

Notes from Re-Imagining Democracy: Politicisation workshop 1

Oxford, 17 September 2007

I. Review of phases of the Re-Imagining Democracy project

II. Thinking about Politicisation

Mark Philp introduced the term politicisation and suggested that it had multiple possible meanings:

- it might refer to political socialization (a process of individual learning)
- it might involve the development of certain forms of political activism (a process of collective learning)
- it might refer to both, but the two are not identical

He warned of the constant pull of teleology: we may read or think about forms of political action, notions of representation, etc., with certain ideas in mind that do not correspond to what people in the late 18th and 19th centuries were reaching for. Our ideas about what constitutes a democratic election, thus, might miss how these earlier thinkers understood their situations and practices. A general issue, then, is that it is important to understand how people themselves understood their own actions and practices as political. A problem this raises in turn, however, is that if one focuses too much on contemporary perceptions, one might lose the level of generality that is needed for comparison. One might lose a framework that is needed to track political change.

One aim of the workshop session was to look at processes of politicisation characterised in ways that allow comparative study across time and space. These might be conceived in any of the following ways:

1. in terms of involvement with formal political institutions and practices and related informal elements, and processes whereby new participants were inducted into this involvement
2. in terms of encroachment upon these institutions and practices by those previously excluded from the political sphere, through contestation;
3. in terms of the expansion (or contraction) of the existing sphere of politics itself

Challenges to the boundaries associated with established institutions and practices often produce complicated patterns of interaction and feedback, shaping or altering the contours of the political arena.

To theorise politicisation, we need a clear notion of what constitutes political action and agitation – we need to be able to distinguish between acts implying politicisation other crowd actions. Mark suggested that the Gordon riots were not in themselves political (though he agreed later that they succeeded an agitation that has a more political aspect, the collection of signatures for a petition to parliament). Jean Nicolas has documented very extensive patterns of crowd activity in France over a long period before the French Revolution – but should this be seen as evidence of ‘politicisation’?

How far is agitation that challenges and responds to the social and economic outcomes of the system itself necessarily political?

Mark suggested that, to count as ‘political’, actions should be conceptualised by actors as forms of engagement with power – though he noted that observers might conceptualise actions as political even when they were not so conceptualised by the actors themselves.

Insofar as politicisation is conceived as a democratising process, ‘political’ actions should moreover involve a contestation with power, not simply an appeal to it: people should conceptualise themselves as excluded, but trying to find a new voice.

A series of issues were thus raised about politicisation – and it could involve:

1. engagement in formal practices
2. engagement in informal practices
3. contesting forms of exclusion
4. developing institutions or practices to contest established forms
5. establishing a language about exclusion with which people (or classes) speak to each other/and might attempt at wider mobilization

Francois Jarrige and Deborah Cohen then explained the role of ‘politicisation’ in French historical debate.

The French republican tradition links politicisation with modernisation. The story of ‘politicisation’ is a story about how the French became republican – how their conduct changed between the French Revolution and the era of the Third Republic. There are two main debates:

Agulhon vs Weber: did this change happen in the mid or later nineteenth century?

Agulhon vs Guyonnet: how did people become politicised? By trickle down from above, or through popular practice, entailing the invention from below of new forms of ‘political’ conduct?

Strong teleological assumptions pervade much French writing, and should be challenged. The legacy of the Marxist tradition in French historiography is that politicisation tends to be regarded as presupposing class-consciousness: the consciousness of exclusion which Mark proposed we should look for is conceived to involve consciousness of exclusion as a class. It follows that there were no ‘politics’ in the eighteenth century – because no actors qualifying as ‘political’ actors. Conversely, more recently the influence of Habermas has been very important. Habermas resists overemphasis on the importance of words or language: he sees language as belatedly giving expression to phenomena which develop of themselves. The French Revolution it is in this perspective seen as giving people words for things previously merely implicit in their actions.

