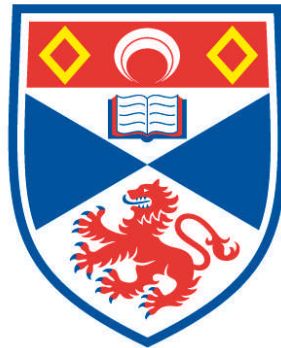


THE RUSSELL ADMINISTRATION, 1846-1852

FREDERICK AUGUST DREYER

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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THE RUSSELL ADMINISTRATION, 1846-1852.

by

F. A. Dreyer.

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews.

January, 1962.




Declaration.

This thesis is my own work based on my own research
and has not previously been accepted for a higher degree.



Certificate.

I certify that F.A. Dreyer has spent 10 terms at research work under my supervision, that he has fulfilled the conditions of ordinances nos. 16 and 61 (St. Andrews), and that he is qualified to submit this thesis in application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



Research Qualifications.

I graduated from Toronto University (B.A. 1st class, Modern History) in 1955 and from Oxford University (B.A. 2nd class, Modern History) in 1957. In October 1957 I matriculated as a research student at the University of St. Andrews.

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Abbreviations

Add. Mss.....	Additional Manuscripts.
Brit. Museum.....	British Museum.
<u>E.H.R.</u>	<u>English Historical Review.</u>
<u>Greville</u>	L. Strachey and R. Fulford, <u>The Greville Memoirs.</u>
Ms. Clar.....	Clarendon Manuscripts.
P.R.O.....	Public Record Office.
<u>Trans. R. Hist. Soc.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society.</u>
Victoria, <u>Letters</u>	A.C. Benson and Viscount Esher, <u>The Letters of Queen Victoria.</u>

INTRODUCTION

The history of party politics during the period of Lord John Russell's first ministry has been relatively neglected. The social, the economic, and the diplomatic developments that took place between 1846 and 1852 have been discussed at length by students of the nineteenth century, but until very recently their interest in political and parliamentary history seemed to end in 1846 with the repeal of the Corn Laws and the disruption of the Conservative party. This neglect is, perhaps, reasonable and natural. In comparison with Peel's Government, Russell's seems somewhat commonplace and trivial. In terms of drama the latter represents an anticlimax: Russell's function, it seems, was merely to tidy up and secure the achievements of his predecessor. The years between 1846 and 1852, however, are not dull: they are dominated by the threat of Chartism, by the Irish famine, and by the revolutions on the continent. But these very same events overshadow the more prosaic and humdrum succession of debates, manoeuvres, and compromises in Parliament. Whether or not the period commands interest for its own sake, it is of considerable importance in the evolution of the Liberal party. The Russell Cabinet represents the last purely Whig administration in the nineteenth century. During these years the foundation was laid for the union of the Whig and Peelite parties in the Aberdeen coalition of 1852; and at the same time the leadership of the liberal forces in Parliament began to pass from the Whigs to the Peelites. The best account of these two processes is

contained in three articles, all of which were published in the last ten years. The first, "Peel and the Party System, 1850-50", by Professor N. Gash deals in part with the relationship between Peel and the Whigs after the corn-law crisis of 1846. The second, by Mr. C.H. Stuart deals primarily with the collapse of the Russell Government and the formation of the Aberdeen coalition. The third, by Professor J.B. Conacher is on the subject of Peel and the Peelites between 1846 and 1850.¹ While these articles reflect a growing interest in the period and provide an important contribution to our knowledge, they are not by themselves sufficient for a complete understanding. All three are based largely on Peelite sources and are written to some extent from a Peelite point of view. Professor Gash and Professor Conacher are primarily concerned with either Peel or the Peelites and Mr. Stuart with the immediate circumstances which led to a Peelite-dominated coalition. There is, therefore, some justification for re-examining the subject by the light of Whig sources and from the standpoint of the Whig party.

Identifying the Whig party at the time of the Russell Government is a difficult and perhaps impossible exercise. It had no corporate and separate existence in the sense of a twentieth-century party. In so far as the Liberal movement in Parliament had become based on the

¹ N.Gash, "Peel and the Party System, 1850-50". Trans. R. Hist. Soc. 5th series, I.
C.H. Stuart, "The Formation of the Coalition Cabinet of 1852". Trans. R. Hist. Soc. 5th series, IV.
J.B. Conacher, "Peel and the Peelites, 1846-1850". E.H.R. LXXVIII.

Reform Club in the 1830's, membership of the latter implied membership of the former. But while all Whigs were Liberals, all Liberals were not necessarily Whigs. Many members of the Reform Club ranging from Irish Repealers to Radical Reformers acted independently in Parliament. They frequently opposed the nominally Whig governments of the 1830's and 1840's and sometimes acted in combination with the Conservatives to drive the Whigs out of office. The Reform Club at this date served as a basis for Whig-Radical co-operation in the constituencies. The two parties or factions frequently combined for the purpose of fighting elections, but this alliance of the hustings was not always reflected in Parliament. A glance at some contemporary guide like Dod's Parliamentary Companion reveals many members of Parliament who are described as either Moderate Liberals, Liberals or Radicals. There are a few who are mentioned as either supporters of Whig principles or followers of a particular Whig government, but the man who is declared to be a Whig, pure and simple, is a rarity. In strictest usage the title seems to assume that its bearer is related to one of the great liberal families of the country like the Greys, the Hollands and the Russells, and that he has regularly acted with the representatives of these families in Parliament. This definition, however, would exclude such men as Palmerston and Clanricarde on the grounds of party regularity and such men as Macaulay, Campbell and Brougham on the grounds of pedigree. It would restrict the membership of the Whig Party to a mere handful of peers and well-born commoners. As a definition, it is

probably too precise and pedantic to be of use. The gradations which separated a Whig from a Radical Reformer are subtle and elusive, and it is difficult to discover a point either on the basis of political principles or on the basis of party association where a hard and fast division can be made. To describe the Whigs as the right wing and the Radicals as the left wing of the Liberal party oversimplifies what is in fact a complicated and essentially casual relationship. On the whole, however, a Whig may be regarded as a moderate or conservative Liberal who either follows or belongs to the liberal aristocracy.

For all practical purposes the origins of the nineteenth century Whig party date back to the last decade of the previous century, more specifically to the rupture between Charles James Fox and the Duke of Portland in 1794. While Fox and his adherents did not possess any exclusive property in the term Whig as a party label, this group represents the seed from which the modern Whigs developed; and from the Foxites it is possible to trace a certain continuity of personnel and of doctrine leading to the Whigs of the 1840's. By the 1840's, of course, both the Foxite tradition and the Foxite party had been much diluted. Collaboration with the Grenville and Canningite Tories on the one hand and with various assortments of radical reformers on the other broadened the basis and modified the principles of the Foxite Whigs. But to a greater or lesser degree as circumstances required, the Whig party from the time of Fox to the time of Russell managed to stand for the principles of civil liberty, religious equality and

political reform.

Before the formation of the Canning Government in 1827, the Whig party represented a perpetual opposition in Parliament. With the exception of the short-lived coalition of 1806 in which they took part, they held aloof from office. Indeed, in view of their constant opposition to the court and their eccentric, if somewhat spasmodic interest, in Catholic emancipation and franchise reform, they had virtually debarred themselves from participating in any Government. It was not until the end of the 1820's that circumstances restored them to the forefront of politics. In 1827 the death of Lord Liverpool precipitated a split within the Tory party between Wellington and Peel on the one hand and Canning on the other. The bulk of the Whigs, led by Lansdowne and Tierney, combined with the Canningites and assisted in the formation of the Canning and Goderich coalitions. This combination was not countenanced by Lord Grey and terminated with the resignation of Goderich in 1828. The Canningites allied themselves with Wellington and the Whigs drifted back into opposition. With the return of the Tories to office, however, the impediments which had hampered the Whigs for over thirty years were removed one by one. The alliance of conservative interests which had maintained Liverpool in power began to disintegrate. Four months after the Government was formed the Canningite members resigned. The successive disputes over the Corn Laws and the currency problem, and the final crisis of Catholic emancipation split the great Tory party into fragments. The death of

George IV in 1830 and the succession of his brother terminated the long-standing feud between the leaders of the Whig party and the court. And finally with the out-break of the reform agitation in the same year and with the evident necessity of extending the franchise, the formation of a reform government under Whig auspices became not only possible but imperative.

The reform government which took office under Lord Grey in 1830 was in fact a coalition. Although the Whigs represented the preponderant element within the Cabinet, they were joined by Palmerston, Grant and Goderich, all three of whom were former followers of Canning and by the Duke of Richmond, one of the leaders of the ultra-protestant Tories. In spite of the mixed and somewhat conservative character of Lord Grey's administration, its policy was marked by a strong radical bias. The provisions of the Government's reform bill far exceeded anything that had been before considered in Whig or moderate-liberal circles, and its passage through Parliament was secured only by recourse to a general election in 1831 and by threatening to swamp the House of Lords with Whig creations. The dissolution of 1832 under the new franchise returned the Whigs to power with a clear, if undisciplined, majority in the Commons. If the composition of the new House favoured the Government as a whole, it also strengthened the influence of the more liberal Whigs like Russell, Brougham and Durham over the direction of Government policy. In 1833 a measure for the abolition of slavery was introduced and carried; and in 1834 the

administration of poor relief was reformed on Benthamite lines; and finally in the same year Russell committed his colleagues to the policy of expropriating part of the endowments of the Irish church and employing them for secular purposes. It was this last event which marked the high-water mark of reforming Whiggism. The Duke of Richmond and Lord Goderich (then Lord Ripon) accompanied by Stanley and Graham, both conservative Whigs, resigned from the Cabinet in May and a month later were followed by Lord Grey. After an unsuccessful attempt on the part of Lord Melbourne to reconstruct the Ministry, the Whigs resigned in November, making way for the Peel Government of 1835. Although the latter's administration was of brief duration and failed to remain in power in spite of a dissolution in 1835, it marks a turning point in the fortunes of the Whig party. At the beginning of the decade the discipline of the Tory party had collapsed, whereas the Whigs, the Canningites, and the Radicals represented a comparatively homogeneous and united combination. Four years of Whig government, however, permitted Peel to reconstruct and re-organize the Tories to a degree where he could attempt to take office in 1835. This transformation was facilitated to a large extent by the fear of Whig radicalism which the Government's various policies had inspired in conservative circles. After the break-up of Lord Grey's Government in 1834, Peel slowly and patiently extended his authority and influence over conservative interests in Parliament and in the country, while the Whigs and their allies were increasingly weakened by internal dissension and the loss of public

confidence.

Although the dissolution of 1835 did not result in a majority for Peel's Government, it drastically reduced the number of Liberals who had been returned in 1832. In the end Russell succeeded in defeating Peel and the Whigs returned to office only by means of a fairly close alliance with O'Connell and the Irish Radicals. Melbourne himself had little desire to carry on the radical and reforming policies of the previous Whig administration. It was doubtful, in fact, whether the Government possessed sufficient support in the Commons to engage in any serious dispute with the House of Lords. In the course of the next six years it became more and more evident that the Government's survival depended more on the forbearance of Peel than on the inherent strength of its own supporters. Melbourne failed to repair the breach which the resignation of Stanley and Graham in 1834 had opened within the very core of the Whig party. In 1839, Howick, the son of Lord Grey resigned from the Government. More important, perhaps, was the growing divergence between the Whigs and their Radical supporters. The emergence of the free-trade agitation in England and the Repeal movement in Ireland not only divorced the Whigs from the Irish and English Radicals in Parliament, but deprived them of any claim as a popular party. In 1841 Melbourne and Russell attempted to compromise their differences with the free-trade Radicals on the basis of an eight-shilling duty on imported corn. The fixed-duty proposal, however, failed to satisfy the free-traders and seriously alarmed the

agricultural interests. When Peel came into office as a result of the Conservative victory in the election of 1841, the Whigs, as distinct from the Liberals, had been reduced to a small and impotent faction. Stanley and Graham threw in their lot with Peel and the latter seemed to possess undisputed supremacy over the Conservative party. Russell and Melbourne on the other hand could no longer pretend to act as the leaders of a united Liberal party. Peel's ascendancy for the next four years depended primarily on the support of the agriculturalists. Although his freedom of action was to a large extent circumscribed by this fact, his evident willingness to extend the principle of free-trade to every commodity but corn encouraged many Liberals, ranging from Lord Howick to Cobden, to place their confidence in Peel rather than Russell. And it was not until the outbreak of the Irish famine in 1845 that Russell and the Whigs found themselves in a position to resume the direction of the Liberal party.

CHAPTER 1

The period between the cabinet crisis of December 1845 and the resignation of Sir Robert Peel in June 1846 forms an indispensable background to the study of the Russell Government. The events of these seven months brought the Whigs into office and laid the foundations for their Government during the next six years. The importance of the rupture within the Conservative party and of the emergence of two independent and irreconcilable Conservative factions requires little elaboration. This development permitted the Whigs to take office without ever commanding a dependable majority either in the House of Lords or the House of Commons. Long before Peel resigned, it was evident that the Whigs were the only party with sufficient cohesion to form a Ministry and that neither the Protectionists, the Peelites, the Radicals, nor the Irish Repealers alone could take office without bringing down upon themselves an irresistible opposition. A detailed examination of the period, however, reveals serious weaknesses within the Whig party. Their conduct during the cabinet crisis of December 1845 and during the debates on the corn and coercion bills in the spring of 1846 foreshadows the problems and difficulties that were to dominate the history of the Russell Government.

The outline of the crisis is generally known. On December 8th, 1845, Sir Robert Peel broke up his Government after failing to persuade

its members to accept his measure for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Lord John Russell, who had in the Edinburgh Letter already announced his conversion to free trade, was invited to take office with the understanding that Peel would assist him in passing the repeal measure through Parliament. In spite of this offer Russell did not accept office immediately, but spent from the 12th to the 18th of December conferring with his friends. On the 18th he informed the Queen of his decision to form a Ministry and proceeded to the distribution of places in the new Cabinet. On the next day he resigned his commission on the grounds that Lord Grey had refused to join him if Palmerston was to become Foreign Secretary. Russell pleaded that it was impossible for him to proceed, in the circumstances, without the complete support of his party.¹ Many contemporary observers believed that Russell was forced to abandon his attempt not because of the defection of Lord Grey but because of the opposition of his supporters to the repeal of the Corn Laws, and thought that he returned the "poisoned chalice" to Peel to avoid tasting it himself. Halévy repeats this interpretation and suggests that Russell, Palmerston and Grey urged trivial and unnecessary difficulties in order to avoid the responsibility of repealing the Corn Laws.² Most of the evidence, however, contradicts this and points to other causes of failure.

Russell confined his consultations to the principal leaders of the

¹ Halévy, Victorian Years, 115-19.

² Ibid. 119-20.

Whig party, who met during the crisis at his London house in Chesham Place. The largest of these meetings was attended by Sir George Grey, Sir Francis Baring, Henry Labouchere, Thomas Babington Macaulay, Edward Ellice, John Cam Hobhouse, Lords Cottenham, Morpeth, Palmerston, Grey, Lansdowne, Clarendon, Monteagle, Auckland, and the Duke of Bedford.³ Lord Bessborough and Russell's father-in-law, Lord Minto, did not come up to London for the meetings, but both corresponded with Russell and offered advice on various aspects of the negotiations.⁴ All these people with the exception of the Duke of Bedford, Russell's brother, had served in Lord Melbourne's Cabinet; Lord Grey, Monteagle and Edward Ellice had resigned their offices before its dissolution in 1841. Bedford, although he was subsequently pressed to join Russell's Cabinet of 1846-1852, never held political office.⁵ His role seems to have been that of a confidential adviser and negotiator for the Whig party.⁶ The same is true of Edward Ellice.⁷ He had not belonged to a Whig

³ Northbrook, Baring, 223-24.

⁴ Minto to Russell and Bessborough to Russell, Letters for December 1845, P.R.O. 30/22/4.

⁵ Greville wrote to Clarendon: "The Duke of Bedford seems to have made up his mind not to come into the Cabinet, & on the whole I think he is right, & more useful out of it - he is a sort of out-door member now". December 1, 1847, Ms. Clar. dep. c 521.

⁶ Maxwell, Clarendon, I, 320.

⁷ Lord Grey believed that Ellice "...was the only person with whom Lord John seemed to consult respecting his appointments". Grey to Ellice, December 29, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 120/3. Charles Wood wrote to Grey: "If he [Ellice] is good for anything it is as a means of communication between different parties & an assuager of difficulties". Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 102/2.

Government since 1835 and did not join Russell in 1846, nor does his name appear among those proposed for the Cabinet in December. Lord Normanby, who was in Italy at the time of the crisis, was the only member of Melbourne's Cabinet, still active in Whig politics, who was not consulted by Russell.⁸

Before the publication of the Edinburgh Letter, most of these men were publicly committed to the policy of a fixed duty on imported corn. Lord Moxpeth subscribed to the Anti-Corn-Law League at the same time as Russell announced his conversion to free trade. Several weeks earlier Lord Grey told Russell that the time for a fixed duty was "quite gone by."⁹ In the spring of 1846 a number of Whig peers attempted to re-impose the fixed duty upon the party. This reaction, which was largely tactical in its inspiration, gives weight to the suspicion that Russell's friends were not prepared to repeal the Corn Laws in December. But the accounts of the Chesham Place conferences do not support this. No one who was present seems to have opposed repeal on principle or apprehended any resistance to repeal within the ranks of the Whig party. Russell, himself, stated in Parliament, "...the remarks which have been made out of doors upon my inability to bring those whom I consulted into an agreement on the subject of the Corn Laws were utterly unfounded".¹⁰ Although he had spoken to none of his friends before writing the Edinburgh

⁸ Normanby to Russell, January 1, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

⁹ Lord Grey to Russell, November 8, 1845, P.R.O. 30/22/4.

¹⁰ Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXIII, 103.

Letter, it seems to have been received fairly well. On December 2nd

Ellice wrote to Lord Grey:

"I have of course seen much of, & had much discussion with Lord John - His promptness & boldness have had their usual results - They have decided wavering friends...The Duke of Bedford after weighty consideration approves. Ld Lansdowne had longer misgivings - doubtless - but will follow the stream when he sees no hope of a fixed duty".¹¹

Five days later Bedford wrote to Clarendon that, "Of all his [Russell's] late colleagues only two have disapproved".¹² These two were Lansdowne and Palmerston. The former had made a last-minute attempt to stop Russell from publishing the Edinburgh Letter,¹⁵ but he appears to have come round to Russell's point of view by December 12th.¹⁴

Early in the next session he told the House of Lords that, "...the entire abolition of all interference with the corn trade..." accompanied by the removal of agricultural burdens, "was the only practicable course open [to] their adoption".¹⁵

¹¹ Ellice to Lord Grey, December 2, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 84/8.

¹² Bedford to Clarendon, December 7, 1845, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 539.

¹³ Bedford wrote to Clarendon, on November 6, 1850:

"Lansdowne was here (in 1845) when John arrived, after dinner, from Edinburgh & told me when I went to see him that he had stated his opinions on the Corn Law in a letter we shd see in the newspapers -- I repeated this to L. & so I think did he in the evening--The next morning L. came to my room to ask if I cd not prevail upon him to stop the publication of the letter".

Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 c.

¹⁴ Russell wrote to Lord Grey on December 11, 1845 and told him that it was not necessary to come up to London immediately, "...for unless Lansdowne consents I shall give up the task". Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 119/1. Since Russell proceeded with the negotiations, Lansdowne cannot have pressed his initial objections to the Edinburgh Letter. Lord Melbourne wrote to Russell on December 13, 1845, "I am much rejoiced that you have got Lansdowne with you". P.R.O. 30/22/4.

¹⁵ Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXIII, 175.

In conversation with Lord Campbell on Russell's letter Palmerston had spoken of " 'John's temerity in writing and publishing this letter without the sanction of his party' ", complaining that it would strengthen Peel and prevent the Whigs from returning to power.¹⁶ Palmerston's protest to Russell does not appear among the letter's papers. But Lord Beauvale, Palmerston's brother-in-law, wrote that he regretted Palmerston had not stood "upon his first letter to Lord John" and insisted upon the fixed duty.¹⁷ As Beauvale implies, Palmerston did not persist in his initial objections to the Edinburgh Letter, and on December 18th voted with the majority of the meeting for taking office and proposing total and immediate repeal. Charles Greville predicted that Palmerston could not resist the temptation of office:

"...as Palmerston's objection was grounded on the assumption that it [the Edinburgh Letter] would strengthen Peel, now that Peel is out of office, and the doors of the F.O. are open to him, he will no doubt be reconciled to it; for I don't imagine he cares about corn, fixed duty, sliding scales, or anything else except so far as they may bear upon his return to that abode of his bliss".¹⁸

If the Whigs entertained any lingering hopes of a fixed duty after the Edinburgh Letter, these hopes were dashed by Peel's resignation and abandonment of protection. Lord Clarendon wrote to his brother-in-law, George Cornwall Lewis:

¹⁶ Hardcastle, Campbell, II, 193.

¹⁷ Airlie, Lady Palmerston, II, 100.

¹⁸ Greville, V, 251-52.

"As to the fixed duty it wd be too much to say that many of the embryo Cabinet were favourable to it, for they all agreed that it was useless to discuss it even as Peel was pledged against it, wch was a matter of regret to some as it took away a source of revenue independent of protection".¹⁹

Many of those who were present at the Chesham Place conferences may have been driven to accept repeal, reluctantly and against their personal preferences, but the necessity of abolishing the Corn Laws was accepted by everyone. The issue that dominated the conferences was not whether the Corn Laws should be retained, but how they should be repealed.

In the course of their negotiation the Whigs considered two plans of repeal. At first they proposed to suspend the Corn Laws for the duration of the famine and then introduce a bill which would have gradually diminished and finally abolished all the duties on imported corn. This plan was dropped on December 16 in favour of total and immediate repeal. The first proposal is generally known and its details have been printed, but its significance has never been properly appreciated. Thursfield in his article on the Greville Memoirs in the English Historical Review refers to the original proposal simply as "a matter of history"²⁰ and cites it to illustrate Russell's inadequate grasp of the urgency of the economic crisis. Regardless of its intrinsic merits, the circumstances which led Russell to adopt

¹⁹ Clarendon to Lewis, December 23, 1845, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 532.

²⁰ ----"Notes on the Greville Memoirs". E.H.R. I, 125. This article was published anonymously. It is attributed to J.R. Thursfield in Parker, Graham, II, 27.

and later to abandon the scheme of gradual repeal deserve closer study. For it is in this aspect of the Chesham Place conferences, rather than in some supposed difficulties about the principle of repeal, that the problems that confronted the Whigs are most clearly implied.

When Russell composed the Edinburgh Letter, it is unlikely that he had decided on a definite scheme of repeal, and less likely that he foresaw Peel's resignation and the possibility that he might have to carry his own recommendations into effect. Nevertheless, in the course of the letter, Russell hinted in a vague and indirect fashion at a possible settlement of the question. He warned Peel against the "imposition of any duty at present, without a provision for its extinction within a short period". This would only prolong "a contest already sufficiently fruitful of animosity and discontent". In the final paragraph he urged the country to agitate for repeal, concluding:

"Let the Ministry propose such a revision of the taxes as in their opinion may render the public burdens more just and more equal; let them add any other provision which caution and even scrupulous forbearance may suggest; but let the removal of the restrictions on the main articles of food and clothing used by the mass of the people be required, as useful to all the great interests and indispensable to the progress of the nation".²¹

On first reading the letter Sidney Herbert, Peel's Secretary at War, believed that Russell had "embraced fully the doctrines of the League and was prepared for immediate abolition", but on closer examination decided that he had contemplated "only ultimate abolition within a short period balanced by a re-adjustment of local burdens [local rates

²¹ Walpole, Russell, I, 408-09.

which fell chiefly on agriculture]"²²

On December 10th Peel sent a memorandum to the Queen outlining the measure he had considered before the dissolution of his Government, and offering to support Russell in passing a similar measure through Parliament. Peel wrote:

"If the opinion of his colleagues had been in accordance with his own, he was fully prepared to take the responsibility of suspension and of the necessary consequence of suspension, a comprehensive review of the laws imposing restrictions on food with a view to their gradual diminution and ultimate removal...

"Sir Robert Peel is prepared to support in a private capacity a measure which may be in general conformity with those which he advised as a minister.

"It would be unbecoming in Sir Robert to make any reference to the details of such measures.

.....

"The principle on which Sir Robert Peel was prepared to recommend the reconsideration of the laws affecting the import of the main articles of food was in general accordance with that referred to in the concluding paragraph of Lord John Russell's letter to the Electors of the City of London.

"Sir Robert wished to accompany the removals of the restrictions on the admission of such articles with relief to the land from such charges as are unduly onerous and with other such provisions as in the terms of Lord John Russell's letter caution and even scrupulous forbearance may suggest.

"Sir Robert Peel will support measures founded on that general principle and will exercise any influence he may possess to promote that success".²⁵

Without Peel's offer of support it is unlikely that Russell would have even considered taking office to repeal the Corn Laws. At the time he commanded not more than one-third of the House of Lords²⁴ and about 250 votes in the House of Commons.²⁵ Macaulay wrote: "It is quite

²² Stanmore, Herbert, I, 52.

²³ Victoria, Letters, II, 62-63.

²⁴ Clarendon's Memorandum, December 1845, P.R.O. 30/22/4.

