Two Eras of Democracy 1789-1849, Oxford, 24-26 June 2010

Joanna Innes (Oxford) opened proceedings, summarizing the history of this interdisciplinary network-building project. She asked participants to refrain from constructing a narrative of changes *between* 1789 and 1848 – they were instead to aim to produce a snapshot at each point in relation to a series of issues, so that comparisons could emerge from discussions; by this means it was hoped to resist the tendency towards teleology that often marks discussions of the rise of democracy. Interest should be directed towards what people 'thought' democracy was all about around 1789 and 1848 (when, to quote a German historian, 'democracy moved from the book into life'). It should be noted that the term was reconfigured during this period in relation to modernity. In the 18th century, people thought of themselves as modern; the fact that they had moved beyond being able to operate under ancient-style 'democracy' was evidence of that. But events forced them to reconceptualise democracy as part of modernity. The conference should explore what elements of the ancient model endured and what not. It did continue to shape conceptions, but in the 19th century, a new critique of modern democracy developed in which it was seen as individualistic and selfish. The conference was intended to focus on the North Atlantic triangle; American and French revolutions had been significant because they threw up democratic phenomena which encouraged a revival of interest in democracy. There was less reason to credit British and Irish experience with broader influence, though during the 1830s popular agitations in these countries did provide a model for foreigners as to how democratic social-relations might operate. It was intended that there should be a further meeting focussing on the Mediterranean world, possibly followed by one focusing on the Netherlands, Switzerland and Poland. The project meanwhile continues by means of a reading group, a seminar, and an online bibliography.

Session 1 Languages of Democracy in France

Innes introduced this series of sessions by noting that there were two themes to be explored within it. One had to do with exploring how contemporaries talked about democracy. The other, with how 'language' works, and should be studied historically. It would be important to bear conceptual and methodological issues in mind, to do with how we can assess the significance of what people say; how important context is; how can reception be assessed; how does speech or writing relate to action; in what ways democratic ideas and values can be signalled or communicated other than in words.

PAPERS

Ruth Scurr (Cambridge) warned that, as a historian of ideas, she would concentrate on the way the concept was perceived by the elites. It could be said that the establishment of the first French Republic gave democracy political form. According to Rosanvallon, in this period democracy meant essentially ancient democracy; it only acquired modern meanings in 1848;

the term was not used during debates on voting rights. There were many discussions on 'popular sovereignty', but this was not held to entail any particular form of government (see thus Montesquieu, Rousseau). In 1791, interest focussed above all on the Executive, particularly on how to overthrow the King. This discussion was clearly seen in Paine and Sieyes' exchanges in 1791 ('hell of monarchy' versus 'hell of republics').What emerged from the Constitution of 1791 was a 'democratic republic with a phantom of monarchy'. The question of how to create an executive suitable for democracy did become a focus of concern thereafter. Initially, the primary concern was to make government responsible to the public will; later, after Thermidor, it came to be thought that under this pressure, there was a danger that government would disappear altogether; it needed a measure of insulation. Roederer subsequently (in 1793), dated democracy in France to 1792; he said that democracy too could throw up Neros. He invoked Hobbes to justify the idea that protection from molestation might be the most that one could hope for. He said there had been a moderate third party aiming at rule by an elected aristocracy of merit, but this had perished during 1792. He spent much of the rest of his short life trying to explain that collapse. In his account, 1792 brought not absolute anarchy but the triumph of particular wills; a general will alarming in its content and extent had however been embodied in political clubs and the national guard. A distinction between 'democracy' and 'representative government' was crucial for Sieyes, who believed representative government more valuable than democracy. Robespierre by contrast had a positive, yet confused understanding of the concept. Robespierre criticized the remoteness of representatives. His aim was to regenerate representation, not to establish direct democracy. At this stage, the term 'democrat' was used as an antonym of aristocrat, and applied to anybody opposed to the Old Regime rather than in relation to any specific model of government. It was used fairly interchangeably with a host of other terms, including patriot, Jacobin and sans culotte. The Royalist press derogatorily called Robespierre a 'democrat' for arguing against the death penalty, and later when he resisted drawing a distinction between 'active' and 'non-active' citizens, which he said was incompatible with the Declaration of Rights. It is worth noting that Robespierre's political ideas were to a significant extent rights-based.

Louis Hincker (Valenciennes) considered that the history of the concept had already been explored. He wished to focus therefore on the relationship between language and democracy. He asked participants not to confuse '*langage'* (patterns of speech in context) with 'l*angue*' (an agreed vocabulary employed in conventional ways). The first has not been seriously explored although there is plenty of work on the latter. In the first revolutionary era, France experienced a creation of 'national language (langue)'. Counterrevolution entailed among other things war on this new revolutionary language, and consequently a war of words. The later period was less linguistically fertile. In this context, authors such as Baudelaire and Flaubert highlighted the failure of language. They said the language of democracy had become a cloak for mediocrity. A further point to consider concerns access to the langue/language in various forms. In this period, political capacity was measured by the ability to read and write. A 'democratization' of education however opened the way to wider

reading and writing. In 1848, there were moves to simplify spelling, to aid access to written French. On such matters, see the work of Sonia Branca-Rossof and Nathalie Schneider, *L'écriture du citoyen. Une analyse linguistique de l'écriture des peu-lettrés pendant la période révolutionnaire* (1994) on strategies of writing, and Denis Slakta**, '**L'acte de ''demander'' dans les ''cahiers de doléances''', *Langue française* (1971). on forms of address: handbooks were produced to guide people as to how they might address authorities**.** It is important that historians look beyond the immediate functions of words to consider how words can themselves be masters. Arguably the notion that language can be wholly mastered is itself a democratic illusion.

DISCUSSION

Laurence Whitehead (Oxford) asked Hincker to look backwards so as to explain what changes had been experienced in the period preceding the revolution that allowed the Royalist press to call Robespierre 'a democrat'. He asked Scurr to project forward, specially regarding the Consulate and the Hundred Days, as in these two occasions suffrage was put into practice, albeit imperfectly. ***Hincker*** replied by stating that political language became stagnant after the Revolution. ***Scurr*** agreed. She also said that during the consulate, there was a serious attempt to find a way of creating a functional electorate.

Malcolm Crook (Keele) Bonaparte overshadowed both periods. He has been seen as the inheritor of democracy. The term 'universal suffrage' was coined in France in 1800, in connection with discussions of the Bonapartist constitution. Perhaps because it was associated with Bonaparte, it acquired negative connotations.

Innes accepted that the modern French political language might be the product of the revolutionary period, yet specific terms have originated in other periods, i.e. elements of the language of petitioning during the 19th century. ***Hincker*** insisted that political language was frozen, perhaps due to the application of the Code Napoleon. There is no further innovation, only appropriation of the language by more people. ***Sophie Wahnich*** (CNRS, Paris) asked whether continuity in language helped to shape an experience of events repeating themselves. She suggested that there developed later a sense that it was important to allow creativity in language: for people to express themselves by developing their own forms of speech. ***Hincker*** agreed that ideas about how language operated may have changed even if vocabulary did not. The notion that language could and should transparently reveal reality was characteristic of the first revolutionary period. ***Wahnich*** suggested that this linked with the prevalence in 1789 of the idea that democracy related to the community while in 1848 it was seen as providing a chance for the individual to participate in politics.

Jim Livesey (Sussex) was interested by the notion that after 1792, people were faced with a choice between revolutionary and counterrevolutionary languages. He stressed however that new ideas like 'popular sovereignty' were incredibly hard for people to make sense of. The gap between such idealising notions and the actual exigencies of government remained wide for some time. The invention of the social sciences, anthropology etc should be seen as in

part attempts to close that gap. He invoked Pierre Serna's idea that the later 90s saw the emergence of what Serna terms a 'radical centre', employing Hobbesian ideas to develop a model of how a democratic republic might effectively function. He sees in these developments the origin of a new model of the republic which would ultimately inform the Third Republic. Other historians, such as Howard Brown and Donald Sutherland, have however challenged this, arguing that thE ideas of the period provided no basis for a rational politics. In general he argued against trying to ascribe too definite a meaning to democracy. We are not dealing with a solid political tradition – like 'republicanism' – but instead with a traumatized experience.

Mark Philp (Oxford) pondered whether the National Assembly by unifying all powers (Executive, Legislative, etc) might have produced confusion over the remits of particular institutions. In that context until 1794 a problem with democracy as a political concept was that it wasn't clear what work it could do; Robespierre was distinctive in trying to make it do analytical work.

Seth Cotlar (Willamette) wanted to distinguish between democracy as a language of legitimization and as a language of opposition. Different people employing the term vary in terms of whether they want to open or close a gap between reality and representation.

Alex Keyssar (Harvard) asked how much we knew about how ordinary people used this vocabulary. Was there any 'archaeology' of the shift in the language? ***Hincker*** said not much was known. ***Wahnich*** said that ordinary people did talk about democracy, but 'popular government' was more common at the time of Revolution. This phrase went back to the era of constitutional monarchy. ***Innes*** said that it was also translated in this way in England, in order to make the concept clear and accessible. She noted the paradox that, though democracy is a word for a popular thing, it was at the start of our period essentially a learned, not a vernacular term. ***Hincker*** said that by 1848 it had come into common use, eg in the form 'social democracy'.

Livesey picking up on Hincker's point about the importance of studying how people use language highlighted the transition in petitions from the language of supplication to a rights-based language.

Laura Edwards (Duke) said that the US also experienced attempts to standardize political language in this period; there seems to have been much interplay between what went on at high and low levels. This attempt to standardize may have put constraints on meanings; for this reason, we should be cautious about expecting change always to be reflected in words.

Philp wondered about forms of exchange between the US and France if it is the case that in France 'democracy' was not much in use while in the US there were self-consciously French-style democratic republican societies in the 1790s. ***Cotlar*** quoted a contemporary American newspaper in which France was represented as m model of US democracy: it was stated that in France, the 'republic' and 'democracy' existed in a pure form. Changes in modes of speech and address, eg the habit of addressing others as citizen, was welcomed. ***Edwards*** added that in the US old and new languages were mixed. ***Dan Feller*** (Tennessee) warned of the danger

of defining too tightly terms and attributing to them too much meaning, considering that people do not define terms when they are conversing. The meaning is assumed. In a US context by the 1830s and 40s, 'democratic' primarily functioned to mean 'non-aristocratic'. ***Nick Cole*** (Oxford) In the 1790s some observers in the US began to ask the question as to whether American changes had gone far enough; in that context they used the term 'democrat' to indicate their desire to go further.

Frank O'Gorman (Manchester) pondered whether we should not look outside the North Atlantic triangle considering the impact that the Constitution of 1791 and the Spanish Constitution of 1812 which drew on that had on understandings of democratic practice in Latin America.

Michael Drolet (Oxford) wondered when democrat/aristocrat ceased to be standard antonyms. He suggested that the post revolutionary period saw a deliberate shift from political in favour of a more economic language. For the ideologues, the term 'producer' perhaps functioned as an analogue for democrat, 'aristocrat' being equated with idler. The Doctrinaires consciously promoted the idea of the producer in contrast to that of democratic man, just as they promoted the ideal of discipline in place of that of virtue. ***Scurr*** concurred. Following the Terror, the categories of work were used in preference to those of politics, so we should explore them as well. ***Mariana Saad*** (Wellcome Trust) disagreed: there was less continuity between ideologues and doctrinaires than was being suggested. She argued that the *ideologues* used terms such as 'virtue' and 'philosophers of freedom' instead of the language of labour. ***Scurr*** however insisted that for Sieyes, for example, the nation consisted only of producers. ***Hincker*** supported the need to explore of the language of work., and thought that this may have been a site of continuing linguistic innovation. ***Maurizio Isabella*** (Queen Mary) argued that the language of work and productivity was an attack on the language of ancient democracy. ***Scurr*** contended that it was not so much an attack as an alternative. ***Livesey*** pointed out that the great weakness of ancient democracy was the presence of slavery. There was a perceived need to emphasise what was distinctive about the socio-economic base of modern societies; the language of labour offered a means of doing that. ***Keyssar*** suggested that changes in the language of work came from below as a result of changes in the working experience. He thought that that process deserved further research.

Philp stressed the need to distinguish between changes in words and in concepts. Lexicons develop over a very long time. Though the words we use to express certain concepts may not have been in use, or in this form of use, that is not to say that people lacked those concepts.

Session 2 Languages of democracy in America

PAPERS

Seth Cotlar (Willamette) described how he had made a keyword search for the term democracy, focussing chiefly on newspapers during the period 1787-1800. Dramatic change was evident. In 1787 it was difficult to find anybody describing themselves as a 'democrat' or

advocating 'democracy', while only 13 years it was possible for a party to call itself 'Democrat'. The term was used during the Constitutional Convention of 1787, but it was an elite term used to refer chiefly to an element in a mixed constitution, sometimes to denote a social stratum (as in the case of 'the democracy' to refer to the lower classes – thus frequently in John Adams' *Defence of the Constitutions*). It was thought that there needed to be a democratic element in a republican system, but that this should be checked by other elements. Criticisms of democratic excess often in practice referred to pro-debtor legislation; there was a fear that if creditors' rights weren't protected, Europeans wouldn't invest. There was also a fear that the people who gained office might be too ordinary and mediocre, hence 'democratic'. Neoprogressive historians such as Terry Bouton have argued that this fear was limited to the elites and not shared by the rest of the population. This doesn't imply that there was a democratic coalition waiting in the wings; what there was was popular scepticism of what was termed aristocratic government, though the word democracy was not widely used to describe the alternative. What was agreed in 1787 was that the new form of government should be republican, but nobody knew what that meant. There was a call for more 'democratical government', but not for full democracy. Conversely, noone explicitly championed aristocracy, though those in power saw vesting power in some form of natural aristocracy as a way of insulating the government from the people (i.e. Adam favoured the idea that a few families could control government). In the 1790s, attacks on aristocracy began to morph into a positive concept of democracy. Anti-Federalist editors began to craft a narrative of the revolutionary era in which the 1770s appeared as the high tide of 'democracy' (even though that term had not commonly been positively used at that time). In that context, the constitution of 1787 was seen as a step back, abandoning the democratic model of 1770s. It was suggested that in the 1770s the ideal of equality had had real meaning, but now was becoming a sham. Adams in particular was often attacked. Those who defined themselves as democrats all favoured the French Revolution, seeing it as taking up and extending the democratic principles underlying the French Revolution. Equally, the American counterrevolution was seen as equivalent to the French counterrevolution. Accounts of the treason trials of London Corresponding Society members in London similarly presented a narrative of democracy trying to be born, but facing attacks. At this period people began distinguishing themselves as democrats. He cited a Democratic Songster, which included songs of the United Irishmen and the French Revolution alongside sea shanties and anti-slavery songs. Painite thought favoured the use of mechanisms of the state to promote equality among white men, for example via tax policies and public education. As 'democracy' became part of everyday discourse, and particularly as it acquired partisan connotations, however, its radical edge blunted. At the same time, enthusiasm for the French was waning. Democracy came to denote a particular way of choosing people for office. Earlier there had been debates about the theory and practice of representation, about how government could best be made self-government, eg what were the respective merits of large and small electoral districts, or who had the right to say when the constitution had been abrogated. However, conversations about the institutional design of the polity also faded.