Joanna Innes wanted to resist or modify some of Mark Philp’s formulations. She suggested that if the object was to avoid teleology it might be best if we described the focus of discussion as politicisation and depoliticisation, recognising that things could move either way. She suggested that it would be hard to avoid teleology so long as the category of the ‘pre-political’ was preserved (especially inasmuch as this term implies some chronological sequencing). She noted that there had apparently been much

recent work in a variety of European countries on the extent of petitioning in early modern societies. She did not think it helpful to characterise this *ab initio* as pre-political, as seemed to be implied in the notion that that ‘political’ action must involve not just an appeal, but a challenge to (non-democratic?) centres of power. Rather, the question of the relationship between this and later developing forms of political action should be left open to enquiry. She suggested that rather than trying to find a boundary line between the ‘political’ and the ‘pre-’ or ‘non-political’, it might be more fruitful to think of there being several criteria by which something might be judged political – including, as Philp had suggested, action framed by formal political processes, and actions conceptualised by actors as political interventions; actions which met all criteria would be clearly political, but we should accept that some actions might meet one criterion and not another, and should above all be interested in exploring processes whereby certain actors or projects moved between being ‘political’ and ‘non-political’, according to this multi-criterion approach. She also suggested that certain actions might be conceptualised as political by their leaders, if not by all participants, who might act on the basis of very diverse understandings and motives. As had been noted in previous discussions, ‘broker’ figures may have played a particularly important role in the development of new forms of popular politics in our period, and deserve close attention.

Thomas Biskup observed that in Germany, debate over politicisation had really ended in the 1980s – above all because no effective solution had been found to engaging with issues of consciousness, if that was conceptualised as a necessary criterion of ‘political’ action. He suggested that previous debates might be thought to have revealed the limitations of any form of actor-centred approach.

Utan Gillen noted that an effect of insisting on ‘political’ consciousness as an ingredient of political action would tend to be that politics might be judged to be altogether absent from rural settings.

Deborah Cohen suggested that we should retain the idea that ‘political’ action should relate to the nation, and to the state as a national centre of power. To extend the adjective ‘political’ to contests over other forms of power would be to risk losing its specificity.

Richard Sheldon asked whether a premise of our discussion was that there was more politics in 1850 than in 1750. **Philp** suggested that there was at least a growth in activity the state was prepared to regard as political, and that concession on the part of those in power that an activity constituted legitimate politics was one of the things (though not the only thing) that we should be interested in. **Innes** argued again that development was not all in one direction: certain forms of activity or topics of activity were probably at the same time depoliticised. **Kathryn Gleadle** emphasised the need not to treat ‘the state’ as unitary: there could be debate within ‘the state’ about e.g. the status of petitions. **Amanda Goodrich** suggested that the state ability, as well as wish, to engage with forms of popular activity should be considered as a factor: statesmen might wish to repress riots but lack the manpower to do so.

III. The Late Eighteenth Century: Politicisation and the Impact of the American and French Revolutions

Future plans (Easter 2008) to look at the American context were discussed

Innes tried to kick off discussion. She suggested that historiography of the period of English history leading up to the Reform Act had passed through 4 phases:

