered him the greatest of all apostates from the cause of Radical Reform. Pitt, Hunt wrote, was a "Heaven-born, despotic, and arbitrary" man whose ambitions got the best of him and made him the most deserving of "execration" of any man who ever lived. Hunt claimed that Pitt had caused British gold to be used to buy the

18 Memoirs, II, 201-02. Hunt claimed a personal friendship with Fox while they were both taking the waters at Cheltenham. Ibid., pp. 138-39.

19 Ibid., p. 212. 20 Ibid., III, 565.

21 Correspondence, January 23, 1821.

22 Memoirs, II, 197.

23 Ibid., p. 200. Yet Hunt claimed that Pitt had one saving grace: integrity. Ibid., p. 166.
assassination of Czar Paul of Russia in 1801, and professed to believe that "all the atrocities that had been committed in Paris, all the blood that had been spilt, all the massacres that had been perpetrated, were hired and paid for" by Pitt. No political crimes were too heinous for Hunt to lay at Pitt's door.

While Hunt made no direct suggestions to abolish the monarchy, individual members of the royalty did come under severe attack. In his first letter from prison, Hunt compared himself with William Prynne in being imprisoned for speaking and writing the truth, and he was warmed by the thought that Prynne had lived to see Charles I beheaded and the judges punished; the unstated inference was that Hunt might have a similar experience. Hunt also castigated Charles II as a "faithless, treacherous Monarch" for not restoring the estates of his ancestor, Colonel Thomas Hunt, after the Restoration.

Of George III Hunt wrote, "George the Third was the only King I ever saw, and I never wish to see another King. . . . I had known him in his prime, and had frequently hunted with him." He made the inaccurate claim

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24 Ibid., I, 469.  
25 Ibid., p. 235.  
26 Ibid., p. xx.  
27 Correspondence, October 29, 1822.  
28 Memoirs, III, 201. Hunt's claim of personal acquaintance with George III is not substantiated.
that George III had signed more death warrants than any man who had ever lived and suggested that the bloodiness of his reign had driven the King mad. Hunt expressed a strong hatred for the Prince Regent and compared his coronation as George IV with a funeral procession. The Radicals, with Hunt at the lead, had attached themselves to Queen Caroline in 1820 when the new king had forced the Government to make an unsuccessful effort to rid him of the Queen. When the Queen died in 1821, Hunt wrote of her "implacable persecutors" who were also his enemies and the foes of rational liberty. On Christmas eve, 1821, Hunt sneeringly wrote of George IV:

. . . your shoes, your salt, your candles, your soap, your sugar, your tea, your beer, in fact, everything that you eat, drink, touch, wear, or look at, was taxed to enable his gracious Majesty to reward his grateful and loyal Hanoverian subjects, and to pay them for serenading him; and to pay them, no doubt, for listening to the noble speech which his Majesty made to them out of the window. What an imitative creature man is! Who should have thought that his Majesty would have condescended in Ireland and Hanover to have endeavored to imitate "Orator Hunt?"

Hunt went on to say that he had at least paid his own way

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29 Ibid., pp. 201-02.  30 Ibid., II, 156.
31 Correspondence, July 26, 1821.
32 See Halévy, pp. 84-104, for a good account of the affair of Queen Caroline.
33 Correspondence, August 24, 1821.
34 Ibid., December 24, 1821.
when he spoke from windows, and, now that Hunt was in jail, George IV had gotten rid of a "rival." 35

Hunt sarcastically labeled Louis XVIII "Louis the Desired" 36 and he expressed the hope that the tricolor would fly again in France when Louis died. 37 The Bourbons, Hunt claimed, were despised by all the French except the "lazy, indolent, rapacious, and profligate priesthood, and a few of the old bigotted nobility." 38

Few successful political figures were praised by Hunt, but two exceptions were George Washington and Napoleon Bonaparte. Hunt was an ardent admirer of Washington and described him as "a pure and spotless patriot" who was a "friend to the liberty of mankind." 39 However, Hunt's greatest accolades were reserved for Napoleon, and he wrote that he was emulating Sir Walter Raleigh and Napoleon by writing his biography while imprisoned. While he insisted that Napoleon was the most illustrious man of his times, both as a statesman and as a general, Hunt had some reservations about Napoleon's sincerity in the cause of liberty. 40

35 Ibid.  
37 Correspondence, March 25, 1821.  
38 Memoirs, III, 183.  
39 Ibid., I, 332.  
40 Ibid., p. vii.
claimed that Napoleon's greatest error had been either admiring the English "justice of the boroughmongers" or defeating tyrants, putting them back on the throne, and defeating them again. He wrote that Napoleon was too "noble, generous, and forgiving" to the tyrants, and according to Hunt, Napoleon had left Elba only because the Allies at Vienna had been plotting to move him to St. Helena. Hunt had felt a deep sadness when Wellington and "the dirty old animal Blücher" were victorious at Waterloo, and, of sending Napoleon to St. Helena he wrote, "Disgraceful, damnable, imperishable blot in the escutcheon of England's character!!" When he received the news of Napoleon's death, Hunt eulogized: "Though N. be gone, a love of liberty is not extinct."

As Hunt's ideas on political figures affected his actions and speech, in a like manner his thoughts on economics had an important influence upon his views of liberty. Besides expressing great pride in his own farming ventures, Hunt also exerted much of his written

41Ibid., p. viii. 42Ibid., II, 381-82.
43Ibid., III, 265. 44Ibid., pp. 250-51.
47Correspondence, July 9, 1821. Later he mentioned with pride that some ewe cheese intended for Napoleon had been sent to the "Captive of Ilchester." Ibid., October 9, 1821.
effort toward increasing the sales of Hunt's Breakfast Powder. He advertised for agents and wrote that he allowed his representatives "treble what I get" in profits. He wrote that one ounce of the powder boiled in two quarts of water, with a little sugar and milk added, would make a "wholesome and nutritious" meal for five persons. Hunt saw nothing wrong with mixing business and the Radical cause, and he claimed that he had invented the product so Radicals would not have to "force down their throats a heating, deleterious, narcotic berry" that was heavily taxed. However, when the Government ruled that Hunt's Powder was a beverage which must also pay the tax, it helped sound the death knell on this entrepreneurial effort by the Orator.

G. D. H. Cole wrote that Hunt was no Socialist, and at his trial Hunt testified he was a "reformer, not a leveller." Hunt had been indoctrinated against "equality" early in life, and when one of his tutors, a Mr. Carrington, had talked to the young Hunt of free and equal representation, Hunt's father had warned that the

48 Ibid., December 6, 1822.
49 Ibid., July 23, 1822.
50 Ibid., February 22, 1821.
51 Cole, A Short History, I, 69.
52 The Trial of Henry Hunt, p. 149.
"word equal will never go down." Hunt professed the belief that every man's house was his castle, and he held that all private property was sacred and inviolable. He wrote, "We do not mean an equal share of wealth, because that is an impossibility: we may as well contend for an equal share of talent . . . ." Hunt also believed in caveat emptor and showed no bitterness about getting a bad bargain in a horse trade with Burdett. In the same vein, Hunt warned his potential customers that he sold his Breakfast Powder for 'ready money only.'

In a talk given at the Crown and Anchor in London in September, 1819, Hunt insisted that his desire was not to set the rich against the poor. Hunt's message was that there must be both, some must work, and some must be kept. But, he warned, something was wrong when an honest working-man could not earn subsistence for his family, and Hunt

53 Memoirs, I, 138. 54 Ibid., III, 474.
55 Correspondence, August 27, 1820.
56 Ibid., October 9, 1821.
57 Memoirs, II, 283. He saw nothing wrong in taking advantage of French Bonapartist Lefebvre's straitened circumstances to make a forced purchase of a miniature of Napoleon. Later he also refused Madame Lucien Bonaparte's tearful pleas that she be allowed to purchase it. Ibid., pp. 429-31.
58 Correspondence, October 29, 1822. Earlier Hunt had warned his correspondents that he would refuse all letters that arrived without full postage. Ibid., December 10, 1820.
demanded that the workers be paid enough so that they could "lay up something for a rainy day." Hunt was highly critical of his own jail conditions, but he claimed that "... a poor labouring man is twice as well off in jail as he is out of it, as to meat, drink, washing, and lodging." Hunt claimed, apparently correctly, that he had made efforts to raise the poor rates all of his adult life, and, even before his entrance into the arena of political agitation, Hunt had effected a raise in the Enford poor rates from 2s. 6d. to 3s. Hunt expressed dismay at the "degrading idea of asking for parochial alms," and while relating that he had had to fire a man for refusing to work for 24s. a week in 1822, Hunt again insisted that 3s. per week poor pay to a single man was far too low. In 1834, just a year before his death, Hunt, along with Cobbett, was still criticizing the low poor rates.

