'THE POLITICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THE ENGLISH COMMONWEALTHSMEN, 1695-1725'
Jonathan Duke-Evans, St John's College, Oxford
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'The Commonwealthsmen' is the name given by historians to a widely misinterpreted group of pamphleteers active from 1695 to 1725, the most important of whom were John Toland, Robert Molesworth, John Trenchard, Matthew Tindal, Charles Davenant, and the third earl of Shaftesbury. These writers have often been portrayed as radicals inspired by the achievements of the Interregnum and bent on the subversion of Church and King: the purpose of the thesis is to examine their careers and ideas, and, on the basis of all the available evidence, it appears that there is little justification for presenting them as republicans. Instead, they were fully committed to the 'Ancient Constitution' of King, Lords, and Commons, together with the existing erastian settlement of the Church of England. Their political ideas were derived largely from the 'Country' tradition, which was still lively: yet, with the exception of Davenant, they were also enthusiastic Whigs, a position which was inconsistent with the 'Country' dislike of party. At times when Jacobite resurgence seemed to threaten the achievement of the 1688 Revolution, the Commonwealthsmen disregarded the Country ideology and called for Whig solidarity: this accounts for much of the apparent inconsistency in their work. Without being purely mercenary, they were deeply involved in the competition for government patronage; the resulting tension between principle and political expedience is particularly well documented in three areas of great concern to the Commonwealthsmen, foreign policy, the financial revolution taking place in London, and the position of Ireland. The thesis explores all these areas; it reconstructs the origins of the group of Commonwealthsmen, and assesses the main intellectual influences upon them (here Locke was quite as important as Harrington); finally it suggests that they were in many ways typical of the political culture of their time. They were by no means as exceptional as most historians have assumed.

# ABSTRACT

No-one could claim that the English Commonwealthsmen have been ignored by historians. John Toland, Robert Molesworth, the third earl of Shaftesbury, Matthew Tindal, John Trenchard, and Charles Davenant- to name the most prominent of them- have attracted a good deal of attention for their religious and political writings; the most important of these are well known to all serious students of the early 18th century. But, despite all this attention, few writers on politics have been more widely misinterpreted than this group.

The traditional view is that these men were radicals, intent on subversion of the constitutional settlement of 1689 and its replacement by a republic. Such allegations can be found in the work of contemporaries as diverse as Defoe and Charles Leslie, and it has been restated in a modified form in the fullest existing work on the subject, Caroline Robbins' The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman (1959).

In this thesis I have re-assessed these judgments on the basis of a more thorough examination of the Commonwealthsmen's writings than has previously been attempted. Although most of the evidence has come from their large corpus of books and pamphlets, I have also used important manuscript collections in London, Oxford, and America. My conclusion is that to portray the Commonwealthsmen as radicals is to misinterpret them grossly: they were men of their age, and the age was not sympathetic to radicalism. The misunderstanding has arisen for three principal reasons: firstly, the term Commonwealthsman- which these writers did not consistently apply to themselves- had fortuitous associations with the Rump; secondly, their heterodox religious opinions- with which this thesis is only incidentally concerned- made them many clerical enemies who attempted to blacken their reputations by presenting

them as political subversives; and thirdly, some of them showed an interest in the work of such republicans as Machiavelli, Milton, and Harrington.

After attempting to clear up these sources of confusion, I have given a brief account of who the Commonwealthsmen were, with particular emphasis on the questions of how they came to know each other and how close their links were. Few definite answers emerge, but there are some interesting indications: for instance, the hitherto unexplored role of Locke's 'College' in the origins of the group.

Much of the thesis is concerned to put the Commonwealthsmen and their ideas into their political context: it shows that, so far from being republicans, they subscribed to the dominant view that the best constitution involved a balance between the one, the few, and the many, and that the English constitution was admirable because it depended on this principle. Their perception of the threats to which the constitution was subjected in their own time, which largely arose from the financial and military power of the monarchy, led them- as historians like Kramnick and Pocock have already noted- into sympathy with the ideals of the Country Party. Too often dismissed as anachronistic, these ideals and the ways in which they could be defended supplied some of the most important topics for political debate in Augustan England, and the Commonwealthsmen made a notable contribution to these arguments. I hope, therefore, that my conclusions will add a little momentum to the already discernible reaction against the tendency to view the politics of the time purely as a two-party system.

Yet, although the most famous and substantial political works of the Commonwealthsmen- Cato's Letters, the Account of Denmark, the Art of Governing by Partys, for instance- are strongly redolent of Country ideals, the matter cannot be left here. As soon as attention is directed to their more ephemeral works, or to their

correspondence, it becomes clear that many of them both actively sought offices of various kinds (despite the traditional 'Country' distrust of placemen) and were heavily involved as Whigs in the struggle between the two great political parties. They had many connections among the most powerful politicians in the land: Sunderland, Godolphin, and Harley in particular play important parts in the manoeuvres which are reconstructed here. If- as I argue- the Commonwealthsmen were not merely opportunists, planning their courses with the sole view of maximising their chances of patronage, the question arises: what induced them at different times to play up their Whig credentials and to denounce all parties on principle in the approved 'Country' manner ? The answer seems to lie in their fear of Jacobitism and of French power: the two were of course closely connected. When the internal and external threats to the achievements of 1689 seemed greatest, the Commonwealthsmen called for Whig solidarity since the Whigs were ultimately, in their view, the party of the Revolution. But when this danger was less urgent, they could focus attention on the corruption which had been left untouched by the Revolution, and in which the Whig grandees were as much involved as anyone.

These problems are dealt with in the early chapters of the thesis, and they form its centrepiece. Other chapters explore different aspects of the political careers of the Commonwealthsmen, but they are also intended to reinforce the main conclusions of the work. One section discusses the anticlericalism which is such a striking feature of their writings, and it argues that this was not the manifestation of any deeply-laid plan to secularise society, but rather a natural reaction to the strength of the High Church party and its tendency to Jacobitism. Three areas in which the Commonwealthsmen were particularly interested- and in which their activities have hitherto been virtually ignored- are dealt with in separate chapters: foreign affairs, Ireland, and the

financial politics of the City of London. All exhibit that combination of public and private interest, of bitter partisanship and of lofty contempt for party, which are so characteristic both of the Commonwealthsmen and of early eighteenth century politics as a whole. Another chapter analyses the social ideas of the Commonwealthsmen: it confirms the conclusion that, far from being proto-democratic radicals, they were thoroughly typical of their period in their respect for hierarchy and property. The last chapter surveys the intellectual influences on the Commonwealthsmen, who were uniformly well-read. Here I contend that it would be a mistake to read too much into their interest in Harrington, Milton, Spinoza, or Hobbes, for some of these authors were less of an influence, others more respectable, than has often been thought. If there was one thinker who moulded the Commonwealthsmen's outlooks more than any other, it was John Locke: yet in important respects they were less adventurous than him.

All this may seem very negative: the Commonwealthsmen, who appeared to be so distinctive, have been placed in the mainstream of Augustan politics. Yet this has the advantage of making a study of them a kind of political anatomy of their time in microcosm. For this reason, if the Commonwealthsmen seem less exceptional than they did, this need not, I hope, make them less interesting.

# THE POLITICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

# OF THE ENGLISH COMMONWEALTHSMEN

# 1695 - 1725

A Thesis submitted for the Degree

of Doctor of Philosophy

at Oxford University

by Jonathan Duke-Evans

Autumn 1980 [illegible]

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# PREFACE

In this study I have used Old Style dates, except in the case of letters written from the continent, where I have indicated the use of New Style or given both versions. The year is taken to begin on 1 January throughout. I have modernised spelling and punctuation, except in titles of books and pamphlets. In the footnotes full references to books and articles are normally given only on the first occasion on which they are cited in each chapter.

I would like to thank the following people and institutions for their help during my research: St. John's College, Oxford, for electing me to a three years' senior scholarship there; the Department of Education and Science for supplementing their maintenance grant by paying my expenses for a study trip to the U.S.A. in 1979; Prof. Henry Snyder and Ann Hyde, librarian at Lawrence, for their kindness in providing information on and access to the valuable manuscript collection at the University of Kansas; Keith Thomas for his interest in and suggestions on my work; Nick Banton for his constructive criticism; and, most of all, to my supervisor, Dr Garry Bennett. His insistence on clarity and relevance has, I hope, made the thesis both more scholarly and more readable than it otherwise could have been.

Jonathan Duke-Evans

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# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| B.I.H.R. | Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research |
| B Lib (Add MS) | British Library (Additional Manuscript) |
| Burnet | Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time, 2 vols, 1724-34 |
| C.S.P.Dom. | Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series |
| Davenant, Probable Methods | Charles Davenant, An Essay Upon the Probable Methods of Making a People Gainers in the Balance of Trade, 1699 |
| D.N.B. | Dictionary of National Biography |
| Doebner, Briefe | Richard Doebner, Briefe der Konigin Sophie Charlotte von Preussen an hannoversche Diplomaten, Leipzig 1905 |
| Ec.H.R. | Economic History Review |
| E.H.R. | English Historical Review |
| H.M.C. | Publications of the Historical Manuscripts Commission |
| Klopp, Correspondance | O. Klopp, ed., Correspondance de Leibniz avec la Princesse Electrice Sophie de Brunswick-Lunebourg, 3 vols, Hanover 1874 |
| Luttrell | Narcissus Luttrell, A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs, 6 vols, Oxford 1857 |
| Methuen Corr | Original correspondence between John Methuen and Sir William Simpson at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Lawrence, Kansas |
| Molesworth Corr | Correspondence of Robert Molesworth and his family, calendared in H.M.C. 55, Manuscripts from Various Collections, Vol VIII |
| Moyle, Published Works | The Whole Works of Walter Moyle that were Published by Himself, 1727 |
| Moyle, Unpublished Works | The Works of Walter Moyle...none of which were ever before Publish'd, 2 vols 1726 |
| P.R.O. | Public Record Office, London |

| | |
|---|---|
| Rand, *Shaftesbury* | Benjamin Rand, *The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury*, 1900 |
| Robbins, *Commonwealthman* | Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman*, Cambridge (Mass) 1959 |
| *Somers Tracts* | *A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts...*, Ed. W.Scott, 13 vols, 1809-15 |
| *State Tracts, William III* | *A Collection of State Tracts publish'd on Occasion of the late Revolution in 1688, and during the Reign of King William III*, 3 vols 1705-7 |
| Swift, *Prose Works* | *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. H.Davis *et al.*, 14 vols, Oxford 1939-68 |
| Toland, *Collection* | *A Collection of Several Pieces by Mr John Toland*, ed. P.Desmaizeaux, 2 vols 1726 |
| Toland, *Shaftesbury Corr* | *Letters from the Right Honourable the Late Earl of Shaftesbury, to Robert Molesworth Esq*, ed. J.Toland, 1721 |
| Trenchard, *Collection* | *A Collection of Tracts by the Late John Trenchard, Esq, and Thomas Gordon, Esq*, 2 vols, 1751 |
| *Trenchard Corr* | Original correspondence of John Trenchard at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Lawrence, Kansas |
| *T.R.H.S.* | *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* |
| *Vernon Corr* | *Letters Illustrative of the Reign of William III from 1696 to 1708... by James Vernon Esq*, ed. G.P.R. James, 3 vols, 1841 |
| *Worden* | Introduction to Edmund Ludlow, *A Voyce from the Watch Tower, Part Five*, ed. A.B.Worden, Camden Society, 4th Series Vol 21, 1978 |

# INTRODUCTION

Early eighteenth century Englishmen seem to have taken a low view of human nature. This was the great age of English satire, which depended for its impact on the widespread belief that vanity, greed, and hypocrisy were rife. Mandeville suggested that society was so imperfect that it relied on these unpleasant traits for its well-being; the Rev. Joseph Trapp even told his congregation that exceptional probity should be regarded with distaste and suspicion, These were extreme examples of a common attitude which had important implications for ideas about politics. Utopias were out of fashion; Gulliver's Travels deprived the genre of all credibility. Since so few men were rational or disinterested, custom provided statesmen with a surer guide than theory. Existing practices might be acknowledged to be less than ideal, but the dangers of radical interference could not be calculated; quieta non movere seemed to be the wisest maxim.

These attitudes contrast strongly with those current in the preceding and succeeding periods. During the Civil War and the Commonwealth schemes of political and social improvement were ardently advocated by Milton, Hartlib, Harrington, Winstanley, and many others; a century and a half later Paine, Price, and Priestley saw new hope for mankind's regeneration in France and America. Despite their many differences, all these thinkers shared a belief in human perfectibility which is not often found in the intervening period.

The supposition that there was some continuity between these two radical movements is a plausible one, but clearly it cannot be accepted without documentation. In 1959 Professor Caroline Robbins attempted to provide this documentation in her ambitious and wide-ranging book, The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman. In it, she contended that a tradition of liberal Whiggery connected the Civil War republicans with Priestley and Price, and that successive

generations of heterodox thinkers had kept this heritage alive in the unsympathetic conditions of the early eighteenth century. One of the most important links in her intellectual genealogy comprises the group which she calls the Molesworth connection, and to which this thesis is devoted. Robbins believes that the familiar spectrum from left to right wing is an appropriate framework for the study of early eighteenth century politics, and she places the Molesworth connection (the 'Commonwealthsmen' of my title) on its far left[1]. Her ideas about this group have been widely accepted, and they are summarised in three passages[2]:

> For nearly four decades after the Revolution, a number of men connected in varying degrees of intimacy with Robert Molesworth worked to secure its benefits and extend its constitutional reforms.
>
> The Commonwealthmen...asserted liberty, talked about equality, and assumed the possibility of progress at a time when most Englishmen thought of the constitution as sacrosanct, and change as dangerous if not sacrilegious.
>
> The Whiggish malcontents or Commonwealthmen in varying ways provided a deterrent to complacency, and reminders of the need for improvement and the continual adaptation of even good governments to economic and political changes... (Molesworth and his friends reminded their compatriots) of the rights of electors and of the unenfranchised, of the virtues of rotation in office and of the necessity for constant vigilance against the corruptions of power, whether wielded by king, ministers, or estates.

Other historians have tended to assume the validity of this picture. Rosalie L.Colie believed that these people 'were the carriers into eighteenth century political thought of the theories of the Commonwealth'; Margaret Jacob sees them as a coterie which professed 'a radical Whiggery and derived its political ideology largely from the Commonwealth tradition'[3]. Some writers have noted that many of the Commonwealthsmen were deists, and assumed that

1 Robbins, Commonwealthman, p. 90.
2 ibid., pp. 88, 91, 133.
3 Rosalie L.Colie, 'Spinoza and the Early English Deists', Journal of the History of Ideas 20, 1959, p. 30; Margaret C.Jacob, The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720, Hassocks 1976, p. 204. It may be noted here that although most modern historians refer to the 'Commonwealthmen', the form 'Commonwealthsmen' is far more common in the period with which we are concerned.

deism and republicanism were closely associated; John Toland, friend of Molesworth and one of the most famous of the Commonwealthsmen, is often treated in this way[4]. Franco Venturi contends that the Commonwealthsmen 'show us the whole republican tradition, both English and continental, having to face new problems', while in Toland's case 'the republican tradition becomes a way of life'[5].

One of the main purposes of the present study is to question this interpretation of the politics of the Commonwealthsmen. The idea that they were the transmitters of republican thought rests on a highly selective use of their works and, even more dangerous, a propensity to accept much of what their enemies said about them. Toland himself warned against this uncritical approach in 1700 when he wrote that 'I specially disown whatever is said by those who first presume to divine my thoughts, and then to vent their own rash conjectures as my undoubted opinions'[6]: unfortunately, this protest seems to have been ignored by many who have written about him and his associates.

In the past fifteen years, some revaluation of the Commonwealthsmen has taken place. It has been pointed out - first, I think, by J.G.A. Pocock - that if they are to be regarded exclusively as radical Whigs, the close similarity between many of their ideas and those of the Tories becomes inexplicable. Following Pocock, Isaac Kramnick, H.T.Dickinson, and J.A.Downie have all insisted on the importance of 'Country party' attitudes in the thought of the Commonwealthsmen, attitudes which transcend the anachronistic dichotomy between left-wing Whigs and right-wing Tories[7]. Yet none of these historians has been

4 e.g. F.H.Heinemann, 'John Toland and the Age of Enlightenment', Review of English Studies 20, 1944, pp. 138-9; R.L.Emerson, 'Heresy, the Social Order, and English Deism', Church History 37, 1968, pp. 399-400.

5 Franco Venturi, Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment, Cambridge 1971, pp. 53,57.

6 Toland, ed, The Oceana and other Works of James Harrington Esq, 1737 ed, p. xl.

7 J.G.A.Pocock, Politics, Language, and Time, 1971, pp. 107-8; Isaac Kramnick, Bolingbroke and his Circle, Cambridge (Mass), 1968, pp. 236-60; H.T.Dickinson, Liberty and Property, 1977, pp. 103-6, 116-7; J.A.Downie, Robert Harley and the Press, Cambridge, 1979, pp. 20-3.

willing to abandon entirely the notion that the Commonwealthsmen were radical Whigs, retaining their links with the ideals of the Interregnum.

This study is the first attempt to identify all the members of Robbins' 'Molesworth connection' (a term I am unwilling to adopt, since it implies Molesworth's primacy), and to find out what they thought on the basis of all their political writings. This in itself, however, is insufficient if the radicalism of the Commonwealthsmen is to be assessed; their ideas must be compared with those of their contemporaries. Where they can be made, these comparisons tend to show that, far from being a beleaguered minority of radicals, the Commonwealthsmen were much less exceptional than has often been thought.

Another problem arises from the respective analyses of Robbins and Pocock. The former emphasised the Whiggery of the Commonwealthsmen, the latter their commitment to anti-party, 'Country' ideals. A good deal of support for both views can be culled from their writings, but a full treatment cannot leave the matter here: the crisis of identity must be resolved. The Commonwealthsmen saw themselves sometimes as Whigs and sometimes as Country theorists, but on what issues and why did they take these respective positions ?

After a preliminary section establishing who the Commonwealthsmen were, the early chapters of this study attempt to answer these questions by building up a composite picture of their political thought. The division of subjects must necessarily be somewhat artificial for the sake of clarity. Assumptions about the nature of society and the purposes it should serve may be logically prior to ideas about the best form of government, but the two were very closely connected in the minds of the Commonwealthsmen. Similarly, it has proved convenient to treat their opinions on the church and the state separately, but the proviso that the two can hardly be understood in isolation should be remembered. One of the main difficulties about

this composite picture is that the writers it is derived from followed no party line. They had much in common and were unanimous on many issues, but in those cases where there was no consensus I have pointed this out.

One of the assumptions upon which this analysis is based is that a body of political thought can often be illuminated by a study of the personal aspirations of its progenitors. This is not to assert that political ideas are merely a rationalisation of the interests of those who hold them; education, religion, and traditional moral standards all play a large part. But in the case of thinkers who, like most of the Commonwealthsmen, were actively involved in political conflict, the role of personal interest bears investigation. Although no attempt has been made to write a kind of multiple political biography, much of the second half of the thesis is devoted to the activities of the Commonwealthsmen in four areas of great concern to them: the control of the central government, its foreign policies, the mercantile politics of the capital, and the position of Ireland. The narrative method has been adopted in these chapters, because it alone can show how changing circumstances affected the thought of the Commonwealthsmen.

The results of this investigation demand some revision of our ideas about early eighteenth century politics, but I have tried to resist the temptation to overstate my case. The presence of republican elements - or rather, of ideas derived from republican thinkers, which is slightly different - in the thought of the Commonwealthsmen is not denied; an attempt is made to assess the influence upon them of writers like Harrington or Milton. And, although I have suggested that utopian speculation was, in general, uncongenial to Augustan England, it would be foolish to deny the existence of exceptions. Perhaps one of the most interesting, though apparently hitherto unnoticed, is The Free State of Noland[8], which presents a Harringtonian picture of a country

[8] Published in 1696; I have no idea of its authorship.

in all respects like England which has recently become a republic on the failure of the royal line. The laws have been reformed and a citizen militia exists; sovereignty is in the hands of a bicameral legislature based ultimately on household suffrage and equal representation. There may have been other pamphlets like this published in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; if so, my contention is that their authors, unlike the Commonwealthsmen, were not typical of an age which thought that political ideas should be firmly rooted in existing conditions.

# CHAPTER ONE: THE COMMONWEALTHSMEN

Few of the terms current in the heated political arguments of the early eighteenth century were as ambiguous as 'Commonwealthsman'. A thorough grasp of its meaning is therefore an essential preliminary to a study of the authors who applied this name to themselves. What was meant by 'a Commonwealthsman' in the generation between 1695 and 1725, when they were active ?

One answer had been given by Richard Baxter some years earlier, when he wrote of 'the democratical party...(that call themselves Commonwealthsmen); they imagine that God himself hath given the sovereign power to the people, and consequently that no government but popular is lawful'. Bishop Burnet seems to have agreed: when he wrote of the Restoration period that 'the Commonwealthsmen...were meeting, and laying plots to retrieve their lost game', he clearly implied that their aim was a return to the republican regime of the 1650s. The Tory pamphleteer William Baron concurred: he wrote in 1699 of the 'design of the Commonwealth party' to revive 'their former mischiefs'. They claim that 'there must be a thorough reform of the whole government, which I presume this new club is to undertake according to some old drafts of Milton and his fellow-projectors in '59'[1]. This was a bitter accusation, since the Interregnum, and particularly the act of regicide which had inaugurated it, was seldom discussed dispassionately in Augustan England, and sympathy with it was almost universally condemned.

Professor Robbins begins her book The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman with a quotation from Viscount Molesworth[2]:

1 Baxter, A Holy Commonwealth, 1659, p. 461; Burnet I 198; Baron, A Just Defence of the Royal Martyr K. Charles I, 1699, Preface.

2 Robbins, Commonwealthman, p. 3, quoting Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, 1721 ed, p. viii, probably written in 1705. Robbins' work, the fullest existing treatment of this subject, remains a valuable source of biographical information, but its uncritical approach limits its interest for students of political ideas.

> 'A true Whig is not afraid of the name of a Commonwealthsman because so many foolish people who know not what it means run it down'. This often-quoted definition proudly claimed for the Real Whigs- as they liked to call themselves- kinship with luminaries of republican thought like Milton, Harrington, Sidney, and others.

In fact, Molesworth was doing precisely the opposite. He was taking care to point out that an alternative meaning could legitimately be attached to this controversial term, one which divested the Commonwealthsmen of their invidious republican associations and placed them in the mainstream of English constitutional thought.

Reference to the Oxford English Dictionary helps to clear up the confusion. It defines a 'Commonwealthsman' firstly as 'one devoted to the interests of the Commonwealth' and secondly as 'an adherent of the English Commonwealth in the 17th c...an adherent of a republican government'. In the former sense the word is first recorded in 1579, but it derives from the idea of 'the common weal' which was perfectly familiar to the social and political thinkers of the 16th century and earlier. In this sense, a Commonwealthsman was a moral rather than a political being: in his famous description of a country parson (1632), George Herbert wrote that 'his children he first makes Christians, and then Commonwealthsmen; the one he owes to his heavenly country, the other to his earthly, having no title to either except he do good to both'[3].

In a similar spirit John Hall of Richmond wrote[4]

> when we see the ploughmen, the shepherd, the spinster or the like to be intent in their labours and providing food and clothing for us, these we may truly call Commonwealthsmen, forasmuch as they do by their occupations make real improvement without the loss of others. Whereas he that through public disturbance hath seated himself as high in office as his ambitious head can desire...cannot at all be called a Commonwealthsman in what he hath done.

Hall's social and political outlook differed widely from Herbert's,

3 The Works of George Herbert, ed F.E.Hutchinson, Oxford 1941, p. 239.

4 John Hall, Of Government and Obedience, 1654, p. 159. I am grateful to Keith Thomas for this reference and that to Baxter in note 1.

but here their terminology was identical.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries writers like Molesworth, John Toland, and John Trenchard virtually appropriated the word Commonwealthsman to themselves, and they offer some useful indications as to what they meant by it. Toland's most ample statement on this subject bears extensive quotation as a convincing exposition of the 'primary' rather than the 'secondary' meaning: his use of the term had far more in common with Herbert's than with Baxter's. He refers[5] to the charge

> that I am a great Commonwealthsman, the truth whereof I freely own, and value myself on being so...(A Commonwealth) signifies liberty and order, equal laws, strict and impartial justice, a wise and liberal education, a sober and frugal management in private economy, an upright and disinterested administration of the public revenues, the natural source of industry, wealth and power, of ingenious arts and useful inventions, a nursery of capacious, daring, and gallant spirits, an example of noble and generous actions, a promoter of great and glorious undertakings; a place where the national religion is duly maintained and piously observed, with an allowed toleration to innocent dissenters, where vice is severely punished (though it can never be totally extirpated), where virtue is amply encouraged(though it be the greatest recompense to itself), and where the merit of deserving citizens obtains those honourable characters and lasting monuments after death which their own modesty or the envy of others might happen to deny 'em alive.

After this brief expression of self-pity (he was writing to defend himself against the attacks of Convocation), Toland went on to imply that on these criteria, the disorderly regimes of the 1650s were not Commonwealths; the traditional monarchy of England, however, was: Sir Thomas Smith had described it as such a century earlier. In 1717 Toland was still declaring that 'our monarchy is the best form of a Commonwealth'[6], and he was not alone is this assertion. Its most famous exposition is in Molesworth's preface to his translation of Franco-Gallia, which reads in many parts like an expansion of the passage of Toland's transcribed above. Cato's Letters, the fruit of a

[5] Toland, Vindicius Liberius, 1702, pp. 125,146-8.
[6] Toland, The State-Anatomy of Great-Britain, 1717, p. 13. See also Toland's Anglia Libera, 1701, p. 92.

collaboration between John Trenchard and his protégé Thomas Gordon, took the same line in attempting a rehabilitation of Algernon Sidney. If Sidney was a republican, then 'our own constitution... is the best republic in the world, with a prince at the head of it': it at least resembles a Commonwealth far more than it does an absolute monarchy[7]. William Stephens, a close associate of Toland's, echoed these sentiments[8]:

> What strange magic lies hid in the word Commonwealth ! It frights men like a goblin...Is any government so much as tolerable which is not a Commonwealth, that is to say, which does not aim at common weal ? Ought not every king and every subject to be a Commonwealthsman, and contribute all he can to the public weal of his country ?

Republic and Commonwealth are parallel terms, in that 'Republic' is the anglicised version of the Latin word which 'Commonwealth' translates. By adopting moral rather than strictly political criteria for their use ('does the state serve the interests of all its people ?' rather than 'does it have a king ?'), these authors sought to escape the subversive connotations of their terminology. When they did use the word Commonwealth in its more recent sense, it was always to condemn such republican ideas. Trenchard in Cato's Letters contended that the adherence of all the most important groups in society to the monarchy meant that the 'phantom of a Commonwealth' was fit only for 'disordered brains'. The third earl of Shaftesbury, friend of Molesworth and patron of Toland, wrote privately that the establishment of a Commonwealth in England was unrealistic and would in any case threaten European stability. Charles Davenant spoke for the whole group when asserting that 'the people naturally respect the throne; their minds are not tainted with the wild and impracticable

7 Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, esp. p. viii; Cato's Letters, no. 37, 15 July 1721 (1733 ed II 28).
8 Stephens, 'The Claims of the People of England Essay'd' (1701), in An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, with other Tracts of the Same Author, 1709, p. 116.

notions of a Commonwealth'[9].

The Commonwealthsmen were by no means unaware of the semantic confusion to which I have drawn attention. Not surprisingly, they blamed it on their enemies, but this did not narrow the field unduly. Trenchard believed in the existence of a party whose aim was to establish tyranny by depriving the people of all their just rights, and whose methods included vilifying all salutary measures 'by the name of a Commonwealth, or the spirit of a Commonwealth...(But now) the word Commonwealth has been found out to signify the common benefit'. This conspiracy theory had been outlined by Toland in 1701 and the chief villain identified as Charles II: one of his tactics had been to slander the idea of a Commonwealth[10].

As early as 1694, during an uneasy period as an external student at Oxford before he had published anything, Toland was complaining that non-juring enemies maliciously tried to stigmatise him as a Commonwealthsman[11]. As a technique of denigration it was certainly effective. Why should he and his associates have courted trouble by refusing to disown the name ? It is worth considering the possibility that they saw themselves as successors of the mid-Tudor writers and preachers known to posterity as the Commonwealthsmen. Certainly

9 Cato's Letters no. 85, 14 July 1722 (III 162); Rand, Shaftesbury, pp. 350-1, 366-9; Davenant, Sir Thomas Double at Court, Part 1, 1710, p. 36.

10 Trenchard, Essays on Important Subjects, 1755, pp. 69-70 (an autograph version of this book is at the Houghton Library, Harvard University); Toland, The Art of Governing by Partys, 1701, pp. 34, 38-9. In his edition of Oceana (1737 ed, pp. xxix-xxx) Toland gave an alternative explanation of the unpopularity of the term 'Commonwealth' in England, deriving from the falsely named Interregnum regime.

11 Toland, Collection, II 306. It is possible that Toland's wild talk at this time (which he often later regretted) may have led to the persistent reports that he was a republican (See Life and Letters of Edward Lhwyd, ed R.T.Gunther, Cxford 1945, as Vol. XIV of 'Early Science in Oxford', p. 278). If he did go through a republican phase it was over before he published anything on political affairs. Yet in 1702 he was still being attacked as a member of the 'Commonwealth party' (Saul and Samuel, sometimes wrongly attributed to Davenant, 1702, pp. 16-17).

members of the two groups had some ideas in common. The most articulate manifesto of the earlier writers, Sir Thomas Smith's Discourse of the Common Weal, anticipated Molesworth, Trenchard, and Toland in its denunciation of standing armies as detrimental to public welfare and a threat to the liberty of the state, and all these authors would have relished the criticism of the clergy which ends Smith's tract[12]. But the differences between the two groups are more important, and more obvious, than the similarities. The mid-Tudor publicists - Latimer, Crowley, Lever, Hales, Smith - saw the 'common weal' as a state characterised by piety and material prosperity. A century and a half later their putative successors emphasised that political rights and liberties for the subject were essential to any Commonwealth. They tended to assume that prosperity would naturally follow liberty, and their concern with piety was minimal. Recent work on the social critics of Edward VI's reign has undermined their claims to originality, cohesion, and disinterestedness, and in a cheerfully iconoclastic article, G.R.Elton has contended that the very existence of a group of 'Commonwealthsmen' at this period was an invention of A.F.Pollard's[13]. Although Toland at one point cited Sir Thomas Smith - apparently the De Republica Anglorum - there seems to be no evidence that the Tudor Commonwealthsmen, whether so called at the time or not, had any real influence on him or his associates.

It seems more likely that their tremendous regard for John Locke led them to refuse to disavow the term Commonwealthsmen. Toland,

[12] A Discourse of the Common Weal of this Realm of England, ed E.Lamond Cambridge 1954 (written in 1549), pp. 83-4, 94-5, 132-9. Although Miss Lamond thought that the book was by Hales, Smith's authorship is now generally accepted.

[13] M.L.Bush, The Government Policy of Protector Somerset, 1975, pp. 61-70; G.R.Elton, 'Reform and the "Commonwealth-men" of Edward VI's Reign', in The English Commonwealth 1547-1640, ed P.Clark et al., Leicester 1979, pp. 23-4.

Molesworth, Shaftesbury, and Matthew Tindal all knew Locke, and Trenchard may have done through their mutual friend Anthony Collins. More importantly, although Shaftesbury criticised his epistemology, all of them admired his political thought. Locke attempted to restore some respectability to the word Commonwealth, which had been under something of a cloud since Charles II's return. In the Second Treatise Locke explained that

> by 'commonwealth' I must be understood all along to mean not a democracy, or any form of government, but any independent community which the Latins signified by the word civitas, to which the word which best answers in our language is 'commonwealth'.

Toland, who probably knew the identity of the author of this passage at an early date, was so impressed by it that he plagiarised it in 1701[14]. Similarly, Locke's Epistola de Tolerantia, the authorship of which was soon an open secret, defined respublica as a society of men organized for the preservation of their civil goods - lives, liberties, and possessions - and, significantly, William Popple's English translation of 1689 used 'commonwealth' here[15].

Locke's influence, then, may help to account for the enthusiasm for the unfashionable word by some of his younger contemporaries. But can we go further and speak of them as a self-conscious group of Commonwealthsmen, or has Professor Robbins performed the same function for them as Pollard seems to have done for their Tudor namesakes ? Making the proviso that they were not an organized party, Robbins writes that 'for nearly four decades after the Revolution, a number of men connected in varying degrees of intimacy with Robert Molesworth worked to secure its benefits and extend its constitutional reforms... They often referred to themselves as Old Whigs and were quite often praised or blamed as Commonwealthmen'[16]. Leaving for later chapters

[14]Locke, Second Treatise, para. 133; Toland, Anglia Libera, p. 92.
[15]Locke, Epistola de Tolerantia, ed R. Klibansky, Oxford 1968, pp. 64,66.
[16]Robbins, Commonwealthman, p. 88.

the question of the coherence of their ideas, the rest of this introduction will appraise the evidence for the existence and organization of such a group, with particular reference to its origins.

As early as 1694, as we have seen, John Toland was being censured as a Commonwealthsman. A whole literature has sprung up on Toland (1670-1722) in the last few years[17], but his political significance has not been analysed as rigorously as his contributions to religious and philosophical thought. He possessed a formidable intellect and an extrovert personality; living off his wits and perpetually short of money, he rapidly became one of the best-known men of his time. The quantity of his publications and of the information we have about his life make him one of the central figures in this study. At Oxford, while working on his first and most famous book, Christianity Not Mysterious, Toland was already a member of a group closely connected with Locke, in which it seems plausible to detect the origins of the future circle of Commonwealthsmen. Returning from a period of study in Holland in the previous year, he had carried letters to Locke from Philipp van Limborch, Jean Le Clerc, and Benjamin Furly, leading figures among the Dutch intelligentsia; Furly in particular, an English Quaker of the most liberal views, had warmly recommended Toland to the philosopher as a 'free-spirited ingenious man' who, having 'cast off the yoke of spiritual authority', was in consequence finding trouble in making a living[18]. This reputation followed him to

[17] The fullest account of Toland is by Pierre Desmaizeaux, written soon after his death at the suggestion of the bibliophile Sir Berkeley Lucy: Toland, Collection I iv-xcii. J.G.Simms, 'John Toland, a Donegal Heretic', Irish Historical Studies 16, 1968-9, pp. 304-20, provides the best recent general account, while the years leading up to Christianity Not Mysterious are described in H.F.Nicholl, 'John Toland: Religion Without Mystery', Hermathena 100, 1965, pp. 54-65. E.Twynam, John Toland, Freethinker, privately printed in 1968, is adulatory, inaccurate, and illiterate.

[18] The Correspondence of John Locke, ed. E.S.de Beer, 8 vols Oxford 1976- , no. 1650 (IV 710-1) Furly to Locke 9/19 Aug 1693; no. 1646 (IV 704-5) Limborch to Locke 25 July/4 Aug 1693; nos. 1653, 1657 (IV 717,724) Le Clerc to Locke 15/25 Aug and 1/11 Sept 1693.

Oxford, where Arthur Charlett, the inquisitive Master of University College, took a special interest in his activities; we are indebted to one of Charlett's correspondents for the picture of Toland and James Tyrrell sitting through a bitter sermon directed against Locke's political philosophy, with the apparent aim of sending notes on it to the great man[19].

Two other friendships made by Toland around this time, both almost certainly through Locke's good offices, were far more important than this connection with Tyrrell, which is not mentioned again. One was with Lord Ashley (1671-1713; from 1699 third earl of Shaftesbury), a pupil of Locke's from early childhood who, after a period of foreign travel and intense study, entered the Commons in 1695[20]. Charlett, by now an avowed enemy of Toland's, wrote to Archbishop Tenison in that year that 'he boasted much of the young Lord Ashley Cooper, how he had framed him, and that he should outdo his grandfather in all his glorious designs'. Ashley's own political principles at this time seem to have been rather vague. Much later in life, referring to himself as 'a Commonwealthsman', he recalled how a generalised antipathy to corruption had led him to associate with the anti-court Whigs[21]. He remained a regular correspondent of Locke's on more or less equal terms, which seems never to have been the case in his long association with Toland. In 1703 Shaftesbury, though short of money, was paying a pension of £20 a year to the even more penurious Toland; for this and other reasons, the story that Toland pirated the first edition of the

[19] Bodleian Library MS Ballard xxxviii f.4, Hinton to Charlett 31 Jan 1694-5. In the same collection are two entertaining letters from Edmund Gibson, giving Charlett all the details which the future bishop had been able to glean on Toland's career: v ff. 46-8.

[20] Shaftesbury's fame as a philosopher means that a great deal has been written about him: a reliable guide is R.L.Brett, The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, 1951. The main sources on his political career and ideas are the compilation in Rand, Shaftesbury, and the manuscripts at the Public Record Office, London (collection mark 30/24). Christopher Cunliffe of Christ Church is at present preparing a thesis on this aspect of Shaftesbury.

[21] Lambeth Palace Library MS 942 f.110, Charlett to Tenison 25 Oct 1695 P.R.O. 30/24/24/13 f.99, an almanac annotated by Shaftesbury.

earl's Inquiry Concerning Virtue in 1699 should probably be discounted[22].

Toland's other important acquaintance in 1694 is less well-known than Shaftesbury. John Freke was a veteran Whig who had corresponded with Locke during his exile in Holland, and in the 1690s, together with Edward Clarke and Sir Walter Yonge, he was a member of the 'College', a political club in London which the philosopher used as a link with men in power[23]. In May 1694 Toland, writing from Oxford, described Freke as 'the primum mobile of my happiness', while early next year Freke was writing to Locke to acknowledge receipt of some of 'Mr T's papers' (two recent scholars have plausibly surmised that these may have been an early draft of Christianity Not Mysterious)[24]. Toland's translation in 1696 of Davanzati's Discourse on Coins was avowedly connected with the College's parliamentary and press campaign on the subject of the recoinage undertaken in that year. Finally, the fact that Freke and Clarke advised Ashley on his election to the Commons in 1695[25] tends to confirm the impression that by this time two of our future Commonwealthsmen were members of a Lockeian group of which the College - if it is to be distinguished from it at all - was only the inner ring.

By 1697 more details of this circle are available, and they are highly relevant to the search for the origins of the Commonwealthsmen. Toland was in Ireland during 1697, and two letters written to him

[22] P.R.O. 30/24/20/80,81, Shaftesbury to Wheelock Nov 1703; A.O. Aldridge, 'Two Versions of Shaftesbury's Inquiry Concerning Virtue', Huntington Library Quarterly 13, 1949-50, pp. 207-14.

[23] On Freke's earlier activities, see Frank H.Ellis, 'John Freke and the History of Insipids', Philological Quarterly 44, 1965, pp. 472-83; see also refs. in Maurice Cranston, John Locke: A Biography, 1958, esp. p. 398.

[24] Toland, Collection II 294; Bodleian Library MS Locke c8 f.194, Freke to Locke 9 April 1695 ('Mr T' is a recurrent contemporary name for Toland); M.C.Jacob, The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720, Hassocks 1976, pp. 213-5 and note 44; John C. Biddle, 'Locke's Critique of Innate Ideas and Toland's Deism', Journal of the History of Ideas 37, 1976, p. 417. Jacob's statement (p. 213) that Locke never aided Toland financially seems to be disproved by Bodleian MS Locke b1 f.188 and c1 p. 321, where a payment of £5 to Toland through Freke and Clarke is recorded, as late as 8 Feb 1696-7.

[25] Bodleian Library MS Locke c8 f.197, Freke to Locke 16 May 1695.

there by friends in London were intercepted, probably by ecclesiastical authorities, and have been preserved[26]. The circumstances in which they were written will be considered in another chapter: here they will be used as evidence for the composition of the Toland connection in 1697. Freke and Clarke are present, and the significant new names are those of Thomas Rawlins, William Simpson, John Methuen, and John Cary.

Cary is worth mentioning because, although he only appears on one other occasion associated with the Commonwealthsmen (he was to serve with Rawlins and Trenchard as a trustee for Irish forfeitures), he is known to have admired Locke, with whom he corresponded on economic matters during 1695-7. Cary does not seem to have called himself a Commonwealthsman, though his lifelong concern for the welfare of the poor - which bore fruit in his native Bristol - made him more worthy of the name than several who did[27]. Much to his annoyance, Toland, short of money in Ireland, was drawing bills on him in 1697.

Not very much is known about Thomas Rawlins; nevertheless, he was clearly a figure of some importance among Toland's friends. In 1698 he guaranteed Toland's contract with the publisher John Darby, and in the same year Toland, dedicating his controversial Life of Milton to 'Thomas Raulins of Kilreag in Herefordshire Esq.', wrote 'I send you at length, my best friend, what you have so often and earnestly solicited me to write'. In 1696 and in 1701 he was a deputy lieutenant for his native county, but he was also well known in London as an habitué of the Grecian Coffee House and a friend of Trenchard's[28].

[26]Lambeth Palace Library MS 933 f.74, Simpson to Toland 20 April 1697 ? to Toland 1 June 1697.

[27]On Cary see the article in D.N.B. and his published works listed there; also Bodleian Library MS Locke c5 ff.14-21.

[28]B Lib Add MS 4295 f.6; Toland, The Life of John Milton, 1699 (written 1698) p.5; C.S.P.Dom 1696 p. 488, 1700-2, p. 256; Northants R.O., Shrewsbury Papers 48 f.52, Vernon to Shrewsbury 30 March 1700

Rawlins published little, but there is strong evidence implicating him in the appearance in 1705 of a libellous attack on a ministerial pamphlet by Toland, for which a mutual associate, William Stephens, was successfully prosecuted. Nothing is known of Rawlins after 1714 when, again on good terms with Toland, he wrote to his friend from Pau, where he may have retired for reasons of health[29].

Simpson and Methuen were close friends who corresponded regularly during Methuen's absences abroad. Both were important figures in official circles, enjoying close links with the second earl of Sunderland. It was through him that Simpson obtained the post of cursitor baron of the Exchequer and a knighthood in 1697, while the combined influence of Sunderland and Shrewsbury obtained the post of Lord Chancellor of Ireland for Methuen in the same year[30]. It is not clear how these men came to be connected with the Freke/Toland group. In the spring of 1696 both Locke and Methuen had been appointed to the newly-constituted Board of Trade, but several months later Locke wrote that (owing no doubt to illness) he had met Methuen only once, and he channelled a recommendation to the Irish Chancellor-designate through Freke, who knew him better[31]. The recommendation, which was welcomed by Methuen, was for the Dublin scientist and political writer William Molyneux, and the connection formed in this way may have led to the

[29] Toland, Collection II 433-6.

[30] Luttrell IV 269, 287, 319; Vernon Corr I 146, Vernon to Shrewsbury 26 Dec 1696; see also A.D.Francis, The Methuens and Portugal, Cambridge 1966, p. 67.

[31] Cranston, John Locke, pp. 403-4; The Works of John Locke, 10 vols 1823, IX 398-9, Locke to Molyneux 22 Feb 1696-7; Bodleian Library MS Locke c8 f.227, Freke to Locke 6 April 1697. William Ashe, an obscure Wiltshire MP who once served with Trenchard's father (Heytesbury 1690), may furnish a link between Freke and Methuen: see A Letter from the Grecian Coffee-House, 1701, and Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 28 March 1704. Methuen was related to the Ashe family, but I cannot prove that the same William Ashe is referred to in all these cases.

entry of Robert Molesworth into the nascent group of Commonwealthsmen.

In view of his high social rank and his later prominence, surprisingly little is known of the early life of Robert Molesworth (1656-1725, a viscount in the Irish peerage from 1719)[32]. The posthumous son of one of the Cromwellian expropriators of Ireland, Molesworth graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1675, and entered Lincoln's Inn in the same year. He was abroad for about four years from 1684, spending some time in Germany[33]; he returned home to high hopes of an official career under William III, which were dashed by his unsatisfactory conduct as envoy to Denmark. He owned land in England (at Edlington, near Doncaster), and entered Parliament in 1695 buying his way in at Camelford. In the Commons he probably met Ashley, with whom he concurred 'about all public affairs during King William's government and afterwards'; they certainly sat together on several committees[34]. But Molesworth's main property lay in Ireland, where he sat in every Parliament from 1695 until his elevation to the peerage, either for the county of Dublin (1695) or for his pocket borough of Swords (1703, 1713, 1715).

In 1697 Molesworth already knew and admired Locke, but Molyneux's letter to the philosopher which mentions him as a mutual friend seems to indicate that the relationship was not close. The respect was genuine, though: 'we never meet but we remember you; he sometimes comes into my house and tells me it is not to pay a visit to me, but to pay his devotion to your image that is in my dining room'[35]. It was perhaps during one of these idolatrous sessions that Molesworth first

[32] The only biography is still that in D.N.B.; the fullest source, his correspondence calendared in Molesworth Corr, begins only at the time of his mission to Denmark, on which see chapter 6. See also the account of his political career in Appendix C of E.L.Ellis, 'The Whig Junto', Oxford D.Phil thesis, 1961.

[33] G.D.Burtchaell and T.U.Sadleir, Alumni Dublinenses, Dublin 1935, p. 582; Lincoln's Inn Admission Register 1420-1893, 1896, p. 320; C.S.P.Dom 1697, p. 263; Toland, The Second Part of the State-Anatomy 1717, p. 39; B Lib Add MS 4295 f.2, Schurtsfleisch to Haxthausen, Sept 1687.

[34] Molesworth Corr pp. 217-8; Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, pp. ix, 26; Commons Journals XI 432, 440, 533. But see below, p.123, for one disagreement between Molesworth and Ashley in this Parliament.

[35] The Works of John Locke, IX 434-5, Molyneux to Locke 11 Sept 1697.

met Toland, who certainly visited Molyneux once (and perhaps several times) in 1697, loudly proclaiming his attachment to Locke[36].

Lord Chancellor Methuen too cultivated Molesworth, probably initially as a powerful man to be conciliated during a difficult parliamentary session. But a friendship grew up which continued after Methuen returned to Lisbon in 1702 as ambassador for the last four years of his life, with Molesworth writing to keep his old ally informed on Irish affairs[37]. Simpson's duties at the Exchequer Court - from which he did not retire until 1726 - kept him in London, and for a quarter of a century he kept in close touch with most of the leading figures of this study. He was, for example, almost certainly the 'Sir W.S.' who, unsolicited, sent the indigent Toland five guineas in 1719. Informative letters from Trenchard, Molesworth, and Rawlins to him survive, and his long and invaluable correspondence with Methuen shows that both of them knew Matthew Tindal well[38].

Molesworth, though a far more important man than Simpson because of his writings, was probably, owing to long absences in Ireland, not so prominent in the social life of the group. His relations with Trenchard seem never to have been close, for reasons which should become apparent when Ireland is discussed. His friendship with Toland, however, was a warm one, particularly at the ends of their lives, and may have been based as much on a shared antiquarianism as on politics[39]. Molesworth was one of Shaftesbury's earliest and warmest friends, but relations

[36] The Works of John Locke IX 405-6, 421-2, Molyneux to Locke 6 April, 27 May 1697.

[37] H.M.C. 45 Buccleuch-Whitehall Vol II(ii) pp. 518, Methuen to Shrewsbury 3 Aug 1697, 567, Shrewsbury to Methuen 20 Oct 1697; Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 18 Jan 1703-4, E82, Methuen to Simpson 31 May 1704.

[38] E.Foss, A Biographical Dictionary of the Judges of England, 1870, p. 613; Toland, Collection, II 445-8; Trenchard Corr MS G23 passim; Methuen Corr MS E82, Methuen to Simpson 6 Dec 1701.

[39] B Lib Add MS 4465 f.36, Toland to Molesworth, c. July 1719.

between the two were probably closest from 1707 to 1710, when the ailing peer left England for Italy and an early death. Their friendship was both personal and political, and Molesworth was heavily involved in efforts to secure a government post for Shaftesbury's young relative, Thomas Micklethwayte, to which Simpson also lent his influence. Eight years after the earl's death some of the correspondence between him and Molesworth was published by Toland, with appropriately eulogistic editorial comment[40].

The name of John Trenchard (1662-1723) has arisen frequently in the course of this discussion, and his connections with other members of the group demand attention. Unfortunately, although he came from a prominent Dorset family[41], Trenchard's life is very poorly documented, and, even after he had achieved national fame through his Irish activities, there is a long period (1702-1719) during which virtually nothing is known of him. His friendships are therefore not always easy to trace. In an early work Trenchard and his collaborator, Walter Moyle, praised Molesworth as an 'excellent author', but later evidence seems to indicate that Molesworth and Trenchard in fact despised each other[42]. Trenchard certainly knew Rawlins, and probably Cary, before they served with him as trustees for Irish forfeitures[43], and Rawlins probably supplies the link between Trenchard and Toland which has been

[40] P.R.O. 30/24/22/4 ff.57-8, Shaftesbury to Molesworth 13 Dec 1707 (printed in Rand, Shaftesbury, pp. 383-5); 30/24/21/145, Cropley to Shaftesbury 4 Feb 1707-8; Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, passim.

[41] He was a distant cousin (their common ancestor lived under Henry VII) of Sir John Trenchard, Secretary of State 1693-5, with whom he has sometimes been confused, and of Thomas Trenchard, a Dorset M.P. throughout William's reign, who is mentioned in Shaftesbury's correspondence. The best account of John Trenchard is that in D.N.B. J.A.R.Séguin, A Bibliography of John Trenchard, privately printed, Jersey City (N.J.) 1965, is not very helpful.

[42] Trenchard & Moyle, An Argument, shewing that a Standing Army is Inconsistent with a Free Government, 1697, p. 10; Trenchard Corr MS G23 ff.30-1, Trenchard to Simpson 25 Oct 1721, ff.43-4, Molesworth to Simpson 2 Nov 1723.

[43] Northants. R.O., Shrewsbury Papers 48 f.52, Vernon to Shrewsbury 30 March 1700.

surmised by students of the Standing Army controversy of 1697-9[44]. Although the evidence remains circumstantial, it is hard to believe that Trenchard and Toland, sharing the same antimilitary views, apparently involved in the same literary campaign, and published by the same man, John Darby[45], did not know each other in 1697.

Two younger men, Walter Moyle and Thomas Gordon, are often classed among the Commonwealthsmen on the basis of their literary cooperation with Trenchard. Moyle (1672-1721) enjoyed a large acquaintance, and a substantial reputation, among London literati, and perhaps for this reason he was the most classically minded of the writers to be dealt with here. Like Ashley, whom he certainly knew, and Molesworth, he was a member of the Parliament elected in 1695, but after about 1700 he spent most of his time in his native Cornwall, and his works, not published during his lifetime, lost much of their relevance to contemporary politics[46]. More than twenty years after Trenchard had collaborated with Moyle in the Standing Army controversy, he was associated with the Scotsman Thomas Gordon (1691? 1750) in the authorship of two highly influential periodicals, The Independent Whig and Cato's Letters. Gordon was a talented journalist, but his motives appear to have been largely venal, and it

[44] Worden p. 41 and note 176; Lois G.Schwoerer, 'No Standing Armies!', Baltimore 1974, p. 177. Dr Worden's footnote is of great interest, but it is probably overhasty to attribute much of the Trenchard canon to Toland on the basis of statements by unknown third parties.

[45] John Darby, who specialised in political publishing, was sometimes described in terms usually reserved for his authors; Richard Kingston called him 'so bigoted a fanatic republican that nothing can cure his spleen' (Impudence, Lying, and Forgery Detected and Chastis'd, 1700, pp. 4-5).

[46] The best account of Moyle is in the Introduction to Two English Republican Tracts, ed C.Robbins, Cambridge 1969, pp. 21-38. See also Anthony Hammond's biography, prefixed to Moyle, Published Works. The evidence for Shaftesbury's knowledge of Moyle is in Second Characters, or the Language of Forms, ed B.Rand, Cambridge 1914, p. 11, and in the parliamentary committees on which these two (and occasionally Molesworth) sat together: Commons Journals XI 432, 440, 573.

is difficult to find any consistency when his career is examined as a whole. While co-operating with Trenchard he conducted negotiations with an unidentified senior government member with a view to turning his coat, apparently with the approval of his mentor. Gordon's change of allegiance occurred soon after Trenchard's death in 1723: its price was a Commissionership of Wine Licenses, and it was solemnised by the dedication to Walpole of his translation of Tacitus (1728). In any case, Gordon's career began too late for him to be considered usefully here; he did not share the political experiences of the other writers, whose work was strongly influenced by their perceptions of the dangers of the 1690s[47].

A less well-known collaboration of Trenchard's was with the clergyman William Stephens (1647?-1718), who attained notoriety in 1700 by preaching a 30 January sermon which criticised the annual observance of King Charles' death. Much of this sermon was written by Trenchard[48]. Arthur Charlett, well informed as ever, was told that at this very time Toland was lodging with Stephens in London, and now or later both men were pensioners of Shaftesbury's[49]. Stephens seems also to have been a close friend of Rawlins, and to have taken the blame for a libel probably written by the latter in 1705[50].

Matthew Tindal (1653?-1733), Fellow of All Souls for half a century, knew many of the people described here. Although he is remembered today even by specialists almost exclusively as a deistic

[47] On Gordon, see J.M.Bulloch, 'Thomas Gordon, the Independent Whig', Aberdeen University Library Bulletin 3, 1915-8; C.B.Realey, 'The London Journal and its Authors', University of Kansas Humanistic Studies 5, 1935-6, esp p. 31. See also Trenchard Corr MS G23 ff.9-10, Gordon to Trenchard 1 Aug 1721.

[48] Stephens, A Sermon Preach'd before the Honourable the House of Commons, January 30 1699-1700, 1700; Richard Baron, The Pillars of Priestcraft and Orthodoxy Shaken, 4 vols 1768, II 256; Worden p. 44, note 194, citing a manuscript annotation in a Cambridge University Library copy of the sermon.

[49] Bodleian Library MS Ballard vii f.78, Kennett to Charlett 25 Jan 1699-1700; P.R.O. 30/24/20/80, Shaftesbury to Wheelock, Nov 1703 (?). Stephens was presented to his rectory at Sutton, Surrey, in 1690 by Lady Anne Mason (O.Manning and W.Bray, History and Antiquities of Surrey, 3 vols 1804-14), mother-in-law of the earl of Macclesfield, a friend of Shaftesbury.

[50] On this obscure affair, see page 130 and note 50.

writer, Tindal was also a dedicated political controversialist, whose training in the civil law allowed him to bring an acute but sometimes pedantic mind to bear on the topics he discussed. He wrote to Locke early in 1697 to express his appreciation of the philosopher's work on toleration, which he had followed in his own tract on the subject. Tindal may have met Toland in Oxford in 1694; he certainly knew Trenchard, although the two were to differ bitterly in politics under the Hanoverians. Tindal and Moyle probably knew each other: both corresponded with Dr William Musgrave, who distributed Tindal's notorious Rights of the Christian Church in Exeter. Simpson and Methuen both knew him, and in 1712 he was a guest of Molesworth's at Edlington[51]. Contemporary accounts of Tindal were not flattering, emphasising his personal unattractiveness, and his views made him generally unpopular at Oxford, where he chose to spend as little of his time as possible. But he was by no means without influence there, and for many years he seems to have been leader of the opposition in All Souls politics[52].

Another man often classed among the Commonwealthsmen[53], Charles Davenant (1656-1714), presents problems partly because his relationships with most of them do not appear to have been close. He knew and admired Walter Moyle, according to a mutual friend writing

[51] Bodleian Library MS Locke c20 f.207, Tindal to Locke 10 Jan 1696-7; Trenchard Corr MS G23 ff.15-16; Hearne, Remarks and Collections, ed C.E.Doble et al., 11 vols, Oxford 1884-1918, III 182-3; Moyle, Unpublished Works, Vol I, 'Letters to Dr William Musgrave'; Methuen Corr MS E82, Methuen to Simpson 6 Dec 1701; Molesworth Corr p. 259, Robert to Lettice Molesworth 12 July 1712.

[52] On Tindal, see E.C. (Edmund Curll), Memoirs of M.Tindall, LL.D., 1733; The Religious, Rational, and Moral Conduct of Matthew Tindal, LL.D., 1735; references in Hearne, Remarks and Collections, esp I 193, 237, III 439, XI 244; Montague Burrows, Worthies of All Souls, 1874, pp. 313, 381, 418. Tindal was not a clergyman, as Robbins, Commonwealthman, p. 88, thinks.

[53] Most notably by Isaac Kramnick, Bolingbroke and his Circle, Cambridge (Mass) 1968, pp. 237-43. The fullest account of Davenant is by D.G.A.Waddell, 'The Career and Writings of Charles Davenant, 1656-1714', Oxford D.Phil thesis 1954, condensed in Ec.H.R. 2nd Series 11 1958-9, pp. 279-88.

much later[54], and his Discourse Upon Grants and Resumptions was written in 1699 with the intention of preparing the way for Trenchard's report on Irish forfeitures. Shaftesbury referred to Davenant as an old acquaintance, but the friendship may not have been political[55]. Like those of all the Commonwealthsmen, Davenant's career and sympathies were erratic, and cannot adequately be explained in terms merely of Whig and Tory loyalties. He is, however, sharply differentiated by his close links with High Tories, which involved him in questionable dealings with the French in 1701, and by his flaunting of his enthusiasm for the Church of England. The latter trait is nowhere more apparent than in his attack on Toland as 'Mr Gospelscorn' in 1702[56]. Many of Davenant's ideas, particularly on the constitution, were very similar to those of Toland and Trenchard, but when he is discussed in subsequent sections it must be with the proviso that he did not share some of the basic assumptions of his putative colleagues

Historians investigating the coterie surrounding Molesworth, Toland, Trenchard, and the others have often been generous in assessing its membership. Professor Robbins mentions Benjamin Hoadly, Edward Wortley Montague, and Gilbert Heathcote as part of her 'Molesworth connection', while Dr Blair Worden names such figures as Tyrrell, Roger Coke, David Jones, John Tutchin, and Samuel Johnson as Toland's main political associates in the 1690s[57]. These assertions are not reliable. They are based at best on isolated expressions of regard, or on single scraps of evidence like the one linking Tyrrell with Toland cited earlier in this chapter. There is only one more name

[54]Moyle, Published Works, pp. 5-7.

[55]Rand, Shaftesbury, pp. 462-6, Shaftesbury to Micklethwayte 19 Jan 1712 NS. Some distrust between Shaftesbury and Davenant is indicated by B Lib MS Lansdowne 773 f.15, Charles to Henry Davenant 14 Jan 1703-4.

[56]Davenant, Tom Double Return'd out of the Country, 1702, pp. 69-71.

[57]Robbins, Commonwealthman, pp. 88-9; Worden, p. 19.

which can confidently be assigned to the Molesworth/Trenchard/ Toland connection which has been reconstructed here, that of Anthony Collins.

Because Collins did not publish anything relating directly to politics he will not appear much in this thesis. But his close links with men who will should be noted here. He was a country gentleman and religious thinker of great critical power[58]. His intimacy with Locke at the end of the old man's life may help to explain his friendship with so many of Locke's acquaintances and admirers. In December 1711 Shaftesbury expressed his appreciation of Collins' favours to his son, left behind in England, while a couple of years before that Rawlins had asked Stephens to pass on his regards to Collins. Collins knew Stephens, and probably Trenchard, who expressed respect for his work[59]. Toland knew Collins well and probably interested him mainly as a bibliophile and writer on religion, although their correspondence was not entirely devoid of political content; and Thomas Hearne reported after Tindal's death in 1733 that many of the works attributed to the Doctor were the result of collaboration with Collins[60]. Collins' client Pierre Desmaizeaux[61] stood on the periphery of the group. On coming to England in 1699, this French Protestant had been recommended to Locke, and by 1701 he was working for Shaftesbury

[58] Collins has been the subject of a painstaking study by J. O'Higgins, Anthony Collins, the Man and his Works, The Hague 1970.

[59] Rand, Shaftesbury, pp. 449-452, Shaftesbury to Micklethwayte 8 Dec 1711; Trenchard Corr MS G23 f.50, Rawlins to Simpson(?) 6 July 1709, and see also Collins' own letter at ff. 45-6; f.38, Trenchard to Simpson(?) 19 Nov 1723; B Lib Add MS 4282 f.116, Collins to Desmaizeaux 4 May 1712, f.244, chronology of Collins' life.

[60] B Lib Add MS 4282 ff. 139, 141, Collins to Desmaizeaux 6 Dec 1717, 25 Feb 1717-8; Hearne, Remarks and Collections XI 244.

[61] The main source on Desmaizeaux is his correspondence in B Lib Add MSS 4281-9. He has been studied in two articles by J.H. Broome, 'Pierre Desmaizeaux, Journaliste', Revue de Littérature Comparée 29, 1955, pp. 184-204, and 'Une Collaboration: Anthony Collins et Desmaizeaux', ibid. 30, 1956, pp. 161-179

on a French translation of the Inquiry Concerning Virtue. Many years later he edited Toland's posthumous works, and his personal knowledge of the man enabled him to produce what remains the only substantial biography[62].

At this stage, evidence has been assembled pointing to the existence of a group of eight or ten men, most of them writers and almost all of them politically aware, over a period of many years from the mid-1690s. To call this clique 'the Commonwealthsmen' requires some justification, since, although other names were current, there is nothing to suggest that it was ever referred to in this way. But individual members of it were often abused as Commonwealthsmen, and some of them were almost unique at the time in refusing to disown the term. By now, an established historiographical convention sanctions the application of the name to Molesworth, Toland, Trenchard, and perhaps others, and in extending its use to cover the whole group the historian can give some precision to a word which certainly needs it.

Later chapters will appraise the ideas of the Commonwealthsmen, in order to show how distinctive or otherwise they were. But several questions remain about the relationships between the members of the group. What were its origins ? Was it organized in any way ? Did it constitute a party ? Attention has already been drawn to the way in which a small circle of friends and admirers of Locke seems to provide a nucleus, but this by no means excludes other explanations. Two characteristics of the early lives of the Commonwealthsmen stand out. One is the high proportion of them who had received some training at either the Inner or Middle Temples. Simpson and Methuen were both members of the Inner Temple, where Methuen's rooms were

[62]Bodleian Library MS Locke c7 f.148, Coste to Locke 23 June 1699; P.R.O. 30/24/27/17, four letters from Desmaizeaux to Shaftesbury; Toland, Collection, I iv-xcii. Desmaizeaux's statement (iv) that he had not been a close friend of Toland's should probably be dismissed as an attempt to assure the reader of the author's impartiality. Molesworth, however, did not know Desmaizeaux well: B Lib Add MS 4465 f.19, Molesworth to Toland 1 Aug 1719.

occupied by his friends during his frequent absences. Trenchard, too, attended the Inner Temple, being called to the Bar there in 1689[63]. The Commonwealthsmen were also well represented at the Middle Temple: Freke, Rawlins, and Moyle were all admitted there, as well as such occasional associates as Molyneux, Edmund Waller (grandson of the poet), Charlwood Lawton, Arthur Newcomen (a friend of Molesworth's), and Robert Harley. Another Middle Temple acquaintance was Walter Clavell from Dorset, admitted in 1697 and a friend of Toland, Tindal, and Stephens. Toland himself stayed at the Middle Temple in 1696[64]. Although the men named differed widely in age, with twenty-five years elapsing between Waller's admission and Clavell's, the possibility that acquaintances formed at either of these two centres of legal education may have had a bearing on the group of Commonwealthsmen should not be ruled out.