1. Initially, what was offered was a narrative about the birth of democracy, with events being seen as progressively leading to the 1832 Reform Act;
2. This account was challenged from a Marxian perspective, representatives of which did not wish to celebrate 'reform' as a satisfactory end point; they also argued that more attention should be paid to socio-economic context; and that there should be more focus on the immediate contexts action, as the source of meaning for actions;
- 3 Subsequently, historians had emphasised the endurance of political forms such as petitioning, riot and political propaganda through the 17th and 18th centuries – but in this context had not really worked out how to tell a story of political change – she suggested that no overall narrative had emerged from this work (one effect of this was that the narrative of democratisation now being taught in British secondary schools was still primarily cast in terms set during the first historiographical phase!);
4. Most recently, there had been a cultural phase – entailing interest in the forms of political life, theatre, imagery etc.; this had gone hand in hand with a loss of faith in how to characterize the social and economic setting of the political culture, not least the social identity of political actors and their networks and milieu. Though Habermas was much invoked, in a sense his work had not had much impact, drawing extensively as it did on 18th century British historiography: in effect, Habermas had reflected back to British historians things they had already thought; his impact on nineteenth century historiography, now perhaps beginning to make itself felt, in the form of new kinds of studies of political culture very broadly conceived, might prove more innovative. She suggested that there was a need to develop a broader historical narrative of change that addressed, for instance, the continuing, indeed in some ways developing importance of religion in the 19th century. She noted that the older narrative had tended to leap from one moment of change to another (according to its own way of constructing change). In that context, certain arguably important periods tended to be overlooked. It was particularly regrettable that the 1780s was so commonly passed over as a fallow period between the collapse of the Wyvillite reform movement and the French revolution; in fact, many important actors of the 1790s cut their political teeth during the 1780s; we don't know enough about what they were doing in that decade, and how their perceptions were being shaped. For instance, we know little about the role Lord George Gordon continued to play as a kind of tribune of the people through the 80s, long after the Gordon Riots.

Goodrich suggested that one problem in the historiography had been construction of political conflict in terms of an over stark dichotomy between radicalism and conservatism. She noted that neither term was in use in the late eighteenth century; that most British 'radicals' were not very radical by continental standards, and in general that there existed a more complex and important middle ground than is often recognised, where much of the action took place.

Gareth Stedman Jones noted the continuing influence of Edward Thompson's account. In the Thompsonian account, political economy is conceived as a

conservative discourse, subject to challenge from the left. In fact, many challenges to it might as well or better be conceived as coming from the right. Political economy should be understood as a form of reformist discourse; it should be recognised that within popular movements in this period there was often a strong undertow of conservatism; some popular leaders might well be characterised as right-wing populists. ‘Radicalism’ as historians have constructed it badly needs disaggregation.

He also suggested that the concept of ‘representation’, a key term in much political discourse and argument in the period, deserved careful attention, with respect to its various possible meanings. Hanna Pitkin, in her 1967 study The concept of representation had written illuminatingly about what representation meant to Burke; that issue deserved revisiting. Peter Miller, in Defining the common good (1994), similarly had shown how a particular set of radical dissenters had recast political language in the era of the American war on the basis of individual rationalism – but this understanding of political relationships contrasted starkly with other contemporary understandings that were also important.

Innes suggested that an important shift took place around 1800, when the changing nature of war helped to make it possible to develop what was broadly accepted as a ‘patriotic’ critique of the war-mongering state; in this context, people who had been anti-Jacobins in the 90s, such as Cobbett and Hunt, could reinvent themselves as populist radicals; it was especially at this point that ‘radicalism’ (a term which did come into use in the 1810s) became a rather heterogeneous broad church. Even so, there may be more to early nineteenth century ‘popular politics’ than we have yet properly charted. She suggested that historians have yet to find really effective ways of understanding anti-Painite popular demonstrations of the 1790s: what accounted for the way in which that form of popular sentiment suddenly flared up and then as it seemed disappeared. Did it entirely disappear? Was it credible, even given the breadth and greater appeal of early nineteenth-century radicalism that there was at that time no popular anti-radicalism? *Jon Mee* argued that it wasn’t adequate to characterise all anti-Jacobinism as anti-Painite; particularly in the later 90s (when, it’s worth noting, that Anti-Jacobin Review was launched), Godwin and Thelwall were also important targets. *Innes* agreed that at the level of the periodical-reading public, it appeared that there continued to be a complex and by no means one-sided debate through the later 90s. She suggested however that in relation to the ‘politics’ of less literate sectors of the population, there may have been a series of more sharply distinct phases in the course of the 90s. Social elites sponsored rowdy populist forms of conservatism in the early 90s – but many drew back after 1795, when widespread grain rioting underscored the continuing dangerousness of ‘the people’. She suggested that at that point elite strategies shifted; effort focussed more single mindedly on depoliticising the people; the project became instead one of civilising them, through education and philanthropy. *Mee* picking up on another strand of earlier discussion, suggested that it was important to consider what model of revolution the national government was working with at this time. In that context, he argued that radical intellectuals continued to loom very large as a source of threat. *Goodrich* agreed that State Trials provides ample material to support this view. *Mee* explained that in his view ideas of ‘infection’ by radical ideas, and of the contagious spread of ‘enthusiasm’ remained powerful motifs.