Hunt was vehemently opposed to the Corn Bill which was passed in 1815, and he railed about its ill


60 Memoirs, I, xvii. 61 Ibid., p. 403.

62 Ibid., II, 180.

63 Correspondence, September 25, 1822.

64 Briggs, p. 279.
effect upon the laboring poor. Hunt referred to it as the "Starvation Act" and "England's Greatest Curse," and he commented:

... this law, this infamous Corn Bill, to enhance and keep up the price of bread, the staff of life, was passed under the protection of a military force, in defiance of the prayers, the petitions, and the remonstrances of a great majority of the people of England; . . . .

Hunt claimed that he had been the first to arouse feeling against the proposed Corn Bill when he had spoken at Warminster, January 6, 1813. Hunt was pessimistic about the possibility of farmers becoming devoted to the Radical cause, even though the Corn Bill was doing little to help them. His favorite epithet for farmers was "John Gull," and he wrote, "It seems the only way to John Gull's brains is through his pocket and belly." The Bath Agricultural Society was composed of "greedy, rapacious landholders, some long-headed, cunning parsons, and a number of vain, empty, conceited, boasting farmers." Worsening economic conditions

65Correspondence, December 10, 1821.
66Ibid., April 8, 1822.
67Memoirs, III, 245. 68Ibid., p. 234.
69Correspondence, December 10, 1821. When he was feeling better about farmers, Hunt called them "clod-hoppers." Memoirs, II, 39.
70Correspondence, December 10, 1821.
in 1822 caused economic distress among farmers, and Hunt predicted many estates would fall into the hands of "Jews, stock-brokers, contractors, or government agents." With some perception, Hunt saw that farmers became Radical to a greater or lesser degree in direct proportion to their economic prosperity.

Hunt's proposed remedy for economic distress was for the landlords to cut the rent, the clergy to cut the tithes, and a reformed Commons to cut the taxes. He did not believe war ever promoted freedom, happiness, or cheap bread because the Ministry, in his opinion, often used the fear of invasion to levy exorbitant taxes and borrow huge sums.

No type of tax received Hunt's praises. The tax on private breweries violated the principle that a man's home was his castle, and the hated income tax, also called the property tax, was "an arbitrary and inquisitorial war tax" that should have been abolished at the end of the war. Shortly after Peterloo, Hunt began calling upon Radicals to abstain from taxed beverages. He began production of his Breakfast Powder as a

71Ibid., September 25, 1822.
72Memoirs, II, 449. 73Ibid., p. 34.
74Ibid., p. 207.
75Ibid., III, 245. It was repealed March 18, 1816.
substitute, and he wrote a letter September 10, 1819, "To the Brave Reformers of Lancashire" reporting, "I have made a solemn vow not to taste one drop of Taxed Beer, Spirits, Wine, or Tea till we have brought these murderers [at Peterloo] to justice."76 Hunt exhorted against the port charges that he was levied when he sent half a ton of Breakfast Powder to help the starving Irish. According to him, the three pounds charge was levied by the "bloodstained fangs of an . . . agent of corruption."77 Hunt's position was that everyone in England paid taxes, and, since no one should be taxed without his consent, everybody should be allowed to vote.78

Hunt constantly urged the necessity of economy in the government, and he generally opposed government investigations because he thought they cost more than they saved.79 Economics practiced in the United States were often praised, and Hunt was pleased to report that

76 Peterloo Massacre, No. 5, p. 76.
77 Correspondence, June 22, 1822.
79 Memoirs, II, 285-86.
in America "the annual expenditure of the chief office of the State was only nine thousand five hundred pounds . . . ."\textsuperscript{80} Believing that the only real money was metal, Hunt claimed that ever since the government had stopped payments in cash by the Bank of England, "swindling, the most barefaced swindling, has become legalized."\textsuperscript{81} Paper money was "the paper bubble,"\textsuperscript{82} and Hunt warned his friends not to keep any "country bank-notes, or, in fact, any bank-notes at all."\textsuperscript{83}

The sinking fund was also a despicable innovation that "tickled John Gull's ear, . . . puzzled his brains, and emptied his pockets."\textsuperscript{84} Hunt railed against the "unjust and unnecessary war, profligate expenditure, the funding or swindling system, and . . . a ruinous and irredeemable debt."\textsuperscript{85} He advised the Radicals that they had had nothing to do with creating this national debt, that they had opposed the system, the policies, and the wars, and that they had no moral obligation to help pay it.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{80}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 34-35. \textsuperscript{81}\textit{Ibid.}, I, 332.
\textsuperscript{82}\textit{Correspondence}, July 23, 1822.
\textsuperscript{83}\textit{Ibid.}, April 8, 1822.
\textsuperscript{84}\textit{Memoirs}, II, 214. \textsuperscript{85}\textit{Ibid.}, I, vi.
\textsuperscript{86}\textit{Correspondence}, June 22, 1822.
Hunt saw a real need to reduce the Civil List and lower royal salaries. He also demanded that judges' salaries be reduced and unmerited sinecures and pensions be abolished. In 1821 Hunt was lamenting that over seventy Members of Parliament held government offices and were dead votes for the Government. While discussing Princess Charlotte's marriage to the Prince of Saxe Coburg, Hunt wrote, "I ridiculed, in indignant language, the idea of granting sixty thousand a year to a young German adventurer, merely for marrying our Princess, . . . ." It was not only marriage to German royalty to which Hunt objected, he also complained about the presence of German troops in England. He found it especially objectionable when they were used to oversee the flogging of English soldiers. Hunt thought England's standing army was a monster that was used to deprive the people of their constitutional rights, and in 1820, he was calling for the immediate disbanding of the army. He suggested pensioning all soldiers and

87 Ibid. See also Memoirs, II, 516.
88 Correspondence, February 10, 1821.
89 Memoirs, III, 315. When Princess Charlotte died, Hunt suggested by innuendo that the Prince had managed to get her to "pop off" so he could spend the pension unencumbered. Ibid., p. 507.
90 Ibid., II, 376. 91 Ibid., p. 150.
sailors at full pay for life, officers at half pay, and
giving all soldiers with ten years' service a cottage
and from two to five acres of land. All that Hunt would
have required of the pensioned soldiers would have been
to keep their equipment in good order and practice three
days or so a year to be able to resist invasion. Hunt
claimed that pensioning the soldiers would save £6,000,000
annually, and the money "squandered away upon the lords
of the admiralty" would pay for sailors' pensions.92

Hunt deprecated what he saw as the callous way
England treated the mustered out soldiers and sailors,
and he estimated that nine out of ten of them became
Radicals.93 According to Hunt, his plan for their
treatment would quickly be approved by any Reformed
Parliament.94

At irregular intervals, Hunt flayed other con-
ditions in England which he thought were inexcusable. He
complained about "those common pests of society, common
brewers."95 Charging a fee to go through Blenheim was
"a disgrace to the British character."96 While approving

92 Correspondence, August 27, 1820.

93 Ibid. Hunt wrote that "our sailors were dis-
charged and treated worse than dogs." Memoirs, III, 326.

94 Correspondence, August 27, 1820.

95 Memoirs, I, 255. 96 Ibid., II, 17.
the 1808 abolition of the slave trade, Hunt insisted England had "a system of white slavery at home."\(^{97}\) In 1822 Hunt called for the repeal of England's game laws, and he wrote that the two most common offenses in England were bastardy and poaching. Hunt wrote that all poaching was punished by the squires, ", . . . whether committed upon their young women or upon their hares."\(^{98}\)

Combination acts and the transportation laws also were attacked as "wanton and brutal acts of cruelty."\(^{99}\) Even when the Government stopped punishment by pillory, Hunt gave them no credit. Hunt claimed that the reason for the abolition was that the victims became popular heroes because of the general disenchantment with the courts.\(^{100}\) Hunt used the existence of capital punishment as an argument for manhood suffrage:

"I am one of those who will never assent to the justice of taking away the life of a man in cold blood, upon any other principle than that of the law, and laws made, too, by universal consent. A man put to death in cold blood, deliberately executed, in pursuance of any law that is not made by common consent, that is, by the assent of the whole community, I shall always hold to be murdered; this consideration alone is quite sufficient to justify the demand for universal suffrage."\(^{101}\)

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\(^{97}\)Ibid., p. 214.

