



Thomas Gee. (*Source: National Library of Wales.*)

Parliament and People in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Wales

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Most political observers, but more especially those who were sympathetic to the policies of the radical *Nonconformist* wing of the Liberal party, believed that the outstanding characteristic of Welsh politics in the middle decades of the nineteenth century was the political apathy of the bulk of the people. ‘Nid yw y genedl fel cenedl yn teimlo nemawr o ddyddordeb mewn gwleidyddiaeth’ (The real nation takes very little interest in politics) was the considered judgement of the author of an influential Welsh handbook on electoral affairs, *Llawlyfr Etholiadaeth Cymru* (Welsh Electoral Handbook) by Revd John Jones (Llangollen 1867) (B.1). The publisher *Thomas Gee* of Denbigh, owner of the enormously influential newspaper *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* (Banner and Times of Wales), agreed with him, as did many of the leading ministers of religion such as Dr Thomas Price, minister of *Calfaria Baptist Chapel*, Aberdare, who at various times edited newspapers circulating widely in the industrial towns and villages of south Wales. Above all, it was the view of leaders of political pressure groups and especially the leaders of the Society for the Liberation of the Church from State Patronage and Control — the Liberation Society, as it was known. It was not a view subscribed to by all politicians, and many Liberals would have agreed with the *Tories* that this alleged political apathy was preferable to the fearful disturbances which had accompanied the emergence of radical politics in the late 1820s and 1830s.

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The evidence for this apathy was mainly of two kinds. First, there was the difficulty experienced by local politicians and the leaders of political societies from outside Wales in persuading men to take an active interest in local and national affairs, and to organize for the purpose of agitation by supporting the numerous political pressure groups active at that time. Both the *National Reform Union*, a largely middle-class society founded in 1864 to campaign for household *suffrage* (B.2), and the *Reform League*, a working-class organization founded in 1866 to campaign for manhood *suffrage* and the ballot (B.3), found it difficult to establish strong and permanent branches in Wales. Men flocked to listen to lectures but were reluctant to give their financial and moral support. The author of *Llawlyfr Etholiadaeth Cymru*, himself a Vice-President of the *Reform League*, was of the opinion that if the people of England had shown as little interest in politics as the Welsh people the cause of Liberalism would not have advanced very far, and he suggested that the political backwardness of Wales may even have been a positive hindrance to the advance of Liberalism (B.1). This was certainly the view of the most successful of the political societies working in Wales — the Liberation Society. This organization, which had been founded in 1844 and had had a presence in Wales ever since, and which since 1862 (B.4a) had been concentrating much of its very considerable resources in Wales, professed itself deeply disappointed with the kind of response it was getting and the practical results of its efforts (B.4b).

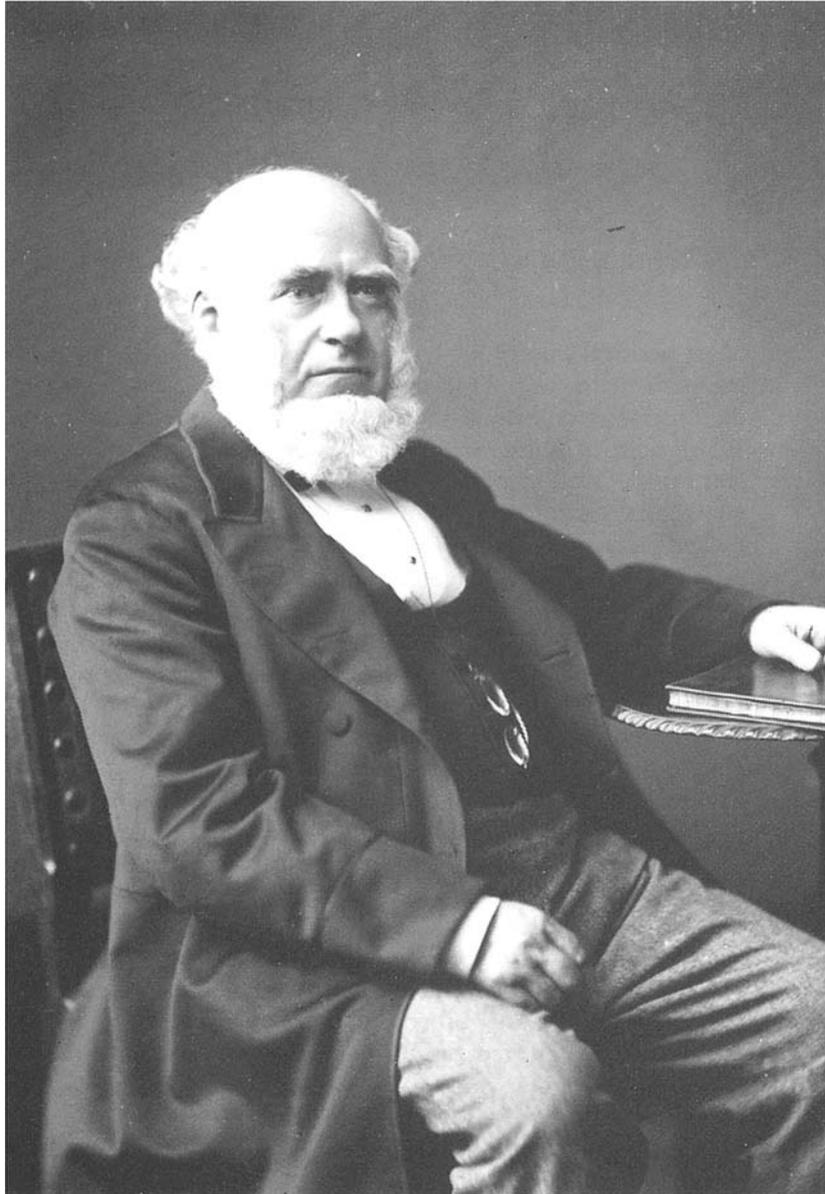
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B.4a

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Henry Richard. (Source: BBC Hulton Picture Library.)

Nor was this something new. *Henry Richard*, secretary of the *Peace Society*, a leading *Liberationist* and exponent of *Nonconformist* politics, was convinced that this was the normal condition of the Welsh people and was the product of their intensively exclusive religious culture and a consequence of the lack of an indigenous political press (B.5). Twenty years earlier, the young *Walter Griffith*, stationed in Wales as a lecturer for the *Anti-Corn Law League*, made exactly the same points: the Welsh people were ignorant of politics and difficult to agitate. In his perambulations throughout the length and breadth of the Principality he had encountered an active response among the working classes only in those towns and villages where *Chartism* was strong — in those cases, a very active, well-informed and intelligent opposition to the views he was propagating (B.6). *Chartism* and the protest movements of the previous half century or so were not so much ignored by these new politicians of the 1860s as explained away. *Chartism*, they proclaimed, was not an indigenous movement: like trade *unionism* it had been brought into Wales by

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disaffected Englishmen and had been confined to the south eastern counties (B.7). The Rebecca Riots constituted an aberration from the normally peaceful state of affairs in the countryside and the movement, if it really was a movement, was in no way political (B.8). In any event these rural risings had long since ceased, and *Chartism* survived only in a few places, lacking any organization, confined to middle-aged and middle-class men happy in their support of middle-class liberal Nonconformism. As Morgan Williams of Merthyr Tydfil, who had succeeded John Frost as the leader of Welsh *Chartism*, remarked in 1866, 'the working men did not have the political feelings of thirty years ago'. He and his fellow *Chartists* had long since abandoned their revolutionary principles and had come to embrace instead a more pragmatic, gradualist, reformist and deeply constitutional philosophy of political change.