Adam Smith (University College, London) said he would focus narrowly on 1848. This was a key moment because it saw a concerted and self-conscious attempt to loosen the Democratic

Party's special grip on 'democracy'. A problem for the analyst of usage in this period is that the term is ubiquitous. By 1848, the term democrat connoted patriotism and American national identity. Everybody was a democrat. The term democrat encompassed everything, including all the attributes given to the term 'republican' earlier in the period. An index of its power is supplied by newspaper titles, which can be studied via the Library of Congress index. There was a surge in the use of 'democrat' (and variants) in newspapers titles from 1840-60, by no means always denoting a party-political affiliation; the term rose at the expense of 'republican'. Smith pointed to the interesting imagery with which the term was associated – it was aligned with the forces of nature ('tides', 'volcanoes', etc) and considered both 'modern' and 'timeless'. It was frequently the subject of homilies, eg one by William Allen was widely reprinted in newspapers. It was imagined as a sentiment existing in the heads of the people; he had been particularly struck to find it being associated with moral and political reformation. Yet if the word was ubiquitous, it was particularly talismanic for the Democratic Party – and this too is evident in Allen's homily. It also had other particular applications, eg in lower Manhattan, there was a grouping of so-called 'shirtless democrats' under the leadership of Mike Walsh (no doubt the term was intended to evoke the sans-culottes). The prestige of the word explained the anxiety of other parties to appropriate it. Whig politicians sought to divest ther term of its radical edge, and to ensure its compatibility with moral and social order. To this end they emphasised that it was a form of government, involving popular sovereignty but with appropriate institutional checks. They linked democracy to the rule of law and of the best men. It was no longer to involve rule by the 'great body of the people' on the basis that 'an aggregate of imperfections could not result in perfection'. There thus developed a bourgeois democratic discourse. Events in France helped to catalyse efforts to reconceptualise democracy in more conservative terms. The failure of European democratic movements seemed to underscore democracy's need for institutional underpinning, and for individuals to show self-restraint. The French were thought to have shown themselves to be temperamentally unsuited to democracy – but all democracies were seen to be unstable, vulnerable to passion. May 1849 brought a bathetic echo of the June Days in New York, as a result of a theatre riot, involving an attempt to drive an English tragedian from the stage. These efforts were met by a show of force; the militia supported his attempt to portray Macbeth, and 25 people were killed. The shirtless democrats were at the centre of this campaign. For the authorities, it was argued that it had been demonstrated that democracy was capable of standing up to red republicanism. It was said that popular disorder had been too long tolerated in the theatre; now the rights of actors and audiences should also receive protection. Democracy must be understood to mean liberty under the law. In 1851, Marx charged Lord John Russell with cynically appropriating the term in the interests of the bourgeoisie. It could be argued that something similar had happened in the US.

DISCUSSION

Robert Saunders (Oxford) asked how far the concept of democracy was linked in the US to proposals to widen the electoral franchise. ***Smith*** replied to a large extent. Wherever there were debates on suffrage, the defence of democracy was invoked. ***Cotlar*** stated that in the

90s there was not much discussion of the franchise in the newspapers: it was not a central issue. ***Keyssar*** noted that in the 1790s debate was complicated by the fact that even those who favoured extending the franchise didn't necessarily favour extending it to all adult males.

Innes asked whether and how in the US people talked about what it might mean to have a democratic Executive. ***Cotlar*** observed that Jackson argued that he was, as President, the embodiment of the people. ***Smith*** concurred. ***Feller*** added that he made this claim first in responding to a censure by the Senate. Jackson advocated a straight popular vote for the president. Likewise others attacked institutionalized sources of power such as the judiciary, the medical establishment and organised religion, portraying them all as bastions of aristocracy. The idea that aristocracy was the enemy was all pervasive.

Edwards was interested in what she saw as a shift from the idea of democracy as being associated with a set of principles of government to an idea that it had to do with to the organisation of political life, notably the suffrage. She wondered if this had to do with changes in the nature of government itself, as it took on more functions. Initially neither federal nor state governments met very much; state legislature might sit only very occasionally. ***Smith*** agreed, adding that political participation was focused on one level at the electoral processes (as captured in Caleb Bingham's pictures displaying democracy as a form of rational deliberation), while on another level – Mike Walsh's level, say – assertions of democracy focused on defiance of institutions and on keeping them out of people's lives.

Philp asked whether the press (a key source for both contributors) was centred on Washington or at state and local level as well. ***Cotlar*** said that not until 1796 were state election results reported in the press; the term democrat was used as a party term in that context. By 1800, this usage had become standard. In general though there was little local coverage; 75% of what was printed was news from Europe. Newspapers in Boston, NY and Philadelphia circulated news among themselves; this helped to keep their focus national. In the late 90s, the newspapers became mouthpieces for the new democratic party, a process described by Jeff Pasley in his *Tyranny of printers*. But by 98 a particular generation of editors had all died; newspapers then reoriented towards the practical business of getting out the vote.

Peter Gray (Queen's, Belfast) asked about the impact of the arrival of Irish immigrants and of Catholic Mexicans incorporated as an effect of the Mexican War on the development of the concept of democracy. How did this effect the Protestant Democratic party, and the perceptions of its opponents. ***Smith*** said that there was certainly an anti-Catholic strain to Whig bourgeois democratic discourse. All that was attributed to the excesses of democracy are characterised as essentially Irish and Catholic. ***Feller*** doubted whether the Democratic Party could even in the 1820s and 30s have been characterised as Protestant. ***Keyssar*** wondered whether the Whigs ever considered changing their name. Smith said that they often claimed to be the 'real' Democratic Party but doubted that this counted as a serious consideration. ***Feller*** said that Whig was used as a party name as from 1834: a speech by Henry Clay is usually seen as key (***Smith*** noted that according to Donald Ratcliffe the term

was used earlier; ***Feller*** denied that it was used earlier as a party name). Feller said that democracy connoted an attitude to life: it meant, no one is better than me, and no one can tell me what to do. There wasn't much discussion along the lines of, given that we're democrats, how should we organise our government. Whig criticisms of democracy partly focussed on this. ***Cotlar*** agreed. ***Smith*** contested that it would be better to follow contemporaries in talking of 'the Democracy' instead of the 'Democratic Party' to avoid anachronism. He though Martin van Buren shouldn't be seen as having helped to legitimate a party system; on the contrary, what van Buren did was to find a way of organising elections that gave voice to 'the Democracy'; the ideology of this phenomenon was not an ideology of party; similarly, the Whigs employed much anti-party rhetoric. ***Cole*** agreed: the legitimacy of parties was not generally agreed. Washington identified permanent parties as a problem. One objection to democratic societies was that they had constitutions: they seemed to have pretensions to be public bodies. ***Ken Owen*** (Oxford) notes that throughout the early period there are references to so-called democrats – even Federalists at that date weren't ready to abandon the term to their opponents. He also wondered if it was a coincidence that the term first passed into use as a label with primary reference to national bigwigs: in that context the idea of the low-life democrat clearly didn't fit so wasn't very troubling. The group most demonised in the 90s were 'jacobins'; Paine on his return to the US was stigmatised as a Jacobin. Jefferson by contrast was clearly not a Jacobin. Federalists nonetheless accused 'democrats' of hypocrisy on the grounds that if they really believed what they said about equality they would be doing more to abolish slavery

Edwards again tried to shift discussion to a higher plane, saying how striking she thought it was that a term that had been used to discuss government should have moved into the arena of party; she wondered if this could reflect patterns of research rather than just of usage. She wondered if other forms of research might have identified arenas in which the term was being used in different ways. ***Keyssar*** said that he thought there were other literatures in which the term was doing different work. ***It was suggested that*** Horace Mann may have used the term. ***Smith*** said that nonetheless, those using the term in other ways must have been aware of its political uses. And it wasn't to be found in some places where one might have expected to find it. Francis Lever's *Manual of Political Ethics*, published in the mid 1830s, for example, mentioned democracy only three times; the term wasn't central to his dicussions about how to structure government. ***Cotlar*** argued that democracy was strongly associated with white men, and linked with aspirations to universal proprietorship. Great democratic heroes of the 1820s and 30s were people who killed Indians and cleared land. In the south, owning slaves was key to social mobility; so democracy was linked to rights of slave ownership. Social issues were discussed in other languages.

The chair then took a series of questions. ***Eduardo Posada*** (Oxford) asked about the impact of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*; ***Livesey*** commented on the importance of land ownership to democracy: he argued that this was true both of America and of Europe. Thelwall eg saw landownership as key. ***Francis Boorman*** (IHR) asked how it came about that visions of citizenship were narrowed, such that virtue was not expected of the modern as of the ancient citizen. ***Robert Poole*** (Cumbria) asked for more comments on the link between

voting and democracy. ***Innes*** was curious about whether Americans used the word 'organisation' in talking about party; in an European context, 'organization' had radical connotations; Louis Blanc conjured up a vision of the 'organisation of the people'.

Cotlar said that, according to Oliver Zunz, Americans paid no attention to Tocqueville or just thought that he approved of American ways. They didn't pick up on his ideas about the channelling and disciplining of popular energies via local organisations, family and religion. ***Smith*** agreed and suggested that Americans did not theorise the relationship between voluntary associations and government, which Tocqueville might have helped them to do.

Philp noted that it had emerged as a weakness of the programme design that no special space had been allocated to the discussion of interconnections between different national experiences.

Day 2

Session 3 Languages of democracy in Ireland.

PAPERS

Ultan Gillen (Queen Mary College, London) explained that he proposed to address three questions: what was the effect of the Atlantic revolution on Ireland? What vision of democracy did people in Ireland develop in this period? And did they have ideas about what we might term democracy that were expressed in other ways? He stated that the discussion of democracy in Ireland followed the pattern common to the rest of the Atlantic world, though it was complicated by Ireland's particular relationship to Great Britain and the confessional nature of the Irish state. Early references to 'democracy' were cast within the 'mixed constitution' framework. The American and French revolutions both precipitated crises in Ireland. Irish legislative independence in 1782 was a failure, with London soon reasserting control through the use of patronage. However, after 1782 the Volunteers continued to try and use similar tactics to those used in 1778-1782 to obtain universal manhood suffrage, Catholic emancipation and more frequent parliaments – these were 'democratic demands' but the Volunteers neither used the term 'democracy', nor were they called 'democrats' by their opponents. Charles Francis Sheridan (Richard Sheridan's brother) was a British diplomat in Sweden during Gustavus III's coup, something he described in a 500-page book, in the form of an enlightenment historical narrative, which offered a veiled warning about what could happen if the power of the executive were not effectively checked. Parliamentary institutions were, in his view, not enough to check executive power. Sheridan advocated Irish legislative independence, based on a particularly Irish reading of Locke. He did not put much faith in elections, believing that what chiefly mattered was that the electorate not be bribable; so long as they were not bribable, choice by lot was as likely to yield good government as more deliberate choice. He became more conservative after joining the Portland administration in 1782, taking fright at the nature of political agitation in Ireland. He penned attacks on parliamentary reform and the Volunteers.

He claimed that the Volunteers had politicised the Irish nation, that this had had a deleterious effect since shopkeepers were not the equals of lords; he was particularly critical of the election of Volunteer officers; he saw the democratization of politics as a threat to the constitution. He thought that public opinion had been perverted and become corrupt. Democracy in a religious context was attacked by Richard Woodward; he stated that Presbyterianism was fit for republics, not monarchies. Woodward helped to precipitate a debate over the nature of the confessional state, arguing that the established church had to be protected if the establishment in state was to be preserved. In this context, there was a reaction against reform prior to 1789. Post 1789 the term 'democracy' was normally associated with France, and was initially used negatively, by counterrevolutionaries – in use within 6 months or so of the outbreak of revolution in France. Reformers were said to aim at absolute democracy; they were also linked with Cromwell, who would, it was suggested, have made a good leader for the Irish Whigs. Democracy strongly connoted France. By 1792, reformers in Ireland had adopted the term as a self-description; thus, the United Irish newspaper offered a political dictionary in which both aristocracy and democracy were defined. Dialogues between democrats and aristocrats were also published In 1790 the United Irish Society had narrowly voted in favour of universal suffrage, but Gillen said that he did not take this to reflect committed radicalism; time would suggest that not all those who initially supported this line were committed democrats He posited nonetheless that there was a real revolutionary corps who were very much democrats, possibly embracing the term as early as 1790. He suggested that they adopted democracy because it offered a way to break the log jams of Irish history. Democracy promised to make corruption from London impossible to achieve; it was hoped that the promise of equality inherent in the idea of democracy would allow full Irish potential to develop (especially with regards to the Catholic population). Irish democrats essentially subscribed to a form of commercial republicanism.

Laurent Colantonio (Poitiers) asked what was the Irish language of democracy around 1848, and was it any way specifically Irish? He thought that there was not any 'Irish exceptionalism' but there was an 'Irish touch' within the transnational debate – this was most notable in the Irish tendency to express ideas about democracy in terms of the nation. The Irish model had a broader influence; in France eg the Irish were seen to have successfully democratised: Gustave de Beaumont, Tocqueville's collaborator, who visited and wrote about Ireland, saw democracy as an irresistible force but one that needed channelling. The problem for modern European nations, as he saw it, was how to embrace the democratic spirit without undermining social order. He saw O'Connell as the paradigm of the modern democratic politician; he had brought the majority of the people into the political arena, but at the same time channelled their energies. This understanding of O'Connell did echo his own understanding of his role. He aimed to empower the people, by means of the vote, or by mobilising them as a moral force, for example through 'monster meetings' Such meetings usually began with a toast to The People. To O'Connell, 'the people' was synonymous with the nation, embracing all creeds. However, his message was mostly directed to Catholics, and his movement came to be seen as a Catholic one. He envisaged a 'controlled explosion' of the people into public life, entailing the need for a powerful organisation and strict discipline– this informed his dislike of socialists, English Chartists, and French republicans.

Historians credit O'Connell with having aided the progress of democracy in Ireland, but democracy in this context is not usually defined; the limits of O'Connell's vision, and discontinuities in the history of Irish democracy tend to be ignored. In 1829, O'Connell did achieve 'Catholic Emancipation', Catholics gained the right to stand for parliament, but only at the price of a curtailment of the franchise. There were also discordant voices in Ireland: defenders of the Union opposed both O'Connell and democracy; for example, members of Brunswick clubs portrayed democracy as a threat to liberty. He asked however whether being a unionist necessarily entailed being anti-democratic, and at the same time whether there were alternative forms of nationalist discourse. Among (mainly Protestant) Young Irelanders, some were pro-democratic, complicating the idea that there was only one Irish vision of democracy; they defended Chartism against O'Connell's criticisms from 1843 onwards. In 1848, they acclaimed the French revolution as a turning point. Some Young Irelanders had seen themselves only as nationalists; now it became more common for them to embrace democracy, and accordingly to reject monarchy and aristocracy. Finally, he suggested that it was difficult to establish how ordinary people did or didn't talk about democracy. It may not be possible to find evidence of how they talked, but only of processes, symbols at public meetings and so forth.

DISCUSSION

Sean Connolly (Queen's, Belfast) posited that the confessional nature of Ireland makes it very difficult to analyse democracy. Also that the Irish made no real contribution to the theory of democracy. He suggested that to the United Irishmen democracy was a means to an end, that the creation of an Irish parliament (their ultimate aim) necessitated the better representation of the people – they aimed to put the 'nation on the march', but this was different from a genuine appeal to democracy. ***Innes*** stated that the relationship between democracy and nationalism is also key elsewhere, eg in Italy, but also in France; part of the appeal of the concept in the nineteenth century was precisely that the people could be linked with the nation – the Irish case was not so exceptional.

O'Gorman raised a methodological objection by asking how far tracing the history of particular terms will get us. ***Gillen*** shared O'Gorman's scepticism, hence his emphasis on people talking about democracy without using the word. He suggested that the Irish made no real contribution to the theory of democracy because their 'democrats' never had access o state power, unlike in France and the United States. Ordinary Irish people were most interested in establishing rights to land. Furthermore he posited that the United Irishmen were too busy with organisation to write long tracts, unlike British radicals.