\(^{98}\)Correspondence, September 25, 1822. As a Member for Preston in 1831, Hunt called for lower penalties for poaching. Hammond, p. 166.

\(^{99}\)Memoirs, II, 303-04. \(^{100}\)Ibid., III, 300.

\(^{101}\)Ibid., p. 54. See also Correspondence, October 9, 1821.
In the last letter in his Correspondence, Hunt reported on a meeting he recently had attended in Wells, Somersetshire. It had been called by the Whigs, but Hunt claimed that he had been the most popular public figure in attendance. He offered an amendment which listed many of the targets of his wrath and which called for (1) reducing the standing army, (2) abolition of sinecures, (3) reduction of the civil list and royal salaries, (4) reduction of all tax-paid salaries, (5) repeal of the taxes on salt, malt, hops, leather, soap, candles, farmers' riding horses, and tradesmen's draft horses, (6) repeal of the game laws to allow every farmer to kill game on land he occupied, and (7) a ban on all clergymen from being commissioners of the peace or of taxes, sewers, or turnpikes.102

Hunt claimed his amendment carried almost unanimously. The meeting had arisen out of the agricultural distress of the times, and Hunt's first amendment, a call for a Reformed Commons, had been rejected.103 To Hunt the one solution to the ills of England was constantly the same: Radical Reform. He was always insistent that a Reformed Parliament would pass all the laws necessary.104

102 Correspondence, July 8, 1823.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid., August 10, 1822.
CHAPTER V

HUNT'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER RADICALS AND
HIS PLANS FOR RADICAL ACTION

Quick and assertive governmental action along
with an economic upturn contributed largely to the lack
of Radical success following the events of 1816 to 1819.
However, dissension among the Radical leaders was also an
important factor in the decline of the movement for
Radical Reform. Henry Hunt, whose self-professed interest
in history had caused him to label the year 1812 "the most
interesting period in the history of the world," lamented
in January, 1821, that the Radicals had been much stronger
in 1817. Hunt asserted that the passage of the Seditious
Meetings Act and the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act
had testified to their strength.2

Within the Radical movement were spokesmen of
varying hues of respectability. Professor A. Stanley
Trickett puts these leaders into five categories: (1)
Sir Francis Burdett and Lord John Russell, seeking legis-
lationary action in the House of Commons; (2) William

1Memoirs, III, 47.
2Correspondence, January 23, 1821.
Cobbett, spreading Radical ideas through the Hampden Clubs and his Political Register; (3) Henry Hunt, working to arouse working class emotions through his oratorical rabble-rousing; (4) the Spenceans, who demanded not only political equality but also equality of wealth through public ownership of all land; and (5) Arthur Thistlewood and the Physical Force Party, who believed that any means, including riots and assassinations, were legitimate methods to gain their revolutionary goals.\(^3\) In a movement that included such diversity of philosophy, dissension was to be expected. Donald Read maintains that the principal cause of the Radical decline was internal conflict,\(^4\) and he blames Hunt for precipitating a large part of the trouble in the fall of 1819.\(^5\) E. P. Thompson also stresses the bickering among the Radicals, and he says that the greatest cause of disagreement was "sheer vanity."\(^6\) Thompson additionally points out that money was another source of friction, that Hunt was extravagant in his tastes, and that, unfortunately, no clear dividing line existed between private business and the finances of the movement.\(^7\) As an example, Hunt ended

\(^{3}\)Interview with A. Stanley Trickett, Chairman, History Department, University of Nebraska at Omaha, July 11, 1968.

\(^{4}\)Read, p. 155. \(^{5}\)Ibid., p. 156.

\(^{6}\)Thompson, p. 626. \(^{7}\)Ibid.
the last letter of his Correspondence extolling his Roasted Corn. He told his readers that the government had refunded the £200 "which I paid for the invention of it" because it was so good.\(^8\)

Hunt devoted a sizable amount of his writing in both his Memoirs and in his Correspondence to either attacking or praising his fellow Radicals. An early friend, William Butcher, was called a "famous arm-chair politician; . . . he would never act."\(^9\) He warned the Radicals away from Sir Thomas Lethbridge, a Tory member of that group of agriculturists labeled by their opponents "Jolterheads."\(^10\) Hunt scorned Lethbridge's Radicalism as consisting "not of principle, but of empty pockets and no rents."\(^11\) The venerated "Father of Reform," Major John Cartwright, was too much respected to be violently attacked by Hunt. However, Cartwright's acceptance of Burdett's plan for householder suffrage was too limited for Hunt's tastes.\(^12\) Richard Carlile and Hunt often traded attacks.

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\(^8\)Correspondence, July 23, 1823. Nowhere in the letter did Hunt indicate that this would be his last letter.

\(^9\)Memoirs, I, 504.  
\(^10\)Halévy, p. 114.

\(^11\)Correspondence, July 14, 1822.

\(^12\)Cartwright, in his late seventies during this period of Radical agitation, had refused to fight in America during the American Revolution. He was a prime mover in the organization of the Hampden Clubs, and he was fined £1000 for sedition in 1820. He died in 1824. DNB, III, 1133-34.
as Hunt defended himself from Carlile's barbs urging Hunt to stand for a republic and to disavow organized religion.\textsuperscript{13}

Arthur Thistlewood was too violent and intemperate in his manners and actions to suit Hunt. Hunt preferred the more moderate leader of the Spenceans, Dr. James Watson,\textsuperscript{14} and thought that Thistlewood's immoderation was likely to make him an easy prey for government spies. Nevertheless, Thistlewood and Hunt spoke from the same platform July 21, 1819, and Thistlewood organized the September 5 London reception for Hunt after his release on bail following the Peterloo Massacre. Thistlewood was executed May 1, 1820, for his part in the Cato Street Conspiracy.\textsuperscript{15} C. R. Fay, who usually defended the governmental actions in this Radical crisis, insisted upon coupling the two Radicals, and he wrote that the working class "revelled in the extravagances of Thistlewood and Hunt."\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13}Correspondence, April 24, 1822. In November, 1819 Carlile, who is credited with being instrumental in increasing freedom of press in England, was sentenced to three years imprisonment for libel. Castlereagh suggested at the time that transportation would have been a better penalty. DNB, III, 1010-11.

\textsuperscript{14}DNB, XX, 922. See also Thompson, p. 635, n. 4.

\textsuperscript{15}DNB, XIX, 623. Among Thistlewood's indiscretions was an 1818 challenge to a duel that he sent to Sidmouth which resulted in a jail sentence. Ibid., I, 120.

The political disagreements between Hunt and Francis Place led to personal attacks by each upon the other. Cobbett joined Hunt in calling Place a spy after Place had said that Cobbett was "an unprincipled, cowardly bully" and Hunt was "impudent, active, and vulgar." To Hunt, Place was "that political tailor" whose word was not to be trusted. Hunt said that Place was a "violent, professed Republican" who had been known to take a bribe while serving on a jury. He later described Place as a "Jacobin tailor" with "malicious feelings" who had a "rancorous hostility against Mr. Hunt." For years, wrote Hunt, Burdett would not even appear in the same room with Place.

Hunt's invitation to speak at Manchester August 16, 1819, had come from Joseph Johnson, a Manchester brushmaker. In the recriminations that followed that fateful meeting, Johnson was severely attacked by Hunt. Hunt was unhappy about a debt that Johnson claimed Hunt owed for the cost of stabling his horse, and Hunt called Johnson a "mean, dirty, cowardly dog" who was full of "vanity, emptiness, and conceit." He further claimed that

\[\text{Thompson, p. 486.} \quad \text{Memoirs, II, 423-24.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., III, 577.} \quad \text{Ibid., p. 578.}\]
\[\text{Correspondence, May 25, 1822.}\]
\[\text{Memoirs, III, 631.} \quad \text{Ibid., p. 606.}\]
Johnson was the basest, most unprincipled person ever to live, and that he would do anything "to save his own worthless carcass."