²⁵ Reid, Milnes, I, 368.

clear that we cannot win the battle with our own unassisted strength. If we win at all, it must be by the help of Peel, Graham, and their friends".²⁶ If Russell had accepted office and attempted to repeal the Corn Laws without some understanding with the Conservatives, he would simply have invited the defeat of his Government and the rejection of his measure. Before he had seen Peel's memorandum, he told the Queen that he was "the leader only of a minority, and thus not in a condition to form a Ministry".²⁷ The memorandum altered his prospects. Prince Albert wrote to Peel that Russell was "afraid of his minority in the House of Commons, but much relieved by your memorandum which just came in time".²⁸ However, if Russell's difficulties were, in his own words, "certainly diminished by this communication",²⁹ Peel had indicated certain conditions of support: he restricted his offer to gradual repeal, and by implication excluded the programme of the League, immediate repeal.

Since Peel's conditions corresponded closely with the terms of the Edinburgh Letter, it is unlikely that Russell felt any personal objections to them. He and his friends, on the contrary, regarded the memorandum as a suitable basis for further negotiations with the Conservatives, and on December 12th Russell and Lansdowne approached Sir James Graham "to ascertain more in detail" Peel's intentions.³⁰

²⁶ Trevelyan, Macaulay, II, 165.

²⁷ Gooch, Russell, I, 103.

²⁸ Parker, Peel, III, 241-42.

²⁹ Gooch, Russell, I, 103.

³⁰ Ibid. I, 104.

Peel, however, refused to divulge the details of his plan, and on the 15th Russell received a letter from Sir James Graham to this effect.⁵¹ Graham's letter was received with considerable suspicion. Macaulay wrote, "...we all feel that this is too vague, and that we may still be left in the lurch".⁵² On the information of Bedford and Clarendon, Greville wrote in his memoir :

"John produced Graham's letter. Lord Lansdowne said that certainly there was nothing in it at variance with what he said at their interview, but there was an appearance of drawing back in it, and something in the tone he did not like. The feeling of the meeting was, that Peel and Graham were not going to deal fairly and frankly with them, and they would not hear of Peel's excusing himself from divulging his intentions.... They unanimously agreed that great caution and determination were necessary, and they must see their way more clearly before they committed themselves to taking office....They will have no appearance of intrigue or underhand dealing, but an open frank proceeding which may enable them to see the exact condition in which they stand".⁵³

On the afternoon of the 15th Russell and Lansdowne went to Windsor and told the Queen that they proposed to draw up their own measure and submit it to Peel. If Peel refused to pledge himself to support it, they would not take office. Secondly, they asked the Queen to invite Peel to state whether or not any of his friends were prepared to form a Government on the policy of protection. In her letter to Peel of the same day the Queen said she

"...could not but see the fairness of the claim, 'that those members of the Cabinet who had disagreed with Sir Robert should declare

⁵¹ Graham to Russell, December 12, 1845, P.R.O. 30/22/4.

⁵² Trevelyan, Macaulay, II, 165.

⁵³ Greville, V, 255.

that they are not capable or willing to carry on the Government'...

"With an enormous minority in both Houses this could give the only chance of success to the new Government".³⁴

In spite of Peel's reserve, the Whigs did not immediately abandon his memorandum as the basis of their own proposal. Baring wrote in his diary on the 13th, after Graham's letter had been read to the meeting:

"Lord John strongly in favour of gradual abolition. I said time was of no value [to the agriculturists] but I had no objection to give time [if it would help] to settle the question. Most of the others were for time".³⁵

On the 14th Russell showed Baring the details of his plan. He proposed to retain a duty of eight to ten shillings when the average price of corn was below forty-eight shillings per quarter. The duty was to be lowered to five shillings when the averages rose above forty-eight and to one shilling when they rose above fifty-four.³⁶ Russell had drawn up his plan with reference to Peel's memorandum and even went so far as to adopt the latter's principle of a sliding duty. Baring did not approve of the rates of duty, but accepted the plan. He told Lord Grey, "it would be worthwhile supporting it as the only way of carrying the measure without a convulsion, if by adopting it we could conciliate the agriculturists".³⁷

If this plan was designed to conciliate the agriculturists and

³⁴ Parker, Peel, III, 245-46.

³⁵ Northbrook, Baring, 219-20.

³⁶ Ibid. 220.

³⁷ Lord Grey to Lady Grey, December 15, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 100/3.

provide a basis of co-operation between the Whigs and Conservatives, it soon proved unacceptable to the extreme free-traders of the former party. Lord Grey had not publicly repudiated the fixed duty before the crisis, but during the session of 1845 he had acted in concert with two influential Radicals, Charles Buller and Benjamin Hawes. During the crisis he entered into communication with Richard Cobden, the leader of the Anti-Corn-Law League.³⁸ It seems that he even believed that Arthur Roebuck was one of his admirers, and told Lady Grey that "our ways of thinking were not very unlike".³⁹ On the 1st of December Charles Buller encouraged Grey to take a leading part in the expected crisis and assured him of support. Buller wrote:

"I trust you will take your full share & assert those claims to the confidence of your countrymen which everybody seems to admit more readily than yourself...Depend upon it, if you will only lead, followers will not be wanting".⁴⁰

When Lord Grey arrived in London on the 15th, Russell held an informal meeting and outlined to him in company with Sir George Grey and Edward Ellice the plan he proposed to submit to his friends on the following day. Russell in his memorandum of the crisis simply records that Lord Grey "...appeared more hasty than was necessary".⁴¹

³⁸ Palmerston to Russell, December 20, 1845:

"As to Howick and his ultra Free Trade doctrines, you are of course aware that in the beginning of the last session he was inspired by others, or formed himself a little plan of setting up business on his own account as leader of a small party, Charles Buller & Hawes being his two generals of Division". P.R.O. 30/22/4. Grey Diaries, December 18, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III C 3/12.

³⁹ Lord Grey to Lady Grey, February 16, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 100/3.

⁴⁰ Charles Buller to Lord Grey, December 1, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 79/11.

⁴¹ Gooch, Russell, I, 105.

In fact, Grey refused to have anything to do with a gradual measure and insisted on immediate repeal. In his diary he states:

"When Ld John told me what had been settled as to his proposing the heads of a plan, he also informed me that the nature of the plan wd be to open the ports for some months in order to meet the necessity of the country & then to re-establish for a time some modified system of protection.... I expressed somewhat warmly my extreme surprise and disappointment at finding such a plan in contemplat'n, I pointed out some of the obvious object's to it & said that for one I cd never agree to such a plan so that if it was only called to consider the heads of such a scheme there wd be no use in my attending the meeting of the next day - Ld John said that to the immediate repeal of the whole duty neither Lansdowne nor Palmerston nor others of his friends wd assent & that he was not himself prepared for it".⁴²

Charles Greville's account of the interview contains further information:

"...John so much disagreed with Howick's [Grey's] violent views (for he was all for extreme measures, immediate repeal, no compensation, trampling on adversaries) that H. said pettishly 'I see it would be useless for me to attend your meeting tomorrow'. Ellice interfered and said, 'Oh, nonsense, you had better come' and he did. Johnny said he was very sorry Ellice had prevailed upon him to come, as he should have much preferred taking him at his word".⁴³

Greville's account of the argument requires explanation. He was not, of course, present at this meeting, or at any of the others held at Chesham Place. Clarendon and Bedford, however, kept him informed, and his history of the crisis corresponds substantially to the letters and diaries of those who actually attended the conferences. His account of the interview between Grey and Russell was entered into the

⁴² Grey Diaries, December 15, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey C 5/12.

⁴³ Greville, V, 259.

Memoirs on December 16th, the day when Russell departed from Peel's memorandum and adopted complete and immediate free trade; and the wording of the entry does not exclude the possibility that Russell expressed his regret that Ellice had prevailed upon Lord Grey to attend the meeting, on the 16th instead of the 15th. But we know from an entry in Grey's diary that Russell himself wrote to Grey on the morning of the 16th and urged Grey to see him privately before the beginning of the meeting.⁴⁴ During the meeting of the 16th Russell conceded Grey's demands and made no reference to the argument of the previous day. Therefore, it seems likely that Russell was prepared on the 15th to go on without Grey and to propose a measure to Peel which Grey could not support. Within twenty-four hours Russell changed his mind, abandoned his own measure, and submitted to Grey's proposal.

It must be remembered that on the 15th Russell still hoped for some arrangement with Peel. The plan of repeal that he intended to submit to his friends on the next day was to be sent to Peel for his opinion. It is reasonable to assume that as long as Russell hoped that Peel would completely identify himself with the Whig measure, he felt he could ignore Grey's radical objections to gradual repeal, and even dispense with his support. Complete and immediate repeal was inconsistent with the terms of Peel's first memorandum to the Queen, and even if Peel were prepared to accept it, himself, he could hardly be expected to carry many of his party with him in supporting the measure.

⁴⁴ Grey Diaries, December 15, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C 5/12.

On the morning of the 16th, Russell received a letter from the Queen which transformed his position. This letter contained an enclosure from Peel to the Queen; Peel had consulted his colleagues and assured her that none of them was prepared to take office to maintain protection. He refused, however, to receive and pledge himself to the details of any measure proposed by the Whigs.⁴⁵ Russell read Peel's refusal to his friends and then declared his intention of proposing complete and immediate repeal. In explanation of this sudden change he told his friends:

"...that the notion of having it [gradual repeal] originated in the intended attempt at concert with Peel -- that this was now impossible & that upon the whole it seemed to him if he was to form a Govt. at all it must be in order to propose the immediate repeal of the Corn Laws".⁴⁶

The meeting, which included Palmerston and Lansdowne, adopted the new proposal without any opposition. Lansdowne later insisted that the removal of agricultural burdens "to the extent of a million or a sum of that magnitude" should be made an integral part of the repeal measure. On the 19th. Lord Grey, Palmerston, Clarendon, Auckland, Baring, and Ellice agreed after some controversy to provide for immediate relief the sum of £700,000, and to propose additional relief to the limit of a million pounds as soon as the state of the revenue made this possible.⁴⁷ Lansdowne and Palmerston may have been personally disposed to favour gradual repeal, but like Russell, they submitted to Grey's terms.

⁴⁵ Parker, Peel, III, 248-49.

⁴⁶ Lord Grey to Lady Grey, December 16, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 100/3.

⁴⁷ Gooch, Russell, I, 94-95.

Lansdowne, according to Prince Albert, regretted that Peel had not stated his conditions of assistance in reply to Russell's overtures and "strengthened the moderate party in the new cabinet".⁴⁸ But as long as Peel refused to enter into full and open concert with the Whigs, any course of action which would have alienated Grey and divided the free traders could not have been followed with safety. Russell hinted at this in his letter of resignation of December 20th:

"...Sir Robert Peel could not, of course, rely on the support of his political friends should the proposed measure be in their eyes dangerous or otherwise.

"In this uncertainty of obtaining a majority in the House of Commons it was absolutely necessary that all those who were prominent in the political party to which Lord J. Russell is attached should give their zealous aid and act in concert with the new Administration".⁴⁹

It may be inferred that the uncertainty of Conservative support magnified Grey's influence in the Chesham Place negotiations and enabled him to modify Russell's original plan. Palmerston, Lord Lansdowne, and probably Russell, himself, would have preferred to repeal the Corn Laws gradually and save themselves from the imputation of surrendering totally to the Anti-Corn-Law League. Certainly it would have been in the interest of the Whigs, as a party, to conciliate Peel and as many of Peel's supporters as possible by proposing a moderate measure. As long as they expected Peel to give full and unreserved support to their measure, their interests as politicians coincided with their preferences as landlords and aristocrats. When

⁴⁸ Parker, Peel, III, 255.

⁴⁹ Walpole, Russell, I, 418.

Russell's overtures to Peel failed to produce more specific guarantees or definite hope of collaboration, it is likely that the Whigs took fright and adopted the more radical measure, which would prevent a split in their party and might, with luck, receive enough support from the Conservatives to pass through Parliament. Whatever weight these considerations carried in the negotiations, the shift from gradual to immediate repeal is of interest insofar as it shows that Lord Grey was a factor of no negligible force in Russell's calculations. Russell did not suddenly discover his importance on December 19th when he decided to throw up his commission, but had already given tangible proof of the value he placed on Grey's co-operation in the proposed Government.

On the 18th a full meeting was held and the majority voted in favour of taking office. No one seemed to be very confident of Peel's assurances, but the majority who voted in favour of taking office felt that he had gone too far to lead an opposition against their measure. Clarendon wrote to G.C. Lewis:

"...all agreed that if the question turned upon the amount of support specifically promised, the undertaking must be declined, but the majority voted in favour of attempting a Govt., because they thought Peel's position wd prevent him playing any trick -- there was confidence in his dilemma but none in his assurances..."⁵⁰

When Russell proceeded to distribute places in the new Cabinet on the 19th, Lord Grey informed him that he would not take office if Lord Palmerston returned to the Foreign Office. The day before, Grey seems

⁵⁰ Clarendon to Lewis, December 21, 1845, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 552.

to have received some encouragement from Labouchere, Macaulay and Sir George Grey. Lord Grey wrote in his diary:

"...we talked (Labouchere, G.Grey, Macaulay & myself) a little about arrangements & particularly about Palmerston the notion of replacing whom in the F.O. everybody dislikes though as usual the whole odium of making the object'n will I see be left to me -- Macaulay suggested a mode of avoiding this that he shd have the Colonial Office with the lead in the Ids...."⁵¹

Russell had already sounded Palmerston about taking the Colonial Office before Lord Grey raised his objection. Palmerston had refused, however, to take any other office. Russell was confronted with the necessity of choosing between Palmerston and Grey, and the loss of either man would have materially weakened his Government. Sir George Grey later explained to his cousin, Lord Grey that:

"Under the circumstances in which Lord John was placed he could not have dispensed either with you or with Palmerston & that the refusal of either to join him would, even if he had been disposed to go on, have necessarily led to other secessions".⁵²

By adopting complete and immediate repeal, Russell had diminished his chances of receiving Conservative support, in order to preserve the unity of his party. The omission of Lord Grey from the Cabinet would have seriously endangered that unity. Greville wrote to Henry Reeve on the day Russell resigned, "...if he [Lord Grey] was not in office he would infallibly embarrass the Government by his violence and urging extreme measures, and Russell resolved to throw it up. He was strongly confirmed in this by all the peers in his party"⁵³ Russell's conduct during the crisis may have been excessively timid, and his suspicion of Peel's good faith may have been unjustified, but there is

⁵¹ Grey Diaries, December 18, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C3/12.

⁵² George Grey to Lord Grey, January 2, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 98/4.

⁵³ Johnson, Letters of Charles Greville and Henry Reeve, 125.

no reason to believe that the grounds of his resignation were contrived and insincere. Russell had signified his sense of Grey's importance when he gave in to him on the question of gradual repeal, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that his ostensible reasons were his real reasons for resignation. The obstacle to the formation of a Whig Government was not the protectionist sympathies of Lord Lansdowne and Lord Palmerston, but the Radical connections of Lord Grey.

Before Russell threw up his commission, he sent Ellice to try to overcome Grey's objections to Palmerston. Subsequently both Palmerston and Grey accused Ellice of duplicity: of inciting Grey to oppose Palmerston's return to the Foreign Office; of not informing Russell of Grey's objections; and finally, of doing nothing to moderate Grey's views on the 19th.⁵⁴ Since 1835 Ellice had opposed Palmerston's conduct of foreign affairs and he had complained of Palmerston to Grey at the beginning of the crisis.⁵⁵ The only record of what passed between Ellice and Grey on the 19th is contained in the latter's diary. Ellice does not appear to have urged Grey to abandon his objections, but he did warn him that Russell would throw up the Government if he did not join it. Grey wrote:

"After I got home Ellice came to me & asked whether my decision was final -- I said yes to which he ans'd then the whole thing must be given up 'but I don't tell you you are wrong'.

⁵⁴ Lord Grey to Ellice, December 29, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, Palmerston to Russell, January 5, 1846, P.R.O. ^{120/3} 30/22/4.

⁵⁵ Lord Grey to Ellice, December 29, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 120/3.

"The decis'n I have come to is a painful one but I am satisfied it is my duty to adhere to it".⁵⁶

After Ellice left, Grey regretted he had not been allowed more time to reconsider his decision. He wished he had proposed to Russell to put the question of Palmerston's returning to the Foreign Office before the Cabinet, on the understanding that both of them would be bound by its judgement.⁵⁷ Ellice had told Grey of the consequences of his decision. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Ellice's attempt at mediation does seem perfunctory. He was certainly the most unsuitable man to send to Grey to present the case for Palmerston - to overcome, in fact, a sentiment which he shared himself. However, there is no reason to charge Ellice with double-dealing. He did not withhold Grey's objections from Russell. On the 15th, after an interview with Grey, he warned Russell about possible difficulties with the Foreign Office.⁵⁸ Finally, whatever Ellice did say or did not say, there is no reason to believe that Grey was guided by his advice in any respect. On the contrary, Grey entertained the deepest suspicions of Ellice's judgment. When he arrived in London on the 15th, he wrote to his wife: "I went to J.R.'s and unluckily found Ellice thereI cd not stay long as he [Russell] had letters to write & wanted to be left -- he kept Ellice the worst adviser he cd have". Even on the lowest assessment of Grey's

⁵⁶ Grey Diaries, December 19, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/12.

⁵⁷ Grey Diaries, December 19, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/12.

⁵⁸ Gooch, Russell, I, 89.

prudence, it is unlikely that he was influenced by a man whom he regarded as Russell's "worst adviser".⁵⁹

Although Lord Grey identified himself with the policy of the League during the Chesham Place negotiations, it is highly possible that he was playing a much deeper game than Russell realized, and may have been intriguing to bring about some sort of Conservative - Liberal coalition. Grey and his brother-in-law, Charles Wood, had long considered the possibility of such a union, and the idea seems to have become increasingly attractive to both of them. Wood first started the proposal in a letter to Grey just after Peel took office in 1841:

"...I do not think that out of the late materials [Melbourne's Cabinet] a strong Government can be made -- unless there is such a break up of the Tory party as I cannot contemplate & at present the alternative seems to me to be the present Govt. & Her Majesty's opposition in [two words illegible] aiding and controlling them: or by some accident a break [up] of them & a Govt. of the liberal part of them & an addition from our side carrying liberal commercial measures; & excluding radicals & orangemen.

I think the former the more likely -- but we ought not to exclude the latter if we mean to do what is best for the country. We cannot hope: suppose Lord Melbourne's Govt. stood as at its strongest to alter the corn laws, pay the R. Catholic priests, settle church rates etc. etc. --& yet all these things are the most pressing considerations for the country. You will not easily be on good terms with France with Palmerston at the F.O. or have a popular Adm'y with Minto -- In short you cannot have a strong Govt. out of the present liberal party: you must be prepared to act more or less with a portion of the other side. Probably it will be a modified opposition but circumstances might make it necessary to join"⁶⁰

Later that year Wood urged Lord Grey not to attack Peel too violently

⁵⁹ Lord Grey to Lady Grey, December 15, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 100/3.

⁶⁰ Wood to Lord Grey, October 14, 1841, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III 102/2.

but to praise his liberal intentions and to refrain from identifying him with his extreme supporters. He pressed Grey to exaggerate the differences between Peel and "his ultra friends".⁶¹ In 1843 Wood returned to the same policy:

"I think we must play a long-sighted game at present. The liberal party per se cannot govern the country & if we are to govern it at all we must look to support from the liberal Tories & must conduct ourselves in such a way as to receive that support..."⁶²

Wood's advice seems to have influenced Grey. During the session of 1844 the latter openly disagreed with Palmerston on several occasions and formed a strong aversion to serving again with him in a Whig Government. Grey wrote to his wife:

"I have told him [Wood] that Palmerston has not acted upon the rule which he wished to prescribe to me by giving way when he did not agree with any opinions I have thought it necessary to urge in the H. of C. He made no scruple in answering me on the vote of thanks to Napier or voting against me on the export duty on coals... I have added for Wood's private information that if we wished to turn Peel out & to keep together a party capable of taking up the Govt. I might think it of more consequence our shewing that we do not agree, but the case is different when I think that Peel's going out wd be a great misfortune & when I am perfectly determined never again to belong to a govt. a bit like the last certainly not to one in wch P. should be F. Sec'y --- I do not look in public life to returning to office but to exercising a useful influence in Parlt. & the country by establishing a character for acting honestly & independently, much good I am convinced may be thus done -- If I ever shd return to office it wd hardly be otherwise than in consequence of a great breaking up of existing parties & their re-arrangement in some new way".⁶³

The December crisis presented Grey and Wood with the opportunity of bringing this coalition into existence, and Grey seems to have considered

⁶¹ Wood to Lord Grey, November 5, 1841, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 102/2.

⁶² Wood to Lord Grey, January 12, 1843, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 102/2.

⁶³ Lord Grey to Lady Grey, April 9, 1844, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 100/5.

it as a possibility before, during and after the Chesham Place negotiations. Writing on the Corn Laws Grey told Russell on December 6, 1845, "The prospect of a dissolution of the Govt. upon this question frightened me very much and I am far from wishing to see an attempt at a liberal government till there is a prospect of its being able to maintain itself".⁶⁴ On December 16th. he wrote to Russell again and warned him against bringing the former Whig Government back into office:

"....I hope you will allow me to express my conviction that you ought above all things to guard against giving to the public an impression that your administration is a mere revival, with as little alteration as possible, of the last whig government. That government had, justly or unjustly, totally lost the confidence of the public, and had become so unpopular that even now the recollection of it is one of the chief difficulties with which you will have to deal".⁶⁵

It is unlikely that Grey had resolved not to join Russell in a pure Whig Government under any circumstances. On the 16th, after immediate repeal had been adopted, he wrote to his wife, "It looks more like my being in office".⁶⁶ At the same time, however, he considered joining Peel as a feasible alternative, if Russell refused to meet his terms. In conversation with Sidney Herbert on the 17th, he complained of Palmerston's return to the Foreign Office and stated his preference for a coalition between the two parties, adding, "...I admit I stand alone there: nobody has wished for it but me; but at any rate I wish we could keep Lord Aberdeen".⁶⁷ The day after Russell threw up his

⁶⁴ Gooch, Russell, I, 86-87.

⁶⁵ ----"Notes on the Greville Memoirs". E.H.R. I, 124.

⁶⁶ Lord Grey to Lady Grey, December 16, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 100/3.

⁶⁷ Stanmore, Herbert, I, 58.

commission, Grey expected that Peel would offer him a place in the new Conservative Cabinet. He wrote to his wife:

"What shd you say if Peel now made a proposal to me? I started the idea to Wood who said we ought to accept of course with a proper understanding about Ireland & free trade which I believe we might arrive at -- Nothing wd surprise me less than its coming to this & I hardly like going from town till I am sure that it will not, or that in some other way I shall not be wanted".⁶⁸

Peel must have known through Sidney Herbert of Grey's wish to join a liberal-conservative Cabinet. But he made no attempt to include him in his new arrangements. Charles Buller, with or without Grey's knowledge, indicated a wish to join Peel, and Graham suggested him to the latter as a possible Vice-President of the Board of Trade or Judge-Advocate. Peel replied to Graham:

"If you will recall to mind Charles Buller's declaration of opinion about the Irish Church -- more extreme than any yet delivered -- you will I think agree with me that he could render us no useful service in high Parliamentary office".⁶⁹

Buller's overtures to Peel may possibly have been intended as the first stage in more general negotiations between Grey and Peel. Even if this is not true, the incident indicates the obstacle to any union between Grey and the Conservatives. Peel had succeeded after Russell's resignation in reconstructing a Conservative Cabinet; all but one of his former Ministers had agreed to take office for the purpose of repealing the Corn Laws. After restoring a measure of unity to his party, it is unlikely that Peel would have jeopardized it by recruiting either

⁶⁸ Lord Grey to Lady Grey, December 20, 1845, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 100/3.

⁶⁹ Graham to Peel, December 26, 1845, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.
Peel to Graham, December 28, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.

Buller or Grey, thus risking a division among his supporters on religious as well as economic policy.

In spite of his neglect, if not rebuff, by Peel, Lord Grey continued to flirt with the plan of a coalition. On May 24, 1846, he wrote in his diary:

"This morning in the Spectator there is a most ill-natured article (containing however too great a mixture of truth) on Peel's superior qualifications for the leader of a real liberal Govt. over Johnny....It put into my head many visions as to the advantage of a Peel liberal Govt., in which Ld J. shd be offered a place but which on his refusing (as he wd do) a good many of us might join, after Church I went to Wood's & discussed this notion with him -- he did not think it so visionary as I expected".⁷⁰

Again, on June 2nd Grey wrote:

"We [Wood and Grey] had much talk on the composition of a new Govt... I am almost tempted to try & set in motion some means for bringing about what I think the really desirable consummation of a coalition govt. with Peel at its head".⁷¹

On the following day:

"Wood talked to me a good deal about my prospects & said he thought it very likely I might in 3 or 4 years be called upon to form a Govt. myself -- this is not impossible but most earnestly to be deprecated as I know how little I shd be equal to the task -- I might indeed by possibility [sic] be of use in forming some kind of coalit'n govt. headed by either Peel or Lord John, my being at the head myself wd never do".⁷²

Lord Grey did not put his plan into action. There is no reason to believe that after his initial approach to Sidney Herbert and his omission from Peel's new Government, he discussed the coalition with

⁷⁰ Grey Diaries, May 24, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/12.