The second characteristic is that the overwhelming majority of the Commonwealthsmen came from the west of England. Methuen and Trenchard were from Wiltshire, Shaftesbury and Freke from Dorset, Tindal from Devon, Moyle from Cornwall, Rawlins from Herefordshire, Cary from Bristol, and Simpson and Stephens from Worcestershire. Locke, it may be recalled, was a Somerset man. It is difficult to know how much significance to attach to this. But it may be tentatively suggested that the interest of many westerners in the prosperity of the woollen industry might have brought some of these men together. This was a particularly sensitive issue in the late 1690s, since it pitted English manufacturing interests directly against Irish, and it links

[63] Methuen Corr MS E82, Methuen to Simpson 6 Dec 1701; The Commons 1715-54, ed R.Sedgwick, 2 vols 1970, II 481.

[64] Register of Admissions to the...Middle Temple, ed H.A.C.Sturgess, 3 vols 1949, I 179 (Freke, 1676), 195 (Rawlins, 1677, though the identification is uncertain), 228 (Moyle, 1691), 192 (Molyneux, 1675), 176 (Waller, 1668), 194 (Lawton, 1676), 218 (Newcomen, 1686), 206 (Harley, 1692), 241 (Clavell, 1697, and cf. Hearne, Remarks and Collections III 202); Toland, A Discourse Upon Coins, 1696, p. vi.

Cary, who in 1695 was one of the first to call for restriction of Irish woollen manufactures, with Methuen, himself a member of a great Wiltshire clothing family, who as Chancellor had to try and sell this policy to the Irish Parliament in 1698-9[65].

Locke's College, it may be noted, was almost entirely a western affair, for Clarke, Sir Walter Yonge, and Somers (often regarded as a member), came, like Locke and Freke, from this area. In 1697 Clarke and Yonge's concern for the southwestern woollen manufacture led them to vote against the government, contrary to their usual practice, on a commercial question[66]. Clearly the College, in addition to its other functions, could act as a regional pressure group, and the conjunction of the names of Freke, Clarke, Methuen, and Cary in Toland's intercepted letters of 1697 should not, therefore, be surprising[67]. Two later documents raise the possibility that Methuen, Toland, and Tindal may themselves have been members of the College. Late in 1701, about to return from Ireland, Methuen wrote to Simpson: 'My humble service to Mr Toland and Dr Tindal. I hope the same college of politicians will be every night with us'. The use of the word 'college might be regarded as coincidental if it were not for a letter of September 1704 between the same two correspondents, in which Methuen is told that 'Mr Freke drinks your health at the College...Mr Clarke is melancholy, and as good as distracted'[68]. These words were written a few weeks before Locke's death, but he had long lost interest in

[65] Cary, An Essay on the State of England, in Relation to its Trade, Bristol 1695, pp. 91-2; H.F.Kearney, 'The Political Background to English Mercantilism, 1695-1700', Ec.H.R. 2nd series 11, 1958-9, pp. 484-96.

[66] H.Horwitz, Parliament, Policy, and Politics in the Reign of William III, Manchester 1977, p. 321.

[67] Lambeth Palace Library MS 933 f.74, Simpson to Toland 20 April 1697, ? to Toland 1 June 1697.

[68] Methuen Corr MS E82, Methuen to Simpson 6 Dec 1701, C163, Simpson to Methuen 19 Sept 1704.

public affairs. The College has usually been regarded as an instrument for the expression of Locke's views on government policy, but it was also acknowledged to have a social function[69], and this may have become more prominent as Locke withdrew into retirement.

My suggestion, then, is that the College provided some kind of organizational basis for the emerging group of Commonwealthsmen. Its membership probably overlapped with that of the equally famous Grecian Club, which has always been recognised as the social focus of many of the men discussed here. The Grecian Coffee House in Devereux Court had for many years been frequented by the republican Henry Neville, but he had died in 1694 and Moyle is the only Commonwealthsman known to have been influenced by him. Moyle regularly appeared at the Grecian, where, as his friend and biographer Anthony Hammond complained, he quickly acquired anticlerical sentiments[70]. 'Mr Gospelscorn', Davenant's caricature of Toland, was to be found at the Grecian, and Rawlins and Tindal were both well-known there. Both Toland and Moyle could on occasion speak rather snidely about the politicians at the Grecian, but it is clear that the place had a special significance in the history of the Commonwealthsmen[71].

One source goes further and speaks of a Grecian Club with four recognised chiefs, three of whom are named as Trenchard, Gordon, and Simpson[72]. This report must refer to the years round 1720 in which

[69] The Correspondence of John Locke and Edward Clarke, ed B.Rand, 1927, Introduction, p. 41.

[70] Two English Republican Tracts, ed Robbins, p. 25; Moyle, Published Works, pp. 5, 21.

[71] Davenant, Tom Double Return'd out of the Country, p. 71; Northants R.O. Shrewsbury Papers 48 f.52, Vernon to Shrewsbury 30 March 1700; Religious...Conduct of...Tindal, p. 8; P.R.O. 30/24/20/105, Toland to Shaftesbury 22 Oct 1705; W.Coxe, Memoirs of Sir Robert Walpole, 3 vols 1798, II 62, Moyle to Horatio Walpole 20 April 1716. Freke and Clarke are connected with the Grecian by the author of the libellous Taunton-Dean Letter, from E.C. to J.F. at the Grecian Coffee-House, 1701, and its sequel.

[72] Joseph Spence, Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men, ed J.M.Osborn, 2 vols, Oxford 1966, I 286-7.

Trenchard and Gordon collaborated, but there are many other allusions to clubs and cabals involving the Commonwealthsmen. Most of these come from avowed enemies: for instance Peter Browne, attacking Christianity Not Mysterious, asserted that the work 'which goes under his (Toland's) name was the joint endeavours of a secret club, who set themselves with a great deal of industry to destroy all of revealed religion'. Luttrell, who was not noticeably biassed, recorded rumours that 'a club of gentlemen', among whom he named only the MP Edmund Waller, was responsible for Trenchard and Moyle's An Argument. Defoe, a bitter but often poorly informed opponent of the Commonwealthsmen, produced a fantastic amplification of the conspiracy theory in 1698, claiming that his adversaries in the army controversy were 'a whole club of mistaken politicians' who, all Socinians, 'bid defiance to the Son of God on one hand, and to the King and Government on the other'. The accusations can become monotonous: as late as 1735 it was claimed that Tindal's Rights was the work of 'an abandoned club of deists or atheists', whose members lived in Oxford, London, and Holland[73].

These charges appear at their most lurid in the various accounts of the Calves Head Club, which usually involve the Commonwealthsmen. In 1700 it was reported that Stephens was chaplain to the Club. 'This Calves Head Club is some noblemen and gentlemen who meet at a tavern the 30th of January and instead of fasting have a great feast and among other things as a symbol of the day (of Charles I's execution) have a calf's head served up in a dish like St John Baptists head in a charger'. Ned Ward devoted a pamphlet to this scandal, to which Toland was linked because he had denied Charles' authorship of Ikon Basilike. Matthew Tindal too was accused of being a participant by

[73]Peter Browne, A Letter in Answer to a Book, entitled Christianity Not Mysterious, 1703 (first published 1697), p. 143; Luttrell IV 313; Defoe, A Brief Reply to the History of Standing Armies in England, 1698, p. 24; Religious...Conduct of...Tindal, p. 31.

his enemies in Oxford[74].

All these accounts, however, are unsatisfactory because sources of information are never mentioned. If, as Browne claimed, a 'secret club' was at work, how did its transactions become so widely known ? There is, it seems, no real evidence that the political activities of the Commonwealthsmen were carried on any more secretly than those of other cliques[75]. And although, after the proofs of personal connections amongst them which have been assembled here, it is natural to assume that a certain amount of consultation took place on books and pamphlets to be issued, this is not equivalent to the concerted campaign of literary subversion described by Defoe. As for the Calves Head Club, it was probably no more than a fiction of High Church propagandists, anxious to blur the distinctions between Whiggery and republicanism, Dissent and atheism[76]. Too many historians have been led astray by these techniques.

Defoe's diatribe does, however, raise one interesting point. His assumption that Socinianism - which, loosely used, could mean any kind of religious radicalism - implied disaffection to the government and constitution was shared by many. At first glance, the central position of the Church of England within the polity seems to justify this view. Toland could accurately be described as a Socinian, for the central proposition of Christianity Not Mysterious, that no unintelligible

74 H.M.C. 46 Johnstone p. 116, ? to Annandale 30 Jan 1700; Ward, The Secret History of the Calves-Head Clubb, 1703, p. 6; Abel Evans, The Apparition, 1710, p. 38. For another contemporary account of the Calves Head Club, see Charles Leslie, Cassandra (But I Hope Not). No I, 1704, pp. 48-51. As far as I know, the only attempt by a Commonwealthsman to justify the execution of Charles I was made by Stephens, and even he admitted that it was, strictly, an illegal act: An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, with other Tracts of the same Author, 1709, pp. 163-9, 172-8.

75 Toland's interest in Rosicrucianism and proto-masonry, while hardly political, may have helped to create an air of mystique about his career.

76 J.P.Kenyon, Revolution Principles, Cambridge 1977, p. 77, has doubted the existence of the Calves Head Club. The elaborate details of its ceremonial given by Ward and others recall the groundless medieval fantasies explored by Norman Cohn in Europe's Inner Demons, 1975.

doctrine could be imposed on men by God, denied the basis for belief in the Trinity. Tindal and Collins were both deists, while Moyle may have been an atheist for some time, and although the religious opinions of other Commonwealthsmen are more obscure, it can at least be said that they had no objections to associating with such heterodox characters[77].

But in practice, as the publication of Bolingbroke's posthumous works was to prove sensationally many years later, doctrinal deviation, even infidelity, was in no way incompatible with membership of the national church. For the Commonwealthsmen, loyalty to the English constitution implied loyalty to the established church: as Toland put it, the Church of England 'is infinitely the most accommodated to our civil government'[78]. Abuses may have been rife in both, but the original principles were sound. This question will be discussed with the attention it deserves in a later chapter; here it is sufficient to point out that the Commonwealthsmen's religious heterodoxy never obscured the political arguments which seemed to them to favour a national church.

This chapter has tended to minimise the radicalism of the Commonwealthsmen, and in doing so has relied more on their own writings than on those of their enemies. Once the ambiguities involved in the word 'Commonwealthsman' have been understood, these men can be removed from a historical continuum to which they do not belong, the 'revolutionary tradition' postulated by Professor Robbins[79]. They were

[77] On Moyle's atheism, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Lawrence, Kansas, MS P515:1, Prideaux to Lloyd 20 March 1694-5. Similar accusations were made against Tindal: H.M.C. Appendix to 7th Report, 244a. The most authoritative study of Shaftesbury's thought indicates that he was a deist: A.O.Aldridge, 'Shaftesbury and the Deist Manifesto', Transactions of the American Philosophical Society New Series 41, 1951, especially Section 1 (but see p. 370 for a qualification).

[78] Toland, Anglia Libera, 1701, p. 87.

[79] Robbins, Commonwealthman, p. 4.

not as distinctive as this view implies. Their ideas, as I hope to show, are readily intelligible within the context of the mainstream of Augustan politics. They found patrons and allies among leading statesmen; these relationships, which will be examined at length in subsequent chapters, are among the Commonwealthsmen's main claims on the attention of posterity. For the very reason that they fitted so well into the political culture of their time, they cannot be defined in terms of their ideas alone: they were not exceptional enough. Only the personal contacts described here can establish the identity of the group to be studied. But although the College and the Grecian may have provided them with some form of organization it is unsafe to speak of the Commonwealthsmen as a party, since the evidence for collaboration on the requisite scale comes almost entirely from their enemies. They are best regarded in far less formal terms, and it is as well to bear in mind that they never used the word Commonwealthsmen, as we shall do for the sake of convenience, to refer to any recognisable group of people.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE ANCIENT AND BALANCED CONSTITUTION

Literary critics have argued for generations about the relevance of an author's life to his works. The problem occurs in the study of political tracts just as it does with novels or poems. In this analysis I argue that the published works of the Commonwealthsmen and their political careers are mutually illuminating; nonetheless, the interests of clarity dictate that the two should be expounded separately. The next three chapters, therefore, examine their basic ideas on the distribution of power in society and the rights of the individual: the evidence is taken largely from their more substantial published works. Once these ideas are established, subsequent chapters - in which more extensive use is made of unpublished material and printed ephemera - will show how they were affected by the vicissitudes of practical politics.

The basic political ideas of the Commonwealthsmen, which are repeated, with modifications, throughout their careers, fall logically into two parts: first, those concerned with fundamental rights and the way in which an ideal constitution could always secure them; secondly, those concerned with constitutional abuses of their own time and the possibilities of rectifying them. These are the subjects of the next two chapters.

If a dominant theme is to be sought in the writings of the Commonwealthsmen, it is undoubtedly the contest between liberty and tyranny. They regarded political liberty as man's highest good in society. In the absence of freedom other benefits of social life were tenuous at best: Shaftesbury thought that liberty was the prerequisite for virtue, good manners, and aesthetic taste[1]. Economic prosperity too could be ascribed to liberty; conversely, arbitrary government

[1]Shaftesbury, Characteristics, ed J.M.Robertson, 2 vols 1900, I 9, 46, 51, 141-5, Second Characters, or the Language of Forms, ed B. Rand, Cambridge 1914, p. 20; cf. Cato's Letters no, 68, 3 March 1721-2 (1733 ed II 331).

invariably led to loss of credit, depression, and ultimately depopulation[2]. Moyle, making a characteristic eighteenth century connection, believed that 'liberty is the chiefest good of civil society, because it is that which makes everything else we possess our own'. Toland considered that despotism and superstition, which he abhorred, flourished together. Cato's Letters asserted that 'love of liberty is an appetite...strongly implanted in the nature of all living creatures', while for Stephens liberty gave the true relish to all the pleasures of life[3].

For the Commonwealthsmen the benefits of liberty were clearly incalculable. Although they never analysed the concept with any real logical rigour, their definition of liberty was a negative one: men must be free from outside interference, submitting only to authority which has been freely accepted[4]. This essentially liberal view ensured that much of their attention was devoted to constitutional arrangements. Their assumption that ultimate values could be safeguarded by correct political institutions strongly influenced the complexion of their thought; it contrasts with theorists like Machiavelli who emphasised that power rather than law or convention provides the key to political analysis[5]. Quite understandably, the intellectuals of Augustan England, although unwilling to rely entirely on first principles, could afford to take political rationality more seriously than those who had lived through the apparently pointless Italian wars. The many controversies about

[2]Stephens, A Second Deliverance from Popery and Slavery, 1714, pp. 36-7, Toland, An Account of the Courts of Prussia and Hanover, 1705, pp. 45-9; Cato's Letters no. 73, 21 April 1722 (II 331).

[3]Moyle, Published Works, p. 50; Toland, Adeisidaemon, The Hague 1709, pp. 16-17; Cato's Letters no. 62, 20 June 1721-2 (II 249); Stephens, A Sermon Preach'd before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, 1694, p. 18.

[4]Only Shaftesbury seems to have questioned this concept of freedom; the influence of the Stoics is apparent in his belief that 'reason and virtue alone can bestow liberty' (Characteristics II 351).

[5]Cf. Felix Raab, The English Face of Machiavelli, 1965, p. 180: the 'most conspicuous feature' of the Florentine's political thought was the lack of any idea of institutions as historical forces

political obligation which characterised the decades after 1650 reflect the optimistic view that government and obedience is a relationship based on custom or right, not merely on superior power.

The Commonwealthsmen themselves contributed nothing new to the debate on obligation. Their approach to the subject was eclectic, and, although Locke's was the main influence, borrowings from other traditions are also prominent. Tindal began his Rights of the Christian Church with an exposition of man's rights in the state of nature and of the necessity for consent (including tacit consent) to government. All this is based on the Second Treatise, but Tindal's views on obligation were in fact an uneasy amalgam of Hobbes and Locke. He adopted (without acknowledgement) Hobbes' thesis that 'protection and government are the same thing' in order to dispose of Jacobite legitimism, but he openly followed Locke in expounding the sovereignty of the people and their right of resistance to intolerable tyranny. The combination presents logical difficulties, but it was cleverly contrived in order to justify the 1688 Revolution while excluding any further change [6]. Toland's idea of the purpose of political association closely resembled Locke's, but he placed no emphasis on the social contract as such. Like Shaftesbury, he believed in man's natural sociability (the 'herding principle'), and this made it unnecessary to invoke an artificial contract[7]. Cary asserted that the right of Englishmen to consent to the laws that

[6] Tindal, The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted, 1706, pp. 3-11, An Essay Concerning Obedience to the Supreme Powers, 1694, esp pp. 2, 3-5, 12-13. Hobbes' influence on Tindal can also be seen in An Essay Concerning the Laws of Nations, 1694, pp. 34-5, The Judgment of Dr Prideaux...maintain'd, 1721, pp. 11, 24-8.

[7] Toland, Anglia Libera, 1701, pp. 1-4, 'Reasons for Naturalising the Jews', ed H.Mainusch, Studia Delitzschiana Band 9, Stuttgart 1965, p. 42; Shaftesbury, Characteristics, I 75, II 77; Rand, Shaftesbury, pp. 49, 188.

bound them was based on 'an original contract, beyond any books &c., and as old as the Common Law of England': here contract theory is subsumed in the ancient constitution[8]. The Commonwealthsmen unanimously insisted that consent was necessary to legitimise government, regarding the rival theories of divine right and patriarchal power with contempt[9], but this respect for the principle of consent was based as much on Common Law traditions as on Lockeian theory.

Clearly the Commonwealthsmen were not troubled unduly by the democratic implications of their beliefs. Cary and Tindal resorted to the sophistry of tacit consent[10], others ignored the problem. Universal suffrage was ruled out by the social assumptions which they shared with all educated men; the criterion for political participation was not occupation but ownership of the country.

Two arguments were offered in support of this contention. The first was that land provided a stake in the country which made its owners more faithful to the common interest. This had been asserted by Ireton at Putney; Toland restated the case when flattering a great magnate that landed men had a 'natural right to share in the government of any place where they have such an interest to secure, and the people such a pledge of their fidelity'. Cato's Letters contended that 'they who were entrusted with the interest of their country should have some interest of their own in it'; if, as 'Cato'

8 Cary, A Vindication of the Parliament of England, 1698, p. 31. Trenchard also identified the original contract with 'the fundamental laws and statutes of this realm', Cato's Letters no. 132, 8 June 1723 (IV 233).

9 See, e.g., Stephens, Bess o'Bedlam's Love to her Brother Tom, 1709 (this pamphlet is attributed to Stephens in Bibliotheca Antonii Collins, Arm., 1731, Part II, p. 186); Tindal, Essay Concerning Obedience, pp. 3-5; Stephens, A Sermon Preach'd before the...Lord Mayor.., 1694, pp. 5-6; and cf. the contempt for legitimism expressed by Shaftesbury in Characteristics I 139: 'by experience we find that those very princes from whose conduct the world abroad as well as we at home have reaped the greatest advantages were such as had the most controverted titles'.

10 Cary, Vindication, p. 95; Tindal, Rights, pp. 7-8.

claimed, preservation of property was 'the principal business of government', it was clearly expedient to entrust the task to those who held the most enduring kind of property, the landowners[11].

The second argument was that this state of affairs, whether right or not, was inevitable. The Commonwealthsmen accepted Harrington's principle that political power was determined by the ownership of property; Toland and Shaftesbury stated this explicitly, while the idea underlies much of what other members of the group wrote: for instance, Molesworth's view that the yeomanry were the backbone of England[12]. Stable government could only be achieved if political power were in the hands of the property owners, and the Commonwealthsmen had not fully accepted the possibility that such property need not take the form of land.

If these arguments excluded manhood suffrage, democracy in its other contemporary sense - the complete control of the executive by an elected assembly - found very little support from these writers. Halifax had thought this type of constitution unsuitable for large countries like England, but had hinted that in abstract terms it was the most desirable form of government[13]. On the whole, the Commonwealthsmen were unwilling to make even this concession. Democracy, in the sense of a House of Commons with unlimited powers, was in Molesworth's opinion hardly preferable to an aristocracy, and his friend Shaftesbury warned against the encroachments of the Lower House. Toland believed that the few English republicans had been converted to monarchy as a result of the equitable rule of William III; democracy, he believed, was 'the worst form of a Commonwealth',

11 Toland, Anglia Libera, Epistle Dedicatory; Cato's Letters nos. 115, 32, 9 Feb 1722-3 and 10 June 1721 (IV 85 and I 248).
12 Shaftesbury, Characteristics, II 186; Toland, ed, Oceana, 1737 ed, Preface, p. xviii; Molesworth, An Account of Denmark, 1694, p. 86.
13 Halifax, Complete Works, ed J.P.Kenyon, Harmondsworth 1969, p. 158; cf. Rand, Shaftesbury, p. 45.

even if 'a thousand times better than any sort of tyranny'[14]. Davenant conceded that democracies enjoyed certain advantages in wartime, but thought them inherently unstable because of the power of demagogues, and Tindal concurred with this view. Trenchard feared that extension of the powers of the Commons, particularly their jurisdiction over private property, would make the constitution 'at last centre in a democracy'[15].

Obviously the Commonwealthsmen, often regarded as radicals[16], had little sympathy either for democracy or for republicanism. If tyranny was the greatest evil, since it involved an absolute denial of freedom, liberty could never be safe under the rule of the masses either. The well-regulated state had to keep to a median between these opposite perils. A strong tradition of political thought held that the abuses of the basic forms of government - oligarchy as well as democracy and absolute monarchy - could be avoided by a judicious mixture of the three which created an institutional balance between the interest groups concerned. The origins of the idea can be found in Aristotle and Polybius, and later it was

[14] Toland, Vindicius Liberius, 1702, p. 128, The Memorial of the State of England, 1705, p. 35; Molesworth, A Letter from a Member of the House of Commons to a Gentleman without Doors, 1719, p. 32; P.R.O. 30/24/20/13, Shaftesbury to Furly 5 Aug 1700; cf. Stephens, A Sermon Preach'd before the...Lord Mayor, 1694, p. 16.

[15] Davenant, A Discourse Upon Grants and Resumptions, 1700, pp. 14-15, B Lib Harleian MS 1223, 'An Essay Upon Publick Virtue' (1696), pp. 43-5 (original pagination); Tindal, Judgment of Prideaux, pp. 86-7, 93; Trenchard, Essays on Important Subjects, 1755, pp. 44-5. This dislike of the supremacy of the Commons involved some of the Commonwealthsmen in inconsistency. It was acknowledged that power followed the balance of property; Toland, Stephens, and perhaps Molesworth at various times also accepted Harrington's view that since Henry VII's time most of the land in the kingdom had been transferred from the Crown and nobility to the Commons. This, wrote Stephens, created a 'popular foundation', which 'does naturally support none but Commonwealth forms of government'. Yet Stephens did not suggest the establishment of a republic; he, like Toland, continued to favour a mixed monarchy, but neither explained how this could be reconciled with Harrington's views. See Stephens, A Letter to His Most Excellent Majesty King William III..., 2nd ed 1699, pp. 3-5; Toland, Anglia Libera, p. 19; Molesworth, A Letter from a Member of the Commons, pp. 29, 31.

[16] Enemies frequently accused the Commonwealthsmen of being republicans: see e.g. Richard Kingston in Somers Tracts XI 155. For a modern restatement of this view, see J.R.Pole, Political Representation in England and the Origins of the American Republic, 1966, p. 385.

popularised in the Renaissance through the widespread respect enjoyed by the Venetian constitution. It has been remarked that the seventeenth century saw the English Constitution as ancient; the eighteenth, as ancient and balanced[17]. Writers as diverse as Coke and Harrington regarded the English polity as the result entirely of custom, not of the operation of political wisdom. It was left to authors of the end of the century (among whom the Commonwealthsmen were prominent) to identify the King, Lords, and Commons of the Ancient Constitution with the mixture of one, few, and many recommended by the classical tradition; in this way they could portray the 'Gothic balance' as the result of rational planning. Custom and natural rights were combined in the Ancient Constitution, which, because it was so well calculated to preserve liberty, was also the ideal constitution.

The ancient and balanced constitution commanded virtually general acceptance during the eighteenth century: it was apparently unquestioned until the publication of Common Sense, and perhaps it was not finally discredited in this country until the 1911 Parliament Act. The clockwork universe expounded by Newton and celebrated by Pope may well have lent plausibility to the mechanistic assumptions of the idea of balanced government: at all events the Commonwealthsmen were not exceptional in their respect for the concept[18].

When applied to England the ideal of the mixed constitution presented many complications, which proved sufficient to distort Montesquieu's analysis[19]. Was the balance to be conceived as one

17 J.G.A.Pocock, Politics, Language, and Time, 1971, p. 133.

18 The classic ancient exposition of this theme is Polybius, Histories Book VI, 3-10, and its English applications are fully discussed in Corinne Comstock Western, English Constitutional Theory and the House of Lords 1556-1832, 1965. See also the stimulating, if occasionally opaque, comments on mixed government in J.G.A.Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment, Princeton 1975, which deals with Davenant and Trenchard.

19 See Robert Shackleton, 'Montesquieu, Bolingbroke, and the Separation of Powers', French Studies 3, 1949, pp. 37-8; Betty Kemp, King and Commons 1660-1832, 1957, pp. 82-3.

between social orders (monarch, nobles, and people) or in terms of constitutional functions (legislative, executive, and judiciary) ? Were its components mutually independent or interdependent ? Is the scheme compatible with sovereignty ?

On the whole, the Commonwealthsmen provided coherent answers to these questions. They normally conceived of the balance as one between estates or orders. Toland wrote that the three estates formed 'a mutual check or balance on one another's oversights or encroachments', while Molesworth, in expounding his political creed, emphasised the necessity of 'keeping up to the strictness of the true old Gothic constitution, under the three estates of King (or Queen), Lords, and Commons'[20]. The nobility, by virtue of their intermediate position, were essential to the maintenance of the balance. 'In all ages', thought Moyle, 'the nobility has been the guard of sovereign power in limited monarchies, and always opposed any innovations in favour of popular government'. He made the same point when writing with Trenchard against standing armies, which were often regarded as incompatible with a genuine aristocracy: 'the wisdom of our ancestors hath instituted a middle state, viz. of nobility, whose interest it is to trim this boat of our Commonwealth, and to screen the people against the insults of the prince and the prince against the popularity of the Commons'. The same argument was to be restated in Cato's Letters twenty-five years later[21].

The idea of checks and balances among the various functions of government, as enshrined in the American Constitution, was foreign to the Commonwealthsmen. The equilibrium of monarch, nobility, and

20 Toland, The Art of Governing by Partys, 1701, p. 31; Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, 1721 ed, p. vii.

21 Two English Republican Tracts, ed C.Robbins, Cambridge 1969, p. 208; Trenchard and Moyle, An Argument, shewing that a Standing Army..., 1697, p. 3; Cato's Letters no. 70, 17 March 1721-2 (III 14). Cf. Toland's comment that nobles are 'the very soul of the state', Anglia Libera, p. 58.

people was institutionalised in Parliament, and the legislature composed of these three estates was unquestionably supreme. Locke's Second Treatise had shown the way, and all those whose whiggery retained any ideological content concurred[22]. Only rarely did a Commonwealthsman go against this principle. Trenchard, who wrote of the desirability of keeping legislature and executive separate so that they might provide 'a check upon one another'[23], seems to have been the only dissident; his own leading part in the parliamentary commission on Irish forfeitures indicates that in practice he was prepared to ignore his precept.

Toland stated categorically that the legislative power is superior to the executive, while Stephens implied the same conclusion when listing the various ways in which Parliament kept ultimate control over the activities of the administration[24]. This control was necessary because the rule of the Stuarts had shown that, in England, the greatest threat to liberty lay in the tendency of the monarch to transgress the legal limits of the executive power; the alternative to supervision by Parliament was arbitrary government or an appeal to arms, as took place in 1688. The Commonwealthsmen were aware of the difficulties in a scheme in which the monarch was head of the executive as well as an integral part of the body responsible for supervising the executive. But they firmly believed that no preferable options existed.

Opinions varied as to the exact nature of the relationship between

22 cf. Pole, Political Representation, pp. 18-19.

23 Trenchard, A Short History of Standing Armies in England, 1698, p. vii. Davenant wrote in his 'Memorial Concerning the Coyn of England' that 'in a mixed government...the legislative and executive authority are in different hands, and not near and ready always to help one another upon all disputes that shall arise, without which no act of great power can be performed'. There is, however, no suggestion here that a structure of checks and balances exists: Two Manuscripts by Charles Davenant, ed A.P.Usher, Baltimore 1942

24 Toland, Anglia Libera, p. 3; Stephens, Bess o'Bedlam's Love..., pp. 10-11.

Parliament and administration. Davenant, writing to defend the government in 1704, wrote that Parliament should not hamper the executive by making new laws in reaction to every turn of affairs; its role should be limited to intervention in cases of gross mismanagement. In the 1690s, however, he had been less inclined to trust ministers, and had argued that a parliamentary Council of Trade, with executive functions, was no breach of the constitution[25]. But even if such claims were of dubious validity, Parliament was consolidating its supervisory role during these years. Shaftesbury welcomed the acceptance by William III of Parliament's competence to deal with foreign affairs, and Davenant devoted a substantial essay to the proposition that the legislative assembly must always be consulted on matters involving war, peace, and alliances[26]. The assertion that Parliament should nominate, or at least enjoy a veto over, ministers was a further step towards legislative supremacy, and although the Commonwealthsmen did not always insist on this claim Toland, Trenchard, and Stephens all declared that under certain circumstances it was reasonable[27]. But the clearest demonstration that Parliament was seen as the paramount constitutional body was the statement that the monarch's authority was derived from it. Here again, Toland provided the most complete statement: he believed that

25 Davenant, Essays Upon Peace at Home and War Abroad, 1704, pp. 339, 346-7, Discourses on the Public Revenues, 1698, pp. 129-30. See also R.M.Lees, 'Parliament and the Proposal for a Council of Trade 1695-6', E.H.R. 54, 1939, pp. 42-4.

26 Shaftesbury (assisted by Toland), Paradoxes of State, 1702, p. 2; Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. 22; Davenant, Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power..., 1701, pp. 132, 136-222. Cf. Mark A.Thompson, 'Parliament and Foreign Policy 1689-1714', History 38, 1953, pp. 234-43.

27 Toland, Art of Governing, p. 111 (see also Clayton Roberts, The Growth of Responsible Government in Stuart England, Cambridge 1966, p. 321, and Archibald S.Foord, His Majesty's Opposition 1714-1830, Oxford 1964, pp. 40-1); Trenchard, Collection II 12-16; Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, with other Tracts of the same Author, 1709, pp. 110-4.

the late medieval and Tudor kings reigned by a parliamentary title. 'Henry the eighth was only a trustee appointed by the Parliament' and the Exclusion Bill had been perfectly just. Other Commonwealthsmen implied this conclusion by treating the executive in a mixed government as a trust from the people, to be abrogated if grossly abused[28]. All these manifestations of the power of Parliament over the executive indicate that the Commonwealthsmen saw the supreme power of the legislature as the basic principle in the English constitution.

Guarantees for frequent meetings of Parliament were also thought to be enshrined in the Ancient Constitution; if this were not so, the theoretical supremacy of the legislature would have meant little. Molesworth's account of the Danish polity mentioned regular assemblies of the Estates as an integral part of the Gothic constitution which had once been common to all Europe. Trenchard went further, considering that frequent rotation of the people's representatives was part of the Ancient Constitution: Davenant lamented the failure to establish a regular succession of new Parliaments at the Revolution, fearing that the 1694 Triennial Act might have come too late[29]. Thomas Gordon condemned the Septennial Act (1716) as a dilution of sound constitutional principle, and, although Moyle and Toland were prepared to sanction it at the time, at the end of his life Toland reverted to his 'Commonwealth' creed. Fatally ill in 1722, he reissued a pamphlet he had originally written in 1698, with a new preface intended to show that 'on free and frequent Parliaments depends the whole wealth and power, all the

28 Toland, Anglia Libera, pp. 117-26, 128 (quotation at p. 123), and cf. Reasons for Addressing His Majesty..., 1702, p. 15; Tindal, Essay Concerning Obedience, pp. 9-10; Cato's Letters no. 24, 8 April 1721 (I 179, 181).

29 Molesworth, Account of Denmark, p. 43, and cf. Preface to Franco-Gallia, pp. xvi-xvii; Cato's Letters no. 60, 6 Jan 1721-2 (II 233-5); Davenant, 'Essay Upon Public Virtue' (1696), B Lib Harleian MS 1223, pp. 34-5, 38 (original pagination).

liberty and property of the British world'[30].

Frequent meetings were not, of course, the only desiderata if Parliament's effectiveness were to be ensured. Lack of enthusiasm on the part of MPs threatened the system and led Davenant and 'Cato' to suggest rules to enforce regular attendance[31]. Other problems arising from the special circumstances of Stuart rule will be discussed in the next chapter.

The relations between the three Estates represented in Parliament furnished material for controversy. It was shown earlier that Trenchard, Molesworth, and Shaftesbury were all unhappy at the prospect of the Commons gaining wider powers, since this could make the regime in effect republican. As early as 1691 Charlwood Lawton, an associate of Toland's who, though a Jacobite, shared many of the ideas of the Commonwealthsmen, was complaining that the political power of the nobles had been too far depressed[32]. In this context the reactions of the Commonwealthsmen to the Peerage Bill of 1719 are of interest; the bill is usually seen as a cynical attempt to preserve ministerial majorities in the Lords[33], but it should be noted that there was some justification for it on 'Commonwealth' principles. By severely limiting new creations of peers by the crown, the bill was designed to secure the independence of the House of Lords, and it was therefore no aberration for Commonwealthsmen to sympathise with it.

30 Gordon, 'A Discourse of Standing Armies' (1722), in Trenchard, Collection I 348; Toland, The Danger of Mercenary Parliaments, 1722 ed, p. v, and cf. Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, pp. xviii, xx, for a rebuttal of the argument that frequent Parliaments cause tumults.

31 Davenant, Probable Methods, pp. 266-8; Cato's Letters no. 99, 20 Oct 1722 (III 286-9).

32 Lawton, 'The Jacobite Principles Vindicated', in Somers Tracts X 523-41, at p. 526. On Lawton, see Appendix I.

33 As by E.R.Turner, 'The Peerage Bill of 1719', E.H.R. 28, 1913, p. 243, and J.P.Kenyon, Revolution Principles: The Politics of Party 1689-1720, Cambridge 1977, pp. 191-4. Weston, English Constitutional Theory, pp. 167-74, puts the Peerage Bill into its constitutional context.

Molesworth was probably author of The Patrician, a four-part periodical which argued for the bill in hopeless opposition to Steele's Plebeian. In another pamphlet, he asserted that the measure would guarantee a balance between aristocracy and democracy and protect the Lords from the illegitimate influence of the Crown[34]. In 1717 Toland had argued for a law which would make a repetition of Oxford's creation of twelve peers in a day impossible; since this can only be interpreted to mean a Peerage Bill or something like it, his retrospective denial that he approved of that measure seems inexplicable. Tindal certainly thought the bill a salutary one, and one of Moyle's correspondents, citing Henry Neville, considered some such regulation of the Lords necessary[35]. It is true that Trenchard, a bitter opponent of the Stanhope/Sunderland ministry, denounced the bill on the Walpolian grounds that some degree of mutual influence among the three Estates of the legislature was vital to the smooth working of the constitution[36]; but the debate among the Commonwealthsmen makes it clear that some at least of them saw the independence of the Estates of the realm, the ostensible rationale of the Peerage Bill, as essential if Parliament were to perform its supervisory role effectively.

If Parliament was supreme in the constitution, its plenitude of power still posed problems for the theorists of the period succeeding the Revolution. The vast prestige still enjoyed by the

[34]Molesworth, A Letter from a Member..., pp. 5, 32. This pamphlet is not impressive as political theory. The contention that the ancient foundations of the constitution are strengthened by the bill (pp. 13-14) is not reconciled with the assertion that England's polity has greatly altered from the old Gothic model (pp. 29-31).

[35]Toland, The State-Anatomy of Great Britain, 1717, p. 40, Reasons most humbly offer'd to the Honble House of Commons..., 1720, p. 21; Tindal, A Defence of our Present Happy Establishment, 1722, pp. 17-18; Moyle, Published Works, p. 26.

[36]Trenchard, Collection, I 118; see also Cato's Letters nos. 9, 84, 31 Dec 1720 & 7 July 1722 (I 43, III 154).

idea of the Ancient Constitution at the end of the seventeenth century meant that parliamentary sovereignty could not be accepted without hesitation. Toland cited Tacitus' Germania (as Kemble and Stubbs did in the 19th century) to show that English institutions did not differ substantially from those of the ancient Germanic tribes; Molesworth translated one of the basic texts of this tradition, Francois Hotman's Franco-Gallia, and he believed that the Gothic polity, once common to all the northern kingdoms, 'far excell(ed) all others that we know of in the world'. Davenant too spoke approvingly of the Gothic constitutions of Europe, all of which were based on the principle that monarch, nobility, and populace had reciprocal rights and obligations. In England 'we still continue free, and...keep the main parts of our original constitution'[37]. Did the sovereignty of Parliament extend to the alteration of this form of government in its fundamentals ? The Commonwealthsmen gave no coherent answer. Molesworth believed that frequent Parliaments were such an integral feature of the polity 'that even no Parliament can part with this right'. Toland, however, rejected this formulation of fundamental law, asserting that all laws are revocable. Moyle leaned to this latter opinion, but he was more circumspect. 'The supreme power of a nation, 'tis confessed, can be bounded or limited by no precedent law', but wanton neglect of basic regulations could only be damaging[38].

The supremacy of Parliament and its balance of Estates were at the heart of the political thought of the Commonwealthsmen.

37 Toland, The Militia Reform'd, 1698, p. 93; Molesworth, An Account of Denmark, p. 43, and cf his Preface to Franco-Gallia, pp i-iii; Davenant, Discourse Upon Grants and Resumptions, pp. 92, 97, and cf. his Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power..., p. 236. It may be noted that in 1719 Molesworth, under pressure from opponents of the Peerage Bill, claimed that England's constitution was no longer a Gothic one: see note 34 above, and cf. Steele, The Plebeian, no. 1, 1719, p. 13. Cf. Samuel Kliger, The Goths in England, Cambridge (Mass) 1952, pp. 112-209, on the 17th century penchant for tracing free parliamentary institutions back to the tribal assemblies of the Goths. This includes a short and unsatisfactory account of Molesworth.

38 Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, pp xvi-xvii; Toland, State-Anatomy, p. 10; Two English Republican Tracts, ed C.Robbins, p.54.

But the ideal frame of government had other components. The law-making body was paramount, but for the laws to be effective in preserving liberty the executive and judiciary had to be kept separate. For this reason the Commonwealthsmen applauded all measures which ensured the independence of the judges. According to Toland, one of the motives inducing Shaftesbury to desert his former associates of the Junto was their opposition to the bill which fixed the tenure and salaries of judges; Toland denounced the Stuarts for their refusal to accept this reform, and his Jacobite friend Lawton made the same criticism of William III[39]. Toland emphasised his point about judicial independence by claiming that judges should have some 'arbitrary power' to interpret law according to equity, but in general he and his associates seem to have assumed that a well-constituted Parliament would never legislate against public liberty. Toland's hint hardly amounts to an embryonic doctrine of judicial review, and the Commonwealthsmen were relatively unconcerned with many aspects of the law which had no direct constitutional bearing. One exception, however, was the Act of 1696 providing for fairer trials in cases of treason, of which they strongly approved[40].

The public revenue also demanded attention; if it was not well regulated, the governmental balance was doomed to failure. High taxation was intimately connected with national weakness and despotism, as Molesworth and Davenant showed from the examples of Denmark and Imperial Rome[41]. Liberty was threatened if the executive

39 Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. xvi; Toland, Art of Governing, Chapter 5, esp pp. 82-3, and cf. his State-Anatomy, p. 41; Lawton, 'Jacobite Principles Vindicated', Somers Tracts X 527, and cf. his 'Letter Formerly Sent to Dr Tillotson' in Somers Tracts IX 367-372, at p. 368.

40 Toland, Art of Governing, p. 81; Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, p. xxxiii; Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. xvi. See below, chapter 9, for their ideas on the social bearing of English law.

41 Molesworth, Account of Denmark, Chapter 9; Davenant, Discourse Upon Grants and Resumptions, p. 87.

was allowed the free use of too much money: the techniques of force and bribery would be available to it. The huge sums passing through government hands for the wars after 1689 made the issue an urgent one. The necessity of parliamentary control over taxation, a principle long admitted in England, went without saying: the Commonwealthsmen insisted that this control be strictly exercised. Molesworth thought that revenues should not outlast the life of the Parliament that granted them, while Trenchard and Shaftesbury believed that taxes should be appropriated to known uses[42]. To enforce these curbs, parliamentary commissions of accounts should enjoy access to the records of the spending departments of the administration[43]. No doubt the traditional English dislike of taxation underlay much of this theory; heavy fiscal impositions were as great an infringement of liberty as arbitrary imprisonment. The Commonwealthsmen particularly disliked commodity taxes, as paid by the overburdened Dutch and the slavish French[44].

Intellectual freedom was as important for these writers as physical liberty; any satisfactory government had to guarantee a free press and religious toleration. The two were of course closely related: as Tindal wrote, restraint of the press was a precondition of spiritual tyranny[45]. Locke's College, with which some of the Commonwealthsmen had been connected[46], had been instrumental in the

42 Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, p. xvii; Shaftesbury, Paradoxes of State, pp. 19-21; Trenchard, Essays on Important Subjects, p. 94, and cf. pp. 91-2: 'No magistracy can be limited without limiting their revenue and expence'.

43 Shaftesbury, Paradoxes of State, pp. 19-21; Trenchard, Collection I 231, 245; Cato's Letters no. 97, 6 Oct 1722 (III 274).

44 Davenant, Probable Methods, pp. 41-2; Cary, An Essay on the State of England, Bristol 1695, pp. 23-6. It was, however, recognised that excises were probably the fairest form of war taxation; Davenant, An Essay Upon Ways and Means, 1695, pp. 58-9; Tindal, Essay Concerning Obedience, p. 68.

45 Tindal, The Jacobitism, Perjury, and Popery of High-Church Priests, 1710 (often attributed to Toland), p. 11.

46 See above, Chapter 1.

Commons' decision not to renew the Licensing Act in 1695. Like Locke, Toland placed a high value on freedom of inquiry: 'the best books we have on any subject are such as were opposed to the prevalency of the contrary opinion'. He quoted Milton's Areopagitica in support of his view that licensing is more dangerous to liberty than a standing army, and that censors were 'sworn officers to destroy learning, liberty, and good sense'. Tindal wrote two pamphlets against the restraint of the press, both of them heavily indebted to Milton. He believed that wherever freedom of publishing is secured it will, 'like a faithful sentinel', preserve all other liberties. Pamphlets on current affairs provided an important means of communication between people and Parliament, and printed libels were often the only safe way of exposing the faults of the powerful[47]. Trenchard gleefully took up this defence of libel, of which, in his view, the inconveniences were far outweighed by the benefits. They provided a rein on the mighty, and 'guilty men alone fear them'[48]. Davenant, although not as sympathetic to full intellectual freedom as heterodox figures like Toland, implied that restraint of the press was a tactic of the Whig Junto to secure impunity for its crimes[49]. When the Commonwealthsmen did argue in favour of some form of press control, it was normally on the grounds

47 Toland, The Life of John Milton, 1699, pp. 62, 65-9, 70, 138; Tindal, 'A Letter to a Member of Parliament, showing that a Restraint on the Press...' (1698), reprinted in State Tracts, William III, III 614-26, Reasons Against Restraining the Press, 1704, esp. pp. 14, 10, 11-12. For other examples of Tindal's concern with press freedom, see A Defence of the Rights of the Christian Church, 1707, p. 23, A Second Defence of the Rights, 1708, p. 23, Christianity as Old as the Creation, 1730, p. 157.

48 Cato's Letters no. 100, 27 Oct 1722 (III 295, 298), and cf. no. 32, 10 June 1721 (I 252, 254), and Trenchard, A Short Vindication of the Ld Archbishop of Canterbury, 1719, p. 6 (this pamphlet, not previously attributed to Trenchard, appears to be his on the basis of Trenchard Corr MS G23 ff.15-16, Trenchard to Simpson 21 Sept (1719?)).

49 Davenant, Tom Double Return'd out of the Country, 1702, pp. 92-3.

Jacobites must not be allowed to publish seditious matter. Tindal called for proceedings against Cato's Letters for precisely this reason, while a manuscript of Toland's dating from George I's reign, arguing that all news-sheets should be printed on stamped paper, justified its proposals in the same way. Defoe, who hated the Commonwealthsmen, ascribed the zeal which this 'club of mistaken politicians' showed for liberty of publishing to the fact that they relied on the press for the accomplishment of their subversive designs. But a more balanced verdict would be that, within certain limits, their genuine concern for freedom of thought made this policy seem essential to them[50].

The same consideration underlay their total commitment to the Toleration Act of 1689. Again, it would probably be wrong to see this merely as an expression of self-interest by a group of intellectuals whose position would be difficult if the Church ever regained the power and inclination to persecute dissentients. Religious liberty was regarded as inseparably tied to other liberties: as Moyle put it, 'there is scarce any instance in history of a persecution raised by a free government'. Davenant thought dissenting Protestants had a natural right to liberty of conscience; Tindal, who believed that persecution was 'the most comprehensive of all crimes', described the Act of Toleration as 'sacred'. Shaftesbury attacked the imposition of religious belief by public authority[51]. Toland, like Milton, rejected the idea that uniformity of faith was advantageous to a nation[52]. The Commonwealthsmen insisted that religious liberty, when applied to

50 Tindal, Enquiry into the Causes of the Present Disaffection, 1723, pp. 24-8; B Lib Add MS 4295 ff.49-50; Defoe, A Brief Reply to the History of Standing Armies in England, 1698, Preface and p. 24.

51 Two English Republican Tracts, ed Robbins, p. 214; Davenant, Essays on Peace at Home and War Abroad, p. 233; Tindal, Rights, pp. 18, 143-4; Shaftesbury, Characteristics, II 220-1.

52 Toland, Socinianism Truly Stated, 1705, pp. 5-10, The Memorial of the State of England, 1705, p. 52; cf. Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, with other Tracts of the same Author, 1709, p. 248.

England, was perfectly compatible with an established church; here they were appreciably less radical than Locke, whose Epistola de Tolerantia had advocated total separation of church and state. Toland asserted that it was natural for every nation to have an official church, and that Anglicanism was particularly well suited to the English character. Trenchard and Stephens concurred with this view[53]. But the Commonwealthsmen normally rejected the contention that public office should be reserved for members of the national church. Dr Tindal disapproved of the Test Act on the 'Protestant principle...that 'tis not lawful for a state to make any distinction between its subjects on a church account'; Toland ridiculed it on the grounds that it incorporated the old sectarian claim that dominion is founded in grace, and Trenchard favoured its repeal[54].

If, as Toland said, the Church of England was compatible with the country's constitution, this was because the royal supremacy effectively curtailed clerical power. The Commonwealthsmen were thorough-going erastians; the strongest statement of their views on this topic, Tindal's sardonically titled Rights of the Christian Church Asserted (1706), claimed that in England the body of the clergy had less power than 'that of every petty corporation'[55]. This position was the result of fears that clerical claims threatened the religious and civil liberty of the laity, and it naturally involved its proponents in a great deal of controversy during the High Church revival of the early eighteenth century.

53 Locke, Epistola de Tolerantia, ed R.Klibansky and J.W.Gough, Oxford 1968, pp. 81, 85; Toland, Anglia Libera, pp. 95-7; Cato's Letters no. 81, 16 June 1722 (III 129-30); Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, with other Tracts of the same Author, p. 198.

54 Tindal, Rights, pp. 287-8, 412, and cf. his Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate...in Matters of Religion, 1697, pp. 168-9 (Tindal cites the Epistola de Tolerantia at pp. 2, 183-4); Toland, State-Anatomy, p. 32; Cato's Letters, loc. cit.

55 Tindal, Rights, Preface, p. xii.

The large claims for liberty of conscience had two exceptions. Just as Jacobite propaganda could not expect to benefit from freedom of the press, atheists and Roman Catholics could not be entrusted with liberty of conscience. Even Locke had failed to follow up Bayle's hint that the atheist was not necessarily a menace to all social life, and Tindal consequently sanctioned the punishment of those who rejected God as enemies to mankind. Davenant thought that speculative atheists were the natural allies of republicans and corrupt politicians generally. Toland, although he knew by experience that the charge of atheism usually 'imports as much as an angry bully's calling every one he meets son of a whore', believed that genuine denial of a deity could not be tolerated[56]. There was even more unanimity on the question of the Catholics. All the Commonwealthsmen agreed that, absurd as the doctrines of popery were, the only justification for its outlawry was that it set up 'a foreign jurisdiction paramount to our laws'. On these grounds Stephens called for the prosecution of Catholic priests; Tindal, who had an embarrassing youthful conversion to live down, approved of the double taxation of Catholics because of the security problem they created[57]. Toland was another quondam Catholic, having been brought up in the faith in Donegal, but his mature attitude betrayed no residual sympathy for it. He called for its extirpation as inconsistent with civil society, and attracted Defoe's criticism for his excessive

56 Locke, Epistola de Tolerantia, p. 135; Tindal, Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate, pp. 5-6; Davenant, Essays on Peace at Home and War Abroad, pp. 221-3; Toland, Vindicius Liberius, 1702, p. 42 ( and cf. his Letters to Serena, 1704, p. 116), Adeisidaemon, The Hague 1709, pp. 76-8.

57 Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, p. xi; Stephens, A Thanksgiving Sermon Preach'd...upon Occasion of His Majesty's Deliverance from...Assassination, 1696, pp. 10-11; Tindal, Enquiry into the Causes of the Present Disaffection, pp. 30-1. See Tindal's own account of his early Catholicism in A Second Defence of the Rights, pp. 79-80.

anti-popery[58]. On this issue the Commonwealthsmen, steeped in the lore of the Inquisition and the Popish Plot, were rather less liberal than many of their contemporaries[59].

The disposal of military force was a constitutional issue of great significance for the preservation of liberty. A cursory reading of the history of Europe, and that of England during the Civil Wars, made it apparent that full-time professional armies were normally fatal to the 'Gothic' polity. Molesworth's Denmark provided a paradigm of those European nations where the monarch had used the army against the Estates, but the experience of the New Model proved that a parliamentary army could also destroy the constitution. The alternative was a system of defence which dispensed with professional soldiers: a citizen militia, when supplemented by a strong navy, provided an effective force whose members could have no interest in subverting the liberties which they enjoyed. This attitude was a very old one, but the Commonwealthsmen became its leading publicists during the debate of 1698 on the disbandment of the army[60]. Trenchard and Moyle wrote well researched pamphlets on the subject which became justly famous, while Toland also made an important contribution[61]. When Molesworth claimed that the arming of freeholders was part of the Ancient Constitution and Toland asserted that classical wisdom agreed with Gothic practice on this point, they were giving a spurious historical backing to an ideal very popular in Augustan England[62].

58 Toland, Anglia Libera, p. 102, and cf. Life of John Milton, p. 113, State-Anatomy, p. 21; Defoe, An Argument Proving that the Design of Employing and Ennobling Foreigners..., 1717, p. 81.

59 Burnet I 195-6; Lawton, 'Jacobite Principles Vindicated', Somers Tracts X 535, 537-8.

60 See, e.g., Sir Thomas Smith, A Discourse of the Common Weal, ed. E.Lamond, Cambridge 1954, pp. 83-4, 94-5, and, generally, Lois G. Schwoerer, 'No Standing Armies !', Baltimore 1974, which shows that distrust of a professional soldiery was in no sense the prerogative of republican thinkers.

61 See Lois G.Schwoerer, 'The Literature of the Standing Army Controversy, 1697-1699', Huntington Library Quarterly 28, 1964-5, pp. 189-93, 197-203.

62 Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, p. xxvi; Toland, A Philippick Oration, 1707, p. 23, note 17.

Stephens too advocated a citizen militia, on the grounds that a people entrusting defence to mercenaries becomes 'mean and dastardly in their spirit'[63]. But when the passions raised by the Paper War of William's reign had subsided, the Commonwealthsmen showed that the Standing Army issue was not necessarily central to their thought. Without exception they saw the War of the Spanish Succession as a vital struggle for the preservation of English liberty, and for this reason demands for immediate disbandment seemed maliciously motivated. Under Anne and George I, therefore, Molesworth can be found stating his preference for a Whiggish army rather than no army at all, and arguing in Parliament against Tory attempts to run down the forces[64]. In 1717 it was still possible for Toland to write 'I am by principle and inclination against a standing army', but he and Tindal both thought the Jacobite threat was far more immediate and justified the retention of the forces[65]. Unfortunately, in this as in other cases the fact that most of their pamphlets were published anonymously meant that there was little pressure on these writers to explain apparent inconsistencies. Hence none of their statements about the supposed constitutional dangers of standing forces can be taken as definitive.

Nevertheless, the guiding principles of the political thought of

63 Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, with other Tracts of the same Author, 1709, pp. 120-38, quotation from p. 125 (originally written in 1701).

64 Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, p. xxvi; Nicholas Tindal, The Continuation of Mr Rapin's History of England, 9 vols (numbered 13-21), 1759, XIX 187; W. Cobbett, The Parliamentary History of England, 36 vols 1806, VII 536-7. Here, not for the last time, Molesworth can be found arguing against the application of the Account of Denmark to current politics. B Lib Add MS 4282 f.141, Collins to Desmaizeaux 25 Feb 171 7-8, indicates that Toland and Collins shared Molesworth's view in this controversy.

65 Toland, Second Part of the State-Anatomy, 1717, p. 33; State-Anatomy, pp. 59-60; Tindal, The Nation Vindicated from the Aspersions Cast on it, Part I, 1711, p. 32, Enquiry into the Causes of the Present Disaffection, pp. 18-20. Cf. Rawlins (?), A Letter to the Author of the Memorial of the State of England, 1705, pp. 11-12.

the Commonwealthsmen are not difficult to discern. In this chapter a composite picture of their ideal polity, drawn from writings published over a period of twenty-five years, has been reconstructed. The balanced constitution, the supremacy of Parliament, religious toleration, erastianism, moderate taxation, judicial independence, freedom of the press, and a distrust of professional forces are its most important aspects; all of them were, in theory, manifested in the English constitution. Clearly, guaranteed religious toleration and freedom of the press could not be found in the laws of the Saxon kings, but by referring to these rights as sacred the Commonwealthsmen showed that they regarded them as fundamental, just as was the balanced constitution itself. Exceptions were freely made to these rules, sometimes perhaps without sufficient consideration; atheists, Jacobites, and Catholics could not be allowed to abuse them. But even when these apparent failures of tolerance are taken into account, it remains clear that a concern for liberty animates the whole scheme. Even if these arrangements broke down, liberty was to be maintained through a constitutional 'fail-safe' device, the right of resistance.

The right of resistance to a tyrannical government was perhaps the most fundamental of the vaguely defined 'revolution principles' which were so commonly referred to in the eighteenth century. Tindal justified it in Lockeian terms, arguing that the nature of the original contract implied that allegiance could be withdrawn from unjust rulers. Cato's Letters strongly hinted that violent resistance was legitimate in such a situation. Molesworth agreed, using historical precedent as well as argument from natural rights when he claimed that tyrannicide - the ultimate form of resistance - had been formerly approved in Denmark as a part of the Gothic constitution[66].

66 Tindal, Second Defence of the Rights, pp. 72-6; Cato's Letters no. 33, 17 June 1721 (I 257) and 59, 30 Dec 1721 (II 218); B Lib Blenheim MS 61118 (provisional), Molesworth to Godolphin 8 March 1709-10, f.9; Molesworth, Account of Denmark, pp. 44-5, disputed in Thomas Rogers, The Common-Wealths-Man Unmasqu'd, 1694, pp. 60-1 Cf. Molesworth's recommendation of Buchanan's De Jure Regni apud Scotos; Molesworth Corr pp. 366-7, Wishart to Molesworth 7 Nov 1723.

The Revolution of 1688, delivering the nation from a government which, most people agreed, threatened established liberties, was of course the focus of all arguments on the right of resistance in this period. Although the Commonwealthsmen, like many others, thought the remedial legislation passed in 1689 inadequate, they never wavered in their belief that the coup had been necessary to save the country from popery and arbitrary power. Toland proposed that 5 November should replace 30 January as a day of national observance, while Stephens denounced those who enjoyed the benefits of the Revolution without being willing to declare that it was just[67]. It is important to bear in mind that the Commonwealthsmen seem to have regarded the events of 1688-9 as, in Macaulay's famous phrase, a 'preserving revolution'. Trenchard, for instance, asserted that the Declaration of Rights merely reaffirmed existing law when stating that standing forces without parliamentary consent were illegal. For Molesworth the whole purpose of the Revolution was conservative, 'to be as we were'[68]. As a historical interpretation, this argument is not contemptible; it also betrays some of the assumptions which this chapter has tried to make explicit. The Ancient Constitution guarantees the liberties of the English people, and deserves their loyalty. Although some changes may be made 'towards the bettering of our constitution', it is 'without doubt...already one of the best

67 Toland, Amyntor, 1699, p. 166; Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, 1696, pp. 11-13. Stephens regarded the Revolution as an assertion of their liberties by the common people: A Sermon Preach'd at Sutton in Surrey, 1707, p. 7.

68 Trenchard, A Short History of Standing Armies in England, p. 20; Molesworth, Account of Denmark, Preface. Among the Commonwealthsmen only Shaftesbury cast any doubt on the theory of the Ancient Constitution: this was implied in his acceptance of successive conquests of England (Shaftesbury, Characteristics II 249-50).

in the world'[69]. In this sentiment, Molesworth spoke for all his associates.

[69] Molesworth, Account of Denmark, Preface. The only constitution which the Commonwealthsmen regarded as comparable with England's was that of Sparta, which was similarly, and less ambiguously, balanced. For admiration of Sparta, see Moyle, Published Works, p. 62; Rand, Shaftesbury, p. 83; Davenant, Probable Methods, pp. 154-5.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE COURT, THE COUNTRY, AND THE PARTY SYSTEM

Democracy was regarded with aversion by almost everyone in the early eighteenth century, and the subjects of this study, as we have seen, were no exceptions. But recent history seemed to show that the opposite evil, tyranny (in the classical sense), posed a greater threat to the idealised Ancient Constitution. This danger had two closely related aspects, which are only separated here for purposes of analysis. The monarch and the courtiers had, according to the Commonwealthsmen and many others, spent much of the seventeenth century attempting to escape that necessary control by Parliament which was the constitutional barrier against arbitrary government. The methods of force and fraud which they could bring to bear on this project were supplemented by the moral authority of the clergy, the natural allies of arbitrary monarchs. Unending vigilance was required against this formidable combination. Although, to avoid seeming subversive, the Commonwealthsmen continually professed their devotion to good monarchs and respect for good clergymen, their bad counterparts were undeniably very prominent in the writings of the group.

After 1688 the threat from the Court was less immediate than it had been under the Stuarts. The Commonwealthsmen were often as critical of William III as they dared be, but there is no evidence that they ever attributed any well-laid design against English liberties to him. Shaftesbury, sympathetic to his Dutch friends' suspicion of the House of Orange, wrote that if William's wars had been successful the constitution would have been in peril, but he recognised that the king's concern was with the freedom of Europe, not the subjugation of England. Davenant might criticise by implication William's frequent absences in Holland, and Trenchard could applaud the Commons for keeping him on a very tight budget, but in none of their works does he appear as a potential tyrant. This

holds true for works published after 1702, when there was more freedom to criticise the dead king[1]. Other Commonwealthsmen were more positive in their attitude to the hero of the 1688 Revolution: for Molesworth he was the defender of the liberties of Europe, for Stephens the man of God's right hand. Yet even the best of monarchs might have a bad successor, and for this reason the constitutional safeguards against the abuse of executive power should never be allowed to lapse. Hence, admonished Toland, 'you must not wonder at this distrust of King William...who himself was the least of all men to be suspected of harbouring any designs against that liberty he so generously came to retrieve'[2]. The Commonwealthsmen never deluded themselves that 'the late happy revolution' had eliminated all prospects of danger from the Court.

Clearly the Standing Army controversy was the issue which caused the most rancour between the Commonwealthsmen and the new regime. Yet the details of the debate show that there were assumptions common to both sides, a fact which became obvious when rearmament for a new war began at the end of the reign. Trenchard and Moyle admitted in 1697 that the war against France had been 'just and necessary'. By 1701 Toland was recalling that the disciplined and moderate way in which the army had been disbanded alone made possible its speedy reconstruction in the current crisis. The soldiers were 'the servants and friends of the nation, of which they themselves are a very considerable, honoured, and privileged part'[3]. The argument against standing armies was never really reconciled with the Commonwealthsmen's commitment to necessary foreign wars; it was derived from domestic history, and

1 P.R.O. 30/24/21/168, Shaftesbury to Furly 13 Jan 1708-9; Davenant, Probable Methods, p. 187; Trenchard, Collection I 236-7.
2 B Lib Add MS 34095 f.177, Molesworth to Colt 17/27 Nov 1690; Stephens, A Sermon Preach'd before the Honourable House of Commons, 1700, p. 16; Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. xviii.
3 Trenchard & Moyle, An Argument, shewing that a Standing Army..., 1697, p. 29; Toland, Anglia Libera, 1701, pp. 171-3.

this preoccupation was reflected in the title of Trenchard's Short History of Standing Armies in England.

It has been seen that the Commonwealthsmen regarded self-defence by the citizenry as a long-standing institution; their case against the Stuarts was, in part, that they had discouraged this salutary tradition while building up professional forces loyal to the monarch rather than the nation. Like Richard II before him, Charles I had attempted to overawe Parliament with his forces, and he had thought 3,000 footsoldiers sufficient for this purpose. James II had planned to enslave the nation with his greatly increased army, and would probably have succeeded had it not been for the anxieties caused among his officers by his catholicising policy[4]. It is unlikely that the Commonwealthsmen ever believed that William III had similar plans. But, as Trenchard and Moyle's influential Argument put it, 'we ought not to entrust any power to him which we do not think proper to be continued to his successor'. The many adulatory references made by Commonwealthsmen to William after his death indicate that it would be wrong to accept the views of Defoe and Richard Kingston that they seized on the standing army issue as an excuse to embarrass a regime they hated. It seems more likely that their historical knowledge of the dangers of a peacetime army led them to oppose in this debate a king whom in general they strongly admired[5].

4 Trenchard, A Short History of Standing Armies in England, 1698, pp. 1-19, 'The Second Part of An Argument', in State Tracts, William III II 577-84, at pp. 577, 579-80; Toland, The Militia Reform'd, 1698, pp. 12-13, 25.

5 Trenchard & Moyle, An Argument, p. 6, cited by Richard Kingston, 'Cursory Remarks upon some late Disloyal Proceedings' (1699), Somers Tracts XI 150-91, at pp. 174-5; Defoe, Some Reflections on a Pamphlet...Entitul'd, An Argument, 1697,pp. 2-27. For posthumous praise of William III see, e.g., B Lib Add MS 4465 f.44; Rand, Shaftesbury, p. 350, Shaftesbury to Van Twedde 17 Jan 1705-6.

But, as opponents of the Court well knew, the resort to force through an Army was only one alternative for a monarch bent on evading constitutional restraints. Various forms of political manipulation, all more or less corrupt, were available to him and his ministers. They were designed to ensure that Parliament, the body in which the balance of power was institutionalised, was unable to carry out its regulatory function. Bribery was, perhaps, the Court's most feared tactic, and it was partly to guard against this threat that the Commonwealthsmen, as seen above, tended to stress the necessity for strict accounts of all money granted to the government[6]. Toland believed that 'bribery, as it is the shortest, so it is the surest way to destroy a nation, by corrupting and imbasing men's spirits'. Shaftesbury at the end of his life privately claimed that the whole of his career had been devoted to the extirpation of political corruption. He would have agreed with Davenant that its consequences were wide: a rise in faction and a general decline of public virtue[7].

