BRITAIN CREATES THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT

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Historical Anniversaries

The year 1980 marked the two-hundredth anniversary of London's Gordon Riots. Just over two centuries ago, in 1780, Lord George Gordon organized his Protestant Association; it was his means of broadcasting the demand for repeal of the Catholic Relief Act which Parliament had passed two years earlier. After a massive march of Gordon's supporters from St. George's Fields to Parliament, the marchers' presentation of a giant anti-Catholic petition, and Parliament's refusal to deliberate under pressure, some of the great crowd who had spent the day in Parliament Square rushed off to sack Catholic chapels. On the following days, more Catholic places of worship fell, as did the houses of prominent Catholics and of officials who had gained the reputation of protecting them. Eventually the orderly destruction of buildings spiraled into looting and arson. The 9,500 troops who entered London to end the affair killed 285 people in the cleanup. The courts hanged another 25. It was eighteenth-century Britain's bloodiest confrontation between troops and civilians, and one of the century's most costly popular attacks on property as well.

The Gordon Riots are well known to British historians. Charles Dickens' Barnaby Rudge lodged Lord George, his Protestant Association, and the fearsome days of anti-Catholic action in English literature as well. But no commemoration, so far as I know, marked their bicentennial. Attacks on religious minorities -- rightly -- do not call up proud recollection in Britain. Furthermore, Lord George Gordon died in Newgate Prison, where he had gone for libeling the Queen of France, the French ambassador, and the administration of justice in England; those are not exactly the credentials of a candidate for commemoration.

The year 1982, in contrast, will most likely bring more than one historical festival. For we approach the sesquicentennial of 1832's Reform Bill. Just about 150

years ago began the renewal of popular agitation for parliamentary reform which finally brought Commons, Lords, and King to undertake a broadening of the franchise, a reduction in the number of boroughs under control of a family or a clique, and an extension of representation to many towns which had previously been excluded from direct participation in the national electoral process.

Between the 1780s of the Gordon Riots and the 1830s of Reform, large changes occurred in the way the British did their everyday political business . Back in the 1780s, we find ourselves in the world, not only of Lord George Gordon, but also of John Wilkes. Seventeen years before, the rakish Member of Parliament had stirred the British public with his North Briton's publication of an article (in its famous No. 45) offering an indirect attack on the King's speech. Wilkes' brief imprisonment, the burning of No. 45 in Cheapside, and Wilkes' later republication of the offending issue as well as a pornographic Essay on Woman had launched a sensational public career: new prosecution, flight to France, secret return to Britain, failed appeals for clemency, new incarceration, successful campaigns for reelection to Parliament repeatedly rebuffed by the Commons, great crowds outside Wilkes' new prison, mass celebrations of his electoral victories, equally vigorous displays of anger at his legal defeats, huge marches through the streets. In short, the trappings of a momentous movement around a popular hero. By the time of Lord George Gordon's rise to prominence, Wilkes' great days as a demagogue had passed; during the Gordon Riots, in fact, he lined up squarely on the side of order. In 1780, nevertheless, he still symbolized mass action and popular sovereignty. He was still prepared to trade on his reputation as a reckless political innovator.

Before Gordon's Protestant Association, Wilkes' followers had pioneered the mass petition march. They had created a widely-based special-interest association; Wilkes' Society of the Supporters of the Bill of Rights was already a formidable political force, making and breaking candidates for Parliament, by the end of the

1760s. The Wilkites had perfected the display of symbols which simultaneously identified people as supporters of a cause and summed up the theme of that cause. The deployment of the number 45, recalling the issue of Wilkes' North Briton which the hangman had burned as seditious in 1763, is a good example. It worked so well that the lighting of 45 candles, the marching of 45 men, or the setting out of 45 bowls of punch became standard ways of signifying opposition to the royal government not only in Britain, but also in the far-off colonies of North America. Aside from his channeling of popular anti-Catholicism, then, Lord George Gordon's innovations were minor; they consisted of extending the social base of his special-interest association, and then joining a mass-based special-interest association to the public display of symbols, numbers, and determination on behalf of the cause.

Establishing the association as an instrument of popular collective action, nevertheless, opened a new pathway through British politics. As Eugene Black states it:

> Association made possible the extension of the politically effective public. Discomfited country gentlemen could move against the increasing power of the territorial magnates (which concerned them as much as the increasing power of the crown) with Christopher Wyvill through political association. In the same way powerful, discontented manufacturers and merchants were ready to join Joseph Parkes, even Francis Place, in the Political Unions and the struggle for the great reform bill. Modern extraparliamentary political organization is a product of the late eighteenth century. The history of the age of reform cannot be written without it (Black 1963: 279).

Thus association, according to Black, covers the gap between our two anniversaries: from Lord George Gordon to the Reform of 1832, we witness a great increase in the

scope and effectiveness of deliberately-formed, specialized, manifestly political organizations as instruments of collective action.