⁷¹ Grey Diaries, June 2, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/12.

⁷² Grey Diaries, June 3, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/12.

any of Peel's friends. After Peel's resignation in July 1846, Grey suppressed his objections to Palmerston and took office in Russell's Government. But even as he was on the point of rejoining Russell, the thought of a coalition was uppermost in his mind, and he seems to have been influenced in his decision by the fact that Russell had spoken to Peel and offered places to some of his late colleagues. On June 30 Grey wrote in his diary:

"Wood ... told me (what is calculated very materially to influence my decision) that J.R. has already had a communication with Peel, he told him ... that he was ready to take in those whom Peel might recommend & discuss with him the arrangements that shd be made ... The fact that such an overture has been made I consider most important whether it should be accepted or not, it is doing all that J.R. could in order to avoid having to form an exclusive Whig Govt."⁷⁵

Russell was probably not aware of the real motives behind Grey's objections to Palmerston, and probably believed that he was bidding for Radical support and might lead an opposition from the Radical flanks of the proposed Government. Russell's difficulty lay much deeper than that. Once Peel broke with his ultra-Tory supporters he opened the door to collaboration between himself and Russell's followers. Peel's desertion of the protectionists and the division within the Tory party permitted Russell to consider taking office. But if Peel's adoption of a liberal policy divided his own party, it divided Russell's as well; or more exactly, it threatened Russell's authority with the liberals by holding out to them an alternative to his leadership. This fact underlay Russell's failure to form a Government in December 1845 and subsequently dominated the history of the Government he formed in July 1846.

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⁷⁵ Grey Diaries, June 30, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C3/12.

The circumstances which permitted the Whigs to take office in July 1846 are better understood than those which led them to refuse it in December 1845. Peel's corn bill did not conciliate the majority of his followers and its passage through Parliament depended largely upon the support of the Whigs. Once the corn bill was safe, the Whigs combined with the dissident Conservatives and defeated Peel on the second reading of the Irish coercion bill. Given an irreparable breach in the Conservative party, the danger for the Whigs of taking office with a minority was substantially modified. They out-numbered either the Peelites or the Protectionists alone, and they could be reasonably confident of the support of either group against the opposition of the other. It is a mistake, however, to take the policy of the Whig party for granted. Their decision to support the corn bill and to oppose Irish coercion was not arrived at without disagreement. Before the beginning of the session Charles Greville wrote to Reeve, "... the Whigs are all in confusion, some wanting to take one course and some another, and by no means at present unanimous about supporting Peel, whose person they dislike while his measures they distrust".⁷⁴ In March, Monckton Milnes, a liberal-conservative member of Parliament wrote, "Our political Verwirrung continues as wild as ever; all combinations are possible Peel and Cobden, Lord John and the High Tories; anything after an election or even before".⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Johnson, Letters of Charles Greville and Henry Reeve, 142.

⁷⁵ Reid, Milnes, I, 375.

In the history of the session, the discussion which took place within the Whig party is as important as the debate between the free traders and protectionists in Parliament.

Russell's first impulse was to promise Peel full support in the settlement of the Corn Laws. In his letter of resignation he told the Queen:

"Lord John Russell is deeply sensible of the embarrassment caused by the present state of public affairs. He will be ready therefore to do all in his power ... to promote the settlement of that question which is ... the source of so much danger ...

"...he will be little disposed to insist... on what may seem to your Majesty's advisers as an impracticable course".⁷⁶

In spite of this assurance Russell, during the month of January, seems to have seriously considered forcing Peel to accept immediate repeal.⁷⁷ His motives may have been tactical in so far as Cobden and the Anti-Corn-Law League were initially opposed to any compromise. It is more likely, however, that Russell resented the prospect of being dragged along in the wake of Peel's measure and wished to dictate the provisions of the bill from the opposition benches. Greville wrote, "It is difficult not to think that he is jealous of Peel. He is probably provoked that a man of whom he has so bad an opinion should have outstripped him in popularity and public consideration".⁷⁸ Russell told Hobhouse that Peel had deliberately refused to collaborate with

⁷⁶ Walpole, Russell, I, 418.

⁷⁷ Greville, V, 288.

⁷⁸ Ibid. V, 286-87.

him in December in order to prevent the Whigs from taking office.⁷⁹

Russell's sentiments towards Peel were shared by many of his followers. Bessborough and Villiers told Greville that, "there was a bad disposition among the Whigs, many indisposed to attend [the debates to support Peel], and many only anxious to embarrass the Government".⁸⁰

Late in January Russell told Charles Villiers that if Peel did not include immediate repeal in his measure, he would urge it himself.⁸¹

On January 28th. Russell called a meeting of the principal liberals in the House of Commons to discuss this question. Cobden, who was present at Chesham Place for the first time, spoke strongly in favour of immediate repeal. He did not wish to endanger Peel's measure but was not disposed to accept a delay of three years before the corn duties were finally abolished. Nothing was agreed upon and the subject was postponed for the consideration of a general meeting of the party.⁸² Before this meeting was held, however, Cobden and Russell abandoned any serious intention of imposing immediate repeal on the Government. Peel's scheme proved more popular among the free traders than either had expected.⁸³ Greville wrote to Graham on January 31st:

"Charles Villiers has seen Cobden, who has received numerous

⁷⁹ Broughton Diaries, February 9, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add.Mss 45,748.

⁸⁰ Greville, V, 288.

⁸¹ Ibid. V, 288.

⁸² Broughton Diaries, January 28, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add.Mss 45,748.

⁸³ Greville, V, 289-90.

letters from Manchester and elsewhere, all regretting the sliding scale, but highly approving of the measure generally; and he says that it is evident there will be a universal expression of opinion manifested in its favour -- such a one, and so strong that, though Cobden feels himself compelled to vote for immediate repeal, after all his antecedents, there will be quite enough in the public manifestations to induce the Whigs, if they are so disposed, to accept the compromise".⁸⁴

Secondly, neither Peel nor Graham was prepared to indicate whether or not they would resign if immediate repeal were carried. Graham told Greville that such an amendment could very likely drive the Government out of office, and that Peel was obliged to defer in some degree to the wishes and opinions of the Duke of Wellington and the Duke of Buccleuch.⁸⁵ After refusing to take office in December, Russell could hardly run the risk of plunging the country into a second crisis and rendering any settlement of the Corn Laws impossible. On February 9th the Whigs assembled at Chesham Place and Russell announced, "that however he might be inclined to support an amendment for immediate repeal of the Corn Laws yet he could not do so if it endangered Sir Robert Peel's measure".⁸⁶ That evening he repeated the substance of this declaration in Parliament.⁸⁷ In the committee stage of the corn bill Villiers brought forward an amendment for immediate repeal. But without the support of Russell and the Whigs, it constituted nothing more than an empty, face-saving gesture. Not

⁸⁴ Parker, Graham, II, 33.

⁸⁵ Greville, V, 290.

⁸⁶ Broughton Diaries, February 9, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

⁸⁷ Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXIII, 607.

even Villiers wished to see it succeed.⁸⁸ With the exceptions of Morpeth, who was a member of the League, and Charles Wood, all the principal Whigs divided with the Government, and the amendment was defeated by a majority of 187 votes.

A more serious danger to the bill was threatened by an intrigue between several Whig peers and the Protectionists. It is difficult to give a precise and continuous account of this conspiracy since the evidence is imperfect and incomplete. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the majority of the Whigs in the House of Lords were still favourably disposed to the idea of a fixed duty, and that several of them were in communication with the Protectionists with a view to defeating Peel's measure and bringing into office a Whig-Protectionist coalition. Disraeli mentions this proposed combination in his life of Bentinck:

"If... the Whigs had been prepared to form a government on the economical principles of their own budget of 1842 [1841 ?] the whole of the protectionist party would have arrayed itself under their banners and the landed interest whose honour they would have saved, would have been theirs for ever. This was a result which the whigs as a party were desirous to accomplish; and a nobleman whose services have been since prematurely lost to the country, and whose excellent sense, imperturbable temper, and knowledge of mankind, had for many years exercised a leading influence in the councils of the whigs, ... was extremely anxious that by a reconstruction in this spirit an end should be put to that balanced state of parties.... What he wished particularly to accomplish was to see Lord George Bentinck in the new whig cabinet. But though this eminent individual conducted his negotiations under the happiest auspices, for Lord George Bentinck entertained for him great personal regard, and was united to his son by ties of very warm and intimate friendship, his object was

⁸⁸ Greville, V, 292.

not attained.... Lord George Bentinck offered and promised to support the whig government, but would not become a member of any administration which was not prepared to do justice to the land".⁸⁹

The person referred to by Disraeli could be one of a number of Whig peers. But in all probability the allusion is to Lord Bessborough, who served in Lord Melbourne's Cabinet and until his death in 1847 held the Irish Lord Lieutenancy in Russell's Government. Bessborough's principal interest in a Whig-Protectionist coalition was not the imposition of a fixed duty, but the remedy of Irish political and social grievances. Greville wrote that Bessborough was "...taken in by all the wonderful things the Protectionists offer to do for Ireland, and which have been conveyed to him through Duncannon [Bessborough's son] by George Bentinck". Greville continued, "It seems that the Protectionists profess to be ready to do anything the Irish please, provided they will not be expected to destroy the Irish Church; but even any reform in that they are prepared for".⁹⁰ Bentinck, who had been the private secretary of his cousin, George Canning, had identified himself with Catholic emancipation and had come to believe in the establishment and endowment of the Catholic Church in Ireland as a means of reconciling Irish opinion to the Act of Union.⁹¹ In the course of the first reading of Peel's coercion bill, Bentinck indicated that he recognised the need for tenant-right legislation.⁹²

⁸⁹ Disraeli, Bentinck, 231-32.

⁹⁰ Greville, V, 314.

⁹¹ Disraeli, Bentinck, 177.

⁹² Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXV, 644-46.

It is not impossible, moreover, that he briefly contemplated working with the Irish Repealers to defeat the corn bill in the House of Commons.⁹³ Early in March Bessborough approached Hobhouse to discuss the coalition. Hobhouse recorded in his diary:

"...Ld Bessborough told me his opinion was that our party could not possibly form a government except by coalescing with one or other of the two parties and that as joining with Peel was objectionable in many respects he thought we had nothing left for it than taking Ld George Bentinck & his friends -- when the corn bill was carried out new allies would be content with having one cabinet place in the commons -- & Bentinck had earned that -- belonging as he did to an old Whig family -- one cabinet place in the Lords would be enough.

"I told Ld B. that I saw insuperable objections to such an arrangement -- in the first place there were many of our friends who wd never consent to it -- he might know that from the vehement abuse of the Protectionists in parliament & in our Chronicle -- Ld B. said yes that was true & he was very sorry for it -- but he repeated without such a coalition no Whig government could last a month!'⁹⁴

Bessborough seems to have made a similar suggestion to Lord John Russell. The latter stated in his reply:

"...I should not like to embark in a Government which rested on the support of any extreme party. This has been the case too much both with our Ministry of '35 and Peel's of '41...Your liberal Protectionists must seriously consider whether they can bear to see franchises, equal to those of Englishmen bestowed on Irishmen; offices given to Catholics as well as Protestants; the Irish landlords compelled to act fairly by their tenants; the national revenue maintained by adequate taxes; crime put down by vigilance and exertion rather than by shutting honest people up all night ... If such measures are beyond the ken of the Protection party, they seek only for revenge, we should do ill to patch up a Ministry which the first Cabinet meeting might dissolve".⁹⁵

In spite of Russell's discouragement, Bessborough did not altogether

⁹³ Greville, V, 314-15.
Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXV, 980-85.
Disraeli, Bentinck, 179-84.

⁹⁴ Broughton Diaries, March 18, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add.Mss 43,748.

⁹⁵ Walpole, Russell, I, 423-24. "Shutting people up all night" refers to the curfew clause in Peel's coercion bill.

give up his scheme. When the corn bill reached the Lords, Hobhouse complained that Bessborough did nothing to make the Whigs "stand firm" in opposition to a fixed-duty amendment.⁹⁶

It is impossible to determine what degree of concert existed among those Whigs who wished to act with the Protectionists. Nevertheless, others besides Bessborough were in communication with the Protectionists. Lord Malmesbury recorded in his memoirs, "We expected after Lord Normanby had made overtures to us through me, which were agreed to by Lord Stanley, that they [the Whigs] would support our amendment".⁹⁷ Normanby, who had resented Russell's neglecting him during the December crisis, very probably acted from personal motives. Early in January he had written to Lord Bessborough to withdraw his proxy.⁹⁸ Lord Ponsonby, who was later appointed by Russell to the embassy at Vienna was in regular correspondence with Disraeli during the session and actually voted with the Protectionists in the House of Lords. In August he told Disraeli:

"I regret that our wishes have not been satisfied by such a junction of parties as might have been effected & which if obtained would have secured for our country a Government strong enough to meet all difficulties -- I think the wish was wise and honest".⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Broughton Diaries, May 7, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

⁹⁷ Malmesbury, Memoirs, I, 172.

⁹⁸ Broughton Diaries, January 23, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

⁹⁹ Ponsonby to Disraeli, August 7, 1846, Hughenden, box B, file P.

All three men were figures of considerable importance in the Whig party. Two of them, Normanby and Bessborough, held office in Melbourne's Cabinet and all three of them received important appointments outside of the Cabinet when Russell formed his Government. The fact that they had made overtures to the Protectionists was sufficient to give the latter a reasonable expectation of success in amending the corn bill in the House of Lords.

Palmerston's attitude to the fixed-duty movement is somewhat obscure. Disraeli stated that a few incidental remarks which Palmerston made during the first reading of the corn bill encouraged the Protectionists and that his speech was subsequently quoted by them as "a rallying point".¹⁰⁰ Before Peel submitted his measure to Parliament, Palmerston wrote to Russell:

"If he [Peel] should propose... a permanent fixed duty of four or five shillings, I do not see how flesh and blood can resist voting with him for that, and I should not quarrel with him for a shilling or even two more than that amount".¹⁰¹

Palmerston's family expressed themselves strongly in favour of a compromise. Lady Palmerston wrote to Mrs. Huskisson in March:

"...This fixed duty which everybody would like, which would be a compromise between violent opinions and give us the advantage of a revenue is ... now got to be impossible and the only chance would be the Lords throwing out the bill and so forcing a compromise, and this is a strong measure which many are afraid of, and I believe their Lordships are not up to".¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Disraeli, Bentinck, 125.

¹⁰¹ Palmerston to Russell, January 5, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/4.

¹⁰² Lever, Lady Palmerston, 273.

Lady Ashley, who in Greville's opinion spoke "the sentiments of Palmerston House" told the latter that the Whig peers would combine with the Protectionists and that Russell would be "induced to acquiesce in the compromise". She added that "...Palmerston would not separate from John R. and take this line alone; but that John would (she was persuaded) go with him".¹⁰³ In all likelihood Lady Ashley's views of Palmerston's intentions are correct. He would probably not have been indisposed to join a Whig-Protectionist coalition, but did not wish to break with Russell. There is no reason to believe that he had any dealings with the Protectionists to promote this coalition.

During the month of May the success of the bill seemed to be in serious danger. On the 14th Clarendon wrote to Bedford:

"I have little to say & that little is not very agreeable, for I think that the prospect of carrying the amend't in the Lords increases every day. De Mauley, Ponsonby, Beauvale, Vivian, & Morely have announced their intention of voting for it & I hear that others are wavering on our side".¹⁰⁴

On the 22nd Clarendon repeated his warnings:

"The plot is thickening here... it is only just beginning to ooze out to the public that the measure wch for the last three months they have looked upon as safe is really in the greatest danger of being burked

"...I am sorry to say...that the idea is prevalent among them [the Protectionists] ... that if the fixed duty amend't is passed it will eventually be adopted by your brother & Palmerston & others of the Whig party among whom they consider that there is as much dissension as in the Tory camp. I am afraid that this absurd notion is encouraged by some of our friends who thereby

¹⁰³ Greville, V, 322.

¹⁰⁴ Clarendon to Bedford, May 14, 1846, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.Ireland 21c.

abet the Protectionists & induce them to think that their plan is a safe one & that things will come right in the end".¹⁰⁵

After writing the Edinburgh Letter and supporting Peel's bill in the Commons, Russell could hardly revert to the fixed duty and was left with no choice but to oppose this combination of parties. On the 23rd of May he summoned a meeting of all the Whig peers (fifty-three attended) at Lord Lansdowne's house. Lansdowne addressed the meeting first and told them "...that a fixed duty was in itself what wd be best, but that in the actual situat'n of affairs it seemed unattainable & that it wd be better to support the bill as it stood".¹⁰⁶ Russell spoke a good deal more emphatically, stating that, "...he cd not undertake the Govt. to carry a fixed duty in the event of the Govt. being defeated in that sense".¹⁰⁷ Neither he nor Peel would submit to it, and if it were carried in the Lords, "they must choose another leader".¹⁰⁸ Russell's ultimatum forced the peers to abandon any hope of a combination with the Protectionists. Lord Palmerston told Hobhouse that "All [were] unanimous against the bill and all unanimous not to oppose it".¹⁰⁹ Lord Melbourne probably expressed the feelings of the majority of those present. According to Lord Grey, Melbourne, "in saying he should do this [support Peel's bill] put it entirely upon the ground of its being useless to do otherwise after J.R.'s declaration, but spoke with extreme bitterness of the course he was

¹⁰⁵ Clarendon to Bedford, May 22, 1846, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 c.

¹⁰⁶ Grey Diaries, May 23, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/12.

¹⁰⁷ Grey Diaries, May 23, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/12.

¹⁰⁸ Broughton Diaries, May 25, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

¹⁰⁹ Broughton Diaries, May 25, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

taking".¹¹⁰ Lord Lilford agreed with Hobhouse that the Lords would dishonour themselves if they submitted to Peel's measure, but added, "...what could we do? Ld John Russell told us that if we took any other line we should break up the party".¹¹¹ The success of the scheme depended upon the dissentient Whigs persuading or compelling Russell to take office once the bill was defeated. When it was clear that Russell was determined to resist a fixed-duty amendment, all prospects of combining with the Protectionists vanished.

Coinciding with the difference on the fixed duty, a division occurred over Peel's coercion bill. The Government had introduced the measure in the House of Lords at the beginning of the session, and the majority of the Whig peers, apparently without concert with Russell, gave it their support.¹¹² Seven of them, - Lords Grey, Cottenham, Campbell, Langdale, Carrington, Lilford, and Kinnaid - voted to reduce the punishment for a breach of the curfew clause from transportation to one year's imprisonment, but the rest of the party refused to support the amendment.¹¹³ The first and third readings of the bill were passed virtually without debate, and Lansdowne, Clanricarde, Bessborough and other Whigs with property in Ireland gave the bill substantial assistance. On March 9th Russell called a meeting at Chesham Place to discuss the measure. Somerville and Wyse, both Irish

¹¹⁰ Grey Diaries, May 25, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/12.

¹¹¹ Broughton Diaries, May 25, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,748.

¹¹² Bedford to Clarendon, February 26, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland
7 b.

¹¹³ Grey Diaries, March 12, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/12.

liberals, but not members of O'Connell's Repeal party, condemned it. Russell, according to Hobhouse, appeared undecided, but "...was rather more against than for" coercion. However, Russell told Hobhouse after the meeting that, "...he was much embarrassed by the line taken by his friends Lansdowne & Bessborough -- he had been asked by the former whether he liked his speech & answered not at all".¹¹⁴ On the 10th Lord Clarendon conveyed Russell's objections to the bill to the Whig peers, but did not succeed in influencing them. Clarendon wrote to Russell on the 11th:

"I went to the Lds yesterday and told the people on our side what your opinions and difficulties were about the Irish bill -- they were much annoyed, but seemed to think that they cd give no better proof of the sincerity of their own [belief] that the measure was necessary than in supporting it contrary to your wishes. Bessborough & Clanricarde both said that everyone of the liberal Irish members who are now opposed to the bill, have in private expressed themselves favourably upon it & admitted its necessity."¹¹⁵

Clarendon enclosed a letter from Bessborough in which the latter wrote:

"...I assure you till the meeting in John Russell's room I had not heard a doubt expressed.... It is useless for me to say anything more to John Russell, but I am surprised he does not see that not one person in the H. or L. connected with Ireland opposes the bill".¹¹⁶

Lord Clanricarde wrote directly to Russell and urged him not to oppose the bill when it reached the Commons.¹¹⁷

Peel's management of the bill complicated Russell's position.

¹¹⁴ Broughton Diaries, March 9th, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,748.

¹¹⁵ Clarendon to Russell, March 11, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

¹¹⁶ Bessborough to Clarendon, March 11, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

¹¹⁷ Clanricarde to Russell, March 11, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

Instead of postponing the debate on it in the House of Commons until the corn bill had been passed, the Government insisted on the first reading immediately after the first reading of the corn bill.

Doubtless the coercion bill was more urgent than the corn bill and a case could have been made for giving it priority over the second measure, but Peel wished merely to pass the first reading and then proceed to the second and third readings of the corn bill without any interruption.¹¹⁸ Somerville announced his intention of moving the orders of the day on March 30th when the bill was to be introduced. This motion, if it had succeeded, would have allowed the Whigs to escape from the necessity of voting on the principle of the bill and would have permitted them to vote simply on the expediency of bringing the bill in before the corn bill had been passed. Under the circumstances this line would have been fully justified. O'Connell and the Repealers were determined to resist coercion by every means within their power.¹¹⁹ Once the debate on the first reading commenced, they delayed the progress of the bill with factious amendments, motions for adjournment and every method of obstruction at their disposal, and prevented the House from dividing until the beginning of May. Peel's plan, therefore, had the easily foreseeable consequence of interrupting the progress of the corn bill without expediting the passage of the coercion bill.

On March 27 Russell held a second meeting to discuss the tactics

¹¹⁸Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXV, 76-77.

¹¹⁹Ibid. 3rd series, LXXXV, 77.

of the party in the House of Commons. Hobhouse gives a full account in his diary:

"A meeting at Ld J. Russell's -- a good many there -- but only one peer - Bessborough - the question was what was to be done about the first reading of the coercion bill on Thursday -- Ellice was strongly for not interfering with the first reading of a bill sent down from the Lords a fortnight ago -- Ld B. said very little but seemed of the same opinion -- Palmerston also -- but Wyse urged that do what we would O'Connell & his friends were determined to oppose the first reading -- and Somerville's amendment to read the orders of the day was the least [one word illegible] of opposition -- Macaulay took the same line so did Hawes & Ward -- Ellice still insisted that we ought to stand by the government as long as they were a government, on which Russell looked a little red in the face & said that perhaps it might be as well for him to accept a lordship of the treasury -- and take his seat near Peel -- I remarked that there was no necessity for that as Peel had Russell's services at a cheap rate viz. for nothing -- there was a good deal more talking but so little could I make out what was resolved upon that I asked Ld John what he wished to do -- why said he -- I shall vote with Somerville -- but when the bill does come on I shall vote for the 1st & 2nd reading ... Ld Bessborough overtook us & laughed at our deliberations on which I could not help remarking that as the lords had precluded us from taking one line of conduct and O'Connell an obstruction to the other line it was no wonder our Councils came to nothing".¹²⁰

Russell's conduct can hardly be explained solely by a wish to keep Peel in office until the corn bill was passed; for, in that case, he would not have risked defeating the Government by voting for Somerville's motion. Although this consideration may have influenced Russell, Greville wrote on the 29th that it was not expected that Peel would resign if he were defeated and that he would stay in office until he carried the corn bill.¹²¹ Since the Protectionists opposed the motion,

¹²⁰ Broughton Diaries, March 27, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

¹²¹ Greville, V, 309.

however, the Government obtained a majority of thirty-nine and the House proceeded with the debate on the first reading. Although Russell could support Somerville on the grounds that the introduction of the bill at that moment was inexpedient, he could not lead a frontal attack on the principle of the bill without coming into conflict with his colleagues in the Lords.

With the exception of Russell and Morpeth, none of the principal Whigs took part in the subsequent debate on the first reading of the bill. Russell's speech gave only qualified support to the Government and threatened opposition to the bill during the committee stage. He objected to the curfew clause; regretted the failure of the Government to accompany the measure with some remedy for Irish grievances; and asked them to table a landlord and tenant bill before the second reading of the coercion bill.¹²² The significance of Russell's speech was obvious. Peel wrote to the Queen on the 4th. of April:

"Sir Robert Peel ... in compliance with Y.M. wishes gives the best opinion he can as to the course pursued on the Irish Bill by Lord John Russell.

"As it is Lord John Russell's apparent intention to vote for the first and second reading of the Irish Bill he wishes to conciliate the feelings of the powerful Irish party opposed to the Bill by general declarations in favour of a liberal policy towards Ireland.

"He will retain their confidence and support not withstanding his support of the Bill on the first two stages.

"He will then unite with them in committee on the Bill, and will attempt, supported by the whole Whig party, acting in concert with the Irish members to make material alterations in the Bill".¹²⁵

¹²² Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXV, 547-57.

¹²⁵ Peel to Victoria, April 4, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,441.