The Court could use two main forms of bribery concurrently. It could be directed at electors in order to secure a favourable return at the polls, or it could be addressed to M.P.s when chosen. In either case the representative character of Parliament, and hence its ability to supervise the Court in the interests of the people, was undermined. Among the Commonwealthsmen only Tindal seems to have made the obvious comment that electoral corruption should not be blamed wholly on those who offered illicit inducements to vote. In his view the receiver of a bribe was as guilty as the giver[8]. The other writers ignored this consideration, perhaps because it was incompatible with their general

6 See above, chapter 2.

7 Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. xxi; P.R.O. 30/24/24/13 f.99 (Shaftesbury's almanac); Davenant, 'Essay Upon Public Virtue' (1696), B Lib Harleian MS 1223 p. 22 (original pagination).

8 Tindal, Enquiry into the Causes of the Present Disaffection, 1723, p. 12.

scheme of an ideal representative system in which flaws could only arise through the abuse of power. None of the Commonwealthsmen took up the suggestion of a secret ballot at parliamentary elections made in a pamphlet of 1690[9]; this device would have eliminated bribery at the cost of destroying the ties of deference which guaranteed the ascendancy of the propertied classes, and was consequently far too radical to appeal to proponents of the mixed constitution. Instead, Shaftesbury, Molesworth, Toland, and 'Cato' all showed some sympathy for a reapportionment of parliamentary seats. If the representation of the 'little contemptible corporation(s)', as Thomas Gordon witheringly called them, was transferred to larger electorates, bribery would become impossible[10]. Toland, who advocated a uniform borough franchise based on payment of poor rates or tithes, thought that the parliamentary privileges of decayed boroughs should be rescinded, and Molesworth advocated the transfer of seats from such villages to 'wiser, more industrious, and better populated places'. Shaftesbury too was interested in the 'disproportion of our representative', believing that the excessive number of seats in Wales and the west had produced distorted results in the 1701 Parliament[11]. Statements like this have captured the attention of

9 'Some Remarks upon Government', in State Tracts, William III, Vol I. Shaftesbury was, however, interested in the use of the ballot within Parliament in order to lessen the dependence of M.P.s on the Court: see P.R.O. 30/24/21/148, Cropley to Shaftesbury 20 Feb 1707-8, Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. 17, Shaftesbury to Molesworth 25 Nov 1709, and Geoffrey Holmes, British Politics in the Age of Anne, 1967, pp. 145-6.

10 Cato's Letters no. 70, 17 March 1721-2 (1733 ed, III 18). This letter, interestingly, attacks 'deferential' voting patterns, advising voters to examine the credentials of candidates and to reject all who might depend on the Court. But the Commonwealthsmen never criticised the kind of deferential voting which led to the domination of the Commons by wealthy landlords.

11 Toland, The Art of Governing by Partys, 1701, pp. 172-3, 175; Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, 1721 ed, p. xxiv; P.R.O. 30/24/20/37, Shaftesbury to Furly 27 Feb 1701-2. The pamphlet to which Shaftesbury refers is probably 'The Representative of London and Westminster in Parliament, Examined and Considered' (in Somers Tracts XII 399-416). The earl conveniently forgot his own borough interests in the greatly over-represented counties of Wiltshire and Dorset.

historians who see the Commonwealthsmen as the radicals of Augustan England[12]. Yet a reading of the ephemeral pamphlet literature of this generation, and particularly of the years around 1701, indicates that calls for electoral reapportionment were by no means rare; they were an integral part of the ideological armoury in the skirmishes between the Court and its opponents.

Bribery of Members of Parliament was a danger as obvious as bribery of the electorate; it could take the form of secret pensions paid by the crown or of well-paid government posts, often involving minimal duties. It is generally agreed that this kind of corruption was by no means so far advanced at the beginning of the eighteenth century as it became under Newcastle and Walpole, but the Commonwealthsmen nevertheless tended to regard the large numbers of placemen and pensioners in the Lower House as a threat to the representative character of the constitution. An extreme statement of 'the deplorable consequents and effects...of a House of Commons filled with officers and court pensioners' was presented in The Danger of Mercenary Parliaments, an election tract of 1698 for which Toland and Shaftesbury were jointly responsible. The pamphlet claimed that two hundred M.P.s depended on the Court for various reasons, and asked how it was possible for an assembly of placemen, 'where the malefactors are the judges', to check the abuses of power. Trenchard denounced underhand payments to M.P.s whose only qualification was making 'a proper application of two monosyllables', and suggested that acceptance of such bribes should be punished as high treason. 'I would not be understood quite to exclude Parliament men from having places', he conceded, 'but I would not have it to be a qualification for a place'[13].

12 E.g. J.R.Pole, Political Representation in England and the Origins of the American Republic, 1966, pp. 404-5, John Cannon, Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832, Cambridge 1973, p. 45.

13 'The Danger of Mercenary Parliaments', in Harleian Miscellany, ed T.Park, 10 vols 1808-13, I 599-607, at pp. 599, 604, 600, and cf. Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. xviii; Trenchard, Collection I 241, 246, and cf. his Essays on Important Subjects, 1755, pp. 74-5, Short History, p. vi.

The favoured remedy for this situation tended to be, not execution (as Trenchard would apparently have preferred), but Place Bills. In 1701, the year in which the Act of Settlement ordained a thorough-going exclusion of placemen from Parliament when the Hanover Succession took place, Toland wrote that such a 'self-denying bill' was necessary unless offices were to be held for life instead of at will. By 1705, however, the Court view that a blanket exclusion would impair the efficiency of Parliament had won many converts. Shaftesbury and Davenant took a close interest in the parliamentary struggle of January and February 1706 over the kind of regulation which should replace it. Sir John Cropley, an intimate friend of Shaftesbury whom Davenant also knew, was a leading supporter in the Commons of the 'Whimsical Clause' of the Regency Bill, which would have allowed only forty specified officers to sit in the Lower House after Anne's death. Davenant seems to have endorsed the opinion of 'many wise men' that the new rule would still be 'such a cramp to the prerogative as will make our government impracticable and in the event lead us either into a Commonwealth or absolute power'. But the Doctor, himself a well-paid officeholder and an apologist for the Godolphin administration, was probably not at this time typical of the Commonwealthsmen. Cropley kept Shaftesbury closely informed on the Clause's progress and ultimate failure. Shaftesbury, convinced that the measure would be resurrected, was not too depressed at this outcome; liberty, he reflected, had to be fought for, and concessions easily granted were not prized[14].

As was the case with standing armies, Charles II occupied a crucial place in the demonology of parliamentary corruption. William

14 Toland, Art of Governing, p. 65; B Lib Add MS 4291 ff.42-3, Charles to Henry Davenant 22 Jan 1705-6, and cf. ff. 48, 111 (for his knowledge of Cropley); P.R.O. 30/24/21/114, Cropley to Shaftesbury Feb 1705-6, 30/24/22/2, f.122, Shaftesbury to Cropley 18 Feb 1705-6. See also Geoffrey Holmes, 'The Attack on the "Influence of the Crown", 1702-1716', B.I.H.R. 39, 1966, pp. 53-59.

Stephens animadverted on his use of places and pensions to create a court party, 'which by angry people is called bribery'. Both Toland and Trenchard dated the systematic application of corrupt techniques to the Commons to the same reign. There were good grounds for this belief. Danby had imposed a more rigid discipline upon Crown dependents in Parliament than any of his predecessors, and the series of Place Bills which continued into the next century began with the measure of 1675[15].

Another constitutional innovation which worried the Commonwealthsmen was the Cabinet. Queen Elizabeth, recalled Toland, had ruled through a 'wise council'. But when the formal structure of the Council was abandoned or bypassed a Cabinet existed, and this, according to Trenchard, undermined ministerial responsibility to Parliament. Davenant was particularly concerned at this development, referring unfavourably to Cabinet Councils as cliques of ministers which replaced Parliaments in unfree countries. In England, Cabinet members who undertook responsibility for dealing with Parliament - the 'Managers' - were particularly sinister. They interposed between Crown and Parliament and thus prevented the growth of mutual trust. This innovation was a genuine grievance: 'things have never gone well with our princes nor their people since it was first invented'[16].

15 Stephens, A Letter to his most Excellent Majesty King William III, 2nd ed, 1699, p. 8; Toland, Art of Governing, pp. 58-9; Trenchard, Essays on Important Subjects, pp. 71-2; and cf. Thomas Gordon, Three Political Letters to a Noble Lord, 1721, pp. 5, 12. Andrew Browning, Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, 3 vols, Glasgow 1951, I 167-73, 191-3, takes a fairly cautious view of the novelty of Danby's tactics. See also Gerald Aylmer, 'Place Bills and the Separation of Powers', T.R.H.S. 5th Series 15, 1965, pp. 61-3.

16 Toland, Collection II 421-3; Trenchard, Short History, Preface, p. viii; Davenant, Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power..., 1701, p. 226, Probable Methods, pp. 304-5 (recte 204-5), 'Essay Upon Public Virtue', B Lib Harleian MS 1223 p. 115 (original pagination) Nonetheless, as Chapter 5 will show, the Commonwealthsmen did not allow this negative attitude to inhibit them from cultivating close relations with such parliamentary managers as Sunderland, Harley, and Godolphin; had they not done so, they would have forfeited much of their political influence.

The Commonwealthsmen identified a further danger to their conception of the representative process in a development which was only indirectly a result of Court action. During William's reign there occurred a spectacular rise in the political power of top financiers, particularly those who had profited by funding the king's forces in the Nine Years' War. Conversely, the unprecedentedly high taxation which the French wars made necessary placed a heavy burden on landowners. Yet because even the huge sums raised in this way were unable to cover the costs of the war, the public debt rose vertiginously during the quarter of a century after the Revolution. The outcome seemed to be, in Davenant's words, that 'the landed men, for near 100 years to come, must lie under contribution to (those) who have had dealings in the Exchequer'[17]. To those who, like the Commonwealthsmen, shared the usual view that the landed gentry were the bulwark of the country's liberties, this situation posed obvious dangers. Firstly, the wealth of the monied men would enable them to buy their way into the Commons, displacing the traditional representatives: a well-publicised instance of this occurred in the elections of 1700-1 when the New East India Company, heavily involved in lending to the government, secured the return of at least twenty-eight of its directors and backers to Parliament[18]. Secondly, the immense growth of the national debt brought the prospect of ever higher taxes to service it, leading perhaps to the economic ruin of the landowning (and mercantile) class. If the gentry and merchants were allowed to slip ever further into debt to the financiers, warned Davenant, social instability would be the result, and the class of creditors would not be strong enough on its own to uphold the government[19].

17 Davenant, Sir Thomas Double at Court, 1710, pp. 92-3.
18 See Robert Walcott, 'The East India Interest in the General Election of 1700-1', E.H.R. 71, 1956, pp. 223-39.
19 Davenant, Probable Methods, pp. 189-90, and cf. A.P.Usher, ed., Two Manuscripts by Charles Davenant, Baltimore 1942, p. 80.

The remedies offered by the Commonwealthsmen were not original. Trenchard, in dealing with the problem of 'the greatest part of the gentlemen of England...being bought out of their neighbouring boroughs by courtiers, company men, brokers, or grocers, and such like heroes', did, it is true, make the ludicrous suggestion that any monied man who supplanted a gentleman in a borough should be expelled from the Commons as guilty of 'presumptive bribery'. Retaliatory bribery by the aggrieved gentleman was, however, quite excusable[20]. Clearly Trenchard was here beginning to lose sight of the whole nature of the representative system. But, more typically, he endorsed the principle of a land qualification for M.P.s, observing that a similar rule had been followed by the Roman senate. Toland justified Land Qualifications by claiming that men with estates had the same interests as their constituents, while 'monied men without land...have no firm pledge in England to answer for their behaviour'. Molesworth included a provision for the parliamentary land qualification in his political creed, and he claimed to have voted for it in the 1695 Parliament at a time when he owned no land in England himself. Shaftesbury's support for such a measure - which became law in 1711 - is well documented. None of the Commonwealthsmen, apparently, considered the objection made by John Humfrey that such enactments were 'not justifiable, because (they were) an entrenchment on (the) fundamental liberty of the people'[21].

A Land Qualification Act, however, was not on its own a sufficient safeguard against the social and political disruption brought about by

20 Trenchard, Essays on Important Subjects, pp. 49-53.

21 Cato's Letters no. 115, 9 Feb 1722-3 (IV 85); Toland, Art of Governing, pp. 165-6 (and cf. Anglia Libera, Dedication A4-A4v); Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, pp. xix, xx; B Lib Blenheim MSS, D II 6 (old classification), Molesworth to Sunderland, 1708(?) Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. xvi; P.R.O. 30/24/22/2 f.172, Shaftesbury to Cropley 18 Feb 1705-6; Humfrey, Letters to Parliament-Men, 1701, p. 9.

the financial revolution. The necessity of lowering the public debt was widely accepted, and the group of writers under consideration was no exception. Under George I Toland presented a memorial to an unnamed minister in which he urged reduction of the 'heavy load of public debts'. As early as 1698 Davenant claimed that the future balance of power in Europe would depend upon whether England or France could be first in paying off all financial obligations: the resulting freedom to deploy national resources would probably be decisive. Many years later this became one of Trenchard's favourite themes. Some Considerations upon the State of our Publick Debts, an essay he wrote in the ominous year 1720, called for huge reductions in official spending in an effort to make the nation solvent. In Cato's Letters he denounced the blindness of fundholders in pressing for an increase in public obligations, which would only make 'the payment of the old ones desperate', and restated Davenant's contention that 'that people... who can soonest discharge their public burdens will give laws to the rest'[22].

Frightening as they found the recent great increase of the national debt, the Commonwealthsmen never countenanced its repudiation. Davenant and Trenchard wrote knowledgeably about finance, and were convinced that default would have dire consequences. Another Stop of the Exchequer, warned Davenant, 'would at once pull down all our civil rights'. Toland too emphasised the necessity of maintaining public credit, and suggested that too rigid a distinction between landed and monied interests was not appropriate[23]. Even Trenchard

22 Toland, Collection II 253-4; Davenant, Discourses on the Publick Revenues, 1698, p. 199; Trenchard, Collection I 228-49, Cato's Letters nos. 89, 10, 11 Aug 1722 & 3 Jan 1720-1 (III 197, I 53); cf. Trenchard & Gordon, Considerations upon the Approaching Peace, 1720, pp. 28-9.

23 Davenant, Probable Methods, p. 172, and cf. Usher, ed, Two Manuscripts, pp. 96-7; Toland, State-Anatomy of Great Britain, 1717, pp. 41-3.

refused to let his enthusiasm for debt reduction lead him to support the most ambitious venture of this nature, the South Sea Scheme: he was aware of the financial instability of the project several months before the collapse, and pointed accurately to the main flaw in the scheme[24].

There was one more constitutional malfunction which, in the opinion of the Commonwealthsmen, was at least in part attributable to the Court. It used to be stated that before the appearance in 1770 of Burke's Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents, literary justification of political parties was almost non-existent. Recent work has shown that this was a gross oversimplification: in the early eighteenth century there were writers, of whom the most notable was John Shute Barrington, who pointed out that an institutionalised party conflict could promote stability[25]. Nonetheless, statements of this kind long preserved a paradoxical quality, and the Commonwealthsmen, in their general dislike of political parties, merely expressed the conventional wisdom. Many qualifications can and must be made, but on the whole Toland's comment that 'certainly a true patriot can be of no faction'[26] is representative of his and his associates' writings on the subject.

The Art of Governing by Partys, Toland's best-known political tract, offers an analysis of parties as a manifestation of corruption

24 'A Comparison between the Proposals of the Bank and the South-Sea Company', in Trenchard, Collection I 221-7, esp. p. 227: the project managers should be made to declare exactly what terms of exchange they are offering to the annuitants.

25 J.A.W.Gunn, Factions No More, 1970, Introduction, and cf. his 'Party before Burke: Shute Barrington', Government and Opposition 3, 1968, pp. 223-40; Caroline Robbins, '"Discordant Parties": a Study of the Acceptance of Party by Englishmen', Political Science Quarterly 73, 1958, pp. 505-29. Cf. Francis Atterbury, preaching in 1701: 'frequent struggles and concussions within' are a sign of the soundness of the constitution 'and the chief security of its continuance', Sermons and Discourses 2 vols 1730, I 265. A similar point is made by Voltaire on England: Lettres Philosophiques, ed G.Lanson, 5th ed, Paris 1936, Lettre IX, p. 104.

26 Toland, Militia Reform'd, p. 9.

emanating from the Court. 'It is the most wicked masterpiece of tyranny purposely to divide the sentiments, affections, and interests of a people'. It should be no surprise to find that he dated this system in its full development to the reign of Charles II, although its origins went back to James I. Davenant also accorded the first of the Stuarts an important place in the rise of party. But the danger had not left England with James II. In 1701 Davenant thought that corrupt ministers were still fomenting factions in order to cover up their depredations and unspecified 'other crimes against the public'. The essential regulatory function of Parliament, in other words, was under threat[27].

Commonwealthsmen often emphasised the irrational behaviour of party zealots. They were, wrote Trenchard, the 'bubbles' of cynical manipulators. The distinctions between Whig and Tory, according to Toland, had become hereditary in many families; the words themselves, he wrote in 1698, were 'now of a very doubtful signification'[28]. Once parties had deserted the principles which distinguished them, only the foolish, the ambitious, and the greedy perpetuated them. Stephens preached that faction, involving one party's determination to engross all honours, was a national sin. The Letter to the Author of the Memorial of the State of England, written by him or Rawlins, reiterated that party conflict is about 'nothing else but the possession and enjoyment of the several public places and employments which the Court has it in its power to bestow'. Cato's Letters opined that self-interest had nullified all real distinctions between

27 Toland, Art of Governing, pp. 7, 8; Davenant, Essays Upon Peace at Home and War Abroad, 1704, p. 182, Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power..., p. 6.

28 Cato's Letters no. 16, 11 Feb 1720-1 (I 107); Toland, 'Reasons for Naturalising the Jews', ed & trans H. Mainusch, Studia Delitzschiana Band 9, Stuttgart 1965, pp. 52, 54, The Militia Reform'd, p. 7. Cf. Cato's Letters no. 80, 9 June 1722 (III 123) and Toland, Memorial of the State of England, 1705, pp. 78-9, where it is claimed that the once decisive differences between the parties are at an end.

parties, and that their leaders were all fraudulent[29].

Occasionally the Commonwealthsmen suggested that political parties might not be totally malign institutions. Shaftesbury was being intentionally provocative when he suggested that association in them was an aspect of man's natural gregariousness; a more traditional justification, owing much to Machiavelli's Discorsi, was offered by Moyle, Toland, and Davenant. In 1717 Toland wrote that, whether they improved the polity or harmed it, parties at least kept it from stagnation if 'held within due bounds'. His failure to enlarge on this important concession is surprising, but he was probably thinking along the lines sketched by Moyle and Davenant in their comments on the Roman republic. Here it was pointed out that the factions at Rome and the seditions they engendered had produced constitutional amendments which safeguarded liberty and promoted peace[30]. This argument approached Shute Barrington's contention that a balance of opposites in a state was the best basis for stability, but the Commonwealthsmen never made much of it. Despite their unfeigned concern for freedom of thought, they seem on the whole to have assumed that intelligent and honest men could not fail to agree in politics. A two-party system, since it presupposes genuine disagreements, is plainly incompatible with this assumption.

The Commonwealthsmen never affected to find Whig and Tory equally

29 Stephens, A Sermon Preach'd before the...Lord Mayor, 1694, pp. 19-21; Rawlins(?), A Letter to the Author of the Memorial of the State of England, 1705, p. 7; Cato's Letters nos. 96, 14, 27 Sept 1722 & 28 Jan 1720-1 (III 259-65, I 89).

30 Shaftesbury, Characteristics, ed J.M.Robertson, 2 vols 1900, I 77, (and cf. his respect for the 'precept and law of the wise Athenian: "Choose one" (viz. Party)...I chose therefore my party and am a Whig', P.R.O. 30/24/24/13, f.99. Yet Shaftesbury always repudiated the kind of party loyalty which put persons before principles); Toland, State-Anatomy, Preface, and cf. his Grand Mystery Laid Open, 1714, pp. 14-15; Two English Republican Tracts, Ed C.Robbins, Cambridge 1969, pp. 242, 246-7; Davenant, Essays Upon Peace at Home and War Abroad, pp. 55-6.

distasteful. Both parties might have deserted their principles, but but this did not affect the validity of those principles. 'Men and words may change, but principles never', wrote Toland in this context[31], insisting that politicians be judged by their actions and not their professions. During the Exclusion Crisis and the succeeding years the Whigs had consistently opposed the Stuarts in what the Commonwealthsmen saw as their efforts to subvert the constitution by force or fraud; the Tories were of course the party which had concurred in the design. With the exception of Davenant, therefore, the Commonwealthsmen all called themselves Whigs: this was not an affirmation of party loyalty, merely a statement of their political creed. Davenant was a special case because his devotion to the Church of England made him prefer the purer Anglicanism of the Tories. He nevertheless proclaimed himself quite willing to go 'against the declared sense of my party' when he felt the national interest required it[32]. Significantly, he, like the other Commonwealthsmen, always professed a reverence for the original tenets of the Whigs. In his celebrated pamphlet of 1701, The True Picture of a Modern Whig, he wittily and damningly pointed out the contrast between the uprightness of those tenets and the corruption of the ministerial Whigs who had abandoned them.

This dichotomy was no mere literary device. The 'Junto' of Whigs who emerged as William's chief advisers in the mid-1690s soon made clear their opposition to reforms which would guard against a repetition of Stuart misrule. Points which the Commonwealthsmen regarded as essential - Place Bills, short Parliaments, disbandment of the army - had to be fought for against a Court resolved to evade them if possible. J.H.Plumb writes that '1694 is one of the great

31 Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. xvii.
32 B Lib Add MS 28055 ff.13-14, Davenant to Godolphin 19 Oct 1703.

watersheds in the development of party...From this time the Whigs, in constitutional principles, become deeply conservative'. This renunciation came in the years immediately preceding the emergence of our group, and their outlook was drastically affected by it. In constitutional matters, they were the 'old Whigs', preserving the purity of their beliefs against both the Tories and the apostate Whigs. For this reason, complained Molesworth, he had been 'most basely abandoned and abused' by his former Whig associates, when his only crime was that he had 'persisted in principles which some of them for by-ends had quitted'. The sense of betrayal was very strong. 'We have lived in an age of miracles...', sneered Trenchard, 'when surly patriots grow servile flatterers (and) old Commonwealthsmen declare for the prerogative'; he warned 'those who were once called Whigs' not to exasperate the people too much with their corrupt practices. Stephens in 1701 lamented the tendency of those who were patriots in former reigns to comply with the Court in the present one. Davenant was particularly forthright in his invective against these Stalins and Napoleons of the Glorious Revolution. In 1688, admitted Tom Double, his archetypal Modern Whig, 'our aim...was only to change persons, and let things continue as they were found'. By contrast, the Old Whigs were men 'whose principles will be reverenced in future ages by all such as love their country'[33].

Yet despite this barrage of abuse, the relationship between the Commonwealthsmen and the official Whigs was not always as sour as might have been expected. Old and Modern Whigs always had at least

33 J.H.Plumb, The Growth of Political Stability in England 1675-1725, 1967, p. 135; B Lib Blenheim MS 61118 (provisional classification), Molesworth to Godolphin 16 July 1706; Trenchard, Short History, pp. 40, 46; Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England with Other Tracts of the Same Author, 1709, pp. 109-10; Davenant, Sir Thomas Double at Court, p. 53, Probable Methods, pp. 234-5.

one characteristic in common: an unquestioned commitment to the Protestant Succession. The significance of this will become clear when the Commonwealthmen's attitude to the Tories is considered. Sometimes, they admitted, the Tories could be useful; for instance, they often supported salutary measures in attempts to embarrass the ministerial Whigs. No doubt for this reason, Shaftesbury called them 'good servants, but ill masters'[34]. In 1705 Toland claimed to be no enemy to non-Jacobite Tories, whom he believed to be honest and well-intentioned, while in 1711 he submitted a memorial favouring a coalition government of moderate Whigs and Tories. After 1714 he thought loyal Tories should continue in posts of honour and profit, although 'posts of trust in His Majesty's service' ought to be reserved for Whigs. At other times, however, Toland was much less tolerant. The Electress Sophia criticised his bitter attitude. At the end of William's reign he opposed the employment of Tories, most of whom had given ample proof of their dislike of the king's regime. In his most extreme statement on the subject he wrote that 'the true aim of both parties of Tories is, by all possible means, to hinder the succession of our Crown in the electoral family...and to promote the chimerical designs of the Pretender'[35]. It was this consideration which led Molesworth to fear the Tories even when they bore such gifts as a willingness to campaign against the standing army. Shaftesbury thought 'a formed Tory ministry' would lead to a concerted attack on English liberty[36].

34 Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. 22, Shaftesbury to Molesworth 6 Jan 1708-9; P.R.O. 30/24/20/53, Shaftesbury to Furly 11 Jan 1700-1.

35 Toland, Collection II 344, Toland to (Penn) 26 June 1705, and ibid. 216-7, 244-5; Klopp, Correspondance, III 25, Sophie to Leibniz 4 April 1703; Toland, Art of Governing, pp. 45-6, 108-9, Mr Toland's Reflections on Dr Sacheverell's Sermon, 1710, p.3, and cf. The Art of Restoring, 1714, p. v.

36 Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, pp. xxv-xxvi; Rand, Shaftesbury, p. 349, Shaftesbury to Van Twedde 17 Jan 1705-6.

Although it was generally agreed, then and now, that the Revolution of 1688 was an achievement of Tories as well as Whigs, the Tories never became wholly identified with 'Revolution Principles'. The refusal of many of their most prominent figures to recognise William as a rightful king attracted the contempt of the Commonwealthsmen[37]; it seemed that they were unwilling wholly to renounce that close connection with the Stuarts which had brought them such great influence in the early 1680s. As Toland pointed out, all the Jacobites were Tories[38].

Fear of Jacobitism was crucial in the political thought of the Commonwealthsmen, for it limited their condemnation of party. It has been shown that their primary allegiance was to the Ancient Constitution of England, and that in their view the main threats to it had come from the ambition of the Stuart kings. Jacobitism was therefore not so much loyalty to a line of monarchs as a conspiracy against fundamental liberties. The English polity remained imperfect and subject to corruption after 1688, but its condition was still far better than it had been under the Scottish dynasty. When, therefore, the prospects of a restoration of James II or III were greatest (and this, of course, was when foreign powers seemed most willing to aid it), all the true supporters of the Revolution should ignore their differences and maintain a united front. At times when France, and later Sweden, planned a restoration of the old line, or when English ministers seemed disposed to do the same with outside aid, a closing of ranks took place. Crises like this occurred in 1701, 1711-14, and 1717, and at such times the Commonwealthsmen saw politics as a struggle between Whigs and Jacobites, with most of those who called

37 Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, 1696, pp. 11-13; Molesworth, An Account of Denmark, 1694, Preface, sig c2.
38 Toland, Reasons for Addressing His Majesty..., 1702, p.9.

themselves Tories in the latter camp. They themselves were allied with the Junto by virtue of their common whiggery and, more specifically, by their shared devotion to the Protestant Succession.

At times when there was no immediate danger, the Commonwealthsmen could talk moderately about Jacobitism. Trenchard, preoccupied with his attacks on ministerial Whigs in 1697 and 1722, minimised the threat from these old-fashioned loyalists. Toland had also discounted the danger they posed in a pamphlet dated 1 January 1717. Perhaps to his embarrassment, the Gyllenborg Plot, with its sensational evidence of collusion between the Swedes and the Jacobites, came to light exactly four weeks later[39]. The Commonwealthsmen were sometimes accused of being Jacobites by their Whig enemies. Even Tindal, writing to support the government, claimed that Cato's Letters was deliberately creating disaffection on behalf of the Pretender. Molesworth's answer to accusations like these was that the main cause of Jacobitism was Whig misgovernment. Toland fulminated that 'the truly apostate Whigs, who became servile and arbitrary to please Court empirics, branded all those as Jacobites who adhered to those very principles that occasioned and justified the Revolution'[40]. All this, however, does not detract from the real and abiding aversion to Jacobitism shown by these writers. When the Gyllenborg Plot was revealed, Molesworth called Charles XII's English accomplices 'malicious wretches' who harboured 'an implacable hatred of the royal family'. He agreed with Toland that the doubtful birth of the Pretender was absolutely irrelevant: the Jacobites' crime was to

39 Trenchard and Moyle, An Argument, p. 15; Cato's Letters no. 83, 30 June 1722 (III 142); Toland, State-Anatomy, p. 6. It is worth noting that Toland never favoured petty persecution of the Jacobite laity, such as their exclusion from the professions: Anglia Libera p. 86, Memorial of the State of England, pp. 92-3.

40 Kingston, 'Cursory Remarks', Somers Tracts XI 159; Tindal, Enquiry into the Causes..., p. 3, A Defence of our Present Happy Establishment, 1722, passim; Molesworth Corr pp. 317-8, Robert to Letitia Molesworth 29 July 1721; Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. 13n.

ignore the principle of popular sovereignty. Toland and Shaftesbury approved of the Oath of Abjuration, which excluded them from all public office, and years later Tindal, in The Defection Consider'd, called for even more severe measures of repression[41].

Tindal's pamphlet provides a good illustration of the way in which the suspicion that all Tories were potential Jacobites led to an acceptance of the two-party system: the Whigs, standing for liberty and Protestantism, were the only alternatives to popery and arbitrary government, and a united Whig party was therefore essential. Under these circumstances, any attempt to strike a balance between the two parties was clearly culpable: 'cowardly, trimming measures' were expressly denounced. Soon after George's accession Toland presented a memorandum in which he criticised the trimmers as 'timorous pusillanimous knaves', and in 1717 he elaborated on this: 'Whigs and Tories are incompatible in the ministry...We all now follow Solon's law, which made it capital not to be of some party'. As early as 1702 he had expressed a dislike of neutrals, and Shaftesbury too invoked the 'wise Athenian' to justify partisanship[42]. On the other hand, in 1701 Toland had commended trimmers as being in the state what latitudinarians were to the church, and in the next reign he praised the queen's wisom in balancing parties, a course which even had biblical precedent. At the same period Davenant, writing to promote moderation, deprecated the total exclusion of any party from office or influence; honest men should remain constant to their parties,

41 Molesworth, 'A Short Narrative of the Life and Death of John Rhinholdt, Count Patkul' (1717), in Somers Tracts XIII 873-92, at p. 891, Preface to Franco-Gallia, p. xxxi; Toland, Reasons for Addressing His Majesty..., pp. 16, 14, 18-9; Shaftesbury, Paradoxes of State, pp. 18-19; Tindal, The Defection Consider'd, 1717, p. 50.

42 Tindal, Defection Consider'd, pp. 10-11, 50; Toland, Collection II 245, State-Anatomy pp. 102-3, Reasons for Addressing His Majesty..., p. 20; P.R.O. 30/24/24/13, f.99 (see above, note 30).

always restraining them from violent measures[43].

No attempt to reconcile these conflicting opinions can be wholly satisfactory. Ideas about the correct way to handle the parties varied with political circumstances. Halifax's approval of the middle course between two extremes seemed most convincing to the Commonwealthsmen at times when their disillusion with the ministerial Whigs was pronounced. If there was little to choose between Whigs and Tories, 'trimming' or 'balancing parties' was rational and laudable, but it became a deplorable neutrality if one party was that of the Protestant Succession and the other that of the Pretender.

Under normal circumstances, however, the split between Old and Modern Whigs remained wide. It will have been noted that the issues over which it had opened - for instance Place Bills, short parliaments, land qualifications - were for the most part classic Court-and-Country questions, and this is the context into which it is most profitable to place the Commonwealthsmen. Although Toland, flaunting his Whig loyalties in 1717, could dismiss Country agitation as an 'artificial cry' and a 'threadbare topic', many of his other political works belie the assertion. His Art of Governing by Partys (1701), like Molesworth's well-known preface to Franco-Gallia, provides some of the most trenchant 'Country' political analysis that the period produced. A pamphlet often attributed to Moyle (although it may have been by his close friend Anthony Hammond) succinctly relates the politics of Court and Country to the main concerns of the Commonwealthsmen. Corrupt ministers alone made a Country party necessary: ''tis this distinction must preserve the honour of our ancient constitution of government, till it may flourish under the influence of a Parliament in which none

43 Toland, Art of Governing, p. 118. (and see pp. 147-9 for a quotation from the Character of a Trimmer, which he thought was by Sir William Coventry), Letters to Serena, 1704, p. xv, Memorial of the State of England, pp. 73-4; Davenant, Essays Upon Peace at Home..., pp. 111-3, 70-84.

or few who have gainful offices shall be members of the House of Commons'. Davenant agreed that in 'corrupt' countries (those in which the ministers were not completely honest) the existence of a Country Party which could restrain the greed and ambition of the Court was both inevitable and desirable[44].

The place of Court-and-Country politics in the history of this period is not yet fully agreed upon, and because this is a point of great importance for the Commonwealthsmen I shall offer some comments here. Professor Holmes' view that politics in Queen Anne's reign were dominated by the contests between the Whig and Tory parties has found general acceptance. 'Whereas we can still talk about Country ideals and a Country tradition in the age of Anne, we can no longer validly refer, like students of William III's reign, to a "Country party"'. The case of the Commonwealthsmen fits this generalisation well: until the war with France could be brought to a victorious conclusion the Protestant Succession remained unsafe, and in this situation Whig loyalties tended to come first. Shaftesbury, it is true, was a passionate supporter of the 1706 'Whimsical Clause' during 'the fiercest struggle between Country and Court in Anne's reign', but after 1701 his political correspondence is normally monopolised by questions of war and peace[45]. Nonetheless, attempts to extend this picture into William III's reign have not been wholly successful. The evidence of political pamphlets shows that during the years up to 1701 a large volume of political argument was conducted around the poles of court and country, and those studies which have used it have on the whole recognised this. Dennis Rubini, Henry Horwitz, and

44 Toland, State Anatomy, p. 102; 'Some Considerations Upon the Choice of a Speaker' (1698), in State Tracts, William III, II 651-3, where it is attributed to Moyle (Hammond, however, claimed authorship in Bodleian MS Rawlinson A245 f.64; it could well have been the result of a collaboration); Davenant, Probable Methods, pp. 302-3 (recte 202-3).

45 Holmes, British Politics in the Age of Anne, pp. 118, 132.

J.A.Downie, despite their differences of emphasis, concur in their view of the importance of the struggle between Court and Country in William's reign[46]. Division lists, far from being the only adequate guides to the nature of political behaviour, can be misleading if relied upon too heavily. One painstaking analysis of three lists of the mid-1690s purports to prove 'quite conclusively that voting behaviour on all issues during this period' was determined by party. The argument which supports this conclusion is, however, circular: if Godolphin, whose background was clearly more Tory than Whig, is classifie d among the Whigs because he voted with them on three occasions, the consistency of this 'Whig' voting will naturally look impressive. But the possibility that these were, in fact, 'Court' votes is excluded by the authors' assumptions[47].

Court and Country configurations were always significant in William's reign, sometimes overshadowing Whig and Tory and sometimes obscured by them. In a poorly received book, Professor Robert Walcott made the excellent point that a spectrum from left-wing Whig to right-wing Tory dœs not correspond to the realities of the time. If the spectrum, he suggested, is replaced by a compass in which North and South represent Whig and Tory and East and West stand for

46 See D.Rubini, Court and Country 1688-1702, 1968, passim, esp. pp. 16-17; Henry Horwitz, Parliament, Policy, and Politics in the Reign of William III, Manchester 1977, pp. 316-9; J.A.Downie, Robert Harley and the Press, Cambridge 1979, pp. 19-40.

47 I.F.Burton, P.W.J.Riley, and E.Rowlands, 'Political Parties in the Reigns of William III and Anne: the Evidence of Division Lists', B.I.H.R. Special Supplement 7, 1968, pp. 3, 39. B.W.Hill, The Growth of Parliamentary Parties 1689-1742, 1976, pp. 65-7, 77-9, tends to accept the conclusions of Burton and his colleagues. But Rubini, Court and Country, pp. 259-62, and Henry L.Snyder, in The Parliamentary Lists of the Early Eighteenth Century, ed A.Newman, Leicester 1973, pp. 55-83, warn against excessive reliance on division lists.

Court and Country, a correct understanding of the period is facilitated. We then move 'around a circle: from Court through Court Tory and Country Tory to Country Party and so back through Country Whig and Court Whig once again to the Court'[48]. This scheme has immediate advantages when applied to the Commonwealthsmen, who are often misunderstood by being placed at the far left of the Whig-Tory spectrum. In the late 1690s we find Trenchard collaborating with Davenant, and Moyle enjoying a close political friendship with Anthony Hammond, although Davenant and Hammond appeared to Macaulay to be two of 'the most virulent Tory members of the House of Commons'[49]. The difficulty disappears when the strength of Country loyalties at that time is realised. For our purposes there is another reason why the importance of the Court-Country segment of Walcott's compass, particularly in the 1690s but also at later times, should be appreciated. As Country Party thinkers, the Commonwealthsmen were addressing central problems of the day. It would be quite wrong to portray them as isolated intellectuals in whose writings virtually no-one was interested.

Davenant's gloomy opinion was that any political division in a state was a sign of corruption, derived ultimately from the Court, and that Court and Country 'at bottom are scarce better than the factions of those who have and those who want employments'. This view has been made familiar by those historians who like to discount the part played by ideas in politics, but Davenant himself was later to modify it slightly. Certainly many members of the Country party were motivated by jealousy and ambition, yet its parliamentary function

48 R.Walcott, English Politics in the Early Eighteenth Century, Oxford 1956, pp. 91-3, 156-8, 'The Idea of Party in the Writing of Later Stuart History', Journal of British Studies 1, 1961-2, p. 59.

49 Macaulay, The History of England, 2 vols 1873, II 768.

in checking maladministration remained vital and there was a place in it for genuinely disinterested men. Trenchard did not share these doubts. Court and Country was to him clearly a more salutary system than Whig and Tory, the former being 'a necessary and reasonable distinction', the latter a blind for factious men to cover their misdeeds[50]. The criticisms of the parties offered by other Commonwealthsmen make it fairly certain that they shared this view except at junctures when fear of Jacobitism drove them into the opposite camp. Their basic principle was that Parliament must supervise the executive: this function, obscured by the clashes between Whigs and Tories, was the very raison d'être of a Country opposition.

This in turn meant that, while Whigs and Tories aimed only to succeed each other in an unceasing and meaningless round of favour and disgrace, Country politics were not self-perpetuating. If they were based on opposition to bad ministers, the possibility of consensus with good obviously existed. A Country party, therefore, was not necessarily bitterly opposed to the Court. One writer has observed of the early seventeenth century that 'there has been a tendency to overlook the ease with which men who had been leaders of the Country opposition in Parliament moved into office'[51]. The remark holds good for our period, and for the Commonwealthsmen in particular. All of them were zealous protagonists of the Country line in the late 1690s, yet halfway through the next decade we find Toland and Davenant as two of the Court's leading writers, and a little later Molesworth and Shaftesbury rushing to the defence of the ministers. If this was simply because they sold their pens and their

50 Davenant, 'Essay Upon Public Virtue', B Lib Harleian MS 1223, p. 37 (original pagination), Probable Methods pp. 302-3 (recte 202-3); Trenchard, Essays on Important Subjects, p. 59, Cato's Letters no. 69, 10 March 1721-2 (III 9-10).

51 J.S.Morrill, The Revolt of the Provinces, 1976, p. 15.

votes to anyone who was in the market, then all the assumptions of this study are misplaced. Fortunately there is a more satisfactory explanation. Stephens, Toland, and Shaftesbury explicitly identified the years 1701-2 as a period in which the corruption of the Court was rectified, with the result that all honest men were enabled (and obliged) to support the government. Toland's Anglia Libera, appearing in 1701, explained that the Country party's programme had been achieved with the passage of the Act of Settlement. 'The limitations now passed into an Act' would abolish the opposition of Court and Country by 'drying up the spring of their contrary interests'. At almost the same time Stephens expressed himself in similar terms. For Shaftesbury, writing a few months later, the Act of Settlement had, together with the renewed French threat, transformed the face of politics. 'The particular interests of the Court and Country, of prerogative and privilege, of the king and people, may be and at this time are actually the same...There is no other real distinction among us, but of those who are for the Protestant religion and the present establishment, and those who mean a Popish prince and a French government'[52].

The cynosure of Country politics was the point at which the interests of Court and Country ceased to differ, and the nation could unite behind its 'patriot king'. It would be a mistake to place the famous tract by Bolingbroke at the fountainhead of this tradition: Halifax's Character of a Trimmer makes the same suggestion that the most powerful monarch is the one who respects the laws and liberties of his country, since he gains far more in the love and esteem of the people than he loses in arbitrary power. The patriot king, disdaining

52 Toland, Anglia Libera, p. 51; Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, with other Tracts of the same Author, 1709, pp. 150-3; Shaftesbury, Paradoxes of State, pp. 1, 4; and cf. Gordon, Three Political Letters to a Noble Lord, pp. 6-8.

party government, treats all his subjects equally, and the legal restraints on his prerogative are no limitation on his power of doing good[53]. Strikingly similar ideas can be found in the writings of the Commonwealthsmen. Stephens in 1696 exhorted William to seek a 'real popularity', based on respect rather than force or corruption, with the result that factions would be 'sunk and forgotten...for the interest of Court and Country will be one and the same, which has not been known since the death of Queen Elizabeth'. Elizabeth's exceptionally high reputation among the Commonwealthsmen (and many others) is explained by the fact that she was thought to have had all the characteristics of the patriot king. Toland, who apparently planned a pamphlet on the subject, admired her maintenance of the balance of power, care of the navy, reliance on wise ministers, and economical rule. Trenchard dated the decline of national virtue from her death; Stephens praised her commitment to the Protestant interest, and Moyle expressed the hope that Anne would prove a second Elizabeth by firm prosecution of the war. Davenant applied the central paradox of the patriot king specifically to Elizabeth: 'such of our princes as had the skill not to seek after power have had it thrown upon 'em: was Henry the Eighth himself more absolute than his daughter Queen Elizabeth ?'. Since her interests were identical with those of the nation, she had 'an absolute dominion over their hearts...(and) did what she pleased with both houses of Parliament'[54].

53 Halifax, Complete Works, ed J.P.Kenyon, Harmondsworth 1969,pp. 56, 62-3, 99; cf. Burnet II 657-8, 662-3, Bolingbroke, The Idea of a Patriot King, ed A.Hassall, Oxford 1917, pp. 60-1, 87-97, Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson, Everyman ed, 2 vols, I 386-7, P. de Rapin-Thoyras, An Historical Dissertation upon Whigs and Tories, trans J.Ozell, 1717, p. 13.

54 Stephens, Letter to...William III, p. 15; Toland, Collection II 421-3; Trenchard, Short History, p. 2; Stephens, A Thanksgiving Sermon Preach'd before the...Lord Mayor, 1696, p. 15; Moyle, Unpublished Works, I 165; Davenant, Essays Upon Peace at Home..., p. 215, Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power..., p. 197. See Gerald M.Straka, Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688, Madison 1962, pp. 100-5, for further comments on the 'Elizabethan ideal' and its relevance to the 1690s.

It would be easy to demonstrate that these laudatory comments were not historically accurate, but this would be to miss the point. Elizabeth stood at the high-water mark of national strength and prosperity, which was to suffer so severely under the misrule of her Stuart successors. The Revolution of 1688 had made a return to the old ways possible, and the Commonwealthsmen fervently hoped that the new rulers would emulate the Elizabethan ideal. For them, the Country programme was not intended to limit the prerogative so far that the ruler's position would be like that of the Venetian doge. It was designed instead to restore the purity of the balanced constitution, thus laying the foundations for the greatness which could come only under the rule of a patriot king.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRIESTCRAFT AND PROTESTANTISM

Some of the most dramatic events in the careers of the Commonwealthsmen came during brushes with the clergy. Toland, according to one hostile source, began his anticlerical campaign with a riot at Glasgow around 1690, in which he 'was a principal man at heading the mob, and hallooing them at the clergy'. In 1697 came the more famous episode when he was forced to leave Ireland by a furore raised from the pulpit against his first book, Christianity Not Mysterious, while in 1701 he came under attack from the lower house of Convocation for the same work[1]. In 1713 Molesworth greeted the arrival at Dublin Castle of a deputation from the Irish Convocation with the sour quip that 'they that have turned the world upside down are come hither also': the witticism was suitably publicised and served as a pretext for his dismissal from the Irish Privy Council[2]. But, among this group, it was probably Dr Tindal who inspired the most antipathy from Churchmen: on the publication of his Rights of the Christian Church 'most of the ecclesiastic bellows in the kingdom were set to work' producing replies which were, for the most part, thoroughly vitriolic. Trenchard devoted a fifty-part periodical, the Independent Whig, to attacks on various aspects of the Church, while Stephens, although an Anglican rector, publicly denounced the cynicism of the clergy as the prime cause of the growth of deism[3]. With the exception of Davenant, a staunch Churchman all his life, the relations between the Commonwealthsmen and the bulk of the clergy could hardly have been any worse.

It has often been assumed that this mutual antipathy can be

1 Charles Leslie, Cassandra (But I Hope Not), No 2, 1704, p. 64; Toland, An Apology for Mr Toland, 1697, esp. pp. 3-4, Vindicius Liberius, 1702, passim; Daniel Wilkins, Concilia Magnae Britanniae, 4 vols 1737, IV 631.

2 See Chapter 8, p. 225.

3 Curll, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Matthew Tindall, LL.D., 1733, p. 12; Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, 1696.

party government, treats all his subjects equally, and the legal restraints on his prerogative are no limitation on his power of doing good[53]. Strikingly similar ideas can be found in the writings of the Commonwealthsmen. Stephens in 1696 exhorted William to seek a 'real popularity', based on respect rather than force or corruption, with the result that factions would be 'sunk and forgotten...for the interest of Court and Country will be one and the same, which has not been known since the death of Queen Elizabeth'. Elizabeth's exceptionally high reputation among the Commonwealthsmen (and many others) is explained by the fact that she was thought to have had all the characteristics of the patriot king. Toland, who apparently planned a pamphlet on the subject, admired her maintenance of the balance of power, care of the navy, reliance on wise ministers, and economical rule. Trenchard dated the decline of national virtue from her death; Stephens praised her commitment to the Protestant interest, and Moyle expressed the hope that Anne would prove a second Elizabeth by firm prosecution of the war. Davenant applied the central paradox of the patriot king specifically to Elizabeth: 'such of our princes as had the skill not to seek after power have had it thrown upon 'em: was Henry the Eighth himself more absolute than his daughter Queen Elizabeth ?'. Since her interests were identical with those of the nation, she had 'an absolute dominion over their hearts...(and) did what she pleased with both houses of Parliament'[54].

53 Halifax, Complete Works, ed J.P.Kenyon, Harmondsworth 1969,pp. 56, 62-3, 99; cf. Burnet II 657-8, 662-3, Bolingbroke, The Idea of a Patriot King, ed A.Hassall, Oxford 1917, pp. 60-1, 87-97, Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson, Everyman ed, 2 vols, I 386-7, P. de Rapin-Thoyras, An Historical Dissertation upon Whigs and Tories, trans J.Ozell, 1717, p. 13.

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explained by reference to the heterodox religious views of the Commonwealthsmen. The speculations of Toland, Tindal, and Shaftesbury were certainly offensive to pious ears. Tindal began his literary career with an assault on current trinitarian doctrine as unintelligible (which, incidentally, anticipated the main thesis of Toland's far more notorious book), and he ended it by producing what was possibly the most ample statement of the deist case for the sufficiency of natural religion. In addition, it was said to be common knowledge among Oxford dons that he freely admitted atheism in private[4]. Toland's heresies included pantheism (a term he coined), the belief that Islam was a variety of Christianity, and, at least by implication, Socinianism. But it was probably his dynamic materialism which seemed most subversive to contemporaries, recalling as it did the teaching of the most feared of all the philosophers, Spinoza[5]. Shaftesbury was circumspect in doctrinal matters, and although he was almost certainly a deist his notoriety in orthodox circles was owed to his widely misunderstood advocacy of gentle mockery as a test of moral or religious truth; ridicule, it has been argued, was far more potent than rational argument as a solvent of Christian belief[6]. Moyle is said to have been an atheist as a young man, when he was most closely associated with the other Commonwealthsmen, while Molesworth seems to have regarded Confucius as the equal of any Christian moralist[7].

4 Tindal, A Letter to the Reverend the Clergy of Both Universities, 1694, esp. pp. 32-5, Christianity as Old as the Creation, 1730; The Religious, Rational, and Moral Conduct of Matthew Tindal, LL.D., 1735, pp. 25-7; H.M.C. Appendix to Seventh Report, 244a, Sir John Perceval's note.

5 Toland, Socinianism Truly Stated, 1705, pp. 5-10, Nazarenus, 1718, p. iii, Letters to Serena, 1704, Letters IV and V, in which the extensive criticism of Spinoza failed to mask important affinities: see Rosalie L.Colie, 'Spinoza and the early English Deists', Journal of the History of Ideas, 20, 1959, pp. 43-5.

6 See Chapter 1, note 77; John Redwood, Reason, Ridicule, and Religion 1976, pp. 14, 182-3.

7 Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Lawrence, Kansas, MS P515:1, Prideaux to Lloyd 20 March 1694-5 (although in later life Moyle asserted that there are sound arguments for Christian revelation: Unpublished Works II 290-1); Molesworth Corr pp. 366-7, Wishart to Molesworth 7 Nov 1723.

Clearly this group was far from orthodox. But historians would be ill-advised to assume too hastily that religious radicalism was inseparably connected with political subversion. Evidence for this proposition comes from suspect, because partisan, sources like Henry Sacheverell, whose famous sermon of 1709 referred to 'heterodoxy in the doctrine of the (Church) naturally producing, and almost necessarily inferring, rebellion and high treason in the (state)'[8]. The career of Anthony Collins, who published books containing advanced deistic views while acting in public as a pillar of the Whig oligarchy in Essex, is surely enough to invalidate the view that heterodox opinions implied radical political tendencies. Shaftesbury, as is well known, thought that free religious speculation should be confined to the educated; Toland's insistence that his secret club of pantheists must separate itself 'from the multitude' carries this implication too. Molesworth's bequest of money to rebuild his local parish church may have been a tacit admission of the wisdom of the view that doctrinal speculation and public life should be kept apart[9].

It has already been shown that the Commonwealthsmen had, on the whole, no quarrel with the institution of a national church. A publicly prescribed form of worship did not infringe the essential liberty of conscience which they valued so highly. The hostility which they showed towards the body of the clergy is not, therefore,

8 Henry Sacheverell, The Perils of False Brethren, both in Church and State, 1709, p. 12, and cf. the Letters of Humphrey Prideaux to John Ellis, ed E.M.Thompson, Camden Society, 1875, pp. 162, 156 (11 Dec and 27 Nov 1693). The first passage is cited in Margaret C.Jacob, The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720, Hassocks 1976, p. 204, but her belief that religious and political radicalism imply each other (cf. pp. 208-9, 248-9), like that of R.L.Emerson ('Heresy, the Social Order, and English Deism', Church History 37, 1968, pp. 399-400), is not borne out by a close study of the Commonwealthsmen.

9 Shaftesbury, Characteristics, ed J.M.Robertson, 2 vols 1900, I 53; Toland, Pantheisticon, English trans., 1751, Preface; Molesworth Corr, p. 397.

explicable on the grounds that radical theology demanded action against the Church's institutional position. Instead, it should be seen as an aspect of the political and constitutional concerns which have already been described. Freedom was the highest value in the political thought of the Commonwealthsmen, and they devoted much attention to the way in which it was threatened by the activities of the Court. But it was common knowledge that in seventeenth century England the Church had provided strong moral backing for the royal drive towards absolutism. The Laudian party within the Anglican church, which incited Charles I to take 'those unhappy measures which proved his ruin in the end'[10], had consistently preached against constitutional liberties and subverted freedom of conscience.

Surveying religious history, both Christian and heathen, the Commonwealthsmen claimed that such behaviour on the part of priests was far from atypical. The Druids, for example, had made sure that the people were kept in ignorance, a necessary condition of servility. The pagan priests, who 'first entertained designs against the liberty of mankind, were also the first depravers of their reason'; the Egyptian holy men 'used their learning to serve political ends and to manage the multitude to their own purposes'[11]. No doubt generalising from instances like these, Shaftesbury thought the 'settled idleness, supineness, and inactivity' which was common to men living 'in courts and palaces, and in the rich foundations of easy and pampered priests' was responsible for the antisocial inclinations of kings and clergy[12].

For the Commonwealthsmen, as for the great majority of Englishmen, Popery furnished the pattern for the malignant results

10 Toland, Amyntor, 1699, p. 100; Tindal, The Merciful Judgments of High-Church Triumphant in the Reign of Charles I, 1710, pp. 26-7, makes a similar point.

11 Toland, Collection, I 8, Letters to Serena, p. 72; Shaftesbury, Second Characters, or the Language of Forms, ed B.Rand, Cambridge 1914, p. 85.

12 Shaftesbury, Characteristics, I 313, 315-6.

of clericalism, and much of their writing on this subject could equally well have come from the pen of John Foxe. Moyle regarded Catholicism as 'the most absurd, the most impious, and the most bloody (faith) that ever the madness or wickedness of man or devils invented'; Stephens preached lurid sermons recalling the gory details of massacres perpetrated by Catholics a lifetime earlier[13]. Toland predicted the speedy downfall of the papacy as the progress of enlightenment enabled princes and peoples to realise its absurdity and corruption. Tindal and Shaftesbury accepted the established view that the large number of men and women in holy orders in Catholic countries led to economic inefficiency; Cato's Letters mentioned underutilised monastic lands, excessive holidays, diseases caused by fasting, and the withdrawal of precious metals from circulation as additional reasons why Catholic countries could never be prosperous[14].

But the core of the case against Rome was perhaps the fact that the allegiance it demanded was incompatible with intellectual freedom. 'Popery', wrote Toland,'in reality is nothing else but the clergy's assuming a right to think for the laity'; Tindal provided the corollary that personal judgement is 'the essence of Protestantism'[15]. In political terms, this absolute dependence of Catholics upon the hierarchy meant that they were not entitled to toleration; in moral, it was a denial of that rationality which the Commonwealthsmen, and many of their contemporaries, valued so

13 Moyle, Unpublished Works, I 161; Stephens, A Sermon Preach'd to the Protestants of Ireland, 1712, A Sermon without Doors to the Protestants of Ireland, 1713.

14 Toland, The Destiny of Rome, 1718, pp. 6-19; Tindal, An Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate...in Matters of Religion, 1697, p. 158; Rand, Shaftesbury, p. 278, Ashley to 2nd earl of Shaftesbury 3 May 1689; Cato's Letters no. 114, 2 Feb 1722-3 (IV 73-81).

15 Toland, An Appeal to Honest People Against Wicked Priests, 1713, p. 38; Tindal, A Defence of the Rights of the Christian Church, 1707, p. 6.

highly. Although writers like Toland, Trenchard, Shaftesbury, and Tindal may have been dubious Christians, they were, paradoxically, enthusiastic Protestants - at least in their own sense of the word.

Popery, however, was not a necessary condition of spiritual tyranny, even though it was the most obvious example of the evils of clericalism. In Protestant countries the kind of absolute ecclesiastical power claimed by Rome was out of the question, but by allying themselves with arbitrary courts unscrupulous clergymen could still acquire power and wealth at the expense of the people's liberties. Molesworth pointed out in 1694 that the Lutheran ministers in Denmark had taken this course, and Moyle criticised Fletcher of Saltoun for claiming that only popish tyrannies inflicted cruelty 'under a notion and pretence of government'. Cato's Letters pointed out that Protestant and Catholic tyrannies were equally unacceptable. According to Tindal, the independent power and internecine rivalries of the clergy had already made the reformed religion as corrupt as its foe[16].

The application of this melancholy truth to England was easily made. The phenomenon which Toland liked to call 'protestant popery' was very strong during his lifetime[17]. The Commonwealthsmen had, as we have seen, identified the Arminian party under Archbishop Laud as accomplices in the attack on the constitution under the early Stuarts. The same project was still the goal of their successors, the 'High-Church' party, 'highfliers', or 'Laudian

16 Molesworth, An Account of Denmark, 1694, p. 257; Moyle, Published Works, p. 49; Cato's Letters no. 94, 15 Sept 1722 (III 237-8); Tindal, The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted, 1706, pp. 188-9.

17 Toland, Appeal to Honest People Against Wicked Priests, p. 38.

faction'[18], after the Glorious Revolution. The threat which this party posed to established liberties had four closely-related aspects. The High Churchmen were accused of being sympathetic to Jacobitism and of using the doctrine of passive obedience to promote it; they were enemies to the existing constitution of the Church of England; they excited animosity against fellow-Protestants, both at home and on the continent, who were not Anglicans; and they encouraged servile notions in their pupils through their control of higher education. The Commonwealthsmen had a good deal to say on all these topics.

It would probably be wrong to assume that the Commonwealthsmen were disingenuous in their defence of the constitution of the Church against the men who regarded themselves as its champions. Tindal's Rights of the Christian Church Asserted, which appeared in 1706 and may have owed a substantial amount to Collins' help[19], provides an ample statement of the extreme erastian position which seems to have been shared by most of his associates. The Church is a voluntary society which, since the Reformation, has like other societies been under the control of the state, which administers it for the good of all the people. Its whole hierarchy is of human creation and can be altered when convenient: the Church can plead no 'ancient constitution'. Even the basic distinction between clergy and laity is of civil, not divine, institution, and clergymen are therefore subject to deprivation by authority of the government. Among the many books which Tindal used to support his

18 Tindal, Rights of the Christian Church, pp. 257, 340. Cf. Stephens' comment that 'the Laudian faction...altereth not, the spirit thereof having always consisted of...rigour without moderation, and malice without provocation': Bishop Hacket's Memoirs of the Life of Archbishop Williams...abridg'd, 1715, Preface. Stephens published this volume with the aim of making Laud's crimes better known.

19 T.Hearne, Remarks and Collections, ed C.E.Doble et al., Oxford Historical Society, 11 vols, Oxford 1884-1918, XI 244.

views were Erastus' Treatise of Excommunication and the Account of Denmark[20]. The Independent Whig echoed many of these propositions, and Moyle showed that he held the same attitude by praising the ancient Romans for keeping religious matters under the control of the magistrate[21]. Stephens called for an end to William III's informal committee for ecclesiastical promotions on the grounds that it was subverting the direct dependence of the clergy upon the state; Toland contended that the idea of a Church with its own constitution, totally separate from the secular power, was both unscriptural and 'impossible in itself'[22].

These principles were, of course, anathema to High Churchmen, and Tindal was not slow to exploit the rhetorical possibilities thus created; he unfairly took any assertion of independent power in the Church of England as a frontal attack upon the royal supremacy, thus equating his opponents with Catholics[23]. It was in the controversy over Convocation's right to sit regularly and make rules for the Church that this issue was posed most squarely. Atterbury opened the question in 1697 with his Letter to a Convocation-Man, a pamphlet immediately denounced by Tindal as covert popery and by Toland as a libel against king and bishops[24]. Toland, the intended victim of the revived Convocation of 1701, pointed out that assemblies of churchmen, whether General Councils or Anglican Convocations, tended to be instruments 'to bully men

20 Tindal, Rights, pp. 24, xvi-xxii, xlii, 122-4, 108, 352, lxii, 253, and cf. his Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate.., p. 89.

21 Trenchard and Gordon, The Independent Whig, nos. 8, 10, 13, 15 (9 and 23 March 1719-20, 13 and 27 April 1720); Two English Republican Tracts, ed C.Robbins, Cambridge 1969, pp. 213-7.

22 Stephens, Account of the Growth of Deism, pp. 30-1; Toland, Collection I 146.

23 Tindal, A Second Defence of the Rights, 1708, pp. 8-11, 14, New High-Church Turn'd Old Presbyterian, 1709, pp. 4-6, A New Catechism, 1710, p. viii.

24 Tindal, Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate..., pp. 178-9; Toland, Apology for Mr Toland, pp. 19-20. Toland wrote (ibid) that he had planned a reply to Atterbury until he saw that it was being done more competently by Wake and Kennett.

into superstition, as if they were more holy or infallible all together than every one of 'em was in particular'. Shaftesbury found Atterbury's theology abhorrent, but his dislike was probably reinforced by their radically different conceptions of the Church. Although the most authoritative study of Atterbury makes it clear that he was not a Jacobite before 1716, the Commonwealthsmen thought that High Church principles necessarily implied sympathy for the Pretender, and the bishop's subsequent evolution can have come as no surprise to them[25].

The superstition inculcated by the High Churchmen took on a political form in the doctrine of non-resistance; this was, therefore, potentially the most dangerous, and certainly the most contentious, of all their doctrines. Stephens, in supporting Hoadly's attack on it, went to the heart of the matter by asking 'what turn could be served by such doctrines, which cast an odium upon the Revolution, but only that of the Pretender?'. The allied tenets of non-resistance and passive obedience, preached up in the Restoration period when the Laudians were in league with the Stuart monarchs, now, according to the Commonwealthsmen, provided the ideological backing for Jacobitism. Trenchard, restating the people's right to appeal to 'the will of heaven', dismissed the opposing doctrines as cobbled up to serve a turn by 'Mahometan and Christian monks'; even Davenant, no enemy to Anglican claims, spoke of unlimited obedience as a dogma which 'poisoned our youth'[26]. Toland in 1710 alleged that although the Highfliers

25 Toland, A Letter Against Popery, 1712, pp. 10-11, and cf. Toland, Collection I 162; Shaftesbury, Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord to a Young Man at the University, 1716, p. 37; G.V.Bennett, The Tory Crisis in Church and State 1688-1730, Oxford 1975, pp. 206-7; and cf. Toland, State-Anatomy, p. 89; Cato's Letters no. 125, 20 April 1723 (IV 163-172); Gordon, A Modest Apology for Parson Alberoni, 1719, pp. 29-30.

26 Stephens, Bess o'Bedlam's Love to her Brother Tom, 1709, esp. p. 6; Cato's Letters no. 59, 30 Dec 1721 (II 218-20); Davenant, Discourse Upon Grants and Resumptions, 1700, p. 24.

constantly recommended passive obedience to the government, their seditious intentions proved that they themselves did not take it seriously[27]; in his opinion, held also by Stephens (and by Swift), non-resistance was a duty owed not to the monarch but to the true sovereign, the crown in Parliament[28].

In 1701 Toland was at his most optimistic about the prospects for national unity, and thought that the doctrine of passive obedience was no longer a threat to liberty[29]. If he still believed this a decade later, the events surrounding the Sacheverell trial must have come as a bad shock: the widespread popular sympathy for the Doctor showed that there was no national consensus on Revolution Principles. Sacheverell had been a well-known figure since the beginning of Anne's reign, with Tindal among the many who deprecated his Character of a Low Church Man as inflammatory. At the height of the agitation over the Doctor's trial Molesworth sent a long letter to Godolphin exposing the seditious nature of his doctrines and applauding the prosecution. Shaftesbury too approved of the proceedings against him, while Toland, though believing that this loudest of the 'trumpets of rebellion' deserved death, hoped that Parliament would impose some relatively lenient but ignominious punishment which would destroy his credibility[30]. But Tindal had to admit that in 1710 the

27 Toland, The Judgment of King James the First...Against Non-Resistance, 1710, p. 3; here Toland shows that James I and Charles I, adulated by the High Church party, were quite prepared to countenance rebellion. Cf. Burnet II 544.