The one fellow Radical toward whom Hunt was constant in his praise was Sir Charles Wolseley. He claimed that Wolseley had begun supporting Radical Reform in 1811, but that they had not met each other until November 17, 1818, at the Crown and Anchor in London. Furthermore, according to Hunt, they had not had their first private visit until August, 1819, when Hunt had stopped at Wolseley's place on the way to Manchester. This was shortly after a mock-election in Birmingham had named Wolseley as the "member" of Commons, or 'legislatorial attorney' for that city. Wolseley was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment for sedition for his response to that "election." Hunt wrote of the "magnanimous and truly generous conduct of Sir Charles Wolseley" and praised him for his "true, noble, manly, and patriotic part" following Peterloo. When Wolseley

24 Ibid., p. 622.
25 Ibid., II, 478-79.
26 Ibid., III, 556.
27 Ibid., p. 601.
28 Ziegler, p. 370.
29 Memoirs, III, 638.
was freed from jail, Hunt hailed him as a Radical hero who would never fear the tyrants in England.

Hunt's relations with the two famous Radicals, Sir Francis Burdett and William Cobbett, were characterized by tempestuous changes. Burdett, who was in Paris during the early years of the French Revolution, returned to England in 1793 and entered Commons for the first time in 1796. He was a wealthy and generous man who opposed the French wars and strongly advocated freedom of speech. As a cautious legislative reformer, Burdett often became estranged from Henry Hunt between their periods of alliance for the Radical cause.

Hunt recalled that his first meeting with Burdett had been in Cobbett's apartment in King's Bench Prison while they were all serving terms in 1810. Hunt reported telling Burdett that he would follow him, "... yet, if ever you should stand still," Hunt would leave him and go forward. He wrote that Burdett, upon hearing this, immediately cooled toward him, and that Cobbett was surprised, too. Hunt chaired a dinner at Bristol in 1812

30 Correspondence, December 10, 1821.
31 Ibid., July 14, 1822. When Hunt was released from prison, Wolseley and Thomas Northmore each put up a £500 bond guaranteeing his peaceful behavior. Ibid., December 6, 1822.
34 Ibid., p. 28.
to celebrate Burdett's election victory at Westminster, and Hunt claimed that he was named a dangerous enemy of the government for doing so. During the same election Hunt had stood unsuccessfully for Bristol in a riotous affair. In July Burdett presented a petition to Commons from Hunt in which Hunt complained of the military presence during the election and listed other alleged malpractices, including bribery, terror, and murder.

The 1816 Spa Fields meetings and the accompanying riot caused an estrangement between the two men. Hunt, who had earlier questioned Burdett's motives in failing to oppose the Corn Bill, claimed that Burdett "deserted his post . . . in the years 1816 and 1817." Even so, Hunt claimed to value the Baronet's friendship above any "pecuniary considerations" and wrote that he never felt any "private enmity" toward him. Despite this claim, Hunt opposed Burdett and his party in 1818 and claimed that


37Memoirs, III, 235.

38Ibid., p. 580. In February, 1817 Burdett was no more than lukewarm in supporting a Hunt petition to Commons alleging oppression, misrepresentation, and libel following the Spa Fields meetings. Hansard's, 1st ser., Vol. 35 (1817), pp. 210-11.

39Memoirs, III, 78.
"ruffians and assassins were regularly hired to attack me in a body." Hunt claimed that he caused a partial defeat of the Burdettites at this 1818 Westminster election, although Hunt himself received few votes.

In 1819 Hunt accused Burdett of shirking the cause for reform in a pamphlet, *The Green Bag Plot*, but Burdett's letter attacking the August 16 actions of the Manchester magistrates again caused Hunt to warm toward him. Hunt claimed that in any nation but England the letter "would have caused the whole people to rise in arms to avenge the horrid murders which had been committed upon their helpless, unoffending countrymen." Before long, however, Hunt became impatient with what he considered too timid efforts by Burdett to obtain a parliamentary enquiry into the actions of August 16, 1819. Before he had been in Ilchester prison two months, Hunt was attacking Burdett for three times making and then withdrawing motions for enquiry. He suggested that Burdett's actions could be explained by the fact that the Baronet had not yet been sentenced for the seditious libel conviction which had resulted from his letter. Hunt,

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42 *DNB*, X, 265. 43 *Memoirs*, III, 634.
professing a strong distrust of Burdett's constancy, wrote, 'But Brutus is an honourable man!' In his letters from prison, Hunt was harshly critical of Burdett from July, 1820, to February, 1821.

Within the next year Hunt's attitude toward Burdett again underwent a change. Burdett, always working in his own quiet and dedicated manner, was attempting to lessen Hunt's sentence. In February, 1822, he told Commons that Hunt's sentence had been against the individual, not the crime. He maintained that it "was not an act of justice, but of vengeance. It was a paying off of old scores." Three days later Hunt was writing of his forgiveness of Burdett and suggesting that he may have been wrong in his judgment of the Baronet. When Burdett visited Hunt in prison April 18, Hunt was overwhelmed by such an act of kindness. Hunt expressed sorrow for the unjustness of his

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44 Correspondence, July 1, 1820. Burdett's sentence was finally set at three months. Hunt wrote that it "best everything of the sort I ever knew." Ibid., February 22, 1821.

45 See Ibid., August 27, 1821; December 10, 1820; February 10, 1821; and February 22, 1821.


47 Correspondence, February 11, 1822. Hunt was in solitary confinement at the time, although Sir Thomas Lethbridge told Commons that just because Hunt said he was in solitary was no reason to believe it. Hansard's, 2nd ser., Vol. 6 (1822), p. 520.
past attacks and tried to excuse them in the name of an over-zealous desire for liberty. Hunt, in a pensive frame of mind, suggested the possibility that he may have done other Radicals a similar injustice and promised more tolerance to those who could not see the urgency of "Annual Parliaments, Universal Suffrage, and Vote by Ballot." According to Hunt, "Sir Francis Burdett has set me a noble example... of forgiveness." 48

Burdett made a long speech on April 24 supporting his motion for the remission of Hunt's sentence. Burdett's motion lost, 223-84, 49 but the "Ilchester Captive" was satisfied that Burdett had done all in his power in the cause of justice. For the next year amicable relations existed between the two, then the inevitable, considering Hunt's personality, happened. When Burdett refused to support the freed Hunt's plans for Radical reorganization and action, Hunt again attacked him. In the last of his Correspondence, Hunt scolded Burdett and the others who opposed him for holding sinecures and pensions. 50

The relationship between Hunt and William Cobbett was probably even stormier than that between Hunt and Burdett. Cobbett, a man of peasant origins who had little

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48 Correspondence, April 24, 1822.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., July 8, 1823.
formal education, had spent eight years in the army. In the early 1790's he lived first in France, then in America, and returned to England in 1800. He had been a Federalist in the United States, but by 1804 he was taking the popular side in politics. An article attacking the flogging of soldiers brought Cobbett a two year prison term in 1810. In 1816 he reduced the price of his journal to 2d. and joined the Radical cause. He fled the country in March, 1817, but he returned in late 1819 bringing Thomas Paine's bones with him. Edward Smith called Cobbett an eloquent, independent man with common sense who was, at the same time, pugnacious, virulent, inconsistent, and of doubtful integrity. Historians have generally been much kinder to Cobbett than to Hunt. John Derry, for example, calls Hunt "vain, fickle, unreliable, and self-centered" while he claims that Cobbett "typified all the bluff virtues of the English yeomanry."

Hunt first met Cobbett in 1808, and Hunt reported that he was not impressed. He thought that Cobbett had both poor manners and a poor appearance, but Hunt wrote in his Memoirs, "I believe that two men never lived that more sincerely, honestly, and zealously,

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51 DNB, IV, 598-600. 52 Ibid., p. 600.
54 Memoirs, II, 257.
advocated public liberty than we did, hand in hand, for eight or ten years." In 1809 Hunt gave Cobbett a freehold tenement in Wiltshire, and in 1810 they shared rooms in King's Bench Prison. According to Hunt, Cobbett asked him during their prison stay to promise that he would "never wear white breeches again." Hunt angrily replied that he would so promise on one condition: "... that you will ... never ... wear dirty breeches again."