Sheldon reverted to a theme Stedman Jones had introduced. He asked if it was right to characterise political economy as the most powerful sociology of change then available. He asked Stedman Jones if it was right to read his recent book, An End to Poverty? (2004) as proposing a kind of counterfactual history, according to which the trajectory of reform might have been quite different, following a more benign, Smithian course, had other things not supervened. *Philp* argued that we should distinguish subscribing to a sociology of change and political radicalism or progressivism: not all radicals subscribed to such a view; some conservatives did. *Innes* observed that indeed, as Goodrich among others had shown, visions of progressive economic change were quite frequently enlisted in the cause of counterrevolution (though whether that means we should type those who argued in that way as ‘conservative’ is another question).

Innes suggested that one source of reorientation and realignment around 1800 was religion: the mushroom growth of evangelical itinerancy in the late 90s put the Church on to the defensive, and encouraged polarisation along religious lines. *Mee* again argued that one should not understate continuities. Rational Dissent did not die in the 1790s, but found continuing expression through the Evangelical Magazine, which brought together rational dissenters and liberal Anglicans. *Stedman Jones* similarly noted that the Friends of Peace gave continuing expression to rational dissenting and what might be termed liberal views in politics: it would be wrong to overlook the survival of this position on the political spectrum. *Mee* noted that from a somewhat different ‘middle of the road’ position, the first issue of the Edinburgh Review attacked Thelwall, but also Wordsworth and Coleridge as fellow travellers: all were seen to indulge in enthusiasm, and to have an excessively sentimental and indulgent view of the common people. *Gillen* endorsed the importance of ‘moderate’ opinion. He noted that according to Greg Claeys new book (The French Revolution Debate in Britain: the Origins of Modern Politics, 2007), it was above all the liberal Whigs who were responsible for heading off the French Revolution in Britain; their efforts also helped to ensure that the improvement project then took on a new urgency.

Gillen also drew attention to Allan Blackstock’s recent book, Loyalism in Ireland 1789-1829, for its contribution to characterising change over time. Blackstock crosses the French revolutionary divide, and describes the development of commercial loyalism and militarised citizenship. The postwar era saw a demilitarisation of loyalism, which had to regroup to counter the O’Connellite challenge, in the form of a mass Catholic petitioning movement extending through rural as well as urban Ireland; loyalism then found expression instead in Brunswick clubs.

He suggested that in Britain, in contrast to Ireland, there had never really been a powerful radical tradition. The notion that there had been owed much to the efforts of the CPGB to give itself a native lineage; a radical history had been stitched together in the 1960s out of not very much. *Mee* however argued that, while it was true there was no revolutionary tradition, whether there was a radical tradition depended on what one understood by ‘radical’. *Gillen* noted that although to some extent England and Ireland shared in a common political culture, in Ireland there had arisen Protestant revolutionaries in the 1790s. *Mee* suggested that a crucial difference between English and Irish situations was that in England there was more confidence in the possibility of achieving change by non-revolutionary means.

Gillen observed of Irish historiography that ‘politicisation’ was the master theme of the 1790s; the 1800s, by contrast, were seen as depoliticising; the 1810s, as repoliticising – but now on a more sectarian basis than in the 90s.

Mee argued that in the English case it was important not to overstate depoliticisation; 1790s radicals such as John Bone and William Hone continued to be active through this period. *Philp* argued however that for some years they lost their popular base or context.