28 Toland, Appeal to Honest People Against Wicked Priests, pp. 53-5, Stephens, A Thanksgiving Sermon Preach'd before the...Lord Mayor, 1696, p. 24; Swift, Prose Works II 16.

29 Toland, Anglia Libera, 1701, p. 21.

30 Tindal, Rights, p. lxxvi; B Lib Blenheim Papers 61118 (provisional), Molesworth to Godolphin 8 March 1709-10; Shaftesbury, Several Letters from a Noble Lord, p. 44; Mr Toland's Reflections on Dr Sacheverell's Sermon, 1710, pp. 5, 8, 12. Cf Sacheverell's Character of a Low Church Man, 1702 p. 15, for an attack on the 'vile and desecrable wretch' Toland, unjustifiably spared by the bishops in Convocation when burning would have been a more suitable fate.

majority of the common people were sympathetic to Sacheverell, a circumstance which Walter Moyle lamely attributed to a national frenzy[31].

Sacheverell was a doubly sinister figure because his reassertion of passive obedience, with its Jacobite implications, was combined with a vehement hatred of Dissenters. The Commonwealthsmen saw the opposition of Protestant and Catholic as the fundamental division in Christendom, as had their admired Queen Elizabeth. The Laudians, rising to power and influence under the Stuarts, had blurred this vital distinction by driving their Protestant opponents into schism and emphasising that the Church of England was a Catholic church. Arbitrarily-minded themselves, they weakened the resistance offered by Protestantism to the political and intellectual slavery of Popery by rejecting foreign Protestants and English Dissenters as allies. The High Churchmen, wrote Shaftesbury, 'no more esteem themselves a Protestant church, or in union with those of Protestant communion'. Tindal criticised the 'Laudian faction' for insisting at the Restoration that episcopal ordination was necessary to a clergyman, which in effect denied the existence of foreign Protestant churches. Like other Commonwealthsmen, he pointed out that the Highfliers were the bitterest enemies of the beneficent policy of naturalising continental Protestants[32].

In their attitudes to domestic Dissenters, High Churchmen like Sacheverell appeared to be undermining national unity. The

31 Tindal, An Enquiry into the Causes of the Present Disaffection, 1723, pp. 10-11; Moyle, Unpublished Works I 205-6, Moyle to Musgrave 22 June 1713; cf. Stephens, A Second Deliverance from Popery and Slavery, 1714, p. 34.

32 Rand, Shaftesbury, p. 434, Shaftesbury to Ainsworth 11 May 1711; Tindal, Rights, pp. 340-3; cf. Toland, Second Part of the State-Anatomy, 1717, pp. ii-iii.

Commonwealthsmen expressed indifference to purely doctrinal disputes, and as members of the national church were unsympathetic to scruples which prevented others from conforming: Toland in 1697 implicitly censured such people for their continued separation when their principles were so similar to those of the Church of England. But there is some evidence for supposing that Toland and Trenchard at least may have had personal reasons for a relatively favourable attitude towards Dissent. Toland as a young man had been supported in his studies by the presbyterian congregation of Daniel Williams, and he was a friend of Quakers like Penn and Furly. Trenchard's father, who lived until 1710, was a Dissenter, and the son may have retained traces of a nonconformist upbringing; those numbers of the Independent Whig which denounce church ceremonial do it with an acerbity which suggests not the deist case that it was irrelevant mumbo-jumbo but the puritan contention that it was spiritually corrosive[33]. At all events, it has been seen that the Commonwealthsmen took the Toleration Act of 1689 to be an inviolable part of the constitution; they were unhappy with the Test Act, and insisted that further infringement of the civil rights of Dissenters was unjustifiable[34]. Toland went out of his way to promote understanding between nonconformists and Anglicans. Both he and Stephens felt that the only possible argument against toleration of Dissenters was that they had refused it to others during the Interregnum[35]. In 1706, therefore, hoping to 'reduce the doctrine of toleration to a clear and positive system', as he

33 Toland, Apology for Mr Toland, p. 17; Alexander Gordon, ed., Freedom After Ejection 1690-92, Manchester 1917, pp. 182-3; Bodleian Library MS Ballard v ff.46-7, Gibson to Charlett 13 June 1694; Douglas Lacey, Dissent and Parliamentary Politics 1661-1689, New Brunswick (N.J.), 1969, p. 452; The Independent Whig nos. 31, 32, 17 & 24 August 1720.

34 See Chapter 2, pp.

35 Toland, The Life of John Milton, 1699, pp. 77-9; Rawlins (?), A Letter to the Author of the Memorial..., 1705, pp. 3-4.

told Archbishop Tenison, Toland, in association with Stephens, wrote to leading Dissenters to ask them for an unequivocal renunciation of religious persecution. Although this meddling elicited a sour response from Defoe, who believed that Toland was trying to subvert all religion, he obtained favourable statements from Independents, Baptists, Quakers, and some of the younger and more liberal Presbyterians[36].

The Commonwealthsmen were sympathetic to Occasional Conformity as a practice which developed links between differing sects of Protestants. Toland pointed out that the Independents, having recommended it in 1658, could not be accused of practising it solely to evade the Test Act. Tindal believed that St.Paul himself had encouraged it as a gesture of good will, and Shaftesbury had praised it as strengthening the Protestant interest. Among the Commonwealthsmen only Moyle found any tincture of hypocrisy in the custom[37]. Repeated attempts by High Church partisans to make it illegal for officeholders were therefore pernicious. Davenant amazed his Tory associates by arguing strongly against such a measure in 1704, when the controversy was at its height: unity among Protestants was the most important consideration as long as the war lasted. Tindal suggested that High Church demands that all civil employments be reserved to Anglicans recalled the old doctrine of the sectaries that dominion should be founded in grace, while Stephens feared that the Occasional Conformity Bill

36 Lambeth Palace Library MS 930 f.229, Toland to Tenison 2 May 1707, MS 933 f.7, Toland to leading Dissenters; Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson c146 ff.47-8, Smith to Hearne 23 Jan 1706-7; Defoe, A Short View of the Present State of the Protestant Religion in Britain, Edinburgh 1707, p. 34; Toland, Second Part of the State-Anatomy, pp. 47-65; Edmund Calamy, An Historical Account of my own Life, ed J.T.Rutt, 2 vols 1829, II 37-8.

37 Toland, Memorial of the State of England, 1705, pp. 60-1; Tindal, Rights, pp. 344-5; Shaftesbury, Paradoxes of State, 1702, pp. 6-8; Moyle, Unpublished Works ii 208.

would increase hypocrisy rather than curb it[38]. In 1717 Toland called for the repeal of the Act and its counterpart, the Schism Act, which he thought had been designed by Queen Anne's last ministry to nullify dissenting opposition to the Pretender's succession; High Church bigotry again went hand in hand with political disaffection. Molesworth was prominent in the parliamentary campaign of 1717 to secure repeal of the obnoxious measures[39].

The final element in the attack on the High Church clergy was the criticism of 'priestcraft', the complex of practices by which unthinking obedience was inculcated in the laity. Education remained largely under clerical control, and the Commonwealthsmen believed that the huge power this conferred was being abused. The clear and distinct ideas necessary to true understanding were too often sacrificed to jargon and mystification: Toland thought that both the medical and clerical professions had a good deal to answer for here[40], although except at times of severe illness his attention, and that of his friends, was focussed on the latter. As deists, or at least latitudinarians, they assumed that the principles of cosmology and religion reflected the operations of a beneficent mind, the purposes of which could be apprehended

38 Davenant, Essays Upon Peace at Home and War Abroad, 1704, pp. 241-58; Tindal, New High-Church Turn'd Old Presbyterian, pp. 15-16; Stephens, A Letter to the Lords upon the Matter of the Occasional Bill, 1711.

39 Toland, State-Anatomy, pp. 26-32; D.Bogue and J.Bennett, History of the Dissenters, 3 vols 1808-12, III 127-8; The Correspondence of Richard Steele, ed Rae Blanchard, 1941, p. 339, citing Boyer, Political State of Great Britain XIII 417-9; cf. W. Cobbett, The Parliamentary History of England, 36 vols 1806, VII 586, recording Molesworth's vote for repeal in January 1719.

40 Toland, Collection II 280. Cf. Clarissa Harlowe's comment that 'I have always observed that those who treat the professors of the art of healing contemptuously, too generally treat higher institutions in the same manner', The Works of Samuel Richardson, 12 vols 1883, VI 207.

through the human reason. Toland summed up his views on this subject in a jingle:

> Natural religion was easy first and plain,
> Tales made it mystery, offerings made it gain;
> Sacrifices and shows were at length prepared;
> The priests ate roast meat, and the people stared.

Toland's first book, attacking the concept of mysteries, had noted that they were deliberately promoted by priests for their own benefit. Superstition, like mysteries, subjected men's minds, and hence their purses, to their spiritual masters, and Toland therefore greatly admired those who endeavoured to dispel it: men like his Dutch acquaintance Antony Van Dale or the renaissance magus Giordano Bruno[41]. Trenchard fully concurred with Toland's analysis, describing the evil effects of superstition in lurid terms and claiming that irrational beliefs and observances were particularly fostered by the High Church clergy. Tindal thought that the clergy were afraid of an intelligent and well-informed laity, and Anthony Collins too asserted that priests found their account in ignorance[42].

On these assumptions, the existing clerical control of higher education was clearly intolerable. The implacable Tindal believed that the collective interest of the clergy had stifled free thought at the universities. Molesworth regarded the education available there as 'monklike', and Shaftesbury sneered at them as

41 Toland, Letters to Serena, p. 130, Christianity Not Mysterious, 1696, pp. v-vi; Toland, Collection II 332, Toland to Van Dale 1699, ibid., 380-1, Toland to (?), 1707-8(?); B Lib Add MS 4465 ff.5-6, Leibniz to Toland 30 April 1709. Cf. F.H.Heinemann, 'John Toland and the Age of Enlightenment', Review of English Studies 20, 1944, pp. 139-46, and G.Aquilecchia, 'Nota su John Toland, traduttore di Giordano Bruno', English Miscellany 10, 1958, pp. 77-86.

42 Trenchard, 'The Natural History of Superstition' (1709), in Somers Tracts XII 106-121, at p. 119, Independent Whig nos. 33 and 52, 31 Aug and 31 Dec 1720; Tindal, Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate..., p. 115; Collins, A Discourse of Free-Thinking, 1713, p. 25.

'endowed seminaries'. By their choice of terminology, both writers indicated that popery as well as pedantry were rife at Oxford and Cambridge, and Cato's Letters criticised the universities as centres of disaffection[43]. It was, however, left to Toland, who had been drummed out of Oxford in 1694, to suggest their reform. The High Church hold should be broken, he wrote, and useful courses introduced at the same time: in 'trade, no less than in... mathematics, mechanics, agriculture, navigation, planting, fishery, mining, and so on'[44].

The Highfliers, then, seemed to threaten the constitution of the Church, the Hanover Succession, Protestant unity, and freedom of thought, and all these causes of their indignation were interrelated. Sometimes their sense of outrage at such extensive subversion led the Commonwealthsmen into a wholly negative attitude towards the Church. Toland described priests as the 'most intolerable of tyrants', and pointed to the good effects of secularisation of church wealth. 'A landed clergy...seldom fails to corrupt religion, and to embroil the state', he wrote, and the Electress Sophia suggested that the cause of his unpopularity in England was his freedom in talking against the revenues of the church[45]. Tindal wanted the clergy to subsist on alms alone;

43 Tindal, Reasons Against Restraining the Press, 1704, p. 6; Molesworth, Account of Denmark, Preface; Rand, Shaftesbury, p. 432, Shaftesbury to Somers 30 March 1711; Cato's Letters no. 127, 4 May 1723 (IV 184).

44 Toland, Collection II 248, State-Anatomy, pp. 71-4. Cf. Toland's alleged threat of 1695 'that he should be a Member of Parliament and should then have an opportunity of being revenged on priests and universities': Lambeth Palace Library MS 942 f.110, Charlett to Tenison 25 Oct 1695.

45 Toland, Destiny of Rome, pp. 19, 12-15, Nazarenus, p. 29; Doebner, Briefe, p. 219, Sophie to Bothmer 24 June 1702, and cf. p. 14, Sophie Charlotte to Bothmer 14 July 1702.

Shaftesbury thought that they had been corrupted by their acquisitions of land under Constantine. Both he and Moyle, who picked up his anticlerical attitude at the Grecian, expressed the view that all interference in politics by clergymen was undesirable[46].

Yet the judgment summed up in Pope's famous line

> Toland and Tindal, prompt at priests to jeer[47],

is hardly a fair statement of the views of the Commonwealthsmen on the Church of England. Their professions that their strictures upon priestcraft were not meant to apply to honest ministers often seem perfunctory, but should not be dismissed. Toland praised Archbishop Sharp for recommending that clergymen should not take part in politics, while the Latitudinarian prelates generally received a good press from the Commonwealthsmen. It had been the Low Church bishops, mainly promoted by the admired William III, who had defended the Church's constitution against the Highfliers in the Lower House of Convocation; they had at the same time effectively prevented action against Toland as a heretic. Burnet in particular seemed to the Commonwealthsmen to emerge with credit from these affrays[48]. Later on they were even more forthright in their admiration for Benjamin Hoadly. In the famous sermon which gave rise to the Bangorian controversy, he expounded doctrines of church authority almost identical to those held by Tindal and his associates; earlier in his career he had assailed the belief in

46 Tindal, Rights, p. 219; Shaftesbury, Characteristics, ed J.M. Robertson, 2 vols 1900, II 205-6, Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord, p. 44; Moyle, Published Works, pp. 5, 64.
47 Pope, Dunciad (original version), II 367.
48 Toland, Appeal to Honest People Against Wicked Priests, pp. 33-4; Shaftesbury, Paradoxes of State, pp. 4-6; Toland, Vindicius Liberius, pp. 50-4, 71-4; Shaftesbury, Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord, p. 34.

passive obedience, which most whigs assumed to be the hallmark of Jacobitism. Tindal commended Hoadly as 'the strenuous assertor of our religious as well as civil rights', and Toland praised him in similar terms. The Independent Whig, needless to say, wholeheartedly agreed with Hoadly's views; for Gordon, the bishop of Bangor was 'that great good man'[49].

Hoadly was the spokesman for those clergymen - of whom Stephens was one - who upheld an established church which respected the rights of the individual and the state. Although there seems to have been no personal contact between him and the Commonwealthsmen, their ideas were remarkably similar: they anticipated him in portraying the church as a moral force which, like the patriot king, would be all the stronger for renouncing its coercive power. It was in the name of this ideal, and not out of mere anticlerical spite, that they persisted in their often rebarbative attacks upon the Highfliers.

49 'The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ', in The Works of Benjamin Hoadly, 3 vols 1773, II 402-9; Tindal, Christianity as Old as the Creation, p. 215; Toland, Nazarenus, p. xxiv, Tetradymus, 1720, p. 182; The Independent Whig no. 40, 19 Oct 1720; Trenchard, Collection II 131-2.

## CHAPTER FIVE: PATRONAGE AND PRINCIPLE

Over the last few chapters a composite picture of the political ideas of the Commonwealthsmen has been presented: broadly, they have been seen to have been more traditional and less exceptional than previous accounts would have led us to expect. But to portray the Commonwealthsmen merely as a group of detached theorists would give a very one-sided impression. They were actively concerned with many of the most contentious issues of their time, and particularly with foreign policy, high finance, and Irish problems. The next chapters will attempt to disentangle their rather complicated involvement in these main issues, and thus to reach some conclusions about their relevance to the corpus of 'Commonwealth' thought discussed above. But first the Commonwealthsmen's relations with the governments of their time should be dealt with, for three reasons. Firstly, such a discussion shows that many of them were figures of real political significance; secondly, it allows the establishment of a chronological framework for the digestion of the large amount of information available on their political careers; and thirdly, it poses the important question of the relative importance of personal ambition and public principles in their motivation.

Even a superficial look at the lives of the Commonwealthsmen reveals that their political activity was seldom disinterested; they failed to distinguish themselves in a period that was not renowned for altruistic public service. Molesworth presents a picture of assiduous importunity: constantly referring to his large and needy family, he applied to a bewildering succession of potential patrons - Nottingham, Shrewsbury, Sunderland, Godolphin, and Harley - for lucrative government jobs and favours. With the same purpose in mind Davenant could approach with equal assurance a Junto Whig like Montague or a High Tory like Nottingham.

Trenchard seems to have hoped for some kind of post from the Sunderland ministry two years before he began his devastating attack on it in Cato's Letters[1]. Toland was incessantly soliciting Harley - and no doubt other benefactors - for money to pay off his debts, and his aspirations were fixed on a government place or pension; at one point it was rumoured that he had obtained the Keepership of the Paper Office, but this and all other hopes of a permanent income were frustrated. Shaftesbury, of course, had no financial needs as pressing as Toland's, but he too expected a quid pro quo for services rendered to the government. This eventually took the form of the office of Treasurer of the Transports for his young protégé, Thomas Micklethwayte, obtained in 1708 after six years of single-minded lobbying on the latter's behalf[2].

Among the Commonwealthsmen the political conduct of Matthew Tindal was most open to the suspicion that it was influenced by considerations of personal advantage. It was reported that Tindal received a government pension of £200 a year, and it seems natural to connect this with the pamphlets he wrote on behalf of the ministry between 1717 and 1723. The first of these, The Defection Considered, was a bitter attack on Walpole and Townshend, who had resigned from the government; Walpole, however, was able to produce a manuscript of Tindal's which had espoused the opposite side in the dispute, and claimed that the Doctor's motives for publication

1 Molesworth Corr, e.g. pp. 214-5, 219, 221, 227, 257; B Lib Add MS 7121 f.19, Davenant to Montague 6 May 1694, 29588 f.70, Davenant to Nottingham 25 June 1702; Trenchard Corr MS G23 ff.22-3, Trenchard to Simpson 10 Oct 1718.

2 H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 235-6, 408-10, Toland to Harley 28 Aug 1705, 16 May 1707; Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson c146 ff.47-8, Smith to Hearne 23 Jan 1706-7; P.R.O. 30/24/21/145(2), Molesworth to Shaftesbury 4 Feb 1707-8, 21/152, Cropley to Shaftesbury 13 April 1708, 21/155, Godolphin to Shaftesbury 26 April 1708, 21/231, Shaftesbury to Marlborough 10 April 1702.

were entirely mercenary. Tindal published another tract to explain away the apparent inconsistency, but the mud stuck: Pope refers to the story in the notes to the Dunciad[3].

The many cases in which Commonwealthsmen altered or abandoned trenchantly expressed views reinforce the impression that their principles were lightly worn. Willingness to accept long Parliaments and a standing army under George I contrasts with impassioned denunciations of the same things a couple of decades earlier; the constant demands for office ignored their own assertions that placemen could not have the true interests of their country at heart. The Commonwealthsmen were never dispassionate political observers. They were involved in some of the most momentous issues of their time, and they had personal contacts with many prominent statesmen. An examination of these relationships is necessary if we are to understand the complex balance between private and public aspirations in their careers.

On the whole, the Commonwealthsmen had few dealings with Tory leaders. Molesworth had hoped for Nottingham's patronage in 1690, but this proved a false start to his career. Davenant, exceptional because of his High Church sympathies, had stronger contacts with the Tories, but they were seldom decisive[4]. If the Tories are discounted, the politicians with whom the Commonwealthsmen were involved can be divided into four main groups. There were the Junto Whigs, emerging as a recognisable faction in the mid-1690s; the 'non-aligned' Whigs, like Shrewsbury, Somerset, and Newcastle, often closely connected with the Court by birth and inclination;

3 Curll, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Matthew Tindal, LL.D., 1733, p. 54; Tindal, An Account of a Manuscript, entitul'd, Destruction the Certain Consequence of Division, 1718; Pope, Dunciad (original version), note to II 367.

4 Molesworth Corr pp. 214-5; B Lib Add MS 29588 f.70, Davenant to Nottingham 25 June 1702.

the political managers, attempting to manipulate the party system in the interests of efficient administration; and Robert Harley, whose preference for the politics of Court and Country was perhaps sui generis among leading statesmen.

Among the Junto leaders neither Orford nor Wharton had any close connection with the Commonwealthsmen; Shaftesbury disliked the latter, finding him a baffling mixture of public spirit and personal depravity[5]. On the other hand, Charles Montague, Lord Halifax, was, according to Toland, 'a person of extraordinary talents and accomplishments', and Shaftesbury paid tribute to his Whig integrity when asking him to stand godfather to his baby son in 1710. Halifax seems to have acted for a time as a patron to Moyle and Davenant, and there is a tradition that he encouraged the writing of Essays Upon Peace at Home and War Abroad, Davenant's plea for political moderation and national unity[6]. To Shaftesbury, however, Somers was the most admirable member of the Junto, since unlike most of his colleagues he was capable of subordinating party interests to those of the nation; on at least one occasion Shaftesbury entrusted his Lords' proxy to Somers, to whom some of his philosophical works were addressed. Somers had been closely connected with Locke's College in the 1690s; it was reported that he wrote the Preface to Tindal's Rights, and Swift insinuated that he had discussed religious matters with Toland. Thus, despite the fact that Somers never offered Toland his political favour, the ties between him and some of the Commonwealthsmen appear to have

5 Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, pp. 16, 44.
6 Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. xiii; B Lib Egerton MS 929 f.9, Moyle to Montague 1696, Add MS 7121 f.63, Shaftesbury to Halifax 23 Feb 1710-1, f.19, Davenant to Montague 6 May 1694; Edmund Calamy, An Historical Account of my own Life, 2 vols 1829, II 16.

been strong[7].

This was also true of the youngest of the Junto Lords, the third earl of Sunderland. Toland knew the young Lord Spencer as a bibliophile in 1697, and by the end of William's reign Shaftesbury regarded him as a political ally. In 1717, the year in which Tindal wrote to defend his ministry against Walpole's attacks, Sunderland married Molesworth's niece after having several times asked the viscount to recommend a wife to him[8]. Yet Sunderland never received the kind of respect which the Commonwealthsmen paid to Somers; his party zeal contrasted sharply with the more moderate approach of the older statesman. The Junto leaders were susceptible to the criticism that during the 1690s they had put the interest of the Court before their Whig principles, but the comparatively temperate attitudes of Somers and Halifax seemed to mark them out as men who had positive contributions to make to politics.

Although the Junto provided the driving force of Whiggery, there were other Whig magnates who lent support and patronage to some of the Commonwealthsmen. These lords tended to lack the combination of personal ambition and party loyalty which characterised the Junto, and they found it easy to pose as disinterested supporters or opponents of administration as it suited them. They included two earls who had been involved in the Rye House intrigues, Macclesfield and Stamford: the former acted as Toland's patron on the Hanover embassy of 1701, while the latter, who had known and liked Toland in Germany, drank Methuen's

7 Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. 16; P.R.O. 30/24/20/87, Somers to Shaftesbury Dec 1704; William L. Sachse, Lord Somers: A Political Portrait, Manchester 1975, pp. 99, 116, 203-5, 302; P.R.O. 30/24/21/237, Toland to Shaftesbury 1705; cf. Gordon, Three Political Letters to a Noble Lord, 1721, p. 6.

8 Lambeth Palace Library MS 933 f.74, Simpson to Toland 20 April 1697; P.R.O. 30/24/20/38, Shaftesbury to Spencer 13 Nov 1701; H.M.C. 29 Portland V 537, newsletter of 14 Nov 1717.

health with John Freke in 1705[9]. A more important figure, the earl of Peterborough, was also well known to the Commonwealthsmen. Shaftesbury recognised his great abilities, but rightly distrusted him as erratic. Peterborough offered to jobs to nominees of both Shaftesbury and Trenchard, and his readiness to favour William Stephens with a rich benefice fits into the same pattern[10]. Moyle knew and admired Peterborough, and may have been involved in the earl's disastrous attempt to use the Fenwick case against the ministry in 1696-7. During the War of the Spanish Succession, Rawlins, Trenchard, and Davenant all praised his achievements in Spain, an attitude which was widely regarded as implying dissatisfaction with Marlborough's Flanders campaigns[11].

Three Whig Lords with reputations for moderation (they were all prepared to serve with Harley in 1710) also had some links with the Commonwealthsmen. Shrewsbury acted as a friend and patron to Molesworth during William's reign. Davenant dedicated an essay to him in 1696, and Moyle welcomed his appointment as Lord Chamberlain three years later[12]. The Duke of Somerset, the haughtiest peer in England, was, according to Shaftesbury in 1701, 'a zealous and hearty man with us', and he took a sympathetic interest in the electoral fortunes of the earl's brother, Maurice

9 See Chapter 6; Klopp, Correspondance, II 359, Sophie to Leibniz 2 Sept 1702; Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 4 Dec 1705; cf. H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 98.

10 P.R.O. 30/24/20/55, Shaftesbury to Furly 30 Jan 1701-2, 21/166, same to same 18 Jan 1707-8; Bodleian Library MS Eng Letters c200 ff.4-5, same to same 26 Dec 1708; P.R.O. 30/24/20/66, same to same 4 Nov 1702; Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 5 June 1705; Luttrell V 613, 615.

11 Moyle, Published Works, p. 17; House of Commons Journals XI 661 Rawlins (?), A Letter to the Author of the Memorial of the State of England, 1705, p. 25; Swift(?), The Characters of Two Independent Whigs, 1720, p. 10; Davenant, Sir Thomas Double at Court, 1710, pp. 74-5.

12 Molesworth Corr pp. 219, 221, Robert to Lettice Molesworth 6 Dec 1698, 11 May 1700; H.M.C. 45 Buccleuch-Whitehall II(i) 97, Shrewsbury to Capel 10 July 1694, 567, Shrewsbury to Methuen 20 Oct 1697; C.S.P.Dom 1694-5, pp. 181-2, Shrewsbury to the King 15 June 1694; B Lib Harleian MS 1223, 'Essay Upon Public Virtue', Dedication; Moyle, Published Works, p. 19.

Ashley. Toland praised Somerset as the man who had led the Lords in their opposition to those who planned to reintroduce religious persecution and arbitrary power by means of an Occasional Conformity Bill[13].

Newcastle, the most important of the Court Whig associates of the Commonwealthsmen, was often mentioned together with Somerset. 'My Lord Somerset and Newcastle, they say, are out of the cabal', reported Simpson in 1706, 'and set up for patrons of the virtuous Whigs such as Molesworth and Stanhope'. Eighteen months later Shaftesbury was informed that these two lords were prepared to join a non-party administration of the kind that Molesworth was working for[14]. Newcastle was, in fact, essential to Molesworth's political ambitions during Anne's reign. Sunderland recommended him to the duke in 1701, and he was returned to the Commons on the Holles interest at East Retford in 1705; his abandonment by Newcastle in 1710 'for some private reasons' was a harsh setback[15]. The duke's patronage was equally important to Toland, who had in 1699, 'though unknown', dedicated to him an edition of the memoirs of his kinsman Denzil Holles. By 1701 Newcastle was one of Toland's main sources of financial support, as he remained for at least the next four years. Toland praised the duke's enthusiasm for the Protestant Succession, and in Hanover in 1701 he seems to have sounded out the possibilities of implementing Newcastle's audacious plan of marrying his daughter to the Electoral Prince. A few years later he welcomed Newcastle's entry

13 P.R.O. 30/24/20/55, Shaftesbury to Furly 30 Jan 1701-2, 20/89, Burgess to Shaftesbury 20 Jan 1704-5; Toland, An Account of the Courts of Prussia and Hanover, 1705, pp. iii-ix.

14 Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 30 April 1706; P.R.O. 30/24/20/141, Cropley to Shaftesbury 30 Dec 1707.

15 Molesworth Corr pp. 233, 240, Robert to Lettice Molesworth 12 April 1705, 30 Dec 1708; H.M.C. 29 Portland II 180, Sunderland to Newcastle 13 Nov 1701, IV 612-3, Molesworth to Harley 11 Oct 1710; cf. G. Holmes, British Politics in the Age of Anne, 1967, p. 225 & note.

into the Cabinet as 'the presage of an upright and impartial administration'[16]. There are some indications that the heiress whom Shaftesbury hoped to marry in 1708-9, and for whose father he professed high esteem, may have been Newcastle's daughter[17].

The third type of politician with whom the Commonwealthsmen had links was the Court manager. These men had no real party affiliations themselves, and their brief was to contract with the various factions in order to secure the passage of official business through Parliament. For much of Anne's reign this function was performed by Marlborough and Godolphin, while the second earl of Sunderland played a very similar role under William III. The Commonwealthsmen seem to have had little personal contact with Marlborough; among them, only Davenant was a regular correspondent of the duke's[18]. This was not the case with Godolphin. Toland, it is true, resented his neglect by the Lord Treasurer. Molesworth, however, had a personal devotion to him, which seems to have been based on sympathy for his policy as much as on services rendered. Godolphin tried to help him into the Commons when Newcastle's support failed, and in 1708 Molesworth was counted as one of the 'Lord Treasurer's Whigs' who offered support to the government in an effort to stave off total capitulation to the Junto. Molesworth persuaded Shaftesbury to throw his local influence behind the Treasurer, and his sense of

16 Toland, ed., Memoirs of Denzil Lord Holles, 1699, p. viii, Anglia Libera, 1701, Epistle Dedicatory; P.R.O. 30/24/20/28, Toland to Shaftesbury 19 July 1701, 21/231, Shaftesbury to Toland 21 July 1701; Toland, Collection II 343, 348, Toland to Penn 26 June 1705; Klopp, Correspondance II 400-1, Leibniz to Sophie 25 Nov 1702; Bodleian Library MS Montagu d1 f.69, Stepney to Montague 3/14 Dec 1701; Toland, The Memorial of the State of England, 1705, p. 70.

17 Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. 10. The girl in question had originally been intended for a great lord beyond the sea', a probable reference to the Electoral Prince.

18 See twelve letters from Davenant to Marlborough (1701-1709) in B Lib Blenheim Papers MS 61135 (provisional).

loss on his patron's death was expressed in a letter to his wife: 'My dear Lord Godolphin is dead: The greatest man in the whole world for honesty, capacity, courage, friendship, generosity, is gone: my best friend is gone:'[19].

The second earl of Sunderland had not been a man to inspire similar feelings of devotion. His reputation for deviousness and lack of principle was unenviable. Yet Toland's claim that he was a statesman to whom, 'when his story comes to be impartially told, England will appear to owe the highest obligations', is not implausible. By forging the alliance between the king and the Junto in the mid-1690s he perhaps contributed as much as anybody to the stability of the Revolution regime. As late as 1701 Toland thought him essential to any broadly-based Whig government. Sunderland's connections with some of the Commonwealthsmen were close. He was a patron of Molesworth, who seems to have been a regular visitor to Althorp and to whom he once offered a seat on the Board of Trade; he supported Methuen's successful bid to be nominated Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and his influence obtained the coveted post of Cursitor Baron of the Exchequer for William Simpson[20]. Sunderland, like Godolphin, never identified himself with any of the constitutional principles urged in the writings of the Commonwealthsmen; his concern was with the maintenance of administration, not with ideas about rights and liberties. The

19 H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 408-10, Toland to Harley 16 May 1707; Molesworth Corr pp. 240, 259, Robert to Lettice Molesworth 30 Dec 1708, 20 Sept 1712, p. 238, John to Lettice Molesworth 14 Sept 1708; P.R.O. 30/24/21/180, Molesworth to Shaftesbury 12 Nov 1709.

20 Toland, Memorial of the State of England, p. 82; P.R.O. 30/24/20/28, Toland to Shaftesbury 19 July 1701: Molesworth Corr p. 219, Robert to Lettice Molesworth 6 Dec 1698; C.S.P.Dom. 1699-1700, p. 36, Molesworth to Vernon 30 Jan 1699; B Lib Blenheim Papers MS 61118 (provisional), Molesworth to Godolphin 16 July 1706, 23 Jan 1708-9; Vernon Corr I 146, 26 Dec 1696; Luttrell IV 269.

regard for this 'court artist' shown by Molesworth and Toland is the strongest proof that the Commonwealthsmen should not be judged on their theoretical writings alone.

But the ties between Robert Harley and the Commonwealthsmen are, perhaps, the most illuminating of all their political relationships. Harley was the statesman whose beliefs most closely resembled those expressed by our group; he was once abused as a Commonwealthsman and is known to have frequented the Grecian Coffee House[21]. His early Whiggery, based on dislike of the Restoration governments, was during the 1690s transmuted into a genuinely Country outlook, involving a wholehearted distaste for party politics. As a skilful moulder of public opinion, he quickly enlisted the journalistic talents of Trenchard, Toland, and Davenant; he supplied Trenchard with information needed for the composition of the Short History of Standing Armies, and he was connected with several of Toland's publishing ventures in the later years of William's reign. During the same period he inspired much of Davenant's political writing[22]. If it is borne in mind that Harley was a frequent correspondent of Methuen's in the 1690s and that Shaftesbury acknowledged him as his mentor in public affairs in his younger days, the importance of his links with the subjects of this study becomes clear[23].

Under Anne, Harley made the transition from opposition to office easily. He seems to have regarded the Country programme as fully achieved by the passage of the Act of Settlement; national

21 J.A.Downie, Robert Harley and the Press, Cambridge 1979, pp. 19 22.

22 Downie, Harley and the Press, pp. 32-3, 35 (Downie's reference to the B Lib Portland Loan appears to be inaccurate), 42-5; Toland, Collection II 227; B Lib Portland Loan 29/190 ff. 17, 131, Davenant to Harley 19 Sept 1700, 26 Dec 1701.

23 Sachse, Somers, p. 171, asserts that Methuen was Harley's candidate for Chancellor in 1700, but the sources he cites do not seem to bear this out; P.R.O. 30/24/22/2 f.178, Shaftesbury to Stephens 17 July 1706.

union under a patriotic monarch and ministry was consequently both possible and desirable[24]. It has already been shown that Toland and Shaftesbury held exactly the same view of the effect of the Act of Settlement on political alignments; Harley could hardly be blamed for deserting the Country Party when the very distinction between Court and Country now seemed obsolete[25]. But this did not imply acceptance of the legitimacy of the Whig and Tory parties, and Toland, resuming his pamphleteering activities on Harley's behalf in 1705, called for honest and moderate men of both factions to unite in support of the government[26].

The most striking example of the congruence between the Harleian position and the political creed of the Commonwealthsmen is the famous tract Faults on Both Sides, written by Simon Clement under Harley's supervision in 1710. The affinity at all points between its views and those expressed at various times by Toland, Shaftesbury, Molesworth, Trenchard, and Tindal is astonishing. Clement traces the origins of the factions which distract the state to Charles II's reign, and laments the failure to correct all the imperfections of the constitution at the time of the Revolution settlement. The Junto Whigs, corrupted by the experience of power, had resorted to the Tory tactics of relying on placemen and a standing army, while developing the technique of running up large public debts for their own short-term advantage. On the other hand, continued Clement, the High Church clergy had exacerbated divisions by preaching up the absurd doctrine of unlimited passive obedience (Clement returned to the attack on the Laudian clergy in the second part of his tract,

24 Angus McInnes, 'The Political Ideas of Robert Harley', History 50, 1965, pp. 319-20.
25 See above, chapter 3.
26 Toland, Memorial of the State of England, esp. p. 69.

published later in the year); the national church must be regulated on erastian principles. Honest Whigs and Tories should both support the new minstry; a 'regal commonwealth' with a king at its head 'is the only republic we love, and the absolute is the only monarchy we hate'[27].

All of these themes, as has been seen, occur frequently in the writings of the Commonwealthsmen, and together they amount to a full statement of the Old Whig platform. The point was not lost on at least one of Harley's Tory supporters, unhappy at his leader's penchant for a non-party administration[28]. Toland and his associates, it could be said, were natural Harleyites. Yet their relationship with the great man was a stormy one. Molesworth had always thought Harley untrustworthy, and from 1701 this was also Shaftesbury's attitude. After 1712 Toland and Trenchard both showed violent hostility to their former friend. If these fluctuations are to be made intelligible, a chronological approach to the politics of the time is required; we must try to identify the motives which led the Commonwealthsmen to cultivate their connections with Junto members, Court Whigs, managers, or Harleyites. Since they were never a party, it would be wrong to expect unanimity; nevertheless, close analysis can reveal some interesting trends.

For this purpose the generation in which the Commonwealthsmen were politically active may be divided into seven unequal periods. The first runs from the group's origins, dating from around 1694-5, to 1697; at this time it was closely connected with the 'College', and hence with Somers, Locke's closest contact in

27 Simon Clement ('Richard Harley Esq'), 'Faults on Both Sides', in Somers Tracts XII 679-707, pp. 682, 685-8, 682-3, 706, 700, 704, 'Faults on Both Sides: Part the Second', Somers Tracts XII 708-25, esp. p. 715; cf. Downie, Harley and the Press, p. 43.

28 The Wentworth Papers 1705-1739, ed J.J.Cartwright, 1882, pp. 136-7, Wentworth to Raby 18 Aug 1710.

government. The Junto adopted Locke's guidelines for the recoinage of 1696, and both Cary and Toland supported his economic arguments in print. In the Commons division on lowering the price of guineas Molesworth and Moyle voted with the ministry, although Ashley sided with the New Country Party[29]. Molesworth, perhaps not yet a member of the circle around Locke, enjoyed the favour of Somers, Sunderland, and Shrewsbury, while William Stephens' enthusiasm for the parliamentary Association for the preservation of the king's life indicates that his sympathies too were with the Junto[30]. At this early stage, therefore, most of the Commonwealthsmen were prepared to support the Court Whig administration. No doubt it was unsatisfactory in many ways, as Toland later claimed; on the other hand, it had tacitly accepted the end of censorship, a cause advocated by the College and championed by Commonwealthsmen. But their links were with the government in general rather than with the Junto, and it is known that the College, while respecting Somers, were worried about his failure to keep Montague under control[31].

The next three years (1697-1700) saw the sympathies of several of the Commonwealthsmen shift appreciably from the Whig ministry to the New Country. Davenant had opposed the recoinage in 1696, but the presence of Godolphin and Shrewsbury in the ministry may have restrained him from outright attacks on the

29 Cary, An Essay on the Coyn and Credit of England, Bristol 1696, and cf. Bodleian Library MS Locke c5 ff.14-15, Cary to Locke 11 Jan 1695-6; Toland, ed, A Discourse Upon Coins, by Signor Bernardo Davanzati, 1696, pp. iii-iv; Samuel Grascome, An Account of the Proceedings of the House of Commons, in Relation to the Recoining the Clipp'd Money, 1696.

30 C.S.P.Dom. 1694-5, pp. 180, 181-2, 186; Molesworth Corr p. 219, Robert to Lettice Molesworth 6 Dec 1698; Stephens, A Thanksgiving Sermon Preach'd...upon Occasion of his Majesty's Deliverance, 1696, p. 24.

31 Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, pp. viii, xvi; H.Horwitz, Parliament, Policy, and Politics in the Reign of William III, Manchester 1977, p. 221, note 91.

government. From 1699, however, he acted as chief propagandist for the New Country Party. His friend Walter Moyle may have been moving against the Junto as early as the beginning of 1697, when he had some unspecified connection with the malcontent Peterborough, and by 1699 he was enthusiastic about the sport of 'ministry-hunting'[32]. But for Trenchard, Toland, Molesworth, and Methuen it was probably the government's compliance with the king's wish for a peacetime standing army which led them into opposition. Trenchard, Moyle, and Toland made major contributions to the controversy; Methuen and Molesworth deserted the Court in January 1698 when it attempted to reverse the previous decision to disband[33]. The furore over forfeited lands in Ireland, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter eight, brought Trenchard and Davenant still closer to the New Country Party. By 1699 Methuen and Davenant were being named among the Country party zealots in a political satire, while Somers was talking of Toland as a dangerous political enemy[34]. Among the Commonwealthsmen only John Freke appears to have remained conspicuously loyal to the Court during this period. In 1695 he had written to Harley in friendly terms, but by 1701 his former correspondent was accusing him of corrupt practices on Somers' behalf; he and Edward Clarke were described as the main organizers of Whig propaganda. Freke's friendship with Somers was probably based on their association in the College, but unfortunately there seems to be no evidence to

32 Davenant, 'Essay Upon Public Virtue', B Lib Harleian MS 1223, pp. 80-3 (original pagination); Commons Journals XI 661; Moyle, Published Works p. 14.

33 B Lib Portland Loan 29/189 f.4, Robert to Sir Edward Harley 8 Jan 1697-8; C.S.P.Dom. 1698, p. 23, Yard to Williamson 11 Jan 1697-8.

34 H.M.C. 29 Portland VIII 62-3; B Lib Add MS 40773 f.333, Portland to Vernon 29 April 1699.

confirm Harley's charge of unsavoury dealings between them[35].

It seems likely that some of the Commonwealthsmen were not entirely at ease in a Country coalition which included High Church Tories. Moyle in 1699 had welcomed the news that 'the Church party ...are not to be our governors in the ministry, and', he added, 'I hope for that reason they will be our protectors in the House of Commons'. In the same spirit, Shaftesbury was to claim that the Tories 'are good servants, but ill masters'[36]. These expressions of dissatisfaction heralded a partial realignment of loyalties during the years 1700-1702, a period characterised by bitter strife in Parliament and in the nation at large. The problems of French aggression and the succession came to the fore as the New Country party achieved supremacy. During 1700 Shaftesbury apparently decided that Harley's response to this challenge was inadequate. While continuing to speak of himself as a member of the Country party, he came to regard those Country Tories who would not declare for an immediate war as Jacobites in masquerade, and he gave his support to the impeached Lords of the Junto. Shaftesbury showed the utmost distrust of Harley as an apostate who had taught the malignant Tories how to act like patriots while retaining their sinister designs, and he hoped for a speedy end to the 1701 Parliament, dominated as it was by the New Country Party. The little evidence that we have of Molesworth's sentiments suggests that they were similar: 'our present Parliament', he wrote in May 1701, 'pleases no party that I can

35 H.M.C. 29 Portland VIII 45, III 568-9, 570, 571, 572, Freke to Harley; Harley, The Taunton-Dean Letter, from E.C. to J.F. at the Grecian Coffee House, 1701, Query 24 (Clarke's house, Chipley, was in the hundred of Taunton Dean); A Letter from the Grecian Coffee House, 1701. On the question of authorship, see Downie, Harley and the Press, pp. 50-2.

36 Moyle, Published Works, p. 19; P.R.O. 30/24/20/53, Shaftesbury to Furly 11 Jan 1700-1.

hear of, but the French king'[37].

Davenant's behaviour at this juncture was quite the opposite. He remained fully committed to the New Country Party, and although he accepted that French expansionism made a new war necessary he insisted that the former ministers could not be entrusted with its administration. He was convinced of the justice of the impeachments against the Junto Lords, and he strongly criticised Whig agitation against the 1701 Parliament. But his indiscreet and possibly corrupt dealings with the French envoy Poussin robbed him of most of his credibility at this time[38]. Toland's course in 1701 is less easy to plot. To all appearances he was under Harley's thumb, writing tracts to order and informally representing the Speaker in Hanover. Somers and Montague thought that this was the case, but the position was more complex. The Art of Governing by Partys, published by Toland in 1701, was so Harleian in tone that the Speaker was later taken to be the author, yet it was sent to some of Shaftesbury's Dutch friends with the earl's apparent approbation. While on the continent he kept in close touch with Shaftesbury and Newcastle, and he seems to have hoped for and expected a dissolution of Parliament[39]. The assumption that Toland's close contacts with Harley led to a rift with Shaftesbury[40] is, therefore, misplaced. Toland remained heavily dependent on Shaftesbury for an income, and the two seem to have collaborated on the pamphlet Paradoxes of

37 P.R.O. 30/24/20/22, 24, 31, 55, 57, Shaftesbury to Furly 15 April, 9 May, 26 August 1701, 30 Jan, 27 Feb 1701-2; Molesworth Corr p. 224, Robert to Lettice Molesworth 12 May 1701.

38 Davenant, Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power..., 1701, pp. 79-85, The True Picture of a Modern Whig, 1701, pp. 8, 43; Davenant (?), A Vindication of Dr Charles Davenant, Anthony Esq, and John Tredenham Esq, 1702, pp. 31-2.

39 Somers, Some Queries which may Deserve Consideration, 1701, no. 19; Bodleian Lib MS Montagu d1 ff.68-71, Stepney to Montague 3/14 Dec 1701; The Wentworth Papers, pp. 136-7, Wentworth to Raby 18 August 1710; P.R.O. 30/24/20/19, Shaftesbury to Furly 4 March 1700-1, 20/28, Toland to Shaftesbury 19 July 1701.

40 As found in Downie, Harley and the Press, pp. 43-4.

State in 1702. Shaftesbury's distrust of Harley remained strong, and the cessation of Toland's contact with the Speaker at the beginning of Anne's reign probably reflects this[41]. Toland seems to have been happy with Harley's domestic policy as embodied in the Act of Settlement, but doubts about his readiness to commit England to all-out war with France hastened the breaking-off of their relationship.

The years from 1700 to 1702, therefore, saw a fragmentation of the Commonwealthsmen, some of them reverting to support of the official Whigs, others remaining loyal in various degrees to the New Country Party. This lack of cohesion continued in the period from 1702 to 1708, but a perceptible shift took place from adherence to the Junto to support for the ministry. Within a short time the triumvirate of Marlborough, Godolphin, and Harley proved itself an able and effective war administration which was not amenable to pressure from the High Tories. Davenant, who was of course a long-standing Harleyite, produced one of the most substantial apologias for the new policy of submerging internal differences in wartime unity, the Essays Upon Peace at Home and War Abroad (November 1703). The post of Inspector-General of Imports and Exports, bestowed on Davenant earlier in the year, had cemented his allegiance to the ministers[42]. In his Cornish retirement Moyle praised Godolphin's 'conduct and frugality' to the local Grand Jury in 1706, while Tindal defended Marlborough's

41 Downie, Harley and the Press, pp. 43-4; Giancarlo Carabelli, Tolandiana, Florence 1975, p. 88; P.R.O. 30/24/20/52, Shaftesbury to Furly 6 Jan 1701-2; Toland, Collection II 345-6, Toland to Penn 26 June 1705.

42 D.G.A.Waddell, 'The Career and Writings of Charles Davenant', Oxford D.Phil thesis 1954, pp. 336-8, 'Charles Davenant (1656-1714): a Biographical Sketch', Ec.H.R., 2nd Series 11, 1958-9, pp. 285-6; cf. B Lib MS Lansdowne 773 f.27, Charles to Henry Davenant 11 April 1704: 'the moderation in our court which I have recommended in my last book (which moderation only can secure the succession to the House of Hanover) has created many bitter enmities among my old friends'.

reputation against High Church detractors. Sir William Simpson was a personal friend of Godolphin's, and obtained political information from the Treasurer in the course of games of chess; his correspondence with Methuen indicates that both were, on the whole, sympathetic to minsterial policy[43]. It also shows the stages by which their mutual friend Molesworth came to support the government. He had been badgering the duumvirs for employment since 1702, but had run up against the aversion of Marlborough. It was only when his patron Newcastle entered the ministry in 1705 that Godolphin began to take notice of him, but by the summer Molesworth was a 'great favourite of my Ld T'. Godolphin and Newcastle combined to ensure that Molesworth returned to the Commons at the 1705 election for the first time since his defeat in 1698[44]. Molesworth remained closely connected with the Country Whigs, and was active in support of the 'Whimsical Clause' in 1706. Godolphin, however, seems to have been ready to accept the occasional deviation on conscientious grounds as long as the general outlines of government policy were supported[45].

Like Molesworth, Toland was increasingly sympathetic to the ministry in the years up to 1708. As has been seen, at William's death he seemed to be moving towards allegiance to the Junto. He thought Marlborough a threat to the Protestant Succession and spoke disrespectfully about both him and the Queen, while in March 1703 he made an approach to Halifax through Shaftesbury[46].

43 Moyle, Unpublished Works, I 164; Tindal, The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted, 1706, p. 293; Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen, c.26 Nov 1703(?).

44 Molesworth Corr p. 227, Robert to Lettice Molesworth 10 Nov 1702; Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 14 March 1703-4, 12 Dec 1704, 27 March 1704-5, 5 June, 17 July 1705; Holmes, British Politics, p. 225 & note.

45 Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 15 Jan 1705-6, 30 April 1706; P.R.O. 30/24/20/141, Cropley to Shaftesbury 30 Dec 1707.

46 Toland, Collection II 346-7, Toland to Penn 26 June 1705; Doebner, Briefe, p. 16, Sophie Charlotte to Bothmer 29 July 1702; B Lib Add MS 7121 ff.59, 61.

Clearly nothing came of this initiative, and over the next two years Toland became increasingly impressed with the domestic and external policies of the administration. In the summer of 1705 he approached Harley through their mutual friend William Penn in order to disclaim any links with the Junto and to ask for a place in government service. He had always, he protested, been well-affected to Harley, but the malice of certain unnamed people had led to misunderstanding between them[47]. The result of this appeal was the publication of the Memorial of the State of England, a manifesto of the ministry's aims. In its praise for the great officers of state and its defence of principled moderation it strongly resembled Davenant's Essays Upon Peace at Home. The two authors agreed that parties were dangerous and irrelevant, and that good men on all sides should unite in the national interest: the influence of Harley's ideas is clearly visible[48].

Some of Toland's old associates, however, saw no virtue in the Godolphin ministry. Freke had always been closely connected with the Junto, and at the Grecian during 1705 and 1706 he publicly criticised Marlborough's conduct of the war. Toland himself no longer frequented the Grecian, where his old companions claimed that he had become a Tory; Stephens complained of 'Toland's abominable flattery of him (Harley) in the State-Memorial'. Trenchard, it seems, was another of these coffee house

47 Toland, Collection II 338-53, Toland to Penn 26 June 1705; H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 235-6, Toland to Harley 28 Aug 1705.

48 On Toland's influence with Harley at this period, see a sardonic and probably exaggerated letter in H.M.C. 29 Portland VIII 279, Nettervill to Harley(?) 14 Jan 1706-7, reporting advice by the nonjuror Bret: 'he asked me if I had an interest in serving Toland. I said, very little. Said he, "Mr Penn, your friend, has a great interest", advised me to get Mr Penn to speak to Mr Toland that he might speak to Mr Harley, with whom he is mighty great...for, added he, "Toland is secretary Harley's champion or penman to write as he desires"'.

critics of Marlborough[49]. The Grecian's riposte to Toland's apostasy, called A Letter to the Author of the Memorial of the State of England, appeared late in 1705. In it, Marlborough and Harley were bitterly attacked, while William's Junto ministry was praised as upright and moderate. The uncertainty as to the exact authorship of this important pamphlet has never been fully resolved; against the written admission of responsibility by Stephens, there is a strong tradition that the real author was Thomas Rawlins, for whom his friend took the blame[50]. Stephens was immediately suspected, however, and was taken into custody. Like Toland, he depended for part of his income on Shaftesbury, and he must have expected the earl's approval of the pamphlet. Shaftesbury's correspondence had shown intermittent dissatisfaction with the government since 1702. Yet, to Stephens' horror, he was disowned by his former patron after confessing to the libel[51]. Toland had made sure that, when he moved into the ministerial camp, he had at least the tacit concurrence of the earl. He had discussed the step with Shaftesbury well in advance, and sent the

49 Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 25 Sept 1705, and cf. 2 Jan 1705-6; P.R.O. 30/24/20/105, Toland to Shaftesbury 22 Oct 1705, 20/111, Stephens to Shaftesbury 26 Jan 1705-6; Swift(?), The Characters of Two Independent Whigs, 1720, p. 10.

50 See the articles by Douglas Coombs, 'William Stephens and the Letter to the Author of the Memorial of the State of England', B.I.H.R. 32, 1959, pp. 24-37, which accepts Stephens as the author and has useful information on his connections with Shaftesbury, and J.A.Downie, 'William Stephens and the Letter to the Author of the Memorial of the State of England Reconsidered', B.I.H.R. 50, 1977, pp. 253-9. Downie goes for Rawlins as the author, citing Desmaizeaux (Toland, Collection I lx) and Davenant (B Lib Add MS 4291 f.40) to this effect (Davenant also connects Trenchard with the libel). To these he could have added Simpson, who also understood Rawlins to be the author (Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 12 Feb 1705-6). But Downie's dismissal of Rawlins' account of the affair (B Lib Portland Loan 29/155, Rawlins to Harley 15 Feb 1705-6) as unconvincing is too cavalier, and the matter cannot be regarded as settled.

51 Rand, Shaftesbury, pp. 311 (memorandum of 9 July 1703), 334-5 (Shaftesbury to Gwinn 24 Feb 1704-5); P.R.O. 30/24/20/80, 111, 115, 116.

Memorial to him, apparently confident that it would find favour. Stephens' arrest was an unwelcome setback to Shaftesbury's plans for a rapprochement with the government, which was only fully obtained through Molesworth's mediation a couple of years later. During 1708 Molesworth attempted to persuade his friend, who was in temporary remission from chronic illness, to offer active support to the ministry. The bait was the long-awaited post for Thomas Micklethwayte, and Shaftesbury, resolving to forget 'some silly mistakes of pamphlets written', accepted it: at the 1708 election his influence in the south-west was exerted in the government's favour[52].

By 1708, therefore, some measure of agreement existed among the most active and important of the Commonwealthsmen. Davenant, Toland, Molesworth, and Shaftesbury were all opposed to the attempt by the Junto to remodel the ministry on strictly party lines. Yet despite this the period 1708-1712 saw no unanimity among these men. Harley had left the government in disgrace early in 1708, but Toland, resentful at Godolphin's lack of interest in him, remained loyal. Shaftesbury and Molesworth, however, continued to be enthusiastic about the duumvirs, although they observed the constant advances made by the Junto with some alarm[53]. The ministerial changes of 1710 came as an unpleasant shock to them. Shaftesbury vainly hoped that a strict union between the duumvirs and the Whigs would ensure common salvation; nothing of the kind was tried. He kept on polite terms with Harley, but his courtly

52 P.R.O. 30/24/21/237, Toland to Shaftesbury 1705, 20/105, same to same 22 Oct 1705, 22/2, Shaftesbury to Stephens 17 July 1706, 20/137, Molesworth to Shaftesbury 18 Dec 1707, 21/166, Shaftesbury to Furly 18 Jan 1707-8; Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, pp. x-xi; Rand, Shaftesbury, p. 197.

53 H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 408-10, Toland to Harley 16 May 1707; P.R.O. 30/24/21/180, Molesworth to Shaftesbury 12 Nov 1709; Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, pp. 15-16, Shaftesbury to Molesworth 20 Nov 1708.

epistolary style could not hide the old distrust[54]. The advent of the new regime was disastrous for Molesworth: he lost Newcastle's patronage and experienced great difficulty in obtaining payment of money owed to him by the government. While he was as ready as ever to offer advice and solicit favours, he became convinced that the new prime minister was radically dishonest[55].

This attitude was ironic, since Harley, as has been seen, came to power professing a political creed which had a great deal in common with ideas previously expressed by Shaftesbury, Molesworth, and their friends. He was determined to avoid the domination of his government by any party. Davenant, echoing Faults on Both Sides, assured the Whigs that 'particular persons among you will not be rejected who really have parts and worth. On the contrary, I am apt to believe they will be gladly embraced, provided they show a firm disposition to join in measures for preserving the constitution in Church and State'. It was in this limited sense that, as Harley himself averred, a Whig game was intended at bottom[56].

Toland played an interesting part, which has apparently gone unnoticed, in the doomed attempt to create a non-party administration. He had remained in touch with Harley during his disgrace, and in 1710 wrote to the new prime minister to congratulate him on his accession to power. Harley's aspirations for a coalition government survived the initial refusal of

54 Rand, Shaftesbury, pp. 425-6, Shaftesbury to Cropley 24 July 1710; H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 697, same to Harley 30 May 1711.
55 H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 612-3, V 151, 82, B Lib Portland Loan 29/151, 29/308 ff.82-3, Molesworth to Harley 11 Oct 1710, 1 Sept 1711, 10 March 1711-2, 20 Oct 1712, 20 March 1712-3; Molesworth Corr p. 257, Robert to Lettice Molesworth 3 May 1712.
56 Davenant, Sir Thomas Double at Court, 1710, p. 64; The Private Diary of William, First Earl Cowper, ed E.C.Hawtrey, Eton 1833, p. 43.

prominent Whigs to serve with him and the general election of 1710 which brought in a strongly partisan Tory majority, although in retrospect it was easy to argue that the latter event had made all such plans impracticable. Negotiations with Whig leaders continued until 1713, and Toland was an intermediary in some of these approaches[57]. Toland's loyalties were complicated: in 1711 and 1712 he tried manfully to reconcile his allegiance to the House of Hanover with his sympathy for the kind of non-party government which Harley (now earl of Oxford) claimed to favour. The steadily widening rift between Whitehall and Hanover as the negotiations for the Peace of Utrecht proceeded made the attempt seem less and less plausible: as early as February 1711 Toland was urging his patron to improve his relations with the Protestant heirs. In the following December Toland submitted a memorial to the prime minister calling upon him to stop treating with the French 'and be the author of a happy coalition between the true friends of their country, which are the moderate Whigs and the moderate Tories'. In practical terms, he suggested, this would involve the exclusion of Godolphin and Sunderland from power in a remodelled ministry under Oxford. A few days later Toland reaffirmed his dislike for any arrangement in which 'the prince, or even his chief minister, should make himself the head of a party', and it was only during 1713 that Toland brought himself to admit that his contacts with Oxford had been a failure[58].

57 H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 572, Toland to Harley 22 Aug/2 Sept 1710, ibid. 451, Halifax to Oxford May 1714.

58 Toland, Collection II 403-11, Toland to Harley 9 Feb 1710-1, II 216-8, 228, Memorials of 7 and 17 Dec 1711, II 429-30, Toland to (Halifax?), undated (but subsequent to the publication of Dunkirk or Dover in 1713). See also H.M.C. 29 Portland V 258-9, Toland to Oxford, June or July 1711 (misdated 1712).

Toland was never guilty of underestimating his own importance, and his claims that he possessed 'the entire trust...of some of the most considerable men in the nation and City' should not be accepted without supporting evidence. But such evidence does exist. An anonymous correspondent warned Oxford that meetings with Toland were a security risk, since he 'betrays what he knows to the Whig Lords'. By naming Godolphin and Sunderland as men to be excluded from any accommodation between the Treasurer and the Whigs, Toland showed that he was aware that they had set their faces against any such arrangement. Somers, Halifax, and Cowper, on the other hand, were prepared to consider a coalition, and the latter discussed Oxford's relations with Toland at a meeting with the Treasurer in 1713. Toland's plan received little encouragement from Oxford, committed as he was to the Peace and therefore to the Tories, but one meeting at least took place at the end of 1711, and several years later Dr Stratford thought the affair significant[59].

This obscure incident is worth recalling for two reasons: it shows Toland as a figure of genuine political importance rather than a despised hack, and it illustrates the failure of the last attempt for a generation to implement one of the Commonwealthsmen's most cherished ideals, that of non-party government. By 1712 the ideal was defunct, and our penultimate period, the five years to 1717, saw a new unanimity. Molesworth, Trenchard, Moyle, Toland, Stephens, and Tindal all agreed that Queen Anne's last ministry was so badly tainted with Jacobitism that a Whig monopoly of power was necessary for the maintenance of Revolution principles.

59 Toland, Collection, II 410-1, Toland to Harley 9 Feb 1710-1; B Lib Portland Loan 29/162 Misc. 41(1), Anon. to Harley 19 Nov 1711; H.M.C. 29 Portland V 158; Private Diary of...Cowper, p. 55; H.M.C. 29 Portland V 126 ('as I told you t'other day'), VII 441, Stratford to the 2nd earl of Oxford 17 July 1726.

Stephens believed that Oxford and his associates, 'those sons of Belial,...were nursing up a barbarous, bloody, civil, ceremonial war on purpose to introduce a base ignoble phantom of majesty'. Molesworth came to regard him and Bolingbroke as 'two of the greatest traitors that ever breathed in a free nation', and Toland even suggested the attainder of his former patron. Trenchard showed disgust at the relatively lenient treatment meted out to the two ex-ministers[60].

Two particularly blistering attacks were made by Toland. The Art of Restoring, which appeared early in 1714, relied for its effect on an elaborate parallel between General Monck and Oxford, both- according to the author- masters of dissimulation who employed their skills for the benefit of the House of Stuart. Oxford's foreign and domestic policies alike were calculated for the Pretender's advantage: at home, 'those who are for the Succession by principle or interest he treats as his mortal enemies, he excludes 'em from all trust and preferment to the utmost of his power'. The Treasurer was presented as a man without any fervent ideals, an 'adroit expedient-monger', whose motives were 'merely to raise himself and his family at any rate'. Toland obviously expected his tract to cause a stir, for he told a friend of his intention to go into hiding to escape any prosecution for it. In the event, ten editions seem to have appeared during 1714, making it one of the most successful pamphlets of the period; as Nicholas Tindal explained, 'when it was known to be the performance of Mr Toland, a person formerly entrusted and employed by (Oxford)', it attracted all the more

60 Stephens, A Second Deliverance from Popery and Slavery, 1714, p. 5; Molesworth, The Patrician, no.2, 1719, p. 11; Toland, The State-Anatomy of Great Britain, 1717, p. 100, and cf. his Grand Mystery Laid Open, 1714, pp. 3-27, for an analysis of the Oxford ministry as a Jacobite plot: Cato's Letters no. 20, 11 March 1720-1 (I 136-7).

attention. A further instalment of Toland's campaign, The Grand Mystery Laid Open, expressed the conspiracy theory of the ministry's intentions which was rapidly becoming the Whig orthodoxy. It invoked fears of a new catholic insurrection in Ireland, and accused Oxford of fomenting divisions among Protestants and attempting to undermine the credit of parliamentary securities in his efforts to ensure the accession of the Pretender[61].

Even after George I's accession, fear of Jacobitism seems to have determined the attitudes of the Commonwealthsmen. Moyle, for instance, wrote to Horace Walpole in 1716 that the Septennial Act- a negation of the constitutional ideals previously held by the Commonwealthsmen- was justified by internal disaffection and that even the politicians of the Grecian were coming to realise this. Moyle's correspondence during the 'unnatural rebellion' of 1715 proves that his expressions of alarm, far from being excuses for compliance with the ministry, were authentic[62]. During 1717 both Molesworth and Tindal supported the government by presenting readers with a simple choice between Whig and Jacobite; only Toland, who by that year was ready to play down the threat from the Pretender's adherents, felt constrained to offer further arguments in favour of the ministry's measures[63].

If the Commonwealthsmen offered support to the official Whigs after 1712, it was probably because the Tory alternative seemed so

61 Toland, The Art of Restoring, pp. 7, 28, iv, 39; publishing information in Carabelli, Tolandiana, pp. 181-2; Toland, Collection, II 432-3; Nicholas Tindal, The Continuation of Mr Rapin's History of England, 1759 ed, XVIII 137 (a sequel to the Art of Restoring, which I have been unable to see, appeared soon afterwards, entitled A Collection of Letters by General Monk); Toland, The Grand Mystery Laid Open, pp. 5-7, 13-14, 47-8, 11.

62 W. Coxe, Memoirs of Sir Robert Walpole, 3 vols 1798, II 62-4, Moyle to Walpole 20, 26 April 1716; Moyle, Unpublished Works I 253, Moyle to Musgrave 22 Oct 1715.