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Secondly, and more specifically, the evidence for this apathy was inferred from the contradiction between the religious life of the people of Wales and their representation in parliament. Wales was notorious for the pronounced *Nonconformist* character of its religion. *Henry Richard* devoted the third chapter of his book on the social and political condition of Wales to an analysis of the comparative strength of the Church and *Nonconformity* in order to show that the huge disproportions revealed in the *Religious Census of 1851* had, if anything, widened in the interval, and it was generally accepted that about three-quarters of the Welsh people were *Nonconformists*, from which it followed that 'the Church of England is not the Church of Wales'. *Henry Richard* thought of this immense social change as having happened in his lifetime (he was born in 1812), and the statistics do show that the relative strengths of the *established Church* and *Nonconformity* in 1851 was almost the complete reversal of what it had been in 1801 (B.9).

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Nor was there any mistaking the predominant strength of the older Dissenting denominations within *Nonconformity*. The *Independents*, the *Baptists* and the *Unitarians* — the *Quakers* scarcely had a presence in Wales in the nineteenth century — had all originated in the revolutionary times of the seventeenth century, and all had behind them traditions of radical but peaceful and constitutional protest and agitation in defence of their legal rights and for religious equality with the *established Church*. They had been accustomed, on and off, to acting politically in the past: in 1828 they had succeeded in persuading parliament to repeal the hated *Test and Corporation Acts* — that body of legislation dating from 1661 which, though it had little practical effect at the time, they regarded as a badge and symbol of their inferior status as citizens. Some of the remaining disabilities had been removed in 1836 with a new system of civil registration of births, marriages and deaths, and the registration of chapels as places in which marriages might take place. But other grievances remained; notably the payment of *Church Rates* for the upkeep of the parish church and of *tithes* for the maintenance of incumbents; the fact that burials in parish churchyards could be conducted only by clergymen of the Church of England; and the exclusion of Dissenters from the universities. These were grievances which could be redressed only in Parliament because they all required the repeal of statutes which asserted the supremacy of the *established Church*. Not all *Nonconformists* felt all of them

to be grievances. The *Methodist* denominations, both the *Wesleyan Methodists* and the *Welsh Calvinistic Methodists*, for example, frowned upon almost any kind of formal political commitment and activity by the individual congregations and denominational organizations. But when, from about the middle of the century, fears grew that the *established Church* was drifting in the direction of Rome, that Anglo-Catholicism was corrupting the Protestantism which the Church existed to defend, the *Methodists* became more ready to co-operate in the political campaigns of Dissent. It is this which explains the great upsurge in political feeling in the great election of 1859 in Merioneth — an election which heralded the coming of a new kind of politics.

But these social facts, the essential, defining social characteristics of the Welsh people, were in no way reflected in the representation of the people in Parliament. All the seventeen county members were wealthy landowners and all resident as proprietors in the counties they represented, and most of them belonged to families which had dominated the respective seats for many generations. Precisely these same upper-class landed families monopolized, or nearly so, the fifteen borough seats and hence the sixty representative towns or contributory boroughs. There were exceptions to this rule especially in constituencies such as those in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire, where powerful and rich ironmasters and coalowners were prepared to contest elections. But even these aggressive industrialists were also landowners on a large scale, and like all other great industrialists in Wales coming more and more to resemble, and in the end to be identified with, the great landowners. The system of representation was eloquent testimony to two related facts: first to the monolithic control of political life at that level by a small group of aristocratic dynastic and gentry families, and second, to the convergence in practical policies as in style and manner of life of the two major sources of wealth, agriculture and industry.

As important was the fact that all were Churchmen. It is true that a few were good Liberals whose votes could be relied upon by the *Nonconformists*, and at least one, the industrialist Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn (elected for Swansea in 1855) though an Anglican was a leading Liberationist both in and out of Parliament. But none was identified religiously with the majority of the people either of the country as a whole or at constituency level. Radical newspapers, such as *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* and *The Liberator* (the organ of the Liberation Society), regularly published analyses of the votes of the Welsh members on issues of religious and civil equality with a view to publicizing the scandalous indifference of the members to the interests and feelings of their constituents (B.10).

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This was why franchise reform became the main objective of *Nonconformist* politicians. The most radical among them advocated manhood *suffrage*, as had the *Chartists* before them; all wished to abolish the age-old property qualifications for the vote which the 1832 Reform Act had retained, and all wished to abolish other restrictions on the possession of the franchise, such as payment of rates and receipt of *Poor Law Assistance*, by which so many working men were disqualified and which made it possible for party managers to manipulate the votes of the working classes. It was the combination of these factors which kept the electorate small and which, in fact, ensured that the rise in the number of votes should not be commensurate with the rise in

population. In the middle decades of the century population grew by 24 per cent, but the number of voters by only about 10 per cent (B.11). The same was true of the working class vote in the boroughs. In 1832 the vote had been given to £10 householders, and these were mainly the professional men, tradesmen and shopkeepers, artisans, and the top ranks of the working classes. The bulk of the working men who possessed the vote in 1832 would appear to have qualified as freemen or ancient rights voters for whom the possession of property would not necessarily have been a qualification. These were abolished by the Reform Act and as their possessors died out so the ranks of working class voters diminished (B.12). In Merthyr Tydfil, which had been enfranchised by the 1832 Reform Act and where there were therefore no freemen voters, and where the vast bulk of the population lived in rented accommodation, the number of voters was kept small by the rating requirements of the Act. These statutory conditions ensured that the voters were overwhelmingly middle class and that only a minute proportion of the working class should be enfranchised. The relative decline in the number of voters and the stringent conditions imposed by the law and exploited by party agents and managers was not an encouragement to participatory politics.