With the exception of the fact that Russell combined with the Irish on the second stage of the bill, Peel's prediction proved correct. On April 5th Arbuthnot wrote to Peel that the Duke of Bedford admitted that, "... in order to conciliate the Irish, it was Lord John's intention to move certain resolutions and amendments, hoping that thereby the hostility would be appeased".¹²⁴ In the conclusion of his analysis of Russell's policy, Peel noted a less conspicuous but equally significant aspect of his speech:

"Lord John Russell, as your Majesty may perhaps have observed, maintained silence about the Irish Church.

"He committed himself on any point as little as it was possible to do, consistently with the main object of conciliating the Irish party".¹²⁵

In discussing Irish grievances without referring to the Irish Church and its surplus revenue, Russell had evaded one of the major issues that separated the Whigs from the ultra-Tories and thus partly laid the foundation for the combination of Whigs, Protectionists, and Irish Radicals, which defeated Peel on the second reading of the coercion bill. However, there is no evidence that Russell was in communication with the Protectionists before early June.

During the debate on the first reading of the coercion bill Lords Bessborough and Clanricarde, the leaders of the pro-coercion party in the House of Lords, informed Russell that they no longer regarded the measure as necessary. The Duke of Bedford told Greville that they

¹²⁴ Parker, Peel, III, 345.

¹²⁵ Peel to Victoria, April 4, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,441.

"...have now entirely changed their minds and are convinced it will do more harm than good, and that in fact it has already done a great deal of harm".¹²⁶ The reasons for their abrupt conversion are obscure. Greville thought that Clanricarde had been influenced by personal observations he had made during a short visit to Ireland. It may be possible that Bessborough repudiated the coercion bill in order to promote the coalition between Russell and Bentinck. Whatever their motives may have been, Russell was permitted to oppose the bill without fear of alienating the Whig peers. Instead of waiting for the committee stage, he decided to oppose the bill directly on the second reading. On the 6th of June he held a meeting at Chesham Place. Hobhouse gives an account of it in his diary:

"...I went in my carriage to the meeting at Lord John Russell's. His dining room was full of members. The good little man mounted a chair & addressed us -- He told us he should oppose the second reading of the Irish coercion bill & why -- There was much applause during his speech & at the conclusion of it ... Dan O'Connell stepped forward. Very feeble & [one word illegible] --but very decided in regard to the support which he & his friends would give to Russell. ...It was settled that the Irish should arrange it [the motion against the second reading] amongst themselves".¹²⁷

Russell does not appear to have entered into personal communication with Bentinck or any of the leading Protectionists to discuss the details of the opposition. In so far as there were any negotiations between the two parties on the coercion bill, they seem to have been

¹²⁶ Greville, V, 312.

¹²⁷ Broughton Diaries, June 6, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,748.

conducted through intermediaries. Alexander Bannerman, a Liberal M.P., wrote to Russell on June 14th:

"...I saw this morning a list of Protectionists who will vote against the Coercion Bill, they number 77 & among them are Lord Lonsdale's lot & others of the greatest political influence in the party. His Grace of Buckingham has got into disrepute by indecision and hankering towards Peel ..."128

The Whig member for Malton, J.E. Denison, who was Lord George Bentinck's brother-in-law, was probably a much more valuable link between Russell and the Protectionists. On the 10th. of June, Denison wrote to Russell and informed him of the Duke of Portland's wish to see the Whigs take office. Denison enclosed a letter from the Duke, which stated:

"If my opinion weighed with anybody it would be given in favour of support by the Protectionists to a Govt. formed by the leaders of the present opposition, it would make them independent of Rebels and Radicals...."129

On the 15th. Denison reported to Russell the results of a conversation with Bentinck:

"He thinks 70 will vote with him. But he says a good deal will depend on your speech... If you shd say anything about the Church with wch they could have an excuse for pretending alarm it wd increase his difficulties".130

Whether or not Russell was influenced by Denison's letter when he made his speech that evening, he refrained from making any reference to the appropriation clause.

Although none of Russell's colleagues resisted his policy on

128 A. Bannerman to Russell, June 10, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

129 J.E. Denison to Russell, June 10, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

130 J.E. Denison to Russell, June 15, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

the second reading of the coercion bill, several of them entertained serious doubts about the wisdom of taking office on an Irish question. The Duke of Bedford told Clarendon three years later that:

"...the question of 46 is now the second on which he has turned Peel out on very rotten ground, & on which his adversary stands firmer & better than he does. Whether he was right or wrong in the former case [the appropriation clause of 1835] I can defend his consistent & conscientious course upon it ... but in the present case. I fear I have nothing to say for him".¹⁵¹

On June 30th. Hobhouse was told by Lansdowne that he regretted the consequences of the Whigs' defeating Peel on an Irish measure.¹⁵²

The means by which Russell defeated Peel subsequently proved a serious source of weakness to his ministry. Although the Whigs, the Protectionists, and the Repealers could combine in opposition to Peel's coercion bill and admit the need for remedial measures for Ireland, they did not agree on the best means for curing Irish grievances. The same objection could be made against this combination of parties as Russell had made against Bessborough's proposal for a coalition between the Whigs and the Protectionists. Lord Monteagle warned Russell that if the Government was forced to resign on the coercion bill, it would be yielding "not to the assault of a one party or even of several parties united on a common principle",¹⁵³ but to a vote on which these parties were united for strongly contrasted reasons. No Government could expect to drive the Whigs, the Protectionists and the Repealers in the same harness; and the combination which Russell used to defeat

¹⁵¹ Bedford to Clarendon, February 19, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7b.

¹⁵² Broughton Diaries, June 30, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

¹⁵³ Monteagle to Russell, June 2, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

Feel dissolved almost at the very moment the Whigs took office.

CHAPTER II

The Russell Cabinet, as it stood in 1846, represented in its composition little more than a re-arrangement of the elements of the Melbourne Government. In spite of the fact that the Whigs were in a minority in both houses, the membership of the Cabinet was limited to Russell's immediate associates, with whom he had acted during the December crisis. Excluding Lord Bessborough, who was sent to Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant, twelve of Russell's colleagues had held office under Lord Melbourne. Four of them returned to their former places: Lord Lansdowne as President of the Council; Cottenham as Lord Chancellor; Hobhouse as President of the Board of Control; and Palmerston as Foreign Secretary. The appointment of Lansdowne to the Council Office, a small department entailing only very light official duties, was probably intended to leave him free to lead the Whigs in the House of Lords. The Lord Chancellorship, being a professional office, could go only to an eminent lawyer, and Lord Cottenham's re-appointment was automatic. Lord Palmerston's claim to the Foreign Office had been established during the December crisis and his return to that place was accepted without any opposition. Hobhouse's appointment, however, was more controversial. His administration of Indian business under Lord Melbourne had not been conspicuously successful. Russell believed that Hobhouse tended to defer too much

to the opinions of the directors of the East-India Company. Furthermore, during the Melbourne Administration Hobhouse had neglected his duties in the House of Commons; he rarely spoke in defence of the Government and its measures; and he was frequently absent during important debates. Before the formation of the Government Russell approached Hobhouse through the Duke of Bedford and invited him to consider taking a different office and to leave the Board of Control open for Lord Auckland, who had served as Indian Viceroy under Lord Melbourne. Hobhouse refused to accept any other place but a Secretaryship of State and confronted Russell with the choice of putting him back at the Board of Control, promoting him to a higher and more responsible place, or leaving him out altogether.¹ It is possible that if Russell had succeeded in enlisting the assistance of one or two of Peel's former colleagues, Hobhouse might have been omitted from the new Government to make room for the new recruits. However, Russell seems to have followed the least troublesome course and re-appointed him to his old department.

The other members of Melbourne's Cabinet were given new places. Lord Morpeth, who had served as Chief Secretary, received the Woods and Forests. During the December crisis he had refused to return to Ireland and expressed a wish to have the more senior post of First Lord of the Admiralty. He admitted, however, the superior claims of Auckland and Russell's father-in-law, Lord Minto, both of whom had held

¹ Broughton Diaries, June 26 and June 27, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

the Admiralty under Lord Melbourne.² Although Russell had offered the Admiralty to Minto during the December crisis, the latter waived his claims in favour of Auckland, who was ultimately made First Lord.³ Auckland's appointment may have been decided by the fact that Minto's administration of the Navy had been unpopular, and that he had shown excessive favour to his relations in the use of his patronage.⁴ Minto was finally given the sinecure place of Lord Privy Seal. Since he rarely spoke in the House of Lords and did not render any important parliamentary services to the Government, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Russell was influenced by his personal relationship with Lord Minto in making the appointment. Lord Grey and Sir George Grey received the Colonial and Home Offices respectively. Since Russell had held the Colonial Office himself under Lord Melbourne and the previous Home Secretary, Lord Normanby, had been appointed to the Paris embassy at his own request,⁵ both of these places were more or less at Russell's disposal and could be filled without offending the former occupants. Macaulay's appointment as Paymaster needs no explanation. The office involved no labour and left him free to concentrate on debate in the House of Commons. Russell's motives in appointing Labouchere

² Morpeth to Russell, December 17, 1845, P.R.O. 30/22/4.

³ Minto to Russell, December 16, 1845, P.R.O. 30/22/4.

⁴ Lord Auckland told Hobhouse that, "...Lord Minto was not a popular First Lord...& was much condemned for employing his own relations in commands for which they were totally unfit. e.g. the Elliots in China". Broughton Diaries, January 4, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

⁵ Broughton Diaries, January 25, 1846, Brit.Museum, Add.Mss 43,748.

to the Irish Secretaryship and Clarendon to the Board of Trade, however, are somewhat difficult to understand. Labouchere had held the Board of Trade under Melbourne and returned to it in 1847 when Clarendon became Lord Lieutenant in succession to Bessborough. Campbell described Labouchere's appointment as "the least felicitous" of Russell's arrangements.⁶ A quiet and unassuming man, who discharged the routine duties of the Board of Trade with modest competence, Labouchere was found to be totally unequal to the nerve-racking responsibilities of the administration of Ireland.⁷ It is possible that Russell appointed him to this place, which was normally occupied by a junior minister, to strengthen the authority of the Irish Government in Cabinet discussions and enable it to cope more effectively with the urgent and critical problems that were created by the potato-famine.

In addition to these appointments Russell included three new men in the Cabinet; Lord Clanricarde as Postmaster General; Charles Wood as Chancellor of the Exchequer; and Lord Campbell as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Lord Clanricarde had married George Canning's only daughter and consequently was distantly related to Bentinck. Although he had been previously employed as ambassador at St. Petersburg, he had never held a parliamentary office before his elevation to the Cabinet. He proved to be an administrator of average capacity and a regular but

⁶ Hardcastle, Campbell, II, 210.

⁷ Jennings, Croker, III, 105.

Grey Diaries, August 15, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey C5/13.

undistinguished debater. Unless it is significant that Clarricarde was the only Irishman in the Cabinet, no particular reason for his appointment can be suggested. Charles Wood, on the other hand, probably gained entry into the Cabinet on the strength of his connection with Lord Grey. In December Russell had offered the Exchequer to Francis Baring, who had occupied the place under Lord Melbourne. Because of the emergency and the weakness of the prospective Government, Baring had agreed to take the post, but with the utmost reluctance. Before Peel's resignation he wrote to Russell and asked to be left out of the latter's arrangements.⁸ Russell had not intended to include Wood in the Cabinet in December. Ellice later explained to Lord Grey that with Labouchere, Sir George Grey, Francis Baring (all of whom were related) in the Cabinet the addition of another member of the Grey connection would offend those Whigs who had been excluded.⁹ Baring's refusal to join Russell in July not only left the Exchequer open but removed in part the objection to Wood's appointment. Of all the arrangements, that of Lord Campbell's was perhaps the most singular. In the last few weeks of the life of the Melbourne Government Campbell was given the post of Irish Chancellor. The appointment of a Scot to one of the most lucrative positions in the Irish bar gave considerable offence to the Irish liberals and Russell resolved to overlook Campbell's title to be re-appointed and gave the post in 1846 to an Irishman and

⁸ Northbrook, Baring, 233.

⁹ Ellice to Lord Grey, January 2, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 84/8.

a former Irish Law Officer under Melbourne, Sir Maziere Brady. In exchange Campbell received the political office of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Subsequently he came to an understanding with Russell to succeed to the next suitable judicial vacancy in England.¹⁰ In March 1850 he was appointed to the office of Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench. Campbell's appointment, however, was not altogether gratuitous. The Whigs were notoriously deficient in speaking-talent in the House of Lords. In particular, the Lord Chancellor, could not even make himself heard, and was no match in debate against the two former Chancellors, Lords Brougham and Lyndhurst. Lord Campbell found himself acting as one of the principal speakers for the Government and its chief speaker on legal questions, in spite of his political office.

The first overtures in the reconciliation between Lord Grey and Russell seem to have come from the former. After the December crisis Russell was determined to break completely with Grey and wrote to Lady John: "Howick is so much to blame that I am resolved never to act with

¹⁰ Campbell wrote to Russell:

"I thank you for the honourable arrangement you have accomplished for me. Of course I mention nothing else as a condition and I am now bound to serve you contentedly & zealously -- but you will allow me to suggest whether both for your sake and mine you may not think it right in settling with your law officers to reserve to yourself the power of appointing me to the first chiefship which may become vacant in Westminster Hall.

"Thus you have a desirable political appointment with a seat in the Cabinet to dispose of -- and I should be put upon the bench -- my natural destination". Friday morning, P.R.O. 50/22/4.
Hardcastle, Campbell, II, 202.

him in public again".¹¹ On the 27th. of June a private interview between the two men took place. Russell told Grey of his intention to give Charles Wood Baring's place at the Exchequer, but stated that he could not ask Grey to join him. Grey wrote in his diary:

"...he [Russell] did not think it by any means impossible that we shd ever be in office together, but that upon the whole he thought it better we shd not be so just at present -- in addition to other reasons for this he observed that without going into the question that had been raised about Palmerston, it seemed difficult that so soon after the dissens'n he (P.) and I shd be Secretaries of State together"¹²

Immediately after the interview Grey went to Charles Wood to discuss what Russell had said. Wood wrote to Russell on the next day to the effect that if Grey were not given a place in the Cabinet he would in all likelihood drift into opposition in the House of Lords and added that if Grey were included he would not press his objections to Palmerston's return to the Foreign Office.¹³ Wood's letter was tantamount to a personal surrender by Grey of the position he had adopted in December, and Russell authorized Wood to make Grey a tentative offer of a place, which the latter accepted.¹⁴ Grey had probably discovered that his defection in December had separated him from the Whigs without bringing him noticeably nearer to the liberal Conservatives. Furthermore, since Russell had opened communications with Peel and was prepared to offer one or two of Peel's former colleagues places in the new Government, Grey had little to gain by

¹¹ Walpole, Russell, I, 417.

¹² Grey Diaries, June 23, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/12.

¹³ Walpole, Russell, I, 427.

¹⁴ Grey Diaries, June 30, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/12.

refusing to join Russell.

Most of his colleagues Russell had inherited from Melbourne's Cabinet, and the narrowly aristocratic character of his appointments cannot be entirely attributed to Russell's preference. Russell himself was disposed to consider the claims of new men, who enjoyed no connections with the great Whig families, such as Cobden and the Catholic Liberal R.L. Sheil.¹⁵ Outside of the Cabinet he appointed a number of Radicals including C. Buller, H. Ward, B. Hawes and T. Milner Gibson to important offices. But, admitting this, it cannot be disputed that all the members of Russell's Cabinet were recruited from a small and exclusive society. They were not only political colleagues, but in many cases private friends. They dined at one another's houses in London; spent their holidays at one another's estates in the country; and frequently married into one another's families. Eight members, exactly half of the Cabinet were related. Russell was the son-in-law of Lord Minto; Wood the brother-in-law of Lord Grey; and Labouchere became the brother-in-law of Lord Morpeth. Sir George Grey and Lord Grey, Lord Auckland and Lord Minto were cousins. And Lord Palmerston was the brother-in-law of Lord Melbourne. A few men, like Campbell, Macaulay, and Cottenham had no private connections worth mentioning and had achieved cabinet rank by personal ability alone. But the composition of Russell's

¹⁵ Russell wrote to Clarendon: "If Macaulay should persist in retiring to letters & history I should be disposed to offer his seat in the Cabinet to Cobden -- But I feel also that Sheil has some claim to the Cabinet & would be a sign of religious liberty". August 1847, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 a.

Cabinet was not such as to encourage others to emulate them.

On the surface it appeared as if Cobden's absence from the Cabinet could be attributed to the same spirit of aristocratic exclusiveness which characterized the majority of Russell's appointments. During the free-trade agitation Cobden had been compelled to neglect his business and at the very time of his triumph in Parliament his private affairs were in a precarious state. His admirers had set on foot a public subscription to reimburse him for his services and relieve him from his financial embarrassments. Russell was certainly aware of Cobden's difficulties and it may be, as Halévy suggests, that this disqualified him for membership in the Government.¹⁶ But, fundamentally, the impediments to Cobden's accession were of a more practical nature.

During the December crisis Russell had offered Cobden the post of Vice-President of the Board of Trade without the Cabinet. The events of the session of 1846, however, transformed Cobden's position in Parliament. The measure for which he had been agitating had been carried, and Peel in his last speech as Prime Minister had singled him out by name and complimented him for his work.¹⁷ Russell recognized that he could no longer expect to obtain Cobden's services as Vice-President of the Board of Trade. If he were to have Cobden at all, it had to be as a colleague inside the Cabinet.¹⁸ Many Whigs, including Lord Grey, Macaulay, Labouchere and Lord Clarendon were anxious to see

¹⁶ Halévy, Victorian Years, 152.

Broughton Diaries, July 2, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

¹⁷ Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXVII, 1054.

¹⁸ Victoria, Letters, II, 100.

Cobden included.¹⁹ During the debate on the coercion bill a number of the free-trade Radicals had shown signs of wishing to give their support to Peel instead of Russell.²⁰ Cobden himself had written to Peel, urging him to join the Radicals and form a middle-class party for the purpose of abolishing all the surviving restrictions on commerce.²¹ Although Peel declined to accept this proposal, his professed respect for Cobden and his enthusiastic adoption of the principles of free trade encouraged the suspicion that he was attempting to obtain Cobden's aid. Edward Horsman, formerly a Lord of the Treasury under Melbourne, told Russell that many Whigs were alarmed at the prospect of a union between Peel and Cobden:

"They [Russell's supporters] observe with some uneasiness the successful courtship of the Free traders by Sir Robert Peel -- & so enamoured of him have these gentlemen become that there is no extravagance they may not commit unless the wisdom and courage of your first movements save them from themselves.

"Personally Mr. Cobden is liked & respected in the House by all parties -- acknowledged to be a man of genius & character & he would add in these days influence to any Cabinet -- If you place him there, not only do you secure his following & restore unity to your party, but you gain a colleague of whose powers the world is not yet aware....

"...On the other hand if in deference to the timidity or prejudice of others, you miss your opportunity, we may rely on it

¹⁹ Broughton Diaries, July 2, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

²⁰ Broughton Diaries, March 17, 1846; June 9, 1846; June 15, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

On June 6, Hobhouse wrote, "Bright was there. I did not see Warburton, nor Duncombe, but Wakley was there -- and most of the Radicals or so called radical members -- I mean those who vote in small minorities & who are said to prefer Peel to Russell".

Broughton Diaries, Add. Mss 43,748.

²¹ Morley, Cobden, I, 391-97.

Sir Robert Peel will not miss his. There are some of our friends, of high standing enough to make one ashamed to listen to them, bearing down everyone who doubts their assurances that Sir Robert Peel is sick of official life & will never resume it....We may depend upon it his eye is at this moment on Cobden & the manufacturers, he thinks they will yet spin him the ladder by which he is to mount back to office".²²

Lord Clarendon drew up a memorandum which he circulated to his colleagues, repeating Horsman's warning, that unless Cobden were included in the Cabinet he would inevitably join Peel.²⁵

Other members of the party, however, were disturbed at the effect that Cobden's entry into the Cabinet would have on the Protectionist party. Lord Beauvale wrote to Russell and warned him that if Cobden were included, the Protectionists would forget their quarrel with Peel and the Conservative party would re-unite and place the Whigs in a minority; Beauvale wrote:

"I am aware of the influences which are at work to place Cobden high in the Government & Clarendon is not only anxious for this but hostile to any connections with the Protectionists to such a degree as to declare openly that he would rather cut his hand off than be supported by them. To me this is rather wild and we must not forget that one of the two conditions upon which their offer of support is made to depend is the not placing Cobden in any prominent office. If this is done I conceive that there is an end to all Protectionist support.

I met D'Israeli this morning and had a long talk with him. He says it will be very difficult to keep the Protectionist party undivided & in a single course that a fixed duty would have done it, but that now until a flag is erected to which they can rally they will be liable to go different ways. He holds that no stable govt. can be formed unless upon a territorial basis... that a Govt to be durable must rest upon the property of the country & from these premises he deduces that no man ever had such an opportunity as you now have of rallying all the [one word illegible] elements of strength to a Whig administration, but

²² E. Horsman to Russell, June 22, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

²⁵ Maxwell, Clarendon, I, 265-267.

he adds that if you miss this opportunity we shall have Peel back within a year. Now in my opinion Cobden in the Cabinet or near it would be the first step towards the accomplishment of this prophecy by giving to all shades of Protectionists a flag not to which but against which to rally, which as far as uniting them would do just as well".²⁴

Lord Fitzwilliam wrote to the Duke of Bedford in a similar vein.

Since Russell read this letter to a meeting of the Cabinet on July 2 in justification of his decision to make no offer to Cobden,²⁵ it deserves to be quoted in detail:

"The great question...is about Cobden, and as I am quite clear about it, I will at once state my opinion -- I am decidedly of the opinion that he ought not to be included -- I see no reason for his being taken in, except that exclusion may seem hard upon him, and this is not a reason upon which you can act in this case -- In Nov. I think there were great reasons for including him, and in a more prominent place than, I believe, was proposed to him -- John's govt. at that time was to be formed for the express purpose of repealing the Corn Laws, it was therefore right, ay, necessary, to bring in the govt. the man who, above all others, was qualified to assist in that great work -- the purposes now in view are totally different -- the Corn Laws are repealed -- the point upon which the change of govt. has technically turned is the govt. of Ireland -- and the object is to frame a ministry which will be acceptable to the largest possible portion of those classes whose feelings & views make up what is called public opinion -- now public opinion...consists of the thoughts of the great -- calm -- body of thinkers, -- these persons dislike extremes -- they repudiate violence -- they fear any extra powers in the state such as the League was growing to be -- If Cobden is a minister all those persons will call it a League Ministry -- they will be frightened to death & you will reject the real solid support which is to be obtained from other quarters".

Fitzwilliam continued that Peel was on the verge of embarking on a radical, free-trade policy and that Cobden's membership in the Government would do nothing to hinder him. "...if you buy C. by

²⁴ Beauvale to Russell, Saturday night, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

²⁵ Broughton Diaries, July 2, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,748. Hobhouse describes the contents of this letter but does not mention the fact that it was written to Bedford & not to Russell.

making him a minister", Fitzwilliam argued, "Peel will ally himself with Bright & those who may endeavour to revive the League after Cobden has left it".²⁶ Although Fitzwilliam belonged to that very small number of Whig peers who were genuinely opposed to the Corn Laws and the principle of protection, he wished to see the Whigs acting in concert with the Protectionist party, and had told Hobhouse that, "He was for Russell getting help from Bentinck rather than Peel".²⁷ The arguments contained in the letters of Beauvale and Fitzwilliam were probably at least as important as any feelings of aristocratic delicacy about the inclusion of Cobden. Lansdowne told Russell that he did not entertain any personal objections to Cobden's appointment and believed that the other members of the Cabinet would accept it, but considered, on the whole, that, "...the risque of inviting him would be greater than the gain".²⁸ Russell told Prince Albert that if he introduced Cobden, it "...would affront a great many people whom he (Lord J.) had to conciliate, and create even possibly dissension in his Cabinet".²⁹

Cobden confronted Russell with a dangerous choice. If he included Cobden, he ran the risk of antagonizing the Protectionists and possibly some of his own supporters in the House of Lords as well. If he did not include him, he ran the risk of antagonizing the Radicals and perhaps even facilitating a union between them and Peel. It is possible

²⁶ Fitzwilliam to Bedford, June 30, 1846, P.R.O. 50/22/5.

²⁷ Broughton Diaries, June 20, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

²⁸ Lansdowne to Russell, Friday night, July 1846, P.R.O. 50/22/5.

²⁹ Victoria, Letters, II, 100.

that Russell tried to escape from this dilemma by offering Cobden the consulship at Cairo with the intention of getting him out of the country.³⁰ The offer was refused, if it was ever made. On the advice of Clarendon, Russell wrote a friendly letter to Cobden in which he stated that as the latter proposed to spend some time travelling for his health, he would not offer him a place in the Cabinet at the moment, but added, "I hope... that on your return to this country you will join a liberal administration!"³¹ Russell thus kept Cobden out of the Government without slamming the door in his face. When Cobden returned from abroad in the summer of 1847, Clarendon re-opened the question. On August 8, Clarendon wrote to Lord Grey:

"It will never do to leave him [Cobden] an outlying deer to be stalked by Peel, & yet this will happen if he returns without any notice having been taken of him -- The Radicals will imitate him, Peel will flatter him & the whole of them will amalgamate with some sacrifice of principle & expediency on both sides, & such a party wd have a great following in the country while we should have humbly to follow in their wake. Pray let me know what are Ld J.'s feelings upon the subject & whether there is any vacancy wch Cobden might fill".³²

In August Russell proposed to the Queen to give Cobden the Presidency of the new Poor-Law Commission with a seat in the Cabinet.