63 Tindal, The Defection Consider'd, 1717; Molesworth, 'A Sort Narrative of the Life and Death of...Count Patkul', Somers Tracts XIII 873-92, p. 891; Toland, State-Anatomy, pp. 6, 40-1.

much worse. This was no basis for a lasting alliance, and in the final phases of their careers Molesworth, Trenchard, and (to a lesser extent) Toland began to criticise the government in terms reminiscent of their attacks on the Junto many years before. Toland retracted his support for the Septennial Act and argued against ministerial policy over Ireland. Molesworth, ignoring his sons' hopes of official careers and the recent marriage tie between his family and Sunderland, launched into a final fling of 'whimsical' opposition which ranged over Ireland, continental policy, and the South Sea disaster. It was at this time, too, that Trenchard emerged from retirement to enter the Commons for the first time and to direct some of the most caustic libels of the century against the ministry[64]. Among the surviving Commonwealthsmen only Tindal offered the government support after 1717. Probably inspired by a pension, he fulminated against the supposedly Jacobite tendency of Cato's Letters without, in all likelihood, being aware of the identities of their authors[65].

Anger and chagrin arising from their neglect by the ministry may help to explain this last outburst of independence by a group of cantankerous old men who were not on the best of terms with each other. The Protestant Succession had created an insoluble crisis of rising expectations. Molesworth had received an Irish peerage and a place on the Commission of Trade and Plantations, and yet he still felt entitled to complain that 'the government neglects the whole family'. In 1716 Toland, then as ever indigent,

64 Toland, Preface to The Danger of Mercenary Parliaments, 1722 ed, Reasons most humbly Offer'd to the Honble House of Commons..., 1720, passim; Molesworth Corr pp. 287, Robert to John Molesworth 30 June 1720, 326, Walter to John Molesworth 9 Nov 1721. For more detail on Molesworth's and Trenchard's opposition, see chapters 6, 7, and 8. Molesworth's opposition was not total: he supported the government on the Peerage Bill in 1719.

65 Curll, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Matthew Tindal, LL.D, p. 54.

was described as one of the worthy supporters of the Hanover Succession whom the government had failed to reward. Trenchard's personal animosity towards an unnamed minister (possibly Sunderland) was apparently thought to be the key to Cato's Letters by those in the know, and this resentment may well have resulted from disappointed hopes of employment[66].

But we should not assume that these considerations provide a full explanation of the activities of Molesworth, Trenchard, and Toland at the ends of their lives. There was, as has been argued before, a certain consistency in their careers which underlies the frequent self-contradictions. On the basis of their most substantial political testaments- The Art of Governing by Partys, the preface to Franco-Gallia and the Account of Denmark, Cato's Letters- we can say that the Commonwealthsmen were at bottom Country party theorists who believed in strong institutional checks on the executive and disliked party government. During the third and sixth of the phases we have been describing (the periods 1700-2 and 1712-7) these priorities were overturned by the imminence of internal and external threats to the Revolution Settlement, which forced an unnatural compromise with the Whig exponents of party government. When, after 1717, these dangers receded, Trenchard, Toland, and Molesworth seem to have reverted to their original principles, attacking, in various forms, the corruption and cynicism of the one-party Whig government.

None of the Commonwealthsmen were totally disinterested. They saw no reason why they should not benefit from the roles they played in politics, and they were therefore constantly soliciting favours of various kinds. But if some contemporaries thought

66 Molesworth Corr p. 283, Robert to Lettice Molesworth 1 Dec 1719; John Dunton, Life and Errors of John Dunton, 1818, p. 734; Gordon, Preface to 1733 edition of Cato's Letters, p. xli; Trenchard Corr MS G23, Trenchard to Simpson 10 Oct 1718 (ff. 22-3).

Toland a 'mercenary author' or that Molesworth wrote only as personal pique dictated, it should be borne in mind that others, equally hostile, saw them as dedicated republicans who wrote from a sense of principle[67]. If we make the unadventurous assumption that the truth lies somewhere between the two extremes, we shall not be far wrong.

67 Ned Ward, The Secret History of the Calves-Head Clubb, 1703, p. 6; William King, Animadversions on a Pretended Account of Denmark, 1694, Preface; but cf. Defoe, A Brief Reply to the History of Standing Armies in England, 1698, pp. 24-5.

## CHAPTER SIX: THE PROTESTANT INTEREST AND THE BALANCE OF POWER

In previous chapters it was suggested that the key to many of the Commonwealthsmen's apparent inconsistencies was their fear of Jacobitism. Their obsession with this problem gave their thought an international cast: a Stuart restoration seemed feasible only with the aid of external forces. The central theme of this chapter is therefore the way in which the Commonwealthsmen saw England's relations with foreign powers as determining the kind of government it could expect after the deaths of William III and Anne. They were well-informed and critical observers of European affairs, which they seem to have regarded as the main concern of any English administration; a close analysis of this topic offers insight to an unusual degree into their political assumptions and motivations.

Another aspect of this subject exhibits some of the Commonwealthsmen as participators rather than observers. Twenty years of warfare on an unparallelled scale offered many opportunities for employment in the government's service abroad, and both Molesworth and Toland achieved notoriety in these roles. Their experiences provide an interesting commentary on the Commonwealthsmen's published statements on foreign policy.

Diplomacy was recognised at this time as a prestigious and desirable career, and one historian has concluded that it was 'open to talent'[1]. John Methuen's well-known diplomatic achievements seem to bear this out, though the far more equivocal experiences of Molesworth and Toland remind us that governments were not always fortunate in their choice of representatives. Molesworth's mission to Denmark, an isolated episode at the

1 M. Lane, 'The Diplomatic Service under William III', T.R.H.S. 4th Series 10, 1927, p. 106.

outset of the Nine Years' War, is in itself of limited relevance to our main theme. Responsible to superiors in London and to some extent under the tutelage of his Dutch colleague Amerongen, his freedom of action was severely circumscribed, and it would be wrong to expect his letters from Copenhagen to exhibit any specifically 'Old Whig' traits. For two reasons, however, this phase of Molesworth's career should not be ignored. It led directly to that loss of favour with the Court which early in life identified him as a malcontent, a reputation he never entirely lost; and it produced a classic textbook of Commonwealth thought, the Account of Denmark as it was in the Year 1692.

Molesworth's brief in Copenhagen was a complex one. His initial task was to secure Danish troops for service on the allied side in the Nine Years' War, and to ensure that these troops were available he had to attempt to preserve the peace in the Baltic. The enforcement of allied restrictions on trade with France caused problems in Anglo-Danish relations which Molesworth could only smooth over. More generally, he was instructed by William to send back 'constant information' to his government on the policy of the Danish court[2]. It is not entirely clear why Molesworth should have been selected for this difficult post. Professor Robbins' claim[3] that in 1689 he was a member of Princess Anne's entourage would establish a Danish connection, but she offers no evidence for it. His three years (June 1689- autumn 1692) at Copenhagen were unsatisfactory to all concerned. William complained of the onerous terms in the military treaty negotiated by him in September 1689,

2 British Diplomatic Instructions 1689-1789, Vol III (Denmark), ed. J.F.Chance, Camden Soc. 3rd Series XXXVI, 1926, p. 5. On Molesworth's mission in general, see M.Lane, 'The Relations between England and the Northern Powers, 1689-1697, Part 1: Denmark', T.R.H.S. 3rd Series 5, 1911, pp. 161-76, and K.Danaher & J.G.Simms, The Danish Force in Ireland 1690-1, Dublin 1962, Introduction.

3 Robbins, Commonwealthman, p. 92. Prince George wrote a letter commending Molesworth to Christian V at the start of his mission as 'eine wohl intentionirte Person' (printed in C.H.Brasch,

(continued

while Molesworth's commercial treaty of 1691, though ratified, failed to provide final solutions to the questions in dispute[4]. Molesworth's semi-official letters to other English diplomats make his own feelings on his situation clear. They abound in complaints of the French sympathies and inconstancy of the Danish rulers, on the lack of attention paid to him by the English government, and of loneliness, cold, and salary arrears[5]. The Danes clearly found the English envoy impossible to cope with. Molesworth quarrelled with Danish ministers, and seems to have trespassed on royal highways and poached royal game; and he provoked a minor diplomatic incident by his rudeness to a Swedish envoy. In June 1692 the Danes requested his recall, and he departed without a formal leavetaking[6].

Those authors who attributed the Account of Denmark to Molesworth's resentment at his treatment in that country may not have been far wrong. Amid the acute social analysis of despotism which makes the book a worthy predecessor of Tocqueville's Ancien Regime, there is a good deal of trivial and inaccurate carping at

3 (continued) Om Robert Molesworths Skrift 'An Account of Denmark' Copenhagen 1879, Appendix, p. 203), but this seems likely to have been a formality.

4 Lane, 'Relations', p. 161, quoting B Lib Add MS 34504, Vol 1 p. 13. On the military negotiations, H.M.C. 71 Finch II, esp. pp. 237, 287, 304, 419, III, esp. pp. 8, 36. On Danish trade with France during the war, see G.N.Clark, The Dutch Alliance and the War against French Trade, Manchester 1923, c. 5. The texts of Molesworth's commercial (20/30 June 1691) and military (15 Aug 1689) treaties: J.Dumont, Corps Universel Diplomatique, 8 vols, Amsterdam 1726-31, VII(2) 292-4, 237-8.

5 B Lib Add MS 34095 (esp. ff. 78, 148, 299), 36662 (esp. ff. 15-16, 153-4, 239, 380) include Molesworth's letters to Sir William Dutton Colt, envoy at Hanover; Add MS 37407, Molesworth to Johnston, complaining of salary arrears.

6 Brasch, Om Molesworths Skrift, Appendix, p. 204; William King, Animadversions on a Pretended Account of Denmark, 1694, Preface; H.M.C. 71 Finch II 399, in which Nottingham tells William 'I fear Mr Molesworth, though he is very desirous to serve Your Majesty, yet is often too warm and passionate'; Danaher & Simms, Danish Force, Introduction. For Matthew Prior's low opinion of Molesworth's diplomacy, see H.M.C. 58 Bath III 43.

Danish climate, manners, and institutions. But its core is an account of the establishment of absolute monarchy in Denmark and of its practical effects in all areas of national life. This poor northern kingdom was presented as a paradigm of the evil consequences of despotism, which further south were hidden by the false grandeur of Mediterranean civilisation[7]. Many of the obsessions characteristic of the Commonwealthsmen were already present here: the excellence of a mixed constitution, the dangers posed by standing armies, and the malevolent nature of priestcraft.

The immense popularity of the work is not in question. It was licensed on 16 December 1693, and at least 6,000 copies had been sold by March 1694. Thirteen editions had appeared in various languages by 1700. 'Never was story more in fashion', wrote one of the unfortunate Danish envoys who were ordered to try and get the book suppressed, and another admitted to his king that 'this accursed book is in a style which the English greatly enjoy, and it gains credit and protectors daily'[8]. This popularity is partly to be explained by the contemporary vogue of travel works; as Paul Hazard reminds us, books like those of Chardin and Rycaut (the latter a diplomatic correspondent of Molesworth's) were allowing Europeans for the first time to compare their civilisation with others. But the Account was also a thoroughly topical work. To the many who shared the official view that the events of 1688-9 had restored England's ancient constitution, Denmark offered an object lesson in the evil consequences of the abandonment of the old

7 Molesworth, An Account of Denmark, 1694, Preface. The earl of Essex had earlier noted Denmark's possibilities as an exemplar of arbitrary government: Burnet I 397.

8 Publishing data in Paul Ries, 'Robert Molesworth's Account of Denmark', Scandinavica 7, 1968, pp. 108-25; J.M.Kemble, ed., European State Papers and Correspondence, 1857, p. 219; Brasch, Om Molesworths Skrift, Appendix, no. 13, p. 212.

polity.

Nevertheless, Molesworth's exposition of what was rotten in the state of Denmark was not welcome to the English government, which found the affair profoundly embarrassing. To the exasperation of the Danish representatives, who like everybody else were aware of the author's identity, the authorities proved unwilling to bring the matter to court, no doubt because this would entail official recognition that this libel on an ally had been written by an accredited diplomat[9]. But, although the Danes could do little apart from sponsoring literary hacks to write answers to the Account of varying degrees of competence[10], Molesworth was to find that his book was to do him considerable personal damage. Pierre Bayle, who admired him, knew in March 1694 that 'les Courtisans même de l'Angleterre n'ont pas approuvé le livre, et on croit que l'auteur ne s'avancera pas autant qu'il avait lieu de l'espérer'. Given that Molesworth's record in Denmark was hardly a distinguished one, it is possible that his disgrace was not entirely due to the Account, but the offending book almost certainly set the seal on William's aversion. He attempted to salvage his hopes of office by attaching himself to the Junto, and Shrewsbury did his best to get him a place on the Commission of Customs and Excise; but the king remained unmoved by Shrewsbury's novel argument that the sour temper and officiousness which had marred Molesworth's diplomatic career were not inappropriate qualities in a tax administrator. Later in the reign William's hostility to Molesworth seems to have slackened,

9 This suggestion is made by Ries, art. cit.
10 King, Animadversions; Thomas Rogers, The Common-Wealths Man Unmasqu'd, 1694; Jodocus Crull, Denmark Vindicated, 1694, perhaps the most convincing performance.

but his track record probably meant that his hopes of an embassy to Constantinople in 1698 were absurdly optimistic[11]. Even under Anne Molesworth's hopes of diplomatic advancement were to be frustrated[12].

As early as 1694, therefore, the close connection between foreign affairs and domestic liberties which existed in the minds of the Commonwealthsmen had been brought forcibly to public attention. This connection makes it advisable to revert to the chronological scheme of the last chapter in the attempt to make some sense of this complex and well-documented side of their activities.

During the first period, running from about 1694-5 to 1697, the emerging group tended to sympathise with the government. This was reflected in general support for the Nine Years War, which was not, however, characterised by the 'delenda est Carthago' mentality adopted towards the War of The Spanish Succession. Cary and Tindal called for energetic prosecution of the war, and Davenant admitted its necessity. Earlier, Molesworth's letters from Copenhagen had portrayed William as fighting single-mindedly for 'the liberty of Europe'. Equally noticeable in his correspondence from this period is a suspicion of the self-interested intentions of the Hanoverian court which is in marked contrast to the adulation for the Protestant heirs displayed by the Commonwealthsmen after the Act of Settlement[13].

11 Bayle, Oeuvres Diverses, 4 vols, The Hague 1731, IV 705 (Letter CLX); J.P.Kenyon, Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, 1956, p. 265; C.S.P.Dom. 1694-5, p. 181; H.M.C. 45 Buccleuch-Whitehall II(1) 97; Vernon Corr, II 18.

12 Trenchard Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 27 March 1704 (for 1705), 17 July 1705.

13 Tindal, An Essay Concerning Obedience to the Supreme Powers, 1694, p. 67; Cary, An Essay on the State of England, in Relation to its Trade, Bristol 1695, Dedication; Davenant, An Essay Upon Ways and Means, 1695, p. 153; B Lib Add MS 34095 ff. 177, 189, 220: in the latter Molesworth calls trimming the 'usual politics' of Hanover.

There were to be no protests when the war ended in 1697: the European conflict between liberty and slavery, represented by England and France, was not yet central to the Commonwealthsmen's thinking. During the period 1697-1700 many of them were closely connected with the New Country Party, particularly on the question of the evils of the standing army, and they were therefore concerned to minimise the necessity for land warfare on the continent. Trenchard's pamphlets of 1697 and 1698 accept that another war might be necessary on the death of the king of Spain, but they argue that in that case the navy would furnish sufficient protection against French aggression. Davenant in 1698 complained of the high expenses of keeping a land army in Flanders, and, since he too foresaw the impending war, proposed that England's role in it should be a purely maritime one[14].

By 1702 such opinions had come to be identified with High Tories like Nottingham and Rochester, while the Commonwealthsmen were among the most eager asserters of the necessity for a strong war effort by land. The transformation in their outlook by which external problems came to appear far more important than questions of domestic politics took place during our third period (1700-2). In April 1699 the mere circumstance of Toland's being in Amsterdam- the reason for his journey seems to be unknown- was enough to rouse the suspicions of Portland and Somers that he was engaging in 'malicious undertakings'[15]. Two years later, by a process which is not easy to explain, he and his patron Shaftesbury were acting as propagandists for the war policy propounded by the Junto.

14 Trenchard, A Short History of Standing Armies in England, 1698, pp. 43-5; State Tracts, William III, 1705, II 581-3, 592-3; Davenant, Discourses on the Public Revenues, 1698, pp. 99-102.
15 B Lib Add MS 40773 f.333.

A pamphlet called Paradoxes of State, which appears to have been the result of collaboration between Shaftesbury and Toland[16], provides the best statement of the consensus that had been reached between the Old Whigs and the Junto. It was avowedly a rehash of the speech delivered by William to his last Parliament on 30 December 1701, which is known to have been drafted by Somers, and there are other indications that Shaftesbury was working with the king's closest advisers at this time. The pamphlet asserts stridently that war is necessary for the defence of liberty and Protestantism, and that all who oppose it are Jacobites; it claims that England must conclude a strict alliance with the United Provinces and participate in the conflict as principals rather than as auxiliaries; and it demands that the French candidate be excluded from the whole of the Spanish monarchy. Strong confirmation of these views is furnished by Shaftesbury's correspondence with the Anglo-Dutch merchant Benjamin Furly of Rotterdam, a man who epitomised the Protestant internationalism which the earl was now advocating. He claimed that the English and Dutch were 'the two great peoples of the world on whose strict union and friendship...depends the safety of the world and the preservation of all that is good or estimable among mankind', and the letters show that from November 1700 at latest Shaftesbury was willing to identify himself totally with the Junto, the group which was most likely to promote this aim[17]. Hence, although he reckoned 'all partition treaties, of which we have had enough, to

16 Both seem to have spoken of the pamphlet as their own; Giancarlo Carabelli, Tolandiana, Florence 1975, thinks it likely that 'l'opera fu concepita e abbozzata da Shaftesbury, che affidò a T(oland) il compito di stenderne la versione definitiva e di curarne la pubblicazzione' (p. 88). It appeared soon before 30 January 1702.

17 Hardwicke's note to Burnet, History of his Own Time, Oxford, 1852 ed, IV 533; Paradoxes of State, 1702, esp. sections II, V, VII, VIII; T.Forster, ed, Original Letters of Locke, Algernon Sidney, and Anthony Lord Shaftesbury, 1830, pp. 158-62, 107-12.

be fatal', he gave wholehearted support to Somers and the other peers impeached for acquiescing in these treaties, while during 1701 one of his constant themes was the necessity for William to dissolve Parliament and declare for the Whigs[18].

As has been seen, the Commonwealthsmen were far from unanimous at this juncture; while Shaftesbury expressed strong and unequivocal support for Junto policy, Toland preferred to hedge his bets and retain links with Harley. As for Trenchard and Molesworth, we can only reconstruct their views on foreign policy during 1701 from their subsequent statements; we have just one letter of Molesworth's, from May 1701, to indicate his annoyance that Parliament was not standing up to the French. But the important point is that the views so forcefully expressed by Shaftesbury in letters and pamphlets during 1701 were to become the orthodoxy of the Commonwealthsmen within a few years; they came to regard the moral duty of a vigorous prosecution of the war as axiomatic. Simpson in 1703 reported that a gathering of his friends was, without exception, of this opinion[19].

The principal dissentient from this consensus was Charles Davenant, whose political behaviour in 1701 and the succeeding few years was wildly erratic. Closely associated with the Old Whigs on some of the main issues of the 1690s, the polarisation of parties brought about by the foreign policy crisis of 1701 aligned him with what he called the Church party. His Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power..., appearing in March 1701, assumed, like Shaftesbury, that the French threatened universal monarchy and that the Partition Treaties provided no effective safeguard against this. But his analysis of England's situation gradually

18 Forster, Original Letters, pp. 119-23 and 140-62, passim.
19 Molesworth Corr p. 224, Robert to Lettice Molesworth 12 May 1701; Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 2 Nov 1703.

became a polemic against the Junto, and while Davenant agreed that a war would be necessary he argued that if its conduct were entrusted to Whig ministers, as that of the last one had been, their corruption would prove as fatal to the country as French aggression[20]. The famous Tom Double pamphlets made the same points more entertainingly: Davenant made his archetypal Junto follower revel in the gains to be made out of dishonest dealings in war finances, though Double admitted that 'a war upon a right foundation will profit us nothing'. Davenant insisted that his side was equally ready to begin hostilities against France as soon as the king had formed alliances for the struggle. But his conduct during 1701 seems to show that a good deal of his written work at this time was disingenuous. It is known that the French envoy Poussin was in touch with him during the summer and early autumn of that year, and on 4 October he, Anthony Hammond, and another political friend were observed dining with Poussin at the Blew Posts Tavern on the very day on which the Frenchman was expelled from England. No amount of self-exculpation on Davenant's part could repair the damage which this incident inflicted on his credibility[21].

Within a few months of the new reign, however, Davenant's tone had changed: his famous Essays Upon Peace at Home and War Abroad, published in November 1703 and sanctioned by the ministry, assumed that the prosecution of the war was the country's highest priority. For several years thereafter Davenant's intermittent correspondence

20 Davenant, Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power..., 1701, pp. 53, 58-9, 80-5, 268-76. On Davenant's low opinion of the Partition Treaties see also H.M.C. 23 Cowper II 391-2.

21 Davenant, The True Picture of a Modern Whig, 1701, p. 11, Tom Double Return'd out of the Country, 1702, pp. 55-7; D.G.A. Waddell, 'The Career and Writings of Charles Davenant', Oxford D.Phil thesis, 1954, pp. 277-316, esp. pp. 294-6; see also A Vindication of Dr Charles Davenant..., 1702, for Davenant's unconvincing version of the Poussin supper.

with Marlborough contains repeated statements of the necessity of winning the struggle with France[22], while, like Toland, he did his best to ingratiate himself with the reversionary interest[23].

It is clearly not enough to say that when, as in 1701 and 1711-13, foreign problems seemed to overshadow the purely domestic, the Commonwealthsmen chose to drop their specifically 'Country' agitation and align themselves with the Whigs. In 1689 Whigs were not noticeably keener for war with France than the Tories; why should this have appeared to be so in 1701 ? Davenant's explanation, referring to their greed and corruption, can largely be discounted as crude propaganda, for the Whigs had no monopoly of the monied interest. It might be suggested that the Whigs, who during the Exclusion Crisis had accepted money from Louis XIV and were to re-establish an Entente Cordiale under Stanhope, only fortuitously became identified with francophobia in the years preceding the War of the Spanish Succession. Their leaders had experienced responsibility without power during the negotiation of the Partition Treaties, and suffered impeachment when the details became known. Thus they were closely assooiated with Williamite foreign policy just as it was becoming popular outside Parliament, and their use of the Kentish petition of May 1701 shows that they were willing and able to support a popular demand for war in order to outmanoeuvre their parliamentary opponents.

It has been seen that it was only from 1700 that the Commonwealthsmen became committed to the view that national

22 Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen c.26 Nov 1703; cf. B Lib Add MS 28055 ff.13-14, Davenant to Godolphin 19 Oct 1703; B Lib Blenheim Papers MS 61135 (provisional), Davenant to Marlborough, e.g. 16 Sept 1709, and cf. B Lib MS Lansdowne 773 f. 16, Charles to Henry Davenant 8 Feb 1703-4.

23 B Lib Blenheim Papers MS 61135 (provisional), Davenant to Marlborough 4 Oct 1709.

security outweighed all other political problems, and their rapprochement with the Junto was therefore wholly predictable. But it is yet to be explained why earlier preoccupations came to seem quite irrelevant to Shaftesbury, while even Toland played them down. The complexity of the crisis of 1701 and the animosities whipped up by the various issues have perhaps not always been fully appreciated by historians: Davenant was later to remark that 'that the sword was not then drawn will perhaps be thought a wonder in future ages'[24], and the tone of some of Shaftesbury's letters at this time seems to bear him out. The combination of renewed French aggression in Europe and an unsettled succession in England since Gloucester's death in July 1700 clearly threatened the gains which had been made at the Revolution, while the power and influence of politicians compromised by their association with the regimes of the 1680s- Rochester, Seymour, and Godolphin in particular- were re-emerging[25]. After several years' confusion in the development of political parties, divisions between Whig and Tory were again coming to outweigh others by 1701[26], and when forced to declare themselves of either party the Commonwealthsmen always- and rightly- identified themselves with the Whigs.

Toland's continuing relations with both Harley and Shaftesbury complicated his position, as was seen in the last chapter. If Shaftesbury thought that the necessity for war made everything else insignificant, Toland considered that the legislative confirmation of the Hanover succession had been a fine achievement, and in Anglia Libera he gave Harley full credit for it. The pamphlet, which appeared in June 1701, emphasised the religious

24 Davenant, Essays on Peace at Home and War Abroad, 1704, p. 29.
25 See the MS libel on Rochester in Toland's hand in P.R.O. 30/24/20/50, and Toland, The Art of Governing by Partys, 1701, p. 55, for a general denunciation of former servants of the Stuarts in high office. Sunderland was probably tacitly exempted from these attacks: he had connections among the Commonwealthsmen, and was thought to have had some undefined share in the success of the 1688 Revolution.
26 See above, pp. 86, 125.

and political benefits of the Protestant Succession now that it had received statutory backing in the Act of Settlement[27]. The publication of this tract marks the beginning of Toland's long attachment to the reversionary interest, which was ultimately to do him so little good[28]. It was swiftly followed by his first, and most notorious, visit to the electoral court.

As a junior member of the entourage of the earl of Macclesfield, Toland was to present his book to the Electress Sophia. In some ways he was an odd choice for a goodwill mission of this kind. Sophia had already heard his name, since the diplomat George Stepney had several months previously mentioned 'un libertin nommé Tolon' to her as the man responsible for publication of the works of Harrington, Sidney, and others, 'comme si la conjoncture présente favorisait des sentiments semblables'. Certainly it was widely assumed, then and since, that Toland's intentions were subversive: 'he seems to have imagined', wrote J.M.Kemble in 1857, 'that the Court of Hanover would be a

27 Forster, Original Letters, pp. 192-5; Toland, Anglia Libera, 1701, passim. On Toland's attachment to the House of Hanover, see Anna Seeber, John Toland als politischer Schriftsteller, Schramberg 1933, c.6. She concludes (p.87): 'Manches hat er sicher wider besseres Wissen geschrieben, für manches andere machte ihn sein Eifer für das Haus Hanover blind'. See also the Life and Errors of John Dunton, ed J.B.Nichols, 1818, p. 734, for an appreciation of Toland's work in the cause.

28 It has sometimes been thought that a pamphlet called Limitations for the Next Foreign Successor (in State Tracts, William III, III 381-93), which appeared around February 1701, represents the first result of Toland's concern with the succession question, but this ignores Toland's own disclaimer; he said that the tract had been written by a Scottish gentleman, and its disproportionate attention to Scottish affairs confirms this and raises the suspicion that Fletcher of Saltoun was responsible. See Klopp, Correspondance, II 265, and Frank H.Ellis, Introduction to Swift's Discourse of the Contests and Dissensions, Oxford 1967, p. 39. Ellis' useful account of the Paper War is vitiated by his treatment of every issue as a Whig/Tory clash: this has the strange effect of making Toland a Tory.

favourable field for the spread of his infidel doctrines'[29]. The whole argument of this study militates against such an assumption; Toland, and the Commonwealthsmen generally, were interested in foreign affairs not because they were exceptional, but because they shared the preoccupations common to all who were concerned with politics.In fact it was Stepney, a close contact of Charles Montague's and therefore deeply suspcious of any agent of Harley's prowling around the courts of Europe, who provides an explanation of the choice of Toland as a member of the embassy. He refers not only to Toland's role as intermediary between Harley and the electress, bearer of 'the deceitful message of the Speaker', but also to enquiries he was making on behalf of another patron, the duke of Newcastle. Two years later Leibniz knew of Newcastle's ambition to marry off his daughter, heiress to one of the greatest fortunes in Europe, to the electoral prince (he thought the project reasonable enough, although Sophia disagreed). Stepney's belief that Newcastle was 'willing this fellow should view the young prince and judge if he might be a proper match for his daughter, since nothing will serve her but heirs to the Crown' may well, therefore, have been correct. He also sneers at Toland's continuing correspondence with Shaftesbury, a further confirmation that the Irishman was keeping all his political options open[30].

Despite many setbacks, Toland's first journey to Hanover was a success: it brought him publicity and important new contacts. In

29 Klopp, Correspondance, II 209; Kemble, ed., European State Papers and Correspondence, p. 50; and, for a contemporary accusation of the same kind, see John, Lord Somers, Some Queries which may deserve Consideration, 1701, no. 19.

30 Bodleian Lib MS Montagu d1 ff.68-71. On the Newcastle marriage project, see Klopp, Correspondance, II 400-1, 403, and H.M.C. 29 Portland II 193. Shaftesbury mentions the important role Toland is to play 'in a great scene of affairs', and also refers to Newcastle (P.R.O. 30/24/21/231). It was claimed that Newcastle was around this time intriguing for the electress to succeed William directly: see Dartmouth's note to Burnet's History, Oxford 1852 ed, IV 540. On the choice of Toland for the embassy, see also Edmund Calamy, An Historical Account of my Own Life, ed. J.T.Rutt, 2 vols 1829, I 428.

addition to the propagandistic travelogue which Toland himself published in 1705 (An Account of the Courts of Prussia and Hanover), we have contemporary letters from the electress, her daughter the queen of Prussia, and her adviser Leibniz, as well as from Stepney and from Toland's acquaintances in Holland, Benjamin Furly and the more obscure William Hysterman, to inform us of his progress; and we have a jaundiced cameo from Charles Davenant of 'Mr Gospelscorn', the impoverished but bumptious emissary of the Junto, sent abroad in order to whip up foreign anger against the 1701 Parliament[31]. Toland's initial misunderstandings with Macclesfield, the leader of the embassy, soon became known in England, to the annoyance of Shaftesbury, whose regard for the mediocre and unstable Macclesfield was probably due to the earl's old association with the Exclusion Whigs. After Macclesfield was safely dead, Toland averred that 'my Lord himself went with a prejudice against me to Hanover, where he was thoroughly undeceived, and became my hearty patron', but the evidence indicates that Toland gave offence by hurrying on to the electoral court ahead of his superior[32].

Toland's success at Hanover amazed and mortified many observers. The medals and paintings with which he was presented in return for his book were merely the perquisites which even minor members of an embassy of this sort could expect, but the personal

31 Davenant, Tom Double Return'd, pp. 69-71. Davenant's caricature unmistakably refers to Toland, though his political allegations are wide of the mark. Toland's letter of July 1701 to Shaftesbury from Amsterdam (P.R.O. 30/24/20/28) shows that he was expecting and hoping for a dissolution, and he may have had money on this outcome at the Grecian, as Davenant alleged. But his commitment was not merely to 'the late ministry' but to 'the whole Whig party', among which he probably still considered Harley.

32 Forster, Original Letters, pp. 145-7; Toland, An Account of the Courts of Prussia and Hanover, 1705, pp. 64-5; P.R.O. 30/24/45/ Part 1, f.52a,b, and cf. ff.42, 59, 89 for Hysterman's comments on Toland. See also a Dutch letter of 5 Oct 1701 from Hysterman to Joannes Van Dale on Toland and the Macclesfield embassy: Amsterdam University Library MSS I 37 (I owe this reference to Christopher Cunliffe).

favour and attention he received from Sophia, despite Stepney's previous warning of his republican tendencies, was an uncovenanted benefit. The electress was an extremely intelligent woman whose correspondence is reminiscent of Nancy Mitford in its aristocratic tolerance and appreciation of wit. Bothmer, the Hanoverian representative in London, was clearly worried about the effect which rumours of Toland's favour at court would have in England; Sophia replied defensively that he was

> un homme qui a beaucoup d'esprit et fort peu de jugement et dont la conversation a plu à la reine, ma fille, et à moi aussi; quand on demande s'il a fait quelque méchante action, on n'a rien à dire si non qu'il n'a point de religion. Je voudrais qu'il fût le seul en Angleterre qui n'en eût pas.

From Hanover Toland made a visit to the court at Berlin, where Sophia Charlotte, the intellectual queen of Prussia, found him as amusing as her mother had done, and he appears to have returned to England in November[33].

It was Toland's attempt to combine the roles of political agent and court litterateur which led to the failure of his aspirations: this became clear when he made a second visit to the German courts after William's death in 1702. Previously Sophia had been aware that her guest was a well-hated man, but she had pointed out that 'il a aussi beaucoup de gens de considération pour lui, comme je l'ai vu par des lettres que j'ai vu qu'il recevait ici'[34]. By the spring of 1702, however, two events had conspired to lessen Toland's appeal at Hanover. William's death had brought High Tories like Nottingham and Rochester, confirmed enemies of Toland's, back into power for the foreseeable future. Nottingham attacked Toland in conversation with a Hanoverian

33 Toland, Account of the Courts, pp. 62-4; Doebner, Briefe, pp. 219-20; Klopp, Correspondance, II 295.

34 Doebner, Briefe, pp. 150-1. For an amusing account of the way in which Toland obtained one of these letters- in this case, from the Archbishop of York- see Thomas Sharp, The Life of John Sharp D.D., 2 vols 1825, I 273-5.

representative, and Marlborough, though by no means so implacable, warned Sophia that continued contact with him was likely to damage her. Secondly, Toland himself had made a faux pas by publishing at the turn of the year Reasons for Addressing His Majesty...[35]. In this pamphlet he continued his earlier efforts on behalf of the reversionary interest by calling for the electress and her grandson, the future George II, to be invited to England in order to ensure the succession on the demise of the last of the existing royal family; he also proposed that an oath of abjuration of the Pretender should be tendered to everybody in the kingdom. Although this tract, with its fulsome praise of Sophia, was clearly intended to confirm its author in her favour, its effect was very different. Firstly it ignored the fact that Sophia retained some sympathy for the Pretender and was critical of his attainder, strongly urged by Toland[36]; secondly, its publication was regarded at Hanover as a breach of etiquette. But the most important reason for the obloquy which the pamphlet incurred was that it raised a question which embarrassed the ministers at both London and Hanover. The problem can be reduced to the familiar 'queens and the hive' syndrome: Anne's own conduct under William III provided an example of the inconvenience of having a successor resident in the country. The Whig majority in the House of Lords, no doubt hoping to bury suspicions that they were disaffected to the existing regime, censured certain passages in Toland's pamphlet and had their vote printed[37].

35 Doebner, Briefe, p. 158; Klopp, Correspondance, II 372; Toland, Reasons for Addressing His Majesty..., 1702, passim; Carabelli, Tolandiana p. 90 for date of publication.

36 A.W.Ward, The Electress Sophia and the Hanoverian Succession, 1903, p. 209; Ragnhild Hatton, George I, Elector and King, 1978, pp. 73-4.

37 Doebner, Briefe, pp. 150-1; Carabelli, Tolandiana, pp. 90, 98; Lords Journals XVII 132-3; Ward, Electress Sophia, p. 210. Carabelli's statement that Toland was banished (p. 90) seems too strong.

Sophia herself seems not to have realised how sensitive the issue of her residence in England was, for in 1706 she and Leibniz were to burn their fingers badly by sanctioning Sir Rowland Gwynne's memorial advocating the same course of action[38]. But from her correspondents in London she came to realise that a further visit from Toland could prove diplomatically disastrous, and she reluctantly but firmly discouraged him from returning. Instead he went straight to Berlin to cultivate the acquaintance of the queen, who, having no real expectations of the English succession, was less amenable to pressure from that quarter. On her annual visit to her daughter that year, the electress studiously avoided engaging in conversation with Toland. Certainly he was able to make literary capital from his German tour of 1702: discussions with Sophia Charlotte and Leibniz provided the basis for his successful work of popular philosophy in the style of Fontenelle, Letters to Serena (1704)[39]. But in political terms it was a fiasco. Influential sympathisers like Leibniz and Ezekiel Spanheim were alienated by his waywardness. The German courts had quickly realised that, now his enemies were clearly more powerful than his patrons and he was unwilling to return to England, he was expendable[40].

Toland remained at Utrecht, apparently in poor health, for several months in 1703 before he went back to London. His views on the ministry and the conduct of the war at this time can be

38 Hatton, George I, p. 78; Mathilde Knoop, Kurfurstin Sophie von Hannover, Hildesheim 1964, pp. 207-8. Simpson's comments on the Gwynne letter can be found in Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 5 and 12 March 1705-6.

39 Klopp, Correspondance, II 334, 351-2, 356-7; on philosophical discussions, 361-5; Doebner, Briefe, pp. 14, 160, 163, 164-5. Sophia Charlotte commented shrewdly on Toland: 'Je le plains d'avoir tant d'ennemis et le plus grand à ce qu'il me semble est l'indigence', ibid. p. 22.

40 Klopp, Correspondance, II 352-4, 372; on Toland's reluctance to return to England, 377-9, 402: 'il ne peut être en sûreté qu' incognito en Hollande'.

reconstructed fairly accurately: in the spring he wrote a long letter to the Hanoverian courtier Brauns, in which he apparently denounced the Tory ministers as Jacobites: Sophia and Leibniz remained unsympathetic to this approach[41]. Men closely associated with Marlborough had led the campaign to discredit Toland at Hanover, and so his animus against the ministry Marlborough dominated is understandable. But it would be a mistake to dismiss his bitterness as a purely personal matter. As it happened, Shaftesbury was in Holland at the same time as Toland, and the two were certainly in touch: in November 1703 Shaftesbury, never a wealthy man by aristocratic standards, was ordering his steward to continue the pension of £20 a year to Toland which had been begun at an unknown date. The earl was in Rotterdam largely for reasons of health, but he is unlikely to have neglected the opportunity to renew his links with the Dutch republican party, and this probably influenced his decision to keep his lodgings secret[42].

Shaftesbury's opposition to the ministry was based in part on his exclusion from patronage: since 1702 he had been unsuccessfully attempting to secure an official post for his young protégé Thomas Micklethwayte. But differences over the conduct of the war were almost certainly more important. In April 1703, while applauding Methuen's return to Portugal (and the ambassador's past connections with the Commonwealthsmen must have increased Shaftesbury's confidence), he expressed fears that many courtiers were not really interested in beating the French. His suspicions were still strong in September 1705 when he wrote two letters to

41 B Lib Add MS 4465 f.3 (Toland's correspondent Mr Phillips may have been John Phillips, from whom he had received information for the Life of Milton); Klopp, Correspondance, III 25, 33.

42 Klopp, Correspondance, II 378; Doebner, Briefe, pp. 16, 220-1, though apparently the officious representative at Berlin, Cresset, exaggerated Marlborough's concern with Toland (ibid. p. 26); P.R.O. 30/24/20/80, 81, 71 (latter printed in Forster, Original Letters, pp. 198-200).

Furly complaining of attempts by 'some great men' to disrupt the essential Anglo-Dutch alliance: their plan was to 'make this misunderstanding to be a ground of giving such terms to France as may keep Europe still in terrors, and England under the pretended necessity of a standing force'[43]. Although it has been thought that Toland and Shaftesbury were not particularly close after 1701, they were in fact connected as patron and client, and held similar views on the ministry and the war effort. Within a few months, however, both had realigned themselves with the war ministry and recanted their earlier criticisms.

This development was a part of the general rapprochement between the Commonwealthsmen and the government which took place during the fourth phase of this study (1702-8). It can only be explained by the wider political events of these years. With hindsight we can say confidently that Marlborough had always favoured energetic prosecution of the war, but to the Commonwealthsmen his association in the ministry with High Tories like Rochester and Nottingham, both of whom were known to be unenthusiastic about a full-scale land war, was incriminating. Only in 1704, with the departure of many High Tories from the government and the defeat of the Tack, did it become clear that Marlborough and Godolphin hoped to submerge party divisions in the attempt to maximise national strength for the war, and this policy offered an ideological basis on which the Commonwealthsmen might offer them support: it is in fact the main theme of Toland's Memorial of the State of England (1705).

43 P.R.O. 30/24/21/231; Forster, Original Letters, pp. 195-7, 216-7, 218-9; Douglas Coombs, The Conduct of the Dutch, The Hague 1958, p. 122, considers Shaftesbury's attitude in 1705 an aberration: he was 'nominally a supporter, with reservations, of Marlborough and Godolphin'. But the earl's retrospective professions that this was so are unconvincing when placed beside letters like that of 1703 referred to here.

The Memorial is concerned more with peace at home than with war abroad, to adopt the terminology of Davenant's work which had made many of the same points. Nevertheless its criticisms of internal divisions always has the national danger posed by France and the Pretender in mind. Similar sentiments were voiced by Moyle, haranguing the Cornish Grand Jury in 1706: 'on the French side 'tis a war for lawless power and universal monarchy; on ours 'tis a defence of our religion, liberty, and property, the only things worth living for, and the only things worth dying for': he therefore urged support of the ministry[44].

John Methuen's Portuguese diplomacy in these years throws some light on the relations between the Commonwealthsmen and the ministry. Methuen was a trusted lieutenant of the duumvirs, insisting on the importance of the Iberian war without contesting the priority of the Low Countries. His emphasis on the strategic value of Gibraltar was later repeated by Trenchard, while the provisions of his famous commercial treaty had been recommended by Cary years before[45]. His policy, therefore, seems to bear the imprint of his connections among the Commonwealthsmen. Godolphin was, significantly, distressed by his death in 1706, while by this date Halifax and the Junto supporters regarded the ambassador as an enemy. It was seen in the last chapter that at the Grecian Freke remained committed to the Junto, and in 1705 Simpson reported that he was openly attacking Marlborough and Methuen as the main causes of the lack of success in the war[46].

It was, therefore, only to be expected that the regulars at the Grecian would react strongly to the attitudes expressed in Toland's Memorial. Their reply was the Letter to the Author of the

44 Moyle, Unpublished Works, I 161 (and cf. p. 164).
45 Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 1 May 1705 (and cf. below, pp.176-7); Cary, Essay on the State of England, pp. 114-8. On Methuen's Portuguese diplomacy in general, A.D.Francis, The Methuens and Portugal, Cambridge 1966, pp. 112-336.
46 H.M.C. 58 Bath I 84, Godolphin to Harley 26 July 1706, 155.

(continued.

Memorial of the State of England, which was discussed in the last chapter[47]. Although the author, whether Stephens or Rawlins, was indignant at Toland's change of front, the pamphlet attacks the ministry rather than its propagandist. It took advantage of the failure of Marlborough's plan to attack Overyssche in the summer of 1705 to accuse him of wanting peace with France, keeping bad faith with the Dutch, and having no war aims beyond his own profit; its retrospective justification of the record of the Junto under William shows that it was Toland who was writing in the authentic Commonwealth tradition. Faced with prosecution in 1706 over this libel, Stephens attempted to play on his connections with Shaftesbury to avoid punishment. But, as has been seen, Shaftesbury repudiated the charges contained in the pamphlet, and, despite Stephens' incredibly abject letters, his former patron insisted on severing their connection[48].

There can be little doubt that, as Coombs has noted, much of the earl's conduct at this time was disingenuous. His protestations that he had always 'done...justice' to Marlborough even 'when his character stood otherwise than it does at present' hardly squares with his criticisms of the ministry in general expressed in his correspondence with Furly. Nevertheless, his commitment to the war policy never failed, and it was presumably the government's recognition of this which ensured that his intercession with Sunderland on behalf of Pierre Bayle, accused by personal enemies of working for a Franco-Dutch peace, was successful[49]. At about the same time (October 1706) he expressed

46 (continued) Halifax to Rivers 27 Jan 1706-7; Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 25 Sept 1705, 10 April 1706.
47 The problem of its authorship is discussed on p.130 & note 50 .
48 See above, p.130 and note 51.
49 Coombs, 'William Stephens and the Letter...', B.I.H.R. 32, 1959, pp. 24-37; P.R.O. 30/24/22/2, f.178, and cf. Rand, Shaftesbury, pp. 387-8; Bayle, Oeuvres Diverses, 4 vols, The Hague 1731, IV 876-7, 877-8, 883-4.

his fears that the Dutch republicans were moving towards a peace policy, and his resolution to sever his links with them if this should prove to be so. His priorities were therefore clear, and, though he occasionally betrayed doubts about the commitment of the English government, from about 1705 he, like Toland, regarded himself as a supporter of the Marlborough/Godolphin coalition[50].

In the middle of Anne's reign, then, the Commonwealthsmen were united on the necessity for complete victory in the war. With the exceptions of Freke, Stephens, and Rawlins, moreover, they seemed agreed that the triumvirate of Marlborough, Godolphin, and Harley was the ministry best qualified to conclude the struggle successfully. This common attitude was expressed by Toland in 1707 in his edition of a 16th century philippic against the French, which Harley had apparently come across by accident and felt to be appropriate for publication[51]. The main thrust of the speech and of Toland's observations on it is to insist on the fulfilment of allied war aims before peace is considered. The pamphlet appeared at the height of national enthusiasm for the cause, and Toland wrote optimistically that in view of England's greater riches and 'the indisputable superiority of our generals and soldiers over theirs', French power could be broken in a couple of years; their threat to peace and their prospects of monopolising world trade would then be nullified, and England would be restored to its position as guarantor of the balance of Europe.

This unanimity was again lost during the three years after 1708, the fifth period into which this study is divided. The fall of Harley in 1708 inaugurated this new schism among the

50 Forster, Original Letters, pp. 224-8, 228-31. Tindal was another Commonwealthsman who declared in favour of the coalition: The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted, 1706, p. 293.

51 Toland, ed., A Philippick Oration to incite the English against the French, 1707, pp. i, xxx, 14 note 9; Bodleian Lib MS Rawlinson c146 ff.47-8.

Commonwealthsmen, for he retained Toland's loyalty for some years. Toland's aspirations centred on a renewal of his career as a diplomatic agent: in an important letter of 1705 he had suggested his own suitability for a mission to Germany, where he would 'keep a constant weekly correspondence with his Lordship...I should remain sometimes at Berlin, or Cassel, or Dessau, that it might not be said I was more at Hanover than elsewhere...but my interest there is so good, and they have such an opinion of my diligence and affection that when absent I should know all that passed there'. In 1707 Toland left England for a journey to Holland which he explained as motivated by the desire to participate in '<u>arcana literaria</u>', and he again approached Harley for support. The result was that his journey took on a diplomatic significance which has never been fully explored.

Fifteen years later an obituary of Toland, probably by Abel Boyer, admitted that

> the occasion of his going at this time into Germany is still a secret; but, as Robert Harley Esq. (since Earl of Oxford) equipped him for that journey and gave him directions for his personal behaviour, from what happened afterwards in England it is natural to conjecture that Mr Toland was sent to those German courts (Hanover and Berlin) to infuse suspicions of the Duke of Marlborough, and to feel their pulse about the pacific measures which the Queen was persuaded to pursue after the battle of Ramillies.

In some ways this is a reasonable supposition, which seems to be confirmed by the correspondence of Godolphin and Marlborough. In August 1708, some months after Harley was ousted from the ministry, Marlborough reported to his colleague that Toland was assiduously slandering them in Holland, and a few months later Somers claimed that he was preparing a libel to be based, ironically, on the <u>Letter to the Author</u>. 'I know him to be a villain', wrote Marlborough, 'and governed by a very malicious man (Harley), and

is maintained by him in Holland as a spy'[52].

Nonetheless, it would probably be wrong to regard Toland's mission as an attempt to undermine the coalition government in the interests of a peace policy, as Boyer believed. There is very little evidence that Toland was prepared to countenance an end to the war at this juncture, or that this was Harley's aim: the most thorough account of Harley's fall nowhere suggests that the secretary's differences with his colleagues were based on quarrels about war strategy or goals, though Harley's poor showing in the Almanza debate may have been an irritant[53]. Enthusiasm for war at this time was high, as is shown by the concurrence even of the High Tories in the 'No Peace Without Spain' resolution of November 1707, and, as we have seen, Harley had himself contributed to the martial fervour by commissioning Toland to publish the Oratio Philippica in the spring of that year[54].

On leaving England Toland had to apply himself to the problem of repairing his credit at Hanover, which, despite his confident assertions to Harley, had been badly damaged in 1702. To this end he exploited his contacts with the Elector Palatine's London envoy, Daniel von Steinghens. Steinghens has been described as 'a longtime tool' of Harley's, and he had useful connections with Hanoverian diplomats. Steinghens wanted to be elevated to the rank of ambassador extraordinary, and Toland wrote a memorial for the Elector John William recommending that this action should be taken. Another aspect of the public relations work undertaken by

52 Toland, Collection, II 351-2; H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 410; Abel Boyer, The Political State of Great Britain, 38 vols 1711-29, XXIII 341-2; Henry L.Snyder, ed, The Marlborough-Godolphin Correspondence, Oxford 1975, pp. 1059, 1066, 1165, 1171.

53 G.S.Holmes & W.A.Speck, 'The Fall of Harley in 1708 Reconsidered', E.H.R. 80, 1965, esp. pp. 686, 689.

54 See, e.g., William L.Sachse, Lord Somers: A Political Portrait, Manchester 1975, p. 257; above, note 51.

Toland was an English edition of the edict of 1705 by which John William, who had previously persecuted his Protestant subjects, granted religious toleration[55]. Toland incurred some criticism for his introduction to this tract, in which he attempted to explain the elector's earlier policy, but he succeeding in obtaining from the court at Dusseldorf a testimonial that he had rendered it 'very conspicuous and important services' in England. Armed with this, Toland moved on to Herrenhausen, where his arrival in the autumn of 1707 perplexed Sophia until she obtained the full story from a Hanoverian representative, the musician Agostino Steffani, then at Dusseldorf[56].

Marlborough, anxious to know what Toland was up to in Hanover, was no doubt relieved to read a report from the envoy Emmanuel Scrope Howe which assured him that the elector had not seen Toland while Sophia, although she saw him every day, was still apparently displeased with the Account of the Courts and did not welcome his presence. But Leibniz admitted that, when confronted with Toland at Hanover, he found it impossible to gauge accurately how much of the confidence of members of the English government he possessed. Toland of course claimed to be fully entrusted by all leading ministers, 'but as he has given us no proof of this credit of his, we have remained with him on the ordinary footing. Some people ... believe that he is in favour with Mr Harley, Secretary of State'. The problem does not admit of a definite solution, largely because Harley's reputation for duplicity rivalled Toland's unenviable one.

55 Edward Gregg, 'Was Queen Anne a Jacobite ?', History 57, 1972, p. 374; B Lib Add MS 4465 ff.30-2; The Declaration Lately Published by the Elector Palatine, in Favour of his Protestant Subjects, 1707, with introduction by Toland. See also O.Klopp, Der Fall des Hauses Stuart, 14 vols, Vienna 1875-88, XIV 553-4. For Toland's earlier condemnation of the Elector as a persecutor, see Anglia Libera, 1701, p. 183.

56 Bodleian Lib MS Ballard XXVII ff.37-8, 41; B Lib Add MS 4295 f.15; Doebner, Briefe, p. 253; Kemble, European State Papers, pp. 459-60.

One of Toland's techniques was to solicit letters of recommendation at every centre he visited, thus creating the impression that his diplomatic contacts were wider than they really were; he went on to Berlin from Hanover in the winter of 1707-8, and here, since his old patroness Sophia Charlotte was dead, he introduced himself on the strength of a letter from Leibniz. Lord Raby, the English ambassador at the Prussian court, wrote to Harley to ask whether Toland was acting on his behalf, as he claimed, and received a categorical denial: 'Mr Harley himself has written to me that so far from having any commission for him, he made difficulties in giving him a passport to leave England, not knowing what business he could possibly have abroad'[57]. From Berlin Toland travelled to Prague, where he established amicable relations with a community of Irish Franciscans, and to Vienna, where in the early months of 1708 he crossed swords with the English envoy, Philip Meadows the younger[58].

Raby, whom Swift thought arrogant and foolish, querulously pressed Harley on the subject of his relations with Toland. In two letters sent from Berlin[59] he asked for information about the visitor, who had apparently bragged about 'the secret commission you had given him to inspect and inform himself of the behaviour of all Her Majesty's ministers abroad and how they were looked upon in the several courts where they are'. This suspicion recurs in a memorial on English ministers drawn up in 1710 and found

57 British Library Blenheim MS 61146 (provisional), Howe to Marlborough 17 April 1708; Kemble, European State Papers, pp. 462-3, 464-5. For another of Toland's contacts at Berlin, the Dutch envoy Lindlo, see B Lib Add MS 4295 f.13, and for a typically hostile reaction from a British official or visitor, see Northants R.O., Isham Correspondence 4636. Desmaizeaux, in his life of Toland (Toland, Collection I lxii), says that he went to Berlin in spring 1707; if this is true, he was there three times during 1707-8. The 'incident, too ludicrous to be mentioned' (ibid., p. lxii) which forced him to leave Berlin was probably the quarrel reported by Raby in H.M.C. 29 Portland IX 289-90.

58 Toland, Collection, II 381-2; Kemble, European State Papers, pp. 466-7.

59 H.M.C. 29 Portland IX 289-90. These letters are almost (continue

among Raby's papers, while his brother Peter Wentworth was in the same year inclined to believe 'that the report Toland gave out himself, that Harley was his friend, was true'. If this was indeed Toland's mission it would explain a good deal: why Harley was so unwilling to acknowledge any connection with him, and why he found it so easy to antagonise British envoys abroad. Boyer's obituary informs us that Toland had failed to follow Harley's instructions, whatever these were, or had at least been of no use to his patron; his funds were therefore cut off at Vienna, and he encountered great difficulties in his return to Holland. But perhaps this withdrawal of supply is more easily explained by the fact that Harley was forced to resign as Secretary in February 1708, while his agent was still in Austria[60].

Back in Holland, and without ties with the ministry, Toland indulged in the wild talk which made Marlborough, Godolphin, and Somers so uneasy. His support for the war, however, remained firm: a curious piece published in Holland in 1709 and directed against the French journal Mercure Gallant proves this. In Gallus Aretalogus, which was appended to a reprint of the Oratio Philippica, Toland, while unconvincingly disavowing any general anti-French prejudice, attacked the race as both arrogant and servile, and he endorsed the harsh peace terms recently rejected

59 (continued) certainly misdated: the first was probably sent late in 1707, and the second cannot be earlier than January 1708, when Toland was still in Vienna (Kemble, European State Papers, p. 465).

60 J.J.Cartwright, ed., The Wentworth Papers 1705-1739, 1882, pp. 132, 137; Boyer, Political State, XXIII 341-2. While in Vienna Toland apparently attempted without success to bribe imperial ministers into conferring a countship of the empire on a French banker based in Holland: Toland, Collection I lxii. He later reminded Harley of this 'impenetrable negotiation at Vienna, hid under the pretence of curiosity, (which) was not only applauded by the prince that employed me, but also proportionably rewarded' (ibid. II 225).

by the French at the Hague ('ut turbas nempe quas excitasti sedare cogaris et suum cuique, quod leges divinae et humanae suadent, reddas'). While putting in a good word for the Elector Palatine, he demanded that the Dutch be guaranteed a strong barrier and that the Anglo-Dutch alliance be strictly maintained[61].

At the Hague, Toland made a valuable contact in Prince Eugene, though there is nothing to suggest that this went beyond their common concerns as bibliophiles. Toland was employed in searching out rare books for Eugene's library and was apparently well rewarded when the Prince visited England in 1712. Eugene's associate Count Hohendorf- a freethinker who had lived in the east and whose reputation for untrustworthiness yielded nothing to Toland's- corresponded with the English deist on literary and religious topics, and built up a manuscript collection of his works in Vienna which was later to be used by Giannone[62].

By 1710 the position of the Commonwealthsmen was a confused one: united in their support of the war, they differed over which politicians were best qualified to conduct it. While Toland seems still to have regarded himself as a Harleyite, the correspondence of 1708 between Molesworth and Shaftesbury leaves no doubt that they believed the duumvirs were most likely to bring the war to a successful conclusion. Molesworth strongly urged Shaftesbury to re-enter parliamentary politics on the Treasurer's behalf, and he

61 Above, note 52; Oratio Philippica ad excitandos contra Galliam Britannos, ed Toland, Amsterdam 1709, pp. 71-134, esp. pp. 84-5, 87, 94, 122-5, 127-8.

62 Boyer, Political State, XXIII 341-2; on Toland and Hohendorf, B Lib Add MS 4295 f.19; Giuseppe Ricuperati, 'Libertinismo e Deismo a Vienna: Spinoza, Toland, e il Triregno', Rivista Storica Italiana 79, 1967, pp. 629-47. Max Braubach, Geschichte und Abenteuer: Gestalten um den Prinzen Eugen, Munich 1950, has a useful chapter (III) on Hohendorf, 'dieser Amateurpolitiker' (p. 158), for whom book-collecting was 'die...beherrschende Leidenschaft' (p. 161). Cf. the dedication to Hohendorf and praise for Eugene in 'Cicero Illustratus': Toland, Collection I 231-6.

wrote enthusiastically of Godolphin's work in providing funds for 'all the war in its distant parts'[63]. Although ill health prevented Shaftesbury from playing an active role in support of the Godolphin ministry, he remained as strongly opposed to a peace policy in 1709 as he had been in 1701. He was afraid that corruption might bring about an end to the war, and professed himself highly satisfied that Townshend had failed to agree on peace preliminaries with the French[64].

The ministerial changes of 1710 eventually clarified this situation. It has already been argued that Harley's manifesto as he began to remodel the administration was a restatement of the 'Country' attitudes which had long been held by the Commonwealthsmen. As he became committed to a peace policy Toland and his associates were effectively presented with a choice between renouncing their insistence on the necessity of the war and abandoning the Country platform for the sake of an alliance with the Whigs to prolong the struggle. For Shaftesbury the decision was not a difficult one, since for many years the war had been central to his political outlook. On Godolphin's fall he attached himself without hesitation to the Whigs, inviting Halifax to stand godfather to his new-born heir in February 1711. When, increasingly incapacitated, he left England in the same year to die at Naples, he wrote that his despair at the triumph of the Tory peace policy made him the less concerned at his own parlous physical condition. In May 1711 he had written to Harley reminding him of their old friendship, long since cooled, and urging him to 'accomplish the great work so gloriously begun and carried on for the rescue of

63 P.R.O. 30/24/21/180, and see also 21/169, 166 (printed in Forster, Original Letters, pp. 240-8). Godolphin's anxiety for Shaftesbury's support at this period is indicated by the fact that Micklethwayte was now, at last, provided with a place: P.R.O. 30/24/21/152, 155.

64 Forster, Original Letters, pp. 254-6; P.R.O. 30/24/21/172.

liberty and the deliverance of Europe and mankind', but the appeal lacked conviction[65].

Davenant, after a long silence, returned to political controversy in 1710, and made the opposite choice. Writing on Harley's behalf behind his old Tom Double persona, he assured the public that the new ministry would continue the war until Spain was recovered and France humbled. Yet his attitude to the conduct of the war had changed: he no longer supported Marlborough's policy, arguing instead for a defensive war in Flanders and energetic action at sea. In 1711 he repeated this assertion in a report to the Commissioners of Public Accounts, claiming in addition that the war had enriched the Dutch and impoverished England. In a private letter to Harley, as early as August 1710, Davenant was hoping for peace as a result of the recent allied successes[66].

Toland, however, must have found the decision between Harley and the Whigs an agonising one, and he tried to put it off as long as possible. To turn against the Treasurer would be to renounce one of the few lasting contacts he had formed among the numerous statesmen he had attempted to cultivate. The attempts he made during 1711 to induce Harley to form a coalition with the Whigs centred on the necessity for victory over France. 'Though a good peace be a good thing', he wrote in December 1711 to the Prime Minister, 'no peace can be good for their (the House of Hanover's) interest at this time; and much less a peace that gives up Spain and the Indies to the House of Bourbon...This...is the ground of our opposition'. He therefore urged the Treasurer to arrange a

65 B Lib Add MS 7121 f.63; Forster, Original Letters, pp. 269-72 (and see also pp. 266-9, and P.R.O. 30/24/23/9 ff.30v, 47v-48); H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 697.

66 Davenant, Sir Thomas Double at Court, 1710, pp. 63, 71-3; B Lib Add MS 17767 (Davenant's second report to the Commissioners, 10 Dec 1711) ff.43-4; H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 577, Davenant to Harley 27 Aug 1710.

coalition between moderates of both parties, and 'instead of your Priors and Swifts' to send Toland himself as an agent to Hanover, 'where you'll find me as secret as I hope to be successful'. Naturally Toland went out of his way to emphasise his close links with the Electoral Court, and his assertion that, if Oxford had acted earlier as he suggested, 'the world should never have seen his Electoral Highness's late Memorial' almost certainly overstates his own importance. Although the Treasurer seems to have paid some attention to Toland's approach[67], within a month he had secured Marlborough's dismissal and obtained a mass creation of peers to ensure a majority for peace in the Lords. By early 1712 Toland must have realised that his former patron was fully committed to ending the war, and in these circumstances his own attachment to the Hanover interest, which was implacably opposed to peace, necessitated an alliance with the Junto leaders against the government.

Toland seized the opportunity to demonstrate that, whatever his failings as a political agent, his talents as a propagandist were formidable. The only thing he produced on this topic in 1712 was the rather low-key Her Majesty's Reasons for Creating the Electoral Prince of Hanover a Peer of this Realm, which offered comments on the text of the prince's patent: Toland refrained from attacking the ministry, and showed that he still sympathised with the plan for inviting the prince to England which had almost ruined his credit in Hanover in 1702. In 1713 his work became more mordant. Dunkirk or Dover demanded the demolition of the fortifications of the French privateering port, which Louis had

67 See above, pp. 132-4 ; also Toland, Collection, II 215-38; the first memorial is also printed in H.M.C. 29 Portland V 126. see also Collection II 429-30 for a letter from Toland to an unknown Whig leader, perhaps Halifax, mentioning that he had dropped Harley's friendship two years earlier 'upon certain (as he thought) ambiguous words he let drop about the House of Hanover'. Unfortunately the letter is undated.

often promised; it also asserted in more general terms that peace with France was far more dangerous than war, offering as it did opportunities for corruption, and it contained plenty of aspersions on the ministry without as yet directly accusing it of wishing to restore the male line of the Stuarts[68].

But the most cogent statement of the Commonwealthsmen's case that the Peace implied Jacobitism came in Toland's Art of Restoring (1714). Oxford's policy, wrote Toland, involved a betrayal of the Dutch and the Emperor at Utrecht because they were the best guarantors of the Protestant succession[69]. The Peace had, it seems, been the crucial development which convinced him that it was in danger. Oddly enough, Toland's polemics seldom refer to Bolingbroke, who had tried to push the peace negotiations through even faster than Oxford had wanted. Possibly Toland's access to information on quarrels within the Cabinet council was limited, but no doubt his attitude is partly to be ascribed to resentment at the disappointment of his hopes in the Treasurer. He failed to appreciate that the fact that the government was not entirely in the pocket of the reversionary interest did not imply that it was Jacobite. Although after March 1714 Oxford gave up any thoughts of restoring the Stuarts, Toland and his associates continued almost wilfully to misconstrue the situation.

The period from 1712 to 1717 saw the re-establishment of unity among the Commonwealthsmen, based on revulsion against the foreign

68 Toland, 'Her Majesty's Reasons', (1712), in Somers Tracts XIII 215-6, Dunkirk or Dover, 1713, p. 4. As early as 1709 Shaftesbury had been concerned with the Dunkirk issue: Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. 35. Another less noteworthy Hanover tract produced by Toland at this time was The Funeral Elogy and Character of...the late Princess Sophia, 1714, which included updated versions of the character studies of the electoral family already published in the 1705 Account (see note 32 above) they appeared yet again in Boyer's Political State of Great Britain VIII (1714) 209-15. Sophia's death in 1714 must have been a major personal blow to Toland, as his relations with George had never been close.

69 Toland, The Art of Restoring, 1714, esp. p. 7.

and domestic policies of Queen Anne's last ministry. By 1712 Toland was again praising Marlborough, now fully aligned with the Whigs in support of the war. Shaftesbury, dying at Naples, was deeply distressed at the progress of the Peace, which he described to Molesworth's diplomat son John as bringing 'shame and misery' upon the country[70], Stephens regarded Utrecht as a 'scandalous peace', and went on to assert that there could be no distinction between the international interests of England and Hanover. Gordon, who thought the betrayal of the Catalans in 1713 one of the great stains on England's record, later used the same term as Stephens to describe the Utrecht settlement, writing: 'we then stood on the margin of the deep and terrible abyss, when Providence of its tender mercy brought forth the First of August (Anne's death), and made the potent George our second Deliverer'[71].