Colantonio in answering the same question returned to the point that the French in the 1840s saw Ireland as a striking example of a democratic country.

Saunders asked whether the important contributions made by the Irish community in the United States carried back to Ireland; and also what impact Chartism had on Ireland? ***Colantonio*** said that there were numerous Irish Chartists in Britain at the beginning of the

1840s and Chartism tried to develop a foothold in Ireland, but that O'Connell was instrumental in opposing it – even resorting to violence at times. He suggested that this was because of his fear of a competing force in Ireland, and because it was not simply a political movement, but a social one as well. Irish Americans did contribute funds to the repeal movement, but O'Connell later became infamous in the United States because of his opposition to slavery. ***Feller*** suggested that because the early groups of Irish émigré editors in the United States were Protestants they would have little influence in Ireland; he argued that the one thing they did import to the United States was a virulent Anglophobia.

Gillen said that in his period there was little influence from the United States because of a generation gap between the Irish Whigs who looked to the American colonies seeking independence and the United Irishmen who looked to France. Counterrevolutionaries in Ireland remained relatively sympathetic to America, contrasting it to France because in America the mob had not come to power. He argued that O'Connell should be viewed not as the founder of Irish democracy, but as the founder of Irish Catholic nationalism; it was the United Irishmen who were the real founders of Irish democracy.

Gray observed that in the 1840s the most intransigent and radical democrats, the Young Irish were mainly Protestant. He then posed the question of whether there was a linkage between the two eras – how deeply was democratic political culture disseminated in Irish rural society? He pointed out that the O'Connellite movement first emerged in 1813-14 and then asked to what extent did the O'Connell movement built on groundwork laid in the 1790s? ***Gillen*** replied that he thought there as a continuing tradition of popular insurgency that was driven underground, that reemerged in the form of the Ribbonmen. In this context, O'Connell represented a reassertion of Catholic bourgeois leadership. Regarding the depth of dissemination, he suggested that there were large numbers involved, but that the involvement did not continue for very long. ***Colantonio*** agreed, O'Connell always referred back to Henry Grattan, and always regarded 1798 as a bad event.

Livesey asked why is democracy in play? The question of land needs to be looked at. He suggested that focussing on this would illuminate links between Europe and the United States. For example, for the Chartists their land plan was at the centre. We tend to underestimate the importance of the land question, seeing it as somehow anachronistic at this period. Democratic thinkers inherited from the republican tradition thei idea that people need a basis for autonomy; therefore, property was needed to prevent dependence. In the States, land was also important, though the issue presented itself differently because of the vast areas of land available.

Edwards wanted to add the United States to the list of places were democracy was linked with nationalism. She stated that the Confederates were called democrats and claimed the title themselves, an example of the presence of the language of democracy in the complete absence of what we might recognise as democratic practices.

O'Gorman suggested there was an Anglophone belief that democracy could be defined in terms of electoral tactics etc. He then asked how the landless came into the equation. And

how were the British able to overlook tensions between democracy, aristocracy and monarchy; why was it only in Paine that the conflict between democracy and hereditary power was extensively considered?

Colantonio, answering O'Gorman's first question, asked why did people attend meetings. He suggested that it was not simply out of a desire for the repeal of the Union – perhaps there was a desire to exploit the opportunity to express any type of political view, perhaps even just to assert their existence, therefore the movement was not simply nationalist. Also we should remember that mass meetings were actually quite fun, and were advertised to reflect that. ***Innes*** asked about the symbolism of these meetings, especially regarding religion. Surely the identities being asserted were not only political ones? ***Colantonio*** suggested that the meetings were intended to present an image of an ordered, hierarchical society, pointing to the example of the processions which were organised in a hierarchical manner. ***Philp*** argued that only by attending to language could one understand how people conceptualised political relationships..

Gillen proposed that the use of Paine in the historiography hides more than it reveals because so many went beyond Paine's thinking. Returning to the issue of when the property-less entered the equation he pointed to Wolfe Tone who spoke of the 'men of no property', which raised the question of what type of republicanism there was in Ireland in this period – Directorial or Jacobin? Tone he said was a Jacobin, not an admirer of the Directory..

Gareth Stedman Jones (King's, Cambridge) pointed out that in the 20-30 years after 1848 the pope took a reactionary position in relation to Ireland. He wondered how O'Connell had been viewed within the twentieth-century tradition of 'Christian democracy'. ***Colantonio*** observed out that de Gaulle referred to O'Connell quite frequently; his grandmother had written a biography of the Irishman. Regarding Christian democracy, he was unsure; he thought that one could not really speak of Christian democracy within this period however; what is sometimes called this is really better described as liberal Catholicism..

Cotlar pointed to parallels with the history of science, where historians to recover the meaning of terms and to discover lost paths. Like them, we need to work at developing a history of democracy that is 'genealogical' rather than teleological. The lost path that is key in the history of democracy seems to be land, an issue that has now been wished away in the US, where redistributive aspects of past democratic thinking are now ignored.

Eric Foner (Columbia) wondered about the ways in which people reinvent democracy retrospectively. Various people are retrospectively assigned parts in democratic movements though their claims to inclusion are extremely heterogeneous – for example Catholic murals in Belfast portray Frederick Douglass, though Irish Americans of the era were often pro slavery, or a Protestant mural portrayed President James Buchanan, a hopeless president, because he was Scots-Irish. ***Colantonio*** noted that Douglass was called the black O'Connell. He added Davy Crockett and Roosevelt to the above examples. He pointed out that after the First World War many Irish nationalists were tough on O'Connell, portraying him as someone who was almost English, whereas during The Troubles his position on non-violence

made him attractive to moderate Catholics – in 1995 Mary Robinson wrote a tribute to O'Connell portraying him as the founder of Irish democracy. Finally remembered that O'Connell had been voted Irishman of the millennium by a panel of historians organised by the *Irish Times*.

A number of questions were then taken at once.

M. Crook asked about religion and democracy. In the French Revolution the Gallican Church embodied an attempt to marry Catholicism and revolutionary democratic principles – for example by providing for the election of priests and extensive involvement on the part of the laity in Church matters. This history has tended to be neglected: it's too Catholic for some tastes and too radical for others. Abbe Gregoire supported the principle of one man one vote and opposed slavery, but he remains a highly controversial figure. Even in 1989, representatives of the Catholic hierarchy refused to attend when he was pantheonised. Did anyone in Ireland confront O'Connell over the question of combining democracy and hierarchical Catholicism?

Amanda Goodrich (Open University) agreed with those who had questioned the worth of focussing on language. She pointed out that in the 1790s the language of democracy was little used by reformers in England; though ideas associated with democracy were: for example, there were many calls for people to be judged on the basis of their merits alone.

Wahnich asked whether there were Irish parallels to the delegitimation of 'anarchy' by Thermidorians. Also the emphasis so far has been on the interaction with government, but the point about democracy is the inclusion of the poor; therefore we need to look beyond language.

Edwards suggested that placing property rights at the centre of our understanding of democracy makes it easier to understand the limits of the democratic vision, especially the difficulties of extending it to include women.

In responding to these questions and comments:

Gillen stated that one can see at work in Ireland an early version of the Furet-Richet theory of derapage. There was a liberal group in Ireland who welcomed Thermidor as marking the end of the terror and argued that it was time for a regicide peace; they did use Thermidorian language.

Colantonio stated that while the pope was critical of liberal Catholics – thus, in 1832 Lammenais was banned -- the Pope was less intransigent where Ireland was concerned, since it was seen as a mission field. For O'Connell the connection to Rome was always important, he died on a pilgrimage to Rome. In relation to language, he wondered if we can do for democracy what Pickering has done for class, i.e. build up a picture of 'Democracy without words'.

Session 4 Language of democracy in Britain.

PAPERS

Mark Philp (Oxford) began by pointing to the changing meaning of the word 'democracy' 1789-97. Adam Smith used it to describe primitive societies, others in reference to ancient democracy (Plato, Aristotle), to describe small-scale city republics following Montesquieu, or to denote an element in the mixed British constitution. However, it was always acknowledged that democracy was 'not feasible' for Great Britain, France and so on. Only in the context of the mixed constitution was the word ever used in a positive light. The negative legacy remained extremely strong during this period; this meant that contests over the expansion of the franchise, voting rights and so on were rarely, if at all, expressed in terms of the ideal of democracy. There were supporters of democracy, eg John Adams pamphlet on American constitutions was published in Britain in 1787, and republished in 94 by the loyalist publisher Stockdale; he wrote of representative democracy, invested in a single body in which sovereignty was wholly concentrated; he in turn attributed this usage to Marchamont Nedham, though Nedham wrote of a FREE STATE, not of democracy. Catherine Macaulay praised democracy in her discussion of Corsica – though it should be noted that she was called a republican, not a democrat. People in general did not initiate use of the term to describe themselves; instead it was first used as a term of abuse, before eventually being taken up by those labelled as democrats by their opponents. Burke hurled the vitriol against democracy. His attack on British 'democrats' were met with puzzlement, as those who supported the French Revolution rarely thought of themselves as democrats, not even Paine did. Burke in effect succeed in the short term, as there is little, if any, positive use of the term between 1789-1792. In this period, the 'spectre of democracy' began to haunt the papers of loyalist writers, but it was definitely a spectre, and as such had to be invented. Some people began to take up the moniker of 'democrat' in the mid-1790s, and began to wear it as a badge of honour, against the loyalist invective against democracy. But few took up the idea of representative democracy: there is one reference in Thelwall 1794, and in Barlow's writings, in the context of calls to strengthen the popular part of the constitution. Affirmations of the ultimate sovereignty of the people were not accompanied by attempts to imagine ways in which they might more actively exercise power. Paine did support a conventionist approach, owing much to American experience, but this was not defended as democratic; it was more likely to be linked to popular sovereignty. Therefore, it is not at all clear what people were endorsing when they called themselves democrats. The established reform tradition focussed on strengthening the democratic part of the constitution, so that was a possible meaning, though rarely if ever spelt out; there was criticism of aristocracy, even sometimes of monarchy. Loyalists accused democrats of being levellers, and that seems to have encouraged those accused to consider the case for levelling. But the conceptual content of the word was underdeveloped. By the end of the 1790s it seems that democracy was a widely spread word, but not a widely spread concept. It was essentially a fighting term, employed in a context of ideological contestation. It was only the possibility of power, or the pressure of competing concepts which forced the development of a more coherent definition of democracy in the nineteenth century.

Peter Gurney (Essex) began by detailing the current state of the historiography of popular politics in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially of Chartism. He pointed to the recent emphasis on the 'constitutionalist idiom' which has dominated interpretations from E.P. Thompson onwards. However, he wanted to claim that this emphasis has distracted historians from noticing that Chartism was a movement suffused with the 'democratic idiom'. Examining the language of democracy – a language unexamined despite Gareth Stedman Jones' call for more attention to the language of democracy -- can move us away from the intractable debate over constitutionalism. He then detailed the prevalence of negative uses of democracy in the debates over the Great Reform Act, notably by Peel. The Earl of Carnarvon imagined a caricature in which democracy would appear as a giant striding over the land – echoing the association between democracy and the 'monster' made positively by O'Connell). The debate over reform was however primarily conducted by reference to English history on the one hand, the experience of the French Revolution on the other; Whig proponents of reform were no more enthusiastic about democracy than their Tory opponents.. However, there was a slow recalibration of democracy in some quarters, with arguments made (eg by the Lord Advocate Francis Jeffrey) that democracy was a synonym for the Commons and that therefore there could be adjustment with the creation of something entirely new. In this, the figure of Henry Brougham was particularly important. His contribution has been identified by Warhman, who however focuses on his invocations of the 'middle class', not of democracy. Brougham associated democracy with the middle class, distinguishing them from the merely popular, the mob. In parliamentary debate, Brougham shrugged off the charge of pandering to democracy, though in the printed version of his speech he was more positive, suggesting that he saw advantage in presenting himself differently to different audiences. Brougham's ideas were picked up by the radical press, for example in the Poor Man's Guardian, where Bronterre O'Brien took him apart (O'Brien had translated Buonarotti's life of Baboeuf). O'Brien was concerned with issues of language, and the development of an appropriate language for popular politics. Gurney suggested that the equivalent of Olivia Smith's *The Politics of Language 1794-1819* (Oxford, 1984) for this period would be very beneficial, especially concerning the issue of politeness, rudeness and democracy. O'Brien favoured strong leaders: he admired both Robespierre and Andrew Jackson. He then looked briefly at uses of the term against the background of municipal reform. Tocqueville's book on America appeared between the English and Irish Municipal Corporation Acts. Tocqueville's text proved open to many different readings: Tories, Whigs and radicals all thought he provided ammunition for their views. The idea of 'conservative (or tory) democracy' was floated at this time; Gifford, editor of the *Standard*, coined the term and spent ten years trying to popularise it, but in vain; Disraeli also tried. In general, in the first half of the nineteenth century the language of democracy failed to find a home among moderates, let alone tories – this was peculiar to Britain, he wondered why? One reason he suggested was the role of Chartism. Chartism took on the language of democracy. See for example the case of Samuel Holloway, who died aged 18 and was buried in Sheffield in 1842; he was seen as a Chartist martyr; the breastplate on his coffin stated that he Died a martyr to the cause of democracy. It was widely invoked. Even the moderate Chartists invoked the language of democracy. He gave a range of examples. The term was used by Feargus O'Connor, who knew well how to play a popular audience, using the codes of

melodrama. There were debates about who were the real democrats. Thomas Cooper on lecture tours lectured on Athenian democracy; he claimed that it was reading about Greece at the age of 14 that had made him love democracy. Unfortunately, no text of these lectures survives. Classical imagery was also evoked in eg Chartist banners. The general thrust of his argument was that in Chartism it is impossible to separate the constitutionalist from the democratic idiom. This was further reinforced by the practices of the movement, Chartism as practice endorsed democratic forms. By 1842, Chartism and ' democracy' had become elided both within and without the movement. Set against the democracy were variously set aristocracy, shopocracy and smokeocracy. The Complete Suffrage Union attempted to build bridges between middle-class and working-class radicals; it also tried to appropriate their language, but this effort had limits, notably the CSU refused to endorse the Charter. Even Lovett ultimately broke with them. In 1845, the general strike was marked by French influences, notably the importation of the idea of democratic socialism; Chartism acquired an increasingly internationalist flavour. Harney introduced both the term social democracy and the language of bourgeoisie vs proletariat, but neither really caught on. In 1847-8 there was a new attempt at rapprochement, by Cobden and Bright. But Cobden wanted no truck with democracy, advocating machinery, commerce and free trade in preference. He concluded by looking in more detail at the relationship between property and democracy. A focus on property was central to the 'new move': a shift towards an attempt to promote the acquisition of freehold land, as a basis for acquiring the vote. Bright favoured this, seeing the vote as a commodity that could properly be bought. The Chartist vision was however not individualist, focussing rather on the creation of communities whose members could look after themselves. In that context, they had some notion that MPs could be made mere delegates, and subjected to critical scrutiny by those who had commissioned them.