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In the counties the problem of the franchise was somewhat different. The right to vote had been given, as was the case before the Reform Act, to men who owned freeholds of various kinds worth 40 shillings per annum or more and to certain kinds of leaseholders, and thus had enfranchised landowners, clergymen, farmers and substantial tenants. But it had also given the vote to small tenant farmers paying rents of £50 per annum or more for their farms and whose tenancies had to be renewed every year. These were the so-called tenants-at-will, small farmers who had no leases to protect them in the occupancy of their farms and who were therefore economically dependent upon their landlords for their livelihoods. This was a factor of major importance in the shaping of Welsh political life. Wales was a land of huge landed estates and of great numbers of small tenant farmers. On average more than a quarter (27.6 per cent) of the total of county voters were tenants-at-will. In most of the north Wales counties the proportion was about a third of the total registered voters: in Merioneth more than a half were tenants-at-will (B.13). This was a major factor in Welsh politics because it ensured that, in the last resort, the great estates voted as a bloc. At best there would be a tacit understanding between tenants and landlords, and in a deferential system tenants would normally vote with their lords. But at worst there was the ever-present threat of eviction or of positive rent-rises — ‘screwing’, or the exercise of undue influence — to ensure that they did so. Usually tenants did as they were told but they could not necessarily be relied upon to do so. The classic case of tenant farmers, large and small, defying their landlords and refusing to vote for the *Tory* candidate occurred in Bala in the 1859 Merioneth election. Several tenants of the Glanllyn estate of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn and the Rhiwlas estate of R.W. Price were evicted in consequence (B.14). If nothing else, this demonstrated that there were limitations to the traditional electoral behaviour of dependent tenants, and that for many common people principle was more important than profit and religion than livelihood. In fact, the deferential structure of farming communities on the great Welsh estates ensured that, as a general rule, the landed proprietors could determine the party character of county representation.

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Deference operated in the boroughs as well, especially in the small rural towns which were closely integrated into their agricultural hinterlands. It was not such a powerful social force in industrial boroughs — though it was often the objective of industrialists to replicate the political morality of the agricultural estates: and the exertion of influence over the voting intentions of borough voters generally took the form of bribery, or treating, or open or concealed threats on the part of employers. Pressure of this kind by ironmasters on their dependent workers, and the assumption that the machinery of local government was there to be manipulated for the benefit of the masters, was a fact of life in local government elections in industrial towns, and deeply resented as such (B.15). The Rhondda coalowner Walter Coffin owed his unexpected return for the Cardiff boroughs in 1852 partly to the influence which the ironmasters of *Dowlais* and *Cyfarthfa* could exert over their tenants and workmen in Cardiff (B.16). Merthyr Tydfil was not technically a *pocket borough* but it was inconceivable that anyone but the agreed nominee of the ironmasters could ever win the seat. As in the counties, the system of open voting in relatively small, face-to-face communities ensured that the wealthy and the powerful would always be able to influence the outcome of parliamentary elections. The Ballot, or secret voting, was demanded by radicals as the best means of putting an end to influence of this kind.

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In both borough and county constituencies the costs of elections were a fundamental hindrance to the democratic process. Only men with substantial private means, or the backing of aristocratic patrons (in which case their independence might be compromised) could bear the heavy expenses that were involved, or maintain themselves as members of parliament when elected. In pre-reform days election expenses could be astoundingly large. The *Whig* candidate William Paxton of Middleton Hall is said to have spent nearly £16,000 contesting the Carmarthenshire county seat in the election of 1802. But this was the 'Austerlitz of Welsh electioneering': there was nothing comparable in later elections, though very considerable sums were expended (B.17a). High election expenses had the effect of reducing the number of contested elections by encouraging local electoral pacts or agreements between parties, restricted the choice of electors as to the sort of man they wanted, and made it virtually impossible for members of the working class to stand for parliament. *Chartists* put up their own candidates in Merthyr Tydfil and in Monmouth in 1841, but in the nature of things these were gestures only, defiant demonstrations by the unenfranchised and the disenfranchised, and opportunities too good to be missed to express their solidarity, rare episodes in their political education (B.17b).

B.17a

B.17b



Henry Austin Bruce. (Source: BBC Hulton Picture Library.)

To what extent the activities of the reformers helped to bring about the Reform Act of 1867 is a matter for debate, but it is certain that the highly organized and efficient agitation of the Liberation Society in Wales rekindled the political traditions of Dissent and politicized the chapels. But the shape and details of the Act were determined by the exigencies of party conflict within the House of Commons. Even so, the coming of household *suffrage* in the boroughs and a slight widening of the franchise in the counties profoundly changed the pattern of politics. The number of voters more than doubled (B.18a), and in the subsequent election of 1868 'the ice of *Toryism* was broken' and with it the apathy and indifference upon which it had been based. In Merthyr Tydfil the huge increase in the electorate enabled the working classes, especially the colliers, to assert themselves independently of the official Liberal leadership and to bring to the forefront of the campaign issues like industrial relations and *unionism* (B.18b). Indeed, the Merthyr election was as much a victory for working class *Radicalism* as for the *Nonconformist Radicalism* of Henry Richard. Among the Liberal majority were three Welsh *Nonconformists*. More important even than that was the inevitability of further change in the direction of a fuller degree of democracy. The Ballot Act was passed in 1872 which, in due course, gave the voters the reassurance of free and equal voting which they had long sought (B.19). Other measures followed, culminating in the *Reform and Redistribution Acts of 1884/5* which brought in yet another of the old *Chartist* demands, equal electoral districts. But it was still manhood *suffrage*: few Welshmen demanded equal rights for women.

B.18a

B.18b

B.19

Sources

B.1 *Anfanteisiony Cymry gyflawni eu dyledsitydd.* Yn gyntaf, nid yw y genedl fel cenedl yn teimlo nemawr o ddyddordeb mewn gwleidyddiaeth. Dyma ydyw y ffaith, nas gellir ei gwadu . . . Gallwn fod yn sicr pe y buasai y genedl Seis'nig wedi teimlo cyn lleied o ddyddordeb mewn gwleidyddiaeth a'r Cymry, y buasai yr achos mawr rhyddfrydig yn llawer nes yn ol nag ydyw yn bresennol. Nid yw y cymhorth a roddodd Cymru iddo ond y peth nesaf i ddim: ac mewn rhai amgylchiadau yr oedd yn rhwystr i gerbyd rhyddid i fyned rhagddo yn fuddygoliaethus. Mor tawel heb ei aflonyddu gan yr un don . . . yw cyflwr gwleidyddol Cymru wedi bod am dair canrif a rhagor. Pan unwyd Cymru a Lloegr, dan deyrnasiad Henry VIII, ac yr estynwyd gweinyddiad y deddfau Seis'nig iddi, ac y caniatawyd iddi ran yn rhagorfreintiau y deyrnas, darfyddodd terfysg o'i mewn, ac eisteddodd y genedl yn dawel wrth draed eu gorchfygwyr; ac oddiar hyn ydychyd yn awr, y mae y genedl wedi ymollwng i gyflwr o glaerineb a difaterwch gwleidyddol . . . Y mae anwybodaeth yn bodoli yn mhlith mwyafrif y werin ar bynciau gwladol, a theimlad yn cael ei feithrin oddiar hyn nad oes a fynd hwy yn bersonnol a hyn . . . Y teimlad mewn gwirionedd yw, na pherthyn gwleidyddiaeth iddynt hwy, ond i ereill: a gadawant ef i ofal y cyfryw rai. Credwn yn ddiysgog mai dyma deimlad mwyafrif y genedl Gymreig, er bod yma eithriadau gogoneddus.