Although the Commonwealthsmen's uncritical attitude to the Hanoverian regime lasted only about three years from 1714, their vindictive stance towards the members of Anne's last ministry persisted longer than this. In 1720 Trenchard, whose activities during most of Anne's reign remain obscure, asserted that the Tory ministry had been well bribed during the peace negotiations, and regretted that its members had escaped condign punishment. For some years the sense of relief at the smoothness of the Protestant Succession, coupled with the belief that it was still under threat from Tories and Jacobites, ensured that the Commonwealthsmen's comments on ministerial action were usually favourable and always deferential. Toland assumed that the interests of England and

70 Toland, Collection I 293-4, Art of Restoring, p. 8; Rand, Shaftesbury, pp. 508-9, Shaftesbury to John Molesworth 2 Aug 1712. Oxford at this time showed his displeasure with Molesworth by making difficulties about his son's diplomatic credentials: H.M.C. 29 Portland V 151, B Lib Portland Loan 29/308 ff.82-3, 29/151, Molesworth to Oxford, Edlington 20 Oct 1712.

71 Stephens, A Second Deliverance from Popery and Slavery, 1714, pp. 38, 45-6; Gordon, The Creed of an Independent Whig, 1720, p. 11, 'Priestianity' (1720), in Trenchard, Collection II 408.

Hanover were identical, and he was assiduous in his praises of the German ministers Bothmer and Bernstorff. His recommendation of peerages for these statesmen was bitterly attacked by Defoe, who accused him of flying a kite on the ministry's behalf, although the strained relations between the king's English and German advisers makes this seem unlikely[72]. Toland attempted, not very convincingly, to put the tortuous foreign policy of Stanhope in the tradition of the Protestant interest; he commended the Triple Alliance of January 1717 with France and the Dutch as the foundation of a secure peace, and a year later an unexpected passage in praise of the Regent Orléans seems to indicate that his career-long francophobia was gradually mellowing in response to new circumstances[73].

Both Toland and Molesworth accepted the ministerial line that the king of Sweden was the greatest foreign threat to British security: thus in the crisis over foreign affairs which led to the departures of Townshend and Walpole from the government, the two Commonwealthsmen gave support in print to the interventionist policy of Stanhope, Sunderland, and the King. The aid and encouragement given by Charles XII to the Jacobites gave substance to the argument that he had abandoned the role of Gustavus Adolphus and was now the principal danger to the Protestant

72 Toland, The Funeral Elogy, Dedication, State-Anatomy, pp. 57-8; Defoe, An Argument Proving that the Design of Employing and Ennobling Foreigners is a Treasonable Conspiracy against the Constitution, 1717, esp. pp. 4, 5, 26; Toland, The Second Part of the State-Anatomy, 1717, pp. 25-8, where he shows that Defoe's pamphlet contradicted all he had said in the True-Born Englishman. Walter Wilson, Life and Letters of Daniel Defoe, 3 vols 1830, III 415, thought Toland mistaken in attributing An Argument to Defoe, but it appears as item 359 of J.R.Moore's authoritative Checklist of the Writings of Daniel Defoe, Bloomington (Ind), 1960.

73 Toland, State-Anatomy, pp. 55-6, The Second Part, p. 35, The Destiny of Rome, 1718, pp. 17-18. For a more modern appreciation of the Triple Alliance, see Basil Williams, Stanhope, Oxford, 1968 ed., pp. 227-9.

interest: Charles, thought Toland, 'for all his gilt Bible, would give a Popish head to the Church of England', and readers were reminded that he 'has not left as much as the shadow of liberty, though an artifice frequent with tyrants, in his own country'[74].

Molesworth contributed two pamphlets to the controversy, one of which, A Short Narrative of the Life and Death of John Rhinholdt, Count Patkul, attracted a good deal of attention; its tactic was to demonstrate the wilful cruelty of the Swedish king towards his enemies, and so to show his English Jacobite supporters who had sympathised with the Gyllenborg Plot 'what they are to fear or hope from a magnanimity so wrong turned, and an utter ignorance of all laws and liberties'. Molesworth's friend Matthew Tindal used this tract in his Defection Consider'd, which denounced Walpole and Townshend for leaving the ministry and, by implication, abetting Tory plans for a Swedish/Jacobite invasion. The second of Molesworth's pamphlets defended the stiff memorial presented to the Swedish court by the English resident Robert Jackson against criticisms advanced in an anonymous pamphlet which was generally accepted as the work of Count Gyllenborg. Molesworth denied that Charles' wild projects had anything to do with the Protestant interest; the king's ideas of magnanimity were evidence only of mental instability. The government's argument, rejected by Townshend, that an increase in Russian power would benefit Britain by further dividing control of the Baltic, was upheld, and the insinuation that the ministers were following 'Hanover counsels' was indignantly denied: George's policy was intended to promote

74 Hatton, George I, pp. 188-93; John J.Murray, George I, the Baltic, and the Whig Split, 1969, pp. 333-5, 338-9; Toland, The Second Part, p. 37. For Toland's earlier praise of Charles XII, before he was associated with Jacobitism, see A Philippick Oration, p. 44, note 48.

English commerce[75].

Molesworth's support for the ministers on this and other issues may account for the rumour current in October 1717 that he was to be made Secretary at War, or even to replace Addison as Secretary of State. His pro-government stance was felt in some quarters to be a betrayal of his earlier principles, and in 1717-8 the viscount had to undergo the humiliation of claiming that Tory debating points derived from the Account of Denmark were invalid because English conditions were totally different. But the year 1718, which marks the beginning of the final phase into which we have divided the careers of the Commonwealthsmen, brought about a change in opinions. By November, Molesworth was again opposing the ministry on foreign affairs, joining with Jekyll and other prominent opposition Whigs in Parliament in an unsuccessful attack on Stanhope's plan to coerce Spain into accepting the terms of the Quadruple Alliance[76]. His change of front may have been owing to political disappointment, but it is possible that he regarded a war for the defence of Sicily as peripheral to English interests, whereas action against the Jacobite Charles XII had seemed vital.

In his criticism of Mediterranean policy Molesworth was joined by Trenchard, now emerging from twenty years' virtual silence. But Trenchard and his friend Thomas Gordon adopted a less pacific attitude. Spain had been humbled by the exertions of the British fleet, and these authors insisted that the peace terms must reflect this through the cession either of Majorca or of some of the West Indian islands. But their main concern was to denounce any suggestion that Gibraltar should be returned to the Spanish,

75 Molesworth, 'Patkul', reprinted in Somers Tracts XIII 873-92, quotation from p. 873; Tindal, The Defection Consider'd, 1717, p. 16; Molesworth, Observations upon a Pamphlet called An English Merchant's Remarks upon a Scandalous Jacobite Paper, (1st ed 1717), 1738 (bound with the 4th edition of the Account of Denmark), pp. 329-30, 360, 375, 379.

76 H.M.C. 56 Stuart V 187, VII 570, 574, 29 Portland V 570; Nicholas Tindal, Continuation, XIX 187. See also Williams, Stanhope, p. 320.

as Stanhope seems to have intended. This base, they argued, secured naval control over the Mediterranean at a time when 'every true Englishman must tremble at the growing power of France'. The first of the immensely popular Cato's Letters continued this theme[77].

Both Trenchard and Molesworth ended their careers in embittered opposition to Whig foreign policy. In his last parliamentary session the viscount demanded the retention of Gibraltar and Port Mahon, and attacked the provision in Carteret's treaty for a subsidy to Sweden: 'by our late conduct we are become the allies of the whole world, and the bubbles of all our allies'. It was partly because his distrust of Sweden's policy survived even Charles XII that, as Daniel Pulteney told John Molesworth, 'your father was very much warmer on this occasion than any of the Tories'[78]. At this time Trenchard and Molesworth were both primarily concerned with investigation of the South Sea scandal, and their disgust with the tactics of the government in this matter may well have influenced their attitudes to the external policies then being pursued. Conversely, Tindal's defence of the Hanoverian cause led him into a vindication of ministerial policy in the Baltic and Mediterranean, attacked by Molesworth and 'Cato'[79]. Yet Tindal had never been a particularly close observer of foreign affairs, and his comments on this subject are not very enlightening.

At first glance, this survey of the Commonwealthsmen's pronouncements on foreign affairs, extending over a quarter of a

77 Trenchard and Gordon, Considerations, pp. 9-10, 18-20, 28-9, and see p. 4 for an attack on Baltic policy as subservient to the interests of Hanover; Cato's Letters no. 1 (I 1ff.); see also no. 86 (III 166-75), Gordon, The Creed of an Independent Whig, p. 21, for further comment on Mediterranean policy.

78 William Cobbett, The Parliamentary History of England, 36 vols 1806, VII 682-3, 846-7; Molesworth Corr p. 317.

79 Tindal, A Defence of our Present Happy Establishment, 1722, pp. 6-11.

century, reveals little but confusion. Conflicting prejudices and considerations of personal advancement meant that attitudes were liable to change from year to year. But the underlying theme remained constant over the whole period. The conviction that the maintenance of the Protestant interest in Europe was indispensable to the preservation of English liberties animates their views on this subject and makes it impossible to write them off as inessential to the main body of 'Commonwealth' thought.

A permanent feature of this view of European politics was the necessity for a strict alliance between England and the Dutch Republic. Shaftesbury's much-quoted remark to the effect that Jacobites could easily be identified by their passionate invectives against the Hollanders sums up the importance of the Dutch alliance in English politics. To those who held the view that the English constitution safeguarded certain valuable principles which were unknown in most of Europe- representative institutions, security of person and property, and a wide religious toleration- the Dutch commanded respect as allies and preceptors. This feeling was reinforced by their long struggle against Louis XIV and their crucial role in 1688. These, rather than any abstract sympathy for republican forms of government, were the reasons why the Commonwealthsmen placed such strong emphasis on the necessity for good relations with Holland. Among their many criticisms of the governments of the Interregnum was the contention that they dissipated English strength by making war on the Dutch at a time when the power of France was already becoming a threat: Toland and Davenant both argued in this way[80].

80 P.R.O. 30/24/22/2, Shaftesbury to Van Twedde 17 Jan 1705-6 (in Rand, Shaftesbury, pp. 347-52); cf. Toland, Anglia Libera, p. 154; Davenant, Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power..., 1701, pp. 11-21; Toland, Art of Restoring, p. 5, Oratio Philippica, Amsterdam 1709 ed., p. 110. Ironically, Bolingbroke, the villain of Utrecht, came to accept at least a part of this argument: see his Works, ed D.Mallet, 5 vols 1754, II 388.

Normally the Commonwealthsmen sympathised with the Loevestein faction in Dutch internal politics, but it has already been seen that even for Shaftesbury, who took a close personal interest in the affairs of the Provinces, such considerations were eclipsed by the need to maintain the alliance against France. Sympathy for the Dutch republicans was based not so much on common hostility to monarchy as on shared assumptions which were totally different. Pieter de la Court's The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republick of Holland was first published in English in 1702, the year of William's death.Its dislike of standing armies, of the political power of the clergy, and of religious persecution, as well as its advocacy of general naturalisation, all recall leading ideas of the Commonwealthsmen, and it is at least possible that they were directly influenced by the Dutch original[81].

The Commonwealthsmen often talked of the Protestant interest of Europe, and it is worth enquiring what they meant by this curiously old-fashioned sounding concept. None of this group were religious enthusiasts, and the idea of a perpetual struggle between Protestant and Catholic which appears in Burnet's History was not prominent in their thought. Toland, while asserting that the English king must head the Protestant interest, went out of his way to say that this did not imply wanton aggression against Catholics. The Commonwealthsmen were by no means the only thoroughly secular thinkers to place a high value on a Protestant foreign policy: Sir William Temple, author of the anti-French alliance of 1668 between England, Sweden, and the United Provinces, had been censured by Burnet as an admirer of Confucius and despiser of popular religion[82].

81 Toland, Mr Toland's Reflections on Dr Sacheverell's Sermon, 1710, p. 13; Forster, Original Letters, pp. 224-8; de la Court, True Interest, 1702, pp. 8, 60-2, 235-8, 67-70.
82 Burnet I 321, 378; Toland, State-Anatomy, pp. 24, 55-6.

The maintenance of the Protestant interest was seen not as an end in itself, but as a guarantee of the preservation of the characteristics which made England almost unique. The liberal principles enshrined in the balanced constitution seemed to be under constant threat of subversion at home (by the Stuart kings and later by the Jacobites) and suppression from abroad (through the aggression of Louis XIV or Charles XII). In the opinion of the Commonwealthsmen these dangers could only be countered by a firm commitment to the Hanover Succession in Britain and by a strict alliance with the anti-Bourbon powers in Europe, notably the Dutch. Perhaps the Protestant interest was a misnomer for this policy, since the Holy Roman Emperor was an integral part of it; when the Commonwealthsmen talked of the balance of power, a concept which united Protestant and Catholic nations threatened by France, they were probably speaking more accurately. Stephens[83] recognised this when praising Elizabeth's policy

> that England should always make itself the head and protection of the whole Protestant interest...By making all true Protestants, i.e. all true Christians, her friends she enabled England to make good her oldest maxim of state, which was to keep the balance of Europe equal and steady...Our allies of the Roman communion must allow this Protestant maxim to be truly Catholic, because their safety from the power of France was wrapped up in it together with our own.

Toland, Molesworth, and Davenant all claimed to be internationalists, and Harrington's influence is perhaps discernible in their more cosmopolitan aspirations: in 1701 Toland sanguinely hoped for the liberty of all nations, even, ultimately, 'the servile French, or the now more servile Spaniards: for he cannot be true to the liberty of his country who is not true to the cause of liberty itself, by being a hearty friend and lover of all mankind'[84]. But for their own time the security of England

83 Stephens, A Thanksgiving Sermon Preach'd before the...Lord Mayor, 1696, pp. 15-16.

84 The Political Works of James Harrington, ed J.G.A.Pocock, Cambridge 1977, p. 330; Davenant, Essays Upon Peace at Home..., p. 163; Toland, Anglia Libera, pp. 140-1, 190, The Militia Reform'd, p. 17; Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, P. xiv.

came first. Internal and external dangers were inextricably combined, and it is inadvisable to distinguish too harshly between them when analysing the reactions of the Commonwealthsmen. For them, the solution of the problem lay in vindicating the rights of the House of Hanover to the Crown. Shaftesbury summed up this preoccupation well[85]:

> 'tis scarce a quarter of an age since such a happy balance of power was settled between our prince and people as has firmly secured our hitherto precarious liberties...But we are still at this moment expending both our blood and treasure to secure to ourselves this inestimable purchase of our free government and national constitution...We are still held in a perpetual alarm by the...terror of that power which...has again threatened the world with a universal monarchy and a new abyss of ignorance and superstition.

85 Shaftesbury, Characteristics, ed J.M.Robertson, 2 vols 1900, I 141.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE MONIED MEN

The rapid advance in techniques of public finance in the quarter century after the Revolution was one of the most far-reaching developments of the period. It was seen in the third chapter that the Commonwealthsmen were worried about its social and political effects. But at the same time several of them had close personal dealings with the mercantile and financial communities which can be documented from their books, pamphlets, and correspondence. In this chapter these contacts, which culminated in the South Sea scandal, will be examined: it should then be possible to find out whether, in this important area, the Commonwealthsmen's theory squared with their practices.

As observers of the English economy Toland, Trenchard, and Davenant, the main writers to be cited in this connection, were no doubt somewhat one-sided; most of their time was spent in London, very little in the provincial towns (here Defoe enjoyed an obvious advantage). But their knowledge of trade and finance in the capital at a time when these topics were closely related to high politics helps to ensure that their experience remains of interest.

Pride and admiration are always apparent in the comments on London made by the Commonwealthsmen- with the exception of Cary, who, as a spokesman for the outports, disliked the place. The dedication of Toland's edition of the works of Harrington is a panegyric on the City and its governors; elsewhere he commends London to a foreigner as a centre of true learning, and, at the end of his life, boasts that it is 'the see and, as it were, the citadel' of his sect of pantheists. More soberly, Davenant contended that the growth of London was beneficial to the kingdom because it provided a stabilising influence in politics, while Stephens praised its constitution because it 'still retains its

conformity to the old public weal of England'[1].

One reason for this admiration is clear: the Commonwealthsmen were Old Whigs, the conscious heirs of Shaftesbury's party in the struggle to limit the crown's arbitrary power, and London had been the last Whig stronghold when, in the mid-1680s, the cause appeared to be lost. Hence Toland's respect for Sir Robert Clayton, the veteran of that period with whom he had close dealings during the 1690s. But it is equally important to point out the great concern which the Commonwealthsmen always showed for all questions involving trade. They were fully aware of its indispensability for national prosperity, and were by no means so 'nostalgic' for a predominantly agrarian economy as has recently been claimed[2]. A study of their contributions to economic issues and of their activity in the closely related sphere of London politics will make this clearer.

The importance of mercantile disputes in the late 17th century is explained by the trade boom of the period; an abnormally high amount of money was invested in international commerce and comparatively little in industrial development . It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the rivalries between different factions of commercial magnates had important implications for politics. London politics during the 1690s were deeply affected by national conflicts: the divisions between Whig and Tory, Court and Country, High and Low Church. But their course was to a large extent determined by the consequences of the alliance of the 1680s between the East India Company and the Stuart monarchy. Under the more open conditions of William III's reign the interlopers, as is

1 The Oceana and Other Works of James Harrington Esq, ed J.Toland, 1737 ed, pp. i-v (but Toland's motives for this dedication were not entirely disinterested: see Bodleian Lib MS Ballard IV ff.53-4); Toland, Letters to Serena, 1704, pp. ii-v, Pantheisticon, Eng. trans. 1751, p. 58; Davenant, An Essay Upon Ways and Means, 1695, p. 116; Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, with other Tracts of the same Author, 1709, pp. 112-3.

2 by Isaac Kramnick, Bolingbroke and his Circle, Cambridge (Mass), chapter 9.

well known, turned to the Whigs in their attempt to upset the Company's monopoly[3]. This group, which received incorporation as the New East India Company in 1698, included many of the original backers of the Whig-inspired Bank of England; consequently, there was a certain amount of continuity between leading members of the Old Company and the promoters of such financial rivals to the Bank as the Land Bank and the Sword Blade Company. Thus we can see the makings of a two-party system in London politics which was related to, though not dependent on, national political configurations[4]. In particular, it is important to note that not all opponents of the East India Company in the early 1690s were Whigs, Nottingham being one politician who favoured the granting of a charter to the interlopers[5]. But the close ties established between the Bank, the New East India Company, and the Junto ensured that this City faction became identified with the Whigs and their adversaries with the Tories or the New Country Party.

The leadership of these groups can be reconstructed by comparing the slates of candidates put up by the rival factions for the mayoralty or for election as London's M.P.s. As might be expected, there were a number of individual defections, but a pattern emerges in which certain civic dignitaries are recurrently found on opposite sides in City elections. Consistent Tory/Old

3 On investment in foreign trade, see Ralph Davis, 'English Foreign Trade, 1660-1700', Ec.H.R. 2nd Series 7, 1954-5, pp. 162-3; on the East India Company in this period, W.R.Scott, The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish, and Irish Joint Stock Companies to 1720, Cambridge, 3 vols 1910-2, II 150-206, L.S.Sutherland, The East India Company in 18th Century Politics, Oxford 1952, pp. 5-7.

4 See P.G.M.Dickson, The Financial Revolution in England 1688-1756, 1967, p. 19, on the connections between the Bank and the New East India Co., and John Carswell, The South Sea Bubble, 1960, p. 39, on the rivalry between the Sword Blade and the Bank.

5 This point is well brought out in Henry Horwitz, 'The East India Trade, the Politicians, and the Constitution, 1689-1702', Journal of British Studies 17(2), 1978, pp. 3-5.

Company partisans include Sir Thomas Cooke, Sir Charles Duncombe, Sir William Pritchard, and Richard Hoare; and such men were equally consistently opposed by Samuel Shepheard, Sir Robert Clayton, Gilbert Heathcote, Sir James Bateman, Sir Henry Ashurst, and Sir Thomas Abney[6].

It might have been expected that the sympathies of the Commonwealthsmen would have been wholeheartedly on the side of the latter group. Its Whig credentials were unimpeachable. Furthermore, the typical attitude of the Commonwealthsmen to monopolies like that of the East India Company was one of hostility. Molesworth's preface to Franco-Gallia, perhaps written as early as 1705, criticised those clergymen who seek to manage heaven 'by a joint-stock, exclusive of all others (as pernicious in divinity as in trade...)', while Cato's Letters denounce commercial monopolies as sources of corruption and assert that free trade is a natural human right[7]. There were, in fact, close ties between Toland and a leading figure in the New East India interest, Sir Robert Clayton.

Nevertheless, complete identification of the two groups was precluded by the disgust felt by the Commonwealthsmen for the apostate Whigs of the Junto; this led on several notable occasions to their support, by words and sometimes by actions, of the party of opposition in the City, and in particular of its most controversial member, Sir Charles Duncombe. Toland's simultaneous links with Clayton and sympathy with Duncombe are, if easy to

6 On most of these men, see D.N.B.; the slates can be found in Luttrell II 25, III 283-4, 538, IV 689, 721, V 111, 193, VI 186, 633.

7 Molesworth, trans., Franco-Gallia, 1721 ed, Preface, p. xiii (the translation was originally published without the preface in 1705; that the preface may date from this time is indicated by p. xxviii, by which it seems that the Union was not complete at time of writing); Cato's Letters nos. 90, 91, 18 & 25 August 1722, and see also no. 7, 17 Dec 1720 (III 202-3, 213, I 32).

document, difficult to explain. Sometimes his attitude seems to have been determined by the merits of the case, sometimes by personal animosities, and sometimes, though he was by no means the mercenary hack depicted by enemies, by the necessity incumbent on a writer without private means of keeping well in with wealthy patrons.

The course of metropolitan politics was tortuous, and can best be explained by an examination of the conflicts concerning the various institutions of trade and finance; the role played by the Commonwealthsmen in these disputes will be considered here, and the problem of their general outlook on economic questions discussed at the end.

In the mid-1690s, when the pamphleteering careers of most of the Commonwealthsmen were beginning, the Bank of England was a temporary institution deeply involved in current politics. From the beginning it was distrusted by those who resented the war's tendency to transfer wealth from the owners of the land to the monied interest, and the National Land Bank of 1696 was an attempt to provide finance for the war while avoiding these pernicious consequences. As the most recent writer on the subject has argued[8], the duel between the two Banks was not so much a Whig/Tory affair as an effort by the Country Party to protect the landed interest against the Court Whigs; hence the presence among the Land Bank's supporters, in addition to Harley and Foley, of Shrewsbury, whose championing of the Triennial Bill two years earlier had shown that he still sympathised with the Country cause.

It is not, therefore, surprising to find members of the embryonic group of Commonwealthsmen expressing sentiments

8 Dennis Rubini, 'Politics and the Battle for the Banks, 1688-97', E.H.R. 85, 1970, pp. 702-3, 712-4.

favourable to the Land Bank. Davenant, a strong Country Party partisan, warned that the Bank of England might gain too much power through its financial strength, and urged that the Land Bank be encouraged by the government. In August 1696, in a memorial presented to Shrewsbury and Godolphin, he defended the Land Bank against its detractors, whom he identified with the Junto[9]. Another tract, which has been plausibly attributed to Trenchard (but also to John Asgill), supported the project even more outspokenly as 'the most beneficial thing to the landed man that ever was projected'; the Bank of England directors showed their 'malice and self-interest' in attempting to stifle the Land Bank by the simultaneous floating of Exchequer Bills, 'those chimeras and idols of fancy'. The views expressed in the pamphlet are entirely consonant with Trenchard's known economic ideas, which favoured low interest rates and high land prices[10]. The tract may well, therefore, have been the first episode in his campaign against the Junto which was to culminate in the standing army tracts, and it was in any case typical of certain aspects of the economic thought of the Commonwealthsmen.

Cary too disliked the Bank of England at its inception[11], but Toland's attitude to it was less forthright. In his fulsome dedication of his edition of Oceana to the magistrates of London, dated 30 November 1699, he spoke of the Bank as 'so sacred a repository that even foreigners think their treasure more safely lodged there than with themselves at home', and predicted that its charter would shortly be made perpetual[12]. By this time, of course,

9 A.P.Usher, Two Manuscripts by Charles Davenant, Baltimore 1942, pp. 61-2; Davenant, 'An Essay Upon Public Virtue' (1696), in B Lib Harleiam MS 1223, pp. 103-6 (original pagination).
10 Remarks on the Proceedings of the Commissioners...for Establishing of a Land-Bank, 1696, pp. 2, 15, 7; cf. Cato's Letters nos. 10, 87, 3 Jan 1720-2, 28 July 1722 (I 53, 58, III 182).
11 Cary, An Essay towards Settling a National Credit, 1696, pp. 13-14.
12 Oceana, ed Toland, pp. ii-iii.

the Bank was much stronger than it had been in 1696, the Land Bank was dead, and so the kind of negative criticism cited earlier would have been inappropriate.

Nevertheless, Toland's comments were not always so uncritical. A manuscript of his which seems to date from autumn 1720 (since it refers to those 'who are for setting up a Bank in Ireland') outlines an alternative plan for a national bank. This manuscript forms the introduction to 'The Scheme, or Practical Model, of a National Bank, Written by a Gentleman who Died in the Year 1708'; I have been unable to identify the original projector, whose proposals were avowedly based on financial arrangements in the United Provinces. He attacked the existing system by which 'public securities' were 'confined almost to the citizens of London and the Parliament men, and even among them to such only as will buy or earn favour'. Toland's own introduction complains that the existing Bank 'is built...on a narrow foundation', lacking 'any inspection, check, or control from the supreme authority' and subject to 'frequent runs'. He condemned it by writing that 'it is infinitely more honourable, as it is more safe, for a prince to be served by all his people than by any one party among them, and much less by a small, designing, mercenary corporation'[13]. This dismissive comment perhaps indicates that Toland's views on the

13 For Toland's title-page and introduction, see B Lib Add MS 4465 ff.39-41; for the proposals themselves, Toland, Collection I 448-74, quotation from p. 471. Carswell, South Sea Bubble, p. 13, writes that Amsterdam banks, 'for all their prestige, were little more than safe deposits issuing a convenient paper currency'. Nevertheless, Toland refused to publish the scheme without payment: 'as they who are for setting up a Bank in Ireland propose their own as well as the public advantage, so I see no reason why I should not be suitably gratified'. But although he recommended the plan as revolutionary and as particularly designed to benefit the landed men, when it was printed posthumously it became clear that it was not very different from that advanced by Cary in An Essay Towards Settling a National Credit, 1696.

subject were not altogether dissimilar to Trenchard's.

As the struggle over the Banks lost some of its intensity around 1697, a long-standing mercantile dispute which split the City just as severely came to a head. The controversy over the East India trade was basic to London politics in William's reign. When faced with the close ties between the Junto and the interlopers, those City notables who were associated with the Old Company gradually developed the features of a party of opposition. Although they were ostensibly Tories, their common enmity to the Junto Whigs meant that, from about 1697, ties of sympathy quickly grew up between them and the Commonwealthsmen.

Among the Commonwealthsmen, Davenant was the writer most closely connected with the Old Company. His two major works on this subject, the Essay on the East India Trade (1697) and the Discourses on the Public Revenues (1698) had a twofold purpose: to show, against insistent demands for protection[14], that the traffic was not harmful to the English economy, and to persuade Parliament not to revoke the Old Company's charter. Two years earlier he had submitted a private memorandum to the government in which he had urged ministers not to interfere with the East India trade. He was rewarded for these services by being appointed the Old Company's chief negotiator with the Great Mogul[15]. His election to Parliament in 1698 and the prospect of a political career meant that he never went east, but his firm partisanship for the Old Company is one aspect of the increasingly close relationship between the Commonwealthsmen, the New Country Party, and the anti-Junto financiers in the late 1690s.

14 Among them, that by Cary, An Essay on the State of England, Bristol 1695, pp. 47-61.

15 D.G.A.Waddell, 'Charles Davenant (1656-1714)', Ec.H.R. 2nd Series 11, 1958-9, pp. 281-3; Davenant, Discourses on the Publick Revenues, 1698, esp. pp. 420-3, 430-2, 'Essay Upon Public Virtue' (1696), in B Lib Harleian MS 1223 pp. 71-2 (original pagination); cf. B Lib Add MS 29588 f.238, Davenant to Nottingham 17 Feb 1702; Luttrell IV 455.

Charles Duncombe was the central figure in this alliance. He may not himself have had large East Indian interests, as his vast fortune had been made through his activities as a goldsmith banker, but his connections were emphatically with the supporters of the Old Company. His early apprenticeship to the great Restoration financier Alderman Backwell, for example, probably meant that his dealings with Sir Francis Child, once a partner of Backwell's and in the 1690s a leading figure in the Old Company, were of long standing[16]. His hostility to the Bank seems to be indicated by his being reported to have withdrawn his whole holding of £80,000 in August 1695, while next year, in his capacity as Cashier of the Excise, he was involved in negotiations with the Land Bank projectors after they complained of lack of co-operation from the Treasury Board[17]. Duncombe's purchase of Helmsley from the insolvent Buckingham estate at an enormous price was well known; previously his acquisitions of land in Wiltshire around 1690 had given him influence in the borough of Downton, for which he was elected to Parliament in 1695[18]. In his extensive political activity during the 1690s and later he was invariably aligned with enemies of the Junto. The most celebrated incident of his career was the parliamentary attack on him early in 1698, and this affair throws a good deal of light on the attitudes of the Commonwealthsmen at this period.

The background to the episode was the growing estrangement between Sunderland and the Junto, one of the first signs of which

16 See Carswell, South Sea Bubble, p. 32. Child was Methuen's banker and an acquaintance of Simpson's: Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 13 March 1704-5, E82, Methuen to Simpson 17 March 1705.

17 Luttrell III 513, and the comments of J.H.Clapham, The Bank of England: A History, Cambridge, 2 vols 1944, I 30, and Henry Horwitz, Parliament, Policy, and Politics in the Reign of William III, Manchester 1977, pp. 181-2.

18 The Diary of John Evelyn, ed E.S.de Beer, Oxford, 6 vols 1955, V 246 (the buying up of Buckingham's estate was one enterprise Duncombe and his rival Clayton had in common: ibid IV 186); Sir Richard Hoare, History of Modern Wiltshire, 6 vols 1822-44, III 39, 45; Luttrell III 546, 547.

was Sunderland's support of the Land Bank project in 1696[19]. Four of Sunderland's followers- Molesworth, Methuen, Guy, and Duncombe- accused Montague of corruption in the Commons in 1698, and despite the earl's protestations of innocence it seems unlikely that he was totally unaware of the plan. Montague's successful self-exculpation was followed by counter-accusations against Duncombe, who, like his successor as Cashier of the Excise, Bartholomew Burton, had indulged in fraudulent endorsement of Exchequer Bills so that interest could be claimed on them prematurely. In February 1698 Duncombe was expelled from the Commons and a Bill of Pains and Penalties confiscating two thirds of his property introduced; this failed in the Lords in March, but it was only in June 1699 that he was finally acquitted of the same charge in the Common Law courts. In the meantime, embarrassed by the case, political associates had turned against him. It was Harley who suggested dealing with Duncombe by legislation, and Methuen and Molesworth (as Secretary Vernon noted with malicious satisfaction) both voted for the Bill of Pains and Penalties[20].

Nevertheless, apart from these two, who had political careers to consider, the recorded comments of the Commonwealthsmen at this juncture are favourable to Duncombe. Walter Moyle wrote wrily to his friend (and first biographer) Anthony Hammond in February 1699: 'I find by the printed news that Duncombe's trial (in Westminster Hall) is to come on this week. I wish him a good deliverance with all my heart. I love him because the Court

19 Horwitz, Parliament, Policy, and Politics, p. 166.
20 J.P.Kenyon, Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, 1958, p. 303 (Kenyon's references do not substantiate his assertion that Molesworth was involved, but given his close connections with Methuen, Sunderland, and Guy it seems entirely plausible); Luttrell IV 339, 346, 355, 528; Dennis Rubini, Court and Country 1688-1702, 1967, p. 181; Vernon Corr II 19. See also Private and Original Correspondence of Charles Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury, ed. W.Coxe, 1821, pp. 526-7, Sunderland to Shrewsbury 15/25 Jan 1697-8.

pursues him with such implacable malice for having the impudence last session to defend his honour, which he told us was dearer to him than his life, and to save his estate, which is dearer to him than either, against the will and pleasure of an insolent upstart'. In this letter Moyle also expressed his admiration for Peterborough, perhaps the bitterest Whig enemy of the Junto and a man whose connections with Duncombe went back at least to 1690[21]. Much later Davenant, a friend of the financier's, harked back to the Duncombe case as an example of Junto contempt for property rights[22].

A similar line was taken by the election tract The Danger of Mercenary Parliaments which appeared in 1698 and was the result of collaboration between Shaftesbury and Toland. The main thesis of the pamphlet is the familiar Country party proposition that the main function of Parliament, the safeguarding of the constitution and the personal liberties guaranteed by it, is being thwarted by its development into an assembly of placemen. The treatment of Duncombe is seen as a case in point: ministerial supporters showed 'scandalous partiality', while the whole Exchequer Bill scheme was a public fraud[23].

Duncombe retained the support of the Commonwealthsmen for the next few years. Davenant seems to have been involved in Duncombe's successful campaign for election as sheriff of London in June 1699; the result, according to him, was a serious setback for 'the old Whigs (who are now turned Tories)'[24]. More interesting still is the support received by Duncombe in his first, and unsuccessful, attempt to become Lord Mayor in September 1700. The election, at

21 Moyle, Published Works, pp. 15-16, 17; Horwitz, Parliament, Policy, and Politics, p. 61.
22 Davenant, Sir Thomas Double at Court, 1710, p. 76; B Lib MS Lansdowne 773 f.46.
23 Harleian Miscellany, ed T.Park, 1808, I 599-607, quotation from p. 604.
24 H.M.C. 23 Cowper II 388-9, Davenant to Coke 1 July 1699; see also Luttrell, IV 530.

which, at the Common Hall stage, Duncombe had a majority of over 800 votes over his nearest rival, the Whig and Bank of England supporter Sir Thomas Abney, but then failed narrowly to secure the support of the requisite number of Aldermen, is most fully reported by James Vernon. No friend to Duncombe, though they were both followers of Sunderland's, Vernon gloated over Duncombe's discomfiture in a letter to Manchester of 7 October, but for Shrewsbury two days earlier he provided a circumstantial and reasonably impartial account. Vernon's letter includes an important passage which links Simpson- friend of many of the Commonwealthsmen and client of Sunderland- with Duncombe's party in the City:

> People are very apt here to believe everything amiss of him (Sunderland), and he now suffers in their good opinion upon Sir William Simpson's account. They make it a charge upon him that Sir William Simpson went out of the way in his speech to recommend Sir Charles Duncombe to the mayoralty; they say Sir William went further, that he went in person to the aldermen's houses to solicit for Sir Charles, particularly that he was with Sir Robert Clayton on Tuesday night, and made use of my Lord Sunderland's name to engage his vote as if he were employed by him for that purpose.

Vernon adds that he found the story difficult to accept, and that Simpson denied any personal canvassing, having merely made a speech on Duncombe's behalf[25]. Simpson's appointment as cursitor baron of the Exchequer in October 1697 was known by Luttrell to have been recommended by Sunderland. A knighthood followed two months later, shortly before the earl's unexpected resignation from his Chamberlainship[26]. It is clear, then, that any gesture of support for Duncombe on Simpson's part would have been taken as a declaration of hostility by Sunderland toward the Junto. This may be the reason for Sunderland's discomfiture and Simpson's swift denial that he had done any canvassing; the incident seems to

25 H.M.C. 8th Report, Part 2, 77a, Vernon to Manchester; Vernon Corr II 138-41, Vernon to Shrewsbury. On the same election, see H.M.C. 13 Westmorland, p. 450 (this account, by Selby Mucklow, emphasises the East India rivalries behind the election); Luttrell IV 689, 692, 694-5; Northants R.O., Shrewsbury Papers 48 f.126.

26 Luttrell IV 269. 277. 287. 319.

reflect the Commonwealthsmen's continuing ties with members of the City opposition to the Junto.

This impression is confirmed by an acrimonious literary quarrel sparked off by Daniel Defoe's satire of January 1701, The True-Born Englishman. This piece of doggerel contained a vicious libel on Duncombe, quite irrelevant to the main theme of the poem and apparently inserted in order to damage his chances of success at the London parliamentary elections of 1700-1. In it, Duncombe was charged with betrayal of Backwell, habitual duplicity, and corruption. The election in question was the one in which the political aspects of the East India controversy came most clearly to the fore; the directors of the New Company, having spent vast sums securing their elections, were for the most part immediately expelled for corruption by the solid Country Party majority they found at Westminster[27].

It is not clear why William Pittis, in his blow-by-blow reply to The True-Born Englishman, should have assumed Toland to have been the author of the offending piece. His animosity to Toland is hardly surprising, since his excruciating poem The Patriots of 1702, with its extravagant praise for Harley, Jack Howe, and 'Seymour of awful sense, and awful years', shows that he was on the High Church wing of the Country Party[28]. His comments on

27 Defoe, The True Born Englishman, 1701, lines 1064-1092; Robert Walcott, 'The East India Interest in the General Election of 1700-1701', E.H.R. 71, 1956, pp. 223-39. Backwell had gone bankrupt with the Stop of the Exchequer in 1672, while Duncombe, having advance notice, escaped its worst consequences. Defoe also libelled Duncombe in The Villainy of Stock-Jobbers Detected, which appeared on 11 February 1701.

28 William Pittis, The True-Born Englishman: A Satyr, Answer'd, Paragraph by Paragraph, 1701, Epistle Dedicatory, pp. 9, 77, The Patriots, 1702, p. 5. See the biographical note on Pittis in Poems on Affairs of State, ed G.deF.Lord et al., New Haven, 7 vols 1963-75, VII 167-8. Pittis broke with Harley when the latter declared for a policy of moderation under Anne, and was prosecuted in 1705 for writing a pamphlet defending the Memorial of the Church of England.

Defoe's satire defended Duncombe as well as his chequered record allowed, giving due weight to the one really honourable aspect of his career, his extensive charity to imprisoned debtors. It also ran the gamut of criticisms of Toland, an habitué of 'Calves Head assemblies' and 'a leveller....for making one estate of the three the nation is composed of...as in the year 48', as well as tactlessly denouncing the influence in government of Duncombe's patron, Sunderland[29]. In fact Pittis' abuse could hardly have been more misplaced, since Toland's own Art of Governing by Partys, which appeared in the same year, went out of its way to condemn Defoe's aspersions on 'the noble genius of our people' and in particular the libelling of Duncombe[30].

The year 1701, in many ways an eventful one for Toland, opened by bringing to a head an inconsistency in his political sympathies, for one of Duncombe's opponents in the bitter City election of January was Toland's long-standing benefactor, Sir Robert Clayton. Clayton had built up his large fortune in various capacities, notably as scrivener and estate agent, in the unspecialised financial world of the Restoration; he had been Lord Mayor of London during the Exclusion Crisis, and was consequently something of an elder statesman during the 1690s. He had been partially responsible for a Triennial Bill in 1690[31]. The first indication that he was connected with Toland dates from June 1697; two letters of December 1698 convey Toland's consolations to Clayton on the untimely death of his nephew, with whom the writer

29 Pittis, True-Born Englishman...Answer'd, Epistle Dedicatory, pp. 20, 58.
30 Toland, The Art of Governing by Partys, 1701, pp. 161, 162.
31 D.C.Coleman, 'London Scriveners and the Estate Market in the Late 17th Century', Ec.H.R. 2nd Series 4, 1951-2, pp. 221-30 (on Clayton's business activity see also Diary of John Evelyn IV 110, 186); William L.Sachse, Lord Somers: A Political Portrait, Manchester 1975, p. 59, note 70.

had studied at Oxford. Here Clayton is praised as a self-made man, playing an honourable role, 'and that in the most dangerous times', in 'the greatest, freest, and most powerful city in the world', one whom 'all good men love, whom I particularly honour, and to whom I have so great obligations'. A close personal association may be indicated by the fact that Toland knew Clayton's wife Martha well enough to eulogise her in a late essay, many years after her own and her husband's deaths, as a paragon of beneficence[32].

By 1701 rumours were apparently circulating that Clayton intended to bring Toland into Parliament for his pocket borough of Bletchingly. Toland felt it necessary to insert in the Post-Man an advertisement denying the report, which was probably detrimental to Clayton's political reputation; his action drew down on him the sarcastic comments of the author of Modesty Mistaken; or, a Letter to Mr Toland upon his Declining to Appear in the Ensuing Parliament (1702). Defoe used Clayton's connection with Toland as a means of vilifying him in his satire Reformation of Manners (1702):

> Clayton superbly wise and grave of life
> Could every one reform, except his wife...
> With decent zeal to church he'll gravely come
> To praise that God which he denies at home.
> Socinian Toland's his dear ghostly priest,
> And taught him all religion to digest.

The accusations of irreligion in this poem, which also charges Clayton with extreme avarice, perhaps provides further evidence for Margaret Jacob's plausible suggestion that he was associated with Toland in a secret society where a combination of pantheism

32 Lambeth Palace MS 933 f.55; Toland, Collection II 319-24, 288-9. Robert Clayton the younger, like so many of Toland's associates, was a member of the Middle Temple (H.A.L.Sturgess, Register of Admissions to the...Middle Temple, 3 vols 1949, I 238).

and proto-masonic lore was purveyed[33].

The links between these two pose important problems. The support given to the Old Company faction in London politics by some of the Commonwealthsmen in the late 1690s is explained by their common hostility to the Junto at this period. There are several indications, however, that Clayton was a supporter of the Junto Whigs for most of the 1690s. As M.P. for London or Bletchingly throughout William's reign he voted for the Junto and Bank of England policy of lowering the price of guineas (February/March 1696), and observers seem usually to have regarded him as a friend of the Court; he was noted as pro-administration in 1693, against a Parliamentary Council of Trade in 1696, and against Harley's candidacy as Speaker in the 1701-2 Parliament. The only discordant feature is that he was apparently thought to have favoured the Disbanding Act in 1698. It would have been staggering if anyone so closely connected with Toland had not been, and, reassuringly, Luttrell records that October 1697 Clayton was involved in floating a City loan for the paying off of foreign troops, to which he himself contributed £30,000[34]. There is a further indication that Clayton's relations with the Junto were not always of the closest; this concerns the attempt by Somers, Shrewsbury, and Secretary Trenchard to remove him from his Customs

33 Post-Man, Nov 18-20 1701; Defoe, 'Reformation of Manners', in Poems on Affairs of State VI 409 (lines 216-34); M.C.Jacob, The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720, Hassocks 1976, pp. 220-2, citing James Anderson, The Constitutions of the...Masons, 1756, p. 143, and Toland's account of the Chevaliers de la Jubilation in B Lib Add MS 4295 ff.18-19.

34 See Clayton's voting record in Horwitz, Parliament, Policy, and Politics, p. 344, and explanations on pp. 338-40 (Horwitz notes that it is not certain that the 1698 list refers to disbandment, or that of 1701 to Harley's candidacy); Luttrell IV 286, 293.

commissionership, allegedly for lack of diligence but possibly as part of a general political purge of the higher echelons of the revenue service. For one of the vacant posts the Whigs suggested Molesworth, but Godolphin, complaining that the projected changes were motivated solely by partisan spirit, managed to ensure that Clayton retained his place[35]. He was finally discharged in April 1697, apparently for his lack of enthusiasm in raising a subscription for the circulation of Exchequer Bills[36].

On the available evidence it can be argued that Clayton was a Whig by principle who, without feeling any personal loyalty to the members of the Junto, was content to vote for a Whig administration (with the exception of such issues as the standing army, when the modern Whigs seemed to be betraying their heritage). While his pocket borough and his position in London allowed him independence of the Court, his large stake in the Bank of England and his support of the East India interlopers, for whom he spoke consistently in the Commons debates of 1692, meant that he had no reason to wish for a New Country Party triumph[37].

During 1701, as has been seen, the Commonwealthsmen were for the most part drawing closer to the official Whigs, while Toland was keeping open his channels to both Harley and Shaftesbury. He seems, however, to have found the similar balancing act between Ducombe and Clayton, rival candidates in the January 1701 election, distinctly awkward. In the dedication to Oceana, written a year earlier, he had impartially praised both men, Duncombe for his public spirit and refusal to become the tool of 'petty factions and cabals', and Clayton for his liberality, industry, and

35 Horwitz, Parliament, Policy, and Politics, p. 134; Kenyon, Sunderland, p. 265.
36 Horwitz, op. cit., p. 191.
37 On Clayton's support for a new East India Company see H.Horwitz, ed., The Parliamentary Diary of Narcissus Luttrell 1691-3, Oxford 1972, p. 44, where he is said to have been 'strongly against the Old Company'.

impressive political record. By early 1701, when the East India controversy had temporarily become the main issue in national politics, this suave approach was clearly inadequate. No doubt taking as his cue the negotiations which went ahead between the two Companies during 1701 under the auspices of Sir Basil Firebrace, Toland published in that year his little-known pamphlet Propositions for Uniting the Two East-India Companies. This tract took it for granted that a united company was desirable, not on commercial grounds (on which Trenchard was later to denounce the East India monopoly), but because 'now the divisions of all sorts and subjects are briefly comprehended under the names of the New and Old East India Companies'. Toland believed a settlement should be imposed by legislation, with undetermined government sanctions against those who were unwilling to comply; he was soon to be proved wrong in his belief that any agreement reached by members of the Company could not be satisfactory because each Company's sole concern was to outdo the other. Toland's proposals had some features in common with the settlement that was tentatively reached in September 1701; he realised that if the Companies were to be placed on an equal footing the Old Company would have to purchase half the £2,000,000 of government funded debt held by the New Company, but also that a payment would have to be made by the New to the Old Company in order to adjust the differential in value between the 'deadstock', like forts, of the two companies. Other problems, particularly that of the additional 'Shares' issued by the New Company, were not mentioned by Toland. His preoccupations were, after all, political, and they were repeated soon afterwards in the more substantial Art of Governing by Partys. The divisions among mercantile interests trading to India were becoming dangerous to the country, not least because of the

electoral corruption they engendered. The Propositions may, therefore, have been inspired by Toland's sense that his divided loyalties were becoming embarrassing; but they were also perfectly in accord with the fear he often expressed of the effects of faction, particularly at a time when national unity was required against the renewed French threat[38].

Various factors ensured that, for several years after 1701, trade and finance would not be fraught with the political significance which they had during the 1690s. The East India settlement found in 1701, though not fully implemented until 1709, provided a lasting solution. The War of the Spanish Succession was not nearly so disastrous to English trade as its predecessor had been. War finance, which, with its demands for loans, had precipitated the Banks controversy and aggravated that over the East India trade, was placed on a far more sound and less contentious basis by Godolphin's use of annuities. At the same time, with Toland and Molesworth spending long periods out of England and Trenchard apparently quiescent, the volume of comment by Commonwealthsmen on such affairs dwindles rapidly in the early years of Anne's reign. Davenant, as Inspector-General of Imports and Exports from 1705, studied foreign trade statistics closely, but published nothing on the subject until the Tory triumph of 1710; then he used his researches to allege that the Dutch had been engrossing English trade in the war, and thus to argue indirectly for the ministerial peace policy. There is one sign, from 1709, that Toland remained an interested observer of London

38 Toland, Propositions..., passim (the pamphlet is only eight pages long). This tract was dated by Toland 3 March 1701: the year must be New Style, as agreement was actually reached in detail in December 1701; furthermore, Toland proposes that the United Company should begin trading 'from the day of in the year 1701' (p.5). Toland, The Art of Governing by Partys, 1701, pp. 120-1. For the terms on which the settlement was effected, see Scott, Constitution of...Joint-Stock Companies, II 169-73.

affairs: in a comment on Sir Samuel Garrard, the Tory Lord Mayor who had shown his approbation of Sacheverell's sermon and was 'a person of moderate wit', he remarked that his election was owed to the recently introduced system of seniority, but that 'the indiscreet proceedings of somebody might, perhaps, put a stop to this agreement'[39]. Such an agreement would confirm the impression that City politics were remarkably tranquil in the first decade of the new century.

This calm was rapidly dissipated over the next couple of years. The ministerial changes of 1710 alarmed the Bank directors; they had become increasingly involved in government borrowing since 1708, and were afraid that, since a Jacobite restoration would probably mean repudiation of the National Debt, any political changes which made this more likely would seriously affect public credit. Hence Heathcote's visit to the Queen in June 1710, which Harleyites and High Tories alike claimed to find so outrageous[40]. Certainly it is true that the Harley ministry faced enormous financial problems during its first year of office, which its propagandists tried in vain to minimise. Faults on Both Sides, the Harleyite tract which showed such a remarkable congruence with the ideas of the Commonwealthsmen, claimed that it was not ministerial change but the actions of the Bank directors which had impaired confidence and led to a run. Credit, it added truly but irrelevantly, was not part of the wealth of the kingdom but a convenient device for tradesmen. For governments, especially those with wars to finance, it remained vital[41].

39 Davenant, A Report to the Honourable the Commissioners..., 1712 (the manuscript version survives in B Lib Add MS 17767); Toland, Mr Toland's Reflections on Dr Sacheverell's Sermon, 1710, pp. 10, 15.

40 Dickson, Financial Revolution, pp. 62-4; Clapham, Bank of England I 73-5.

41 Simon Clement, 'Faults on Both Sides' (1710), reprinted in Somers Tracts XII 679-707, quotations on pp. 697, 699. Defoe, in An Essay upon Publick Credit and An Essay Upon Loans, both 1710, also attacked the view that credit depended upon a Whig ministry.

On Toland's return from Holland he wrote Harley a letter of advice which he claimed reflected the confidence placed in him by many of the leading men in the City. It was friendly, but also gently reproving in tone, and it blamed the ministry's credit problems on the rumours that it was not as wholly committed to the Hanoverian succession as it should have been. This approach was followed in June or July 1711 by a letter in which Toland urged Oxford to appoint a mixture of Whigs and Tories to the board of the newly founded South Sea Company: in particular he recommended the nomination of the wealthy and well-connected Whig merchant Sir Alexander Cairnes. But the Treasurer evidently felt that with the astute financiers Blunt, Caswall, and Crowley on his side, he could afford to ignore Toland's advice. He was able to surmount the short-term credit crisis without capitulating to the Bank, and he secured the support of many of the City's most influential men for his South Sea project of 1711. Most writers have assumed that those businessmen who accepted directorships of the South Sea Company in September 1711 were Tories intent on setting up a financial establishment to rival that controlled by Whigs like Heathcote and Furnese[42].

This interpretation can be challenged in the case of one of the most prominent of the new directors, Sir Theodore Janssen, whose links with Toland make him a significant figure in this connection. Janssen's background as a Bank of England director for many years before 1711 and as a naturalised French Protestant makes him an unlikely Tory sympathiser. Janssen was praised by Davenant in 1710 for helping to restore government credit, but a

42 On this paragraph, Toland, Collection, II 403-11; H.M.C. 29 Portland V 258-9 (misdated 'c.1712'); Dickson, Financial Revolution, pp. 64-5, for the attribution of the South Sea project to Blunt, Caswall, and Crowley; Carswell, South Sea Bubble, p. 53, prefers Paterson's claims. On the South Sea directors as 'Harley's growing financial flock', ibid., p. 58. Janssen is described as a Tory in Geoffrey Holmes, British Politics in the Age of Anne, 1967, p. 27.

pamphlet he published in 1713, General Maxims in Trade, indicates that, whatever his feelings in 1711, he had turned away from Harley two years later, as had Toland. He argues that because of low wages and currency manipulation, French competition to British manufactures was unfair, and that England would lose £1,500,000 a year in the balance of trade by the proposed Commercial Treaty. In March 1714 he was made a baronet, significantly at the request of the Elector of Hanover; he was clearly aligning himself with the reversionary interest[43].

It is not known when or why Toland's links with Janssen began. In 1717, in his State-Anatomy, Toland had singled out Janssen and Heathcote for praise as pillars of credit[44]; but the first hard evidence that he knew Janssen personally comes as late as June 1720, almost at the height of the South Sea Bubble. It was Toland who, through Janssen, seems to have lured Molesworth into his disastrous South Sea speculation. Oxford's sound scheme had been amplified by unscrupulous projectors who planned to open a current account on the national debt, and the viscount became one of their many victims.

Writing to Toland from his Irish estate on 25 June 1720, Molesworth commended Janssen as honest and reliable, and- 'since the nation is a-sharing, I have contested long enough, and may now without imputation come in for my part of it'- accepted his correspondent's offer to act as his agent in the third Money Subscription, in which stock was offered at the peak price of 1000. In a letter of the same date, however, Toland informed his patron

43 Davenant, Sir Thomas Double at Court, 1710, p. 107; Janssen's pamphlet is printed in Somers Tracts XIII 287-93. For biographical details see D.N.B.; Carswell, South Sea Bubble, pp. 280-1; History of Parliament, The Commons 1715-54, ed. R.Sedgwick, 1970, Vol II, sub Janssen.

44 Toland, The State-Anatomy of Great Britain, 1717, p. 43.

that his name had already, with Janssen's co-operation, been put down on the subscription lists, 'as being sure you would not take it ill, since there was no time for asking your leave, and that most of the Commons who had voted against them did subscribe without being supposed by so doing to have in the least altered their judgement'. Toland apparently proposed to reap the whole benefit for himself: 'another such job will make me easy and independent as I desire without ever stockjobbing more, since I may buy an annuity of two or three hundred pounds'[45]. It seems that Toland got the publisher Jean de Fonvive to put up the thousand pounds which were allowed to Molesworth; such concessions were so highly prized that Toland was allowed to keep half the profit, which was widely expected to reach several thousand pounds. If, as it seems, he thought the price of his annuity would be determined by the price of land, he must have been anticipating at least £6,000 profit by his South Sea dealings[46]. But if it was Fonvive's money that had been lost, then the philosophical attitude adopted by Toland toward this 'caprice and reverse of fortune' in a letter of October 1720 to Barnham Goode (who had also lost in the Bubble) is understandable[47]. Molesworth, by contrast, lost two thirds of the £2000 he had borrowed to buy

45 Molesworth Corr pp. 293-4 and 311 refer to financial problems; Add MS 4465 ff.21-2, Toland to Molesworth, Toland, Collection II 463, Molesworth to Toland, both 25 June 1720. In the latter Molesworth shows interest in investing in the Harburg project, a fraud which was exposed in 1723. It was projected by Sir Alexander Cairnes, whom Toland had known since at latest 1711 (see above, p. 202 ; B Lib Add MS 4295 f.37), and Toland must have had advance knowledge, since the scheme was apparently published only in November 1720.

46 Certificate by Fonvive: Add MS 4295 f.36. Fonvive, in whose Post-Man Toland had advertised in 1701, also had a background as a Harley supporter: see biographical note in Poems on Affairs of State, VII 171. See also Add MS 4295 f.37, Gargan(?) to Toland 25 Oct 1720.

47 Add MS 4295 f.39; 'Physick Without Physicians', dedicated to Goode, in Toland, Collection II, esp. p. 291; cf. Toland's unconcerned jingle on the South Sea speculation: A.Boyer, The Political State of Great-Britain, 38 vols 1711-29, XXIII 343.

stock. His reflection that 'I was rightly served for going against my own judgment' did not lessen his rage against the perpetrators of the fraud[48].

Molesworth and Trenchard achieved national prominence in the aftermath of the disaster. Both had been intermittent opponents of the ministry since 1718, and they now harried it mercilessly; their journalistic and rhetorical energies were devoted to ensuring the exemplary punishment of the directors and their accomplices. Their attitudes to the situation differed slightly, however: Trenchard had no sympathy for the victims, whom he regarded as greedy dupes. His approach to questions of finance was a clear-headed one, and well before the South Sea slump he had published pamphlets which accurately identified the main flaw in the scheme: the fact that the projectors had not been made to declare in advance what terms they would offer to the annuitants[49].

When the crash came, Trenchard wrote to a friend that 'I cannot help thinking that nothing else could have saved the liberties of England...we must be saved as through fire'. To this end he and his collaborator Thomas Gordon deliberately strove to exacerbate the situation in the highly successful Cato's Letters. Claiming that Parliament was the sole judge of treasons against the community, Trenchard demanded that the directors should be hanged even if no existing laws warranted this, and Gordon, who fancied himself as a humourist, wrote a crude letter from 'Jack Ketch', demanding to have them entrusted to him. It is not surprising that Molesworth was thought to have had a share in the Letters: the same hyperbolic note is apparent in his initial suggestion that the directors should be sewn up in sacks

48 Molesworth Corr p. 350, Robert to John Molesworth 20 Oct 1722.
49 Trenchard, 'A Comparison Between the Proposals of the Bank and the South-Sea Company' (1720), in Trenchard, Collection I 221-227, esp. p. 227, A Letter of Thanks from the Author of the Comparison, 1720, p. 11.

with a monkey and a snake and drowned (the classical punishment for parricide)[50]. As the months passed, the Letters' hostility to the directors became an onslaught on the ministers who were screening them. It seems clear that Trenchard was partly motivated by a personal grudge against Sunderland, to whom he had applied for patronage some years previously[51]. He bitterly attacked the fiscal plans of the government, and in the Commons in October 1722 opposed the proposal to write off the South Sea Company's £2,000,000 debt to the Treasury. In August 1721 the London Journal, which published 'Cato', planned to print the report of the Commons committee of inquiry, though government action eventually prevented this. Possibly the report was leaked by Molesworth, since Trenchard was not to become an M.P. for another year[52].

Molesworth had taken a leading part in the investigations of the committee since its election in January 1721. Together with the chairman, his old Irish ally Thomas Brodrick, he had already clashed with the ministry over its bill securing Ireland's legislative dependence on England, and he usually pressed for severe financial penalties to be imposed on the directors. His failure on 28 February to attend for the vote on Charles Stanhope's guilt, which the Court won by only three votes, was widely suspected to be the result of Walpole's sinister influence; but since his attacks of the stone, the reason he gave for his absence, are a recurrent feature of his letters to his wife, the inference was perhaps unfair. He was ready to admit that rumour

50 Trenchard Corr MS G23 f.12, Trenchard to ?, Aug 1720; Cato's Letters nos. 11, 12, 21, 7 & 14 Jan, 18 March 1720-1 (I 66, 76, 144-53); William Cobbett, The Parliamentary History of England, 36 vols 1806, VII 682-3. Gordon's dedication to the 1733 edition of Cato's Letters (I xvi-xviii) complains that Toland 'officiously' gave out that Molesworth had written the Letters; a correspondent of John Molesworth refers to him as the son of Cato (Molesworth Corr p. 325).

51 See History of Parliament, ed. Sedgwick, II 481.

52 History of Parliament, loc.cit.; C.B.Realey, 'The London Journal and its Authors', University of Kansas Humanistic Studies, 1935-6, passim.

exaggerated his own role on the committee, but for him the investigation had become a means whereby a determined parliamentary group could expose the corruption of the executive: in other words, a classic Court/Country issue. 'Knavery is triumphant everywhere', he wrote in January, while in May he was fulminating against the way in which Land Tax collectors, '(staunch Whigs all)', had retained funds in their care for speculation. In his pessimistic view, the South Sea affair was merely a symptom of national degeneracy[53].

Toland differed from Molesworth in his willingness to make distinctions between different degrees of guilt, and in his apparent reluctance to write off the whole scheme as a wicked plot. Continuing hopes for his investment are revealed in a draft letter he wrote to an unknown peer in January 1721 on the subject of a division which had taken place in the Lords 'last Monday'. The result had caused the first rise in the price of South Sea stock for a long time, but this would have been even more encouraging

> had not such persons as Your Lordship, men of known understanding and probity, voted on the wrong side of the question. No mortal expected better things from the standing armies, the sixteen Marpesian mercenaries (i.e. the Scottish representative peers), or from the more infamous Oceanan dozen (the peers created by Oxford to pass the peace preliminaries).

Possibly Toland referred to the Lords' resolution of Monday 9 January that making the directors managers of the scheme had been legal; a protest against this decision was signed by two of the Oceanan dozen, Compton and Bathurst[54].

53 Molesworth Corr pp. 294, 312-3, Robert to John Molesworth 9 Jan 1720-1, 19 May 1721, on his political preoccupations, p. 300, Eckersall to John Molesworth, 303, Robert to Letitia Molesworth, 2 & 23 March 1720-1, on the stone; Carswell, South Sea Bubble, pp. 219-21, 241, 254, 255.

54 B Lib Add MS 4465 f.23; A Complete Collection of the Protests of the House of Lords, ed J.E.Thorold Rogers, 3 vols, Oxford 1875, I 252-4. My tentative suggestion as the recipient of the letter is Cowper, who signed this protest and was about to embark on formed opposition to Walpole; the young duke of Wharton, another signatory, is also conceivable.

The essay printed by Desmaizeaux in 1726 as The Secret History of the South Sea Scheme almost certainly expresses Toland's attitude to the fiasco, although Desmaizeaux states that it was not written by him. It was found among his papers, and there exists a manuscript in his own hand - 'A Letter written in the Name of a Member of the House of Commons to another Member'- which summarises the arguments of the Secret History. The case thus made has been accepted by historians, though it possibly never occurred to Trenchard: it was simply that most of the directors were unaware of the financial malpractices by which stock prices were forced up, and that most of the guilt belonged to an inner ring, called in the essay 'the Decemvirs'. Soon after Knight's escape Toland wrote to Janssen in similar terms in a letter which may have been intended for publication. Janssen was one of the directors who had been imposed upon, and Toland had observed his 'uneasiness at almost everything from a little before the third subscription'; he considered his conduct 'rather imprudent than criminal'. He had attempted to obtain a private interview with Molesworth for him, but was unsuccessful. It seems clear that Janssen, if not the author of the Secret History, at least supplied the boardroom information on which it was based. He obviously appreciated Toland's concern, for a year later, in his last illness, Toland's doctor advised him to get 'four dimity waistcoats, which a visit from Sir Theo. Janssen enabled me to pay'- a nice gesture by a man whose own financial problems at that time were enormous[55].

It remains to be seen whether the evidence assembled here, together with the summary of their published work provided earlier, allows generalisations to be made about the economic

55 Toland, Collection I 404-47; II 466-8; B Lib Add MS 4465 ff.48-50, Toland to Janssen, f.29, Toland to Molesworth.

ideas and activities of the Commonwealthsmen. In particular, we may now be in a position to offer a critique of the view expounded by Professors Kramnick and Pocock that the economic thought of the Commonwealthsmen was conservative, deeply critical of the developments in finance and credit produced by the commercial revolution and the demands of large-scale war[56]. Kramnick must take the credit for being one of the first to look behind the traditional conception of the Commonwealthsmen as radical Whigs and to point out the continuous Country tradition which links many of their views with those later expressed by Bolingbroke. Certainly the classic statement of the case against the monied interest, by Swift in The Conduct of the Allies, can be parallelled in several of the writings of the Commonwealthsmen. In their more substantial works, analysed in chapter 3, they normally accepted the basic proposition in the Country Party case, that the virtue necessary for a man to participate in public affairs with integrity could only be assured if he had the self-sufficiency provided by a landed estate; they gave almost unanimous support to the principle of a Land Qualification Bill[57]. This attitude often led to identification of the national interest with that of the landed classes; thus Trenchard assumed that high rates of interest were undesirable because they harmed landowners. Characteristic of this creed was the belief that the National Debt was perpetuated solely for the benefit of a parasitic rentier class, and that paying it off was a precondition of national success[58]. Variations

56 Kramnick, Bolingbroke and his Circle, chapter 9; J.G.A.Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment, Princeton 1975, chapters 13 and 14.