DISCUSSION

Tim Stuart Buttle (Oxford) pointed to the rapid publishing of three histories of Greece in 1782-4, and wondered if the activities of publishers such as John Murray (who had links to the Fox-Sheridan circle) pointed to a move towards trying to expose the wider population to ideas about democracy through historical writing. It was Murray who pressed John Gast to write a history of Greece; Gast had links to both Ireland and America. ***Philp*** pointed to the difference between Roman and Greek democracy, with Macaulay using a Roman model. He stated that there was little reference to Greece in what he had read. He then replied to the question of how popular were these histories? Thelwell turned to Greece and Rome in his lectures; Godwin wrote schoolbook accounts of them. But Philp made the point that with all ancient models there remained the insurmountable difficulty of how they could be reconciled to the issue of the commercial state. ***Innes*** noted that much use was made of Greek and Roman examples in the 90s to attack democracy; in that context it was unsurprising that those otherwise inclined should have wanted to examine the historical record for themselves. She also suggested that the migration of the word democracy into popular lectures and so on should be set in the context of more general 'popular enlightenment', marked by the

appropriation of much of what had formerly been typed as high culture for popular uses and radical ends.

Smith wanted to take up the methodological issue.: to raise the question, could the Chartists have operated equally well without invoking democracy. They drew on a radical tradition in English history which did not make use of the word 'democracy' and yet expressed 'democratic' ideas (the Levellers and so forth). This raised the question of the place of the United States in Chartist thought: he thought they did see it as a more hospitable setting for their ideas; as a place where the Charter had in effect already been enacted. Andrew Jackson was portrayed as a working man who had risen to power. Was the Chartist fascination with the US an explanation for their use of the democratic idiom? ***Gurney*** agreed that many Chartists were fascinated with the US, O'Brien's fascination with Andrew Jackson forced him to rethink the links between political, economic, and social equality. Though they also saw a danger that pursuit of economic opportunity might undermine democracy. Regarding alternative radical traditions, he pointed out that the Chartists not only had radical traditions available to them but also lived experience of the vestry, and of local self-government – hence their hatred of the new Poor Law. The Chartists echoed older glorifications of the English tradition of local self-government: note eg the title of the Chartist newspaper *The Bridgewater Alfred*.

Several questions were then taken at once:

Robert Gildea (Oxford) suggested that in Britain it was the mixed constitution which stood in the way of the development of a democratic discourse, whereas the destruction of the crown in France allowed one to develop. He also wondered whether the French model, considered as scary in the 1790s, was less so in 1848.

O'Gorman pointed to the growth of preoccupation with democracy as a numbers game. Down to 1832, he suggested, what was emphasised above all was the need to combat corruption, and secure the independence of electors; but 1832 changed things. Grey's government realised that it had no idea how many voters there and therefore they began to survey the constituencies. The passing of the Reform Act reflected new statistical knowledge, which encouraged further thinking in terms of number of voters. Therefore, he suggested there was a move from nostalgic ideas about democracy to statistical speculations about voting possibilities, e.g., how many people could be safely let into the system.

Cotlar was interested in the idea of democracy as the natural state of man; wondered if this notion helped influence the organic imagery of Paine's notion of engrafting representation on to democracy. Does democracy become the term used to describe, romantically, the natural situation – a 'commonsensical' social contract in Paine's terms..

Foner said he was interested in when organisations began to use the term. In the US in the 1790s there appeared democratic-republican societies. What was the first organisation in Britain to use the word in its title?

Keyssar wondered why Mark had found no explicit discussion of local government as democratic, given what had been said about the importance of local structures and experiences as models.

Poole suggested that the constitutionalist idiom addressed occasional major shifts in power. It is important to distinguish between routine, popular, democratic involvement in government and occasional injections of popular involvement to effect change, such as in 1688. 1794, 1817 and 1839 saw attempts of the latter kind Popular sovereignty can be exercised by a leader; alternate monarchs could be championed, such as Queen Caroline. Feargus O'Connor claimed descent from Irish kings.

The paper-givers then responded as follows:

Philp argued that in the leftist press in 1848 though there was much reference to republic, democrat, etc. the terms became all mixed up; they lacked distinct meanings. He suggested that émigrés were an important source of new language. In relation to O'Gorman, he agreed, but the focus of debate in the 1790s was elsewhere. In relation to Cotlar, Paine's conceived of democracy in terms of constituent power, not ongoing government. In relation to Foner, he suggested that the first British group so far traced, by Katrina Navickas, operated in Chester in 1812/13. Agreed with Keyssar and suggested that more work was needed on local government. ***Innes*** pointed out that much of what seems to us to be obvious language to use to discuss local government (including local government and self-government) was not used in Great Britain until the 1830s; in the case of self-government this was much later than in the States..

Gurney agreed with Gildea, but pointed out that the monarchy was in a rather shaky state in the late 1830s. In the 1840s, it remained possible to find some quite rudely anti-monarchical material in Britain. In 1842, there were fears that Queen Victoria might face assassination attempts. (***Philp*** wondered why the fact that the English had already killed one king was not referenced more often in this period.) ***Gurney*** stated that the French example was frequently discussed in the 1840s. In relation to O'Gorman, he agreed, but we should remember that the vote also continued to have a moral aspect to it, and who should exercise it was an important question, debated in the 1860s in terms of 'Rochdale man'.

Session 5 Holding Government to account

Innes recapitulated discussions so far. She said that it had been established that there was quite a lot of talk about 'democracy' in the period (though this can be exaggerated; presentations which reflect a search for the word can leave a false impression of its centrality). Nonetheless, it certainly had a role in discourse, and changes in the ways in which it was talked about were suggestive. 'Democracy' was conceived in two main ways: it was associated with social equality, with attacks on privilege and with the idea that people should behave to one another in ways that acknowledged their fundamental equality; it also had a

political meaning, being associated with the idea that one shouldn't be ruled over by 'others', be these aristocrats, capitalists or foreigners. These two ideas were linked inasmuch as a core idea was that social status conferred no right to rule. In the next session, it was intended that attention should shift from language to practice. It seemed reasonable to suppose that there would be some relationship between language and practice – language might be expected to shift in part to capture changes in practice; people might be expected to try to institute changes they recommended. But exactly how this relationship may have worked out in any given case was an open question. It had been clearly established that 'democracy' at this time did not relate narrowly or even primarily to the practice of election, so it would not be appropriate to confine discussion of practice to electoral practice. Presenters had therefore been asked to survey more broadly practices and mechanisms associated with attempts to make government responsible and accountable. She asked three questions to kick off discussions: What repertoire of devices was employed to hold government to account? Secondly, what changes in the repertoire were made during this period? In connection with the second question she warned that it was necessary to guard against overstating change, or imputing teleology; there might be cases in which existing practices were highlighted and redescribed as democratic when democracy became more fashionable, though the practices were not in themselves new. There had always been pragmatic reasons for governments to be attentive to the voice of the people. Thirdly, discussion might focus upon the question, to the extent there were changes, how do we account for these? What sorts of initiatives by what people produced change? What kinds of interaction shaped it?

She explained that she intended first to take two presenters who planned to stick quite closely to the suggested 'two eras' framework; then to invite preliminary discussion of these, in part to break up proceedings. Then two other presenters would present papers on particular aspects of practice, after which there would be more general discussion.

PAPERS

Alexander Keyssar **(**Harvard) said that he would be contrasting the two periods defined by the conference title within an American context. In 1789-99, both state and still more federal government were relatively new creations. In this period there was a tension between the conviction that government derives its legitimacy from the consent of the governed and a fear of the governed in practice. Because the governed were feared, at federal level especially devices for checking government power did not foreground accountability so much as checks and balances. Both senate and judiciary were insulated from the people, and it was made difficult to amend the constitution. At state and local level, things were rather different; politics were more participatory and fluid, and there were systems of accountability in the form eg of town meetings. There were, however, at all levels informal ways to holding government to account, such as by writing petitions (as in the case of militia men demanding the right to vote), by tax rebellions (mostly directed against state governments) and by the press. In 1848, the landscape was very different. This year did not have the same significance in an American as in a European context, but it was the year when the Supreme Court was

asked to put an end to the Rhode Island rebellion known at the Dorr War. The rebels, who demanded the extension of the electoral franchise to non-propertied men, asked the court to intervene, arguing that such limitations were unconstitutional. The Supreme Court sidestepped the case, finding it to be a political question. There were in the years 1844-53 up 19 state constitutional conventions, many of them addressing the issue of accountability. There was a prevailing idea that a lot had been learned about the science of civil government, and that in the light of this it should be possible to make institutions work better. Elections constituted the main form of holding officials to account. Turnout at elections at this time could be as high as 80 per cent and the number of offices to which men could be elected increased. All state governorships became directly elective. Elections also became the main way to appoint judges. The judiciary was considered to be strengthened by having judges elected because in this way they were released from control by politicians. The period also saw the growth of mass political parties, operating on a permanent basis. By the 1840s, conceptions of key problems in government had changed. The main problem was now thought to be how to keep elected representatives in check: how to prevent them exercising power against the will of the people, notably by incurring debt and raising taxes. New state constitutions accordingly often built in procedural reforms intended to make government more transparent: thus, they provided for the votes of individual legislators to be recorded; for multiple readings of bills, to ensure that they received due consideration; there was also a move to secure plain language in the titles and language of bills. These measures represented a response to popular discontent with legislatures and parties. Petitions continued to be used as a means of transmitting opinion to government There was also a shift in relationships between states and municipalities. In late 18th century-early 19th century, state governments were seen as the creation of municipal power. By 1860s, towns and cities were seen as the creation of states, and it was accepted that state legislatures might limit their powers.

Peter Gray *(*Belfast) began by drawing attention to continuities in this period within an Irish context, starting with the fact that supreme political authority remained outside the territory - a situation that made the Irish case different to others under discussion; the effect was to make the national question unavoidable. The big change during the period came in 1801 when the separate Irish Parliament was abolished, though a local representative of the central executive, the Lord Lieutenant, continued to operate from Dublin. In the 1770s-80s, there was a so-called Patriot opposition to executive control, though this lacked coherence and continuity. Their goal was responsible government, meaning responsible to members of the minority Protestant Ascendancy represented in the Irish Parliament, though sometimes there were attempts to reach out to a more broadly conceived public, notably in Dublin city by Charles Lucas in the 1740s. This intensified at the time of the American Revolutionary war, when the patriot opposition saw the opportunity to mobilise pressure upon a parliament seen as insufficiently responsive because under the sway of borough mongers. The chief vehicle for exercising pressure was the paramilitary Volunteer movement, which held elections for officers and even admitted a few Catholics. The patriot movement exacted key concessions from the British government in 1782 (in the form of so-called Legislative Independence from Britain), but failed to make the executive responsible to either the Irish parliament or the wider public. Against that background, patriots belatedly took up the cause of parliamentary

reform, though without success. The tradition of turning to citizen soldiers would however prove resilient. 1789 spurred radical revival; in 1790 the United Irishman William Drennan called for revolution in Ireland. Initially, however, the object seemed to be to take forward the agenda of 1782-3; in 1790, the Volunteers were revived. The United Irish society adopted tactics which echoed those employed in 92-3. But they soon found their options limited. After the outbreak of war, the summoning of conventions was prohibited, and Volunteers were replaced by an officially controlled militia. Would-be radical reformers then began to set their hopes on the foundation of a republic attained through French-assisted revolution. In the era of 1848, the institutional context was different, in that the Irish were now represented within the British parliament. Viceroys varied in the ways they exercised their power, some opposing popular mobilisation, some preferring to try to woo the people. The two main options for critics were, first, to try to seek incorporation within the Westminster system and exert leverage within it over Irish policy – this was sometimes the objective of the popular movement led by O'Connell from the 1810s. O'Connell used popular assemblies to try to maintain a popular base. He was ready to employ confrontational and intimidating tactics, to stir up public anger and to threaten dire consequences. All this though was partly a way of building up political capital, that could be employed for various purposes. A second option was to aim at repeal of the union: some form of return to Irish self-government, another objective O'Connell sometimes espoused, though details of how government might have worked under repeal were left unclear. It may be that this too was never intended to be more than a bargaining tool. The government clamped down on the repeal agitation in 1843, when the threat of violence took the form of plans to form a Repeal cavalry, echoing the Volunteer movement of the 1780s. The limitations of both the agitational and leverage strategies employed by O'Connell were, however, exposed in the context of the Great Famine of 1845-50, when neither proved efficacious in modifying the inadequate responses of the central British state to the Irish social crisis. In the wake of O'Connell's death in 1847, political initiative returned (as in the 1790s) to more radical nationalists, again seeking inspiration from European revolutionary developments; the Young Ireland rebellion of 1848 was, however, unsuccessful: mass revolutionary mobilisation proved fruitless in the face of Catholic opposition, the social collapse engendered by prolonged famine, and the rebels own ideological incoherence. Gray concluded with observations on the changing character of the state. In the eighteenth century, the Irish state was a fiscal-military state, also dedicated to upholding the existing social and confessional order. However, already at that time it was apparent that there were contradictions within this system. Fiscal strains arising from war in the 1780s and 90s provided openings for opposition. Strains on wartime manpower encouraged the recruitment of Catholics, which compromised the confessional structure. By the 1840s, the role of the state had greatly changed. After Catholic Emancipation (a further extension of Catholic political rights) in 1829, the state sought to present itself as religiously neutral; in an attempt to manifest determination to do justice to Ireland, the state expanded exponentially from the 1830s (more so than in other parts of Britain), taking central control of public works, education, poor relief and policing. The state also expanded its intelligence gathering functions (involving not only surveillance but the gathering of social data). O'Connell can be seen as having aimed to capture and Catholicise this enhanced state. Against this background, there was a general sense that the state should have been able to

alleviate famine in the 1840s – in a way it had not been expected to do in the great famine of the 1740s. The state's failure to respond effectively caused great alienation; it was perceived not merely to have failed, but in effect to have perpetrated genocide.

Innes attempted to summarise some key themes emerging out of the two papers, first noting that both presenters had, as requested, ranged far beyond just looking at electoral politics, describing various ways in which people sought to 'capture' the state. She suggested that in addition to the means described, the introduction of party politics into federal patronage in the US might be seen as constituting such an attempt.

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION

Several comments/questions were taken at once:

Smith asked whether there was a change in perception of the elected representative in the US, particularly in relation to the practice of 'instruction'; he believed that instructions fell from use in the 1840s. He also asked if it was believed that the representative needed to be a man of the people in order to be able to hold the government to account.

Foner observed that Bronterre O'Brien may have been right to see President. Jackson as a representative of the people; he was the first president to present himself as the 'Tribune of the People', in this way conjuring up a new vision of how democracy might operate. Jackson among other things saw the potential of war to enhance presidential power (something that still operates today, and offers a reason for Obama to keep the US in Afghanistan).

Edwards noted that expansion of government and of the franchise took place in parallel, and wondered how the two might be connected. Perhaps the extension of election to office itself helped to encourage government growth. Was the effect or indeed aim of making state governors elective to give them more of a sense of mission?

Responses:

Gray admitted that elections were more important than he had allowed in his paper. Organised associations did focus some of their campaigning effort on them, eg asking MPs to pledge themselves to support repeal. O'Connell's creation of a highly disciplined party was seen at the time as an innovation in British politics. In some ways, O'Connell had a monarchical perspective: he idolised Victoria and was keen on the lord lieutenancy. He didn't favour election to office, seeing patronage as an important source of power.

Keyssar suggested that the party-politicisation of office helped spur demands for accountability. He said that he didn't have a good story about what happened to instructions; it was possible that they were seen to be irrelevant to an age of party. He did not think there was a fundamental shift in the ways in which elected representatives were regarded, since they had always had to compete for position; the main change was that they increasingly saw themselves as party members. He agreed on the need to explore war and democracy. Every

expansion of electoral franchise happened during or after a war and this, he thought, was no coincidence. In relation to links between the expansion of the electorate and of government, his intuition was that growth in government was not driven by popular participation, but had more to do with growth in commerce. The growth of governmental activity at state level led to public offices becoming more like full-time jobs, and that in turn raised new issues of accountability.