Philp proposed that we should return to the question of how new the political activity of the 1790s was. To what extent was it foreshadowed in the 1770s and 80s? He noted that Paine himself did not advocate manhood suffrage in the early years following the French Revolution; he began to argue for it only shortly before he left England for France in the autumn of 1792. In that respect, Paine was rather less radical than Cartwright. He was most distinctive and radical in arguing against the mixed constitution. But in that respect also he seems to have remained an oddity: this was not a position most English radicals took up. Innes asked why it was, given that, that Paine’s writings had circulated quite so widely. *Philp* suggested that Paine himself should perhaps be assigned much of the responsibility for that. Moved by his earlier experience as author of *Commonsense*, which had been a smash hit in America, he wrote with a view to being widely read, not least in terms of style; he saw this as having been crucial to the mobilisation of opinion in America – that was his model of how to make a revolution happen. Paine himself attended the SCI meetings where decisions were made about promoting mass circulation of the book; he was part of the group of SCI delegates who went to discuss this project with the LCS. *Goodrich* added that Paine was in fact not all that interested in Britain: having cast his book upon the waters, he left and never came back.

Olly Dowlen suggested that, in explaining the different trajectories followed by English and Irish radicals, it was important to consider the effect of patriotism; English and Irish ‘patriotism’, by virtue of their context, had different logics.

In relation to depoliticisation, *Biskup* suggested that the post 1795 period saw depoliticisation in France, which might itself have had effects on Britain. *Philp* argued that the collapse of peace talks 96-7 reinvigorated the belief that France should be anathematised – this was the immediate context for the launching of the *Anti-Jacobin Review*. There was another kind of shift from 1802, when Napoleon became the chief target of propaganda. *Gillen* observed that Irish newspapers continued in the late 90s to carry extensive reports of French political debates; *Philp and Mee* disagreed about whether the same was true of the English press. *Gillen* suggested that harping on about Jacobinism in the late 90s did not chiefly reflect continuing anxiety about France; rather, it was a strategy deliberately adopted by some reactionaries. He argued that much of the newspaper-reading public in fact thought that after Thermidor France was being governed by a reasonable commercial set of people.

Sheldon asked whether we still wanted to argue that the people entered into politics in 1792. *Philp* said certainly they were active on both sides, though it remained unclear to what extent we should see this as new. *Innes* suggested that what we see as the rise of the people in politics was partly (certainly not wholly) a matter of elite groups

adopting new strategies, competing to demonstrate that they enjoyed popular support. She instanced the solicitation of signatures to loyal addresses in 1783 – previously addresses at least in towns had commonly been issued by corporate bodies; it had not been thought necessary to collect attestations of broader public support. *Gillen* suggested that one thing needing to be considered was the impact of war, and the extent to which that entailed politicisation on the back of other forms of mobilisation. *Innes* observed that wartime fiscal burdens operated in many ways to politicise various aspects of economic life: production and consumption. *David Magee* suggested that military mobilisation had politicising effects. *Philp* suggested that these were more widely felt in the French War than before: the American War, like previous wars, was to some extent waged by German mercenaries. *Biskup* observed that in Germany, historians now attached importance to the politicising effects of war, in that context identifying the 1810s – mobilisation in support of ‘wars of liberation’, as a crucial decade. *Innes* suggested that, the logistical effects of war apart, the different ideologies associated with different wars had differentially politicising effects. The ideology of the French War helped to make the attitudes of the common people a specially important issue. *Goodrich* observed that the American War had politicising effects inasmuch as it was blamed on government failure.

IV. The Nineteenth Century: More of the same, or are things increasingly different?

Innes again kicked off discussion. She suggested that historians had identified three periods as notable for popular political activity: the 1790s, the late and post-Napoleonic period, and the Chartist period from the late 1830s to late 1840s. It was usual to present these as in effect discontinuous episodes of a single story, though certain changes other than simply progressive changes were recognised, eg the Reform Act in some ways changed the ways in which political exclusion was conceptualised and understood. She suggested that conventionally, the politicisation of the working classes had provided the main story line, but said that she thought there was now emerging a partly distinct historiography, focussing on the development of a more participatory and contestatory middle-class culture. Derek Fraser’s *Urban Politics in Victorian England* (1979) had been an early work in that vein. She suggested that the relationship between that development and developments in popular politics were not well understood. [It could be argued that James Vernon’s 1993 *Politics and the People* does represent an attempt to produce an integrated narrative: one that sees the formalisation of a more participatory politics as having operated to formalise the ‘politicisation’ of some people behaving in certain kinds of way, while ‘depoliticising’ other people and forms of activity].