When Cobbett began selling his Political Register for 2d. in November, 1816, he deemed it necessary to advocate a program that would have a mass appeal. He chose universal suffrage over householder suffrage, thus joining, at least partially, Henry Hunt's Radical camp and dividing from Burdett and Major Cartwright. Three weeks earlier Cobbett and Cartwright had tried to convince a Committee of the Hampden Club to support householder suffrage, but Hunt had carried his motion for universal suffrage, 60-3. Cobbett had also endorsed the limited suffrage in the October 19, 1816, Register, and Hunt was sure that he had

55Ibid., pp. 169-70.  56DNB, X, 265.
58Halévy, pp. 15-16.
59Memoirs, I, ix-x. Hunt wrote, "See how constant I have always been!" Ibid., p. x.
caused Cobbett to change his stand even though Cobbett credited Cartwright with convincing him.

When Cobbett fled to America in March of 1817 to escape possible prosecution, his fellow Radical was shocked, or as Hunt put it, "I was thunderstruck." Yet at the same time, Hunt was understanding and indicated that Cobbett had acted reasonably in leaving the country. Not until later, when their relations had become strained, did he attack Cobbett for fleeing. Hunt was gratified by the twelve public letters that Cobbett wrote to "My dear Hunt," and it was at Cobbett's urging that he stood unsuccessfully for election against Burdett in 1818. Cobbett also thought that Burdett was a deserter and offered, from America, to raise money for Hunt. Hunt wrote happily of Cobbett, "How faithful his friendship is, he has admirably proved." Later the same year, when Sir Samuel Romilly's suicide caused a special election, Hunt nominated Cobbett, but no one seconded the nomination.

60_Ibid., III, 355-56._

61_Halévy, p. 16, claimed that Cobbett was not telling the truth. Cartwright was still favoring household suffrage.

62_Memoirs, III, 463._

63_Ibid., p. 525._

64_Ibid., p. 526._

65_Ibid._

66_Ibid., pp. 557-64._
When Cobbett returned to England in November, 1819, Hunt was under indictment for his actions at Manchester. Cobbett, quite willing to give up some of his principles to avoid the possibility of prison, did not give the Orator the support that Hunt felt he deserved. Hunt now angrily accused Cobbett of being a deserter and complained that he had "behaved very ill to me" since his return. Continuing the attack, Hunt berated Cobbett for going to America "out of Harm's way," while Cobbett knew that Hunt would never have "sanctioned so dastardly, so thoroughly unmanly a proceeding as that of flying from the country, and abandoning the Reformers . . . ." Cobbett retaliated in the same manner by accusing Hunt of having had a "government protection" in his pocket at Peterloo. Hunt was infuriated by this slur upon his courage and called Cobbett a "liar and a slanderer of the first class." Cobbett then belittled the value of Hunt's charity to Ireland, and refused to cooperate in the distribution of Hunt's Memoirs. Hunt suggested that

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67 DNB, IV, 600.  
68 Memoirs, III, 22.  
69 Correspondence, December 24, 1821.  
70 Memoirs, III, 475.  
71 Correspondence, July 23, 1822. See also Ibid., August 10, 1822.  
72 Ibid., July 23, 1822.  
73 Ibid., June 22, 1822.
Cobbett was not a true reformer and that writing the Register was only his trade. Hunt conceded that Cobbett had done much good, but claimed that he had also done much harm.\textsuperscript{74} Cobbett, in the same vein, published a ribald poem that he wrote attacking Hunt, "To 'Saint Henry of Ilchester'" and Hunt published an answering poem about Cobbett and Joseph Johnson, "Cobbett and His Man Bristle, or Buying a Brush."\textsuperscript{75}

Samuel Bamford may have been correct when he wrote;

\ldots Cobbett was jealous of Hunt's popularity, just as Hunt was jealous of Thistlewood's fame; \ldots they hated each other with a most sincere hatred. Not so the worthy Major Cartwright; he was always the same.\textsuperscript{76}

Bamford, writing two decades later in \textit{Passages in the Life of a Radical}, published some interesting thoughts about Henry Hunt.\textsuperscript{77} He complained about Hunt's thoughtless lack of hospitality to him,\textsuperscript{78} and inferred that

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid., July 23, 1822.
\textsuperscript{75}Ibid., September 9, 1822.
\textsuperscript{76}Bamford, II, 303. In the late 1820's Cobbett and Hunt, who were about the only Radical leaders who were not moving toward an alliance with the Whigs, were still staging their public quarrels. Halévy, pp. 281-82.
\textsuperscript{77}Bamford, an unsophisticated Manchester weaver, received a violent initiation into the Radical movement when he received a one year sentence for his part in Peterloo. \textit{DNB}, I, 1020.
\textsuperscript{78}Bamford, II, 279.
Hunt was in the habit of taking pay for attending public meetings. Bamford wrote, "I considered it a mean thing . . . ." 79

Bamford showed his fairness in claiming that Hunt "had thus more to sustain than any other man of this day and station, and should be judged accordingly." 80 He told the poignant story of his arrest following Peterloo. As Bamford stepped from his house, he shouted, "Hunt and liberty." His wife answered the same, and a policeman warned that he would "blow her brains out" if she did it again. "Blow away," she replied, "Hunt and liberty. Hunt for ever." 81 As the story indicates, Hunt was almost worshiped by working class Radicals like Bamford in 1819. Only later were they disillusioned enough to write that Henry Hunt showed "intense selfishness," and that in his faults "Hunt was the weakest of men." 82

Bamford claimed that in the Radical movement the "blind were then leading the blind" 83 and that Hunt was not happy and would not let his friends be:

They must not only serve him, but they must do it at his own time, in his own manner, and to the extent he wished, or he would quarrel with them. His earnestness and vehemence he carried with him

79 Ibid., p. 36. Hunt always vehemently denied such charges.

80 Ibid., pp. 19-20. 81 Ibid., p. 172.

82 Ibid., p. 235. 83 Ibid., p. 27.
everywhere, and exhibited on the most trifling occasions; in consequence he became annoying and oppressive...  

Bamford contended that Hunt's mind had become deranged with vanity during his stay at Ilchester prison. While it is extremely unlikely that Hunt was insane in any medical sense, he did show certain characteristics of egomania. He gloried in the adulation of the crowds and happily responded to the cry, "Bravo, Hunt! Give it to them!" He often referred to himself in the third person:

... that man whom you have... [Named] your champion, and in whose incarceration a deadly blow is, with savage ferocity, aimed at your rights and liberties--one who, during his whole political career, will be found to have been the consistent and undeviating advocate of real or radical reform...  

He claimed that his family had had a foreboding that he would suffer a fatal accident at St. Peter's Field August 16, 1819. Upon his release from prison in 1822, Hunt again showed his desire for recognition when he said that he was attending to his private business, but added wistfully that if the people should ever want him to serve them, their call

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84 Ibid., p. 213.  
85 DNB, X, 265.  
86 Memoirs, III, 289.  
87 Ibid., I, v.  
88 Ibid., III, 600. Hunt wrote that he had given his word and that was enough to insure his attendance.
should "not be made in vain." Then Hunt added one of his favorite remarks, "But we shall see." In both his Memoirs and his Correspondence, Henry Hunt made many suggestions which he thought would improve the Radical chances of success. He advised the Radicals to wear identifying clothing such as white hats and green handkerchiefs with white borders, "Green and white . . . are the colours adopted by my friends . . . ." Hunt addressed his letters "To the Radical Reformers, Male and Female, of England, Scotland, and Ireland" and advised his readers "never to drop the significant word Radical, it is so much better than the Boroughmonger's old bugaboo of Jacobin." He encouraged the involvement of women in the Radical movement, and joined Cobbett in urging the abstinence from taxed beverages.