(*Llaivlyfr Etholiadaeth Cymru*, gan y Parch J. Jones, Llangollen 1867, tt. 115–16.)

(*The disadvantages of the Welsh in fulfilling their duty.* First, the nation as a nation has felt [lit. feels] hardly any interest in politics. This is the fact that cannot be denied . . . We can be certain that if the English nation had felt [it. feels] as little interest in politics as the Welsh, the great liberal cause would have been much more behind than it is at present. The support that Wales has given to it is next to nothing: and in some instances it was an obstruction to the chariot (carriage) of freedom to go ahead victoriously. A calm sea untroubled by a single wave . . . that has been the state of the politics of Wales for more than three centuries. When Wales and England were united in (under) the reign of Henry VIII, and the English laws were applied to her, and she was given a share of the privileges of the kingdom, internal turmoil ceased, and the nation sat quietly at the feet of the victor; and from that day to this, the nation has let herself go into a lukewarm state and political indifference . . . Ignorance about national issues exists among the majority of the people, and out of this is nurtured a feeling that they are not involved personally . . . In fact the feeling is that politics does not belong to them but to others: and they leave it to the care of these others. We believe emphatically that this is the feeling of the majority of the Welsh nation, although there are glorious exceptions.)

(*Election Handbook of Wales* by the Revd J. Jones. Translated by D.A.T. Thomas.)

B.2 *The National Reform Union: Statement*

That while the statements made in this Conference [in May 1862] show the deep conviction of the people in favour of Manhood *Suffrage*, in which conviction a large proportion of the delegates fully sympathized, the Conference considers that the union of all classes of real Reformers is essential to the attainment of any real improvements of the representation, and with this view it submits to the country the following programme as a basis for action: Such an extension of the franchise as will confer the *suffrage* upon every male person, householder or lodger, rated or liable to be rated for the relief of the poor, together with a more equable distribution of seats, vote by ballot, and a limitation of the duration of Parliament to three years.

(The National Reform Conference, May 15 and 16, 1865. Quoted in S. Maccoby, *The English Radical Tradition 1763–1914*, 2nd ed., 1966, pp. 162–4.)

B.3 *The National Reform League: Manhood Suffrage and the Ballot* We shall again soon be called to agitate for the following measures:

I The abolition of restrictions relative to the mode of paying rates upon which the franchise is based.

II The equalization of the county and borough franchises.

III A new and improved distribution of seats.

IV The Ballot, to protect the voter . . .

V If not for annual, at least for Triennial Parliaments . . .

(The League's Midland Department *Second Annual Report from July 1866 to July 1867*. Quoted in Maccoby, *op.cit.*, pp. 164–65.)

B.4a Looking at the great preponderance of *Nonconformity* in Wales, and to the fact that it is at present scarcely represented in Parliament, we think it important that a special and decided Electoral effort should be made in that part of the Kingdom.

(Minute 120b, 27 September 1861. Minute Book of the Executive Committee of the Liberation Society, Greater London County Record Office, MS A/Lib/2, Minute 1207.)

B.4b Resolution 2 — 'That this Conference views with the utmost dissatisfaction the mode in which Wales is represented in the Imperial Parliament — a nation of *Nonconformists* being without a single *Nonconformist* representative, and many of the constituencies being represented by members who are altogether wanting in sympathy with, if not actually opposed to, the religious and political convictions of an overwhelming majority of the Welsh people. That it believes that the time has come when a united, persistent, and courageous effort should be made to put an end to so glaring an anomaly, and therefore calls upon the Welsh Voluntaries to prepare themselves for such electoral movements as will be best adapted to secure the object.'

(Welsh Nonconformity and the Welsh Representation. Papers and Speeches read and delivered at the conferences held in September and October 1866. Liberation Society, n.d., p.ix.)

B.5 And, in the first place, it must be confessed, that it is only within a comparatively late period that the Welsh people have begun to take an intelligent and earnest interest in politics. Not but that the Principality before that was sometimes as violently agitated as other parts of the country by electioneering excitements: but usually the conflict turned much more upon persons than principles. Certain great families, who by tradition or accident, rather than from conviction, had come to espouse one side or the other in politics, held it a matter of hereditary honour to contest the representation with each other, far less as a means of giving effect to any particular views of State policy, than of asserting and maintaining their own family consequence against rival claimants in a county or neighbourhood. In times preceding the religious revival of the last century the bulk of the people were content to leave the question of political principle, if indeed any such were involved, in the hands of these local magnates, enlisting under the banners they unfurled with unquestioning faith and devotion. Whatever of enthusiasm, therefore, they felt in electioneering struggles was less that of citizens contending for their rights than of clansmen vehemently battling for their respective chieftains . . .

. . . there came upon Wales a season of great political apathy. It was a period of transition. The time for the politics of blind partisanship was gone. The time for the politics of intelligent conviction had not yet come. One formidable obstacle in the way of this was the difference of language, which cut the people off from the political literature of England. At first, their own periodical literature, being, like almost everything else that was good among them, the offspring of the religious revival, took its character from the cause from whence it had arisen. It was almost exclusively religious. I remember when I was a boy that all the politics of the magazine received in my father's house were compressed into about half a page of the most insipid summary at the end.

(Henry Richard, Letters on the Social and Political Condition of the Principality of Wales, 1st ed., 1866, pp.79–80 and 83.)

B.6 The people of Wales, though they are in some degree informed, yet they never bore a *political* character. They read much, but it is chiefly on religious subjects. There are certainly great numbers of people that do read newspapers, and know a little about the affairs of the nation, but in general terms these men are landlords and *aristocratic* tradesmen, and will not come to hear anything that is contrary to their opinion. My audiences are generally made up of working people, who do not understand the English language . . . As for forming Associations, they are wholly inexperienced; they have no taste for such a thing. They are ready to assist the cause with their prayers, with their names to petitions, and with their mites towards a public collection, but they say they have no time, nor the power of forming Associations. There is a numerous body of religious men who possess

a very great influence with the working classes. This body has been *generally* against any political movement; their chief men denounce from the pulpit those who are the means of getting up a petition to parliament, be it on what subject it may. There was never any question bearing on politics discussed throughout the Principality before the *corn law* question, which has excited great interest in many places.

(*Anti-Corn Law Circular*, no. 44, 8 October 1840, quoting a letter from Walter Griffith. Quoted in full in Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, 'The Anti-Corn Law Letters of Walter Griffith', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, XXVIII, Part I (November 1978), pp.118–19.)