That much is true. By the 1820s, special-interest associations were carrying out a far wider range of activities than those of middle-class societies for the promotion of good works and useful knowledge; working-class Owenites and old-line Radicals were creating organizations to deploy and display their strength at the same time as they brought a new, cheap, popular press into wide circulation. More was to come. In the years immediately preceding Reform, for example, the increasing visibility of O'Connell's Catholic Associations in Ireland and Britain stimulated the creation of the anti-Catholic Brunswick, Clubs. Reminiscing about Edinburgh in his memoirs, Henry Cockburn described a characteristic sequence:

> In March 1829 we had a magnificent meeting in the Assembly Room to assist
> Wellington and Peel, in their tardy and now awkward Emancipation necessity,
> by a petition in favor of the Catholics. A shilling a head was taken at the
> door, and about 1700 shillings were got. As from the confusion several passed
> untaxed, there must have been about 2000 present; and there were at the least
> double that number outside, who could not get in . . . No meeting could be
> more successful; and the combination of persons in general so repugnant, gave
> it great weight over the country. It must have suggested a striking contrast
> to those who remembered that it was in this very city that, only about forty
> years ago, the law had not strength to save the houses and chapels of the
> Catholics from popular conflagration. There were, as there still are, some
> who, if they could have done it, would have thought the repetition of that
> violence a duty; and there were many even at this meeting who had no better
> reason for their support of emancipation than that it implied the support of
> ministry. Those, whose religious horror of Catholicism made them think the
> application of the principles of civil toleration to that faith a sin, did not

> appear; but procured signatures to an opposite petition by harangues and
> placards borrowed from Lord George Gordon (Cockburn 1971/1858: 458–459).

The mobilization and counter-mobilization of Edinburgh's citizens repeated itself, with many variations, throughout Britain. Within Great Britain, the popular mobilization against Emancipation generally outweighed the mobilization for the cause. The great strength of the movement outside of Great Britain -- in Ireland -- nevertheless augmented its impact within the country. The success of the Catholic Association in forwarding Emancipation set a model and a precedent for the roles of the Political Unions and the National Union of the Working Classes in the Reform campaign of 1830 to 1832. The coupling of Emancipation with legislation dissolving the Catholic Association and raising the Irish county franchise from 40 shillings to 10 pounds dramatizes the fear of organized mass action the new associational activity had raised in the British establishment.

Correlates of Association

Instead of expatiating on the rise of association, however, I want to call attention to some of the correlates of that change in British politics. For not only the issues and organizational bases of collective action, but also its very forms, altered significantly between the age of Wilkes or Gordon and the age of Reform. Note the difference between the anti-Catholicism of 1780 and that of 1829: Those who retained the aims and outlook of Gordon's followers nevertheless adopted the new means. That is the point. Like the supporters of Emancipation, its opponents associated, met, deliberated, resolved, petitioned, and delegating, broadcasting the news of those actions to all interested parties. Occasionally they marched and displayed signs of their affiliations and demands. Rarely did they attack Catholics, their possessions, or their supposed protectors. Much changed between 1780 and 1828.

None of the standard formulas -- not the development of class politics, not the transition to order, not the strains of industrialization -- captures the alterations in the prevailing forms of collective action. To put it crudely, from the 1770s to the 1830s Britain's collective-action repertoire underwent two fundamental changes: first, parochial and patronized forms gave way to national and autonomous forms; second, the creation of a national social movement became an established way to accomplish a set of political ends.

By "parochial and patronized" forms of collective action I mean those ways of pooling effort on behalf of shared interests that depended for their effectiveness on the parties' common membership in a particular community, and that involved some sort of claim on local authorities; the claims ranged from the simple authorization to assemble on ceremonial occasions to the demand that a dignitary communicate a community's grievances to powerful figures elsewhere. In different ways, food riots, attacks on moral offenders, election brawls, and demands of workers on their masters exemplify the parochial and patronized forms. The "national and autonomous" forms of collective action, in contrast, invoke widely-applicable rights and identities, and rely on the partricipants' acting at their own initiative. The public meeting, the strike, the petition march, and the demonstration generally belong to this type. Need I say that the two types are caricatures, drawn to emphasize differences which are more subtle and complex in the actual historical experience?

Within the trend toward national and autonomous collective action, let us single out the creation of the social movement. By "social movement", I mean a sustained series of interactions between national authorities and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation, in the course of which those persons make publicly-visible demands for changes in the distribution or exercise of power, and back those demands with public demonstrations of support.

We need the ponderous definition, regrettably, in order to avoid calling any group that makes demands a social movement. Although sustained challenges to local authorities reached far back in time, and although one might make a case for earlier rebellions and religious conflicts as social movements, before the nineteenth century social movements in this strong sense of the term were either rare or nonexistent throughout the western world. Yet with the nineteenth century that mounting of a public, constituency-based set of demands on national authorities, backed by displays of support, became a regular way of doing political business in Britain and elsewhere. We have only to think of the ways that Chartism, Temperance, and Women's Suffrage made the headlines.

During the earlier decades of the eighteenth century, no challenge we can properly describe as a social movement occurred in Britain. Food riots, industrial disputes, resistance to taxation, invasions of enclosed fields, shootouts between hunters and gamekeepers, and other varieties of conflict proliferated, but none of them clustered into social movements. In the struggles around John Wilkes and George Gordon, elements of the sustained challenge -- but not the full set -- appeared for the first time. It took decades more for the idea and the reality to solidify. By the start of the 1830s, by the time of the campaigns for Catholic Emancipation and Reform, however, all features of the social movement were visible in British politics. There were the claims, sometimes contested, to speak for an unrepresented constituency. There were the demands for change, the sustained interactions with the authorities, the public demonstrations of the numbers and determination behind the cause. The struggles of the 1830s locked these elements into place within the established routines of British politics. From that point to the present, they have changed relatively little.