57 See above, pp. 73-4 ; Toland, The Art of Governing by Partys, 1701, pp. 165-6; Cato's Letters no. 115, 9 Feb 1722-3 (IV 85); Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, pp. xix-xx; Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, Introduction, p. xvi.

58 Trenchard (?), Remarks on the Proceedings of the Commissioners, p. 2; Cato's Letters nos. 87, 10, 28 July 1722 & 3 Jan 1720-1 (III 182, I 53); Toland, State-Anatomy, pp. 41-2 (but the necessity for maintaining credit is also emphasised).

on this theme among the writings of the Commonwealthsmen included Davenant's most famous pamphlet, The True Picture of a Modern Whig, with its allegations of a Whig conspiracy to destroy the landed interest, Trenchard's attacks on stockjobbers as unbalancers of the nation and jibes at their low social origins, and Molesworth's refusal to make any distinction between investment and speculation[59].

All this, however, presents only a one-sided view of the Commonwealthsmen. It is important to remember that most of their works were pièces d'occasion, and that consequently it is unwise to expect too much consistency between pamphlets that were written at intervals of twenty years or more. That part of the republican tradition culminating in Rousseau which distrusted trade and luxury found little sympathy among these writers. Paeans on the inseparable connection between trade and liberty are found in Toland's works just as they are in Bolingbroke; Shaftesbury regarded trade as a civilising influence; and Trenchard went further, directly contradicting the Scottish republican Andrew Fletcher, in asserting that luxury is a source of strength and prosperity[60].

Sometimes the Commonwealthsmen can be found speaking up for the monied interest; this is particularly noticeable in Toland, who, though he never ventured to defend stockjobbing in print, was, as seen above, not averse from some vicarious speculation in the 1720s. He opposed any lowering of the interest rates drawn by

59 Davenant, The True Picture of a Modern Whig, 1701, passim; Cato's Letters nos. 3, 10, 19 Nov 1720 & 3 Jan 1720-1 (I 11, 58); Molesworth Corr pp. 318-20, Robert to John Molesworth 15 Aug 1721.

60 Toland, Anglia Libera, 1701, pp. 13-14, Dedication to Oceana; Bolingbroke, The Idea of a Patriot King, ed. A.Hassall, Oxford 1917, pp. 116-20; Shaftesbury, Characteristics, ed J.M. Robertson, 2 vols 1900, I 313; Trenchard and Moyle, An Argument, shewing that a Standing Army..., 1697, p. 2; Cato's Letters no. 67, 24 Feb 1721-2 (II 305); cf. Fletcher, A Discourse of Government, with Relation to Militia's, Edinburgh 1698, pp. 11-12. For a fuller discussion, see below, pp. 248-50.

government creditors, and on certain occasions he came close to identifying the cause of London's financial establishment with that of the Hanover Succession, his overriding political concern. Thus one of the reasons Toland gave in 1702 for inviting the Electress Sophia to England was that her residence here would raise credit by confirming the Protestant Succession, while in 1711 he admonished Harley that rumours of his Jacobite sympathies were responsible for his difficulties in raising money in the City[61].

If Toland is found in 1701 advocating union of the discordant East India Companies and Trenchard in 1722 complaining about the monopoly of the United Company[62], this is largely because Toland's links with London politics during the 1690s made union seem desirable, while in 1722 Trenchard's outrage at the South Sea débâcle extended itself to all the monied companies. Clearly, when Toland declared in 1717 that the distinction between landed and monied interests was merely a Jacobite ploy to promote disaffection, his disgust at the conduct of the Oxford ministry had overcome the mood in which he had earlier called for a Land Qualification Bill[63]. The Commonwealthsmen wrote few economic treatises; their views on specific economic or financial issues were to a great extent determined by the alliances they had made, the political causes in which they were engaged, or even the prospects of personal advantage (for example, Toland's reaction to the South Sea Bubble). Overall schemes like those of Kramnick or Pocock, though enlightening, can never be entirely adequate because their

61 See note 42 above; Toland, Art of Governing, pp. 120ff, Reasons for Addressing His Majesty..., 1702, p. 6; Toland, Collection II 406.
62 Toland, Propositions for Uniting the Two East India Companies; Cato's Letters nos. 90, 91, 18 & 25 August 1722 (III 202-13)
63 Toland, State-Anatomy, p. 43, Art of Governing, pp. 165-6.

analysis does not take account of this diversity of motive; it is unsafe to submit pamphlets to the exegesis normally reserved for the Summa. Kramnick's emphasis on the role of the Commonwealthsmen as protagonists of Country interests against a centralising Court is valid as far as it goes; but we should also recognise that they could be partisan in the struggle of one mercantile combination against another. This chapter has attempted to show that it would be a mistake to see them as enemies of the new financial order; their attitude to the City was never as unambiguously negative as that would imply. Instead, the evidence presented here enables us to see the Commonwealthsmen, so far from being isolated radicals, behaving as if they felt thoroughly at home in the amoral world of London finance and politics.

# CHAPTER EIGHT: ENGLAND AND IRELAND

The problem of Anglo-Irish relations was prominent in the minds of some at least of the Commonwealthsmen many years before the existence of an 'Irish question' was generally realised at Westminster. This was due in part to the Irish origins of Toland and Molesworth, and to the latter's links with the early patriots Molyneux and Swift; the case of Trenchard illustrates that a normally libertarian, Country Whig outlook was on its own no guarantee of a liberal attitude to Ireland. But the topic is not one of merely local interest. In the mid-18th century some of the works of the Commonwealthsmen were immensely popular in the Colonies, although they had little to say specifically on America; it is in their statements on Ireland that their attitude to imperial organization, and hence their supposed relevance to later American problems, can best be studied.

Toland, in a letter of 1720, denied that his concern with Ireland was based on mere parochial loyalty: 'in the small efforts whereby I have endeavoured to serve Ireland, I was acted rather by those principles which teach me what is due to all mankind than by any bias to that kingdom, in which I have spent so little of my time'[1]. Far from being a matter of personal pride, Toland's origins were a liability revealed only to close friends; continental opponents claimed that he was the son of an Irish priest, an assertion which he countered by getting the Irish Franciscans of Prague to certify the unlikely statement that he was 'ex honesta, nobili, et antiquissima familia'[2]. Like Toland, Molesworth saw himself as a cosmopolitan rather than an Irish patriot, asking 'why, I pray you, may we not all be fellow

1 Toland, Collection II 459 (this contradicts the statement in Worden, p. 31).
2 P.D.Huetius, Commentarius de Rebus ad eum Pertinentibus, Amsterdam 1718, p. 412, who reports Toland's illegitimacy as a rumour; Toland, Collection I v-vi; B Lib Add MS 4295 f.39, Toland to Goode 1720, explaining the significance of his original Irish name: 'pray keep this foolery to yourself'.

citizens of the world ?', and in moments of depression he disclaimed all interest in Irish affairs[3].

Molesworth and Toland shared a lively concern with ancient Irish culture. Molesworth provided his protégé with an introduction to his antiquarian friend Lord Southwell, who possessed a large collection of manuscripts. Most of Toland's work on ancient Irish and Breton was published only in 1726, in Desmaizeaux's posthumous edition of his works, but as early as 1694 his learning in this field had brought him to John Aubrey's attention[4]. Yet this interest in Gaelic culture, parallelled by the Protestant United Irishmen at the end of the 18th century, implied no sympathy with the contemporary Irish Catholics, from whose ranks Toland was proud to have escaped and whose resurgence had forced Molesworth to leave Ireland in 1687. From Denmark he wrote 'that those enemies to the repose of all English Protestants (should) be put out of future capacity to do mischief', and he later realised that this had been achieved. In 1720 Toland was proclaiming the necessity of maintaining a rigorous separation of Catholic and Protestant interests. It is true that Molesworth preferred his 'Fingallian' tenants to English immigrants, and that an anonymous friend of his derived the defects of the Irish Catholics from economic circumstances rather than inherent viciousness; but maintenance of the Protestant ascendancy was an unquestioned assumption behind the Irish nationalism of these writers, just as

3 Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, 1721 ed, p. xiv; B Lib Add MS 37407 f.6, Molesworth to Johnston 11 Oct 1690 (prob. Old Style).

4 B Lib Add MS 4465 ff.19, 36; J.Williams, 'An Edition of the Correspondence of Aubrey with Wood and Lhuyd', London Ph.D. thesis, 1969, p. 559, Lhuyd to Aubrey 9 Jan 1693-4 (cf. pp. 581, 600, 605-6, 607, 610, 612). For Toland's high praise for the ancient state of Ireland, see Nazarenus, 1718, pp. x, 5, 34, 57. His belief that ancient Ireland was peopled by colonies from Britain, with its suggestion of a common cultural heritage, could have had political implications: Toland, Collection I 133.

it was behind that of Molyneux or Swift[5].

Within the Protestant ascendancy Molesworth was a figure of considerable importance. His influence at the parliamentary boroughs of Swords and Philipston was strong, and he also represented the County of Dublin in the 1695 Parliament. As an ally of the Brodricks, probably the most powerful political grouping in Ireland throughout this period, he had a vested interest in resisting undue English influence on Irish affairs. Although Molesworth's main concerns were with English politics- he spoke of Ireland as his 'pis aller' in 1699- there seem to have been few years in which he did not visit his estate of Breckdenston in the smaller kingdom. Already in 1695 he was gaining a reputation as one of the most obstinate defenders of the privileges of the Irish Commons in money matters against English administrators[6].

The most outspoken statement of the Protestant oligarchs' political creed was made by Molesworth's friend William Molyneux in his famous tract The Case of Ireland (1698)[7]. Molyneux's thought was one of the principal seedlings of that delicate plant, the Irish Enlightenment: he corresponded closely with Locke on philosophical problems, and in the Case of Ireland he brilliantly applied Locke's political thought to the situation of his own native land. He argued on grounds of natural law and precedent that the Westminster legislature's claim to bind Ireland was incompatible with the Dublin Parliament's sovereignty. Molyneux's

5 B Lib Add MS 36662 f.193, Molesworth to Colt 27 Oct 1691 N.S.; Molesworth Corr pp. 232-3, 241-2, Robert to Letitia Molesworth March 1704(?), 19 April 1709; Toland, Reasons Most Humbly Offer'd to the Honble House of Commons..., 1720, p. 23; The True Way to Render Ireland Happy and Secure, 1697, p. 12.

6 C.S.P.Dom. 1699-1700, p. 36, Molesworth to Vernon 30 Jan 1699; H.M.C. 45 Buccleuch-Whitehall II 223, 224-5, 228.

7 See The Works of John Locke, 10 vols 1823, IX 434-5, on the friendship between Molesworth and Molyneux.

thesis was too radical to gain general acceptance even in Ireland, but it was at the heart of the long dispute between Dublin and London, in which for many years the Commonwealthsmen were passionately concerned.

Ireland was an issue which split the Commonwealthsmen into two distinct groups: those from Ireland and those from the west of England. Molyneux's Case was provoked by an acrimonious economic quarrel between these two areas which arose from the flourishing state of the Irish woollen industry; cheap imports of Irish wool led to demands by western manufacturers for the suppression of the trade. In 1695 John Cary, acting as a spokesman for Bristolian interests, declared that colonial economies should always be subordinate to those of the mother country, and that Ireland's woollen manufacture should therefore be discouraged. Davenant in 1699 supported the call for a prohibition of Irish woollen exports, since they were undercutting the English product[8]. When The Case of Ireland appeared, both Davenant and Cary reacted quickly with refutations of the argument that the English Parliament had no legal power to regulate the Irish economy[9].

Locke's College, the group so closely connected with the origins of the Commonwealthsmen, seems to have acted occasionally as a kind of western lobby: two leading members, Edward Clarke and Sir Walter Yonge, deserted the ministry in 1697 over a bill which would have adversely affected western woollen manufactures. John Methuen came of a prosperous family of Wiltshire clothiers, and by 1697 he knew Clarke and Freke, the most prominent members of the College[10]. The fact that, during 1696-7, Methuen was assiduously

8 H.F.Kearney, 'The Political Background to English Mercantilism, 1695-1700', Ec.H.R. 2nd Series 11, 1958-9, pp. 484-96; Cary, An Essay on the State of England, Bristol 1695, pp. 89-93; Davenant, Probable Methods, pp. 120-131.

9 Cary, A Vindication of the Parliament of England, 1698; Davenant, Probable Methods, pp. 105-16.

10 See above, pp. 23, 33-4.

(and successfully) soliciting for the post of Irish Lord Chancellor, which involved the management of the Dublin Parliament, gives rise to the strong suspicion that he wanted the job at least partly in order to further the economic interests of his own region. When in office, he certainly proposed to the Irish assembly that it should itself place duties on woollen exports (and subsidise linen manufacture as an alternative industry): this it rejected[11]. These considerations may in turn throw some light on Toland's extraordinary Irish escapade of 1697.

Not much is known of this disastrous trip. But Molyneux, to whom Toland quickly introduced himself, sent reports to Locke from which a familiar picture can be gleaned. As at Oxford, he turned many people against him by his 'unseasonable way of discoursing' and 'tincture of vanity'. Within a few months he had been forced to leave the country, while the Recorder of Dublin inveighed against the 'Tolandists' and the Irish Parliament ordered the burning of his first book. Toland's own Apology, printed in London later in the year and showing his usual flair for self-justification, portrays him as an orthodox Protestant suffering at the hands of High Church bigots for his irenicism[12].

But two letters written to Toland in Ireland, intercepted by the authorities, and copied prove, if nothing else, that he was not in Ireland simply to promote sales of Christianity Not Mysterious. They show that in 1697 he was in close touch with a group in London which centred on Methuen, the Chancellor designate; it included Rawlins, Freke, Clarke, and John Cary, who was rather grudgingly providing Toland with financial support. Methuen had sent Toland to Ireland, but the letters give no indication of the purpose of the journey. They do show, however, that Methuen was

11 Vernon Corr I 101, 179; cf. H.M.C. 58 Bath III 110; Private and Original Correspondence of Charles Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury, ed W.Coxe, 1821, pp. 557-9.

12 The Works of John Locke IX 421-2, and cf. pp. 405-6, 428-9; An Apology for Mr Toland, 1697, pp. 6-7, 15-16, 23.

genuinely embarrassed by Toland's extravagant conduct, to which he attributed his own failure to obtain further advancement in Ireland[13]:

> Mr Methuen as well as all your other friends...say you have acted a part very different from what was given you here... You have...given occasion to the party who are afraid of you in that country to believe that you have, whatever you say to the contrary, some great expectations, such as may justify the advances which you have made towards an acquaintance with all the great men in the kingdom.

Molyneux's account of Toland's journey gives the impression that he was 'driven out of our kingdom' by penury and by the impending action of the Irish Parliament against him as the author of heretical works. Toland's own boast that he had freely attacked local superstitions while in Dublin reinforces the impression that he was a victim of moral outrage[14]. Yet this hardly accounts for the cryptic phrase 'the party who are afraid of you in that country', which clearly implies that the visit had some political significance. The rumour was widespread in Ireland that Toland was to be Chancellor Methuen's secretary[15]; Toland himself seems to have done his best to spread it. The party who were afraid of him, and who presumably instigated parliamentary action against him, would therefore be the party who had most to fear from Chancellor Methuen and his policy of restricting the woollen manufacture. One of these enemies was Sir Richard Cox, who reported with glee that Toland's condemnation was carried by 'ten to one at least', with only the Brodrick faction opposing it[16].

13 Lambeth Palace Library MS 933 f.74, Simpson to Toland 20 April 1697, 'Apisto-demon' (prob. Freke) to Toland 1 June 1697. The original of the second letter is at f.55, and the dinner at Clayton's mentioned in it is also referred to in Luttrell IV 221. At the same time Locke was kept informed through Freke of Toland's hopes from Methuen: Bodleian Library MS Locke c8 f.227, Freke to Locke 6 April 1697.

14 The Works of John Locke IX 434-5; Toland, Collection I 141-3, and cf. An Apology for Mr Toland, passim, J.C., A Letter to the Author of Milton's Life, 1699, p. 1.

15 A.D.Francis, The Methuens and Portugal, Cambridge 1966, pp. 358-60, prints a contemporary ballad which reports this rumour.

16 H.M.C. 29 Portland III 586, Cox to ? 31 August 1697.

Methuen's period of office as Irish Chancellor was a difficult one: his project for a tax on exports of woollens was unsuccessful, and new problems quickly arose. To overcome these he soon forged an alliance with the Brodrick faction, the first sign of which may have been their reluctance to vote against Toland. In August 1697, Methuen, faced with 'all imaginable endeavours...to revive party and faction by clubs and meetings', managed to instal Molesworth, one of the most important members of the Brodrick faction, in the important post of chairman of the committee of elections. In July he had been visiting Molesworth, 'as honest a gentleman as ever was born', and a man whose links with Sunderland, like his own, were significant. Under the new regime Molesworth prospered politically: he was sworn of the Irish Privy Council on 3 August 1697, and at the end of the year he, together with Thomas Brodrick and some others, was considered for a peerage in order to balance the power of the bishops in the Irish House of Lords[17]. Methuen did not drop Toland, who must have been something of a liability while still in Ireland: they continued to refer to each other in kind terms for some years afterwards[18]. But by 1699 the dispute over woollens had been overshadowed by a new crisis in which other Commonwealthsmen played more prominent roles than Toland.

The alliance between Methuen and the Brodricks had been a marriage of convenience: Methuen seems to have shared Cary's view, which the Irish Protestants could never accept, that the economic interests of the smaller kingdom must be complementary to those of England. But the long crisis over Irish forfeitures cemented the

17 C.S.P.Dom. 1697, pp. 259, 275, 529, and, on Molesworth and the Privy Council, pp. 268, 270, 272, 284. See also, for Sunderland's and Galway's recommendations of Molesworth to the Irish Privy Council, Nottingham University Library Portland MSS, Sunderland to Portland 9 June 1697, cited by E.L.Ellis, 'The Whig Junto', Oxford D.Phil. thesis 1961, Appendix C, p. 7.

18 Francis, Methuens and Portugal, p. 358; Toland, Anglia Libera, 1701, p. 164; Methuen Corr MS E82, Methuen to Simpson 6 Dec 1701.

union. The Jacobite lands confiscated after the war had been indiscriminately granted out to favourites by William; many of them had subsequently found their way into the hands of wealthy members of the Brodrick group like William Connolly and Thomas Brodrick. Lord Bellamont, a relative of Molesworth's wife, was one of the main grantees. When the New Country Party at Westminster began to agitate for the resumption of these lands, Methuen, as the King's man in Dublin, and the Brodrick group were naturally united in their opposition. John Molesworth criticised the proceedings of the English Parliament in this matter as arbitrary, and in this he certainly spoke for his father. The English Act of 1700 which resumed the forfeited lands struck at the economic interests of grantees and Protestant purchasers, and it also ignored the Irish case that Westminster had no jurisdiction across St.George's Channel[19].

Toland apparently sympathised with the attitude of the English Country party, which was concerned both to embarrass the Junto and to pay off the public debts after a long war. This case, which assumed that Ireland was a conquered country and that the lands which accrued to the crown should be applied to the expenses of that conquest, was most ably made in Davenant's Discourse Upon Grants and Resumptions (1700), intended by its author 'to give the report of our Irish commissioners a kind reception'[20]. One of the leading figures among the seven commissioners appointed by the English Parliament in 1699 to investigate the question was John Trenchard; he had presumably commended himself to the Country

19 See, in general, J.G.Simms, The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland, 1956, chapters 9, 11; Molesworth Corr p. 220, John to Letitia Molesworth 15 Feb 1699-1700. Molesworth had lent a considerable sum to Walter Tuite, who later forfeited 1500 acres in Westmeath through rebellion, and this gave him a further interest in the forfeitures question: C.S.P.Dom. 1694-5, p. 263; Simms, Williamite Confiscation, p. 99.

20 Toland, The Art of Governing by Partys, 1701, pp. 105-6; H.M.C. 23 Cowper II 389, Davenant to Coke 1 July 1699.

efs who inspired the inquiry by his writings on disbandment. attendance at Trinity College, Dublin, from 1685[21] had arently done little to make him sympathise with the 'Protestant chasers' of Ireland; he was from the west of England, and it have been the economic rivalry between his region and Ireland ch made him so hostile to Irish claims. At all events he, ether with Francis Annesley, was one of the most outspoken bers of the Commission, and while in Ireland these two kept in se touch with such Country party leaders as Davenant, Anthony mond, Arthur Moore, and Simon Harcourt. These contacts arently encouraged the Commissioners to include in their report liam's huge grant of land to the Countess of Orkney; when a mons committee examined them in January 1700, much discussion tred on Methuen's accusation that it had been said on the mittee that the Orkney concession was a 'villainous grant'. nchard was named as the man who had used these words, but his ial was accepted by the sympathetic M.P.s[22].

Trenchard was probably the hardest working of the seven; he k a leading part in confrontations with Methuen, and meetings k place in his room while he was ill. His influence was such t when, in 1700, Parliament appointed Trustees to administer the ds subject to the Act of Resumption, Trenchard sat on this rd. Furthermore, as James Vernon noted, Thomas Rawlins was also cted: 'he is a particular friend of Trenchard's, and he and y of Bristol will make a majority for the five old ones (the i-Court Commissioners)'[23]. Rawlins and Cary had been connected

Alumni Dublinenses, ed G.D.Burtchaell & T.U.Sadleir, Dublin 1935, p. 823 (see p. 582 for Molesworth's entry).
Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson A245 f.85; Kenneth Spencer Research Library, Lawrence, Kansas, Arthur Moore collection (uncatalogued), Annesley to Moore 5 Aug 1699; P.R.O. 30/24/50/47 (detailed report of the examination of the Commissioners: résumés in Commons Journals XIII 123-5, W. Cobbett, The Parliamentary History of England, 36 vols 1806, V 1202-17).
Northants R.O., Shrewsbury Papers 48 f.52, Vernon to Shrewsbury 30 March 1700. For a full list of candidates to be forfeiture

(continued

with Methuen in 1697, but now they were enthusiastic followers of Trenchard, whose dominance over the Trustees was signalised by the appointment of his brother as their secretary.

The Trustees wielded enormous powers in Ireland, and accusations that they abused them were not slow in coming. Methuen's alliance with the Brodricks held firm, and the Chancellor acted as the principal channel for these complaints. To Harley and Rochester, leaders of the Country Party at Westminster, he argued that the Trustees were both arbitrary and corrupt: 'in truth almost everyone suffers by your Act'[24]. Such charges were not isolated. A devastating pamphlet attack on Trenchard, referring scornfully to his association with the Wiltshire clothiers, appeared in 1702. The Secret History of the Trust was written by someone who knew a good deal about the affair, and it charged Trenchard- under the name of Truncheon- with corruption and favouring Catholics. Trenchard did not remain silent under these accusations. Two pamphlets of 1701 and 1702 have been plausibly attributed to him, and both claim that his Irish enemies have exaggerated the economic dislocation caused by the resumption policy, ridiculing the petition organized by William Connolly against the Trustees. Their main thrust, however, is to accuse the Irish Protestants who opposed the resumptions of disloyalty to the English Parliament[25]. This last was the major point at issue. Although, as the historian of the affair has written, the Forfeiture Commissioners were 'guilty of a

23 (continued) Trustees, see B Lib Portland Loan 29/207 f.98; Simms, Williamite Confiscation, p. 103, on Trenchard's illness.

24 Ezekiel Burridge(?), 'Jus Regium' (1701), in State Tracts, William III II 733-73, at p. 769; B Lib Portland Loan 29/189 ff.214, 234, Methuen to Harley 27 June, 10 Aug 1700; Methuen Corr MS E82, Methuen to Simpson 12 Dec 1701.

25 The Secret History of the Trust, 1702, esp. p. 1; Trenchard(?), The Several Addresses of some Irish Folkes to the King and the House of Commons, n.d. (1702?), 'A Letter from a Soldier to the Commons of England' (1702?), in State Tracts, William III II 773-87.

considerable degree of prejudice and exaggeration', the blow to Irish economic interests was not so important in the long run as the blow to Irish sovereignty. Trenchard was clearly one of the strongest upholders of English supremacy, and early in the reign the Irish Parliament, with Allen Brodrick as Speaker, felt strong enough to censure the Trustees' proceedings and make it prudent for their leader to retire to England[26].

After the accession of Queen Anne, Methuen's return to Portugal, and Ormonde's appointment as Lord Lieutenant, the links between the Brodrick group and the government were severed, to be briefly re-established during Wharton's viceroyalty. The Irish Commons delayed supply while the outflow of money to England through sinecures and pensions was investigated; in October 1703 Molesworth presented the report of the Committee on the State of the Nation, which proposed a union of Parliaments with England as the remedy for these and other evils. His Preface to Franco-Gallia, probably written in 1705, advocated such a union 'upon equal terms (for upon unequal it would be no union)' as likely to be advantageous to England, Ireland, and Scotland. The idea of a union was canvassed by a succession of writers, including Henry Maxwell, a friend of Molesworth's, and Arthur Dobbs; only in Grattan's time does it seem to have become unpopular with Irish liberals[27].

Molesworth was, predictably, unhappy at the Tory regime of the duke of Ormonde: early in 1704 he told Marlborough that he thought the Lord Lieutenant was trying to divide the Protestants into High and Low Church factions. He was more satisfied when the changing

26 Simms, Williamite Confiscation, p. 106; Nicholas Tindal, The Continuation of Mr Rapin's History of England, 1759 ed, XV 525.
27 C.S.P.Dom. 1703-4, pp. 150, 156, 170, Southwell's letters to Nottingham; Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, p. xx; Robbins, Commonwealthman, pp. 148-9.

fortunes of English politics brought over Wharton as Lieutenant[28]. On the whole, Irish problems did not bulk large among the concerns of the Commonwealthsmen in the earlier years of Anne's reign; but what they saw as the crisis of the Protestant Succession in the years after 1710 had repercussions in the smaller kingdom which they could not ignore.

The chief agent for government policy in Ireland under the Oxford ministry was Sir Constantine Phipps, whose sinister reputation in Whig circles was gained by his defence of Sacheverell in 1710. Named as Irish Chancellor in the same year, he immediately set about attempting to break the power of the Whigs, an aim which in Ireland as in England gave ample room for suspicions of Jacobitism. His impolitic lenity towards a Jacobite writer and his attack on the autonomy of the City of Dublin became the causes célèbres of the bitter opposition to him expressed in the 1713 Parliament by the Brodrick faction. While he still had hopes of Harley, Toland complained vociferously of the persecution of the Whigs being carried out in Ireland; a letter of February 1711 criticised the High Churchmen Langton and Higgins for such activity, and a memorandum of December denounced the employment of incendiaries like Langton and Phipps. By 1714 he was accusing these men of introducing Whig/Tory conflicts in order to divide the Protestant interest and bring in the Pretender[29].

Molesworth was one of the principal victims of these manoeuvres. Already in 1711 he had clashed with Higgins before the Irish Privy Council, and he had written in vain to Lord Oxford to express the hope that Ireland 'will not be quite given up and

28 Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 18 Jan 1703-4; Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. 44.

29 J.G.Simms, 'The Irish Parliament of 1713', in Historical Studies IV, ed G.A.Hayes-McCoy, 1963, pp. 82-92; Toland, Collection II 235, memorandum of 17 Dec 1711, 407-8, Toland to Harley 9 Feb 1710-1; Toland, The Art of Restoring, 1714, p. 42.

abandoned to such as do not know or have a mind to break into our constitution and the remnant of liberty left us'. In the following year he claimed that the malice of his enemies made it unsafe for him to visit Ireland. By the end of 1713 Swift, a staunch ally of Phipps, was hoping for a purge of the Privy Council:

> Sir Th. Southwell, Gustavus Hamilton, Mr Molesworth, Theophilus Butler. These four are very bad, and very insignificant except the third, who is the worst of them... Our friends would be much encouraged if the four commoners above-named were out.

At the same time, Phipps wrote to England complaining of ill-usage from Molesworth and Archbishop King, and he ended sardonically: 'I must own I think we are not fit to sit in the same Council'[30]. The hint was taken, and a snide remark about the Irish Convocation, who opposed the parliamentary attack on Phipps in December 1713, was overheard and gleefully used against him by his enemies. His muttered comment that 'they who have turned the world upside down are come here also' was used as a pretext for his dismissal from the Irish Privy Council, and a clutch of pamphlets blackened the whole opposition to Phipps by its association with this 'enemy to all religion'[31]. Archbishop King, increasingly an ally of Molesworth's, nevertheless wrote to Swift that his outburst was that of 'a peevish man'; certainly Molesworth was intemperate when referring to Phipps, if we may judge by his letters. But one pamphlet did vindicate him from the charge of profaning Scripture by his crack at the Convocation's

30 H.M.C. 29 Portland V 113, 82, 370-1, Perceval to Gastrell 17 Nov 1711, Molesworth to Oxford 1 Sept 1711, Phipps to Bromley 5 Dec 1713; Molesworth Corr pp. 255, 258, Robert to Letitia Molesworth 15 Dec 1711, 7 July 1712; B Lib Portland Loan 29/162 Misc. 48, Swift's observations.

31 See Atterbury, 'English Advice to the Freeholders of England', Somers Tracts XIII 522-41, at p. 528; Swift, 'The Public Spirit of the Whigs', in Swift, Prose Works VIII, at p. 37; 'The Life of Aristides the Athenian', Somers Tracts XIII 828-44, at p. 833; Patrick Delany(?), A Long History of a Short Session of a Certain Parliament in a Certain Kingdom, 1714, p. 7, which complains of Molesworth's favour with Lord Lieutenant Shrewsbury, who had been a patron of his in the 1690s. For the Lords' Address to the Commons against Molesworth, see Journals of the Irish House of Lords, Dublin, 8 vols 1779-1800, II 441-2.

expense, and pointed out that it was justified inasmuch as the prolocutor, Archdeacon Percival, had led a mob, including many papists, during the turbulent Dublin election of 1713[32].

It is probable that Phipps was no more than Bolingbroke committed to a Jacobite restoration, which would have had more drastic consequences in Ireland than in England because of the implicit threat to the land settlement. But worries were rife in 1714: Toland wrote that the Irish Protestants feared a new massacre, and Stephens too harked back to the carnage of 1641[33]. Molesworth's worries, and those of many others, can be gauged from the relief evident in a letter he wrote to King, who with Kildare succeeded Phipps and Lindsay as Lords Justices on Anne's death: 'This day our country is delivered from the domination of two tyrants, and in their stead we have two worthy honourable patriots set over us'[34]. In England the apprehended threat to the Protestant Succession was to be fatal to the Commonwealthsmen's ideal of non-party government, but there were special reasons why this was not to be the case in Ireland.

It is true that in 1717, when the Commonwealthsmen were still enthusiastic about the conduct of the Whig government, the state of Irish politics was used in their pamphlets to prove the necessity of the Whig ascendancy. Tindal claimed that their greater energy was needed in order to keep the Catholic majority firmly under control; Toland, showing his customary sympathy for the Scots presbyterians, linked their cause with that of the Irish Protestants when he asserted that they had all been harassed by

32 The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. H.Williams, Oxford, 5 vols 1963-5, II 5, King to Swift 13 Jan 1713-4; Molesworth Corr pp. 263-4, Robert to Letitia Molesworth 23 Sept 1713; Mr Molesworth's Preface...(with) a True State of his Case with Respect to the Irish Convocation, 1713, pp. 30-8, esp. p. 37.

33 Toland, The Grand Mystery Laid Open, 1714, pp. 5-7; Stephens, A Sermon Without Doors to the Protestants of Ireland, 1713, p. 24.

34 Sir C.S.King, A Great Archbishop of Dublin: William King D.D., 1906, pp. 163-4, Molesworth to King 2 Sept 1714, original at Trinity College, Dublin.

the late ministry for their Hanoverian allegiances[35]. But three years later this time-honoured Whig rhetorical device was proved hollow as far as Irish patriots- among whom Commonwealthsmen were prominent- were concerned.

The issue which accomplished this transformation was the threat to Irish legislative independence from the English Parliament. Before 1720 the constitutional position was unclear: in the 1640s the Irish rebels had made the important distinction between the authority of the monarch and that of the English Parliament, and this argument had received its classic exposition in Molyneux's Case of Ireland. In the year after its publication Somers, as Lord Chancellor, denied the appellate jurisdiction of the Irish House of Lords in his judgment on an important case involving Bishop King. The Irish case seemed to be going by default when in 1709 Molesworth complained that 'we are all here a parcel of slaves and (which is the worst of it) it is to our own brethren, and I see no remedy for it'. Towards the end of Anne's reign his associate Thomas Brodrick told Lord Lieutenant Shrewsbury that the Irish Parliament had as much right to legislate for Ireland as the English had for England. Recent research indicates that, although the English legislation on woollens of 1698 had serious effects in Ireland, the country's interests were never ignored at Westminster, where a strong Irish lobby claimed several successes in the early eighteenth century[36]. It may therefore be asked why men like Molesworth and the Brodricks, who

35 Tindal, The Defection Consider'd, 1717, p. 52; Toland, State-Anatomy, p. 52. Toland's attack on Bishop Browne of Cork (ibid. pp. 49-50) harks back to his Irish trip of 1697, when Browne had led the agitation against him. His sympathy for Scottish Presbyterians perhaps dates back to his own time at Glasgow University; his edition of Denzil Holles' Memoirs presents a favourable view of the Covenanters.

36 William L.Sachse, Lord Somers: A Political Portrait, Manchester 1975, p. 77; Molesworth Corr p. 242, Robert to Letitia Molesworth 12 July 1709; Simms, 'Irish Parliament of 1713', p. 89; Francis G.James, 'The Irish Lobby in the Early 18th Century', E.H.R. 81, 1966, pp. 543-57.

habitually sat in the English Parliament and formed part of this lobby, should have been so sensitive about the powers of the Irish Parliament.

One answer, at least as far as Molesworth is concerned, is no doubt furnished by his heavy financial involvement in the Irish electoral system. He controlled the borough of Swords, and, though not a rich man, was in 1707 planning to buy more property at Philipston in order to consolidate his control of its parliamentary representation[37]. But perhaps equally important was the general point- fundamental to the argument of the Account of Denmark- that when Parliaments are bypassed, despotism inevitably results. A union of Parliaments with Britain would be acceptable, but a gradual atrophy of the Irish Parliament indicated a bleak future for the country as a whole.

Annesley v. Sherlock, the case which led to the 'Sixth of George the First', arose appropriately enough from the forfeitures controversy, itself a grievance of the Irish patriots. Molesworth, created an Irish viscount by the new régime in 1716, constantly attended the Lords in Dublin while the threat to their jurisdiction was being discussed. Notes for a speech to be made on this occasion survive among the family papers and indicate that the viscount was worried that other peers might be bribed or cowed into acceptance. Like Molyneux he invoked natural law, arguing against any notion of sovereignty as based on conquest. It is not known whether this speech was ever delivered, but in any case Molesworth's agitation did not stop here. One of Toland's last pamphlets, Reasons most Humbly Offer'd to the Honble House of

37 Molesworth Corr pp. 227, 237, 264, Robert to Letitia Molesworth 26 Nov 1702, 11 June 1707, 5 Oct 1713, on Molesworth as a boroughmonger: it is not known whether he was able to persuade himself that this kind of electoral manipulation was compatible with the efficient working of the 'Gothic constitution' of Parliament.

Commons..., is devoted to the same issue; written at a time when Toland was financially heavily dependent on Molesworth, it may be taken for granted that his patron inspired it. A published letter of Toland's to Lord Southwell, an associate of Molesworth's who had encouraged the pamphlet, strengthens this supposition. Toland's work points out the lack of precedent for the claims of the British Parliament, and predicts that the proposed legislation, in addition to increasing the power of the peerage, will have the effect of undermining the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. Written from a clear sense of injustice, as the letter to Southwell shows, it is one of Toland's more convincing pieces[38].

Resentment at the cavalier treatment of Irish claims by the British Parliament probably explains one of the most surprising twists in Molesworth's career, his collaboration with Swift in the dean's campaign against the economic exploitation of Ireland. Swift's Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufactures appeared in 1720 and advocated a boycott of all English goods, particularly clothing. The government reacted harshly, prosecuting the printer since it could not detect the author. Four years later, in the fifth Drapier's Letter, addressed to Molesworth, Swift says that 'your Lordship...did me the honour to come into my shop, where I showed you a piece of black and white stuff just sent from the dyer, which you were pleased to approve of and be my customer for it'. In a footnote to his collected works Swift informs us that this cryptic passage refers to the 1720 Proposal, and further evidence of Molesworth's role occurs in Desmaizeaux's collection of Toland's letters. Molesworth, sending Toland a reference for

38 See attendance lists in Journals of the Irish House of Lords, Vol II; Molesworth Corr pp. 283-5 for the draft speech; Toland, Collection, II 459-60; Toland, Reasons most Humbly Offer'd, esp. pp. 22-3, 25-7. In July 1719 it was reported that a speech of Molesworth's, very probably the one referred to, was being hawked about: Molesworth Corr p. 278, Polly to John Molesworth 16 July 1719. See Trenchard, Collection, II 64, on Gordon's detached but critical attitude to the Act securing Irish dependency.

his Reasons..., also asked him to arrange for the publication in England of a pamphlet by 'S——' (only the initial is given in the printed version): the original author's injunction that 'no hardship should be put upon the printer' was no doubt prompted by the prosecution of the Dublin printer. Among the Toland papers is a note in an unidentified hand which informs us that Toland was responsible for the London publication of several works written against the Act securing Ireland's depedency. Although bibliographers seem to have found no London edition of Swift's Proposal, the evidence that plans for such an edition figured in Toland's campaign is strong[39].

This situation was fraught with irony. That Toland should defend the Irish Parliament, which had dealt so summarily with him a generation before, was in some ways odd; that he was involved in a vicarious collaboration with Swift, whose monumental contempt for him never wavered, is astonishing. As a High Church apologist before 1714, Swift had clearly disliked Molesworth, but as his attention was necessarily focussed more strongly on Irish affairs after that time he recognised a kindred spirit in the viscount. Their acquaintance no doubt owed a good deal to King, who in 1722 was suspected of mulling over grievances against the English ministry with Molesworth. At all events, Swift's remarks on Molesworth after 1720 are generous: he was eulogized, along with Locke, Molyneux, and Sidney, as a defender of liberty in the fifth Drapier's Letter, while in 1723 Swift offered some uncharacteristically constructive criticism of a pamphlet with which he disagreed, Molesworth's Considerations for Promoting Agriculture. This rare tract attacked the exaction of tithe as an unnecessary burden on the farmer. Swift admitted that this was 'an excellent

39 Swift, Prose Works IX 15-22 (A Proposal), X 82 (5th Drapier's Letter); Toland, Collection, II 461; B Lib Add MS 4465 f.58. See also Swift, Correspondence, II 357-9, Swift to Hanmer 1 Oct 1720, on Molesworth's support for the Proposal. On this affair, see Oliver W.Ferguson, Jonathan Swift and Ireland, Urbana (Ill) 1962, pp. 57-8.

discourse...full of most useful hints', and continued: 'I am not a stranger to His Lordship; and, excepting in what relates to the Church, there are few persons with whose opinions I am better pleased to agree'[40]. This respectful tone indicates that at the end of his life Molesworth was becoming an elder statesman of the Irish interest. The laudatory references to him in Hibernicus' Letters, a collection of essays written by some of his Irish protégés, shows how high his reputation stood just after his death in 1725; and his contacts with Francis Hutcheson and his Dublin friends meant that his influence remained strong among the most liberal section of eighteenth century Irish opinion[41].

Even Trenchard, previously the staunchest exponent among the Commonwealthsmen of Ireland's subordination, seems to have been unhappy with the situation as it stood after 1720 and advocated some reform in the 'doubtful' relations between the two kingdoms. But Molesworth, like Swift, went beyond the constitutional problem in order to enquire into the economic reasons for Ireland's backwardness. In 1656 Harrington had recommended that Panopea (Ireland) should be farmed out to Jews for efficient cultivation. The idea that the benefits of General Naturalisation, which were axiomatic to evey Commonwealthsman[42], were particularly applicable to Ireland was also found among the Molesworth circle- though, in accordance with current sensibilities, foreign Protestants took the place of Jews. In 1701 Molesworth himself was planning to

40 King, A Great Archbishop, p. 242; Swift, Prose Works II 99, IV 70 for two derogatory mentions of Molesworth, both dated 1708; IX 58-60 for his comments on the Considerations, of which there is a copy (which I have not seen) at Trinity College, Dublin. Two other mutual friends of Swift and Molesworth were the duke of Wharton, another malcontent, and St.George Ashe, bishop of Clogher: see Swift, Correspondence II 285, Molesworth Corr p. 260, D.N.B. sub 'Ashe'.

41 Hibernicus' Letters, 2 vols 1729, I 187, II 385, 426 (originally published in Dublin Journal, 1725-7); Robbins, Commonwealthman, pp. 157, 166-7, 171-2. See also letters from James Arbuckle in Molesworth Corr pp. 351-2, 354-5.

42 See below, pp.243-5.

settle French Protestants on his estate, and, although the scheme fell through, at the end of his career he was, as seen above, still interested in projects to improve Irish agriculture[43].

As I indicated earlier, the Commonwealthsmen seldom extended their concern with Ireland to produce a full-scale critique of the English colonial system. On the face of it, therefore, their immense popularity in the American colonies- and particularly that of Trenchard, who always assumed the supremacy of the English Parliament over Ireland- seems surprising. As early as 1722 James Franklin was printing extracts from Cato's Letters in his New England Courant, and his younger brother Benjamin was strongly influenced by that work. Franklin was also familiar with Molesworth's views, as was John Dickinson, while Jefferson copied out large chunks of the Account of Denmark into his commonplace book[44]. In fact, the old picture of Locke as the chief intellectual influence on the American Revolution must be considerably modified in the light of much work undertaken since the war. Bernard Bailyn considers that 'in America...the writings of Trenchard and Gordon ranked with the treatises of Locke as the most authoritative statement of the nature of political liberty and above Locke as an exposition of the social sources of the threats it faced'; Clinton Rossiter believes these two to have been the most important influence on eighteenth century American

43 Cato's Letters no. 106, 8 Dec 1722 (IV 5); The Political Works of James Harrington, ed. J.G.A.Pocock, Cambridge 1977, p. 159; The True Way to Render Ireland Happy and Secure, esp. p. 3; Molesworth Corr p. 224, Robert to Lettice Molesworth 12 May 1701. For Molesworth's interest in the prospects for an Irish silk industry, Molesworth Corr p. 356, Robert to John Molesworth 5 March 1722-3: 'I would fain not be the last in any matter of improvement'.

44 Clinton Rossiter, Seedtime of the Republic, New York 1953, pp. 298-9; H. Trevor Colbourn, The Lamp of Experience, Chapel Hill (N.C.) 1965, pp. 109-10, 128, 159, and cf. p. 85 on John Adams, whose primary allegiance was to Bolingbroke, but who was also well read in the 'Whig canon' upon which Bolingbroke drew freely.

political thought[45]. The colonists were of course selective in their enthusiasms, and quickly recognised that the polemics against Stuart and Catholic despotism churned out by the Commonwealthsmen were readily applicable to the imperial situation of the 1760s and 1770s; the conspiracies against liberty which Molesworth and Trenchard were so ready to detect seemed equally to characterise the ministries of Bute or North.

These aspects of the thought of the Commonwealthsmen were of course written with England in mind; some of their occasional pronouncements on colonial questions were less likely to recommend themselves to Americans. Significantly, Molyneux's Case of Ireland, which went through three American editions between 1770 and 1776, specifically excluded the American colonies from its argument: Ireland was a separate kingdom but they were not. Nor were Trenchard's thoughts on imperial organization- although commended for their conciliatory tone by Jonathan Mayhew, who got Hollis to reprint them- the epitome of liberalism. His view, similar to that of sixteenth century Castilians, was that the colonies should be confined to the production of raw materials for the mother country (in the case of America, naval stores). Observing the phenomenal rate of population increase in America, he predicted that they would seek independence if such regulation were not enforced[46]. Davenant too considered that colonies should exist for the benefit of the mother country: they should not develop

45 Bernard Bailyn, Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, Cambridge (Mass) 1967, p. 86; Rossiter, Seedtime of the Republic, p. 141. Reception of Locke's political thought in America has been described as 'not conceptually a very interesting one' by John Dunn in J.W.Yolton, ed., John Locke: Problems and Perspectives, Cambridge 1969, p. 74. As Rossiter notes (p. 146), Locke's natural rights were never as popular with the colonists as the Commonwealthsmen's rhetoric of the rights of Englishmen.

46 Molyneux, Case of Ireland, p. 148; Cato's Letters no. 106, 8 Dec 1722 (IV 5-11); Colbourn, Lamp of Experience, pp. 63-4. Trenchard's essay anticipated Franklin's famous observation that the population of the colonies doubled every twenty-five years.

manufactures or shipping, acting instead as suppliers of raw materials. Their assemblies should be subordinate to the English Parliament, and, while their original freedoms should be respected, England was to ensure that they remained dependent[47].

Even where Ireland was concerned, the Commonwealthsmen seldom challenged the mercantilist orthodoxy[48]. The anonymous True Way to Render Ireland Happy and Secure, which may represent Molesworth's views since it was addressed to him in 1697, advocated encouragement of the linen manufacture in order to preserve the harmony of economic interests between England and Ireland, threatened by Irish woollens; the agitation against these woollens was apparently begun by Cary in his Essay on Trade (1695). Only in 1720, when Molesworth promoted Swift's attempt at a boycott, is any Commonwealthsman known to have rejected the idea that Irish interests should be brought artificially into conformity with English[49].

Americans, therefore, found little support for the economic and political rights of dependent kingdoms in the works of the Commonwealthsmen; rather, they used them as mines of rhetoric about the liberties of Englishmen, and in this respect Trenchard and Molesworth served them especially well. In a way, this kind of rhetoric was at the heart of the problem of Anglo-Irish relations. The genuinely liberal elements in Whiggery, its institutionalised checks on authority, were too often assumed only to apply to England. Molyneux had shown how dangerous natural rights, as expounded by Locke, could be. Among the Commonwealthsmen Trenchard illustrates these shortcomings. It is clear that the defence of

47 Davenant, Discourses on the Publick Revenues, 1698, pp. 227, 205, 279-80, 244-6, 231.

48 Even Molyneux's attack on the 1698 Woollen Act, while denying its validity, had said nothing as to its economic advisability.

49 The True Way to Render Ireland Happy and Secure, pp. 11-12; notes 8, 39 above. For contemporary criticism of the 'monopolising humour' in Cary's work by a genuine cosmopolitan, see B Lib Add MS 5540 f.59, Bohun to Cary 18 Jan 1695-6.

Irish rights by Molesworth and Toland was in practice little more than a defence of the (ostensibly) Anglican minority which dominated the Dublin Parliament. But their assumptions throw some light upon another strand in the Whig tradition. Harrington and Sidney had preferred commonwealths for increase to those for preservation, mainly because they were able to spread the benefits of liberty to surrounding nations; Harrington had written in apocalyptic terms of this mission of Oceana. Toland's most Harringtonian tract echoed the view that England's is 'a government for increase...its situation naturally leading it to trade and planting of colonies' and to 'hold the balance of Europe and protect its liberties'[50]. This cosmopolitanism, already noticed in Molesworth and Toland, perhaps made their statements on Irish problems into something more than an exercise in self-interest: they became critics of the parochialism which limited the validity of Revolution Principles.

50 Political Works of James Harrington, pp. 159-60, 328-32; Algernon Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government, 1751 ed., pp. 160-2; Toland, The Militia Reform'd, 1698, p. 17.

# CHAPTER NINE: THE COMMONWEALTHSMEN AND CIVIL SOCIETY

One of the eighteenth century's main contributions to historical thought was the idea that political institutions can only be fully understood in the context of the society which produces them. The dichotomy between substructure and superstructure, which owes as much to Montesquieu as to Marx, has become fundamental to our thinking, and the lack of emphasis on this topic in the writings of the Commonwealthsmen comes as a surprise. Although it was suggested in the first chapter that Toland, Molesworth, and Trenchard deprived the term 'Commonwealthsman' of much of its political content, their thought was nothing if not political. Their attention was focussed on the state rather than on the community which produced it, and they offered little original analysis of the complex relationship between society and government; when discussing this subject, they often added little to what they found in Harrington. This aspect of the Commonwealthsmen's thought is too important to ignore; if it was secondary to their main concerns, it also complements them. Perhaps its chief interest, for the argument of the present study, is that it again shows how representative they were of much of the opinion of their time.

A Commonwealth was defined by these writers as a polity in which the promotion of the interests of all the people is the chief object of government. The Commonwealthsmen's preoccupation with the government is explained by the consideration that they accepted a rather static conception of society which provided no scope for argument about what ends it should serve. Toland listed many of its characteristics in a passage which has already been quoted[1], and he clearly expected his readers to agree with him. The Commonwealthsmen, rightly or wrongly, tended to assume the

1 See above, p. 14

existence of a consensus on what was socially desirable, and most of their thought was concerned with the ways in which government could affect these agreed standards.

But even if the social ideas of the Commonwealthsmen were not very original, they do provide a framework for the understanding of their political thought. As might have been expected in a group so strongly influenced by Locke, their fundamental assumption was the sanctity of private property. Cato's Letters regarded the preservation of property as 'the principal business of government', while Shaftesbury, who alone among the Commonwealthsmen wrote systematically on ethics, classed the aspiration for moderate wealth as a legitimate 'self-passion'. Molyneux and Cary, both closely associated with the Commonwealthsmen, thought along the same lines: the former claimed that hereditary property tenure was a law of nature, while, according to Cary, freehold was a bulwark of English liberties[2]. In the absence of any theoretical justification of the institution of private property- an undertaking which they presumably thought unnecessary- these isolated statements are sufficient indications that the Commonwealthsmen, like most other thinkers of their time, had abandoned the medieval view that it was rooted in human sinfulness.

Acceptance of existing property rights led in practice, if not in strict logic, to acceptance of the social hierarchy as it stood. Toland favoured a rigid class system, in which the opportunities for social mobility provided by education were minimised; for this reason he distrusted the charity schools. During the Standing Army controversy he had argued that the right to bear arms should be confined to men of property. In 1701 he defined the best government as one in which anyone 'may ascend from the meanest to

2 Cato's Letters no. 32, 10 June 1721 (I 248); Shaftesbury, Characteristics, ed J.M.Robertson, 2 vols 1900, I 326; Molyneux, The Case of Ireland's being bound by Acts of Parliament in England Stated, Dublin 1698, p. 24; Cary, An Essay on the State of England, Bristol 1695, p. 166.

the highest degree according to his merit', but he was to qualify this liberal position severely in 1707 when he justified the preferment of men of 'great birth, estate, and credit' to offices over the heads of poor men of equal capacity. 'The distinction of several ranks, the grand secret of government, is thus best preserved', he claimed, and rich men in addition afford 'the greatest pledges of fidelity'[3].

Molesworth's attitude was similar. In his analysis of the establishment of absolutism in Denmark he had noted that the new monarchy preferred to employ men of low birth, the implication being that they were less concerned with constitutional liberties. Davenant altered the emphasis by acknowledging that in a perfect state wisdom and probity would be the only qualities requisite for public office, but he asserted that in England's corrupt condition such employments should be filled by the noble and wealthy who are 'above the common temptations of the world'. He did not pause to justify this fantastic assumption. A few years later he spoke of the importance of maintaining the relations of deference, or 'respect', between rich and poor, upon which government depended[4]. Shaftesbury apparently had the same consideration in mind when he insisted that the freedom to question established conventions and beliefs must be confined to private conversation among the upper classes[5].

Some well-known passages in Cato's Letters run counter to these sentiments. Trenchard asserted that 'the people often judge better than their superiors', and by talking of 'every man..., even the meanest', 'every cobbler', he made it clear that his

3 'A Memorial Presented to a Minister of State' (1714?), in Toland, Collection II 249-50; Toland, The Militia Reform'd, 1698, pp. 18, 25, Anglia Libera, 1701, p. 12, A Philippick Oration to Incite the English against the French, 1707, p. 6, note 3.

4 Molesworth, An Account of Denmark, 1694, p. 82; Davenant, Probable Methods, p. 291, Essays Upon Peace at Home and War Abroad, 1704, pp. 335-6.

5 Shaftesbury, Characteristics, I 53.

definition of the people was not a restrictive one. A few weeks later he quoted Machiavelli on the political sagacity of the common people. Writing under the same pseudonym, Gordon admitted that social inequalities were necessary to the deference which sustained society, but he warned that these inequalities should not be too great, or 'all intercourse and communication is lost'. Yet Trenchard, like Toland, could denounce charity schools for promoting instability by educating labouring people above their stations, and Gordon, in another pamphlet published at the same time, could claim that 'the views of plebeians, however elevated above their own dirt by accidental promotions, are sordid and griping'[6]. Tindal pointed out the inconsistencies in Cato's pronouncements on the political capacities of the people[7], and the conclusion that Trenchard and Gordon were using demagogic tactics for short-term purposes, while remaining committed to the existing order, seems a fair one.

With the equivocal exception of Cato's Letters, therefore, the writings of the Commonwealthsmen reflect the accepted view that political power should, to some degree, be linked to birth and wealth. But their comments on the position of underprivileged groups are not devoid of interest. Their attitude to the poor was on the whole a sympathetic one. Davenant insisted that the government should protect them from exploitation by richer men, particularly the middlemen who controlled food supplies. He believed that taxation should not fall upon the poor, and that the genuinely destitute had a right to maintenance[8]. Cary was devoting

6 Cato's Letters nos. 13, 22, 43, 133, 21 Jan 1720-1, 25 Mar & 2 Sept 1721, 15 June 1723 (I 87, 154, II 71, IV 241); Gordon, The Conspirators, 1721, p. 8.
7 Tindal, A Defence of our Present Happy Establishment, 1722, pp. 25-6.
8 Davenant, An Essay Upon Ways and Means, 1695, pp. 129-30, Probable Methods, pp. 41-2, 51; cf. Two Manuscripts by Charles Davenant, ed A.P.Usher, Baltimore 1942, p. 32.

much of his attention to the problem of pauperism, culminating in his Bristol Corporation of the Poor, during the years in which he is known to have been connected with Toland and Trenchard. The Corporation, according to his account, adopted exceptionally humanitarian methods in their treatment of the destitute, which might have put the nineteenth century exponents of 'less eligibility' to shame[9]. In addition to calling for a thoroughgoing reform of the Poor Laws in order to provide full employment for the indigent, he advocated high wages for artisans as an encouragement to manufactures and a system of pensions for old sailors and maimed soldiers. His observation that absolute poverty makes men incapable of appreciating liberty probably helps to explain his concern with this subject[10]. Trenchard deprecated the oppression of the needy to meet the expenses of a swollen court, while Moyle, during his brief career in the Commons, was distinguished by his interest in bills relating to the employment of the poor. 'In his opinion', wrote a friend, 'the government was responsible for all those who were reduced to the hard and criminal necessity of begging or stealing', and his innate charity guided his attitude to the poverty-stricken[11]. Stephens commended the giving of alms; Tindal praised the Quakers for their efforts in keeping the poor employed, and Toland referred admiringly to the well-known Socinian philanthropist Thomas Firmin for the same reasons. Another man celebrated for his work on behalf of the poor, John Bellers, wrote to Toland in 1718, mentioning that he seemed 'of an extensive charity'. Unfortunately Toland's reply to this

9 Cary, An Account of the Proceedings of the Corporation of Bristol, 1700.

10 Cary, A Proposal Offered to the Committee of the Honourable House of Commons, n.d. (1700?), An Essay on the State of England, pp. 55, 144-5, 151, 157-9, 168-70, 165.

11 Trenchard, Essays on Important Subjects, 1755, pp. 101-2; Moyle, Published Works, pp. 25-32. Commons Journals XI 573 records Moyle's membership of a Commons' committee to consider the Poor Laws in 1696: his colleagues included Lord Ashley, Methuen, Edward Clarke, and Sir Walter Yonge.

approach is not recorded, but he did admire the paternalistic welfare state run in the Hebrides by MacNeil of Barra[12].

These comments are worth attention not because they are in any way exceptional but because they illustrate a fairly general way of thinking; the idea that the later seventeenth century saw the emergence of a laissez-faire attitude which was bound to be detrimental to the poor is no longer tenable. Cary was not the only merchant to advocate high wages; Sir Josiah Child also appreciated their benefits. Private charity remained at a high level, and public provision for the poor was growing[13]. The Commonwealthsmen were not untypical of their time in showing solicitude for the material condition of the masses combined with an assumption that this should not affect the concentration of political power in the hands of the wealthy.

The exclusion of all women who did not belong to the royal family from formal power was as widely accepted as that of the poor, and here again the Commonwealthsmen offered little that was truly subversive. Molesworth, for instance, deplored women who concerned themselves with politics[14]. In many cases their personal relationships with women were not close. Molesworth's letters to his wife show that he was happily married, but by contrast Trenchard's first marriage ended tragically with the girl committing suicide apparently after a few weeks. Tindal's reputation as 'an egregious fornicator', about which amusing stories were told at Oxford, no doubt owed much to the celibacy

12 Stephens, A Sermon Preach'd at the Temple-Church, 1700, p. 11; Tindal, The Nation Vindicated from the Aspersions Cast on it..., 1711, pp. 36-7; Toland, The Life of John Milton, 1699, p. 147; B Lib Add MS 4465 f.14, Bellers to Toland 1718; Toland, Collection I 178-9. Toland's admiration for Firmin may not have been reciprocated: Defoe(?), Remarks on the Life of Mr Milton, as Publish'd by J.T., 1699. p. 30.

13 See Charles Wilson, England's Apprenticeship 1603-1763, 1963, pp. 231-5, for an excellent discussion of this point.

14 Hon. M.Monck, Marinda, 1716, Dedication by Molesworth, unpaginated.

required by his profession[15]. But Shaftesbury and Toland were both unenthusiastic about marriage, the former taking this step only to ensure the preservation of the family title[16]. Toland, however, was almost alone among his associates in committing his views on the relations between the sexes to print. He asserted that women were of equal intellectual capacity with men, and gave such examples as Queen Sophia Charlotte, the ancient philosopher Hypatia, and Locke's defender Catherine Cockburn[17]. He argued in favour of Milton's advocacy of divorce, observing that marriage should be 'suited to (human) convenience and happiness, and not be made a snare to render (men) uneasy or miserable', and this led to accusations that he favoured community of women. In a posthumous work he showed his approval of the obsolete Hebridean custom of trial marriages. But, as with Milton himself, the tone of these passages suggests that the voluntarist conception of matrimony was meant to apply only to men, and elsewhere Toland implicitly condoned the double standard by advising women to tolerate their husbands' extra-marital escapades[18]. Despite their apparent

15 Molesworth Corr, passim; Trenchard Corr MS G23 f.3, Trenchard to Simpson? 24 Nov 1718; H.M.C. 29 Portland V 573; The Religious, Rational, and Moral Conduct of Matthew Tindal LL.D., 1735, pp. 58-62; Abel Evans, The Apparition, 1710, p. 6.

16 On Shaftesbury's attitude to marriage, see Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, passim, and on Toland's, B Lib Add MS 4295 f.18, an extract from the rules of one of Toland's clubs, the Chevaliers de la Jubilation, which calls marriage 'le tombeau des ris et des jeux'. In this connection it may be mentioned that enemies occasionally associated Commonwealth principles with homosexuality, particularly in Stephens' case: William Baron, Regicides no Saints nor Martyrs, 1700, p. 134; The Pillars of Priestcraft and Orthodoxy Shaken, ed R.Baron, 1768 ed., 4 vols, II 230. Shaftesbury's exaggerated aestheticism and his preference for the company of younger men make the suspicion plausible in his case: see, e.g., Rand, Shaftesbury, pp. 472-5, Shaftesbury to Micklethwayte 23 Feb 1712.

17 Toland, Letters to Serena, 1704, pp. viii-x, xiii, A Letter Against Popery, 1712, pp. 3-5, Tetradymus, 1720, pp. 103, 105-6, and cf. pp. 187-8.

18 Toland, Life of John Milton, pp. 53-8, attacked in Defoe(?), Remarks..., pp. 20-4, 35; Toland, Collection I 179-80, II 22-7.

liberalism, Toland's ideas on marrige tended to reinforce the dominance of the male.

Surprisingly little is to be found in the writings of the Commonwealthsmen on slavery, which was coming to assume immense importance in the national economy. Two of their most admired writers had differed on the subject, with Locke condemning it as a continuation of the state of war and Sidney justifying it in the case of blacks. But while the whole corpus of Commonwealth writings is resonant with set pieces on the value of liberty, unequivocal condemnations of slavery as it existed are hard to find. Cary, for instance, wrote in general terms that 'I am no friend to slavery, or anything that looks like it', but he had earlier enthused that negroes were 'the best traffic the kingdom hath'[19].

If the Commonwealthsmen, as this survey has indicated, were not particularly radical in their attitudes to the various unprivileged groups in society, other aspects of their social thought were at least more constructive. They liked to strike cosmopolitan attitudes, claiming to be concerned with the welfare of humanity, not solely that of the English people[20], and this rhetoric was reflected in their pronouncements on the practical question of general naturalisation[21]. Many writers, particularly Whigs, favoured this measure, on the grounds that, in Davenant's words, 'the people...are the most important riches in any state'. But the Commonwealthsmen, who seem to have been unanimous on this

19 Locke, Second Treatise, chapter 4; Sidney, Discourses Concerning Government, 1751 ed, p. 263; Cary, A Vindication of the Parliament of England, 1698, p. 94, An Essay on the State of England..., p. 75.

20 See, e.g., Rand, Shaftesbury, pp. 11, 417, Shaftesbury to Stanhope 7 Nov 1709; Toland, Anglia Libera, 1701, p. 190; and see above, pp. 213-4, 234-5.

21 For the background to this issue, see Caroline Robbins, 'A Note on General Naturalisation under the Later Stuarts', Journal of Modern History 34, 1962, pp. 168-177; H.T.Dickinson, 'The Poor Palatines and the Parties', E.H.R. 82, 1967, pp. 464-85.

point, were among its most ardent advocates. Moyle thought such a policy was a necessary condition for the preservation of freedom in the Roman republic, and Tindal regarded it as beneficent[22]. Molesworth and his friends in Ireland were enthusiastic about the scheme, as an open letter of 1697 mentioned in the last chapter shows; in the same year Molesworth was ordered by the Irish Commons to prepare a bill for the encouragement of foreign Protestant immigration. His own plans to settle French tenants on his estates, however, fell through in 1701[23].

Toland, however, was the most enthusiastic propagandist for General Naturalisation. He regarded populousness as the sign of a free country, and thoughts immigrants should be given rights of citizenship 'without any other condition but yielding obedience to the civil government and taking the Oath of Allegiance'[24]. In 1714 his tract Reasons for Naturalising the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland argued that according to this criterion continued exclusion of the Jews from citizenship could not be justified, and criticised the recently rescinded Act for a General Naturalisation (1709) for confining its provisions to foreign Protestants. This extraordinary pamphlet, which was largely ignored and is now very rare, cannot be parallelled in the works of the other Commonwealthsmen, but its proposals were no doubt influenced by Locke's defence of toleration for the Jews, and perhaps by Harrington's suggestion that they should be allowed to settle in

22 Davenant, 'An Essay upon Public Virtue' (1696), in B Lib Harleian MS 1223, p. 59 (original pagination); Two English Republican Tracts, ed C.Robbins, Cambridge 1969, pp. 228-9; Tindal, The Rights of the Christian Church Asserted, 1706, pp. 285, 343.