- B.7** One very prominent fault of our working men is their readiness to allow themselves to be made the dupes of cunning and designing men. Several instances of this have occurred in the counties of Monmouth and Glamorgan within the last thirty-five years. About the year 1833, a cunning Welshman named Twist, who pretended to be a most sincere friend of the working classes, visited Merthyr and other places on the Hills, where he induced thousands of the people to form themselves into a kind of Workingmen's Union for the professed purposes of defending their rights against the tyranny of the masters, and raise the price of labour by refusing to instruct any workmen from the agricultural districts in mining operations. The designing originator of the Union gained his object by securing to himself large sums of money from his dupes, but his plausible scheme led to nothing better than the horrid nocturnal doings of the *Scotch Cattle*, and a series of ruinous strikes which brought hundreds of families to the brink of starvation. The *Chartist* movement of the year 1839 originated in a similar manner. A number of mob orators came down from England, who, by their thundering declamation against the oppression and injustice of the aristocracy, and fair promises of a perfect earthly paradise to the working classes as soon as the points of the charter would become the law of the land, soon gathered around their standard hundreds of confident expectants of the best things on earth. But, in the course of a few months all their high expectations ended in a disgraceful riot, poverty, imprisonment, and death.

(Thomas Rees, 'The Working Classes of Wales', in *Miscellaneous Papers on Subjects Relating to Wales*, 1867, p.19.)

- B.8** Thus far, at any rate, it is true that from that time to this (i.e from the *Act of Union*) the Welsh people have been unswervingly loyal to the English government . . . For the last hundred and fifty years there is probably no part of the United Kingdom that has given the authorities so little trouble or anxiety. Anything like sedition, tumult, or riot is very rare in the Principality. There have been only two considerable exceptions to this rule, and these are more apparent than real. The first was the *Chartist* outbreak in Newport in 1839. But this was almost entirely of English inspiration, and spread over one corner of Wales, that occupied by the mixed and half-Anglicized population of Monmouthshire and the other adjacent coal and iron districts. The great bulk of the Welsh people had no share whatever in the movement, but looked upon it with undisguised repugnance and

horror. The Rebecca disturbances of 1843 undoubtedly differed widely in this respect, that they broke out in the very heart of the purely Welsh population. But the character of these also has, I believe, been greatly misunderstood in England. They had no political significance whatsoever, and implied no disaffection to the government. They were merely uprisings, to which the men were driven, or imagined themselves driven, by the pressure of a grievance that had become intolerable, and against which they had long in vain protested and appealed . . . No doubt, as the thing went on, there were symptoms that a few evil-minded persons were disposed to turn the agitation to account for other and more serious purposes.

(Henry Richard, *Letters*, op.cit., pp.72–3.)

B.9 Proportional Strength of the Main Denominations in South Wales and North Wales

Denom	% Places		% Sittings		% Attend	
	Nth	Sth	Nth	Sth	Nth	Sth
Church	22.55	33.01	31.27	29.72	17.41	18.76
Independents	16.91	19.69	14.57	23.87	15.92	28.45
Baptists	8.85	15.94	6.45	17.43	8.52	21.26
Wesleyan	20.07	11.21	15.52	8.26	22.06	7.40
Calv. Method.	29.61	16.21	30.68	17.89	39.65	21.09

(Religious Census of 1851)

Indexes for whole of Wales

Popn.	1,005,721			
Accom.	778,202	= 77.37	N Wales 83.14	S Wales 73.37
Attend.	852,024	= 84.71	N Wales 86.62	S Wales 83.39

B.10 The Votes of Welsh Members of Parliament on Ecclesiastical Questions — Summary of Votes

	For.	Against.	Liberal. absent.	Conser. absent.
Qualification for Offices Bill	3 votes	0	15	14
Church-rates Bill	17 votes	4	1	10
Parliamentary Oath Bill	9 votes	9	9	5
Oxford Tests Bill, 2nd Reading	11 votes	3	7	11
Fellow of College Bill	10 votes	7	8	7
Oxford Tests Bill, Committee	14 votes	9	4	5

(Welsh Nonconformity and the Welsh Representation. Paper and Speeches read and delivered at the conferences held September and October 1866, Liberation Society, n.d., p.12)

B.11 Table 1. The County Franchise

County	Registered Voters as Percentage of Population		
	in 1832	in 1866	in 1868
Anglesey	3.9	5.7	9.4
Caernarfon	3.5	3.0	6.2
Denbigh	3.5	6.4	9.0
Flint	5.0	5.9	7.9
Montgomery	5.7	5.8	9.8
Merioneth	2.2	3.9	6.8
North Wales	4.5	5.3	8.1
Monmouth	5.2	3.7	5.1
Glamorgan	6.7	4.7	7.0
Carmarthen	6.1	5.4	9.0
Pembroke	6.0	5.9	6.3
Cardigan	3.2	5.6	8.2
Brecon	5.5	4.5	4.5
Radnor	10.5	8.7	12.0
South Wales	5.5	4.6	6.8
Welsh Counties	5.2	5.1	7.3

Table 2. The Borough Franchise

Borough	Registered Voters as Percentage of Population		
	in 1832	in 1866	in 1868
Beaumaris	3.1	4.2	14.2
Caernarfon	5.2	4.7	12.2
Denbigh	7.2	5.0	13.8
Flint	8.4	3.7	14.3
Montgomery	4.2	5.6	13.7
North Wales	5.8	4.7	13.5
Monmouth	8.6	6.5	9.7
Cardiff	8.3	4.5	9.0
Merthyr Tydfil	1.8	1.4	15.0
Swansea	4.2	3.1	9.3
Carmarthen	5.1	3.6	12.4
Pembroke	10.8	5.9	10.2
Haverfordwest	8.6	8.2	16.1
Cardigan	10.3	6.0	10.8
Brecon	4.6	5.4	12.8
Radnor	8.3	6.0	11.8
South Wales	6.4	3.8	11.4
Welsh Boroughs	6.0	4.0	11.9

(Based on Electoral Returns published in Parliamentary Papers)

B.12 Number of Working Class Electors in Welsh Boroughs in 1866

Borough	Registered Electors				Working Class Electors				
	£10	Free	Other	Total	£10	Free	Other	Total	%
Beaumaris	561	2		563	180			180	33.1
Brecknock	293	12		281	82			82	27.9
Cardiff	1889	234		2123	662	122		784	36.5
Cardigan	637	55		692	83	5		88	12.7
Carmarthen	775	41		816	152			152	18.6
Caernarfon	1027		66	1093	177		31	208	19.0
Denbigh	805	129		934	86	76		162	16.5
Flint	601		99	700	161		51	212	28.1
Haverfordwest	406	191	215	812	116	113	82	311	38.3
Merthyr	1387			1387	126			126	9.1
Montgomery	954	61		1015	171	40		211	20.7
Pembroke	1102	377		1479	515	284		799	54.0
Radnor	420	24		444	51	1		52	11.7
Swansea	1695	312		2007	366	96		462	27.2
	12552	1426	380	14358	2928	737	164	3829	26.6
Monmouth	2125	21		21416	825	10		835	38.8
Wales	14677	1447	380	35774	3753	747	164	4664	38.5

Note what is meant by 'working class' in the above table.