PAPERS

Philip Salmon (History of Parliament) asked What were the forms of accountability before the rise of democracy? And, why did elections and the quantification of support become more central? He wouldn't be talking about the press, protest meetings and so forth, nor at the theory and practice of virtual representation, but would focus on two forms of action especially, law suits and petitions. There was a practice of calling town corporations to account by challenging their authority in the courts, by actions of 'quo warranto' (by what authority?), which he has discussed in ''Reform should begin at home' in *Partisan Politics* ed. Jones, Salmon and Davis (2005). He had also written about the use of petitions in the latest volumes of the *History of Parliament* (1820-32). Scope for using these forms of action was restricted after 1832, encouraging intensified focus on election as a controlling mechanism. In relation to quo warrantos, he cited the case of the borough of Stafford, whose corporation was declared legally defunct as a result of such an action, which had focussed on the role played by non-resident burgesses. In several cases, threats of action against corporations led them to abandon their former attempts to control the composition of the electorate; the effect of this had been estimated as increasing the number of reforming MPs returned by 60-80. Campaigns of this kind also helped bring into being local reforming networks, in the form of Political Unions. Petitioning and lobbying also came into their own in the 1820s. The Reform Bill was significantly reshaped by petitioning, notably by means of challenges to the population figures on which initial proposals had been founded. Some towns won their own MPs only by dint of lobbying: thus Bury, Wakefield and Oldham. In the 1830s, the process of reforming parliament was one negotiated between politicians and people, whereas in the 1860s-80s, the work was done 'indoors'.. Before 1832, MPs could disrupt the parliamentary timetable by bringing a petition. In 1833, however, petitions were sidelined, and in 1835 old ways of dealing with petitions were scrapped by agreement between the two front benches. The effect was to change the political culture of the House of Commons, perhaps more significantly than the Reform Act by itself had. Similarly the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, which standardised borough constitutions, sidelined the use of the law to challenge corporate power.

Pierre Karila-Cohen (Rennes) said that we found it natural to link public opinion with democracy, but that it was important to pause and ask, What is public opinion? Is it a reality or a construct? How is it shaped and given form? He aimed to reflect on its administrative and political use in France 1814-48. Under the constitutional monarchy (1814-30), 'public opinion' was represented as an important force by people of many shades of political opinion.

A measure of press freedom was allowed, so that public opinion could find expression. Attentiveness to public opinion was seen as a mark of social and political modernity, distinguishing the regime from those of both the pre-revolutionary and Napoleonic eras. The object was to refound the link between state and society on a new basis. In this context, as specific kind of survey was invented, what he terms the political survey; only during the revolutionary era had any such surveys previously been attempted. He cited an example from 1814, when men were sent out into the departments to assess the state of public spirit. Thwy were given suggestions as to the factors that might be influencing this; in these suggestions a kind of primitive political science was embodied. He stressed that the form of enquiry he was primarily concerned with had as its focus not disorder as such, but the people's mood. Did the taking of such surveys reflect an increased anxiety to respond to the people's desires? It is suggestive that the young Guizot was involved in such efforts. However, Karila-Cohen stressed the extent to which the surveys were shadowed by anxieties and fears of the political potential of people who had not been entrusted with the right to vote. The surveys should he thought be set in the context of a crisis of legitimacy in the political system. Public opinion was looked to fill the place once occupied by 'divine right', as a source of basic legitimation for government, yet this opinion seemed elusive; it was unclear how to establish what it was or to deal with it.. The surveys commissioned were undertaken with very varying degrees of zeal. Some prefects took the task very seriously; others wrote vacuous reports, intended merely to placate government. Most ministers in any case took little account of these reports. They stand in an ambiguous relationship to democracy. People's views were thought to matter, but they were observed from outside.

DISCUSSION

Wahnich sought to locate the concept of 'public opinion' among other concepts. She stressed that opinion was not regarded as wholly rational; it was expected to be informed by passion, but passion was part of what it was hoped to assess. At the time of the French Revolution, much was made of the contrast between 'public opinion', associated with the populace, 'public spirit', which was thought to be open to manipulation, and 'public consciousness'' which it was thought should be nurtured. She noted that the emphasis on the importance of opinion was in a certain sense depoliticising, in that the role allowed to the public did not include the active one of resisting oppression. ***Karila-Cohen*** asserted that after 1814 these terms were not clearly distinguished..

Isabella said that public opinion and public spirit were also contrasted in Italy at this time, yet with a subtle distinction. *'Spirito pubblico*' was a term in use in the Napoleonic era, but disappeared with it; *'Spirito politico'* was associated with nation-making. He asked if surveillance of the kind described pre-dated 1814. ***Karila-Cohen*** said that he looked at the surveys done during the Napoleonic period, but he found that reports made by the Home and Police Department provided no comparable analyses. They consisted of long lists of disorders. As from 1814, however, a conscious decision was taken to make of the surveys true analyses of popular opinion, not just police reports. Surveys represented a composite of

various previous traditions of knowledge that included statistics, police reports, social surveys etc.

Innes mentioned that in England the term 'public mind' came into use around 1800 in lieu of 'public opinion', perhaps because the latter was not considered wholly respectable; it may have been thought that ‘public mind’ connoted more rationality.

Several comments/questions were then taken at once:

Tom Crook (Oxford Brookes) asked to what extent were people beginning to differentiate between political and administrative knowledge? This question had implications for both speakers: for differentiation between different kinds of surveys, and for ways in which the role of parliament was conceived in relation to executive government.

Francis Boorman (IHR) remarked that the surveys seemed to him anti-democratic, privileging administrative knowledge that could not be contested.

Smith recalled that some parliamentary boroughs were disfranchised before the Reform Era, and wondered whether in these cases the voters were being punished for corruption; he thought that the members of such boroughs remained in place during the parliamentary session.

Drolet noted that Guizot wanted to re-interpret public opinion in order to re-educate it.

O’Gorman (Manchester) suggested that there was a change from eighteenth-century politics focussing on personalities to nineteenth-century politics focussing on defects in the system (expressed best through the lists of corrupt borough patrons that appeared from the 1810s onwards in radical literature).

Responses:

Salmon responded to Smith that there was a practice of punishing corrupt MPs: hundreds were thrown out, whereas only a few boroughs were disfranchised. He noted that the frequency of elections during the early nineteenth century helped to draw attention to corrupt practices. After Reform, attention shifted from petitioning against returns, to battles over the registration of voters.

Karila-Cohen said that it was not easy to classify his surveys as either political or administrative: they were political in content but administrative in form.

Session 6 Self-government and participation

Philp opened the session, saying that the original intention had been to focus on how people conceived of themselves as political actors, a line of enquiry opened up by the work of eg Gunther Lottes. He suggested that the period saw changes in ways in which people

constituted their relationships with one another, and hoped that this theme would be explored in discussion.

PAPERS

Frank O'Gorman (Manchester) asked whether there existed a grand narrative about the emergence of democracy in Britain. He said that historians commonly assumed that progress necessarily involved the sweeping aside of eighteenth-century practices. However, this view requires amendment. His paper would identify proto-democratic practices in ancien regime English politics. Perhaps it was the supersession of some of these older practices that created a demand for new, 'democratic' forms of popular expression. He then painted a picture of an Old Regime in which popular political and social participation was vigorous. Every few years, there were convulsive responses to national crises, mobilising large numbers of people. More consistently, there was a vigorous public street life, involving popular attendance at and participation in ceremonies marking national occasions. Popular politics was often highly ritualised; it relied upon the mobilisation of emotions. In the 1760s, demonstrations associated with the figure of John Wilkes often satirised the established political order; a satirical tone was less evident in the popular politics of the 1790s, though satire was once again the order of the day in the 1810s. An effect of this form of public political life was to socialise people into political communities. Post-Reform practices did not totally break with former practices; indeed, one could see the chief effect of Reform as having been to translate old practices into more rapidly developing parts of the country, though new franchises were less pluralistic and placed more constraints. The year 1835, instead of 1832, should be considered as a watermark because it was when franchise was extended at municipal level. Overall, the period should not be understood in terms of an ideological journey; rather, what took place were a disjointed series of responses to particular crises.

Laura Edwards (Duke) stated that in the US democracy occupied a central place in narratives, which tended to be constructed around stories about the growth of equality or rights. Similar narratives, differently inflected, structured black and women's history. She saw legal history as offering perhaps the most promising site for the construction of an alternative form of account. In fact, the history of the majority of American people isn't well captured by the progressive 'democratic' narrative; even if there was some more widely diffused democratic spirit, for most this was more a matter of aspiration than experience. She argued that it was important to be clear-headed about who had real power to shape the social order. In her new book, she questions the identification of a discrete 'public sphere', the construction of the citizen as a rights-bearing individual, and the equation of 'equality' with equal rights to participate. It was important not to overstate how much government did at this time. State governments met for only a few weeks each year, sometimes only every other year; legislation was often very narrowly focussed furthering the projects of particular groups, not the general good. In legal history, the importance of localism is stressed. Public law was a vague body of law concerned with things that could be said to be of public interest. It was delivered via circuit courts that were often extremely informal, perhaps being

conducted in barns or churches; magistrates sometimes operated de facto rather than de jure. The concept of individual rights was not a central one; they were rarely invoked in personal cases. The object of government was understood to be restoring the peace, but what this amounted to was not precisely defined. The system was inclusive, though hierarchical. Subjects discussed were wide-ranging, from markets to morals: what was public was always in process of definition. Normally localism has been considered as part of nation-building, but this is problematic because it implies a teleological process. This way of thinking stems from histories that were written at this time. Reformers described localism as archaic, promoting the role of the state and federal government over that of the localities. Historians have tended to do the same. Yet all levels are important. Exclusion of people – such as blacks and women -- from the state and federal level do not mean that their role at local level should be ignored. Exclusion from the democratic polity did not entail total exclusion from governance. Over time, at the state level notions of individual rights did acquire more power; they operated as a limiting discourse, limiting what government could properly do. But localism nonetheless often persisted; neither states nor localities always responded to orders from above to do things differently. The framework she had sketched was not one that gave people opportunities to band together to extend their rights, but it did provide them with some means of pursuing their interests. We should reduce the history of democracy to a history of the extension of political rights, or we may overlook the possibility in our own times of finding alternative ways to achieve things of real substance.

Jim Livesey (Sussex) explored the normative power of the idea of democracy asking to what crisis or problem was democracy the answer. The answer was unclear for Britain and the US, but clear in France in 1792, when all other alternatives had failed. Democracy was a big wager: they bet that collective action had the potential to stabilise the polity. This notion also had some appeal elsewhere, for example in Ireland, where United Irishmen told by the Irish Lords and Commons to explain their aims if they hoped to escape hanging explained that in their view, revolution had become inevitable given commercial and technical advances since the invention of the compass. The choice now was between social war and democratic transformation. Essentially their analysis was that the interest of state creditors encouraged war; commerce produced social conflict and consequently social war. The choice was therefore between democracy and endless war abroad and at home. He examined more particularly the role of one network. Thomas Addison Anderson was a United Irishman who went to New York, was called to the bar, and influenced American democratic thinking. Arthur O'Connor edited *The Press*, a reflective paper, for the United Irishmen; he was also Condorcet's son in law. They saw a need to develop civil society to counteract the power of the state. They thought that while the state can dispense justice, only society can create order. O'Connor's mother-in-law, Sophie de Gruchy, democratised Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments.* As she saw it, the core virtue was compassion, which was encouraged by the risks generated by modernity. His son Feargus also bet on civil society. Livesey's basic argument was that an attraction of the norm of democracy was its perceived power to stabilise the social order, when other approaches had failed. In France, another such approach, which failed, was the Declaration of Rights. As John Markoff has shown, the French peaantry rejected this deal; they weren't interested in these formal rights. Rights were

developed as the basis of new claims, as Isser Woloch has shown, eg to education. De Gruchy was sympathetic to the attempt to stabilise society in 1798 – but by 1799 it could already be seen that this wasn't working out. There then developed the radical centre: what was advocated was a form of state which didn't worry so much about its legitimating conditions. La Révellière-Lépeaux, a Director, was very interested in theophilanthropy, which he thought provided a possible basis for a democratic religion; he thought that *some* legitimating tradition was needed. He concluded by suggesting that the history of democracy is necessarily a broken history. Post revolutionary societies found it impossible to meet the conditions they took to be implied by this system of legitimation.

DISCUSSION

Foner wondered why people demanded the right to vote if elections were not a vehicle for political participation. ***Edwards*** said that she wasn't denying that there were forms of power one could access by this means; only that they were the only forms of power worth considering. She also argued that vote was considered a privilege that not only could help people to get what they wanted, but also put them in contact with other similarly minded people. ***Livesey*** commented that democracy was 'the only game in town' in France, citing examples relating to the family and the break up of village communes, the turn to democracy was indicative of the social crisis. ***O'Gorman*** said that voting rights became a radical talisman; it was hoped that they would lead to lower taxes. He concurred also that voting, being a privilege, conferred the allure of 'being a somebody'.

Philp asked why, if voting became increasingly important, turn outs were so low. ***Foner*** said that in the US turnout was already up to 80 percent in the 1800s. ***Keyssar*** said one key problem was determining what was a reasonable denominator to use in matching votes cast against potential voters. ***Crook*** wondered if it was right to measure the importance of voting by turnout; having the right to vote might have seemed sufficient to some who chose not to use it. ***O'Gorman*** added that, in a British context, pre-1832 turnouts were up to 90%. ***Wahnich*** said that giving people the right to vote recognised their worth; this wasn't the same as accepting the legitimacy of the outcomes of particular votes. At the time of deciding whether to execute the monarch, Robespierre had doubted the value of the vote as expression of popular truth.

Feller wanted to respond to the question, to what is democracy the answer. He wasn't convinced this was the right question. How can anyone judge when a government 'needs' fixing?

Wahnich said a point of voting could be to put an end to discussion, itself set in train because democratic ideals suggested that the people should be consulted. ***Crook*** said she was drawing attention to an important point about French practice, which was that voting was usually preceded by discussion. He suggested that the French experimented with democracy for largely contingent reasons. The challenge was to find ways of giving form to the idea that the people were sovereign. ***Livesey*** noted that this approach didn't work so well after 1793.

Edwards said she had not been claiming that what she described was democratic. On the contrary, it operated in a hierarchical context. She merely wanted to challenge the ways in which histories of people's relation to government are written.

Foner pressed the point regarding the alleged vitality of democratic practices during the Old Regime asking why there was so much demand for change if popular grievances could be freely expressed. ***O'Gorman*** argued that no regime could accommodate all changes with such weak central power. This tends to explain why there was a challenge to the State made at least once every decade. ***Innes*** reminded O'Gorman of a point she thought he had mentioned in his paper: that Reform involved an extension of existing political practices.

Day 3

Session 7 Responses

Innes introduced the next part of the proceedings by observing that the rise of democracy as ideal and experience in the nineteenth century was unexpected: this was not the future to which people in the mid eighteenth century had thought they were heading. In the mixed constitutional tradition, there was a way of thinking about why this should have happened: basically the theory was power follows property. In this context, sense could be made of periodic extensions of the franchise in response to social change. But even in that tradition, the rise of democracy could be seen as presenting problems to expectations of the future shaped in the tradition of enlightenment. It had been possible to hope that government would be conducted in an increasingly rational way; the growing power of relatively ignorant people could be seen as threatening that. Up to a point, this problem could be addressed through a programme of education. There was a particularly acute challenge though about how to educate the people to accept the 'truths' of political economy, that late child of enlightenment. Seen from below, nineteenth-century experience posed other problems. People's nominal influence didn't translate very straightforwardly into real influence: people faced the problem, how to give real meaning to their share in power. It proved hard to get politics to deliver, but also hard to change systems, and, even when occasionally systems were changed, hard to stabilise change. In this context, several different kinds of intellectual critique of modern democracy developed. One form of critique had it that the ancients had been right to criticise democracy: it remained essentially a system of rule by the worst, ohlocracy. An alternative critique had it that modern democracy was more faulty than modern democracy, because it didn't rest on public commitment to the common good, and to public virtue, but instead, had become associated with the pursuit of private interest.