Presumably to sweeten the pill for the Protectionists, Russell intended to bring the Duke of Bedford, one of the country's greatest land-lords, into the Cabinet at the same time.³³ The Queen, however,

³⁰ Walpole, Russell, I, 425.

³¹ Morely, Cobden, I, 404.

³² Clarendon to Grey, August 8, 1847, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 81/2.

³³ Victoria, Letters, II, 153-54.

objected to Cobden's sudden elevation to the Cabinet and suggested that he be asked to serve for a while without it.⁵⁴ Russell did not press the matter and in November wrote to Clarendon, "The next session may have among other fruits his [Cobden's] introduction into the Cabinet, or it may not".⁵⁵ But early in the session of 1848, Cobden threw in his lot with the extreme Radicals and followed a policy of almost systematic opposition towards the Government. It was evident that the time for inviting him into the Government had passed. As he moved farther left in politics and embraced the parliamentary-reform programme of Hume, Roebuck and the other intransigent Radicals the possibility of an immediate junction between Cobden and Peel became less likely. Russell wrote to Clarendon on January 22:

"If Peel should ride abroad with Cobden in his Cabinet, may I be there to see! I think it would be rare sport -- But I do not suspect Peel of such a tilt. Nor is the aristocracy of England so fallen as to submit to such an association".⁵⁶

After the Autumn of 1847, nobody in the Cabinet seems to have seriously proposed Cobden's membership again.

On the formation of his Government Russell approached Peel and told him of his intention to ask Lord Lincoln, Sydney Herbert, and Lord Dalhousie to join the Cabinet. Peel did not encourage this, but placed no difficulties in the way of Russell's overtures. Lincoln and Herbert, replying to Russell in substantially identical letters,

⁵⁴ Ibid. II, 155.

⁵⁵ Russell to Clarendon, November 6, 1847, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1a.

⁵⁶ Russell to Clarendon, January 22, 1847, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1a.

rejected his invitation without much ceremony. Although Dalhousie refused as well, he appears to have considered Russell's offer in a more friendly and favourable light than the other two.³⁷ Cottenham, Bessborough, Clarendon, and presumably, Lord Grey and Wood supported this step.³⁸ Lord Lansdowne had written to Russell that since it was inexpedient to ask Cobden to join, it was necessary to strengthen the Government by approaching the Peelites.³⁹ Palmerston believed that Lansdowne had inspired the overture, because of his anxiety about the House of Lords, where the Government was weak both in numbers and in talent.⁴⁰ On the other hand Palmerston and Hobhouse regretted the invitation. Palmerston from the beginning did not think that any of the Peelites would accept office.⁴¹ It is possible that Hobhouse looked upon the three Peelites as potential candidates for the Board of Control, to which his return had already been disputed.

The decision to retain the Duke of Wellington in the post of Commander-in-Chief had been virtually made during the December crisis. The proposal had originated either with the Queen or Prince Albert and was favourably received by Russell.⁴² The Duke seemed disposed to accept on the understanding that his remaining in office would not be taken to imply any political connection with the new Government.

³⁷ J.B. Conacher, "Peel and the Peelites", E.H.R. LXXIII, 439-40. Lincoln to Russell; Herbert to Russell; Dalhousie to Russell, July 2, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

³⁸ Broughton Diaries, July 1, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

³⁹ Lansdowne to Russell, Friday night, July 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

⁴⁰ Broughton Diaries, July 1, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

⁴¹ Broughton Diaries, July 1, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,748.

⁴² Gooch, Russell, I, 104.

He could undertake only not to join any party acting in opposition to it.⁴³ In July the arrangements were settled by Bedford and

Wellington's intimate friend, Charles Arbuthnot, with the concurrence of Sir Robert Peel.⁴⁴ Lord Stanley subsequently complained that,

"The result of this state of things is that the Duke, with a strong partiality for the Conservative party, never appears in public except in opposition to it -- Where he differs with the Government, he thinks it his duty to be silent; where he thinks they ought to be supported, he supports them warmly...."⁴⁵

But, generally, Wellington avoided taking a prominent part in the debates of the House of Lords except on army matters. On the whole, his re-appointment had no political consequences beyond depriving the Conservatives of the considerable influence and authority he commanded in the House of Lords.

After failing to bring the Peelites into the Cabinet, Russell tried to bind them to the Government by offering them places of a more or less non-political character. In August he asked Dalhousie to accept the Presidency of the Railway Board. Dalhousie declined the post, pleading that he could not promise to refrain from joining any future combination of parties opposed to the Government.⁴⁶ At the same time George Grey invited Graham to take a place on the newly constituted Council of the Duchy of Lancaster. Graham ultimately

⁴³ Victoria, Letters, II, 65-7.

⁴⁴ Conacher, "Peel and the Peelites", E.H.R. LXXIII, 439, note 11.

⁴⁵ Aspinall, Arbuthnot, 245-46.

⁴⁶ Conacher, "Peel and the Peelites", E.H.R. LXXIII, 440.

accepted the place when it was made clear to him that it had been offered at the explicit wish of the Queen and it did not commit him in any way to the Government.⁴⁷ Graham's first reaction to the proposal had been unfavourable, and in a letter to Peel, he indicated the difficulties that separated him from the Government:

"...I do not fancy this close approximation to the Government in the eye of the public, which my consent to serve in this new council would have implied and I think that by acting in strict alliance with you and by maintaining a neutral and independent position I can serve the public most efficiently and at the same time indulge the bent of my own wishes.

"These are some of my reasons for refusing to serve ... I could not state them to Lord John; nor was he entitled to any such explanation.... As on the whole I determined to decline positively, I thought it better to add words, which might remove from the mind of Lord John an impression that I was actuated by hostile feelings, altho' I must own, that I have no reason to receive acts apparently of grace at his hands. He has marked such irreconcilable eremity towards me, that I am on my guard, when he makes an approach not avowedly hostile".⁴⁸

Having been a former Whig and a colleague of Russell, Graham was in a rather peculiar position; but, in all probability, the suspicion with which he regarded Russell's overtures was shared by the other Peelites. A year later Lord St. Germans was asked to become Chief Commissioner of the Poor Law. After discussing it with Peel, he declined the offer.⁴⁹

When Lord Hardinge resigned the Governor-Generalship of India in the summer of 1847, Russell took the opportunity to make another approach

⁴⁷ Ibid. 440.

⁴⁸ Graham to Peel, August 31, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.

⁴⁹ Conacher, "Peel and the Peelites", E.H.R. LXXIII, 441.

to the Peelites and offered the place first to Graham, who refused, and then to Dalhousie, who accepted it. The directors of the East India Company had expressed a wish to have Clarendon appointed; Russell approached him, but the offer seems to have been declined.⁵⁰ Normanby and Clanricarde were both considered -- former was known to be eager to have the office --, but Russell and Hobhouse agreed that both men were unfit for it.⁵¹ Hobhouse, however, was most reluctant to see the post go to a Peelite, particularly, to Graham. On May 31, Hobhouse wrote in his diary:

"In regard to Graham I had no doubt as to his efficiency -- but the effect might be bad on the party -- Moreover Graham was notoriously not a trustworthy man and it was a bad example to promote anyone for mere convenience or even fitness in point of ability who had no moral qualities & had behaved ill to all his friends -- all which I begged Lord John to consider -- saying that of course he was master".⁵²

Dalhousie's appointment to the Governor-Generalship does not signify a closer understanding between the Whigs and the Peelites. Dalhousie, himself, may have been partly persuaded by personal feelings to accept Russell's offer. Peel had not invited him into the Conservative Cabinet until after Stanley's resignation when it was apparent that Government's days were numbered. In the earlier shuffle of January 1845 he had been passed over in favour of Herbert and Lincoln. Dalhousie evidently resented this and in conversation with Hobhouse

⁵⁰ Russell to Clarendon, September 25, 1847, Bodleian, Ms. Clar.dep C. 525/2.

⁵¹ Broughton Diaries, May 31, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,750.
Broughton Diaries, September 31, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,751.

⁵² Broughton Diaries, May 31, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,750.

spoke of Peel "with great bitterness".⁵³ He accepted the office after consulting with the Duke of Wellington, but did not take the trouble to discuss Russell's offer with Peel and simply wrote to the latter to inform him of his decision.⁵⁴ He took the place on the condition that it would not compromise his political liberty and would leave him free to associate with his old friends.⁵⁵ Before his departure for India he re-affirmed in public his political independence of the Government. The Duke of Bedford told Hobhouse that, "Dalhousie's speeches had even made Clarendon angry who had approved of his appointment...."⁵⁶ Hobhouse wrote to Russell about Dalhousie's indiscretion, "I hope... that his future good deeds will obliterate the impression made by his foolish words and that he will justify the favour which you have induced the Queen to bestow upon him".⁵⁷

In making these repeated offers Russell does not appear to have intended them as a preliminary to a coalition between the Whigs and the Peelites. After his overtures to Lincoln, Herbert, and Dalhousie in July 1846, he seems to have given up the idea of including the Peelites in the Government until January 1849 when he offered Graham

⁵³ Broughton Diaries, October 31, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 48,751.

⁵⁴ J. Baird, *Dalhousie*, 18.
Conacher, "Peel and the Peelites", E.H.R. LXXIII, 440.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 440-41.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 441. Broughton Diaries, January 9, 1848, Brit. Museum. Add Mss

⁵⁷ Hobhouse to Russell, March 1, 1848, P.R.O. 50/22/7. 48,751.

the Admiralty. Edward Ellice and Charles Wood continued to press for Peelite support in the Cabinet,⁵⁸ but they received no encouragement from Russell. Hobhouse wrote in his diary in April 1847:

"Ld John Russell told me that Edward Ellice had written to the Duke of Bedford, saying that two or three members of the Cabinet were very willing to resign in favour of an equal number of Peel's friends who would be a great accession to the Gt.--Russell remarked this was very like Ellice trying to make matters better than worse -- for said he, I think we are going on very well".⁵⁹

Hobhouse wrote again on August 20:

"Lord John...mentioned that Edward Ellice had suggested that it would be a good thing to make Dalhousie President of the India Board & to send me as Governor General to India. I remarked that the great passion of our friend was to object to what was done & doing & to propose an arrangement of his own in order to boast of it -- "Exactly so" -- said Russell and then we discussed our counsellors merits and agreed that he would have been a good secretary of the Treasury for Peel -- not being burthened with scruples & preferring the crooked to the straight path".⁶⁰

It is possible that Ellice and Wood were pursuing a plan to bring about a Whig-Peelite coalition, similar to the one the latter had envisaged before the December crisis. Both of them, however, seemed eager to weaken Peel by depriving him of his principal supporters and leaving him without the materials for forming a Cabinet. Ellice, who had

⁵⁸ Wood wrote to Lord Grey:

"I should prefer Lincoln & Sydney Herbert as successors to Macaulay & Hobhouse [both lost their seats in the general election] to anybody...I think I had better not broach the subject to him Russell but I certainly shall express my opinion very decidedly if I have an opening".

August 26, 1847, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 102/2.

⁵⁹ Broughton Diaries, April 12, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,750.

⁶⁰ Broughton Diaries, August 20, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,750.

acted as intermediary between Russell and Graham about the Indian appointment, told Hobhouse that, "...if G. was out of the way Peel and his party could never do anything".⁶¹ Wood told Russell that he was frightened of Peel's popularity with the Radicals and believed that the latter would out-bid Russell for their support.

"...I am convinced that he (Peel) means to pursue the popular, body-of-the-people line. They [the Peelites] and we are the rivals for the lead of the great popular party; we have it in very difficult circumstances. He had it very much in favourable times, and has acquired a character which he does not deserve; but still there is a great leaning on the part of many of our friends towards him. This is what has always made me anxious to enlist some of his best men. We are safe enough if we can rally some of his quondam supporters and get the H. of C. into two parties. We can keep down the protectionists, and it is with them our open warfare will be I am afraid of the force on our flank, supporting us if we carry all our own people, but availing themselves of every opportunity of claiming and -- such is the fate of people in power -- obtaining credit for superior sagacity and conduct from our own people whenever we trip and no Government can avoid trips and mistakes".⁶²

Russell's overtures to the Peelites may have been prompted, as has been suggested, by his respect for their "rank, zeal and administrative efficiency".⁶³ It cannot be denied that although the Whigs possessed rank in plenty, they were singularly deficient in zeal and administrative efficiency. Nevertheless, it is equally probable that these overtures were inspired by the fear of Peel's returning to power with liberal support and were intended, if they were accepted, to leave Peel isolated in Parliament.

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⁶¹ Broughton Diaries, June 20, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,50.

⁶² Gooch, Russell, I, 180-1.

⁶³ Conacher, "Peel and the Peelites", E.H.R. LXXIII, 441.

In the period between Peel's resignation and the dissolution of 1847 it is difficult to determine with any certainty the position of the Government in the House of Commons. The nominal supporters of the Government were in a minority and probably numbered altogether something like 270 to 280 members. The Protectionist party represented about 270 and the Peelites about 110.⁶⁴ These figures, however, should not be regarded as anything more than rough approximations, which indicate at best the relative but not the absolute strength of the three parties. The nominal membership of the Liberal party bore little relation to its effective strength in actual divisions. The number of issues on which the free-trade Radicals, the Irish Liberals and the Whigs could act with complete harmony were few and as often as not its members were to be found voting in different lobbies. For instance,

⁶⁴ These figures are based on the division lists for the third reading of the corn bill and the second reading of the coercion bill in Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXVI, 721-28 and LXXXVII, 1027-32. The total number of Liberal members is stated in an analysis of the vote appended to the division list for the third reading of the corn bill. To this figure is added the nine Liberals who voted with the Protectionists. The total strength of the Conservative party is put at 574. Those members who are listed as having voted or paired off against the corn bill as well as those members who were absent but regarded as opponents of the bill are taken to be members of the Protectionist party. The members who supported the bill, paired off in its favour or were absent and included in the list of absent supporters and who also voted or paired off in favour of the coercion bill are assumed to represent the Peel party. It should be noted that the list of members for the division on the corn bill is not strictly accurate. Excluding the speaker, 666 members are listed as having voted, whereas the total membership of the House of Commons was 658 and two seats were vacant at the time of the division. The discrepancy chiefly arises from the fact that a few members are listed as being absent as well as being paired off on the division.

in little more than a month after Russell took office the Radicals opposed a measure introduced by the Government to control the sale and possession of fire-arms in Ireland and finally compelled Russell to withdraw the bill altogether.⁶⁵ Party discipline was not much better among the Protectionists. Bentinck estimated the number of his followers at 250 members, but believed that half of them had never wished to break completely with Peel and longed to see the old Conservative party re-united. "They prefer", Bentinck complained, "to be kicked and fed, feed [sic] and fattened, and kicked again to the false pride of poverty and unsullied honour".⁶⁶ The Peelites, on the other hand, seemed reluctant to make even rough calculations of the respective sizes of the three parties. Francis Bonham, the central political agent for the Conservative party, sounded Edward Cardwell, a former member of Peel's Government, on the subject; the latter replied that, "Old parties are much broken, & votes cannot be counted without full allowances made for many speculative considerations".⁶⁷

After the general election Graham wrote to Peel:

⁶⁵ H. Goulburn wrote to Peel on August 13, 1846:

"The Government have much difficulty in keeping a House and still more in keeping in order their disappointed supporters. They owe to our exertions the continuance of the Irish Arms bill -- Had we gone against them they would certainly have been defeated notwithstanding their admission of the suggested alteration. Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,481.

Hobhouse wrote on August 10 after the first division:

"...we divided 56 to 23. After the division a short debate ensued...not at all pleasant -- but [one word illegible] convinced me there was an end of the bill or of the government..."
Broughton Diaries, Add. Ms 43,749.

⁶⁶ Jennings, Croker, III, 140

It is not clear whether Bentinck is referring to the Protectionist party as it stood before or after the general election.

⁶⁷ Croker to Bonham, September 9, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add Mss 40617.
Cardwell to Bonham, September 9, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add Mss 40617.

"All attempts at precise estimates of relative numbers seem to me quite fallacious. All the ordinary rules of management and of influence are inapplicable to a House elected under such circumstances as the present; and everything will depend on their [the Government's] ability to govern and on the measures which may be proposed".⁶⁸

The greatest caution must be observed in analysing divisions.

Before the general election none of the three parties ever mustered their full strength. The vote on the third reading of the corn bill in which nearly 600 members participated, either dividing or pairing off, was exceptional. Between Peel's resignation and the general election the House divided on more than a 120 motions. On only three of these did the combined vote exceed more than 500 members. In only one instance, Duncombe's resolution on education grants, did the majority exceed one-half of the total membership.⁶⁹ In the other divisions there was often more than a merely mathematical possibility that the absent members could have turned the minority into a majority. Nevertheless, an examination of the actual division lists for the sessions of 1846 and 1847 throws some light on how the Government, with the nominal support of only a minority of the total membership of the House of Commons, obtained the majorities it required to remain in office.

Immediately on coming into office the Government's first act was to introduce legislation for the gradual abolition of the differential duties on imported sugar. The existing system of sugar duties not only

⁶⁸ Graham to Peel, August 22, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add Mss 40452.

⁶⁹ Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXVII - XCIV.

admitted the produce of the West Indian colonies at preferential rates, but was designed to exclude foreign sugar which was cultivated by slave labour. Before his resignation Peel had announced his intention of preserving the distinction between "slave" and "free" sugar after the existing duties expired.⁷⁰ In abolishing the differential the Government willingly exposed itself to the danger of a hostile combination between Peel and the Protectionists. Lord Campbell wrote:

"It was said we were to be ejected upon this [the Sugar Bill], and many of our friends out of doors advised that it should be postponed for another year...it was said he [Peel] would now league with the Protectionists to defeat it. However, the members of the Cabinet were unanimous for immediately bringing it forward, as, if we could not encounter such a peril, the sooner we met our end the better".⁷¹

All of the principal Peelites, however, came out in favour of the bill and on the second reading the Government received a majority of 265 to 155 votes. But the support of the Peelites was not decisive. Only 50 of them voted with the Government; if every one of these members had voted with Bentinck, the measure would still have received a majority. On the other hand 27 Protectionists voted or paired off for the bill and nearly a hundred, on Hobhouse's estimate, abstained altogether.⁷² Although Bentinck and the other Protectionist leaders

⁷⁰ Hansard 3rd series, LXXXIV 979.

⁷¹ Hardcastle, Campbell, II, 215.

⁷² Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXVIII, 180-84.

Hobhouse wrote, "I walked with Peel -- He brought 48 of his friends with him ... nearly 100 Protectionists were absent". Broughton Diaries, July 28, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,749.

formally opposed the bill, H. Tufnell, the Liberal whip, noticed that they were very inactive in bringing up their supporters for the contest.⁷³ In spite of their opposition the Protectionists seem to have allowed this free-trade measure to pass by default. After the division Lansdowne told Hobhouse, "...he thought that now the Govt. would stay in -- it was clear that neither Peel nor Bentinck intended to turn them out".⁷⁴

Early in February 1847 Bentinck brought forward a bill for the relief of Irish distress. The measure would have permitted the Government to advance loans up to a total of sixteen million pounds to private companies for the building of railways in Ireland. Ostensibly, Bentinck proposed it as a non-party measure and insisted that he entertained no wish to embarrass the Government. Nevertheless, the loan of public money to private contractors as a means of famine relief could not be reconciled with the principles of laissez-faire. The Government's policy was to treat the famine substantially as an Irish crisis which should be met from the revenue of Irish local authorities. Government funds, secured on local rates, had been made available for public works, and some money had gone for the relief of starvation in certain districts, but basically the Government contended that the Poor Law was the only answer to the famine. Bentinck's scheme, naturally enough, proved popular with the Irish members of all parties.

⁷³ Tufnell to Russell, July 22, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/5.

⁷⁴ Broughton Diaries, July 29, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,749.

On the first reading, M.J. O'Connell, H. Grattan, Smith O'Brien and several other Irish Liberals announced their intention of supporting the bill.⁷⁵ Arthur Roebuck later wrote to his wife "...the Whigs fancied that the union of the Protectionists and the Irish would give George Bentinck a majority".⁷⁶ The Government did not oppose the bill initially and allowed the first reading to be passed without a division. A meeting of the Liberal members was then called and Russell informed them that if the second reading was passed he would be obliged to give up office.⁷⁷ This declaration placed the Irish members in considerable difficulty. If they supported the bill and defeated the Government they ran the risk of losing several relief measures that the Whigs had already introduced. After holding a meeting among themselves a number of Irish members approached Bentinck and asked him to postpone the second reading.⁷⁸ Smith O'Brien openly pleaded with him in the House to defer the debate until the Government's relief bills were safe.⁷⁹ Arthur Roebuck parodied this request in the following terms, " 'Give us' they said, 'as much as you can from your side (the Ministerial), and when we have squeezed you dry, bring in the plan of the noble Lord, and give us something more' ".⁸⁰ At

⁷⁵ Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXIX, 775-846.

⁷⁶ Leader, Roebuck, 172.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 172.

⁷⁸ Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXIX, 1214, 1216.

⁷⁹ Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXIX, 1206-08.

⁸⁰ Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXIX, 1219.

the obvious cost of losing his Irish support Bentinck proceeded to the second reading on the very next day. When the House divided on February 15th, the Government received a majority of 332 to 118 votes. Only ten Irish Liberals voted in the minority. On the other hand, 58 Protectionists along with 67 Peelites voted with the Government.⁸¹ Disraeli wrote in his life of Bentinck:

"...the government could only be saved by their Irish adherents acting against their acknowledged convictions, and a considerable body of protectionists being induced to absent themselves from the house, or to divide against their party. Men complained of the unreasonable conduct of the ministers, but the fact is it was the inevitable consequence of the government being carried on by a party which had not a parliamentary majority".⁸²

Once Russell had made the issue a question of confidence, Bentinck's manoeuvre collapsed. He refused to wait for Irish support in his measure and by bringing on the second reading so early virtually threw away his chance of obtaining a large vote, if not of defeating the Government.

Three months later the Government reversed the position it had adopted during the debate on Bentinck's bill and Charles Wood brought forward a bill to assist Irish railway construction with a loan of 620,000 pounds.⁸³ Although the size of the proposed loan fell far short of that contemplated by Bentinck, the principles of the two bills were the same, and Bentinck gave the Government his support in a conspicuously offensive speech. Hobhouse wrote in his diary:

⁸¹ Hansard, 3rd series, XC, 125-26.

⁸² Disraeli, Bentinck, 390.

⁸³ Hansard, 3rd series, XCII, 208-13.

"Lord George Bentinck assailed us in a very outrageous speech calling our loan the ²rag end of his scheme for [one word illegible] 16 millions, but declaring his intention of & that of his party of supporting us -- He was often interrupted by cries for a division but became louder & louder & more frantic in his gestures. I confess I felt ashamed of our supporter who had summoned his party for us & felt little joy in our majority of 208 to 75 -- though some cheered".⁸⁴

Peel, Lincoln, Graham and ten other Peelites opposed the Government; 76 Protectionists supported it.⁸⁵ It should be observed that this division was the only occasion of importance in which Peel and Graham together formally opposed the Government before the dissolution.

The fact that on this and other occasions the Protectionists either supported the Government or failed to press home their opposition gave rise to the suspicion in many quarters that they and the Whigs were engaged in some sort of unnatural alliance. Early in January 1847 Bright wrote to a friend in Manchester, "The Government is under the patronage of the Country party & can do nothing without their consent, or dare not try to do anything..."⁸⁶ Again in the same month he complained, "The Whigs are too anxious to conciliate the Bentinck men for me, & I fear they will try to please their enemies till they lose their friends".⁸⁷ Immediately after the resignation of the Conservative Government Graham wrote to Peel:

⁸⁴ Broughton Diaries, April 1, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,750.

⁸⁵ Hansard, 5rd series, XCII, 297-99.

⁸⁶ Bright to George Wilson, January 19, 1847, Wilson Papers, Manchester, Central Reference Library. I am indebted to Dr. N. McCord for this and all subsequent references to the Wilson Papers.

⁸⁷ Bright to George Wilson, January 24, 1847, Wilson Papers, Manchester, Central Reference Library.

"It is right that you should know...a fact which has been communicated to me by the Duke of Buccleuch. Lord Lansdowne gave a dinner yesterday evening at Lansdowne House: there were present with others, the following persons:

Duke of Richmond
Duke of Beaufort
Lord Eglinton
Lord Malmesbury
Lord George Bentinck
Mr Stafford O'Brien

I cannot ascertain whether Lord Stanley dined there. It is understood and, as I hear, averred, that this portion of the Protectionists has come under an engagement to support the Whigs during the remainder of the session....

"The Whig language is, that you and the Free Trade Radicals will make common cause; and they, the Whigs, will ensure the support of the best portion of the country party.

"This dinner at Lansdowne House is a premature and indecent expression of the game which is about to be played. The Protectionists hope after a certain time, probably after a dissolution to be strong enough to supplant the Whigs and overthrow them: both parties intend to use each other for their own purposes, without much mind to the public good -- the public will at once discover and resent it".⁸⁸

Peel did not go as far as Graham in his suspicions, but did not exclude the possibility of a compact between the two parties. In January 1847 Peel wrote to King Leopold, "The Protectionist party boast that power was conferred on the present holders of it mainly through their exertions. Whether any secret understanding exists between them or any section of them and the Government, I know not".⁸⁹ After Peel's resignation the Protectionists had remained on the Government benches as an indication of their confidence in Russell; at the beginning of the session of 1847 they crossed over to the opposition side of the

⁸⁸ Graham to Peel, June 29, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40455.