Over the period from the 1760s to the 1830s, then, the British created the social movement as a distinct've form of collective action. Like the electoral

campaign or the circulation of petitions, it became a recognized (if less frequent and more widely feared) way of making a political point. The ground-breaking effort of the British became a model for citizens of other countries. Today, parliamentary democracies throughout the world share the social movement as a political routine. To what extent different countries created the routine independently, one by one, and to what extent the British model spread by imitation or deliberate instruction is hard to say. But the British were clearly precocious.

A set of ideological changes accompanied the shift from parochial and patronized to national and autonomous forms of collective action, including the creation of the social movement. The older forms of action incorporated a strong set of assumptions about the bases of political life. The assumptions included these:

1. that citizens grouped into more or less corporate bodies, such as gilds, communities, and religious sects, which exercised collective rights;

2. that the law protected such collective rights;

3. that local authorities had an obligation to enforce and respect the law;

4. that the chosen representatives of such corporate bodies had the right and obligation to make public presentations of their demands and grievances;

5. that authorities had an obligation to consider those demands and grievances, and to act on them when they were just;

6. that outside this framework, no one who had not been convoked by established authorities had a clear right to assemble, to state demands and grievances, or to act collectively.

During the eighteenth century, the extension of the theory and practice of capitalist property relations (of possessive individualism, in C.B. Macpherson's phrase) was undermining the premises of such a corporate system; the rapidly growing number of landless wage-laborers, for example, subverted the assumption that they were essentially servants, dependents of farms or shops whose masters represented them, and whose collective interest was their own. The demand for popular sovereignty

which became more insistent in the era of the American Revolution likewise threatened a fundamental alteration of the system. If ordinary citizens could assemble at their own initiative, identify themselves as a political interest, refuse to comply with corrupt authorities, and sometimes even create autonomous organizations and instruments of government, the corporate structure fell beam by beam. But in the meantime the available forms of collective action assumed the structure's existence.

Changing Repertoires

Those forms of collective action comprised a repertoire, in something like the theatrical sense of the word: a limited number of well-known performances repeated with relatively minor variations, and chosen with an eye to the audience and the occasion. The petition march, the illumination, the conversion of solemn ceremonies into displays of opinion, the orderly sacking of houses and looms were among the well-established eighteenth-century performances which have long since disappeared from the British repertoire. They were standard ways of doing collective business, just as strikes, demonstrations, rallies, and deliberative assemblies have become standard ways of doing collective business today. Like improvisational players, people who share an interest choose among the available performances, matching the right element of the repertoire to immediate ends and opportunities.

We must, however, improve on the theatrical metaphor in several ways. First, although the number of well-defined alternative performances in the repertoire at any given point is quite limited, the elements of the repertoire change as a function of experience, organization, and opportunity. Second, interaction with spectators, authorities, rivals, allies, and objects of the action plays a crucial part in the sequence and outcome of the action. Third, much more is commonly at stake than the self-esteem of the performers and the applause of the audience; people use the repertoires of collective action to defend and advance their vital interests.

Let us recall some features of the eighteenth-century British repertoire which set it off from the repertoires which began to prevail in the nineteenth century.First, there was a tendency for aggrieved people to converge on the residences of wrongdoers and on the sites of wrongdoing rather than on the seats of power (sometimes, to be sure, the two coincided). Second, the extensive use of authorized public ceremonies and celebrations for the acting out of complaints and demands. Third, the rare appearance of people organized voluntarily around a special interest, as compared with whole communities and constituted corporate groups. Fourth, the recurrent use of street theater, visual imagery, effigies, symbolic objects and other dramatic devices to state the participants' claims and complaints. Fifth, the frequent borrowing --- in parody or in earnest -- of the authorities' normal forms of action; the borrowing often amounted to the crowd's almost literally taking the law into its own hands. Sixth and finally, an approach to authorities in terms of "aggressive supplication", offering compliance with the authorities if they did their duty, and direct action against them, or in their stead, if the authorities failed to play their proper role. Between the 1760s and the 1830s, all these once-standard features of British collective action became exceptional. A new repertoire replaced the old.

The flurry of activities around John Wilkes did not fit this paradigm exactly. For its time, it had some extraordinary features; that novelty of form, indeed, helps explain the consternation Wilkes and company caused right-minded citizens. Although Wilkes' supporters, for example, provided plenty of street theater, they also showed signs of defining themselves as a special interest, and organized some actions (notably their great petition marches) which resembled modern demonstrations in their orientation to the seats of public power and their ostentatious display of numbers and determination. To our eyes, Wilkes was a curious organizer: playing the role of a popular hero and speaking words calculated to appeal to the populace, but maintaining

a genteel distance from his public. In the perspective of the eighteenth century, nevertheless, he and his entourage were great innovators. They played a significant part, as I see it, in the creation of new forms of collective action which became standard elements of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century repertoire. In deliberately maintaining the claim to speak for the disfranchised, in making dramatic public displays of their following's numbers and commitment, and in offering a sustained challenge to the existing structure of power, they were welding together the essential pieces of the social movement as a distinctive form of political action.