Mee asked whether this period could be said to have seen a redrawing of boundaries between public and private: did it become newly important that public figures were also privately virtuous. It was noted that this was the conclusion to which Phil Harling’s work on attitudes to political corruption could be seen to point.

Gleadle argued that ‘quiet periods’ in politics shouldn’t – as was sometimes suggested – necessarily be seen as periods in which politics took other forms, being reoriented towards the reform of the self. Sometimes it was more appropriate to accept that there were periods in which political engagement really declined. In the early nineteenth

century, Mary Woolstonecraft's writings thus ceased to be read as political interventions: they were approached rather as educational tracts. *Stedman Jones* suggested however that it was hard to draw lines between apolitical and political culture: melodrama, which promoted the stereotype of the wicked baron, served to colour political perceptions.

Jarrige asked whether we should characterise this period, as was traditional, as having seen the rise of the 'social question'. *Sheldon* suggested that the rise of political economy was something important in terms of the two issues just touched upon. It was an example of a background 'cultural' change that at the same time helped to reshape politics. It did so partly by encouraging new thinking about the subject matter of politics, and about the possibilities of political action. However, he suggested that the social question as such, as a political agenda, did not really take shape before the 1830s. *Cohen* suggested that in France at this time, we see a shift away from the previous fashion for idealising the lower orders: this coloured the way in which social issues were henceforth conceptualised. *Michael Drolet* suggested that working alongside this was the appearance of a new kind of social philosophy which deemphasised the role of reason in structuring human interactions. Thus, Royer Collard in the 1810s repudiated the rationalist tradition, drawing instead upon the commonsense philosophy of Thomas Reid. JB Say urged the importance of depoliticising the peasantry.

Against Sheldon, *Innes* argued that the 'social question' certainly took shape before the 1830s – though the extent to which it provided a hinge for the reconceptualisation of politics even in the 1830s and 40s was sometimes overstated by historians; in fact, much of high political life continued to revolve around fiscal and economic policy, foreign relations, religion etc. Whether the formation of a social question should be understood as politicising – providing a basis for new groups to enter politics – or depoliticising, inasmuch as it entailed positing a distinct social sphere, which the state might have limited ability to act upon – was an open question: perhaps what it did was above all to problematise the question of the boundaries of politics in new ways.

Stedman Jones noted that the period saw a new emphasis on work, 'industry', as a key virtue, in both France and Britain; the injunction to Adam and Eve to labour became a favourite text. *Innes* noted the emergence of a related body of writing celebrating industry and invention. *Stedman Jones* agreed, noting for instance that Huskisson had made a speech about the virtues of James Watt. *Philip Lockley* noted that another popular text was 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (he who does not work, shall not eat), much cited in the 1820s and early 1830s.

Dowlen asked what we should make of the quasi-revolutionary situation which existed in England in the late 1830s: what made the government unable to depoliticise the situation? *Magee* stressed the previous rise of the reading public. *Innes* observed that what people read was not always political. *Gleadle* argued that in the rural context, more important than newspapers, magazines or books might be rumour, threatening letters and handbills.