PAPER

Gareth Stedman Jones (King's) spoke about the relationship of Marx to democracy. Marx described democracy as the 'solved riddle of all constitutions'. However, he had a rather different conception of democracy from the modern one, focussing on representative government. He envisaged it as the end of government: he thought that in a true democracy,

the state would be annihilated. At the point he first formulated this notion, his thinking owed much to Feuerbach; he was himself working on a critique of Hegel. Hegel had argued that in th modern state the relationship between government and people must be mediated; a key challenge in modern times, as Hegel saw it, was to reconcile a state serving the common good with pluralistic commercial society. Feuerbach thought that Hegel failed to acknowledge human need for real community, a direct relationship between persons. Feuerbach blamed the introduction of ideas of mediation on Christianity, which had set up Christ as mediator between man and God. Marx argued that Hegel's division between state and civil society must be overcome to allow a return to something like an ancient polis, where the individual and the general would be collapsed; man would be returned to himself; the Rousseauian problem of tension between the general and particular will would also be overcome. The origins of utopian socialism of this kind can be traced to the failure of the French Revolution to deal with the Church. Fourier and Saint Simon argued that Jacobin morality was founded on a wrong view of human nature, positing the centrality of pleasure in the form of sensation. In their view, politics should be subordinated to something prior. They sought a new 'pouvoir spirituel' to win the hearts of the people for a new form of society that would be harmonious. Marx agreed that harmony was incompatible with private property; commercial society needed to be done away with for humanity to triumph. The state is intrinsically incapable of solving the social question. His contribution to the conceptualisation of a solution was to suggest that it was necessary to bring in a group of people outside of and beneath society to topple it. In trying to make sense of the events of 1848, Marx didn't give an inch in terms of his dismissal of mere politics. As he could not in retrospect assert that 1848 had completed the bourgeois period or begun the proletarian revolution, he developed the notion that everything had been a farce. This conceit led him to write some brilliant prose, but to rather feeble and evasive analysis. He treated the widening of the electoral franchise as an illusion equal to the 'fetishisation of commodities' – this meant that he failed to understand how the suffrage issue pushed the 1848 revolution in very different directions from the French Revolution. In his view, the rise of Bonaparte, as later the rise of Bismarck, revealed the shortcomings of the political approach. Marx was also hostile to the democratic leaders themselves; he cited with approval a remark by Proudhon who shouted at Ledru Rollin's supporters, You're nothing but braggarts. Stedman Jones said he was impressed above all by continuities in Marx's thought. That which he called in 1843 'democracy', he termed 'working-class rule in 1871. His discussion of the French Commune is the closest we get to a discussion of how Marx envisioned his working-class society. It would undertake a form of self-organisation; church and state would be separated; working hours would be regulated; police powers reduced to a minimum. Marx repeated Rousseau's arguments against representative government. The government of the Commune was very much a working body, making no distinction between executive and legislative. Judges were paid, and all delegates were recallable. Employing a representative should be like employing a cobbler. Stedman Jones then turned to the issue of history in Marx's conception of democracy. In the 1850s and 60s, Marx became interested in German prehistory, particularly in the idea of the ancient village community, an idea which had first surfaced in Möser's History of Osnabruck, in the later eighteenth century. The communal character of early life was increasingly emphasised, eg by Eichthal and Jakob Grimm -- who in turn influenced John

Campbell, who wrote a History of the Saxons. Stubbs took up the idea of Teutonic liberties; in a course of Oxford lectures he traced the idea of Teutonic liberties from Tacitus to WHO? Freeman developed the theory that democratic traditions were particularly associated with the Aryan race; he saw Arminius (Hermann) as the first of a rollcall which also included Hampden and Washington. Teutonic liberties were also celebrated by JR Green, who contrasted these values with the abstract ideas of Roman lawyers, which fed into absolutism and jacobitism. Marx picked up on these ideas in 1867-8 and reiterated ideas about the natural viability of communal life, notably in his home town of Trier and in the Hunsruck.. He believed in the universality of primitive democracy, being influenced also by writing on Indian villages, and by the ideas of Morgan (who was a disciple of Grote) of ancient democracy among the Iroquois., bolstered by the conviction that this viability had always existed. In a Russian context, Haxthausen elaborated the idea of the *mir;* Haxthausen had himself come out of the German romantic tradition; he had earlier written about Paderborn. As Marx saw it, though the ancient republic had perished in violence, it was basically a natural form. Indeed his reading of these histories suggested to Marx that the epoch of private property had simply been a blip. Even if it might be difficult to root out capitalism where it had taken root, he came to think that there was hope that places like Russia might bypass capitalism altogether. This romantic theme was prominent in his thinking in the later years of his life (paralled by Freeman's visit to Switzerland in the 1880s).

DISCUSSION

Constantin Davidescu (Manchester) asked about Richard Hunt's work of the 1980s on Marx and universal manhood suffrage, which sought to rehabilitate him as a democrat. Davidescu cited a text of 1852 in which Marx wrote of universal suffrage as the soul of democracy. ***Stedman Jones*** replied that Marx saw universal manhood suffrage as part of the modern state and therefore bound up in the property system. Therefore, he was against it in many instances, if not in every instance.

Innes suggested that the second half of Stedman Jones' paper filled in a story about barbaric democracy that is very powerful in the nineteenth century as Roman and Greek democracy ran into trouble. She then pointed out that in the British case, it had eighteenth-century roots in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. Montesquieu also emphasised the importance of barbarian-European rather than Roman traditions in laying foundations for representative government. ***Stedman Jones*** agreed out that both Marx and Hegel wanted to find the origins of representation in a Germanic tradition.

Cotlar added that the idea of Teutonic Aryan democracy was twisted in racial ways in the US. He suggested that so far discussions had described democracy as universalistic and futuristic. Did Marx talk about democracy as universalistic? Was there any tinge of racial ideas in his thinking. ***Stedman Jones*** replied that Marx ridiculed the ideas of Herzen and Haxthausen that primitive communities were solely a Slavonic phenomenon, citing cases of India, Sarawak etc. He was therefore a universalist. Maine for his part saw democracy as part

of the story of European origins, but gave the tale an anti-democratic twist by saying that democracy was something European nations had progressed from.

Foner pointed out that Marx was writing a little later than the majority of people discussed so far, so had different ideas to respond to. Was he sceptical about ideas like industrial democracy as he was about universal manhood suffrage and political democracy? ***Stedman Jones*** stated that Marx tried to skirt questions such as these; he could not be too rude about the pet theories of English trades unionists because they supported him financially, but he also didn't want to suggest that trade unions could in themselves make any great difference – to Marx the factory always remained a tyranny.

Philp observed that it can't have been easy to mobilise the working class around a vision of ancient Teutonic democracy. ***Stedman Jones*** agreed that the English working class were on the whole Mazzinian, emphasising brotherhood etc.

Gurney asked whether it was all backwards looking, citing the example of the Paris Commune. ***Stedman Jones*** replied that in the 1860s-70s, Marx came to think on the evidence of Great Britain, France etc. that northern Europe wasn't going his way; he therefore argued that Europe does not have to be the model for the rest of the world.

Tom Crook asked if the problem of 'pouvoir spirituel' could be further explained. ***Stedman Jones*** said that Hegel thought the French Revolution tried to make a revolution without a reformation: they should have recognised that religion was a private matter; instead, they opted for a Rousseauian solution, trying to develop a state religion, with elected priests. But the attempt to impose loyalty oaths on priests alienated many people, priests and those influenced by them. Stedman Jones suggested that the debate over the Church has been marginalized by historians, but that it was absolutely key to the failure of the French revolution, because it caused a civil war. The conclusion that could be drawn from this was that constitution-making wasn't sufficient to solve the problem; a deeper approach was needed. This in turn led to a sense of the limits of what politics could achieve and the existence of many groups who were unconvinced about the need for votes for everyone, for example Robert Owen in Britain. ***T. Crook*** suggested that this fitted with Hannah Arendt's idea that the American Revolution was able to succeed because the United States' religious pluralism meant they could appeal to a deistic god of nature, while the French Revolution failed to achieve the same religious settlement because of Catholicism. ***Stedman Jones*** agreed that there was a great deal more conflict in France than in the United States.

Livesey stated that we need a good history of catholic thought and tradition in the eighteenth century in order to properly understand the French Revolution. Everyone knows that Fénélon's Telemaque was one of the most read books of the eighteenth century. It espoused a very demanding vision of political virtue. Jansenism was similarly austere and demanding; similarly Spinozism. We don't understand enough about how these currents influenced thinking during the French Revolution. (Asked by ***Innes*** whether he was saying that Spinozism was an important current thought in eighteent-century France, he could say only that Jonathan Israel would surely say that it was). ***Stedman Jones*** observed that critics of

Quinet [author of *Le Christianisme et la revolution*, 1845] weren't able to offer a good account of the role of the church.

Stuart Buttle asked how much people continued to engage with the question addressed by Pufendorf, Hobbes, Hume, etc. about why people obey laws? ***Stedman Jones*** replied that political obligation was generally taken for granted by most nineteenth-century thinkers, perhaps Bagehot was. ***Innes*** noted that the very first session of the Rethinking Democracy project, several years back, had focussed on this question; it had been hypothesised then that this period saw the question of authority naturalised; disciplines such as sociology explained rather than trying to legitimate political obligation.

Davidescu asked what was the connection between communism and democracy. ***Stedman Jones*** stated that Marx doesn't really spell it out in his writings. There is a sense that lurking behind his thought is the idea that there is a form of polis-like existence that could be restored, but he never explained how private property or the division of labour will be overcome.

Philp wondered if there was a problem with this story, namely that the idea of reinventing the past sits rather oddly with Marx's notion that capitalism dissolves the past. How then can the past play a normative or explanatory role? ***Stedman Jones*** said that in the *Communist Manifesto* there is the idea of capitalism spreading over everything, but Marx could not adequately explain why capitalism did spread in this way, except by pointing to the use of political force. He was wrestling with this problem when he first drafted what was going to be the first chapter of vol. 2 of *Capital*. He then got interested in Maurer etc, whose accounts fitted in with the idea that capitalism was forcefully imposed. In the second edition of *Capital*, he tried to back away from what he had said before; he now argued that what he had said really related only to the history of western Europe; the victory of capitalism was a particular and not an inevitable historical phenomenon. The late nineteenth century however saw the creation of the modern reading of Marx, in which these late notions were downplayed.

Innes asked did he share the views expressed Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*?

Stedman Jones replied yes in part, but of course, Engels saw this as solely in the past. In his view, though Czernowshowski had interesting things to say, criticism was still needed. Marx rarely commented on the topic to Engels. He also commented on the ideas of Robert Owen, whose experience of trying to discipline highlanders coming (as he thought) from a primitive social context to work in his factory community disinclined him to suppose in natural primitive cooperation. Owen did not see the challenge as that of reviving ancient habits in the modern world. That was a possible, but not the only possible formulation.

PAPERS

Sean Connolly (Queens, Belfast) said that as asked, he had organised his presentation around the idea of a learning process. He said that in Ireland it was hard to trace a learning process at the level of theory, but possible at the level of tactics. Furthermore, the most coherent responses emerged from the opponents of democracy, not its supporters. He made the point that there is a great deal to look at in the 1780s and 1790s in terms of developments in political tactics and particularly in terms of popular mobilisation, already evident from the time of the Volunteers, 1779-80; William Drennan's *Letters of Oreana* was crucial here; for example, the Catholic rights' agitation of the early 1790s abandoned the lobbying tactics previously employed and turned to mass petitioning and the calling of a convention of elected delegates. His impression was that Wolfe Tone used the term 'democracy' as often in relation to this Catholic upsurge against aristocratic Catholic leadership as in any other context. The question was then, what links if any were there between these developments and the equally dramatic events of the 1820s and 1830s? He suggested that O'Connell himself seemed not to be very aware of the Catholic activities of the 1790s, and proposed that O'Connell acted in a more ad hoc way than historians have usually assumed. He can be seen to have built on an 1811 attempt to transform the Catholic Committee into a board with elected delegates from every county, but he himself doesn't seem to have had a very good understanding of these earlier efforts; his main objective was just to find a way to reach beyond a small committee of Dublin businessmen who he didn't think could make much headway by themselves. He was scarcely a committed democrat; his willingness to accept disfranchisement of poorer county voters in return for Catholic Emancipation is instructive. And it wasn't he who decided to challenge oligarchs in Waterford and elsewhere: in that case tactical innovation was driven from below. In terms of the theory of democracy, O'Connell talked about democracy but in a fairly old fashioned way. At one meeting, he greeted the democracy, the middle classes and the ladies. Sometimes he used it to mean general opposition to the spirit of oligarchy. He came ultimately to support the extension of the franchise on pragmatic grounds, so as to stop landlord intimidation. He believed that the masses should be empowered, but that they should also be led from above, hence his dislike of Chartism. So, what we find in the Irish case, was the development of techniques of mass participation, but not specifically of a theory of democratic politics. He argued that this had lasting consequences, esp. before, during and after the First World War. That period saw a mass agitation whose supporters saw little need to talk in terms of democracy. Bonar Law for examples said there were things stronger than parliamentary majorities; de Valera said that the majority had no right to be wrong. Connolly then turned to the question of why there was a lack of engagement with theory. He suggested an answer in three parts. First, popular political tactics were the means to the end of an independent Irish parliament, not an end in themselves. Secondly, Irish nationalists were constrained by their inheritance of the constitutionalist ideas of the Patriots. They continued to think within a broadly mixed constitution framework; even United Irishmen set universal suffrage in this context, though some went on to develop a more radical vision of separatism. After 1800 however restoring the mythical ancient Irish constitution became a key goal; the Repeal movement explicitly aimed at restoring the 1782 constitution. Thirdly, the division between the Catholic majority and the Protestant minority was important. In general, the Protestant minority were more favourable to a restricted franchise, in order to protect their grip on power. Even the Young Irish looked back to the 1780s when Protestant gentlemen ld

a cross-class reform movement. They were critical of O'Connell, who they saw as unwilling to link advanced nationalism with social or political reforms. In 1848, John Mitchell did get converted to the cause of social reform late in the day, but with little long-term effect. Connolly then turned to the opponents of democracy. He suggested that it was here that the most interesting thinking occurred. For example, the Presbyterian liberals of Ulster long struggled with the burden of inheriting the traditions of 1790s radicalism while finding their possible consequences threatening; they had their minds made up by 1848. The Northern Whigs paid much attention to France. They thought it was good that Louis Philippe had been thrown out, but came to identify democracy in France as the great enemy, and openly praised the mobilisation in England of the middle classes as special constables to control the Chartists. At this point they became liberals rather than democrats. As to Ulster conservatives, there was surprisingly little discussion of democracy in the *Belfast Newsletter*. They didn't get very interested in democracy until the late 1850s and 60s, with the troubles in Kansas. Yet their response to the 1832 Reform Act was striking. They clearly realised then – John Bates for example expressed the view -- that they could no longer rely on tradition and inherited authority to secure their position; the battle henceforth would be a battle over registration. Bates strove to build up electoral backing among plebeian Protestants. Outside Ulster there was a more fanciful literary response; Protestant writers, such as Standish O'Grady and Yeats, created a myth of an Irish society of landlords and peasants linked by the shared values of a rural culture, identified with Gaelic tradition They hoped to sideline the vulgar Catholic demagogues of the towns. The old order did make one dramatic comeback: from the 1850s to the early 1870s, Irish landlords once more succeeded in dominating county elections. Hoppen has shown that they did so by means of a sophisticated blend of conciliation and coercion. From the 1870s, however, landlord power eroded. The Irish story provides a warning against the seductive temptations of teleology.