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89 Correspondence, December 6, 1822.
90 Ibid.
91 Cf., Chapters II, III, IV.
92 Correspondence, October 14, 1822.
93 Ibid., November 24, 1821. Halévy, pp. 67-68, n. 6, discusses the origin of "radical" as a noun. He concludes that the first such usage was on the day of Peterloo, August 16, 1819, by The Times (London).
94 Correspondence, October 9, 1821. Bamford claimed that he deserved the credit for the first women voting at a Radical meeting. Bamford, II, 141.
95 Read, pp. 158-59. The movement experienced little success.
Beginning in 1819, the Orator advised the Radicals to no longer petition any unreformed House of Commons. The *Annual Register* reported a "harangue" by Hunt in which he treated with "contempt" the petitioning of Commons which had "'kicked their prayers and petitions out of doors'."\(^{96}\) When the Irish leader, Daniel O'Connor, announced that he would no longer petition the House of Commons, Hunt was thrilled that he had finally taken "the olive branch."\(^{97}\) In 1822 Hunt changed his position and scolded the Radicals who had taken his advice against petitioning so literally that they even refused to petition Commons to get Hunt out of solitary confinement. Hunt claimed that this was carrying hostility too far when they had "a friend or brother in solitary confinement, subject to the secret torture . . . ." He told them in apparent seriousness that now everyone should petition because times had changed, and some of the Members had "come up to the mark."\(^{98}\)

Hunt was vehement in urging the Radicals to make a momentous annual observance of the Peterloo Massacre. In 1820 he called for a "Voluntary Fast Day" on August 16, 1820.

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\(^{96}\) *Annual Register*, General History, LXI (1819), p. 103.

\(^{97}\) *Correspondence*, January 23, 1821.

and suggested that it be called "Fast Day of Bloodgush."99 On February 22, 1821, he wrote that fourteen had been killed and 618 wounded at Manchester and warned that they must never be forgotten.100 The next July Hunt wrote, "All days are cheering to me, with the exception of the sixteenth of August,"101 and he exhorted the Radicals to speak out on the anniversary of that fateful day: "Will you cower down like slaves, or will you stand erect like free men?"102 He then told of his hopes for the day:

I shall fancy I hear myriads of . . . voices whisper, in gentle notes, "this is the second anniversary of this day that our Friend has passed immured within the yawning walls of a pestilential dungeon.--For coming among us at our call to help us!" My spirit will be with you . . . . I shall be present, in imagination, with you all on the bloody SIXTEENTH OF AUGUST; we shall be in full communion . . . and at the very same moment (about twenty minutes past one o'clock) our voices will . . . call aloud for JUSTICE OR VENGEANCE.103

Hunt also had a plan to exhibit the talent and the industry of the working class. He suggested a museum to show the products of the workers to the "slothful titled drones," and he thought that a proper name for

99Ibid., July 1, 1820.

100Ibid., February 22, 1821. See also Ibid., August 24, 1821; September 24, 1821; March 11, 1822; and July 23, 1822. Most historians agree that eleven deaths resulted from the Manchester incident.

101Ibid., July 26, 1821.

102Ibid.

103Ibid.
the exhibit would be "Hunt's Radical Museum." Plans to publish "A Political Memorandum Book" were also announced. In addition to cash line pages, the book would contain such political events in England since the French Revolution as

subversion of justice, treasons against the Constitution, suffering of prisoners, dates of sentences, spies, plotters, blood-money-men (such as Oliver, Castles, Reynolds, Franklyn, Clegg, etc, etc); . . . when great public meetings were held; and when wicked laws were passed, such as Suspension of Habeas Corpus Acts, Corn Bills, Six Acts, Manchester Meeting, 16th of August, 1819, etc, etc, etc . . . .

Almost without exception, Hunt cautioned against violence, and urged the people to be calm and sensible. In his post-Peterloo London speech, he told the crowd, "Go . . . in peace . . . to your homes, . . . and may God bless you! I have done my best for the people--you approve what I have done, and I am ready to die for the people." But the riots that evolved from Queen Caroline's funeral parade so excited Hunt that for once he advocated violence in "self-defence." He advised his readers that some useful lessons could be learned from the riots. One was that horse soldiers could not

104Ibid., November 24, 1821. See also Ibid., June 22, 1822 and November 14, 1822.
105Ibid., December 24, 1821.
106Peterloo Massacre, No. 6, p. 92.
pass barricades of wagons and carts chained together, and another lesson was that soldiers were cowards who struck those who did nothing and refused to face those who stoned them. Hunt ominously suggested that an iron palisade of the type common in the west end of London would make a good weapon against a horse. Hunt was careful to say that he was advocating resisting only those troops "unlawfully" employed, but

To be sure, if, after having saved myself from being murdered, by having my skull split in two by the sabre of a horse-soldier, I were to use my iron-bar, and by a blow with it, either on the head or forelegs, bring the horse to the ground, and then by another slight pat, I were to send his rider (who had just attempted to murder me) to the next world; why even then my conscience would acquit me, although it is possible a jury, as they are at present selected, might not.107

One can easily imagine the consternation such violent words had on more moderate Radicals like Cartwright, Burdett, and Cobbett.

Hunt advised the working class that it was imperative that they have better representation in Commons. He reminded the Preston Radicals that he had said that if he were not sent to Parliament, no enquiry into Peterloo would take place,108 and by October, 1822,

107Correspondence, August 24, 1821.
108Ibid., July 1, 1820.
he was calling the people of Preston his constituents. To accomplish this representation, Hunt saw the need for the existence of a permanent reform fund to either buy several seats or to pay the expenses of candidates in contested elections. Hunt preferred the latter method.

To achieve this goal of raising money for Radical causes and at the same time lend a permanence to the Radical movement, Hunt unfolded his master plan for the Great Northern Union of Radical Reformers in September, 1821. Dues were to be a penny a week, and the Union was to have a legitimate and open purpose to disarm their opponents. Its holy purpose was to be rational liberty. Every town in Lancashire was urged to form a committee with the avowed purpose of electing a Member of Commons. The organization must be a legal one, Hunt warned, and he suggested Sir Charles Wolseley as the treasurer. He repeatedly urged the Radicals to do everything openly because "you probably have some spy in the room who will hear this letter read."

In addition, Hunt insisted that the Radicals needed to

109 Ibid., October 14, 1822. Cole wrote that when Hunt was elected to Commons from Preston in 1830, he was "the first real representative in Parliament of the working class Radicals." Cole, Life of William Cobbett, p. 376.

110 Correspondence, July 25, 1820.

111 Ibid., August 10, 1820.

112 Ibid., September 24, 1821. Read says that Hunt was largely motivated by the collapse of the old movement. Read, p. 162.
have their own press, and his suggestion was the Manchester Observer.

The Union would be divided into sections of 106 men with a Centurion at their head, under him would be five Trusty Men who must enlist twenty men. Each Centurion would pay weekly dues of 6d., each Trusty Man 3d., and each Brother a penny. All members were to address each other as Brother, and a Central Committee was to be set up in each county in England and Scotland. Hunt wrote caustically, "Pat appears to be stupefied, . . . I shall leave Ireland out . . . for the present."

Hunt suggested that a good day for the countrywide organizational meetings would be November 6, his birthday. He estimated that the potential membership was 3,000,000 people with a total annual income of £117,000,000. He advised the Radicals to buy from no person who was not a member of the Union: "Oh, how the vipers will scream and rave." If Radical tradesmen were not to be found, the Union would set up their own members in the trades. He warned his followers to beware of drunkards and wrote, "I implore you not to enter the doors of a public house." He reminded his readers that if they stuck together "we can show them we can do better without them than vice versa."113

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Correspondence, September 24, 1821. All the foregoing plans for the Union are condensed from this
In his next letter, Hunt was already claiming great success in organizing the Union, and he advised the Radicals that women should also be included but that the Twenties must not be of mixed sexes. Two weeks later Hunt again warned that the meetings would have to be open and candid, with no secret committees, no secret correspondence, and no secret members. He reminded them, "We are surrounded by all sorts of laws . . . ." A month later he accepted the suggestion of John Butler of Little Bolton that there be but two Trusty Men under each Centurion and that the sections contain only ten, not twenty, people.

By January, 1822, Hunt was saying that the sole purpose of the Great Northern Union fund was to elect Members of Commons, and any person with three months membership in the Union was to be allowed a vote on whether or not a candidate would be supported. Hunt quickly became dissatisfied by the lagging interest in the Union, and in February, 1822, he expressed public letter. In at least twelve following letters of his Correspondence, Hunt wrote at length of the Great Northern Union.