'The Board do not intend that the Return should be exclusively confined to journeymen who are employed for wages, but that it should include men who work daily at their handicraft trade without a master, and even sometimes employ a journeyman or apprentice, provided that they derive their chief support from their own labour, and not from the labour of others, or the profits arising from capital or the supply of materials.'

(From a letter to Overseers from the Poor Law Board, 2 January 1866.)

Note also that the total of registered working class electors includes 127 electors who were registered in respect of more than one qualification. These were distributed as follows: Cardiff — 9; Cardigan — 1; Denbigh — 7; Flint — 6; Haverfordwest — 66; Montgomery — 14; Pembroke — 23; Swansea — 1.

(P.P. 1866 LVII (3626) and (296).)

B.13 Tenants-at-will as proportion of total number of voters.

	1835	1865
Anglesey	32.2	24.4
Brecon	27.0	26.3
Cardigan	35.0	23.3
Carmarthen	23.0	27.0
Carnarvon	31.4	21.0
Denbigh	30.0	23.6
Flint	29.5	23.0
Glamorgan	24.6	14.4
Merioneth	50.2	16.7
Monmouth	22.5	16.7
Montgomery	38.9	38.5
Pembroke	10.6	22.8
Radnor	28.0	26.0

Total voters registered in 1835: 34,607

Total voters registered in 1865: 44,951

Proportion of tenants-at-will in 1835: 27.6 per cent

Proportion of tenants-at-will in 1865: 24.3 percent

(Based on 'Summary of Electoral Returns relating to Counties', P.P. 1866 LVII (3736).)

B.14 . . . Tenants at will have learnt to realize the insecurity of their tenure by very diverse but effective methods . . . Here are some instances:

1. *Eviction for exercising an independent judgment in politics*
The *Commissioners* have received some evidence of this already. They will receive more. It will take years to forget the thrill of horror which spread through Wales, more especially through its tenantry, after the political evictions which followed the elections of 1859 and

1868. Four uncles and relatives of mine were evicted for refusing to vote for the *Tory* candidate . . . In the election of 1865, the landlords of this district stood in this hall to watch their tenants voting, and I have heard tenants express their shame that, terrified by the evictions of 1859, they voted against their will and conscience. It was after the election of 1868 that Cardiganshire and Carnarvonshire suffered most.

(Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, *Minutes of Evidence*, I, Question 16, 910. Also quoted in *Speeches and Addresses by the late Thomas E. Ellis*, MP (Wrexham, 1912), p.256.)

B.15 Sir,

The next time you send your Voting Papers to *Dowlais* please to leave them all at the *Dowlais* Office, for it will spare you and them a great deal of trouble. For the man that was distributing this time could not find out the Voters' residences because he was a stranger to the place. Then the *Dowlais* agents had to call in every house to tell the Voters who he was to vote for.

So the easiest way is the best way to accomplish everything that will answer the same purpose in the end. Therefore I beg to call your attention to the above plan, for it will answer the same purpose, and save a great deal of useless bodily exercise to both parties, and time spent without doing good. Which the late renowned Benjamin Franklyn said was money.

Wishing you success in all your endeavours, I remain yours Truly.

(A Voter: To the Merthyr Tydfil Union and Board of Health.
No date (April 1853)

Sir,

I can not rest happy under the flagrant abuse of authority we suffer in the place without making our complaint known to you, as a higher power, and I suppose with power to control our movements. Will you be so kind as to inform me whether it is legal for the Iron Masters or any other party to send their agents to follow the delivery of Voting Papers dictating to the Voters how to fill them — and not only that but to fill them for them, and cross the names of other candidates out. The abuse here has been very great — plenty of evidence — reading and willing . . .

(John Jones, Grocer, *Dowlais*, to the General Board of Health: 7 April 1853.)

That the *Public Health Act* gives the General Board of Health no powers to supervise elections or to coerce the Local Boards into a discharge of their duties under the act.

(Tom Taylor, G[iven]B[y]H[and] to John Jones, *Dowlais*: 12 April 1853.)

(PRO MH 13/125. These documents are to be found in *Public Health in Mid-Victorian Wales. Correspondence from the Principality to the General Board of Health and Local Government Office 1848–71.*

Transcribed and edited by Alun Huw Williams for the University of Wales Board of Celtic Studies (1983) *sub* Merthyr Tydfil.)

B.16 I am informed that a very close canvass is proceeding for the representation of Cardiff. My own feelings are warmly interested for the success of the Liberal Free-trade candidate, Mr Coffin, and I wish you to mention to any Tenants or Workmen of mine who may have votes, that I shall be very glad if it is consistent with their own opinions to support him. I write this because I am informed that much intimidation and undue influence is proceeding on the other side, and to prevent misrepresentations of my views. This I am told has been the case respecting Thomas John of Broviskin who rents of me, and on whom I wish you to call without delay upon the subject.

(Lady Charlotte Guest to J.H.Austin, 17 June 1851. Glamorgan Record Office, D.I.C.L.1852 (i) letter 293. Quoted in Rosemary Jones, 'The Cardiff Borough Election of 1852', M.A. (Wales), 1982.)

B.17a Return of expenses in the 1868 Election

<i>County</i>	<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Total Expenses</i>			<i>Numbers who Voted</i>	<i>Total Electors</i>
Breconshire	G.C. Morgan	£84	3s	3d	No contest	2,288
Cardiganshire	E.M. Richards	£2028	16s	9d	2,074	5,123
	E.M. Vaughan	£3152	4s	7d	1,918	
Carmarthenshire	E.J. Sartoris	£4347	9s	10d	3,280	8,026
	John Jones	£3561	12s	9d	2,942	
	H.L. Duxley	£3768	6s	9d	2,828	
	David Pugh	£2837	9s	4d	1,340	
Caernarfon	T.L.D. Jones Parry	£2427	12s	3d	1,968	4,852
	G. Douglas Pennant	£7024	8s	4d	1,815	
Denbighshire	Sir W.W. Wynn	£6980	10s	0d	3,355	7,623
	G.C. Morgan	£4311	5s	1d	2,720	
	R.M. Biddulph	£376	3s	5d	2,412	
Flintshire	Lord Richard Grosvenor	£244	1s	4d	No contest	4,150
Glamorgan	C.R.M. Talbot	£62	3s	8d	No contest	11,329
	H. Hussey Vivian	£162	5s	10d		
Merioneth	David Williams	£27	6s	1d	No contest	3,187
	W.R.M. Wynne	£2083	6s	11d		
Monmouthshire	C.O.S. Morgan and Oulett Somerset	£11535	4s	0d	3,525	
	H.M. Clifford	£3121	16s	6d	2,338	
	C.W. Williams Wynn	£194	4s	0d	No contest	
Montgomeryshire	C.W. Williams Wynn	£194	4s	0d	No contest	4,810
Pembrokeshire	J.H. Scourfield	£207	19s	0d	No contest	3,644
Radnorshire	Arthur Walsh	£2255	10s	11d	No contest	2,216