Eric Foner (Columbia) stated that democratic political institutions came to define US identity in the absence of the usual forces that help to develop national identity (such as competing neighbours and so on). As such, participation in elections came to be the defining aspect of what it meant to be an American citizen. He cited Noah Webster's *Dictionary* in which the definition of 'citizen' was the right to vote, but only in the United States, Webster noted that this was not the case in Europe. Tocqueville said that those who did not favour democracy had to hide their heads. This approach to citizenship entailed its own pattern of exclusions, however. As older economic qualifications fell away, the excluded comprised especially women and non-white men, thus the limits of democracy shifted from being class-based to being race- and gender-based. These boundaries were defended as natural; in this regard, democracy deepened inequality However, democracy also provided weapons which could be used by those who were excluded from the franchise, notably, as Tocqueville remarked, associationalism. To illustrate his first theme, Foner explored the cartoon *The Almighty Lever* (1840) – which portrays the Whig William Henry Harrison challenging the sitting president Martin van Buren, in an election in which the Whigs out-Jacksoned Jackson. Here public opinion is portrayed as a lever, which old Tippecanoe is able to use to tip the Loco Focos (democrat machine politicians) into the abyss. Foner pointed to the exultation of public opinion as the great power within American politics in the 1840s. He then suggested

that the group which most dramatically used the world created by democracy were the abolitionists, and that they set down the schemata which every group who has sought to change society in the United States since them has adopted (except for anarchists, who favoured bombs and assassinations). Their aim was to 'alter public opinion' (as Wendell Phillips put it) using all the new technologies of the 'market revolution' as well as the institutions and tools of democracy. They managed to perfect what Foner termed 'moral suasion'. They held that such movements should not engage in politics for two reasons. First, because they thought that politics corrupted any movement which engaged with it. Secondly, they thought that the Federal Government was so weak that convincing them to pass a law abolishing slavery was pointless; they did not have the power to enforce any such law; instead public opinion had to be altered. Foner observed that democracy is only ever as strong as the state it controls; he suggested that this accounts for some of the disillusionment with democracy today, now that states are so limited by the larger international system. Abolitionists developed a vision of what democracy might be, post emancipation, entailing a redefinition of the political nation; they developed the ideal of egalitarian, birthright citizenship (which did not hold before the Civil War). Lincoln was not an abolitionist, but he saw the anti-slavery campaign as a battle for public opinion conducted on moral principles, which he found appealing; he thought the abolitionists had helped to embed moral principle in the public mind. Foner ended by making the point that, ironically, by forcing moral issues to the centre of politics, the abolitionists actually forced the destruction of the democratic system in 1861. Lincoln in his speeches rarely spoke of democracy, rather of self-government. The civil war was in a sense a war over democracy, a version of democracy that stressed social opportunity for some, by means of enslaving others, as opposed to one which stressed the need to give equal opportunities to all. The outcome of the war necessitated the rewriting of the Constitution. Originally, this had chiefly been concerned with relations between states, and the protection of property; the bill of rights aimed to protect citizens against the federal government, not to empower them as social actors. The 14th and 15th amendments turned the Constitution into what it is now, a tool which all kinds of aggrieved people can use. American democracy is in one sense old, but in another sense quite recent.

Miles Taylor (IHR) began by stating that between 1827 and 1914 a vast number of petitions were submitted to Parliament. The right to petition was lauded both in Britain and abroad as a particularly British right and action. Petitioning was an ancient right, but it was one that could be looked at in frame of democracy. He identified (and illustrated graphically) a number of trends in terms of numbers of petitions submitted. There were major peaks in the early 1840s (around the Factory Bill), the 1860s (around church rates) and in the 1890s (particularly focused on the drink trade), finally there was a small flurry just prior to the First World War (around the issue of female suffrage). However petitioning all but disappeared in the 1920s. Taylor sought to make three main points. First, that mass petitioning survived the new, restrictive legislation of the mid-nineteenth century. Secondly, that the number of signatures per petition fell away during the nineteenth century. Thirdly, that petitioning as it was employed at this time represented a tactic unique to the period between the Great Reform Act and 1914, to that particular era of democracy. He pointed out that, contrary to what one might suppose from Pickering's account, petitions were not solely political in subject;

religious issues were in fact the most important. The dominance of religion can be attributed to three considerations. First, two of the best-organised campaigns were religious in nature – Sabbath observance, and temperance. Secondly, religious communities were particularly able to gather signatures. Thirdly, petitions provided an important means for non-conformists to express their views to Parliament in a period where there were only a handful of non-conformist MPs. Taylor made the point that petitioning was in some ways rather paradoxical. The process was relatively accessible to all people, but there were extremely tight rules regarding the language of petitions and what they could ask Parliament about and for, e.g. they could not initiate [public] legislation; they could not challenge taxes in the year in which they were first levied, and they could not ask for the relief of distress. In the aftermath of 1832 there were a number of challenges to Parliament which were based around petitions. First, radical MPs began to use petitions to communicate with their constituents; Cobbett notably presented a case every time he presented a petition in parliament; he defended this practice as offering a form of virtual representation. Secondly, the Sabbatarian movement sought to use petitions to initiate legislation, and were successful despite the fact that the MPs who presented these petitions had personal objections to them: they had to present their role as one of transmitting the prayer of the people, while distancing themselves from their calls for action. Thirdly, the greatest challenge came from the Chartist monster petitions. The Chartists had been impressed both by the success of Catholic petitioning and by the efforts of the Lords Day Observance Society (O'Connor at least was well aware of their proceedings). They provocatively organised a delegate convention while parliament itself was meeting; this was classes as a tumult under ancient legislation. The image of the large man, the monster, the monster petition was an important one at the time (he noted use of the same term in an Irish context – monster meetings). Attempts to deploy the monstrous power of the people however caused problems. The 1848 meeting on Kensington Common laid participants open to a charge of tumultuous assembly. Parliament also objected to the 1848 Chartist petition, in part, because the five million signatures (including Queen Victoria's) could not be verified (Though Pickering claims that the clerks could not have counted all signatures in the time they said they took to do this, so they were being fraudulent too). After this experience Parliament insisted that MPs be responsible for and account for the petitions they brought forward and the signatures on them. The reaction against petitioning as a tactic had its effects on the Anti Corn-Law League. However, there were also changes in a more permissive direction: thus petitioners were allowed to challenge new taxation. In the later nineteenth century, there was more convergence between the subject matter of petitions and issues that were before the House, marking a return to a more traditional pattern. In that period, certain MPs emerged as key presenters of petitions. Taylor's conclusion developed three main points. First, that petitioning was not really democratic. Instead, it should be considered a form of representative democracy made to work by Parliament in the years after 1832. Indeed, it can tell us a great deal about virtual representation in actual practice as opposed to the theory of virtual representation. Secondly, there was a definite learning process; Parliament learnt how to control petitioning after 1832 by disciplining MPs and by both counting and recording all petitions and signatures received. Thirdly, petitioning reminds us of the rise of evangelical religion and of the importance of religion as a basis for mobilisation – something that can also be seen elsewhere in Europe at this time, eg in Belgium.

DISCUSSION

Stedman Jones asked whether the petitions have been kept. ***Taylor*** replied that they were kept up to 1834, but were then largely destroyed by fire; they were not systematically kept after the fire, although they are all recorded.

Feller intervened to say (challenging a remark of Foner's) that Jackson was not famous for killing Indians, but for defeating the British, and also that the Federal Government did more than simply kill Indians. ***Foner*** replied that his main point was that the Federal Government did not really do a great deal. ***Feller*** insisted that it had been suggested at this conference that US democracy was based on the killing of Indians. ***Foner*** answered by saying that Madison had asked how do you create democracy (though he didn't use that word) given the great number of poor? The answer is to be found in moving westward and using the great tracts of land available. ***Feller*** argued that while democracy may have entailed displacing Indians in practice, that was not central to democratic theory.

Keyssar agreed that democracy entailed a particular way of defining membership of the community, but suggested that federalism provided arenas in which exclusions could be contested. He noted that in New England states, blacks voted in the 1850s, and from the 1840s a number of states allowed non-citizens (ie immigrants) to vote, in order to attract them as residents. After the Civil War, the Supreme Court ruled that citizenship and voting did not go hand in hand: women though citizens could be denied the right to vote.

Edwards returned to the issue of voting as mark of American national identity. She pointed out that there was no legal connection between the right to vote and US citizenship before Reconstruction. Thus the relationship between the two is very interesting because it is an example of imagined connections forming before the legal connection was created. She then asked what of the women and others who were denied the vote, how do they conceive of their status as US citizens? She suggested that there were aspects of the conception of citizenship which had nothing to do with the vote and democracy. ***Foner*** pointed out that the US constitution did not determine who had the right to vote.

Edwards also asked why, if the Federal Government is so weak, did people want the vote. ***Foner*** suggested that it was because the vote was conceived as a mark of status..

Innes challenged Taylor on his chronology, suggesting that his story was not particular to the period post-1832, rather it goes back to the Wilkite period, the 1760s and 70s, when petitioning on public issues was revived after having become moribund in the early eighteenth century. However, she proposed that a little noticed change did take place in the early nineteenth century She pointed out that a lot of late eighteenth-century legislation originated in private bills, according to procedures which gave petitioners had great deal of control over the legislative process, including for example Lancashire cotton weavers and others who petitioned despite their low status. However, in the early nineteenth century there was a redefinition of what were private and public issues, closing off these forms of

empowerment. Perhaps the trend was towards petitions becoming more a gesture and less a functional part of the political process? ***Philp*** asked by way of rider whether all petitions were the same, such that it's meaningful to count them and survey purely quantitative trends. Surely, the many different subjects of petitions suggest that some had different concepts of the role of petitions. ***Taylor*** said that the source material he was using elided these differences, though he agreed with both points. The separation of private and public issues was key and more work is needed on what is happening regarding this in the 1820s and 1830s.

Gillen suggested that Connolly's story was of democratic means (conventions and so on) being used for both democratic and anti-democratic ends. He then asked what Connolly meant by stating that O'Connell was a great organiser but one without a good conception of democracy: in his view O'Connell was not a democrat. ***Connolly*** replied that the problem was that it was Gillen (in this case) who was stamping the word 'democratic' on certain processes, actions and means when they were not called that at the time. Regarding O'Connell, he was not saying whether O'Connell was a democrat or not, instead suggesting that his primary concerns were different. ***Gray*** agreed that O'Connell was a popular constitutionalist; but thought that the real issue is what was created in Ireland as a consequence of the mass O'Connellite movement? He suggested it created a mass democratic movement/culture which survived O'Connell and the Famine. Parnellism and Buttism both drew upon this legacy: they didn't have to start from scratch; they were able to draw on a high level of political consciousness in an otherwise backward rural society.

Several questions were then taken together:

Richard Huzzey (Plymouth) asked what cogs joined the democracy of the public sphere and the democracy of elections?

Salmon asked whether it is the focus on O'Connell that throws up all the paradoxes we have seen in the Irish context. Are there other people we could focus on, especially in 1829 and in relation to Catholic emancipation, which would give us a broader snapshot of thinking on democracy, eg Thomas Wyse or Richard Lalor Sheill – they didn't support disfranchisement; O'Connell had a hard time carrying them with him.

Cotlar asked who was the public being represented in the cartoon used in Foner's paper – he wasn't sure if the figures included women. He pointed out that there were many women in the petitioning movement. Was participation in petitioning movements a badge of political membership? Or was it a badge of exclusion? He also wondered about the history of petitioning in France. Finally, he commented that the history of petitioning mapped onto the question of how did people conceive of themselves within the political nation.

Responses:

Foner answered that some abolitionists did form a third political party – they didn't entirely eschew conventional politics; but the object was to spread their ideas, not to win an election – however this party focussed on stopping the expansion of slavery, jettisoning the more

radical ideal of racial equality, fulfilling Garrison's fears that involvement in politics would corrupt the movement. As to women, their experience of activism stirred them up to start resenting their exclusion from the vote.

Connolly agreed that more work was needed on the politics of the 1829 disenfranchisement. Regarding O'Connell, he agreed that we tend to assume a backward politics in Ireland and that therefore the emergence of mass politics requires an explanation. However, was Ireland so backwards? The nature of the sectarian divisions and the spread of education in this period in Ireland give reasons why mass popular politics can be regarded as less surprising. O'Connell might be seen not so much as having created a politicised public as having surfed the wave of popular politicisation.

Taylor responded to Huzzey that petitioning is most threatening when it's linked to the idea of a mandate: when it's suggested that the legislature must do as instructed. The rise of the caucus was seen as threatening for the same reason – but by that time parliament had taken a firm stance against petitions.

Session 8 Images of the people

PAPERS

Sophie Wahnich (CNRS, Paris) identified 1789 as the moment when there was a serious attempt to put an end to the disqualification of the people as unruly populace, animal rather than rational and human - a view predominant during the 18th century. This change however built on earlier developments, mainly in the arts (a profane yet often idealised people dominating the scene in the *opera buffa* –\also an important site for emphasis on emotion as a legitimate component of responses to events) and religion (as in Jansenists' conception of a hidden God whose divine silence is carried and communicated by the people). Following on these trends, the period 1789-1793 brought idealisation of the people as the depositary of truth. She cited the argumentation of certainJansenist lawyers in the parlement of Paris in their dissertation on the convocation of the Etats General. Truth was not dictated by a silent God, but made present through the voice of the sacred people (modelled on the Hebrew people) who can speak this 'just truth' when authorities conceal it. This act of 'speaking the truth when concealed by the powerful is a way of resisting oppression, including the oppression of bad laws. Intuitions of oppression were thought to arise from the experience of the senses; Sieyes made this explicit in his exposition of the Declaration of Rights, July 1789. Thus Saint Just could affirm that the revolutionary was 'un home sensible'. The right of resistance to oppression became a popular argumentative resource mobilized in order to warn interlocutors, as well as a way to legitimize popular riots and insurrections. This principle was clearly articulated in the 1793 Declaration of Rights The Thermidorians challenged this concept in 1795. They eliminated the right to resistance and the duty of insurrection and created a limit to sovereign representation by the juridical and constitutional formalization of

the law of numbers that was made into the sole process founding sovereign representation. Against the erratic and free subject that constituted the revolutionary sovereign (the people), they legitimated through the count of voices a political class which gained in autonomy and which confiscated the notion of sovereign representative. At the same time, the figure of the section militant was assimilated to that of a blood-thirsty monster guided only by violent desires. Popular social categories were from then on presented as dangerous and devoid of any morality. Liberal historians have tended to affirm that people did not mobilize itself to resist oppression, hence the people is presented more as a tool than an actor in its own right, making it into a puppet-people. Wahnich pointed to an implicit return to a watered-down right of resistance by 1830, when the freedom of press was violated and elections cancelled. This resulted in article 66 of the 1830 Charter, which stated that the rights that the charter consecrated would be entrusted to the 'patriotism and courage of the national guard and all the citizens'. But this was not complied with either by the July Monarchy or by the regimes that followed the 1848 revolution. The Thermidorian imaginary had cast the people as a child, a potentially dangerous subject. Liberals, be they revolutionaries or republicans, perpetuated these representations.