Wilkes and friends did not do the job alone. As we have seen, Lord George Gordon added to the repertoire at the end of the 1770s by coupling a wide-reaching Protestant Association to the sorts of marches and quasi-demonstrations made familiar by Wilkes. Aside from his channeling of popular anti-Catholicism, however, Gordon's innovations were much less important than Wilkes'; they consisted of extending the social base of the special-interest association, and joining the association's activities to the public display of symbols, numbers, and determination on behalf of the cause. The weavers of London's Spitalfields district likewise devised ways of demonstrating their numbers and determination to Parliament. The chapels, schools, and associations of Protestant Dissenters seem to have contributed, as did the clubs of London Radicals. And, of course, the continuous interaction of those challengers with authorities, rivals, and allies produced a record of successes and failures which further shaped the creation, adoption, alteration, and abandonment of particular forms.

Lineaments of Contention

To trace the alteration of the British collective-action repertoire and the creation of the social movement as an established mode of action, we would have to move through the political history separating Wilkes and Gordon from Reform: the

struggles over the American Revolution and the French Revolution, the days of Luddism and Peterloo, the failed Reform campaigns of the 1820s, and more. Let us, however, take on a much less ambitious pair of tasks: a) to review evidence indicating that change in the everyday forms of collective action did, indeed, occur, and b) to clarify just what has to be explained.

We can gain some illumination from catalogs of events occurring in the London area during 1768 and 1769, and in all of Great Britain, including the London area, from 1828 through 1831. 1768 and 1769 were, as we have seen, peak years for Wilkite activity. 1828 and 1829 brought important national struggles over the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts (which imposed legal restrictions -- often circumvented, but nonetheless cumbersome -- on the participation of Dissenters in British public life) and the enactment of Catholic Emancipation, as well as battles to broaden the base of parish government, to hold off the tightening of regulations concerning Friendly Societies, and to promote a number of other causes. In 1829 and 1830 Britain experienced an intensification of industrial conflict, and the widespread rural conflicts in the Southeast which are known collectively as the Swing Rebellion. 1830 and 1831 saw the acceleration of the campaign for parliamentary reform, and unprecedented displays of popular support for the campaign. If the evidence for 1832 were now available, it would take us up to the enactment of Reform, and into its political aftermath. Alas, it takes time to sort the evidence; for the moment we must settle for stopping with 1831.

The events in the catalog concern "contentious gatherings" -- occasions on which a number of people gathered publicly, and collectively stated demands, grievances, or other claims which somehow bore on the interests of other people. (For more precision and greater detail, see the appendix to this paper.) Contentious gatherings do not cover the full range of collective action, by any means, but they do include many of its more visible and powerful forms. They encompass almost any

occasion for which an observer might use the terms disturbance, riot, protest, demonstration, rebellion, disorder, affray, brawl, or delegation, plus a great many more. As compared to the events that John Stevenson calls "disturbances", for example, contentious gatherings take in a wider range of electoral rallies, mass meetings, turnouts, processions, public ceremonies in the course of which people voice claims, and similar events.

In order to get a sense of the range of events involved, let us examine a list including every tenth event we have identified during the last four months of 1828:

September 1828

In Picadilly, Manchester, some people were injured during an "affray" between Irishmen and coach drivers.

When constables broke up a bull-baiting session in Birmingham, someone threw stones at the constables.

A public dinner was held in Inverness to honor the Honourable Charles Grant.

When coach drivers blocked the street in Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, a crowd assembled and a fight began as people tried to force their way through the coaches.

October 1828

In Newton, Cumberland, after Mr. Green's daughter died, people suspected the parents of killing their child; a crowd gathered around the Greens' house, broke the windows and door, and threatened Mr. Green's life.

November 1828

The Friends of Civil and Religious Liberty gave a dinner at the London Tavern for Mr. Sheil, following his pro-Catholic appearance at the largely anti-Catholic mass meeting on Penenden Heath, near Maidstone, Kent.

A meeting of the British Catholic Association, in Freemasons' Hall, London, petitioned Parliament in favor of Catholic claims.

A group of organizers in Leeds held a public meeting to establish an association based on Protestant principles, to resist all constitutional concessions to Roman Catholics.

At a meeting of the lace trade in Nottingham, the participants resolved to confine the operation of lace machines to eight hours a day.

Colombian bondholders held a meeting at the London Tavern to consider a

document signed by the vice-consul of Colombia.

December 1828

A pro-Catholic group in Leeds held a meeting in favor of Catholic Emancipation and tolerance.

A public dinner was held in Windsor to welcome the King.

Prisoners in the County Gaol, in Leicester, attempted to escape, and injured their guards in the attempt.

The inhabitants of St. Paul's Covent Garden met in the parish vestry room and prepared a petition for the passage of the overseas accounts.

A contested election of Common Councilmen and other Ward officers took place at Fishmongers' Hall, Bridge Ward, London.

Local people held a meeting in Queensborough, Kent, to discuss the distressing absence of work in the fisheries, and to propose solutions to the authorities.

Hunters attacked a game-keeper in Dunham Massey, Cheshire.

Some of these events would qualify as "disturbances" by almost any standard. Many, however, would not. The meetings at which people made demands, pledged support, or stated their opposition to persons or policies would disappear from most catalogs of conflicts and disorders. Yet they clearly form part of the British routine of collective action in the late 1820s. In fact, they comprise a majority of our "contentious gatherings". In the first case, one might wonder why such occasions as a battle between coachmen and an irate crowd should appear in a study of political change. In the second case, one might wonder how anything so routine as a meeting at which people pass resolutions can be relevant to political change. In both cases, the answer is the same: only by examining the range of means people actually used to act on their interests can we single out which ones were politically significant, and which ones were changing.