⁸⁹ Parker, Peel, III, 479.

House to make room for the Liberal members and not, according to Disraeli, to express any change in their attitude towards the Government.⁹⁰

There is only one instance of outright collaboration between the Liberals and the Protectionists and this, on the whole, tends to suggest that there was no explicit understanding between them. During the autumn recess Russell proposed to suspend the operation of Peel's corn bill by order-in-council to allow grain to be imported into Ireland without payment of the four-shillings duty. This step would have obliged the Government to apply to Parliament for an act of indemnity during the next session and before taking any action it was decided to discover first whether or not the Protectionists would oppose such a bill. Instead of approaching Bentinck directly the Government asked Greville to sound him on their behalf.⁹¹ Either on their instructions or on his own initiative Greville delegated the task to another friend of the Government, G. Anson. After the conversation between Anson and Bentinck Greville reported to Clarendon:

"G. Anson has executed my commission. G.B. ridicules the idea of your opening the ports -- that you could not be mad enough to do it -- that the quantity of corn that could by any possibility be brought in by it would be so small that it would make the smallest difference in the price of bread -- that Gov't already stand in need of a bill of indemnity for what they have done in Ireland, which he thinks they are entitled to, because they were right -- but that if this is attempted -- he will give the most strenuous opposition to an indemnity for it -- He was especially violent on this topic, and it is clear enough that if anything is done you will stir up tremendous contest -- I have little doubt that he

⁹⁰ Disraeli, Bentinck, 371-2.

⁹¹ Greville, V, 357.

speaks the sentiments of the Protectionists generally & that at all events they will act in concert with him".⁹²

The evidence is interrupted at this point. But it appears that partly in consequence of this communication Russell gave up his plan of proceeding by order-in-council.⁹³ However, he persisted in his intention to abolish the remaining duties and at the beginning of the next session introduced a bill to suspend them until the following September. In the interval a second approach must have been made to the Protectionists. When the bill was brought in, not only did Bentinck and Disraeli support it, but G. Bankes, one of the most intransigent of the Protectionist leaders, actually seconded Russell's motion for the first reading.⁹⁴ With the Protectionist clearly on their side, the Government managed to pass the bill through all its stages within two days and without a single division. It is significant that Bentinck originally refused to allow the Government to repeal these duties by order-in-council and that the Government felt it necessary to communicate with him through an intermediary like Charles Greville. This does not imply that Bentinck and Russell were on particularly close terms of political intimacy. Nevertheless, it is equally significant that Bentinck ultimately supported Russell's bill

⁹² Greville to Clarendon, Monday night [Autumn 1846] Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 520.

It is not certain whether Greville is referring to G. Anson who was private secretary to Prince Albert, or to the Hon. George Anson, Clerk of The Ordinance and a close friend of Greville's.

⁹³ Greville, V, 357.

⁹⁴ Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXIX, 217-20, 245-55, 257-61.

and made no move to obstruct its passage.

The connection between the Government and the Peelites tended to be of a more direct and cordial character. Both parties were in complete accord on commercial questions and Russell had gone so far as to invite several Peelites to join his administration. Furthermore, members of the Government were in communication with Graham and Peel on several important matters of policy. Wood wrote to Peel in December 1846 on banking matters and conferred with him on the following February on the problem of over-circulation of currency.⁹⁵ Sir James Graham regularly corresponded with Clarendon's brother-in-law, G.C. Lewis, and the Government seems to have attached considerable value to this particular link. On the subject of a letter by Graham on Irish administration and the Spanish-marriage crisis, Clarendon wrote to Lewis in the autumn of 1846:

"I ought to have returned you Graham's letter before, but it appeared to me so important that I thought you wd not object to my sending it to Ld John -- he returned it to me yesterday, saying he was much obliged for it, that it had been a great satisfaction to know the opinions of so able & experienced a man as Graham, & that he had ventured to make an extract of the part relating to Ireland & transmit it confidentially to Labouchere to whom he was sure it wd be of much use -- Ld J., whatever his private feelings towards Graham may be, has the highest opinion of his judgement, experience, & capacity as a man of business & to know what he thought upon the two great subjects of the day, has I am certain been a great satisfaction to him, as well as an encouragement at finding that his own ideas entirely correspond with Graham's. G. puts the case of L.P. [Louis-Phillippe] admirably & quite confirms the message sent through Morpeth by Peel to Ld J. & Palm'n, viz. that he, Graham & Aberdeen were

⁹⁵ Conacher, "Peel and the Peelites", E.H.R. LXXIII, 445.

all of one opinion respecting the treachery & misconduct of
L.P. "96

In November Clarendon wrote again to Lewis:

"I return Graham's letter. I am glad you have told him that the Gov't is not slumbering over the Poor Law but is endeavouring to prepare something that will be acceptable to the Public without weakening the central control & that the Commission will in future have its organ in Parlt. It wd be very desirable to let Graham think that his views & Id John's are nearly identical upon the subject & that the opinions he gave Sir G. Grey have been duly born in mind".⁹⁷

And again Clarendon wrote to Lewis in December: "Many thanks for Graham's letter -- I shall not be sorry for you to have a little talk with him upon foreign as well as Irish affairs when he comes to town".⁹⁸

These discussions do not appear to have led to any regular and overt collaboration in the House of Commons. During the debate on the sugar bill Peel approached Tufnell and Ellice and assured them privately of his intention to use his influence on behalf of the Government.⁹⁹ But on the whole the Peelites appear to have refrained from giving the Government any prior indication of their intention to support or oppose the Government on any particular measure. On Bentinck's amendment to the Irish poor-law bill to transfer the payment of rates from the landlord to the tenant, the Government was taken off its guard and nearly defeated by the Peelites, who divided with the Protectionists. Hobhouse described the incident in his diary:

⁹⁶ Clarendon to Lewis, Oct 7, 1846, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Dep. C 532.

⁹⁷ Clarendon to Lewis, November 22, 1846, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Dep. C. 532.

⁹⁸ Clarendon to Lewis, December 4, 1846, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Dep. C. 532.

⁹⁹ Aspinall, Arbutnot. 240.

"...all the Peelites present except Graham, who did not vote took part with Bentinck -- Marcus Hill and Tufnell the Liberal tellers said we were in a minority -- but it turned out we had 79 to 76 -- and much pleased we were".¹⁰⁰

It is perhaps of some significance that three members who had opposed the repeal of the Corn Laws voted with the Government.¹⁰¹ In June 1847 the Protectionists and the Radicals threatened to combine to censure the intervention of the Government in the domestic affairs of Portugal. At the last moment the Radicals called off the attack and the House did not divide on the issue.¹⁰² During the course of the debate, however, some members of the Cabinet believed that Peel would join forces with the Radicals and Protectionists and place the Government in a minority.¹⁰³ On most of the major questions of policy and administration, the Whigs were almost certainly aware of the opinions of Graham and Peel. It is reasonable to assume that this knowledge was used by the Whigs to their own advantage. The Government was in a minority and consequently the opinion of its opponents had become an indispensable factor in its calculations. There is no

¹⁰⁰ Broughton Diaries, March 29, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,750. According to Hansard the minority was 75 excluding the tellers.

¹⁰¹ Hansard, 3rd series, XCI, 610.

¹⁰² Leader, Roebuck, 181.

¹⁰³ Hobhouse wrote on June 14, 1847:

"Lord John told us that Sir Robert Peel had said that if he had been called upon to vote on Friday night he should not have known what side to take -- he had not read the papers...

"...In the general uncertainty as to Peel's conduct the impression in the cabinet was not favourable as to the result of the debate -- but Lord Grey & myself both said we should not be beaten in either house". Broughton Diaries, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,750.

evidence, however, to suggest that the free exchange of views between the Peelites and the Whigs signified a tacit alliance between them in Parliament.

If the Government, on the one hand, acted with the Radicals and the Peelites against the Protectionists on commercial questions, it tended to act with the Protectionists and against the Peelites and Radicals on religious questions. After Peel's resignation Lord Stanley announced at a Protectionist meeting that he was prepared to allow the Government to go on smoothly "unless the word 'Irish Church' was pronounced."¹⁰⁴ In his speech on the general policy of the Government on July 16, Russell declared that he intended to give preference to the reform of social grievances in Ireland and did not contemplate any alteration in the Irish establishment or any scheme of endowment of the Catholic clergy. This speech was tantamount to a repudiation of the Appropriation Clause and was bitterly criticized by the Radicals.¹⁰⁵ Graham privately urged the Government to ignore the ultra-protestant sentiments of the Protectionist party and deal with the problem of the Irish church. Lewis wrote to Graham on *?London* December 12th:

"His [Graham's] fear seems to be that in the divided state of the House, they [the Government] may seek too much to please all parties, & yield to the views of the the Protectionists....He also says that it is the paramount duty of the present govt to attempt to deal with the Irish Church question, & that no

¹⁰⁴ Victoria, Letters, II, 99.

¹⁰⁵ Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXVII, 1162-95.

Irish settlement can pretend to the name which leaves this question unsolved. Peel & himself could not undertake it, & he regards it as one of the advantages of the change of govt that the present ministers can with honour & consistency take the subject in hand. He said he did not wish ill of the govt & had no wish to urge them into difficulties".¹⁰⁶

Graham was perhaps the last man in the House of Commons who could offer such advice to the Whigs with propriety and the Government proceeded in the next session to lay their Irish measures before the House without any reference to the problem of the Irish church. Graham complained to Peel:

"I can readily believe any conduct to be possible on the part of the Whigs with respect to the Irish Church after their consent to nullify the appropriation clause; yet a comprehensive settlement of Irish affairs, under the auspices of Lord Grey, Macaulay and Ward, without even a glance at the Protestant Church Establishment will be a marvel in politics never to be forgotten".¹⁰⁷

In the course of a Cabinet meeting Macaulay tried to persuade his colleagues to open the universities to dissenters. At this proposal, Hobhouse wrote, "...Morpeth & I smiled -- I said I hoped nothing would be done by the Govt. on any subject affecting the protestant church this session [1847] & most of us agreed on this".¹⁰⁸ Later in the session Russell brought forward to the annoyance of the Radicals a bill to increase the grants for protestant schools of all denominations. The Catholic schools were omitted altogether from the plan. Graham supported the bill but expressed his regret that the Catholics were not

¹⁰⁶ Lewis to Clarendon, December 12, 1846, Bodleian, Ms Clar. Dep. C 531.

¹⁰⁷ Graham to Peel, January 9, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.

¹⁰⁸ Broughton Diaries, January 30, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,749.

included in its provisions. Hobhouse described his speech as "mischievous".¹⁰⁹ At the end of the session the Government introduced with Protectionist support a bill to create a separate diocese for the city of Manchester. It was vigorously opposed by Graham and the Radicals. Bedford wrote to Clarendon after the debate that, "For the present the Radicals are looking to Graham as their leader & think him prepared to 'go the whole hog' with them".¹¹⁰ Stanley on the other hand was more satisfied with Russell's ecclesiastical policy, but was equally astonished at Russell's abrupt conversion. Stanley wrote to Croker on June 7:

"...there seems to be a general confusion of parties, persons and principles. Thus we find Lord John Russell at the head of a Whig Government, and supported by Radical followers, adopting, for the present, a strictly Conservative line of policy, courting the alliance and support of the Church and braving the hostility of the Dissenters..."¹¹¹

During the sessions of 1846 and 1847 the Government depended for its majorities on the votes it received both from the Protectionist and Peelite parties. It is an over-simplification to assume that the House of Commons was dominated by a union of free-trade members in opposition to the Protectionists. Even on ostensibly free-trade questions like the sugar bill and the railway bill the Protectionists gave the Government substantial support. On non-commercial questions like the Irish Church the Government could act with the Protectionists

¹⁰⁹ Broughton Diaries, April 22, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add Mss 43,750.

¹¹⁰ Bedford to Clarendon, July 15, 1847, Bodleian, Ms. Clar.Ireland 7 a.

¹¹¹ Jennings, Croker, III, 107.

against the Radicals and Peelites. Furthermore, neither the Peelites nor the Protectionists seemed prepared to drive the Whigs out of office. Peel and Bentinck almost certainly preferred Russell to retain office than to take any step which would force him to resign and make way for a Protectionist or Peelite Government. Peel wrote to Hardinge on February 7, 1847:

"We are here in a strange state, the Government as weak as water, so far as the ordinary elements of the strength of an administration are concerned, but strong from the dislocation of party, and from the deep prevailing sense of that calamity under which Ireland and the West of Scotland are suffering so grievously.

"There is little disposition to criticize, a strong wish to arm the Government with all the authority which may be requisite to mitigate a misfortune which will derange our finances and disturb all relations of society in Ireland".¹¹²

The Whigs, on the other hand, were aware of the fact that their best assurance of retaining office lay in the continued division between the Peelites and the Protectionists. They hesitated to do anything which might have the effect of diminishing the gulf between the two factions. This consideration appears to have been dominant in the Cabinet discussion of August 26, 1846 to decide on the date of the general election. Palmerston and several other members advised Russell to postpone the dissolution; Palmerston stated that, "...he thought several of the Peel party and perhaps of the Bentinck would join us in the next session -- but if we drove them to fight for their seats now [they] would oppose us at the hustings". Hobhouse, Lord Grey and Wood, on the other hand, believed that "...the longer we delayed the

¹¹² Parker, Peel, III, 476.

dissolution the greater was the chance of the Conservatives re-uniting". Hobhouse argued that if the dissolution was delayed until the summer of 1847, the next session would be occupied by "...the motions made by the radical friends of the Government bidding for seats..."; this, he believed would divide the Liberal party and "...might unite the Peelites & Protectionists".¹¹⁵ Before the dissolution Russell went to considerable lengths to avoid any controversial issue which might serve as a basis for Conservative reunion. He not only avoided the word "Irish Church" but brought forward legislation in the interests of the Church of England, at the risk of alienating his Radical followers. Far from committing himself to a simple combination of Whigs, Radicals and Peelites, he attempted to win and in some measure succeeded in gaining the support of all parties in the House of Commons, including the Protectionists.

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¹¹⁵ Broughton Diaries, August 26, 1846, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,749.

CHAPTER III

On the surface the results of the election were favourable to the Government. The Peelites won on various estimates between 85 and 117 seats; the Protectionists suffered heavy losses, retaining only about 200 seats in the new house. Roughly one half of the members were returned in the Liberal interest; different authorities estimated the strength of the party at somewhere between 324 and 336 members.¹ For Charles Greville, the composition of the new house seemed to promise the Government unchallenged possession of power. In August 1847 Greville wrote to Clarendon:

"...the Govt pure are stronger than the Protectionists & Peelites separately, and with the Liberal irregulars are stronger than both united -- I can see nothing but strength and harmony for them [the Govt] in the absence of all union, concert & definite principles in the other sections into which the H. of C. is split -- people say it will be a difficult to manage such a House of Commons -- I don't think much management will be needed".²

¹ Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1847.

Dod's gives the following figures:

Liberals -- 324

Protectionists -- 199

Peelites -- 117

Hobhouse wrote in his diary:

"Henry [Tufnell] shewed me his lists & analysis of the new house of Commons. He gives 336 Liberals of all parties -- about 40 doubtfuls of whom we may expect more than half to vote with us -- between 85 & 90 Peelites and the rest protectionists".

Broughton Diaries, September 8, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add.Mss.43,751.

² Greville to Clarendon, August 19, 1847, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.dep. c 521.

In fact the Government enjoyed nothing like a working-majority and before the end of the first session of the new Parliament it found itself in very serious difficulties. If the Liberals had improved their position in the House of Commons, the Radicals and Repealers had increased their numbers within the Liberal party at the expense of the orthodox Whigs. The Government's majority, small as it was, depended entirely upon the uncertain allegiance of the Radical and Repeal members. "The extreme difficulty of his [Russell's] position is self-evident", wrote Sir James Graham immediately after the elections, "and I doubt whether he will be able to extricate himself from it".⁵ The session of 1847-48 saw a complete collapse of party discipline, not only among the Liberals but among the Peelites and Protectionists as well; members voted in a spirit of perverse independence that defied the ordinary rules of political calculation. By the end of the session the Government had clearly lost effective control of its majority in the House of Commons and could barely get through its routine legislation. In July Greville wrote:

"Nobody seems to have any command over the House, & business of every sort is obstructed by endless gabble, leading to nothing -- The Govt have unhappily no absolute majority; the Protectionists have no leader, no object, no opinions, don't wish to turn the Govt out, but don't care how much they are weakened & impaired ... Hume, Cobden & their gang have a plan & in such times as these & such a distracted state of parties, they are very dangerous & may be troublesome ... 50 fellows led by such men & acting together are always formidable, when ready to apply the match to any combustible part -- Peel & Graham give their steady support to the Govt, and no doubt their example & authority are valuable, but Peel seems to have no party & to wish to have none -- Goulburn is evidently joining the Protectionists, & Lincoln is always

⁵ Parker, Peel, III, 489.

snarling & worrying the Govt & Gladstone half opposing them -- Graham complained to me of their impatience" 4

A month later George Grey complained to Clarendon:

"I wish I could put you into the H. of Com. for one day. Most of the people who are disposed to be of use are gone -- We have a difficulty in keeping 40 members together & any bore gets up on any question & speaks agst time. We meet daily & sit till about 2 p.m. & for one I have neither strength nor spirit left for fighting anything thro' the House".⁵

In spite of the Government's token victory in the elections, the events of the session of 1847-48 revealed the basic weakness of its position and demonstrated that its tenure of office depended not upon its own strength but upon the confusion and division of its opponents.

Before the dissolution of Parliament a certain amount of tension had arisen between the Radicals and the Government. No offer had been made to Cobden to join the Cabinet and Russell appeared to be suspiciously solicitous of the interests and wishes of the Protectionists. The conviction grew in Radical circles that the Whigs had no intention of implementing a liberal policy, that, particularly, the Whigs were indifferent to the necessity of reducing public expenditure and carrying out the implications of the free-trade revolution to its logical conclusion. Before Parliament assembled, Cobden and other Radicals took alarm at the Government's foreign policy, at the rupture with France

⁴ Greville to Clarendon, July 10, 1848, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 521.

⁵ G. Grey to Clarendon, August 7, 1848, Bodleian, Ms.Clar, Ireland 2 b. During the debate on the sugar bill G. Grey wrote:

"The misfortune we suffer from is the want of an organised opposition with a recognised leader. Every man follows his own course & there is no one of high influence to keep them in order -- the disorder & the waste of time is consequently great". G. Grey to Clarendon, June 24, 1848, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 2 b.

over the Spanish-marriage incident and the intervention in the internal affairs of Spain, and believed, correctly as it was, that the Government proposed to increase the army and navy estimates.⁶ During the session suspicion and dissatisfaction developed into exasperation. In February Arthur Roebuck wrote to a fellow Radical, Bernal Osborne, and urged him to take part in the organization of an independent Radical party, which would act in opposition to the Whigs. In his letter he stressed the exclusion of eminent Radicals like Cobden from the Cabinet and the promotion of men on the strength of their aristocratic connections. This was possible, Roebuck argued, only because the Radicals had hitherto submitted without protest to the pretensions of the Whigs and had not asserted their own claims with sufficient vigour.

"I want you to make a party, to hold together, to form a real opposition (you have no such thing now) and steadily to work out the great ends of the opposition....The Tories are afraid to oust Lord John, because they would be putting in Peel, but we need not have any such fears".⁷

In April the Radicals met together, appointed a permanent committee and cut themselves off from Whig control.⁸ Joseph Hume, who appeared to act as leader of the new party in so far as the Radicals could bring themselves to submit to any form of leadership, outlined their policy in the following terms:

"The state of discontent of a large portion of the working classes

⁶ Morley, Cobden, II, 7-12.

⁷ Bagenal, Osborne, 101-02.

⁸ G. Poulett Scrope to Russell, April 17, 1848, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

at the want of their fair share of the Parliamentary suffrage has induced some liberal M.P.s to consider whether means can be adopted to reconcile the middle & working classes & induce them to unite in their [one word illegible] for Parliamentary reform.

"The aristocracy Whig & Tory are now united & taxation & expenditure will be kept up to the last shilling the Country will pay & we have no longer the chance of throwing the popular power in with the Whigs as formerly to extort concessions from the Tories".⁹

Retrenchment and the household franchise were coupled together in their programme. Bright believed that the latter was a necessary preliminary to the achievement of the former. "The Govt. & the House", he wrote, "are sworn to the aristocracy & they contrive to frighten the middle classes into acquiescence in their nefarious policy. We must oust the dominant class or they will destroy us...".¹⁰

Although the Radicals did not organize themselves into a separate party until April, the actual breach between them and the Whigs took place in February during the debate on the budget. The income tax, which Peel had renewed in 1845 had originally been intended as an extraordinary device to sustain the revenue while adjustments in the rates of custom duties were taking effect. The expectation was that the reduction of custom duties would lead to an increase in trade and ultimately to an increase in revenue that would make the continuation of the income tax unnecessary. Peel's tax was due to expire in April 1848, but circumstances made this impossible. A business recession in the autumn of 1847 had diminished the return from most sources of taxation.

⁹ Copy of letter from J. Hume to J. Gibson, April 20, 1848, P.R.O.50/22/7.

¹⁰ Bright to Wilson, April 18, 1848, Wilson Papers, Manchester, Central Reference Library.

On the other hand the Caffre War in the Cape Colony and famine relief in Ireland had led to an increase in expenditure beyond the expected limits for the year. Charles Wood predicted a deficit of over three million pounds for the current year. Furthermore the Government contemplated a heavy outlay on defence for the next few years, the fortification of the channel ports, an increase in the army and navy, and the possible creation of a militia. To meet the existing deficit and finance the improvements in defence the Government proposed to renew the existing income tax of seven pence in the pound for another five years and to levy an additional tax of five pence in the pound for a period of two years.¹¹ The budget provoked a violent reaction in the House. It was energetically condemned by the Protectionists who regarded the income tax as an instrument for repealing the duties on imported commodities.¹² For the Radicals the continuation and increase of the tax signified extravagance and waste and a sinister propensity for expensive foreign adventures on the part of the Government. Bright, Hume, Cobden, and Osborne denounced the budget in the most uncompromising terms and threatened to combine with the Protectionists to prevent its passing.¹³ "We are", wrote Russell to Clarendon, "in a strange & not very pleasant state here -- Whigs and Peelites keep their senses but Radicals and Protectionists are gone

¹¹ Hansard, 3rd series, XCVI, 900-26.
Broughton Diaries, February 1, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add.Mss 43,751.

¹² Hansard, 3rd series, XCVI, 297-310.

¹³ Hansard, 3rd series, XCVI, 926-29, 933-35, 960-67, 975-78.

mad".¹⁴ G.C. Lewis, then secretary at the Board of Control, described the state of the House in a letter to Clarendon:

"The Peelites & the immediate supporters of the govt were neuter -- Persons of all other parties declared agst the plan on different grounds. If there was anybody in the House who could form a ministry, he has nothing to do but to offer to do the job for $\frac{1}{2}$ a million less, & Id John is out in a week. But there is no such person - no other ministry than the present can be formed & people will be forced to submit to the present budget because there is no alternative".¹⁵

The Cabinet, however, was less confident of its ability to coerce the House into accepting its original proposition. On February 21 Wood attempted to conciliate the opposition by offering to submit the military estimates to the inspection of a select committee.¹⁶ This concession had little effect and a week later the Cabinet met to consider a means of escape. Hobhouse recorded the discussion in his diary:

"When business began Id John desired C. Wood to read a letter from Lord Lansdowne who was at the Lords Bank Committee.... The letter contained Lord L.'s opinions of the course to be pursued in regards to the income tax. He regretted that we must give way and of the modes of conceding preferred taking the five per cent only for one yearCharles Wood then said that he was happy to inform us a mistake had been discovered by which it appears the exchequer balance at the end of the year would be a million less than was at first calculated -- and Id Grey mentioned that the Caffre war was at an endThis might furnish an excuse for [one word illegible] . Lord John then said that he had ascertained that Gladstone & Cardwell & Graham would refuse to support the additional two per cent & that F. Baring would strongly oppose it -- so that it was hopeless to think of carrying out original plan --on the whole he preferred proposing the present

¹⁴ Russell to Clarendon, February 25, 1848, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.Ireland 1a.

¹⁵ Lewis to Clarendon, February 19, 1848, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.Dep.c 550.

¹⁶ Hansard, 3rd series, XCVI, 991.

tax for three years more -- after some desultory talk Lord John put the question to each member of the CabinetMost of us though reluctantly assented to Lord John's proposal -- Labouchere was much against giving way -- Lord Lansdowne was for 5 per cent for one year but gave way -- so was Clanricarde -- so was I -- and I urged sound reasons for that course -- but Lord John said 'we cannot carry it' which settled the matter. Charles Wood gave the same opinion -- but gave way like the rest of us -- so that was settled".¹⁷

In effect the Government was compelled to withdraw its budget and abandon its plan of improving the country's defences.¹⁸ With the exception of an unsuccessful attempt by the Radicals to combine with the Protectionists to limit the renewal of the income tax to one year, the modified budget passed without serious opposition.¹⁹ The incident, however, was extremely damaging to the Government's standing in Parliament. Wood had committed a major blunder and neither he nor the Government ever really recovered the confidence of the House in the management of public finance.²⁰

¹⁷ Broughton Diaries, February 28, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,751.