Robert Gildea (Oxford) said that he wanted to bring emotions and passions into the picture, and to ask, how the trauma of the French Revolution related to democracy. He would be considering three, not two eras: 1789, 1830 and 1848. He would also look ahead to the era of the Third Republic. The challenge presented by the revolution was that of understanding why it should have degenerated into anarchy and terror. Did this show that people were unfit for self-government? Rosanvallon's answer is that there were conflicting images of the people: they were sometimes an abstraction, at others real historical people. Sieyes' model of representation posited the need for representation to create a meaningful 'people'; real historical people by contrast were a mere populace. Sophie Wahnich in her book, *La longue patience du people*, argues that the distinction is by no means as clear as Rosanvallon suggests. The people had their own idea of themselves as the sovereign people. In 1793-4, the Jacobins tried both to acknowledge and yet to channel and contain the passions of the people, by instituting the Committee of Public Safety. It could be argued that they too tried to reduce the people to an abstraction -- thus Danton in 1793 said 'let us be terrible, to dispense people from being so'.; Robespierre in a famous speech in which he evoked the concept of democracy said, 'If virtue be the spring of a popular government in times of peace, the spring of that government during a revolution is virtue combined with terror'.. Themidorians reworked the concept of popular sovereignty to give it to a political class of the propertied and the educated. Terror tarnished the image of the people, and delegitimated them; Thiers would dismiss them as 'the vile populace'. He among others became a shaper of the revolution of 1830. This was intended to represent a French 1688, a Whig revolution. That period saw a continuing assault on the people, conceived as 'classes dangereuses'. In France, democracy could not work until there was a re-branding of the people: a re-thinking of the French Revolution to acknowledge that it was no mere blood-bath, but a legitimate assault on the ancient regime; universal suffrage had to be reconceptualised as a basis for social reconciliation. Michelet (eg in *Le people*, 1846), Lamartine and Ledru Rollin searched for the 'soul of the people' and sought to identify fraternity among the 'real people'. Michelet, in the

first volume of his history of the French Revolution, portrayed the attack on the Tuileries as the work of a heterogeneous assemblage of people of all classes. Lamartine wrote a book about the Girondins in 1847 in which his main point was to insist that not all Jacobins were Montagnards; the Girondins died, as he saw it, because they refused the people the blood that they craved. Ledru Rollin took part in the banquet campaigns; a great theme of these was universal suffrage. The argument that the people were unfit for democracy was rejected. The idea was that the past had seen a long struggle between tyranny and liberty. The hope was that universal suffrage would serve to unify the republic During the Second Republic, one of the first acts of the assembly was to abolish the death penalty for political crimes – an attempt to exorcise the ghost of the terror. The first elections under universal suffrage were conceived as a kind of apotheosis of the people (see to this effect Tocqueville's account of leading local peasants to vote). Unfortunately, the democratic wager did not work. This was partly because of the June Days and the brutal suppression of the popular rising; also because elections gave rise to party, pitting Montagnards (including Ledru Rollin) against the party of order. Finally, universal suffrage played into the hands of Bonaparte. In 1849, Thiers sought a limitation of the suffrage on the basis of a qualifying period of residence, something that in effect excluded many of the often highly mobile working classes; he stated that a 'multitude' should not be allow to get involved in politics (vagabonds should not vote). Louis Napoleon by contrast said that in honour of the name he bore he must defend the interest of the people; he re-installed male universal suffrage (in conjunction with putting elections firmly under the control of the prefects) and employed plebiscites to ratify constitutional changes,. The Third Republic was faced with the challenge of laying to rest two troubling ghosts of democracy: that of the bloodthirsty people (recently manifest again in the form of the Paris Commune) and that of the gullible and corruptible people who had voted for Bonaparte.. In 1870, Flaubert told G. Sands 'I hate democracy ', considering the people as eternal minors. The general belief was that ordinary people would elect a Caesar who would take the French to war defeat. Gambetta addressed himself to the task of rehabilitating the people. In the early 70s, he made speeches in which he rebranded the people as property owners. He invented the phrase 'nouveaux couches sociales' – new social strata. He said that the people were now educated, or very shortly would be. The First Republic was honoured for having redistributed property and introduced religious toleration. In this way he sought to exorcise the ghost of Caesarian democracy. In terms of democratic mechanisms, the Third Republic adopted the American model of a democratic assembly, an indirectly elected senate and a president with limited powers. Edouard Laboulaye was influential: he was the man who conceived of the idea of giving the Statue of Liberty as a gift to America to mark the end of the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian war. It was thought that the Second Republic had erred in being too lenient to its opponents. Progenitors of the Third Republic aimed to be tougher: they exiled the royal families, and laid down that any government must have the confidence of a majority of *republican* deputies. They also instituted a programme of education. On the statute of Danton in the Place de l'Odeon erected for the centenary of the revolution, he is quoted as saying that after bread education is the first need of the people. When Ledru Rollin died in 1878, Victor Hugo said that the people had arrived; they were now fit for democracy. Universal suffrage was having the effect of making the people wise and peaceful.

Dan Feller (University of Tennessee) related the assumption prevalent among the founders in the post-revolutionary period that non-aristocratic America would excel in science and culture. Popular ignorance was thought not to be natural, but the result of talents having been suppressed. Inequality of knowledge was to be eliminated. Franklin and Jefferson thought that this process was already underway, and was demonstrated by their own achievements: by Jefferson's work in the area of natural history and Franklin's work on electricity. They had shown that they could beat the Europeans in their own game. Jefferson moreover challenged Buffon and Raynal's idea that species degenerated in the new world. Antipathy for European scientists had also religious connotations because many Americans believed that European science was infected with the confessional. Washington agreed that the federal government should accept responsibility for promoting science and literature By 1820s, there was growing reckoning of the imperfect realization of the dream of American excellence, eg their failure to produce excellence was mocked by Sydney Smith. Yet in one more generation, his strictures would have sounded philistine. There was a trend for American-centred work in the literary (Irving, Emerson); Emerson's essay The Poet called for the emergence of a great American poet, and helped to inspire Walt Whitman, whose *Leaves of Grass* was composed in 1855. Similarly art celebrated American landscapes. George Caleb Bingham set himself up as the painter of the American people enacting democracy. In science, the record was more mixed. The idea that there should be a national university was revived by John Quincy Adams (who had written the report on weights and measures) – but this only added to his image as an aristocrat; he was defeated by Andrew Jackson. Jacksonians then took on the mantle themselves: a democratic president and congress launched the 'United States Exploring Expedition' under Charles Wilkes, which spent four years in the Pacific and discovered the Antarctic; this gave rise to many treatises. In 1846, the Smithsonian was founded in Washington with the object of making the capital a centre for science and literature. In an 1845 address, Jacksonian Democrat Levi Woodbury reiterated the creed of democratic cultural leadership, clearly implicitly responding to Tocqueville. However, at this time science was becoming increasingly specialised. The Wilkes expedition almost came to grief on this. Expedition reports aimed to communicate in ordinary language, yet there was criticism of the adequacy of ordinary language for the precise expression of scientific ideas. Wilkes in turn challenged such a notion as anti-American (the first instance of that term Feller has found). One might extend this account to the present. America now has high international standing in innovation and science, yet it is also the country where scientific ideas are most widely and radically challenged by ordinary people, especially when science is seen to conflict with religion.

DISCUSSION

Keyssar asked in relation to the French papers whether it was known what the people thought of "the people". ***Gildea*** replied that there are a few working-class accounts of the period (such as Martin Nadaud's *Mémoires de Léonard, ancien garçon maçon* and the writings of Agricole Peridiguier) and that all of them seem to portray the people positively. They emphasised that the people were not dirty or degraded, but simply struggling to make an

honest living. ***Wahnich*** pointed to working-class testimonies in the *cahiers de dóleances* and in petitions whose content does seem to have been shaped by many hands, in the course of debates of the sections.

Philp noted that there was much mention of the danger posed by the people, yet there were many varieties of people. ***Wahnich*** argued that the very fact that the people is conceived as a single whole made it possible for a small group of people to present themselves as 'the people'. as a political category. ***Gildea*** added that people were now agents of change. ***Innes*** qualified this remark stating that 'some people' were agents. This remark kicked off a general debate on the issues of 'abstraction' and 'construction'. ***Philp*** considered that the subtleties of the linguistic terms should be taken in account before deciding whether the people could be described as agents. ***Gildea*** argued that this was no mere matter of language construction, but he was prepared to accept that there was a battle of discourses. Michelet, for example, would have accepted the existence of a variety of people (Bretons, Alsatians, etc) but he brought them together in a single construction to the political stage. ***Cotlar*** pointed to the contested meaning of what the people is. ***Wahnich*** suggested that in Revolutionary France there was a fight to decide who really incarnated the people that left a silent majority in collision with an active minority, the latter eventually prevailing over the former. ***Innes*** remarked that in England reformers such as Francis Place were themselves keen to draw distinctions between different people: some they saw as enlightened, others as degraded. ***M Crook*** said what the people could do as political agents was vote, and they learnt to do this quite well; it was difficult to found a lasting political order on occasional insurrections. ***Gillen*** was struck by a cited reference to the 'multitude', and wondered whether use of this term owed anything to Burke. ***Edwards*** observed that in US discourse it was hard to tell when the people was operating as an abstraction and when not.

Saad asked in relation to the Wilkes expedition, whether they had a relationship with the Academy of Sciences in Paris, or with the Humboldt expedition. Looking at how those relationships worked would potentially open up larger questions. ***Feller*** was not able to comment on this.

Stedman Jones wanted to ask Sophie Wahnich if the Jansenist idea that the people represented God influenced thinking during the revolution and after. He also noted, in relation to prevailing manners, that Peridiguier was astonished when a bourgeois shook his hand.

At this point the speakers were given an opportunity to comment on discussion so far.

Wahnich said that Michelet did not draw directly on Jansenism, but still he believed that the people could discern truth; this was a historically specific idea, even if its descent is unclear.

Gildea addressed the question of whether elections worked under the Second Empire. The empire did undertake reform when it lost a plebiscite; for a short while it might have been argued that this made it stronger than ever, though it then collapsed. Many republicans supported it while it lasted, thinking it was the best they could hope for at that time. It's important that elections were carried on at the local level. He said in relation to Burke, that

Furet discovered him during the bicentenary and decided he was an important commentator on the revolution.

Feller said that the preceding discussion had served to bring home to him how different was the situation in the US compared with that of France. There was no limitation placed on the American multitude and the subject was not even considered legitimate for discussion. ***Keyssar*** retorted that restrictions were imposed to keep the Irish out of politics. Feller argued that they were ineffectual, and that this misses the point. A view prevails to this day of the single, homogeneous American people: invoking the people is thought to trump all other arguments. That explains why American politicians rarely say 'I oppose a bill...' but they say 'the American people oppose this bill...'

Reidar Maliks (Oxford) asked whether in the context of Thermidor, the idea of a constitutional right to insurrection was rejected. It could be argued that a right of insurrection was undemocratic. He thinks that Rousseau objected to it as necessitating implicitly an appeal to a third party (God, providence). ***Wahnich*** said its legitimacy hinges on one's idea of democracy. According to one conception, people should preoccupy themselves with their private affairs.

Cotlar suggested that all constructions of 'the people' are relational -- a crucial issue is, who are they being contrasted to? The answer to this differs from case to case. As he sees it, Whitman meant to evoke a diverse, strange people. Burke wants to say, some people actually like priests. ***Wahnich*** said that the question of who ultimately represents the people is a political question and the subject of struggle. A further complicating factor is the idea of being a particular people. ***Gildea*** said that he thought Michelet would have had no problem with the idea of France as being made up of a mix of different kinds of people: Bretons, Gascons etc. As he saw it, the ancien regime had driven artificial divisions through the people, but once those divisions had been blown apart, there opened up new possibilities for the French to come together as a single people.

Concluding round table

Joanna Innes and ***Mark Philp*** introduced the participants to some electronic resources, one directly linked to the project (Zotero's bibliographical resource available at http://www.zotero.org/groups/re-imagining_democracy_1750-1850) and the other of general use to historians of this period (William Godwin's Diaries available at http://godwindiary.politics.ox.ac.uk); the latter will be available to the general public from September-October.

Future plans for a conference on re-imagining democracy within an Anglo-Mediterranean context were also mentioned.

Remaining participants were then invited to offer reflexions and/or opinions on the way ahead.

Gildea suggested that more attention needed to be paid to cross-references between different countries', especially French and American experiences of democracy. ***Gillen*** noted that there had been some talk of nationalism, but not of internationalism. ***Innes*** agreed: the design of the conference had unfortunately not encouraged engagement with that very important topic.

Davidescu asked if there were plans to study democracy within an Eastern Europe context. ***Innes*** said that not so far, but that there are plans for covering the Netherlands (mainly Belgium in 1830s), Switzerland and Poland post-1840s.

M. Crook suggested that the notion of citizenship should be studied as central to democracy.

Smith said that he was struck by the divergent discourses of Anglo-American and French politics. The conference had shown him that there was less convergence that he had originally expected. This made him to doubt the wisdom of transnationalising the research. ***Innes*** found some common synergy in the 1780s and 1790s, but agreed that it was more difficult to find common points later.

Smith added that the Civil War was central for the development of democracy in the US. Lincoln was more important than Jackson. This led him to question the periodisation of the project: it should end later. ***Innes*** said that there was room for some flexibility in the periodisation. In the Mediterranean world, the 1860s are more of relevance than the 1840s.

Edwards reminded participants that democratic processes in this period were the exclusive preserve of white males. Hence, she pressed the idea that topics outside those of governance should be explored.

Keyssar suggested that it would also be important to study anti-democratic movements. ***Innes*** agreed – though she said that some movements which we may regard as anti democratic, eg fascism and racism, were also to some extent 'children of democracy' . ***Philp*** added that not just children should be studied, but also 'siblings', such as the loyalists who organised themselves in un-hierarchical structures in order to argue against democracy.

Cotlar favoured a 'genealogical' approach to the study of democracy which would call into question our modern inability to conceive how voting could had been seen as not central to democracy. Early conceptions of democracy potentially provide the basis for a challenge to the ascendancy of market capitalism, in a way that is not now generally acknowledged.

Colantonio suggested that a good area for transnational research could be to research how people talked about themselves [lack of information about this was recurrently noted as a problem throughout the conference].

Shany Mor (Oxford) noted that although much attention was being paid to language, it shouldn't be forgotten that people used words for reasons.

T. Crook noted that people used terms in their national context and this made of transnational studies a risky business. ***Philp*** observed that most people who used the term democracy

earlier in the period belonged to an educated elite. He conceded that the project had to deal with the problem of the existence of a shift towards popular use. This made early and later uses difficult to compare: they were operating in different registers.

Feller highlighted the difficulty of analysing a language that always hovered on the boundaries between the descriptive and the normative. He said that people who subscribed to democracy in theory sometimes found it harder to endorse when it didn't yield the results they wanted. ***Mor*** argued that not all conceptions of democratic process required there to be straight winners and losers.

Feller argued that in the US, democracy could be considered as imperfect, but never as bad. ***Keysser*** remained unconvinced and repeated the point that there were those in the US who championed the ideal of the 'republic' and disavowed democracy He also noted that some societies (China and Singapore) at present consider 'efficient governance' more desirable than democracy: the hegemony of democracy as an ideal is imperfect and its future is not assured.

END