The work is still in progress. As a result, the evidence reported here varies considerably in completeness, firmness, and refinement. Cumulatively, nevertheless,

it provides a warrant for thinking that Britain's collective-action repertoire underwent major alterations between the 1760s and the 1830s; that the eighteenth-century parochial and patronized forms of collective action did, indeed, give way to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century national and autonomous forms; that deliberately-formed associations became more and more prominent vehicles for the conveyance of grievances and demands; that the joining of a special-purpose association to a popular base, or at least to the appearance of a popular base, became a standard way of doing political business; that, increasingly, sustained challenges to the existing structure or use of power took the form of representations by leaders and delegates of named associations, accompanied by displays of popular support for those representations; that these processes all accelerated at the end of the 1820s; that, in short, the British were creating the social movement.

Table 1 catalogs contentious gatherings for Middlesex alone in 1768, 1769, 1828, 1829, 1830, and 1831. It groups the events according to a crude set of categories which give a sense of the main alternative forms of collective action, but which correspond only very roughly to the actual repertoires of the two time periods. The counts suggest a quickening of the tempo of contention in Middlesex from the 1760s to the 1820s: from 104 and 63 events in the two eighteenth-century years to some 235 in the average nineteenth-century year. That suggestion, however, could reflect no more than the greater fullness of the nineteenth-century sources; pending further investigation, let us not give it much weight.

The changing mixture of reported events, on the other hand, is much less open to doubt. In 1768 and 1769, routine meetings played a relatively small part in London's contention: 6.7 percent of the total in 1768, 31.2 percent in the following year. (The increase in 1769 resulted largely from the fact that Wilkite action in the streets declined somewhat, while middle-class supporters of Wilkes and Wilkite candidates took to holding meetings on behalf of their cause.) From 1828 through

TABLE 1. PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF CONTENTIOUS GATHERINGS IN MIDDLESEX
DURING SELECTED YEARS FROM 1768 TO 1831

Type of Gathering	1768	1769	1828	1829	1830	1831
meeting	6.7	31.8	77.5	68.3	64.3	86.5
strike, turnout	9.6	1.6	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.4
parade, rally or demonstration	0.0	0.0	6.9	4.2	2.2	0.8
delegation	0.0	1.6	1.4	0.5	1.4	0.4
public celebration	2.9	3.2	1.4	0.9	0.7	1.3
unplanned gathering	22.2	30.2	0.0	8.4	9.0	2.1
attack on blacklegs or other enemies	28.8	20.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
poaching or smuggling	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	1.1	0.4
other violent confrontation	29.6	11.1	11.9	16.8	21.3	7.6
total	100.0	100.1	100.1	100.1	100.0	99.9
number of events	104	63	217	214	277	237

1831, public meetings averaged about three quarters of all the contentious gatherings that took place in Middlesex.

That was not the only change. Nonviolent "unplanned gatherings" such as market conflicts, street confrontations, and informal group displays of political preference were common -- about a quarter of all events -- in the time of Wilkes, but much rarer -- under 10 percent — from 1828 through 1831. Likewise, direct attacks on blacklegs and other miscreants occurred frequently during our eighteenth-century years, but did not occur at all (at least on a scale large enough to qualify as "contentious gatherings") in our nineteenth-century period. The closest equivalents during those years were crowd actions against police informers and the varied forms of resistance to Robert Peel's New Police. Finally, the table gives hints of 1) a decline in the use of public celebrations and ceremonies as settings for the joint statement of demands, grievances, and political preferences, and 2) a rise in the employment of parades, rallies and demonstrations, initiated by the participants rather than the authorities, for the same purpose. All in all, the differences between the patterns of contention in the 1760s and in the years around 1830 reveal a significant alteration of the collective-action repertoire in London, and are consistent with the increasing adoption of the apparatus of the social movement.

Table 2 provides more detail on the nineteenth-century period. It compares Middlesex with the rest of Great Britain, year by year. Some of the comparisons are obvious, and thereby comforting: the generally greater frequency of confrontations between smugglers and (especially) poachers with authorities outside of Middlesex, the greater frequency of delegations (since the seats of government were at hand) in Middlesex are the most obvious. The rise of "other violent confrontations" in 1829 and again in 1830 represents, first, the increasing pace of industrial conflict and, then, the coercion of farmers and machine-breaking which happened during the Swing rebellion, late in the second year. The nearly 1,200 contentious gatherings of 1830

included hundreds of Swing events.

Two subtler, but no less significant, findings lurk in the table. The first is negative: on the whole, meetings at which people stated claims publicly and collectively by passing resolutions, issuing petitions, or otherwise declaring their intentions were no more frequent, proportionately speaking, in Middlesex than in the rest of Great Britain. An informal supplementary tabulation, furthermore, shows that the lack of difference does not result from my lumping of London's immediate surroundings with the rest of Britain. If we define the London area* as Middlesex, Surrey, Sussex, and Kent, the percentage of all contentious gatherings that were meetings of some kind looks like this:

Year	London Area	Rest of Britain	Total
1828	78.1	77.3	77.7
1829	69.9	67.1	68.3
1830	56.6	56.7	56.6
1831	88.4	78.7	82.5

While over the full four years the London region did have a slightly higher proportion of contentious gatherings that were meetings than did the rest of the country, the difference was only substantial during the Reform mobilization of 1831. That state of affairs almost certainly registers a significant change from the eighteenth century; then, if we can trust the fragmentary information now available, meetings were even less common ways to conduct collective business in the provinces than in London. If we eliminate regularly-convened meetings of vestries, municipal councils, and similar assemblies, the eighteenth-century difference between London and the rest of Britain looks very large.