¹⁸ At the end of the session Russell actually undertook to reduce the size of the army and the navy in response to the demand for retrenchment. Walpole, Russell, II, 28-30.

¹⁹ Hansard, 3rd series, XCVII, 532-35.
G. Grey wrote to Clarendon:

"The three years income tax is I think safe, but Peel & the Protectionists are at war upon it -- and the Protectionists will vote with Hume to spite Peel -- & the Radicals to enforce the reduction of establishments many of our friends, as they call themselves, vote for their constituents, & we have no great reason to be satisfied". March 7, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 2 b.

²⁰ Lewis wrote to Clarendon:

"...the House was evidently on the whole satisfied though the recurrence to last year's balances seemed a sort of a puzzle, & nobody could very well understand why the additional income tax was proposed, if when it was given up, there was neither to be a deficit a loan, or a different tax...The meagerness of the plan, its subsequent modification, the sudden reference of the estimates to a committee, & the manner in which this was done, all have made an impression in the House by no means favourable to the govt." March 7, 1848, Ms. Clar. dep c 530.

The most immediate and probably the most important consequence of the debate was the rupture between the Radicals and the Whigs. The Radicals had threatened to vote with the Protectionists and the Government was able to save itself only by throwing up its budget. In the long run the Radicals failed to maintain their separate identity and were compelled to co-operate with the Whigs. But during the course of the session of 1847-48 relations between the two groups were particularly bitter. In May, Milner Gibson resigned his place at the Board of Trade and joined Hume, Bright and Cobden in their agitation. During the debate on the Crown and Government Security Bill, which had been introduced in anticipation of a Chartist rising, the Radicals systematically obstructed the Government at every stage of the bill. The House was forced to divide fourteen times before it was finally passed.²¹ Lewis wrote:

"The split on our side is now as decided as the split in Peel's party in 1846 --only in our case the section which adheres to the govt is the more numerous of the two. The decided radicals are not above 50 and they rarely divide above 40. Their wish to obstruct the measures of the govt., their rancour, & their language with respect to the Ministers are not at all less violent than in the case of the Protectionists, though luckily they have not got so good a case".²²

Russell believed that the Radicals expected to come into office under Lord Lincoln.²³ Although the Radicals were certainly not opposed to

²¹ Hansard, 5rd series, XCVIII, Division List.

Lewis wrote to Clarendon on the committee stage of the bill:

"The opposition was very factious -- they became at last violent & noisy....There were several obstructive divisions -- in which the minority was between 50 & 40. April 15, 1848, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep c 530.

²² Lewis to Clarendon, April 14, 1848, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep c 530.

²³ Russell to Clarendon, February 25, 1848, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.Ireland 1a.

the idea of a Peelite Ministry, it is rather unlikely that this was the specific reason for their breaking with the Whigs in 1848. The behaviour of Lincoln and the other Peelites during the session pointed more to the reconstruction of the Conservative party than to a Peelite-Radical alliance. Whether Russell's suspicions were true or false, the desertion of forty to fifty members from the Government ranks seriously weakened its already precarious position.

The behaviour of the Protectionists during the budget crisis represented a departure from the policy they had pursued before the dissolution. During the previous session they had tended to avoid attacking the Government under circumstances which could lead to its resignation. This change in tactics reflected not so much their wish to turn the Government out of office as the confusion and disorder which prevailed within the ranks of the Protectionist party as a consequence of Bentinck's resignation of the leadership in December 1847. Bentinck, true to his Canningite connection, had tried to impose upon his ultra-Tory followers a policy that was calculated to win Irish support. In 1847 he took up the cause of Ireland's grievances and brought forward a scheme of famine relief that far exceeded in its scope and generosity anything proposed by the Government. To the alarm of his party he advocated during the election campaign the endowment of the Catholic Church in Ireland.²⁴ Lord Stanley wrote to Croker in September:

²⁴ Disraeli, Bentinck, 510.

Major Beresford, the Protectionist whip, wrote to Croker during the campaign:

"...the only real cry in the country is the proper and just old No Popery cry. That is in opposition to Peel, Russell, and Bentinck... How difficult it is to act and regulate this general feeling of the country when all the leaders of the several parties are tainted with the prevailing heresy". Jennings, Croker, III, 116.

"...unfortunately, the strongest bond of union among them [the Protectionist members] is an apprehension of Popery, which I think exaggerated, and in which Lord George Bentinck is so entirely at variance with them, that he is certain to make some strong declarations which will still further weaken the imperfect hold he has of them in the House of Commons".²⁵

The under-current of suspicion and distrust of Bentinck's orthodoxy on ecclesiastical matters erupted at the beginning of the new session.

Bentinck gave his support to a bill to provide for the admission of Jews into Parliament. The Protectionist whip, Major Beresford, on behalf of the ultra-Tories wrote to Bentinck in protest and the latter was compelled to resign the lead and retire to the back-benches.²⁶

In spite of his formal resignation Bentinck remained a formidable force both within the Protectionist party and within Parliament until his death in September 1848. He played a leading part in the debate on the budget and was chiefly responsible for the movement to repeal the sugar duties of 1846 and restore a measure of protection to the West Indian planters. Nevertheless his retirement left the Protectionists without a head in the House of Commons for the entire session.

Discipline suffered and the party was disorganized by internal disputes.²⁷

During the debate on the budget Tufnell reported to Russell that, "Beresford is violent against G. Bentinck & their whole party is in the utmost disorder".²⁸

²⁵ Ibid. III, 132.

²⁶ Ibid. III, 157.

²⁷ Disraeli, Bentinck, 524, 557.

Stanley to Disraeli, December 21, 1848, Hughenden, box XII, 14th Earl of Derby.

²⁸ Tufnell to Russell, March 7, 1848, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

Bentinck's resignation and the disunity of the Protectionist party, contrary to everyone's expectation, brought no comfort to the Government. Their tenure of office depended upon the continuation of the breach within the Conservative party. Bentinck's leadership of the Protectionists had been a guarantee against Conservative reconstruction; his retirement and the consequent disorganization of the Protectionists created the danger of a Protectionist-Peelite fusion, against which the Whigs would be powerless. On January 18th the Duke of Bedford wrote to Clarendon:

"When Stafford [O'Brien] announced it [Bentinck's resignation] at Woburn, John said he was very sorry. I asked why but John properly declined giving a reason. It can only benefit Peel. Chas. Wood also regrets G.B.'s [retirement]. It is wholly better for Govt to have a leader of opposition who is a Gentleman to deal with especially a Protection leader".²⁹

Clarendon believed that Peel would take advantage of the West-Indian crisis to effect a junction between the two parties. On January 21, Clarendon wrote to Bedford:

"Pray tell me when you have a leisure moment ... what the Protectionists really are about. Their broils must give strength to Peel who I expect will draw them towards him by siding with the W. Indians 1st Because he is not committed to free trade in sugar & 2nd as a way to retain Goulburn who seems inclined to

²⁹ Bedford to Clarendon, January 18, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7a
Greville wrote: "Great talk here of G. Bentinck's resignation... John Russell and his colleagues are very sorry for it..."
Greville, VI, 2.

coquette with the Protectionists."⁵⁰

The Government certainly had cause for anxiety, but the danger did not take the shape that Clarendon predicted. During the course of the session Lord Londonderry, a Protectionist peer, urged Disraeli to consider re-unification and later privately approached Graham, but without receiving any encouragement from the latter.⁵¹ Graham and Peel, personally, shunned any opportunity to collaborate with the Protectionists. Graham wrote to Peel in January, "I have no faith whatever in the possibility of reuniting under any circumstances the party which you led in 1841". The union of the old Conservative party depended upon its confidence in Peel's "superior judgement, honesty and prudence". This confidence had been shattered by the events of 1846. "Time", Graham concluded, "will probably solve the difficulty and will restore order to chaos by new combinations, not, as I think, by the revival of past agreements, which are never more ...

⁵⁰ Clarendon to Bedford, January 21, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21d. Clarendon wrote to Lewis after hearing the news of Bentinck's death:

"I cannot quite agree with you about the political results of his death wch seems to me to fill up the chasm that divides the Peelites & the Protect 'ts & I expect to see them unite leaving out Peel who will advise Graham (nothing loth) to join them pro bono publico. At least I think such an arrangement is likely to be attempted & even tho' it lasted but a few months it wd in my opinion be full of danger arising principally for the liberal party".
October 1, 1848, Bodleian Ms. Clar. dep c 532.

⁵¹ Londonderry to Disraeli, July 1, 1848, Hughenden, box B, Londonderry. Graham to Peel, September 25, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.

... to be renewed!⁵² The Government, on the whole, were satisfied with the role played by Peel and Graham. Bedford wrote, "Peel is taking a most friendly part, assisting the Govt as far as he can"⁵³ During the debate on the sugar bill Russell wrote to Clarendon, "You are mistaken in thinking that Peel is at all disinclined to give us handsome support ...he has behaved very well indeed to us & lost the support of his place-seeking party by so doing".⁵⁴

The danger to the Government lay not in the policy pursued by Peel and Graham, but in the fact that Peel could not or would not impose that policy upon the bulk of the Peelite party. Gladstone, Lincoln, Cardwell, Goulburn and Herbert did not share Peel's terror at the prospect of a Protectionist Government coming into office and in some measure probably looked forward to the reunion of the Conservative party.⁵⁵ Whatever their actual policy was, they rebelled against Peel's practice of giving the Government his full support. In the

⁵² Graham to Peel, January 15, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452. Lewis wrote to Clarendon:

"My belief is that you mistake Graham's views in supposing that he wishes to lead a conservative party however formed. His views agree substantially with those of the government, but are rather more liberal & economical & enterprising. These are not merely his esoteric opinions, but the opinions which he expresses. You never cd bind him up with Spooner & G. Bankes. October 1, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 550.

⁵³ Bedford to Clarendon, May 5, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 a. Bedford wrote to Clarendon: "John is as he wrote to you quite satisfied with Peel". July 4, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 a.

⁵⁴ Russell to Clarendon, July 5, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 a.

⁵⁵ Greville to Clarendon, June 23, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep c 521. Morley, Gladstone, I, 260.

course of the session, Lincoln and Herbert acquired control of the Morning Chronicle, a paper which had normally supported the Whig party, and proceeded to use its columns to attack the Government.³⁶ Greville reported the details of a conversation with Graham on the sugar-bill debate to Clarendon:

"He told me that he & Peel should both support the Govt -- but that he did not know of any one besides of Peel's old friends who would -- the whole body of them ... would all go against them, and that tonight their separation from Peel would be manifested to the world -- that this separation had in fact taken place -- they were angry with him for having cordially supported the Govt -- they were impatient, and would no longer wait -- Peel has had no communication with them, nor has he, but he considers that they are by their vote tonight joining the Protectionist party, & prepared to act with them, & take office with them -- he thinks that there must be such an attempt in the event of the resignation of the Govt. Stanley will form a Govt out of Peel's old Cabinet, G. Bentinck, & D'Israeli & what is more besides that, there is no other combination possible & that it will be tried -- & he thinks the Peelites cannot refuse if they turn out the Govt to accept office in this way".³⁷

The sugar-bill crisis was primarily due to the efforts of Lord George Bentinck. The operation of the scale of duties established by the bill of 1846 had seriously damaged the position of the West-Indian

³⁶ Greville, VI, 17.

Russell wrote to Clarendon:

"I do not like to interfere with the Globe -- It is a dull paper, but whilst the Morning Chronicle in the name of Peel attacks all the members of the Govt, it would be hard to guy the only paper which defends us.

"I cannot understand why Sir R. Peel allows Lord Lincoln to use his name to cover the most bitter attacks upon the Govt -- while he gives us his support". January 23, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1b.

³⁷ Greville to Clarendon, June 23, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep c 521.

planters; before the meeting of Parliament the sugar colonies were threatened with bankruptcy and the Government recognised that steps had to be taken to save the planters from ruin. The Government, however did not intend to interfere with the 1846 duties. Wood, Lord Grey and Russell, the ministers chiefly concerned with the question, favoured advancing a loan to the colonies to tide them over the emergency.³⁸ Bentinck probably saw the question as a means of upsetting the 1846 duties and restoring an element of protection to the Imperial economy. Early in February he moved for a committee of inquiry into the state of the West-Indian colonies. Under the circumstances the Government could hardly deny the existence of an emergency in the West Indies, and Charles Wood, while announcing the Government's resolution to adhere to the 1846 duties, accepted Bentinck's motion.³⁹ The committee, composed predominantly of free-traders who had supported the 1846 bill, sat under Bentinck's chairmanship until the end of May. On the strength of Bentinck's casting vote as chairman the committee finally produced a report recommending a ten-shilling differential duty in favour of colonial sugar for a period of six years.⁴⁰ The Government immediately retreated from Wood's announcement and proposed a revised scale of duties that provided for a diminishing

³⁸ Wood to Russell, January 5, 1848, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 102/2.
Grey Diaries, November 12, 1841, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/15.
Russell to Grey, January 16, 1848, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 119/5.

³⁹ Hansard, 3rd series, XCVI, 42.

⁴⁰ Disraeli, Bentinck, 537.

differential starting at seven shillings and ceasing altogether after five years.⁴¹ The Government's scheme was badly received in all quarters of the House. Radicals, Protectionists, and Peelites all rose to condemn it.⁴² Hobhouse wrote, "...our famous plan that, according to Wood ... was to please everybody has pleased nobody & may turn us out into the bargain".⁴³ On June 19 Sir John Pakington, a leading Protectionist, moved an amendment to the first reading. The amendment did not recommend any specific alternative to the Government's plan but more or less stated that it would not accomplish its object of relieving West-Indian distress.⁴⁴ Pakington's motion had the effect of appealing virtually to all sections of the opposition. On June 29 Clarendon wrote to Lewis:

"...the measure [of the Government] is an attempt to reconcile these different contending interests [in the opposition] it has signally failed in Parlt, but then other cir'ces come into play. The Protection 'ts opposed it because they wanted their own resol'n of the committee wch wd have re-estab'd the principle of protect'n & created a precedent for use at the first period of agricultural distress -- the W.I. whom nothing can satisfy but who only look to themselves want to have a Protectionist Govt. & care not a fig for the consequences so they were loud in denouncing the measure. Lincoln, Cardwell, & Co. cannot control their impatience for power & at all risks are determined to have it & then there are free traders like Hume & financiers like Goulburn who have their own reasons for objecting so that I don't see how Pakington with a net for all fish can help catching a majority

⁴¹ Broughton Diaries, June 11, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,752. Hansard, 3rd series, XCIX, 738.

⁴² Hansard, 3rd series, XCIX, 740.

⁴³ Broughton Diaries, June 19, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,752.

⁴⁴ Hansard, 3rd series, XCIX, Table of Contents, 825-50.

unless common sense comes to the aid of the commonwealth".⁴⁵

Almost until the very day of the division on Pakington's motion the Government were convinced they would be defeated and compelled to give up office. On the 23rd of June Russell told the Queen that they would not obtain a majority and could not continue to remain in office.⁴⁶ On the 24th Russell wrote to Clarendon:

"I think our fate is nearly decided -- Tufnell gives a bad account of our prospects in the division -- Our project is excellent but nobody likes it -- Lincoln & nearly all the Peelites are joining G. Bentinck.

"This is strange -- but if we get out, it will be such a blessing that I shall not enquire too closely how it came about".⁴⁷

George Grey wrote to Clarendon on the same day:

"Some people talk of our having a majority but where it is to come from I do not know. Peel, Graham, J. Young & one or two more followers it is said are to vote with us & the rest of the Peelites against".⁴⁸

The general interpretation of the crisis was that the junior Peelites were intending to take office in a Protectionist Government that would succeed the Whigs. George Grey wrote to Clarendon:

"What is to follow is not easy to foresee. Ed Aberdeen & Lincoln are I imagine eager for office...I am inclined to think that if we are beat they will make the attempt & if any union with the Protectionists is possible they may get on for a time -- but how Lincoln & G. Bentinck or Disraeli can 'fraternize' is a problem which a short experience wd solve".⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Clarendon to Lewis, June 29, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 552.

⁴⁶ Broughton Diaries, June 25, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,752.

⁴⁷ Russell to Clarendon, June 24, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 a.

⁴⁸ G. Grey to Clarendon, June 24, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 2 b.

⁴⁹ G. Grey to Clarendon, June 24, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 2 b.

Bedford to Clarendon, June 25, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 a.

Greville to Clarendon, June 25, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 521.

Charles Greville on the other hand believed that it was not impossible that the chaos and confusion could lead to Peel's return to office with the support of the moderate Radicals and Conservatives.⁵⁰ A conversation with Lord Jocelyn, a minor Peelite, appeared to confirm Greville's suspicion: Greville wrote in his diary:

"At night I met Jocelyn, who told me that He meant to vote with Lincoln and Sidney Herbert against Government. I asked him how they could all be so foolish as not to follow Peel's example and do as he did. He then informed me that these Peelites have no intention whatever of joining Stanley and taking office with him; their notion is that this Government is so weak and inefficient that it cannot stand, and that it will be found so impossible to form any other, that it cannot fail to fall into Peel's hands, and they expect by a sort of gentle violence to compel him to take it, having persuaded themselves that he will find general support, though they can't well say how or where. Such are the tactics of impatiens; they hate the Whigs, and imagine they can become a Government and be recruited by moderate Conservatives and moderate Radicals, setting aside Whigs and Protectionists. He hinted to me that Peel might have prevented their taking this course if he disapproved it. It told him they were plucking the fruit before it was ripe".⁵¹

Greville, however, was alone in his suspicion of Peel at this point. Lewis, who was probably more intimate with Graham than any other member of the Government, repudiated the idea entirely.⁵² The danger, in so far as the Whigs could see, came entirely from Peel's lieutenants, who had broken with their leader in order to court the Protectionists.

At the last moment the Government's situation improved, chiefly because a number of the members with West-Indian interests were induced

⁵⁰ Lewis to Clarendon, June 29, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 530.

⁵¹ Greville, VI, 85.

⁵² Lewis to Clarendon, June 29, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 530.

to accept what the Government were prepared to offer rather than gamble on the chance of a Protectionist ministry coming into office with sufficient strength to carry a more generous scheme. On June 27 Russell wrote to Clarendon:

"It looks now as if we should win against Pakington-Indeed the move has always been a very strange one in my eyes -- Still the majority will be very small if we have one.

"In the committee the W. Indians will support us".⁵⁵

In the actual division which took place on June 29th the Government received a majority of fifteen; 245 members voted for Pakington's motion and 260 against. Cobden voted with the Government and Hume with the opposition.⁵⁴ Peel and Graham along with three other Peelites voted against the motion; the rest of the party supported it.⁵⁵

The Government had escaped defeat and was able to carry on for the rest of the session without any serious attack being made upon it, Nevertheless the budget and the sugar crises had badly shaken the Whigs and demonstrated how tenuous was their hold on office. It became evident that unless the Government was reconstituted and the basis of its

⁵⁵ Russell to Clarendon, June 27, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 a. G. Grey wrote to Clarendon:

"Our sugar prospects are somewhat altered & I hear we are to have a majority -- This arising from the Govt scheme being better understood by the West Indians and preferred by them to any other which they think likely to be proposed & carried by any other Govt wch cd succeed us The difficulty if not impossibility of forming at present any other Govt with a prospect of stability will also tell in the division".

June 28, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 2 c.

⁵⁴ Hansard, 3rd series, XCIX, 1396-1400.

⁵⁵ Lewis to Clarendon, June 30, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 530.
Russell to Clarendon, July 1, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 a.

support in Parliament extended, it would be always at the mercy in the future of a factious combination between the Peelites, the Radicals, and the Protectionists. The time when the Government could rely simply on the divisions of the opposition in order to control Parliament was drawing to an end. Old factions were breaking up and threatening to form into new and more powerful combinations. If the Government were to retain effective control of Parliament, or perhaps even to survive as a government, it would have to obtain additional strength.

* * * * *

found an information given to him by one of the members or checked by one simply retelling the story and never that actually attend a change in Government. The distinction, however, between the "Young Party" and the "Old Party" becomes an element of truth. Lord Grey, Viscount, Sir George Grey, and Lord were relatively young men and have departed in office like the other ministers, all of whom had acted under the name of Lord Grey. On the whole the "Young Party" would be adherent to the principles of free trade with more enthusiasm and zeal than their older colleagues. Lord, Lord Grey, and Sir George Grey were united by family ties and all of them with the possible exception of Sir George Grey shared a common dislike of Lord Palmerston's views on

On the formation of the Cabinet in 1846 Prince Albert wrote, "The Government is not a united one...by any means!" He divided the Cabinet into two sections. On the one hand there was the "Grey Party" consisting of Lord Grey, Clarendon, Sir George Grey, and Wood and on the other a group consisting of Lansdowne, Minto, Auckland and Hobhouse. Lord Grey and his friends looked upon the latter group, according to the Prince, as the "old women" of the Cabinet. Russell, he believed, favoured Lord Lansdowne and the others. Palmerston, if he were compelled to make a choice, would take side with Grey against Russell in spite of what happened during the December crisis.⁵⁶ It is impossible to say whether the Prince's division of the Cabinet was founded on information given to him by one of its members or whether he was simply retailing the gossip and rumour that normally attend a change in Government. The distinction, however, between the "Grey Party" and the "old women" possesses an element of truth. Lord Grey, Clarendon, Sir George Grey, and Wood were relatively young men and less experienced in office than the other ministers, all of whom had served under the second Earl Grey. On the whole the "Grey Party" tended to subscribe to the principles of free trade with more enthusiasm and zeal than their older colleagues. Wood, Lord Grey, and Sir George Grey were united by family ties and all of them with the possible exception of Sir George Grey shared a common dislike of Lord Palmerston's views on

⁵⁶ Victoria, Letters, II, 101-02.

foreign affairs. The Prince's analysis, however, under-estimates the gulf that separated Lord Grey from Palmerston and exaggerates the strength of the connection between Russell and the older members of the Cabinet. The use of the term "party" to describe the Grey group is much too strong. If Lord Clarendon was ever bound to Lord Grey or any other member of the group by some special understanding, that understanding did not survive Clarendon's transfer from the Board of Trade to Ireland in 1847. Once faced with the problem of Irish destitution, Clarendon suspended many of his laissez-faire convictions and urged a policy of generous famine-relief which brought him into conflict with Charles Wood. The latter complained that on the subject of famine relief Clarendon had gone "round the compass".⁵⁷ Even Lord Grey, Sir George Grey and Wood cannot be said to have acted in systematic concert within the Cabinet. They regularly corresponded with each other and the connection between Wood and Lord Grey was particularly intimate. There is evidence that on one or two occasions they called upon each other for support in Cabinet disputes.⁵⁸ But Charles Wood, for one, wished to avoid giving the impression that they were acting together as a family party.⁵⁹ Moreover, their relationship

⁵⁷ Wood to Russell, April 9, 1848, P.R.O. 50/22/7.

⁵⁸ Wood to Lord Grey, September 30, 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III,102/2.
G. Grey to Lord Grey, November 15, 1847, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III,96/4.

⁵⁹ After a decision had gone against him on famine relief Wood wrote to Lord Grey: "Don't fidget yourself about not being here. Things must have gone on just as they have done if you & G. Grey had been here: & it is better not have had a family opposition". August 1846, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 102/2.

did not prevent them from differing among themselves. Lord Grey like everyone else in the Government occasionally found himself in opposition to the Chancellor on matters of public expenditure. In July 1848 Wood and Lord Grey quarrelled at a meeting of the Cabinet over a grant to assist emigration from pauper schools to the colonies.⁶⁰ In November 1850 Lord Grey called upon Russell to decide a dispute between himself and Wood over the guarantee of a loan for railway construction in Canada.⁶¹ If Prince Albert's analysis of the Cabinet is not strictly accurate, he correctly detected an element of discord in its composition. The crisis of December 1845 foreshadowed future dissension among the leaders of the Whig party. Until the autumn of 1847 the Government managed to avoid any serious disagreement. But during the session of 1847-48, just at the time when it appeared to be losing its control of Parliament, the unity of the Cabinet was threatened by disputes over Irish policy and the conduct of foreign affairs.

During the session of 1847-48 Irish affairs were approaching a crisis. In the districts most heavily affected by the famine the poor law of 1847 had failed to prevent an emergency. Neither rents nor rates could be collected. Landowners confronted with the problem of declining rents and rising rates tried to escape from their difficulties by mass evictions. This in turn led to an outbreak of agrarian crime. Clarendon was convinced the country was on the verge of a revolution.

⁶⁰ Grey Diaries, July 8, 1848, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C3/14.

⁶¹ Lord Grey to Russell, November 18, 1850, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 120/4.