23 Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, pp. xxii, xxiii; Anon., The True Way to Render Ireland Happy and Secure...in a Letter to ...Molesworth, Dublin 1697; Luttrell IV 280; Molesworth Corr p. 224, Robert to Letitia Molesworth 12 May 1701. Cf. Cary, Some Considerations Relating to the Carrying on the Linen Manufacture in Ireland, 1704, pp. 11-12.

24 Toland, Philippick Oration, p. 20 note 14, p. 84 note 76; for other eulogies on General Naturalisation by him, see the State-Anatomy of Great Britain, 1717, pp. 55-6, The Second Part of the State-Anatomy, 1717, p. 79

Ireland[25].

Both Toland and Shaftesbury were aware that their sympathy with the immigration of foreigners was not shared by the common people, who feared that unemployment would result, and Toland censured the readiness of Tory politicians to use this issue to promote discontent. Davenant, although advocating naturalisation on economic grounds, made the proviso that first-generation immigrants should not have voting rights[26]. In this concession to Tory and popular suspicion of foreigners he diverged from the other Commonwealthsmen, although their basic ideas on the topic were similar.

In arguing for the naturalisation of the Jews Toland had observed that national characteristics should not be ascribed merely to 'a certain genius or bent of mind reigning in a certain family or nation', but to the effects of 'the different methods of government and education'. A recognition of the power of education is strongly apparent in much of the work of Toland and his associates, and this very modern attitude may again be traced to the influence of Locke. Toland praised the mode of child-

25 The only known copies of Reasons are in Dublin and New York, but the original text has been reprinted in 'Gründe für die Einbürgerung der Juden in Grossbritannien und Irland', ed & trans H.Mainusch, Studia Delitzschiana Band 9, Stuttgart 1965. See Locke, Epistola de Tolerantia, ed R.Klibansky and J.W.Gough, Oxford 1968, p. 145; The Political Works of James Harrington, ed. J.G.A.Pocock, Cambridge 1977, p. 159. Toland's attitude to the Jews was ambivalent: he regarded them as originally an illiterate people whose culture was derived from that of Egypt, and attacked their intolerance (Letters to Serena, p. 39, Christianity Not Mysterious, 1696, p. 100). On the other hand he devoted a pamphlet to their citizen rights, believed that Moses had been a pantheist (as he himself was), and showed sympathy for Zionism (Adeisidaemon, The Hague 1709, pp. 117, 155-7, Nazarenus, 1718, Appendix p. 8).

26 Toland, Second Part of the State-Anatomy, Preface, pp. ii-iii; Rand, Shaftesbury pp. 372-7, Shaftesbury to Basnage 21 Jan 1706-7; Davenant, An Essay Upon Ways and Means, pp. 143-4, 147, Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power..., 1701, p. 254, Probable Methods, p. 27.

rearing recommended in his mentor's 'most useful Treatise of Education', but the debt goes much deeper than this. Locke's psychology had abandoned innate ideas, deriving instead all knowledge from experience. Clearly education had great significance in this process; indeed, Locke's analysis of association of ideas suggested that mental patterns inculcated in early childhood determined the involuntary trains of thought in the adult. Both Toland and Trenchard devoted essays to the ways in which prejudice vitiated the operation of reason, with the former's showing Lockeian influence the more clearly[27].

As has already been seen, the Commonwealthsmen were particularly concerned with the methods which they believed were used by the clergy in order to exploit these human infirmities for their own political and economic advantage. But in general the educational values they most esteemed, and which they feared priests were least likely to impart, were urbanity and broadmindedness. These qualities were associated with gentility, and any threat to them endangered the social structure of the country. 'Gentlemen (must) be bred by gentlemen, and not by monks and pedants', declaimed Cato's Letters, and Molesworth similarly attacked the 'monklike education' offered at the universities. Toland too disapproved of pedantry, regarding the Académie Française as a ploy of Richelieu's to divert French intellectuals from the more serious concerns of politics[28]. With the strange admiration for the Prussian despotism which he shared with

27 Toland, 'Reasons', ed. Mainusch, p. 60; Toland, Collection II 12-13; Locke, An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding, ed. P. Nidditch, Oxford 1975, pp. 48-84, 104-118, 394-401; Toland, Letters to Serena, pp. 2-15; Trenchard, 'The Natural History of Superstition', in Somers Tracts XII 106-121.

28 Cato's Letters no. 138, 27 July 1723 (IV 286); cf. no. 121, 23 March 1722-3 (IV 127-32); Molesworth, Account of Denmark, Preface (quoted by Tindal in Christianity as Old as the Creation, 1730, pp. 167-8); Toland, Gallus Aretalogus, Amsterdam 1709, pp. 90-1; and cf. Shaftesbury, Characteristics I 214-5.

Voltaire, Toland praised the new academy at Berlin which would train bureaucrats and promote 'the real advancement of letters, of experimental philosophy, and sound politics'. It would be free from 'the disguises of pedantry, jargon, and chimeras', and, significantly, no-one below the rank of gentleman was to be admitted. This recalls an earlier recommendation of his that education should be committed to 'men of nice breeding, and that understand mankind as well as the liberal arts and sciences'[29].

Moyle was exceptional among the Commonwealthsmen in his enthusiasm for an educational system- that of Sparta- which served a society in which the distinction between rich and poor had been minimised. Toland's and Trenchard's criticisms of charity schools as socially unsettling, as well as Molesworth's complaint that the intellectual opportunities offered to young gentlemen by travel were being squandered on the conventional Grand Tour, correctly identified the conservative function which most people expected education to perform in this period[30]. Free mental development might be highly desirable, but it should be confined to those whose rank guaranteed that it could be used within the existing order of society.

The Commonwealthsmen often emphasised the importance of an adequate moral code in social stability and prosperity. By concentrating on natural religion they separated theology and ethics, a procedure which was characteristic of the age in which they lived. Shaftesbury was explicit on this point, and his

29 Toland, ed., The Ordinances, Statutes, and Privileges of the Royal Academy, 1714, pp. 11-12, 20, The Militia Reform'd, p. 60.

30 Moyle, Published Works, pp. 51, 61; Toland, Collection II 249-50; Cato's Letters, no. 133, 15 June 1723 (IV 241-4); Molesworth, Account of Denmark, Preface, corroborated in Toland, Life of Milton, p. 15. Toland's avowal in Christianity Not Mysterious (Preface, pp. xvii-xviii) that he hoped to influence the 'vulgar' as well as scholars goes against my argument, but it should be borne in mind that he later regarded his book as rash and disclaimed it: Doebner, Briefe, pp. 150-1, Sophie to Schutz 27 Jan 1702.

definition of virtue in secular terms as 'no other than the love of order and beauty in society' sufficiently indicates the bearing of his ethical theory. When virtue was thought of as inherent in the relationship between man and man rather than man and God, the way was clear for utilitarianism, and other writers developed this line of inquiry. Cato's Letters defined morality as 'certain rules of mutual convenience or indulgence, conducive or necessary to the well-being of society', and with this in mind condemned the false ethical codes of duellists and gamblers as 'white elephants'. Tindal believed that 'a love for his species' is innate in mankind, and from this assumption he progressed to the proto-utilitarian position that ''tis the tendency of actions which makes them either good or bad; they that tend to promote human happiness are always good, and those that have a contrary tendency are always bad'[31].

Tindal's acceptance of Mandeville's view that private vices could often be public benefits underlines the impression that the Commonwealthsmen saw morality in social rather than individual terms, or in other words that crime mattered more than sin. In attacking gambling, drinking, and masquerades Toland and Gordon were probably concerned less with reformation of manners as normally conceived than with national strength and prosperity. Moyle's private correspondence shows that he despised attempts to enforce morality, but in a public address he was careful to state the opposite[32].

The Commonwealthsmen were ambivalent on the subject of luxury,

31 Shaftesbury, Characteristics I 279; Cato's Letters nos. 108, 57, 22 Dec 1722 & 16 Dec 1721 (IV 24, II 195-201); Tindal, Christianity as Old as the Creation, pp. 19, 345 (but see p. 367 for the view that an action is 'moral' only if performed from disinterested motives).

32 Tindal, Defence of our Present Happy Establishment, p. 19; Toland, Militia Reform'd, p. 27; Toland, Shaftesbury Corr, p. xiii; Trenchard, Collection I 324-7; Moyle, Published Works, p. 15, Unpublished Works I 157-8 (address to the Grand Jury at Liskeard). The discrepancy may simply have been due to Moyle's advancing age.

so often attacked by moralists as inconsistent with virtue and liberty. Cary associated luxury with idleness and believed that both were prevalent in London, the great centre of consumption, but this attitude was predictable in an outport merchant. Davenant was clearly impressed by the republican tradition of polemic against luxury, as exemplified in Sidney and Fletcher of Saltoun, but his superior knowledge of contemporary conditions (especially the importance of foreign trade) made his comments on the subject curiously indecisive. Luxury led to corruption by raising expectations beyond the levels which could be satisfied by regular incomes, but Davenant was unwilling to end foreign trade in such goods and was not specific as to how it could be made compatible with national integrity. Shaftesbury feared that luxury led to 'the patrimony hurt...the way to knavery, court dependence, et., in the gentlemen'[33].

As has already been seen, the Commonwealthsmen's suspicions of the adverse effects of luxury were largely outweighed by their enthusiasm for foreign trade[34]. Trenchard's attitude to the subject was a robust one; with Moyle, he wrote that luxury, so pernicious to other nations, actually strengthened Britain by keeping a large reserve of sailors in constant employment. Much later, the Independent Whig, on which he collaborated with Gordon, maintained that such popular targets for moralists as swordknots and lapdogs were harmless foibles which were not worth attacking, and that 'the luxury of the rich...is the wealth and support of the poor'. Here as in much else, Cato's Letters were slightly inconsistent. The charge that corrupt ministers promote luxury

33 Cary, An Essay on the State of England, p. 155; Davenant, Essays Upon Peace at Home and War Abroad, 1704, pp. 331-3, Probable Methods, pp. 154-5 (cf. Sidney, Discourses, 1751 ed., p. 202, Fletcher, A Discourse of Government with Relation to Militias, Edinburgh 1698, pp. 11-14); Shaftesbury, Second Characters, or the Language of Forms, ed B.Rand, Cambridge 1914, p. 12.

34 See above, p. 210.

recalls Davenant, but a later letter restates the optimistic view that the invention of arts and sciences makes progress possible from a subsistence economy to one in which the luxuries of the wealthy provide 'the bread of the poor'. It seems apparent that Trenchard, like Tindal, was prepared to accept the utilitarian paradox of The Fable of the Bees[35].

Education and morality were supplemented by the law as methods of social control. The Commonwealthsmen revered the English legal system, but they did make criticisms of some of its aspects. Their comments were sometimes of a progressive and humanitarian character. Davenant was unhappy about the indiscriminate execution of criminals, which he regarded as 'one of the faults of our constitution', and he called for a liberalisation of legal procedure in cases of debt. One of the few things Molesworth admired about Denmark was the simplicity of its laws, which 'are grounded upon equity, and are all contained in one quarto volume', and Toland showed a similar preference for a small number of easily intelligible laws[36]. He considered that the law 'was specially ordained for the relief of the poor and ignorant', though the force of this asseveration was weakened by his simultaneous defence of the Game Laws, which were, according to most historians, among the most oppressive enactments of the eighteenth century. Simpson, himself a lawyer, favoured reform of the expensive and dilatory procedures of the Court of Chancery[37]. But the Commonwealthsmen are sharply distinguished from the more radical

35 Trenchard and Moyle, An Argument, shewing that a Standing Army, 1697, p. 2; The Independent Whig, nos. 1, 27, 20 Jan 1719-20 & 20 July 1720; Cato's Letters nos. 17, 67, 18 Feb 1720-1 & 24 Feb 1721-2 (I 111-7, II 305). Ironically, Tindal's comment (above, note 32) was intended as a criticism of Trenchard's assertion about corrupt ministers and luxury.

36 Davenant, Discourses on the Publick Revenues, 1698, p. 198, Probable Methods pp. 68-9; Molesworth, Account of Denmark, pp. 232-4; Toland, The Art of Governing by Partys, 1701, p. 82.

37 Toland, Collection II 256; Methuen Corr MS C163, Simpson to Methuen 15 Jan 1705-6.

legal reformers of the Interregnum by their contention that they were attacking abuses in the legal system, not the system itself. They never gave any indication that they saw the law as a potential instrument of social change.

Other remarks by the Commonwealthsmen show that there was indeed a humanitarian streak in their thought, though it was often manifested only in the course of polemics on other topics. Thus Molesworth made the barbarity of their executions an argument for the moral depravity of despotisms, whilst one of Tindal's diatribes against the High Church party concentrated on their cruelty towards their enemies. Again, criticising current admiration for the Roman republic, Tindal noted that their gladiatorial shows were cruel and corrupt spectacles. Shaftesbury's celebrated essay on religious enthusiasm stressed the cruelty that normally accompanied it[38]. On the other hand, the fact that Trenchard referred to the ravings of the insane as amusing and diverting shows that he at least was hardly ahead of his time in his respect for human dignity[39].

The division of labour is one of the few areas in which originality might be claimed for the social thought of any of the Commonwealthsmen. Toland's praise for the Roman way of life, in which men ruled and were ruled by turns 'without any difference between the soldier and the statesman, the orator and the general', harks back to Aristotle's description of the ideal state, but it also adds something to it. At Rome, wrote Toland on another occasion, there 'was no difference between the citizen and the statesman, between the husbandman and the soldier, whence the

38 Molesworth, 'A Short Narrative of the Life and Death of... Patkul', Somers Tracts XIII, at p. 890; Tindal, The Merciful Judgments of High-Church Triumphant..., 1710, passim, The Judgment of Dr Prideaux...Maintain'd, 1721, pp. 34, 63; Shaftesbury, Characteristics, I 15.

39 Trenchard, 'The Natural History of Superstition', Somers Tracts XII, at p. 109.

minds of the inhabitants were enlarged to that degree that they became capable of designing and effecting everything'. This point about the mentally liberating character of diversity of occupation is an implicit criticism of a rigid division of labour. Without reading too much into this passage, we can probably say that in it Toland, intel ectually the most impressive of the Commonwealthsmen, showed that he was thinking in ways which later produced the young Marx's theory of alienation[40].

In general, however, little that is strikingly new has been discovered in the writings of the Commonwealthsmen on the society they lived in; when they were at their most original, they were often referring not to Augustan England but to republican Rome or the Celtic west. It was suggested at the beginning of this chapter that social organization was not at this time regarded as a controversial issue. The most important thinkers of the period were concerned with the rights and liberties of the individual, while the medieval and Tudor emphasis on his obligations to the community was weakened[41]. This development can be seen in Locke, Sidney, Harrington, and even Hobbes, and was firmly established by the time the Commonwealthsmen wrote. Underlying all the ideas of the Commonwealthsmen is the view that the independence and self-determination of the individual, both physical and intellectual, is the ultimate social good; this concept of liberty, which runs through much of British philosophy, has been called a negative one since it is defined as freedom from outside interference and ignores the social factors which, then as now, too often inhibited the opportunities for a fulfilling lifestyle[42]. Toland summed up

40 Toland, Collection, II 8 (cf. Aristotle, Politics, 1332b); The Militia Reform'd, p. 72.
41 This contention is based largely on C.B.Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, Oxford 1962, but it does not entail acceptance of all his arguments.
42 On this question see Isaiah Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', in Four Essays on Liberty, Oxford 1969, pp. 118-72.

the ideal of his group with unusual clarity when he wrote that it consisted in each person's 'giving law to his own actions as a free and reasonable man'. This individualistic attitude was immensely fruitful in political thought, but it could lead to a slurring over of equally important social questions, as Molesworth showed when he wrote overconfidently that 'the thriving of any one single person by honest means is the thriving of the Commonwealth wherein he resides'[43]. To many modern readers these assumptions will appear quite unjustified, but in the later seventeenth century they usually went unchallenged. If it is true that the intellectual climate of an age is not always best gauged by its most original and advanced thinkers, the study of the social thought of the Commonwealthsmen, derivative, inconsistent, and unadventurous as most of it is, may not be wasted time.

43 Toland, Letters to Serena, p. 16; Molesworth, Preface to Franco-Gallia, p. xv.

# CHAPTER TEN: THE INTELLECTUAL FRAMEWORK

In earlier chapters it was argued that much of what the Commonwealthsmen had to say about politics and society was not strikingly original. A good deal of their work consisted of variations on well-established themes. At its best, the skilful application of a familiar principle could open up new dimensions in political controversy: a good example is the use of republican theory by Trenchard and Moyle in order to attack standing armies. But at its least impressive (for instance in the pro-government pamphlets of Matthew Tindal) the technique could degenerate into the monotonous repetition of cliches.

In either case, however, a serious study of the Commonwealthsmen must pay some attention to the sources of their ideas. One writer's influence on another can seldom be assessed precisely: a large number of citations proves little, since they may refer to trivia, while intellectual borrowings are often unacknowledged. Perhaps the best approach is to concentrate on the essential ideas of the Commonwealthsmen rather than combing their texts and footnotes in an indiscriminate census of authorities[1]. Eulogistic references to writers like La Rochefoucauld and Fènelon[2] might otherwise disguise the fact that these thinkers contributed very little to the corpus of ideas studied here.

Those historians who have tried to place the Commonwealthsmen in their intellectual context have most frequently chosen to include them in the 'classical republican' tradition whose

1 A cursory count of quotations and citations would, however, reveal one interesting point: the scarcity of references to the Bible in the overtly political works of the Commonwealthsmen.

2 Cato's Letters no. 40, 9 Sept 1721 (II 80); Gordon, The Humourist, 2 vols 1720-5, I 49, on La Rochefoucauld; Cato's Letters no. 93, 8 Sept 1722 (III 231-3), Shaftesbury, Characteristics, ed J.M.Robertson, 2 vols 1900, II 214, note 1, on Fènelon.

greatest luminary in seventeenth century England was James Harrington. Professor J.G.A.Pocock has argued that Toland, Moyle, Molesworth, Trenchard, and one or two others transmitted many of Harrington's insights to the eighteenth century; since, however, they differed from their mentor in preferring the Ancient Constitution to a republic, he coins the term 'neo-Harringtonians' for them, and the usage seems likely to stick[3].

There can be little doubt that Harrington's influence on the Commonwealthsmen was great. Toland in 1700 published the first posthumous edition of his works, complete with a biography. He claimed that Harrington 'far outdoes all that went before him in his exquisite knowledge of the politics', and that Oceana 'is the most perfect form of such a government that ever was delineated by any ancient or modern pen'. Shaftesbury was sending copies of Toland's edition to Dutch friends soon after its appearance, while Davenant, Trenchard, and Moyle all expressed admiration for the book[4].

What kind of influence did Harrington exert on these later followers ? Shaftesbury's rhetorical question implying that nothing was more beautiful

> than the view of an equal Commonwealth or city founded on good laws; a well-built constitution, fenced against interior and exterior force; a legislature and a militia; a senate propounding, debating, counselling; a people resolving, electing; a majesty executing and in rotation

seems to imply acceptance of the whole programme contained in Oceana. The assertion in Cato's Letters that liberty could not be safe 'without an agrarian law, or something like it' indicates

3 J.G.A.Pocock, 'Machiavelli, Harrington, and English Eighteenth Century Ideologies', in Politics, Language, and Time, 1971, pp. 107, 134-5; cf. J.A.Downie, Robert Harley and the Press, Cambridge 1979, pp. 20, 22.

4 Toland, ed, The Oceana and Other Works of James Harrington Esq, 1737 ed, Preface p. viii, The Life of John Milton, 1699, p. 122, and cf. Nazarenus, 1718, Appendix, pp. 6-7; P.R.O. 30/24/20/13, Shaftesbury to Furly 5 Aug 1700, and see references below, notes 8 and 9.

some sympathy for the fundamental social regulation of Harrington's utopia[5]. But the fact that Shaftesbury, Trenchard, and Gordon never returned to these important topics confirms our earlier conclusion that these authors were not republicans. Isolated expressions of admiration for Harrington's constitution are no proof of a desire to see these arrangements adopted in England; in 1711 Toland reminded Oxford, who had encouraged his edition of Oceana, that 'neither of us imagined the model itself to be practicable'[6].

Nonetheless, Harrington had much to teach even thinkers who remained committed to the 'gothic balance' which he so despised; the Commonwealthsmen considered that his political theory 'may as well be accommodated to a monarchy regulated by laws as to a democracy or more popular form of a commonwealth'[7]. In particular, his statement of the relationship between the ownership of land and political power was quite acceptable: Shaftesbury believed 'that dominion must naturally follow property', and Toland called this principle 'a noble discovery'. Davenant followed Oceana's account of the political consequences of the changing balance of property[8]. Trenchard and Moyle used Harrington's analysis of the connexion between land and military power in order to attack standing armies. Moyle was, arguably, the most thoroughgoing Harringtonian among this group; his essays on the constitutions of Sparta and Rome are strongly imbued with principles derived from Oceana. Both Moyle and Harrington, for instance, heartily approved of the erastian system of Rome and Sparta under which the magistrates enjoyed full control over the state religion, thus ensuring that the interests

5 Rand, Shaftesbury, p. 45; Cato's Letters no. 35, 1 July 1721 (II 16).
6 Toland, Collection II 227.
7 Toland, ed., Oceana, p. xix.
8 Shaftesbury, Characteristics II 186; Toland, ed., Oceana, p. xviii; Davenant, Essays Upon I. The Ballance of Power..., 1701, pp. 228-9.

of priests and people were identical[9].

The Commonwealthsmen, however, were not particularly consistent in their use of Harrington. They recognised that the balance of property had swung decisively to the Commons since the time of the Tudors, but they were hazy as to the implications of this social change; refusing to acknowledge that the Gothic constitution was outmoded, they were unable to square it with the view that power must follow the balance of property[10]. Again, although they found Harrington useful during the Standing Army controversy, his prescriptions for a citizen militia were silently dropped when there was real fighting to be done.

The claim that the Commonwealthsmen played a special role in preserving Harrington's thought for the eighteenth century does not stand up to scrutiny. Two of the Restoration's most influential authors, Temple and Petty, were impressed by Oceana's formulation of the relationship between power and property[11]. At the turn of the century the maxim that dominion follows property is found in pamphlets like A Letter to a Modern Dissenting Whig and Clement's Faults on Both Sides; thoroughly Harringtonian interpretations of English history are contained in Swift's Discourse of the Contests and Dissensions and Peter Paxton's Civil Polity[12]. One study of Oceana's influence concludes that in the early eighteenth century 'the Harringtonian theories were gradually becoming known, gradually being watered down, gradually

9 Trenchard and Moyle, An Argument, shewing that a Standing Army is Inconsistent with a Free Government, 1697, p. 24; The Political Works of James Harrington, ed J.G.A.Pocock, Cambridge 1977, pp. 186-7; Two English Republican Tracts, ed C.Robbins, Cambridge 1969, pp. 213-7, and cf. pp. 247, 252; Moyle, Published Works, p. 55.

10 See above, p.45 , note 15.

11 References in B.Behrens, 'The Whig Theory of the Constitution in the Reign of Charles II', Cambridge Historical Journal 7, 1941, p. 65.

12 A Letter to a Modern Dissenting Whig, 1701, p. 26; Clement, 'Faults on Both Sides', Somers Tracts XII, at pp. 680-2; Swift, A Discourse of the Contests and Dissensions, ed F.H.Ellis, Oxford 1967, p. 119; Paxton, Civil Polity, 1703, pp. 83-4, 519-26.

becoming orthodox'[13]. The Commonwealthsmen contributed to this process, especially in the American colonies, but they did not monopolise it; for this reason, and also because of their highly eclectic use of Harrington's thought, it seems misleading to sum them up as 'neo-Harringtonians'.

The rather nebulous 'classical republican' tradition to which Harrington belonged is well represented in the works of the Commonwealthsmen. Algernon Sidney was praised by Moyle in 1698, and the first publication of his Discourses in that year has been plausibly attributed to Toland's circle. Toland certainly had a high opinion of 'that heroic patron of liberty' and his 'incomparable and golden discourses', while Gordon considered that Sidney had 'written better upon government than any Englishman'[14]. Much of Sidney's thought was very congenial- his belief in the ancient and balanced constitution, his advocacy of the right of resistance, his support for general naturalisation, his hatred of popery; yet his book was chaotic and unoriginal, and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that its wide vogue owed a good deal to the martyrdom of its author. Milton's political thought was more genuinely republican than Sidney's, but it had even less real influence. Toland was one of Milton's earliest biographers, and a warm admirer, but his interest was not primarily in the poet's constitutional recommendations, which he thought inferior to Harrington's: he was more concerned with Milton's defences of resistance to tyranny, intellectual freedom, and religious toleration[15]. Toland's associates seldom mention Milton at all.

Machiavelli was, of course, one of the main sources of the republican tradition; in the Discourses he provided the

13 H.F.Russell Smith, Harrington and his 'Oceana', Cambridge 1914, p. 146.
14 Moyle, Published Works, pp. 57-8; Worden, pp. 26-8; Toland, The Life of John Milton, p. 62; Cato's Letters no. 26, 22 April 1721 (I 195).
15 Toland, The Life of John Milton, pp. 65-70, 75-7, 104, 113, 122.

Renaissance's greatest exposition of the virtues of civic participation in government. Trenchard, Moyle, and Davenant, however, were the only Commonwealthsmen to show much interest in his ideas. They were ready to hand in the Standing Army controversy, and years later Cato's Letters made extensive use of some of the more populist passages in the Discourses in its attempts to embarrass the government. Davenant's attitude to the Florentine was more critical; although he cited him approvingly several times, he realised that Machiavelli's ideal of a citizen militia which cost nothing to maintain was hopelessly outdated[16].

By 1700, in fact, Machiavelli had ceased to be particularly controversial[17]. Had the Commonwealthsmen written wholly within the framework of his ideas, their productions would have seemed jejune and uninteresting, but this was never the case. Those writers who are tempted to portray Toland and his circle as the last generation of classical republicans would do well to look at the list of books possessed by Toland at his Putney lodgings a few months before his death. It was not a large collection, but Celtic lore and classical texts were well represented. But while books by Sarpi, Fenelon, Herbert of Cherbury, and Selden are mentioned, we find no trace of Harrington, Milton, Sidney, or Machiavelli[18].

No mediators were necessary between eighteenth century readers and antiquity. Among the Commonwealthsmen Moyle and Toland were enthusiastic classical scholars, whilst Shaftesbury's mind was permeated with ancient philosophy- particularly that of the Stoics. The political thought of Athens and Rome was also highly influential. Tindal singled out the works of Aristotle and Cicero

16 Trenchard and Moyle, An Argument, pp. 8-9, 24; Cato's Letters, e.g. nos. 8, 16, 22, 32, 72; Davenant, Discourses on the Publick Revenues, 1698, p. 312, Probable Methods, p. 137, Discourse Upon Grants and Resumptions, 1700, p. 5.

17 Felix Raab, The English Face of Machiavelli, 1965, pp. 260-1, and cf. pp. 222-3 on Moyle's use of Machiavelli.

18 B Lib Add MS 4295 f.43: 'Books in my room at Mr Hinton's, a Carpenter in Putney, Oct 1720'.

as unrivalled in this sphere before the seventeenth century, and the reasons for his preference are clear. Aristotle's Politics- 'that excellent piece of prudence' according to Toland- foreshadows the doctrine of the balanced constitution, while the Ethics were particularly admired by Tindal for their rational and undogmatic tone[19]. Trenchard regarded Cicero as the 'best and wisest of the Romans', while Toland seems to have thought him the greatest moral philosopher the world had produced; in 1712 he drew up plans for a complete edition of his works. On Duties was an immensely influential treatise, asserting the supreme values of political integrity and the rule of law at a time when they were gravely threatened by arbitrary power; it was, wrote Toland, 'in my opinion the best book upon the best subject', its maxims 'infinitely more refined than adroit Machiavel pretended to teach'[20].

Nonetheless, classical wisdom was far from monopolising the intellectual armoury of the Commonwealthsmen; lessons derived from the history of England were as important as those gleaned from Greece or Rome. Their political and constitutional ideas had medieval antecedents: the belief that the principle of the balance and the supremacy of Parliament were enshrined in the Ancient Constitution led to a lively concern with the past. An important document in this tradition was Francois Hotman's Franco-Gallia, which showed that England's fundamental laws had once been shared by most of the states of Europe; the book was translated, with a once-famous preface explaining its relevance, by Molesworth in 1705. Many English writers could be cited in support of the view

19 Tindal, A Second Address to the Inhabitants of...London and Westminster, 1730, p. 43; Toland, ed., Oceana, p. viii.
20 Trenchard, Collection II 4-5; Toland, 'Cicero Illustratus' (1712), in Toland, Collection I 229-96, esp. pp. 283, 295; Toland, Life of John Milton, p. 147, The Art of Canvassing at Elections, 1714, p. vii; B Lib Add MS 4465 f.59. Similarly Bolingbroke's Patriot King can be read as a statement of the superiority of Ciceronian ideals over Machiavellian guile: see J.Hart, Viscount Bolingbroke, Tory Humanist, 1965, pp. 83-163.

which emphasised the limitation of the royal power by the ancient laws of the land. Toland went back to Sir Thomas Smith as one source of his ideas on the nature of English government[21]. Sir Matthew Hale, one of the best-known exponents of the Ancient Constitution, was highly esteemed by Stephens[22]. Trenchard and Moyle quoted Bacon in support of their case that standing armies were disastrous, and he may well have been a source for their views on the place of the nobility in a mixed monarchy[23]. Although Sir William Temple, surprisingly, was not often cited by the Commonwealthsmen, his verdict on the Gothic polity- 'the truest and justest temper that has ever been found out between dominion and liberty'- was strikingly similar to theirs, and the possibility of his influence cannot be ruled out[24].

One of the most interesting of the Commonwealthsmen's seventeenth century analogues is Andrew Marvell, the leading Country Party publicist of the 1670s. Like them, he praised the mixed constitution, in which the king 'enjoys a capacity of doing all the good imaginable to mankind, under a disability to all that is evil'; like them, he recommended moderation at home and strenuous opposition to French ambitions abroad; and like them he combined unenthusiastic conformity to the Church of England with an intense hatred of popery and a distaste for all clerical assemblies. Tindal was quick to cite Marvell's History of Councils on this point, and the tract was reprinted in a collected edition of Stephens' works. The extent of Marvell's influence upon the Commonwealthsmen cannot be fixed, but the similarities between him and Toland at least were noted by one High Church critic, who went

21 Toland, Vindicius Liberius, 1702, pp. 146-8.
22 Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, 1696, pp. 16-19.
23 Trenchard and Moyle, An Argument, pp. 24, 3; cf. The Works of Francis Bacon, ed J.Spedding, 7 vols 1857-9, VI 405, 423. Gordon, however, saw Bacon merely as the corrupt antetype of the South Sea directors: Francis, Lord Bacon, 1721.
24 Samuel Kliger, The Goths in England, Cambridge (Mass) 1952, pp. 20-1, quoting Temple.

on to describe both as 'poeta mediocris, politicus minimus, Christianus nullus'[25].

In their many writings on the political and social aspects of religion the Commonwealthsmen drew upon two main traditions, one within the Church of England and the other utterly foreign to it. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century there had been a tendency among some of the most distinguished members of the established church to emphasise the religious value of a rational and tolerant personal morality; this attitude usually involved a simultaneous rejection of Calvinist literalism and Laudian obsession with ceremony, and a willingness to accept that the Church could not claim total independence of the state. Richard Hooker, who originated this strand in Anglicanism, was quoted by Toland on the inconveniences of clerical assemblies, and Tindal claimed merely to have adapted the arguments of The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity in his own attacks on High Church pretensions[26]. The liberal theologians of the Great Tew circle seem also to have been influential here: for Tindal, Chillingworth was 'the ablest defender of the Protestant religion', while to Toland he was 'that great master of reason'. Tindal cited John Hales against clerical intolerance, and Pierre Desmaizeaux, Toland's friend and biographer, also published lives of Chillingworth and Hales. Other Anglicans admired by the Commonwealthsmen included Jeremy Taylor, whose advocacy of toleration earned Shaftesbury's approval, Benjamin Whichcote, whose sermons were edited by the

25 The Complete Works...of Andrew Marvell, M.P., ed. A.B.Grosart, 4 vols 1875, IV 250, 251-8, 91-160; John M.Wallace, Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell, Cambridge 1968, pp. 174, 184, 193, 205; Tindal, An Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate, 1697, p. 86; Stephens, An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, with Other Tracts of the Same Author, 1709, pp. 339-401; William Baron, Regicides no Saints nor Martyrs, 1700, p. 137. Baron's assessment of Toland's verse was not far wrong.

26 Toland, Vindicius Liberius, pp. 117-23; Tindal, A Defence of the Rights of the Christian Church, 1707, p. 54, A Second Defence of the Rights of the Christian Church, 1708, pp. 65-6.

earl, and Robert Sanderson, praised by Tindal and Moyle for his moderation and rationality[27].

The group which came to be known as Latitudinarians after the Restoration owed much to these thinkers, and the Commonwealthsmen respected them for the same reasons. Stillingfleet's Irenicon was praised by Tindal and Stephens for its moderate and conciliatory attitude; Moyle also commended 'this excellent prelate', but Toland was contemptuous of his ill-judged attack on Locke's Essay[28]. Even more admired was Burnet, many of whose sentiments chimed with those of the Commonwealthsmen. The Scotsman was a committed Whig as well as a Latitudinarian; his assertion of legislative supremacy and his call for the abolition of special observance of 30 January are examples of his similarity to some of the writers studied here[29]. Moyle thought highly of Burnet's judgment, and Gordon defended the History of His Own Time against High Church cavils. Shaftesbury professed the greatest respect for the bishop's record and principles, and Toland praised the great services he had rendered to the Protestant religion and the cause of the Revolution[30].

It is, therefore, arguable that much of the thought of the Commonwealthsmen was derived from respectable sources within the national church. But the influence of some rather less respectable

27 Tindal, A Defence of the Rights, pp. 9, 40-1, Essay Concerning the Power of the Magistrate, p. 128; Toland, ed., Oceana, p. xiv; Shaftesbury, Characteristics II 358-9; Tindal, A Defence of the Rights, p. 54; Moyle, Unpublished Works, II 183.

28 Tindal, Rights, p. xlii (but cf. p. liv); Stephens, A Thanksgiving Sermon Preach'd before the...Lord Mayor, 1696, pp. 12-13; Moyle, Unpublished Works, II 287; Toland, Collection, II 314-7, Toland to ?, 12 Sept 1695.

29 Gerald M.Straka, Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688, Madison (Wisc) 1962, p. 111; F.Maseres, ed., Three Tracts Published at Amsterdam...entitled Ludlow's Letters, 1812, p. 34.

30 Moyle, Unpublished Works, II 151; Gordon, The Humourist, II 225-7; Shaftesbury, Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord, 1716, p. 34; Toland, Vindicius Liberius, pp. 71-4. Toland's admiration of Burnet was not reciprocated: see Annie Barnes, Jean Le Clerc (1657-1736) et la Republique des Lettres, Paris 1937, p. 256.

figures should also be noted. If Machiavelli had lost his power to frighten, Hobbes and Spinoza had not; the shadows of both were detected on the pages of Tindal's Rights of the Christian Church, the book which summed up the Commonwealthsmen's ideas on ecclesiastical matters. George Hickes called Hobbes 'the grandsire of the Rights', which also, in his opinion, owed much to the Dutch heretic. William Carroll, while principally concerned to attack Locke, believed that Tindal's work was deliberately continuing the destruction of spiritual authority begun by Spinoza in his Tractatus[31].

Hobbes' real influence on the Commonwealthsmen is hard to measure. Trenchard and Gordon seem to have been heavily indebted to him for the deterministic accounts of human behaviour to be found in Cato's Letters; Shaftesbury's Sensus Communis, however, lightly dismissed Hobbes' ideas on this topic[32]. Davenant cited Hobbes on the state of nature, but not in a particularly thoughtful way; Methuen apparently quoted him constantly. 'As the Leviathan has plainly been the principal part of his study, so it is become the standard of his notions', wrote a disgruntled chaplain[33]. It has already been seen that Tindal's sketchy account of political obligation contained recognisably Hobbist elements[34], and although Leviathan is not mentioned in the Rights, its influence may be suspected in the insistence that all claims for the Church's

31 Carroll, Spinoza Reviv'd, 1709 ed., Preliminary Discourse by Hickes, 3rd and 7th pages; Carroll, A Dissertation upon the Tenth Chapter of the Fourth Book of Mr Locke's Essay..., 1706, pp. 277-9. See Abel Evans, The Apparition, 1710, p. 9, for a further charge that Tindal was influenced by Spinoza, together with such other nasties as Hobbes, Milton, Blount, and Vanini.

32 Cato's Letters nos. 116, 117, 16 & 23 Feb 1722-3 (IV 88, 101); Shaftesbury, Characteristics, I 61-5. Cf. Shaftesbury, ed., Select Sermons of Dr Whichcot, 1698, Preface, 6th-7th pages, for a less well-known critique of Hobbes.

33 Davenant, 'Essay Upon Public Virtue' (1696), in B Lib Harleian MS 1223, p. 32 (original pagination); B Lib Add MS 22908 ff. 14-24, Colbatch to Burnet 27 Oct (N.S.) 1696.

34 See above, p. 42.

independence are incompatible with sovereignty. Differing conceptions of political liberty ensured that the Commonwealthsmen could never be true Hobbists, yet some of them were acute enough to realise that parts of his system could be of use to them.

Spinoza was, if anything, more feared than Hobbes, and Toland was one of the few men of his generation who could discuss his philosophy dispassionately. His political theory contained much which might have been expected to appeal to the Commonwealthsmen: his belief in full religious toleration, his dislike of priestcraft, his preference for citizen militias[35]. Similar views were propounded in the works of Pieter de la Court, a republican economist greatly admired by Spinoza; it is very likely that Toland and Shaftesbury came to know of them through Loevesteiner friends in the Netherlands like Furly and Marchand[36]. Matthew Tindal was certainly indebted to the Dutch republicans who wrote De Jure Ecclesiasticorum, sometimes attributed to Spinoza himself. As Hickes pointed out, his Rights of the Christian Church was modelled on this clandestine pamphlet, which appeared in 1665[37]; perhaps Anthony Collins, who had many contacts on the continent, collected rare books, and seems to have played some part in the production of the Rights, provides the link between Tindal and Spinoza.

It seems very likely, therefore, that both Hobbes and Spinoza

35 Stuart Hampshire, Spinoza, 1956 ed., pp. 148-56; Lewis S.Feuer, Spinoza and the Rise of Liberalism, Boston 1958, pp. 82, 122-4. See the fourth of Toland's Letters to Serena, 1704, for his critique of Spinoza.

36 P. de la Court, The True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republick of Holland, 1702, pp. 62, 371-2, 384-6. Furly's links with Spinoza, Toland, and Shaftesbury are well known; on Marchand, see Spinoza, The Political Works, ed. A.G.Wernham, Oxford 1958, p. 44, and B Lib Add MS 4295 f.18. Marchand's club, described in this manuscript, sounds extremely similar to the republican circle (also at the Hague) frequented by De Witt in 1653: see Feuer, Spinoza and the Rise of Liberalism, p. 202.

37 Rosalie L.Colie, 'Spinoza and the Early English Deists', Journal of the History of Ideas 20, 1959, pp. 34-5.

influenced the Commonwealthsmen, and particularly their ideas about the Church and its relationship to society, in important ways. But it should be remembered that this was not the whole story: the more orthodox thought of the liberal Anglicans also counted for a great deal.

One figure of immense significance remains to be discussed. Locke was personally known to many of the writers studied here, and his works on religion, philosophy, economics, and politics were highly prized among them. He was the latest author in the natural law tradition which went back to Cicero; two earlier seventeenth century members of this school, Grotius and Pufendorf, were admired by Tindal[38]. Although none of the Commonwealthsmen theorised much about natural law, it may be suggested that the concept appealed to them because it relied on human rationality for its force. It was confidence in the power of reason, rather than belief in any specific doctrine, which explained the affinity between the Commonwealthsmen and Locke[39]. Since they considered the perversion of the intellect by priests and tyrants to have been one of the main causes of human misery, they saw the Essay's attempt to clear up mental misconceptions as a triumph[40]. To Tindal, the Essay was 'the most useful book that was ever written in philosophy'; its author was, for Toland, the greatest thinker since Cicero, and for Davenant simply 'that great genius Mr Locke'.

38 Tindal, The Reflections on the XXVIII Propositions...maintain'd, 1695, p. 10, Rights of the Christian Church, p. xxxviii. Cf. Stephens' admiration for Pufendorf, 'one of the greatest moralists which this age has produced', An Account of the Growth of Deism in England, with Other Tracts of the Same Author, p. 196.

39 The Commonwealthsmen's greater respect for custom- which they, like Burke, regarded as the result of reason acting through history- was perhaps the most important difference between them and Locke. Some of the greatest inconsistencies in their work stemmed from their reticence as to where unwholesome prejudice ends and salutary custom begins.

40 Shaftesbury was an exception here: as a Platonist he could not accept the Essay's sweeping rejection of innate ideas, and he damned his former tutor's book with faint praise: Rand, Shaftesbury, p. 416, Shaftesbury to Stanhope 7 Nov 1709.

Both Tindal and Gordon thought that Locke's greatness was proved by the fact that the clergy would have loved to suppress his work[41].

It is currently fashionable to minimise the influence of Locke's Two Treatises during the early eighteenth century[42]; a study of the Commonwealthsmen's reactions to the book suggests that this is not entirely satisfactory. In 1698 Moyle expressed his preference for Locke's theories on obligation and resistance over Sidney's; in 1694 Tindal seems to have referred to the destruction of patriarchalism in the Two Treatises, and a few years later he mentioned that the book had 'been esteemed the best defence of the present establishment'. At the turn of the century Stephens gave an unmistakably Lockeian account of government, property, and conquest in one of his sermons[43]. None of the Commonwealthsmen followed the argument of the second Treatise in all its detail; this would have been inconsistent with their firm belief in the Ancient Constitution, for Locke's thought was essentially unhistorical. The radical implications of Locke's view that lives, liberties, and estates constituted the property which conferred political rights were lost upon them. But despite all this, the Commonwealthsmen realised that Locke's philosophical and political theories alike marked important advances for human liberty, and they revered him for it.

This survey has shown that no single tradition of thought can

41 Tindal, 'A Letter to a Member of Parliament' (1698), in State Tracts, William III, III 625; Toland, Life of John Milton, p. 147; B Lib MS Lansdowne 773 f.59, Charles to Henry Davenant 7 Nov 1704; Gordon, A Modest Apology for Parson Alberoni, 1719, p. 20.

42 E.g. John Dunn, in J.W.Yolton, ed., John Locke: Problems and Perspectives, Cambridge 1969, pp. 56-8, modified by Martyn P. Thompson, 'The Reception of Locke's Two Treatises, 1690-1705', Political Studies 24, 1976, pp. 184-191.

43 Moyle, Published Works, p. 58; Tindal, An Essay Concerning Obedience to the Supreme Power, 1694, pp. 3-5, Second Defence of the Rights, p. 76; Stephens, A Sermon Preach'd before the Honourable House of Commons, 1700, pp. 12-13, 17-19.

explain all the political ideas of the Commonwealthsmen. As a group they were intelligent, widely read, and critical, and they were perfectly capable of selecting what they wanted from an author and discarding the rest. This eclectic approach ensured that their intellectual edifice incorporated many different styles. But if the synthesis of Harrington, Cicero, and Locke- to name only the most obvious influences- precluded logical rigour, it at least proved itself adaptable to the changing circumstances of the early eighteenth century.

# CONCLUSION

Much of the discussion in the foregoing chapters has been devoted to the establishment of a new interpretation of the careers of the Commonwealthsmen, which differs radically from those previously advanced by historians. Most earlier accounts accept that our group were subversive republicans, men who threatened the existing order in church and state; a dissenting minority of historians, however, prefer to emphasise their lack of principle and willingness to accommodate themselves to all political junctures. The view taken here, however, is that the Commonwealthsmen were far closer than has been recognised to the political norms of their time, both in the kind of ideas they held and the tenacity with which they were prepared to defend them. There is ample evidence to show that they were deeply involved in the race for favours which only the great could bestow- sinecures, missions abroad, pensions, and the like. Yet the fact that Molesworth voted against his powerful allies on many occasions, or that Toland alienated Oxford when his patron was at the height of his power by forthright admonitions on the conduct of the war, amounts to proof that their political activity cannot be explained solely in terms of their desire for patronage.

The careers of the Commonwealthsmen can be understood only if we bear in mind the tension between the Whig and Country ideals. The Whig party became the party of total opposition to France and the Stuarts; the Country tradition was that of free and effective Parliaments. Only in the 1690s, when the Junto Whigs began to think of themselves as the natural party of government, did the possibility of conflict between the two ideals first become apparent. The Commonwealthsmen emerged as a distinct group precisely at this time, and their best-known political manifestoes (Cato's Letters, The Art of Governing, The True Picture of a Modern Whig, the Account of Denmark, and the Preface to Franco-

Gallia) all expound purely Country attitudes. But, except in the case of Davenant, these views were submerged at times when the threat of a Stuart restoration made Whig solidarity essential: the most startling confirmation of this comes in 1716, when in the aftermath of the Jacobite rebellion most of the Commonwealthsmen seem temporarily to have endorsed that body-blow to the ideal of free Parliaments, the Septennial Act.

Not much, therefore, remains of the 'Robbins thesis' of a continuous radical tradition of which our group formed an essential part. The real radical of the late seventeenth century was Locke, but the democratic implications of his view that possession of life and liberty (as well as estates) conferred political rights which the government must respect escaped the Commonwealthsmen. If we are to trace their political ancestry, their true forebears will be found not in the Florentine commune or the Rump but among those parliamentarians of late medieval England who were already challenging the monarchy on such issues as resumptions, excessive numbers of crown servants, and unpopular ministers. The Country tradition goes back a long way in English history, and it would be unwise to dismiss its eighteenth century manifestations merely as the politics of nostalgia.

This study has been concerned with the ideas and activities of the Commonwealthsmen; it may be appropriate to end it with some suggestions as to the extent of their influence and importance. In their heyday, many of them were among the best-known public figures in the country. Their doings are often related in the private correspondence of the time, and the reputations of Toland, Tindal, and Davenant suffered more than most in the Paper Wars of those years. Such well-known writers as Swift and Defoe detested

most of the Commonwealthsmen (apparently on religious rather than political grounds)[1], and their disapprobation seems to have set the tone for much subsequent comment.

Until the mid-eighteenth century, it is true, the Commonwealthsmen continued to be read and taken seriously. Tindal and Toland were mentioned as fashionable authors in the early 1740s[2], and Bolingbroke's 'Patriot' opposition made extensive use of the ideas of the Commonwealthsmen during its protracted struggle with Walpole[3]. After 1750, however, their popularity seems to have declined markedly in England: editions of their works (with the exception of Shaftesbury's Characteristics) became rare. Expressions of sympathy were largely confined to nonconformist antiquarians like Thomas Hollis, J.T.Rutt, and Walter Wilson[4]. The more usual response is displayed by Macaulay,

1 Swift's contempt for Toland and Tindal is expressed in many places, of which the best-known is Swift, Prose Works, II 29; his dislike of Molesworth at, for example, B Lib Portland Loan 29/162 Misc 48 (but see above, pp. 229-31 for their rapprochement under George I). A witty attack on Trenchard and Gordon, The Characters of Two Independent Whigs, 1720, has been attributed to Swift. Defoe's hatred of Toland and his associates is documented above, pp. 36, 105, 174, 196.

2 J.Nichols, Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century, 9 vols 1812-15, VI 413.

3 Bolingbroke's use of the Commonwealthsmen is explored in Isaac Kramnick, Bolingbroke and his Circle, Cambridge (Mass) 1968, pp. 236-60 passim: D.G.A.Waddell, 'The Career and Writings of Charles Davenant', Oxford D.Phil. thesis 1954, p. 336, citing The Craftsman nos. 303, 306, 423; Quentin Skinner, 'The Principles and Practice of Opposition: the Case of Bolingbroke v. Walpole', in Historical Perspectives, ed. N.McKendrick, 1974, pp. 113-24. Skinner's assumption (pp. 107-8) that it is naive and implausible to believe that Bolingbroke actually meant what he said is quite unjustified; his view that Bolingbroke's borrowings from the Commonwealthsmen were a disingenuous ploy to gain political respectability is unsupprted by evidence. In fact Bolingbroke's affinities with the Commonwealthsmen require no more explanation than Walpole's with the Junto. Substantially the same issues were involved.

4 Francis Blackburne, Memoirs of Thomas Hollis, 2 vols 1780, I 236; Edmund Calamy, An Historical Account of my Own Life, ed. J.T. Rutt, 2 vols 1829, I 393-4n.; Walter Wilson, Memoirs of the Life and Times of Daniel Defoe, 3 vols 1830, I 364, 380-1, II 378.

whose references to Trenchard, Tindal, and Davenant in the History are uniformly unfavourable, and by Isaac d'Israeli, whose essay on Toland is called 'Genius and Erudition, the victims of immoderate Vanity'[5].

But interest in the Commonwealthsmen and admiration for their work was sustained a little longer both in Europe and across the Atlantic. It has already been seen that Franklin, Dickinson, and Jefferson had some knowledge of their political writings, which in this way made an ideological contribution to the American Revolution[6]. On the continent, Enlightenment thinkers found much of what the Commonwealthsmen had to say interesting. Voltaire wrote an article on Toland, and classed him among the great philosophers; it has been argued that, although he said less about Dr Tindal, his intellectual debt to him was greater than that to Toland[7]. The Baron d'Holbach took the trouble to translate and publish both Toland's Letters to Serena and part of the Independent Whig. The Italian anticlericals Giannone and Alberto Radicati were both strongly influenced by Toland[8]. (It is, therefore, appropriate that so much of the modern interest in Toland and his associates should have come from Italian scholars). These writers were interested in the Commonwealthsmen not solely because of their religious speculations- with which we are not primarily concerned here- but also for their attacks on the authority of the church and their strident demands for intellectual freedom. Toland, Trenchard, and the other subjects of this study may be regarded as

5 Macaulay, The History of England, 2 vols, 1873 ed., I 423-4, II 752-3, 768-9; Isaac d'Israeli, Calamities of Authors, 2 vols 1812, II 123-60.
6 See above, pp. 232-3.
7 Norman L.Torrey, Voltaire and the English Deists, New Haven 1930, pp. 12-24, 104-129.
8 See Aram Vartanian, Diderot and Descartes, Princeton 1953, p. 124n.; Giuseppe Ricuperato, 'Libertinismo e Deismo a Vienna. Spinoza, Toland, e il Triregno', Rivista Storica Italiana 79, 1967, esp. pp. 665, 670; Franco Venturi, Italy and the Enlightenment, 1972, pp. 67, 88.

among the foremost publicists of the English Enlightenment, which came a generation before, and set the tone for much of, the European movement.

Seen in the context of English politics, the Commonwealthsmen may seem less exalted figures. Yet their importance at certain critical junctures- for instance, the Standing Army controversy or the South Sea crisis- cannot be denied. Nor does their interest for the historian end here. If our preconceptions about them are discarded, they can be seen as a group of intellectuals whose ideas on politics and society were far from untypical, and whose extensive experience of public affairs allowed them to speak with some authority. The Commonwealthsmen thus furnish an excellent case-study in the complex interplay of theory and practice exhibited by Augustan England and by all other advanced political cultures.

## APPENDIX ONE: CHARLWOOD LAWTON, A JACOBITE COMMONWEALTHSMAN

One of the recurrent themes of this study has been the dislike and contempt with which the Commonwealthsmen normally regarded Jacobitism; this feeling was so strong that on occasion it overrode their commitment to liberal political institutions. The fact that at least one Jacobite was capable of producing a political programme strikingly similar to that described in chapters 2 and 3 is therefore of some interest, particularly since Charlwood Lawton, the man in question, was a friend of Toland's. A short and inadequate biography of Lawton is included in the Dictionary of National Biography, but I know of no other systematic account: this excursus offers some new information on him, and assesses his political affinities with the men of the Grecian.

Lawton, born in 1660, was a member of a Surrey family which was connected by marriage with the Catholic virtuoso Sir Kenelm Digby[1]. Like Freke, Moyle, and Rawlins he was a member of the Middle Temple, being called to the bar in 1688[2]. His dealings with Penn, whom he met in 1686, are fairly well known; Lawton acted as English agent for the proprietary interest when the Pennsylvania charter was under attack in 1701, and he was clearly a person of some influence by this time[3].

Lawton's commitment to Jacobitism has not apparently been noted in this context; it was of a far more activist stamp than Penn's. In 1690 he was deeply involved in Viscount Preston's plot; he was an intermediary between England and St.Germain, and warrants for his arrest were issued. Even though he was not

1 D.N.B. s.v. Lawton, Digby; H.M.C. 17 House of Lords (new series) VI 348.
2 H.A.C.Sturgess, Register of Admissions to the...Middle Temple, 3 vols 1949, I 194.
3 W.Hepworth Dixon, History of William Penn, 1872 ed., pp. 260-1, 268-9, 298, 314; Joseph E.Illick, William Penn the Politician, Ithaca (NY) 1965, pp. 186, 196-7, 202-4; D.N.B. s.v. Lawton.

prosecuted (apparently because no second witness was forthcoming), his role was notorious: Richard Kingston named him as the link between Jacobite and Republican parties to the conspiracy[4]. Lawton was again arrested, this time by the Serjeant-at-Arms, in 1701, although it is not clear whether this was connected with his Jacobitism or his colonial lobbying[5].

In 1701 Lawton is found pleading on Penn's behalf with Harley- another Middle Temple man- and this seems to have marked the beginning of a correpondence which continued intermittently for twenty years. As a non-juror, Lawton was debarred from official patronage: his own requests to Harley therefore centred on his brother Ralph, 'a moderate Church-Whig', who was to be provided with a place from which Charlwood hoped to cream off much of the income[6]. Whether or not these aspirations were gratified, Lawton remained faithful to his patron, constantly offering advice and preserving the friendship even in the period of Oxford's disgrace[7].

Evidence for Lawton's association with the Commonwealthsmen is, although thin, conclusive. In 1699 he was a witness to Toland's contract with John Darby for the printing of Harrington's Works; in August 1710 he went to stay with Shaftesbury at St.Giles for a few days[8]. In the autumn of 1705 Toland reported to Shaftesbury that his own dealings with Lawton had led to a rupture between him and the politicians of the Grecian. Lawton, he said, is 'ready to serve his friends of all opinions'; the business in hand was almost certainly connected with his reconciliation with Harley, in

4 H.M.C. 71 Finch II 392-3, III 128, 308, 400; C.S.P.Dom. 1690-1, p. 442; Matthew Smith, Remarks upon the D- of S-'s Letter to the House of Lords, 1700, p. 28; Richard Kingston, 'Cursory Remarks', Somers Tracts XI 159.

5 'Jura Populi Anglicani', State Tracts, William III, III 289.

6 B Lib Portland Loan 29/149, Lawton to Harley 23 Aug 1701; H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 611-2, same to same 9 Oct 1710. See also IV 561, V 163.

7 H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 287, 448, 478, V 94, 486, 589, 593, 602, 603, 607; B Lib Portland Loan 29/149, Lawton to Oxford 12 Feb 1714-5.

8 B Lib Add MS 4295 f.10; H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 561, Lawton to Harley 11 Aug 1710.

which Lawton's friend Penn played a leading role[9].

As an author, Lawton was not prolific. Five short pamphlets are attributed to him, the last being published in 1706, fifteen years before his death. One of these tracts, A Letter formerly sent to Dr Tillotson[10], is of little interest for our purposes: it makes the familiar point that many Williamite prelates had silently dropped the doctrine of non-resistance which they had preached so enthusiastically under the later Stuarts. But the others clearly show the convergence between Lawton's ideas and those of the Commonwealthsmen. For example, A Short State of our Condition, often known as the Hush-money Paper[11], combined personal accusations against William with complaints of parliamentary corruption which anticipate those advanced by Toland and Shaftesbury in The Danger of Mercenary Parliaments. Lawton's solution is the exclusion of placemen and pensioners and the institution of annual Parliaments.

Lawton's first known tract, The Jacobite Principles Vindicated, published perhaps in 1691, portrays James as far more likely than William to assent to the implementation of the Country programme of constitutional reform (particularly judicial independence and the regulation of treason trials). Lawton believed firmly in the sanctity of the Ancient Constitution and the mixed monarchy, and insisted on the necessity of full religious toleration (including Catholics). 'There are Jacobites that are for reformations', he pointed out: 'a good Commonwealthsman was not a character of reproach in our legislation and politics till all our glory dwindled, and the absoluteness of ministers was more consulted

9 P.R.O. 30/24/20/105, Toland to Shaftesbury 22 Oct 1705; H.M.C. 29 Portland IV 235-6, Toland to Harley 28 Aug 1705.
10 Probably first published in 1693; reprinted in Somers Tracts IX 367-72.
11 Published around November 1693, and reprinted in State Tracts, William III, II 369-71. See also J.A.Downie, Robert Harley and the Press, Cambridge 1969, p. 26.

than the true interest of king or kingdom'[12].

Two final pamphlets appeared in 1705 and 1706. Civil Comprehension and A Second Letter Concerning Civil Comprehension are not overtly Jacobite, although it is known that Lawton's sympathies remained with the Pretender. Instead, these tracts took up the earlier call for full religious toleration, and suggested that sacramental tests for officeholders should be replaced by property qualifications. If possession of a certain amount of land entitled the holder to local office, party strife would become much less bitter, the exorbitant influence of the monied men would be curbed, and political moderation could flourish[13]. All these were themes prominent in the writings of the Commonwealthsmen.

Lawton's Jacobitism meant that there was an immense political gulf between him and the Commonwealthsmen, who tended to subordinate all issues to the necessity for the Hanover Succession. Kingston was therefore wrong to imply that Lawton, like a latter-day Sexby, provided a link between legitimists and republicans. If his case proves anything, it is that ideas normally associated with the Commonwealthsmen were in fact an integral part of the language of politics under William and Anne. So current were these ideas that Jacobites and Williamites could appeal to them with equal confidence.

12 Somers Tracts X 523-41, esp. pp. 527, 530, 533, 536, 525.
13 Lawton, 'Civil Comprehension', in Somers Tracts XII 574-80, esp. pp. 578-9, A Second Letter Concerning Civil Comprehension, 1706, passim.

## APPENDIX TWO: LUDLOW'S MEMOIRS

The Memoirs of the republican and regicide Edmund Ludlow are among the most important primary sources for the history of the Interregnum. First published in three volumes in 1698 and 1699, the Memoirs outraged conservatives by praising the achievements of the Commonwealth. The circumstances of publication were a mystery which has been partially cleared up by Dr Blair Worden in a brilliant piece of investigative scholarship. A large portion of Ludlow's original text is contained in a manuscript now in the Bodleian Library, and Worden has shown that it was almost completely rewritten and updated for publication. Extensive passages were suppressed, and the unfashionable Puritan style in which Ludlow wrote was transformed into prose more characteristic of a cultivated Augustan. His analysis of these changes leads Dr Worden to conclude that Toland was responsible for this distortion. Unfortunately, his work is marred by a rather slap-happy account of the political background to Toland's activities: for example, his division of the group we have called Commonwealthsmen into Calves Head Whigs and Roman Whigs[1] is of no help in understanding the situation. In general, his presentation of Toland as a kind of Augustan Baron Corvo, constantly biting the hand that fed him, is much too highly-coloured.

Some of the arguments for Toland's authorship are better than others. The contention that he 'identified himself strongly with the "Commonwealthsmen" of the Puritan Revolution'[2] is based partly on the unsupported assertions of High Church enemies and partly on the familiar semantic confusion caused by the word itself. Toland's attitude to the English republic was not a favourable one. Although

1 Worden, pp. 40-42.
2 Worden, p. 25; above, pp. 12ff.

he called the 1649 constitution 'a democracy or free state', the use of these terms did not imply approbation; he wrote that this regime was wrongly called a Commonwealth, since it was not governed in the interests of the people, and elsewhere he denounced the Rump's Dutch War as an unnatural conflict begun by impious regicides[3]. Toland's edition of Denzil Holles' Memoirs (1699) may indicate that his sympathies were with the moderate Parliamentarians, but in any case it is clear that if he did publish 'Ludlow' it was not designed as republican propaganda.

The best arguments for Toland's involvement[4] are, firstly, that the Memoirs were almost certainly rewritten with the current controversy over the Standing Army in mind, and secondly that contemporary opinion took John Darby, who financed Toland's works at this time, to be the publisher of the Memoirs[5]. It is, therefore, worth pointing out that these indications point to Trenchard and Moyle as well as to Toland. Dr Worden has noted that there are interesting parallels between Trenchard and Moyle's famous anti-army tracts (which were also published by John Darby) and the printed version of Ludlow's Memoirs, and he accounts for these similarities by supposing that Toland collaborated on the anti-army tracts[6]. There is almost certainly an analogue with 'Ludlow' in Trenchard's praise of the role of the militia during the Civil Wars, and another in Moyle's comment of 1699 that aristocracies normally pursue defensive principles in warfare[7]. If we also bear in mind that Trenchard and Moyle were more favourably disposed towards the Rump's memory than Toland[8], and

3 Toland, The Life of John Milton, 1699, p. 73, The Art of Governing by Partys, 1701, p. 34, Gallus Aretalogus, Amsterdam 1709, p. 119.
4 Apart from that based on the mention of Diodati, which is strong evidence for Toland's participation: Worden p. 25.
5 Worden, pp. 20-1, 49-51.
6 Worden, p. 41.
7 Trenchard, A Short History of Standing Armies in England, 1698, pp. 7-8; Two English Republican Tracts, ed C.Robbins, Cambridge 1969, p. 248; cf. The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, ed. C.H.Firth, 2 vols, Oxford 1894, I 280-2, 187.
8 Trenchard and Moyle, An Argument..., 1697, p. 10.

that they seem to have been much less busy than Toland at the time when the Memoirs were being prepared[9], the case for their participation in the venture comes to seem plausible. Contemporary observers- how well informed we do not know- thought that the Memoirs were produced by a team rather than a single author[10], and this too may be evidence for the hypothesis that Trenchard and Moyle as well as Toland were involved.

It has often been noted that Oceana, Sidney's Discourses, Ludlow's Memoirs and the works of Milton all appeared within two years at the end of the seventeenth century, and the inference has been made that these publications were part of a concerted campaign to disseminate republican propaganda[11]. Toland was certainly a party to much of this activity, but the fact that all his own writings show that he was unsympathetic to republicanism means that his motives must be reappraised. These controversial books were published in the late 1690s because they could hardly have appeared earlier: the Licensing Act had lapsed only in 1695. It was not until then that publishers were free to bring out books on the Interregnum which (precisely because they were controversial) were likely to prove lucrative. It is, therefore, unwise to assume that those responsible for these editions agreed with everything contained in them. Toland and his colleagues- if any- no doubt added to Ludlow's text some passages which would support their case in the Standing Army debate, but their main motives in rewriting the book were to conform to public taste rather than to mould it.

9 During 1697-9 Trenchard is known to have produced only the brief anti-army tracts; Toland, in addition to journeys to Ireland and the continent, was busy with The Militia Reform'd, the Life of John Milton, and the Holles Memoirs.

10 Richard Kingston, 'Cursory Remarks', Somers Tracts XI 155; Defoe, A Brief Reply to the History of Standing Armies in England, 1698, pp. 24-5; William Baron, A Just Defence of the Royal Martyr K. Charles I, 1699, pp. 13-14, Regicides no Saints nor Martyrs, 1700, pp. 4, 6-7.

11 This assumption was made by all the writers cited in note 10 above.

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