B.17a (cont'd)

<i>Borough</i>	<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Total Expenses</i>				<i>Numbers who Voted</i>	<i>Total Electors</i>
Beaumaris	W.O. Stanley	£553	5s	4d		941	1,944
	Morgan Lloyd	£342	10s	10d		650	
Cardiff	J.F.D. Crichton Stuart	£2917	18s	8d		2,501	5,388
	H.S. Giffard	£4796	10s	8d		2,055	
Cardigan	Sir T.D. Lloyd	£65	17s	5d	No contest		1,652
Carmarthen	J.S.C. Stepney	£832	2s	11d		1,892	3,190
	M.D. Treherne	£1226	1s	11d		595	
Caernarfon	W.B. Hughes	£766	0s	0d		1,601	3,376
	T.J. Wynn	£1805	7s	4d		1,051	
Denbigh	Watkin Williams	£1914	18s	9d		1,319	2,785
	Townsend Mainwaring	£1027	7s	8d			
Flint	Sir John Hanmer	£599	10s	4d	No contest		3,280
Haverfordwest	William Edwardes	£1344	2s	11d		638	1,526
	Samuel Pitman	£1302	5s	7d		497	
Merthyr	Henry Richard	£512	7s	2d		11,683	14,577
	Richard Fothergill	£3058	4s	11d		7,439	
	H.A. Bruce	£1920	18s	5d		5,776	
Monmouth	Sir J.W. Ramsden	£2772	9s	11d		1,618	3,771
	Samuel Homphrey	£2591	1s	8d		1,449	
Montgomery	C.R.D. Hanbury Tracy	£101	17s	7d	No contest		2,559
Pembroke	Thomas Meyrick	£1108	12s	0d		1,419	3,028
	Sir Hugh Owen	£277	15s	11d		1,049	
Radnor	R.G. Price	£ 106	16s	6d	No contest		831
Swansea	L.LIDillwyn	£92	9s	9d	No contest		

(Abstracted from Parliamentary Papers 1868–9, L (424))

B.17b *June 27 (Dowlais)* . . . There will not now be probably any contest, the nomination is fixed for Tuesday, and everything hitherto has gone on quietly. But I regret to say that the *Chartists* have printed and stuck up papers calling upon the working classes to attend on Tuesday in order to ask Sir John (Guest, the sitting member) to give account of former votes and to pledge himself to them for the future. This is all nonsense . . .

June 29 . . . John Evans (the manager of the Iron Works) came to fetch me, and I proceeded towards the *Vestry room* in order to take Merthyr (i.e. Sir John Guest) to the hustings . . . Before, however, I could reach that spot he met me, and told me that a *Chartist*, Argust [Francis Argust, a shoemaker], had proposed the *Chartist* leader (i.e. Morgan Williams) as a candidate and that a poll was demanded . . . Merthyr's speech was a good one, and shewed that the price of labour was not regulated by the price of corn, but by demand and by the price of iron . . . Morgan Williams made a very long and prosy speech, part Welsh, part English. . . . He was a good deal cheered, more I think than the other speakers. When he had done, his proposer Argust came forward

and said that he withdrew and would not go to the Poll, after which Merthyr was duly returned.

(Lady Charlotte Guest, *Extracts from her Journal 1833–1852*. Edited by the Earl of Bessborough (1950), pp.122–24.)

B.18a Numbers of Electors in 1868–9

<i>Counties</i>	<i>£12 Occupiers</i>	<i>Other Qualifications</i>	<i>Total</i>
Anglesey	857	2639	3496
Brecon	1347	2297	3644
Cardigan	1046	4069	5115
Carmarthen	2614	5412	8026
Caernarfon	1628	3224	4852
Denbigh	1971	5652	7623
Flint	1223	2927	4150
Glamorgan	2473	8856	11329
Merioneth	1132	2053	3185
Monmouth	2044	5927	7971
Montgomery	1187	3623	4810
Pembroke	1154	3536	4690
Radnor	587	1629	2216

<i>Boroughs</i>	<i>Electors</i>
Beaumaris	1944
Brecon	808
Cardigan	1561
Cardiff	5388
Carmarthen	3190
Caernarfon	3376
Denbigh	2785
Flint	3280
Haverfordwest	1526
Merthyr	14577
Monmouth	3771
Montgomery	2559
Pembroke	3028
Radnor	841
Swansea	7543

(Parliamentary Papers, 1868–9, L(418–9).)

B.18b The chairman reminded the meeting of a remark of Mr Bruce's at the hustings when a show of hands went against him. 'Ah', said he to the people, 'you may hold up your dirty hands against me, but tomorrow I'll be the member for Merthyr in spite of you'. (Cries of shame). The 'dirty' hands had got the power now and would they forget an insult of that kind?

(Merthyr Telegraph, 17 October 1868.)

B.19 Ballot Act (1872)

Statutes of the Realm, 35 & 36 Vict. c.33.

2. In the case of a poll at an election the votes shall be given by ballot. The ballot of each voter shall consist of a paper (in this Act called a ballot paper) showing the names and description of the candidates. Each ballot paper shall have a number printed on the back, and shall have attached a counterfoil with the same number printed on the face. At the time of voting, the ballot paper shall be marked on both sides with an official mark, and delivered to the voter within the polling station, and the number of such voter on the register of voters shall be marked on the counterfoil, and the voter having secretly marked his vote on the paper, and folded it up so as to conceal his vote, shall place it in a closed box in the presence of the officer presiding at the polling station (in this Act called 'the presiding officer') after having shown to him the official mark at the back.

Any ballot paper which has not on its back the official mark, or on which votes are given to more candidates than the voter is entitled to vote for, or on which anything, except the said number on the back, is written or marked by which the voter can be identified, shall be void and not counted.

After the close of the poll the ballot boxes shall be sealed up, so as to prevent the introduction of additional ballot papers, and shall be taken charge of by the returning officer, and that officer shall, in the presence of such agents, if any, of the candidates as may be in attendance, open the ballot boxes, and ascertain the result of the poll by counting the votes given to each candidate, and shall forthwith declare to be elected the candidates or candidate to whom the majority of votes have been given, and return their names to the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. The decision of the returning officer as to any question arising in respect of any ballot paper shall be final, subject to reversal on petition questioning the election or return.

Wherever an equality of votes is found to exist between any candidates at an election for a county or borough, and the addition of a vote would entitle any of such candidates to be declared elected, the returning officer, if a registered elector of such county or borough, may give such additional vote, but shall not in any other case be entitled to vote at an election for which he is returning officer.