The second finding singles out the rest of Great Britain rather than

TABLE 2. PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF CONTENTIOUS GATHERINGS IN MIDDLESEX AND OTHER BRITAIN, 1828-1831

Type of Gathering	1828			1829			1830			1831		
	Mdsx	Other	Total	Mdsx	Other	Total	Mdsx	Other	Total	Mdsx	Other	Total
meeting	77.5	77.8	77.6	68.3	68.4	68.3	64.3	54.3	56.6	86.5	80.9	82.5
strike, turnout	0.5	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.7	0.5	0.4	1.5	1.2
parade, rally or demonstration	6.9	6.9	6.9	4.2	2.6	3.1	2.2	3.7	3.3	0.8	2.3	1.9
delegation	1.4	0.5	0.8	0.5	0.2	0.3	1.4	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.1
public celebration	1.4	0.0	0.5	0.9	1.2	1.1	0.7	0.6	0.6	1.3	0.0	0.6
unplanned gathering	0.0	0.8	1.0	8.4	5.4	6.4	9.0	8.2	8.4	2.1	5.8	4.8
attack on blacklegs or other enemies	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.6
poaching or smuggling	0.5	5.8	3.9	0.5	4.2	3.0	1.1	1.3	1.3	0.4	0.6	0.6
other violent confrontation	10.1	6.3	8.7	16.8	17.1	17.0	21.3	31.0	28.9	7.6	7.6	7.6
total	100.1	100.1	99.6	100.1	100.1	100.0	100.0	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.5	100.1
number of events	217	378	595	214	427	641	277	897		237	618	855

Middlesex; as measured by the sheer number of contentious gatherings, the level of contention in London was fairly constant: 217, 214, 277 and 237 events in the four nineteenth-century years under examination. When the national level rose, the rest of Britain made the difference. Although 1830, with its Swing conflicts, marked the high point of the four years, the frequency of events was generally rising in the rest of Britain, while staying more or less constant in Middlesex. When the debate over Catholic Emancipation heated up in 1829, the increase in public displays of opposition and support took place mainly outside of London; in the provinces, nearly half of 1829's contentious gatherings somehow concerned Catholic Emancipation, while in Middlesex the proportion was about a quarter. Indeed, events concerning Catholic Emancipation followed the rhythm of parliamentary debate, accelerating when Parliament was in session and especially when Parliament was deliberating on the bill. That interaction brought a considerable swelling of anti-Catholic activity in 1829, as the prospects for passage became brighter, and the threat to Protestant ascendancy therefore more serious.

Again, the doubling of contentious gatherings outside of Middlesex from 1829 to 1830 corresponds to what a knowledge of Swing's geography -- concentrated in London's hinterland, but absent from the city's immediate vicinity -- would lead us to expect. In this case, the nearly 300 "other violent confrontations" which occurred outside of London in the course of the Swing events made the largest difference. And the high level of activity outside of London in 1831 fits the great importance of centers such as Birmingham and Bristol in the campaign for Reform. Altogether, the findings for 1828 through 1831 portray a country in which both contention and its forms were nationalizing rapidly.

For Britain as a whole, Table 3 lists every verb which, in any interval from

1828 through 1831, represented at least one percent of all the action-verbs used. (In this case, I have combined paraphrases and verbs taken directly from the sources; the proportions coming directly from the sources vary from a mere 0.1% for END, our convention for closing an event whose exact termination the available accounts do not describe, to virtually 100% for ASSEMBLE, BREAK, DESTROY, ENTER, REQUISITION, SEPARATE, and THANK.) The table breaks 1830 into two intervals, in order to bring out the special character of the Swing events in the later months of that year.

Throughout the five intervals, the most frequent actions clearly belong to regular meetings. The sequence MEET, HEAR PETITION, RESOLVE, THANK, SEPARATE describes a typical gathering in any interval. The list also includes actions shared by orderly meetings, street demonstrations, and responses to the appearance of popular or unpopular figures: APPLAUD, ASSEMBLE, CHEER, OPPOSE, SUPPORT. There are also verbs which appear infrequently in routine meetings, but often enough outside them: ARREST, ATTACK, BREAK, DEMAND, DESTROY, GATHER. Some verbs, finally, concentrate in the local conflicts of Swing; BREAK, DEMAND, DESTROY, GIVE (the response of some farmers when the local agricultural workers demanded a cash contribution), and TRY (the response of many magistrates when faced with rebellious farm laborers) are the most emphatic examples. Outside of Swing, the routines of meeting, debating, resolving, petitioning and deciding on some further course of public action dominate the forms of contention.