Innes directed attention to questions about how people in the early nineteenth century constructed the past. She suggested that the idea of the eighteenth century as sharply different from the nineteenth century, characterised by an exclusive, corrupt and

corrupting politics, dates from this time – and is a corruption that we have still not escaped from, inasmuch as we construe the eighteenth century as pre-political. *Philp* pointed to working-class autobiography, an emergent form in this period, as one important site for such construction. In this genre, individual and collective experiences of politicisation were to some extent conflated. It was noted that such accounts sometimes played down quite how radical protagonists had been, in favour of a more ‘improving’ narrative. *Mee* noted links to a Whig story of improvement, informing eg Dickens’ Barnaby Rudge (which portray the Gordon Riots as a prototype of irrational revolution – Dickens’ portrayal of the French Revolution itself, in Tale of Two Cities, was, by contrast, more ambivalent.) *Sheldon* noted that both Bamford and Cobbett talked about the decline of rioting as a mode of protest. *Mee* observed that improvement was a central theme for Francis Place. *Innes* suggested that Swing and other rioting from 1830 must have raised questions for contemporaries about this narrative.

Jarrige asked about the impact in Britain of French and other European revolutions of 1830 and 1848. *Mee* said that digesting the first revolution remained a challenge – people like Shelley and Byron continued to wrestle with the question of whether the Terror was a blip or in some sense a revelation of the true character of the revolution. Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein can be seen as a meditation on the French Revolution: overweening natural philosophers cobble bits of people together to form a monster, who educates himself by reading Volney etc – it is however suggested that had he not been mistreated and ostracised, the monster would not have become savage and dangerous. *Stedman Jones* said that the translation of Mme de Stael’s Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution in 1818 had an important effect on British understanding; she argued that all had been well until 1792, when things had descended into chaos. Smythe, a professor of history at Cambridge, in another influential account, blamed the philosophes. Thomas Carlyle, by contrast, saw changes in the French people more generally as key: they had lost faith, both in a religious and in an emotional sense. In his essay ‘Chartism’, the argument was that given the state of English culture, the same thing was only too likely to happen here. *Philp* noted reconsideration of the history of the English Revolution [newly so called] in the same period. *Mee* noted in this connection that Southey shifted his view of Methodism between 1808, when he saw it as a danger, and 1820, when he wrote a celebratory life of Wesley. Hetherington identified ignorance as the problem. *Innes* suggested that this was one example of a common construction, according to which the French Revolution went wrong because the people were insufficiently civilised; this account reinforced ideas of the importance of civilising efforts. *Jarrige* noted that there did exist in French an extended study of the impact of 1848 in England, by Fabrice Bensimon (Les Britanniques face a la revolution francaise de 1848, 2000). However, there had been no comparable work on responses to the 1830 revolution. *Dowlen* noted that Cobbett did write about the 1830 revolution in France; he suggested that it made Reform in England inevitable. Bronterre O’Brien formed an unusually favourable view of the French revolution as a result of exposure to ideas in France itself: he praised Robespierre and Babeuf.

There was some discussion of constructions of Napoleon. *Gillen* said that in Ireland, Napoleonic France was generally positively rated. Others said that in England too there was often some admiration for Napoleon: he was not demonised.

Biskup asked if there was any interest in Britain in other constitutional models. It was thought not. *Stedman Jones* suggested that there was more interest in national liberation movements: thus of the Spanish, the Greeks.

Liz Frazer asked whether we hadn't lost sight of our supposed focus, politicisation? *Innes* agreed that we had, more than in the previous session, perhaps partly because esp. by 1830s quite wide politicisation is generally assumed, and perhaps the best developed relevant debate, that about the decline of Chartism (depoliticisation) falls a bit outside our time span. *Jarrige* observed that in France, elections were seen as a key politicising event; in England, by contrast, politicisation was not induced from above, but developed from below. *Cohen* said that what happened in France was basically driven by the elites' desire to be able to demonstrate popular support in order to give themselves legitimacy. *Jarrige* noted that recent historiography stressed the importance of local elections from as early as the 1830s, rather than waiting for manhood suffrage in 1848. *Innes* noted that, contrary to what she has said earlier about general politicisation, it was not clear to what extent the English countryside was politicised by the 1840s; possibly that had to wait rather till the 1880s, and the institution of more elected local government institutions: that might be an arena in which English politicisation proceeded partly from above – though it also developed from below, eg via agricultural trade unions.