114 Ibid., October 9, 1821.
115 Ibid., October 26, 1821.
116 Ibid., November 24, 1821. A fine was also proposed for anyone appearing at a meeting drunk.
117 Ibid., January 23, 1822.
disappointment at the slow progress.\textsuperscript{118} Carlile had attacked the Radicals for being Christians and had suggested that the Union fund was to be used to buy a borough,\textsuperscript{119} and even Burdett's promise to join had not lent a large degree of momentum to the movement.\textsuperscript{120} Yet, Hunt still had hopes for success, and just before his release from Ilchester, he announced his plans to start a paper which could be the new voice of the Radicals: \textit{Hunt's Union; or the Radical Reporter}.\textsuperscript{121} Both the Union and the paper were doomed to an early death by the working class apathy which was largely the result of an economic upsurge. Hunt's greatest dream had met obstacles which he was powerless to avoid and which he could not overcome: better times for the workers and jealous dissension among the Radical leaders.

Hunt wrote in his \textit{Memoirs}, "I was taught . . . that those who promoted the Revolution and guillotined the King of France were bloody-minded fellows . . . ."\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid.}, February 11, 1822. See also \textit{Ibid.}, June 22, 1822.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid.}, May 25, 1822.
\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Ibid.}, October 9, 1821.
\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Ibid.}, October 14, 1822.
\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Memoirs}, I, 136.
and, while he later came to support the cause of the Revolutionists, he advocated neither violence nor the abolition of the English monarchy. He warned that to demand a constitution was treason, and when some Leeds Radicals suggested a constitution, Hunt furiously labeled their action "arrogance and presumption." He also deprecated any action designed to overturn the established religion, and had no use for "playing at soldiers." Following the Peterloo incident, Hunt had said that if coming armed to meetings were necessary, it would be better to have no meetings. Radicals were advised "to avoid the snares of the most violent men, who are generally agents of the Government," because the government was "dying for a plot," and the spies should be avoided "as you would a pestilence." Many of the more intemperate Radicals thought that Hunt was too timid, but in late 1819 Hunt

\[1^{23}\text{Correspondence, April 11, 1821.}\]
\[1^{24}\text{Ibid., October 9, 1821.}\]
\[1^{25}\text{The Trial of Henry Hunt, p. 148.}\]
\[1^{26}\text{Thompson, p. 682.}\]
\[1^{27}\text{Read, p. 156. Quoting the Manchester Observer, October 23, 1819.}\]
\[1^{28}\text{Memoirs, II, 99.}\]
\[1^{29}\text{Correspondence, March 25, 1821.}\]
was rapidly disassociating himself from the extremists and taking no chances of jeopardizing his cause at his upcoming trial.\textsuperscript{130} Even so, throughout his career, Hunt had steadily urged that the Radicals blend caution with constancy.

Henry Hunt was dealing with a working class that was fickle with its loyalties, and he often urged the people to stay with him although "some portion of the giddy public are always ready to toss up their caps and halloo at anything new."\textsuperscript{131} He urged them to avoid "mushroom reformers" and wrote of a John Allen of Bath: "He being a mushroom reformer, raised his head for a short season, and was cut off and disappeared . . . almost as quick as a mushroom disappears after a nipping frost."\textsuperscript{132} Hunt recognized the danger that the Whigs represented to the Radical leaders, and he told the laborers to avoid the aristocracy; instead it was time the aristocratic Whigs searched out the people.\textsuperscript{133} He also disliked the idea of dukes and

\textsuperscript{130}Thompson, p. 700.

\textsuperscript{131}Correspondence, June 10, 1822. See also \textit{Ibid.}, February 22, 1821; July 26, 1821; June 22, 1822. See \textit{Ibid.}, August 24, 1821, for a violent attack on the "slavish, fawning Irish" who welcomed George IV when he visited there.

\textsuperscript{132}Memoirs, III, 409. See also \textit{Correspondence}, August 24, 1822.

\textsuperscript{133}Correspondence, December 24, 1821.
earls being invited to join the Great Northern Union.\textsuperscript{134} Hunt was greatly agitated by the specter of a collapsing Radical movement, and he told his followers in late 1819 to "despair not, my friends" as he assured them Heaven would assist them in obtaining their cause.\textsuperscript{135} Later, while writing of the divisive effects of Radical jealousy, Hunt, with questionable sincerity, offered to withdraw to save the cause.\textsuperscript{136}

That cause, of course, was Rational Liberty, and the prescribed method in gaining it was a Radical Reform of the House of Commons. Hunt defined a Radical as "an honest man, who wishes to be governed by good laws instead of the sword."\textsuperscript{137} According to Hunt, the whole nation felt and declared the necessity of reform,\textsuperscript{138} and his fervent wish was that "every Englishman ought to be a politician."\textsuperscript{139} Hunt insisted that the only legitimate source of power was the people, and he added that "Universal Suffrage, Annual Parliaments, and Vote by Ballot" were the

\textsuperscript{134}\textit{Ibid.}, July 14, 1822.

\textsuperscript{135}\textit{Read}, p. 160. Quoting the \textit{Manchester Observer}, December 18, 1819.

\textsuperscript{136}\textit{Correspondence}, August 10, 1822.

\textsuperscript{137}\textit{Ibid.}, December 10, 1821. Hunt added quite truthfully that many were becoming Radicals without realizing it.

\textsuperscript{138}\textit{Ibid.}, January 23, 1821.

\textsuperscript{139}\textit{Ibid.}, September 9, 1822.
undoubted right of every Briton.\textsuperscript{140} Hunt's extended stay in Ilchester jail did not temper his views. Universal suffrage and the ballot remained "holy principle,"\textsuperscript{141} and Hunt insisted without them the "Constitution of England would soon become a mockery."\textsuperscript{142}

On January 23, 1823, following his release from prison, Hunt was once again instrumental in carrying a petition calling for fair, free, and equal representation in the House of Commons. The same petition called for universal suffrage and vote by ballot, but the call for annual parliaments was omitted. Henry Hunt had remained true to his long-cherished belief that a Reformed Parliament would "secure the future freedom and happiness of the People, the safety and honour of the Throne, and the peace and prosperity of the Country."\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{140}Peterloo Massacre, No. 6, p. 194. In 1832 he still felt the same way and worked against but voted for the Great Reform Bill. He looked upon it as a first installment. Cole, Life of William Cobbett, p. 377. In 1830 Hunt joined the new London Political Reform Society and carried resolutions favoring the ballot and universal manhood suffrage. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 356.

\textsuperscript{141}Correspondence, March 25, 1821.

\textsuperscript{142}Memoirs, II, 369.

\textsuperscript{143}Correspondence, July 8, 1823.
CONCLUSION

The role played by Henry Hunt in the struggle for political reform in England during the years 1815 to 1819 has generally been inadequately explained. Historians, faced with a wide spectrum of Radical leaders, have usually chosen to praise the efforts of Sir Francis Burdett and William Cobbett while denigrating the goals of the Spenceans and the methods of conspirators such as Arthur Thistlewood. At the same time, the results of Hunt's intense oratorical efforts have been largely overlooked.

No major historical research has yet been published which adequately delves into the ideas and proposals of the Radical speaker who mesmerized British working class crowds from 1815 to 1819. Research in regard to Hunt has generally been peripheral as it related to Burdett, Cobbett, or Thistlewood; or perhaps to Lord Sidmouth or Viscount Castlereagh. In other cases, historians working on the rise of the laboring classes or on English Radicalism have allowed secondary works to influence their ideas too greatly. The recent excellent efforts of Donald Read, Peterloo: the "Massacre" and Its Background, and E. P. Thompson,
The Making of the English Working Class, may be indicative that more research in the primary works of the period can be expected.