An important trend, however, appears in the table. On the whole, the meetings of 1828 and 1829 were more sedate and contained than those of the later years. As the years move on toward 1832, verbs such as ANNOUNCE and HEAR decline in importance, while verbs bespeaking more deliberate displays of opinion and determination gain. The rise of ADDRESS, APPLAUD, CHEER, REQUISITION and, perhaps, CHAIR show us the increasing use of the public meeting as a dramatization

of the numbers and determination of a cause's supporters. By the time of 1831's Reform campaign, political organizers were regularly hiring a hall, finding well-known and effective speakers, printing up handbills, marching supporters to and from the hall, deliberately stimulating the attention of the press and the public, making great displays of demands, grievances and affiliations, providing plenty of opportunities for enthusiastic participation, and drawing audiences of thousands.

The recurrent radical meetings at Southwark's Rotunda illustrate the new techniques. The radical Richard Carlile leased the theater building on Blackfriars Road in May of 1830, and immediately converted it to a meeting-place. At first both the reformist Metropolitan Political Union and the Radical Reform Association used the low-priced hall. But as the National Union of the Working Classes amalgamated the survivors of the declining RRA with a number of other ultra-radical fragments, the Rotunda became increasingly identified with working-class radicalism. There London's workers heard Carlile, Cobbett, Lovett, and the other great radicals of the day.

In that connection, it is fascinating to see Francis Place, late in 1831, acting much like a twentieth-century movement organizer: trying to build a broad alliance and to contain the demands of Lovett and other working-class leaders for a radical program, trying to fix the elections to the National Political Union's council by hand-picking working-class candidates and systematically excluding the men he calls "Rotundists" (British Library, Add. MSS. 27791, pp. 71-72). Although Place had not formally joined the National Political Union, and had at first avoided taking any office in it, he had busied himself behind the scenes with its creation. Then he faced the standard problem of the social-movement organizer: how to build a coalition large enough to be effective without compromising the ends he wanted the movement to serve. As Graham Wallas analyzed the difficulty:

If

the National Political Union was to claim any authority, it must, according to the political ideas of the time, be formed at a public meeting, and all who presented themselves must be allowed to join. At the preliminary "committee" meetings resolutions moved by the Rotundanists and their sympathiserz in favour of universal suffrage and annual parliaments had been with difficulty defeated, and it seemed likely that amendments in that sense would be carried at the public meeting advertised for Monday, October 31, at the Crown and Anchor in the Strand (Wallas 1898: 280-281).

In fact, some twenty thousand people showed up for a meeting scheduled to take place in a room measuring twelve by twenty-five feet. It had to be moved to Lincoln's Inn Fields where, as Place feared, a strong sentiment in favor of radical democracy prevailed. The meeting voted an amendment requiring that half the Union's council be working men. After momentary discouragement, Place undertook the difficult search for bona fide working men who were not, in essence, Rotundists. This sort of maneuvering has a familiar air; twentieth-century social-movement organizers continually find themselves in similar tight spots, and similarly work out of the public view in order to make the movement's public activity effective. As Wilkes and Gordon helped create the forms of the social movement's public activity, Francis Place and his contemporaries helped established the private -- or at least less public -- means of manipulating those forms to a desired effect. The British were installing the apparatus of the social movement.

Does all this analysis, then, come down to the old notion that British pragmatism won out, and politics became more orderly as the nineteenth century wore on? Certainly the crowds of the 1830s less regularly initiated attacks on the persons and possessions of presumed wrongdoers than had their counterparts of the

TABLE 3. PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF ACTION-VERBS APPEARING FREQUENTLY, 1828-1831

Verb	1828	1829	Jan-June 1830	Jul-Dec 1830	1831
ADDRESS	0.4	1.2	0.5	1.7	2.9
ADJOURN	0.8	1.0	1.3	0.6	0.9
ANNOUNCE	1.5	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.2
APPLAUD	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.9	1.4
ARREST	0.4	1.0	0.7	3.2	0.3
ARRIVE	1.3	1.4	0.5	1.1	0.8
ASSEMBLE	1.9	2.9	5.8	4.9	2.2
ATTACK	1.3	1.0	0.6	1.1	0.5
BREAK	0.1	0.0	0.1	2.0	0.3
CHAIR	0.2	0.5	1.0	1.6	4.8
CHEER	2.6	3.2	0.7	3.2	5.4
DEMAND	0.2	0.3	0.3	3.4	0.2
DESTROY	0.0	0.5	0.0	1.8	0.0
DISPERSE	0.4	1.0	0.4	0.9	0.4
END	12.9	11.0	16.4	12.3	12.0
ENTER	1.2	1.1	0.1	0.3	0.4
GATHER	0.0	0.9	1.1	5.1	2.8
GIVE	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.3
HEAR	2.7	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
HEAR PETITION	5.7	5.2	9.2	2.3	3.4
MEET	13.3	10.1	11.7	5.4	10.4
OPPOSE	0.9	2.7	0.9	0.8	0.3
PETITION	9.6	6.5	13.1	3.8	6.8
PROCEED	0.6	1.1	0.6	1.5	0.7

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

TABLE 3. PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF ACTION-VERBS APPEARING FREQUENTLY, 1828-1831 (CONTINUED)