Debating the Evidence

Professor Ieuan Gwynedd Jones's essay examines the comparatively placid and traditional forms of organized political activity in the mid-nineteenth century. He, too, draws heavily on evidence from newspapers and official government and parliamentary enquiries. In particular, Professor Jones's use of statistical evidence is worth noting. The appearance of material such as census data and electoral returns reflect greater government interest and involvement in society in the nineteenth century. Compared to the subjective nature of evidence given by informants to Royal Commissions, for example, are we dealing with accurate and objective facts? We shall see below that this is not the case. Professor Jones also makes use of the records of political organizations (the *National Reform Union*, the *National Reform League*, the *Anti-Corn Law League*, the Liberation Society) and of the writings of leading political radicals such as *Henry Richard* and Thomas Rees. We have a mixture here of official or organizational records and of what are sometimes called *polemical* sources, i.e. sources which overtly display conviction, an articulated political philosophy and a deliberate attempt to persuade in a one-sided way. By their very nature these are subjective and biased. This does not mean that they are of no use. Finally, Ieuan Gwynedd Jones's use of an extract from a personal diary — the journal of Lady Charlotte Guest — is also noteworthy. Perhaps after the stolid diet of official material and the spice of polemic, we have here a direct and immediate human testimony. However, the problem of the typicality of such material — let alone its subjectivity — is significant.

Source B.1

What does this document tell us about contemporary attitudes to Wales and Welsh nationalism?

Source B.2

As the author considers the degree of support for universal *suffrage* at this time, what do you think might be the weakness of this source? What comment made by Professor Jones in this article needs to be considered in this respect?

Source B.3

In considering the strength of political opinion in favour of Parliamentary reform, what would you need to know about the *National Reform League* in making use of this source?

Source B.4

Given the objective set out in document (a), what does document (b) reveal about the work of the Liberation Society in Wales between 1861 and 1866? In what way does Source B.9 support document (b) here?

Source B.5

In view of the evidence in Sources D and E, what do you make of the first sentence in this source? Given the authorship of the source what do you make of its reliability as evidence?

Source B.6

What claim made here about the attitude of Welsh people to politics seems to support the evidence in Source B.5? What is there here which may enlighten us as to the value of newspaper evidence?

Source B.7

What is your view of this as a possible source for the study of the *Scotch Cattle* and *Chartism* in Wales? Compare this source to Source E.2 — which do you think is the more reliable evidence for support for the *Scotch Cattle* and *Chartism* in Wales? For what historical question is this primary evidence?

Source B.8

From evidence you read in Source E do you agree with the claim in this source that 'there have been only two considerable exceptions to this rule'? From your reading of Source D what comment would you make on *Henry Richard's* claims as to the causes of the Rebecca riots?

Source B.9

This evidence is from the Census of Religious Worship in England and Wales, 1851. The calculations here are based on a count of the number of people attending places of worship on a particular Sunday. What questions might you need to ask in interpreting this evidence? How reliable is such information as a guide to the religious beliefs and affiliations of the Welsh people of this time?

Source B.10

What does this source show about the attitude of Welsh MPs? How do you think this evidence was obtained and how might it be checked?

Source B.11

What does this source show? Compare and explain the differences in the percentages in the county franchise table for north and south Wales and those for Haverfordwest and Cardiff in the borough table.

Source B.12

What does a comparison between the percentage of working-class electors in Pembroke and Merthyr at this time reveal?

Source B.13

Who were tenants-at-will? Why did they form a much greater percentage of the electorate in a county like Merioneth compared to Glamorgan? What significance did this differentiation have for Welsh politics?

Source B.14

What are the strengths and weaknesses of this source?

Source B.15

What is the writer of the first letter here saying and why does he write in the style that he does? Why do you think he chooses to be anonymous? In what way does the evidence in the second letter support that in the first?

Source B.16

In what way does the evidence here support that in B.15? Which of the two sources do you consider to be the more reliable and revealing?

Source B.17a

What additional information would help to make this evidence on contested elections more useful? How reliable is this document?

Source B.17b

What particular words or phrases here do you feel reveal Lady Charlotte Guest's attitude towards *Chartism*?

Source B.18a

Compare the information in this source on the number of voters in boroughs, with that in Source B.12. What is the overall trend and how do you explain this? Where do the biggest numerical increases take place and what might be the explanation for this?

Source B.18b

What does the reference to 'dirty hands' in this source mean and what is its significance?

Source B.19

Given the evidence contained in Sources B.14, B.15 and B.16, what was likely to be the effect of the Ballot Act?

Discussion

The questions posed on polemical sources (such as B.5, B.7, B.8) are intended to demonstrate the wariness with which the historian must treat such sources. *Henry Richard* was a leading *Nonconformist and Radical* — a prominent figure in the Liberation Society and MP for Merthyr Tydfil after

1868. Thomas Rees was a leading *Nonconformist* minister and an historian of the movement. How well placed were they to provide reliable evidence on Rebecca and *Chartism*? Certainly, they lived through the period of these movements and may well have had direct experience of them. However, their commentary is much more that of the historian or the polemicist than of the direct observer. Their views are in essence secondary interpretations rather than primary sources. This does not mean that we can dismiss their evidence. The strength of this type of source lies in what it reveals about the attitudes of radical Liberals and *Nonconformists* in nineteenth-century Wales. These were prominent men. Their comments are noteworthy.

The historian also has to be careful with statistics. Whilst some sources (B.10, B.11, B.12, B.13, B.18a) appear to be straightforward in the evidence they offer and the interpretation they suggest, and can be cross-checked for accuracy, other examples of statistical evidence are far more problematic. Source B.17a is presumably based on returns made to the authorities by candidates or their agents, which have then been collated by Parliamentary officials. To what extent does this allow an accurate picture to emerge of the role which money played in deciding Parliamentary elections? For example, would the expenses presumably incurred by John Austin at the behest of Lady Charlotte Guest (B.16) be shown in such official returns? How can we be certain that in direct and indirect ways, money was not covertly used to decide the outcome? In any event, is money the only form of influence brought to bear in such situations? Source B.9 is another example of the problems encountered in handling statistical evidence. The Census of Religious Worship of 1851, whilst being a unique indication of the strength and spread of religious affiliation in the nineteenth century, is a source which has long caused problems for historians. For example, in the indexes at the foot of B.9 the population of Wales in 1851 and the total attendances at places of worship on 'Census Sunday' in that year, are given. The obvious inference is that a very high percentage of the population in Wales attended a church or chapel on that day. Such an interpretation would be totally misleading. Attendance figures are actually an *aggregate* of total attendances on 'Census Sunday' and we know for certain that many people attended more than one service on that day. The overall percentage of the population attending any service was therefore much lower than is suggested here. This is not to devalue the importance of the *Religious Census* to historians and the possibilities it offers for generalizing about Welsh religious affiliations in 1851, but it does reveal that statistics can seriously mislead as well as inform.