It seems apparent that Orator Hunt's involvement in Radical politics was an outgrowth of his rural farm background, combined with a liberal education provided by his school teachers and tutors. As a young man, Hunt saw the hopes for immediate reform dashed by political expediency influenced by the excesses of the French Revolution and the long period of war that followed. When Hunt began receiving what he considered to be unfair treatment in the law courts, he was ripe for the Radical philosophy which he heard during his first imprisonment at King's Bench. Once Henry Clifford convinced Hunt that it was not new ideas that would save England, but, instead, a return to the ancient and pure English constitution, this deeply patriotic farmer, who was already uneasy about the startlingly new economic and political policies of William Pitt the Younger, enlisted in the cause for reform.\(^1\) However, he enlisted for a basically reactionary reason: to restore the government of England to its former purity. Hunt was sure that the new governmental policies had lessened his chances of success in both farming and other business ventures,

\(^1\)cf., pp. 7-10
and, to combat what he considered unconstitutional limitations upon his basic right to earn a good living, Hunt attacked the established political powers who had so debilitated the producers of England, including Hunt himself.

After 1806 or 1807, Hunt involved himself in national politics. He saw his role as that of a country gentleman leading the masses and continuing a job partially done by the new Sunday Schools. He was hoping to elevate the laboring class from the uneducated, illiterate "church and king" mobs of the 1790's into a knowledgable citizenry. Naturally, he cast about for respectable allies. Country squires such as Burdett and Sir Charles Wolseley were generally courted, but peasants such as Cobbett, tradesmen such as Francis Place, and artisans such as Samuel Bamford were accepted only grudgingly, often only temporarily, and only as co-workers in the Radical movement, not as social equals. Hunt was neither a leveller nor a socialist, just as he was neither an atheist nor a republican. He saw a real need for social classes and a government balanced among King, Lords, and Commons. Yet, even as he did not enjoy individual, personal contacts with members of the working class, he did exhibit a mystic

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2 Cf., pp. 11-12.
faith in the wisdom of the people as a whole. Hunt often indicated that he considered their collective decisions to be nearly infallible.\(^3\)

That Hunt was a caustic, egotistical, personally selfish, and disagreeable man there can be little doubt. Yet, that his qualities of courage, vanity, sincerity, and eloquence made him a hero, for a few years, of a working class noticeably short on heroes, is also an unassailable fact. Placing more emphasis upon emotion than upon either principle or strategy,\(^4\) he thrilled huge crowds through his exciting and forceful speeches in just as important a way as Cobbett did through the written words in his *Political Register*. Hunt educated his listeners in both real and imagined abuses by their government leaders and church officials, and he gave them hope that a solution was possible short of a bloody revolution.

He waved before them a beautiful dream of universal suffrage and vote by ballot which would bring about a Reformed Commons. Hunt could not bear the thought that his beloved England might be torn by a bloody civil war, and the evidence is strong that Hunt often restrained massive crowds that might have gone on great rampages had he but given the word. Instead, Hunt seemed to have the ability to raise the gatherings to a fine pitch,

\(^3\)Cf., p. 52. \(^4\)Thompson, p. 630.
then advise caution, and cause the people to return home peacefully.5 The rare times in which Hunt came close to advocating the use of force, he did it through the written word and not through speeches.

In his passionate and probably over-zealous desire for immediate Radical Reform, Hunt could not tolerate those that were less dedicated. Thus his splits with Cobbett, Burdett, and others helped create a fatal divisiveness among the Radical leaders. Likewise, those who were too violent, such as Thistlewood, were attacked and treated with disdain. In Hunt's opinion, Richard Carlile was too republican and intolerant of religion, the Spenceans were too socialistic and impractical, and the country squires were usually only "pocket-book reformers."

The period from 1815 to 1819 was a particularly difficult one for Lord Liverpool's government, and especially for the Home Secretary, Lord Sidmouth. The ministers probably did not understand the change which had taken place from thoughtless machine-breaking to a demand for a Reformed Commons.6 When the ever-dangerous Cobbett fled to America in 1817, the greatest enemy of established law and order in Britain seemed to be the demagogic Hunt. There is little reason to doubt that

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5 Cf., p. 22; pp. 39-40. 6 Cf., p. 76.
great efforts were made by government spies to ensnare
Hunt in a plot. Since he was too cautious for them,
the August 16, 1819, incident at Manchester was too
good an opportunity to miss. It is apparent that the
two and one-half year sentence imposed upon Hunt was
indeed against the man, not the crime.

At the time it appeared that the government had
been successful in its attempts to kill the demand for
Radical Reform, but history was to show that the drive
was only temporarily thwarted. From his prison cell,
Hunt outlined grandiose but rather impractical plans
to revive the flagging Radical spirits,7 but his written
efforts were not equal to the task. Indeed, had he not
been in prison, it is doubtful if even his vast oratorical
talents would have been successful. Hunt's lack of suc-
cess may have caused him to become somewhat mentally
unbalanced, and his frustration becomes almost a tangible
thing in the light of his claim that his greatest achieve-
ment in the Radical cause was forcing the resignation of
an ailing Member of Commons.

Hunt, who died in 1835 while still struggling for
reform,8 saw all issues in clear areas of black and white,

7Cf., pp. 112-23.
8In 1842, in Manchester, Feargus O'Connor, the
leader of the Chartists, laid the cornerstone of a
in much the same way as most of his unenfranchised listeners did. To him the difference between liberty and slavery was simple: universal suffrage. He always insisted that a Reformed Commons would bring "Rational Liberty" to all men and solve England's political, economic, and social ills. As Henry Hunt himself might have said, "But we shall see."
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Books


This is a particularly fine account of the development of the English Constitution which is of value to any student of the period. It includes no valuable comments on Henry Hunt.


The first volume is *Early Days* and the second is *Passages*. Dunckley's introduction is of little value, but the second volume is of great value when studied from the point of view of an apostate from the Radical cause writing two decades after the events.


This is a good general reference.


Students of the period will find this book rather valuable as an aid in getting the feel of the times.


This is a fine biography which must be consulted by any researcher studying Henry Hunt. However, considering the Hunt-Cobbett relationship, Hunt is not extensively mentioned. Cole gives Hunt sympathetic treatment.

Cole's sympathetic view of the working class plight is valuable in the study of the Radical movement. Volume I covers the time of concern in this paper.


This book is of no aid in the study of Henry Hunt.


This old but still valuable biography of Wilberforce gives some insights into how the Whig reformers evaluated the Radicals, including Hunt.


Derry has taken shortcuts in his research which greatly lessen the validity of his comments about Hunt and the other Radicals. He has relied much too heavily upon secondary works which are unfriendly to the Radicals.


Fay has written a conservative defense of the governmental action against the Radical Reformers. He included little pertinent comment on Hunt.


This classic first volume of a famous series must be used for background material on the situation that led to the conditions in post-Waterloo England.


This classic work is a must for any student of the period. Halévy's work is a remarkable job
of research and was used extensively by the author of this paper to help document statements found in other books. This book is also valuable for its vast amount of bibliographical information, although much of this is now superseded by later research.


Huish, R. The History of the Private and Public Life of the Late Henry Hunt. 2 vols. London: John Saunders, 1836. This uncritically adulatory biography published the year after Hunt's death is of no value. It is largely a poor re-hash of Hunt's Memoirs and his Correspondence.

Hunt, Henry. Hunt's Correspondence. London: W. Molineux and T. Dolby, n.d. This valuable collection of pamphlets, newspaper issues, and letters both to and from Hunt has too long been ignored by historians. Any student of the Radical movement will benefit by browsing through this collection.

Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq. 3 vols. London: T. Dolby, 1820. Unfortunately, this autobiography only covers the period from Hunt's boyhood to his second attempt to win an election at Bristol. To the student of this period, the Memoirs are less valuable than the Correspondence, but they were both indispensable in the preparation of this paper.


English Radicalism 1786-1832. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1955. MacCoby does not explore the role played by Hunt very deeply, but he does include a helpful bibliography. MacCoby committed the same error of most historians of the period: they rely
almost exclusively upon secondary works for their assessment of the role played by Hunt. In this manner, biases often tend to become ingrained and accepted as truth.


This recent book is by far the most valuable book on the incident at Manchester August 16, 1819. Read has relied almost exclusively upon contemporary writings and records to accomplish a fine piece of scholarship.


This book, first published under the title The Progress of a Ploughboy, is interesting, but, strangely enough, nowhere in it is a direct reference to Henry Hunt.


This recent book is a good account of the government "spy system" and it includes one or two interesting comments on the role played by Hunt and his relationship with Arthur Thistlewood.


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Interview