V. Concepts and Methods in the Study of Social and Political Movements

Philp introduced discussion by explaining why he had placed books by James Scott (Domination and the arts of resistance) and Frank Parkin (Marxism and class theory) on the reading list. He thought Scott interestingly avoided the notion of false consciousness, by his argument that what people can say depends on power relations, but this doesn't mean that they don't have different kinds of conversations among themselves. He said that he had found this useful in thinking about loyalism and radicalism in the 1790s. Parkin he thought interesting on techniques of inclusion and exclusion, and on the political arena as a place of struggle over these; he also offered a post-Marxist form of class theory. He invited others to identify things that they had found helpful in conceptualising issues.

Frazer explained that she had been working on processes of politicisation in modern Britain and France, and on the relationship between politics and 'public life'. She said that the problem she had with ethnographies and theories of the Scott type was that, in an effort to recover a range of things as politically relevant, these authors ditched the notion that publicity is an essential feature of politics. She for her part thought publicity a more important distinguishing feature of politics than the relationship of this activity to the state. Scott is looking at people who don't take the risk of being heard; while this activity might have political implications, she questioned whether it can count as in itself political action. She argued also that it is especially true of the political sphere, conceived as a form of public sphere, that conduct is not a guide to inner belief: politics is intrinsically inauthentic, which is why it has often attracted disapproval.

Mee noted that Scott's work to some extent emerged from the 'subaltern studies' tradition. He said that it appeared that Frazer wanted to side with Habermas against

Foucault and Derrida, in terms of her stress on the value of communicative action. He however argued that the excluded might find it hard to function in this way. To insist that this be the main mode of political life might be to write most of the excluded out of politics by definition.

Fraser responded by noting that her notion of the importance of the public domain and of ‘risk’ in fact had its roots more in the work of Hannah Arendt. She observed that in political science, failure to engage in political activity tends to be explained in terms of a deficit model – people are seen as lacking capacity to participate, or as being led astray by bad leaders and political cultures; the underlying assumption is that political activity is natural and desirable. But in fact, public engagement is painful and risky and there are always good reasons not to participate in it.

Gleadle also had reservations about Scott, who she thought had joined the small team of non-historians whom historians footnote. She wasn’t sure that he provided a very helpful world to the kind of multi-stranded world we deal with, in which there is no clear line between the powerful and the powerless. She also questioned whether people who consistently deferred in certain contexts could maintain this position simply as a tactical pose, without it having any deeper effects. She suggested that it was important to engage with theories of collective identity. People have complex and multiple identities, but certain moments may play to certain of these identities, momentarily bringing them to the fore, and then those sharing this identity can mobilise around this. She questioned whether ‘depoliticisation’ was a helpful term when it came to capturing the ebb and flow of political subjectivity. *Mee* agreed that Scott isn’t interested in ‘politics’ but rather in domination and resistance; it’s not clear that he helps us to understand the political terrain.

Innes, reverting to Fraser’s account of politics agreed that at the very least politics must involve taking a position on what is publicly desirable; the political sphere in a narrow sense (not taking into account all those things which Fraser had characterised as ‘politically related’) is not a sphere of merely personal expression.

Philp argued that though we may think politics cannot be ‘authentic’, this is not to say that that was obvious to everyone in our period. People might enter this arena innocently. Learning cynicism might be an aspect of politicisation.

VI. Future plans

Suggestions as to issues around which the next workshop might focus included ‘quiet periods’; religion; methodology – esp. how to reveal ‘hidden transcripts’; politicisation as individual experience and issues of identity; older models of political change, esp. in relationship to the role of ‘ideology’; the relationship between politicisation and war. It was suggested that discussion might helpfully focus on some texts from the period – and that perhaps these texts might be chosen so as to illuminate changing ideas about what politics is, and how people conceptualise government and what it can and should do.

Innes and Philp undertook to bear these ideas in mind in planning for the next workshop, tentatively scheduled for July 2008.