Verb	1828	1829	Jan-June 1830	Jul-Dec 1830	1831
REQUISITION	0.0	0.6	2.2	0.6	2.7
RESOLVE	3.1	2.6	3.3	2.1	6.8
SEPARATE	1.4	0.9	0.9	0.8	1.3
SUPPORT	0.6	0.8	0.4	1.0	0.6
THANK	2.7	2.9	2.8	1.9	4.9
TRY	0.0	0.4	0.2	2.4	0.1
OTHER	33.7	38.0	24.5	32.1	25.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
NUMBER OF ACTIONS	3224	4075	1405	5990	5968
ACTIONS/EVENT	5.4	6.4	5.0	6.7	7.0

1760s and 1770s. Most likely it is true, as demographic historian P.E.H. Hair has suggested, that British per capita deaths from collective violence other than war declined noticeably after 1780 (Hair 1971: 22). Surely our twentieth-century eyes detect the order within the forms of the newer repertoire more readily than in the mobbing, Rough Music or window-breaking of the later eighteenth century. Yet the shift toward meetings, marches, rallies, demonstrations, strikes and social movements did not, by any means, eliminate violence, indignation, or revolutionary determination from Chartism or industrial conflict. It changed the choices, the risks, and the likely outcomes of demands for change. In the course of their struggles, the British were creating new ways of struggling. One of their most important creations was the social movement.

Conclusion

As I warned earlier, the scattered and preliminary evidence in this paper does not clinch that conclusion, much less provide a convincing explanation of the great change. Even within the period from 1828 to 1831, I have not spelled out how the success of the campaigns for Test and Corporation repeal and (especially) Catholic Emancipation opened the way to the widespread use of social-movement forms during the campaign for Reform. After all, "Catholic Emancipation was the battering ram that broke down the old unreformed system" (Cannon 1973: 191). That was true, I think, not only for the usually alleged reasons: because the issue split the Tories, opened the way to a Whig government, and sanctified the principle of reform. The Irish and British campaigns for Catholic Emancipation also provided a model for the creation of effective mass-based associations, and established a precedent for their action on the national political scene. In a back-handed way, Parliament recognized the likelihood of such effects when it coupled the passage of Emancipation with the

increase of property qualifications for suffrage in Ireland and with the dissolution of the Catholic Association itself. Moreover, some of the personnel of the campaign for Emancipation carried their memories and expertise right into the struggle for Reform; the joining of Henry Hunt and Daniel O'Connell in the founding of London's Metropolitan Political Union illustrates the continuity from one movement to the next. But this essay has done no more than suggest how all that happened.

Nor have I translated the individual verbs and crude categories of events into the complex, flexible sequences which constituted the genuine repertoires of the time. Some pieces of the eighteenth-century repertoire, such as the punishment of an effigy to convey disapproval of its original, or the riding of a blackleg through town on a donkey, continued to serve in the 1830s. And to throw together the decorous assemblies of London coffee-houses and the turbulent gatherings at the Rotunda in the same bland category of "meeting" misses the variation by class, political tendency, and tactical situation that marked all the newer varieties of collective action. Yet the evidence already in hand makes it clear enough that the forms of conflict which had prevailed in the days of Wilkes and Gordon were, by 1832, on their way to oblivion. In fact, the struggles of the eighteenth century's later decades, for all their antique coloration, were helping to create the new repertoire that would displace the old.

APPENDIX: SOURCES AND METHODS

The material in this paper comes from two overlapping investigations, both still very much in progress. My collaborators and I are inventorying contentious gatherings which occurred in the London area (Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, and Sussex) in twenty years spread over the period from 1758 to 1834, and in all counties of Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) from 1828 through 1834. The "contentious gathering" is an arbitrary unit designed to give us a means of scanning historical processes systematically. It is an occasion on which a number of people (10 or more, in the cases at hand) gather in a publicly-accessible place and visibly make claims which would, if realized, affect the interests of persons outside the group. The "claims" range from a direct attack on a person or an object to the laying out of a program to a statement of support or opposition directed at a candidate or public official. The events inventoried consist of all those mentioned in the London Chronicle, the Times of London (once it began publishing in 1785), the Annual Register and Gentleman's Magazine for the years before 1828, and the Times, the Morning Chronicle, Gentleman's, the Annual Register, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, Mirror of Parliament, and Votes and Proceedings of Parliament from 1828 through 1834. (Once an event has entered the catalog, we feel free to draw additional descriptive material from other periodicals, from the correspondence of the Secretaries of State, from published collections of documents, and from historians' treatments of the subject.) These sources yield one or two hundred contentious gatherings for the London area in the average eighteenth-century year, and some thousand events per year in Great Britain as a whole during the 1820s and 1830s; the actual totals, as the tabulations in this paper indicate, vary drastically from one year to another.

We are creating machine-readable descriptions of these contentious gatherings -- descriptions which retain much of the detail and actual language of the sources.

The descriptions include characterizations of a) the event as a whole, b) each place in which some of the event's action occurred, c) each formation -- each individual or set of persons ever acting in a distinctive fashion -- taking part in the gathering, or serving as the object of a claim, d) each phase of the action, a new phase beginning each time any formation's relationship to the action, or to the claims being made, changed visibly; the phases include relevant actions occurring before the event as such began and after it ended, well-labeled and easily separable from actions internal to the event; the tabulations of action-verbs in this paper include both internal and external actions; e) each source consulted for information on the event, f) comments concerning difficulties encountered in describing the event, relevant background information, and links to other events. The machine-readable files thus make it easy to recapture and regroup much of the detail with which we began.

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