In the spring of 1848, encouraged by the example of the successful revolutions on the continent, Irish nationalists began to organize, assemble arms, and agitate for the forcible overthrow of the Government. Clarendon repeatedly urged the Cabinet to take action. Specifically, he demanded increased loans to local authorities to prevent immediate starvation,⁶² a landlord and tenant bill to impede the clearances and provide tenants with some compensation for their improvements,⁶³ and a coercion bill to strengthen the authority of the Government against agrarian crimes and the threat of a revolution.⁶⁴ All three of his proposals met with opposition within the Cabinet. The resistance to further loans for famine relief came chiefly from Charles Wood and the Treasury. In September 1847 Clarendon complained to Bedford: "...Wood is in such trouble about his empty Exchequer that I must try to relieve him even from his engagements to this country but he shows little disposition to care for any one's difficulties but his own!"⁶⁵ Again in November Clarendon complained:

"C. Wood's remedy is 'collect your rates & don't bother us' & I can only repeat that there are places in wch the collection of rates is absolutely impossible because those who should pay them are bonâ fide applicants for relief".⁶⁶

As far as one can tell from the fragmentary records of Cabinet

⁶² Clarendon to Russell, October 23, 1847, P.R.O. 30/22/6.

⁶³ Clarendon to Russell, October 18, 1847, P.R.O. 30/22/6.

⁶⁴ Clarendon to Russell, November 12, 1847, P.R.O. 30/22/6.

⁶⁵ Clarendon to Bedford, September 17, 1847, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.Ireland 21 d.

⁶⁶ Clarendon to Bedford, November 5, 1847, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 21 d.

discussions, Russell, Lansdowne and Palmerston appear to have supported Clarendon's demands for further relief. Sir George Grey and Lord Grey supported Wood. On April 9th, 1848 Lord Grey wrote in his diary:

"I cannot say how little to his credit his [Clarendon's] letters during this period of agitation have been -- they have contained besides his most unreasonable complaints proposals of the wildest kind utterly inconsistent with each other & thrown out in utter ignorance of what has already been done....But what is still more serious Ld John has more than once made proposals for doing something or other to conciliate Ireland hardly less considerate -- This afternoon he threw out again the idea of additional advances of money in a manner wch I firmly believe wd be useless & to wch the H. of Commons wd not consent -- This led to rather a breeze between him & Wood -- Ld Lansdowne & Palmerston joining him & Wood being supported chiefly by myself, G. Grey having gone home -- I fear that Ld John is hardly equal to the emergency".⁶⁷

A week earlier Wood, Lord Grey and Sir George Grey along with Hobhouse and Labouchere persuaded Russell to give up a scheme to advance £500,000 for public works in Ireland.⁶⁸

To some extent the reluctance of the Government to follow Clarendon's advice was due to its parliamentary difficulties. When the Protectionists discarded Bentinck, they also discarded Bentinck's policy of giving virtually unlimited relief to Ireland. During the debate on the budget the Protectionist voted for Sir Benjamin Hall's motion to extend the income tax to Ireland.⁶⁹ The Government interpreted this division as a warning against further loans to Ireland as long as the Irish were exempted from paying the income tax. On April 5, Wood

⁶⁷ Grey Diaries, April 9, 1848, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/14.

⁶⁸ Broughton Diaries, April 1, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,752.

⁶⁹ Hansard, 3rd series, XCVII, 765-67.

wrote to Clarendon:

"I do not think you have a notion how strong the feeling on this subject is. Country gentlemen, members for large towns & economists all join agst further expenditure for a population which does not pay income tax".⁷⁰

Even Hobhouse, who could not be accused of being a free-trade enthusiast, believed that the House of Commons would not consent to additional aid. "Clarendon", he wrote, "...forgets the embarrassments of the ... Exchequer & the temper of the House of Commons in his anxiety to maintain the just reputation he has gained by his Irish administration".⁷¹

The land and coercion problems were related. During the debate on Graham's coercion bill in 1846 the Whigs had criticized the Conservatives for dealing with agrarian crime by police measures alone and ignoring the causes of agrarian crime. They had stressed the need for a landlord and tenant law being passed at the same time as the coercion bill.⁷² In 1847 the Whigs could hardly repeat the same "offence" for which they had ostensibly defeated Peel in 1846. If a coercion bill were brought forward on its own, Sir George Grey predicted in a letter to Clarendon:

"...we shall be exposed to a hot fire for having recourse to the 'vulgar' expedient of coercion without having placed the relations of Landlord & Tenant on a better footing. You would do well to

⁷⁰ Wood to Clarendon, April 3, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 3 a.

⁷¹ Broughton Diaries, undated entry, p. 2 [probably late March 1848], Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,752.

Russell to Clarendon, April 6, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 a.

⁷² Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXV, 547-57.

read the H. of Com. debates in 1846 on Graham's Protection of Life Bill & see what was said by almost all men on our side of the House..."⁷³

In November Russell told the Cabinet that he could not consent to introduce a coercion bill unless it were accompanied by a remedial measure and if it refused to support him, he would be obliged to resign.⁷⁴ Both Russell and Clarendon were convinced of the value of an efficient landlord and tenant bill which would put an end to the growing confusion in the Irish countryside.⁷⁵ Lansdowne and Palmerston, both of whom owned large estates in Ireland, however, were opposed to any measure which would seriously interfere with the rights of Irish landlords.⁷⁶ On October 1, 1847 Lansdowne wrote to Clarendon:

"My greatest apprehension is that of passing something bad in principle & which yet will not satisfy -- persuaded as I am that the real object of those who clamour for it [a landlord and tenant bill] most is to effect by indirect means a real transfer of property".⁷⁷

A month later Palmerston wrote:

"If the principle of the right of property which is the foundation of social order were to be lightly and for such little reason departed from, we should find ourselves at sea in many other

⁷³ G. Grey to Clarendon, November 26, 1847, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.Ireland 2a.

⁷⁴ Broughton Diaries, November 19, 1847, Brit. Museum Add. Mss 43,751.

⁷⁵ Russell wished to put the custom of tenant-right that existed in Ulster on a statutory basis. This was more extreme than anything Clarendon proposed. Russell to Clarendon, November 10, 1847, P.R.O. 30/22/6.

Russell to Clarendon, May 2, 1848, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 1 a.

⁷⁶ Wood to Russell, January 4, 1848, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

Lansdowne to Russell, January 27, 1848, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

Palmerston to Clarendon, January 22, 1848, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.dep.c 524.

⁷⁷ Lansdowne to Clarendon, October 1, 1847, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.Ireland 1a.

respects without any fixed rule to steer by".⁷⁸

From October 1847 to February 1848 the Cabinet met repeatedly on the question without arriving at a settlement which could satisfy Russell and Clarendon on the one hand and Lansdowne and Palmerston on the other. In December Clarendon wrote to Lord Grey, "...if we are not prepared with an effective Land'd & Tenant Bill when Parl't meets we shall lose and deserve to lose any credit we possess with the country".⁷⁹ Finally, on February 1, the provisions of a bill were agreed upon. Hobhouse described the meeting in his diary:

"Lord John Russell informed us that Lord Clarendon had written to him to say that if the tenants compensation bill should be brought in as sketched by us at our last cabinet he desired that his name might not be used as approving it for he disapproved it entirely -- there was some staring & smiling at this -- and Lord Lansdowne seemed a good deal annoyed but Lord John said he presumed we must adopt Ld Clarendon's views & return to our old bill no. 5. Lord L. said that in that case he should wish that bill to be gone through clause by clause.... So we went through the bill -- sticking a good deal at the ejectment clause which was made less stringent than intended -- much against Lord Lansdowne's views -- and Lord John said that no doubt the bill was meant to be a boon to tenants not to Landlords & must be framed & considered as such. He added that it was against all principle and there was no use making it conform to principle -- On which we had a general cheer or laugh -- Indeed this is the third or fourth time... that we had changed our minds in regard to the principal provisions of the measure and perhaps may change them again".⁸⁰

The final draft of the bill exhibited all the marks of the uneasy compromise which produced it. The scope of its operation was limited;

⁷⁸ Palmerston to Clarendon, November 18, 1847, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.dep. c 524.

⁷⁹ Clarendon to Lord Grey, December 29, 1847, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 81/2.

⁸⁰ Broughton Diaries, February 1, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,751.

the machinery of arbitration and appeal was clumsy and ponderous.⁸¹ When it was introduced into the Commons, many of the Irish members complained that it endangered the custom of tenant compensation that was observed in some parts of Ireland without supplying anything better in its place.⁸² On April 7 the bill was referred to a select committee for improvement and was never returned to the House.⁸³

As long as the fate of the landlord and tenant bill was undecided, Russell hesitated to proceed with any drastic measure of coercion. He believed that once a coercion bill was passed the Irish landlords in Parliament would feel free to defeat the remedial bill.⁸⁴ Clarendon, however, was determined to have a coercion bill at all cost and in the autumn of 1847 advised the Government to restore the system of arms licencing which had been allowed to lapse in 1846. Russell and G. Grey with the support of the Cabinet rejected Clarendon's proposal.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Hansard, 3rd series, XCVI, 673-79.

⁸² Hansard, 3rd series, XCVI, 680-85, 689-94, 697-98, 698-700.

⁸³ Hansard, 3rd series, XCVII, 60.

⁸⁴ Russell wrote to Clarendon:

"I do not dislike your permanent arms bill...But I think after the short session, we must at once proceed to complete the remedial measures & bring them in early in February". November 26, 1847, Bodleian Ms.Clar. Ireland 1 a.

"...if we bring in the restrictive measures, we must introduce the conciliatory measures at the same time. We were told in 1833, and I was carried away by the notion that the protection of life would not admit of delay. But when the restrictive measures are passed, the landlords will defeat the remedial measures". November 27, 1847, P.R.O. 30/22/6.

⁸⁵ Russell to Clarendon, November 6, November 15, and November 16, 1847, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 1 a.

The latter replied with a violent protest, stating that he had obviously lost the confidence of the Government. He concluded:

"...if I do not see any reasonable ground for believing that I can perform the duties of Govt. in maintaining the laws & affording due protection to life & property I cannot & I am sure you will not ask me to remain here when I feel my power of usefulness is gone".⁸⁶

Under the threat of Clarendon's resignation the Cabinet agreed to bring in a modified arms bill which permitted the Lord Lieutenant to confiscate weapons in disturbed areas.⁸⁷ Clarendon accepted the Cabinet's proposal with reluctance. On November 30 he wrote to Russell, "...I am still...afraid that your Bill will not prove sufficient & that you may get some unpopularity...without effectually checking outrage".⁸⁸

In the spring of 1848 the controversy over coercion was revived. Fearing an imminent revolution, Clarendon demanded the suspension of Habeas Corpus and a law which would empower him to suppress subversive societies. Initially Russell refused and urged Clarendon to exercise the powers he already possessed with greater vigour.⁸⁹ On July 19, however, Russell abandoned his opposition to further coercion and wrote to Clarendon, "It is evident that you are on the eve of an intended insurrection -- any blow that you can strike to paralyze the rebels...

⁸⁶ Clarendon to Russell, November 18, 1848, P.R.O. 50/22/2. > 7

⁸⁷ Broughton Diaries, November 19, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,751.

⁸⁸ Clarendon to Russell, November 30, 1847, P.R.O. 50/22/6.

⁸⁹ Russell to Clarendon, May 29 and June 8, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 a.

I shall be prepared to support". Two days later the Cabinet agreed against the opposition of Wood, Lord Grey and Sir George Grey, to suspend Habeas Corpus. George Grey refused to bring the bill forward in the House of Commons.⁹⁰ By suspending Habeas Corpus, the Cabinet hoped to avoid the necessity of taking specific action against the revolutionary societies.⁹¹ Russell wrote to Clarendon on August 1, "...we are all of opinion that the suppression of the associations for debating, however mischievous could not & ought not to be attempted".⁹² But, after repeated protests and threats of resignation from Clarendon, Russell acquiesced. On August 2 he told the Cabinet that unless it consented to a law against the Clubs, he would be obliged to resign. Lord Grey tried his hand at a compromise, which would have permitted the police to attend the meetings of any society suspected of treasonable activities.⁹⁵ Clarendon, however, rejected Grey's measure, and on August 7 the Cabinet met and adopted his original bill.

Hobhouse wrote:

"Ld Clarendon...still insists on a stringent law against Clubs -- the clause [Lord Grey's] being worth nothing -- We discussed how we could adapt the clause he sent us -- Russell took up his pen for a division of the Cabinet... There was 5 to 5. The Chancellor & Ld Lansdowne being absent & Russell & I not having

⁹⁰ Broughton Diaries, July 18, July 20, July 21, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,752.

⁹¹ Broughton Diaries, July 21, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,752. Russell to Clarendon, July 29 and July 31, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 a.

⁹² Russell to Clarendon, August 1, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 a.

⁹⁵ Broughton Diaries, August 2, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,752.

voted -- so I was called upon again & said I should be for Lord Clarendon's plan as it was clear he would not be satisfied with any other -- Russell said the same...The five against Clarendon were G. Grey Labouchere C.Wood, strongly, Ld Grey & Ld Campbell -- G. Grey was very bilious he said it was very disagreeable to have to support a scheme one disapproved. Russell said it was and therefore he would introduce the bill -- G. Grey, however, was pacified and agreed to direct that the clause should be drawn accordingly & the bill brought into the Lords".⁹⁴

Although the Government managed to survive the session without a rupture on Irish policy, Clarendon looked upon his relations with his colleagues in England with bitterness and resentment. He complained to Greville that he had been forced to "poke" the Cabinet into a "sense of duty" and "to extract by threats as if for a personal favour" measures that were urgently and obviously needed.⁹⁵ In August Clarendon wrote to the Duke of Bedford:

"I have felt it rather hard... as I set mighty little value by my own services to be compelled 3 times in the course of a twelve-month to offer my resignation as if I thought myself of great importance, in the event of measures not being passed wch I knew were indispensable & for wch the Govt wd be disgraced & this country endangered if they did not propose -- the fact is, tho' I wd say this to nobody but yourself, that there is not one man in the Cabt who really understands Ireland..."⁹⁶

Clarendon, however, frequently tended to ignore the problems which faced the Government in Parliament. He had never sat in the House of Commons and in his early life had followed a diplomatic career.

Although he was an able and diligent administrator, he always felt ill at ease in the House of Lords.⁹⁷ Members of the Government believed

⁹⁴ Broughton Diaries, August 7, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,752.

⁹⁵ Greville, VI, 100.

⁹⁶ Clarendon to Bedford, August 18, 1848, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 e.

⁹⁷ Clarendon to Lord Grey, January 20, 1848, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, 81/2.

that his complaints and protests during the session showed a complete lack of understanding of the realities of Parliament. Hobhouse wrote, "The fact is Clarendon knows nothing whatever of the House of Commons and thinks Government have only to ask and have a bill".⁹⁸

Early in April G. Grey wrote to Clarendon:

"I think you are hardly able to enter into all the difficulties which the Govt. have to contend with in Irish legislation, & you are rather unreasonable in your censures on our proceedings. I have no wish to take your place, but I wd almost consent to do so for a week if I could put you into mine & I am sure it would do you good to breath the air of the H.of Com. & to come every night into contact with the opinions which prevail there".⁹⁹

Even Lord Palmerston, who supported Clarendon on the coercion question,¹⁰⁰ found it necessary to write to him and explain the difficulties of passing an arms bill against the determined opposition of the Irish members.¹⁰¹ Basically, the quarrel between Clarendon and the Cabinet was provoked by departmental and not factional interests. The dispute did not survive the emergency in Ireland. Clarendon was compelled by events to demand an energetic policy just at the time when the Cabinet was least able to run risks in Parliament. Except for the fact that Wood, Lord Grey and Sir George Grey acted together in opposition to Clarendon's requests for coercion and advances of money, the dispute cannot be said to have reflected a permanent division in the Cabinet.

⁹⁸ Broughton Diaries, August 7, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,752.

⁹⁹ G. Grey to Clarendon, April 7, 1848, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 2 b.

¹⁰⁰ Palmerston to Russell, November 20, 1847, P.R.O. 30/22/6.

Palmerston to Russell, April 7, 1848, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

¹⁰¹ Palmerston to Clarendon, April 11, 1848, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.dep. c 524.

In the long run the controversy over foreign policy proved to be of greater importance. At first both Lord Grey and Wood appear to have refrained from interfering in Palmerston's management of foreign affairs. Wood seems to have relied entirely on Russell to curb Palmerston and to prevent him from dragging the country into a crisis. During the Spanish Marriage affair Wood wrote to Russell, "I have the fullest confidence in your managing the matter properly. I am only afraid of mischief being done when and where you have hardly the opportunity of preventing it."¹⁰² Palmerston, however, was determined to keep the administration of foreign policy under his exclusive control. The Queen repeatedly complained of his failure to submit important despatches to her before he sent them abroad.¹⁰³ Lansdowne, who had to answer for the Foreign Office in the House of Lords, was often kept in the dark. Lansdowne wrote to Russell, "Palmerston is very obliging in sending me a good deal of private information which he receives, but very seldom the private instructions which he sends".¹⁰⁴ At meetings of the Cabinet Palmerston resented criticism of his department or his policy.¹⁰⁵ Early in 1848 members of the Government began to take alarm at the consequences of Palmerston's independence.

¹⁰² Wood to Russell, September 21, 1846, P.R.O. 30/22/6.

¹⁰³ Victoria, Letters, II, 143, 152, 202.

¹⁰⁴ Copy of undated letter from Lansdowne to Russell [probably May or June 1848] P.R.O. 30/22/6.

¹⁰⁵ Broughton Diaries, November 5, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,751.

On January 28 Hobhouse wrote:

"His [Palmerston's] despatches are... couched in a language that ought never to be addressed to an independent state -- and I think that his diplomatists -- Bulwer and Normanby and Lyons mix themselves up a good deal too much with the internal politics of the country to which they are sent".¹⁰⁶

In March Labouchere complained to Hobhouse "about the tone of some of Ld Palmerston's despatches particularly of those to Ld Westmorland at Berlin in which he directed our Minister to read the king a lecture".¹⁰⁷

The first signs of discord occurred over the proposed reorganization of the militia. This measure had been under discussion before the dissolution of Parliament in 1847. Palmerston, who believed that the country was threatened by a French invasion, was one of its most energetic supporters in the Cabinet.¹⁰⁸ Wood, Lord Grey and Sir George Grey, however, minimized the danger and persuaded Russell to postpone the question until after the general election.¹⁰⁹ Russell himself was firmly convinced of the threat from France and of the necessity for an efficient militia. In October he told the Cabinet that unless they agreed to accept the principle of militia reform, he would be compelled to give up office. Wood and Lord Grey objected. Hobhouse wrote:

"Ld Grey looked very grave & said he did not choose to [be involved ?] in any scheme for augmenting the army or militia

¹⁰⁶ Broughton Diaries, January 28, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,751.

¹⁰⁷ Broughton Diaries, March 29, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,752.

¹⁰⁸ Gooch, Russell, I, 241, 248-54.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. I, 245-47.

without knowing what it was -- in the present state of taxation he felt sure it would only render the country more weak & render the people more discontented by adding to their burdens & he deprecated any sudden increase likely to produce that effect".¹¹⁰

Both Wood and Lord Grey believed that Palmerston was responsible for the crisis with France. Wood said in a private conversation with Hobhouse:

"...that all the foolish alarm about invasion was caused by Palmerston's correspondence & perpetual broils --- and that he [Wood] should not be surprised if the question of defence broke up the Government. Lord Grey quite agreed with him".¹¹¹

After a conversation with Lord Grey a week later Hobhouse wrote, "he [Lord Grey] thought the defence question would break up the Government --he told me privately he would be no party to an increase of the militia".¹¹² When Russell brought forward the budget, the Cabinet was still undecided about the detailed provisions of its militia plan. Russell had persuaded Wood to allocate £150,000 for this purpose, but Lord Grey told the Cabinet that, "he desired it to be distinctly understood he reserved for himself the right of objecting to the militia plans when proposed in detail..."¹¹³ The dispute, however, was terminated by the refusal of the Commons to tolerate any addition to the income tax. It was evident that neither the Whigs nor any other party could raise the taxes required to pay for the militia scheme and the proposal was dropped completely by the Government.

¹¹⁰ Broughton Diaries, October 19, 1847, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,751.

¹¹¹ Broughton Diaries, January 28, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,751.

¹¹² Broughton Diaries, January 28, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,751.

¹¹³ Broughton Diaries, February 12, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,751.

Early in May another crisis occurred, which, this time, concerned Palmerston directly. On March 16 without the knowledge of the Queen, the Cabinet or the Prime Minister, Palmerston sent a private letter to Sir H. Bulwer, the British Minister at Madrid.¹¹⁴ In it Palmerston instructed Bulwer to urge the Queen of Spain "to adopt a legal & constitutional system" of government and to include in her Cabinet "some of the men in whom the liberal party places confidence".¹¹⁵ Bulwer presented a copy of this letter to the Spanish Government on April 7, for which he later received Palmerston's approbation.¹¹⁶ The Spanish Government treated this communication as an intervention in their domestic affairs and ordered Bulwer to leave the country immediately. The transaction took the Cabinet in England completely by surprise. Hobhouse wrote:

"...we knew nothing of the Bulwer correspondence until it was over --- nor did the Cabinet know that Bulwer's conduct had received the approbation of the Government until we saw the fact in the papers laid before Parliament".¹¹⁷

When Bulwer's expulsion came under discussion in the House of Lords on May 5, Lord Grey wrote, "I had not previously seen any of the correspondence but what had appeared in the newspaper..."¹¹⁸ Lansdowne had been caught off his guard. In defending the Government he

¹¹⁴ Broughton Diaries, June 3, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,752.

¹¹⁵ Hansard, 3rd series, XCVIII, 687.

¹¹⁶ Hansard, 3rd series, XCVIII, 748.

¹¹⁷ Broughton Diaries, June 3, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,752.

¹¹⁸ Grey Diaries, May 5, 1848, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C3/14.

attempted to place the responsibility for the incident on Bulwer by suggesting that the latter had exceeded his instructions by showing the Spanish Government a copy of Palmerston's letter which had, according to Lansdowne, been written solely for Bulwer's eyes.¹¹⁹

Three days later Lord Stanley confronted Lansdowne with the text of Palmerston's letter countenancing the use Bulwer had made of Palmerston's letter of March 16. Lansdowne was barely able to make a coherent reply.¹²⁰ Afterwards he wrote to Clarendon:

"You will see what an agreeable hash I have had in the H. of Lds in being obliged to 'wriggle' thro' the Spanish transaction how I could, of which it was impossible to expression [sic] unreserved approbation".¹²¹

Greville wrote, "Lansdowne was in a state of great indignation and disgust; he told the D. of B. [Bedford] he had never in all his life been placed in such a situation".¹²²

Both Wood and Lord Grey were outraged by the incident.¹²³ After reading the correspondence Lord Grey wrote, "I was disgusted with the whole tone of Palmerston's despatches & especially the last which Bulwer is directed to communicate to the Spanish Minister".¹²⁴ Again on May 7 he wrote:

"This business has made a very great sensat'n in the political

¹¹⁹ Hansard, 3rd series, XCVIII, 691.

¹²⁰ Hansard, 3rd series, XCVIII, 750.

¹²¹ Lansdowne to Clarendon, May 11, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 4.

¹²² Greville, VI, 60.

¹²³ Broughton Diaries, May 24, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,752.

¹²⁴ Grey Diaries, May 5, 1848, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/14.

world & I had thought that it must have led either to Palmerston's retirement or the break up of the Govt. -- the former wd have given me infinite satisfact'n".¹²⁵

Later in the month Grey told Russell that if the subject was raised in the House of Lords, he could not assume responsibility for Palmerston's conduct. Palmerston had written the offensive despatches behind the backs of his colleagues and he could not expect them to take his part. "...I can recognise", Grey added, "no obligation to support a policy which none of our opponents can condemn more than I do..."¹²⁶

Neither Lord Grey nor Lansdowne carried their objections, however, to the point of threatening resignation. Lansdowne, it appears, discouraged Lord Grey from acting rashly. During the crisis Lansdowne wrote to Russell:

"Grey has just been with me for a long time & has shown me a letter he means to send to you. I saw he had great difficulty in controlling himself at the Cabinet yesterday & doubt whether he will be able any longer to restrain himself -- it is very desirable therefore that you should see him as soon as you can -- he will make my task difficult enough already as to this affair, still more difficult in the House of Lords".¹²⁷

After frustrating the formation of the Government in 1845 on the grounds of Palmerston's return to the Foreign Office, Lord Grey was probably reluctant to take responsibility for its dissolution only three years later on the very same grounds. The crisis ended with an assurance by Palmerston that in future he would submit all his despatches to Russell for approval before they were sent.¹²⁸ On May 29 Lansdowne

¹²⁵ Grey Diaries, May 7, 1848, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C3/14.

¹²⁶ Walpole, Russell, II, 44.

¹²⁷ Copy of undated letter from Lansdowne to Russell [probably May or June 1848] P.^r.O. 30/22/6.

¹²⁸ Lansdowne to Clarendon, May 11, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 4.

wrote to Clarendon: "One good will be produced by it [the crisis] for the future -- the enforcement of an understanding for preventing all unnecessary ebullitions, which was supposed to exist, but has been too little attended to."¹²⁹

The differences over Ireland and foreign affairs were composed and the Government managed to survive the session without a rupture. Perhaps no Cabinet could have carried on the Government during the turbulent year of 1848 without suffering some internal dissension. The Whigs, however, were particularly vulnerable. Without a clear majority in Parliament the resignation of either Lord Grey, Clarendon or Palmerston from the Government could easily have led to the dissolution of the Government itself. In answer to the Queen's objections to Palmerston and her suggestion that he should be transferred to Ireland, Lord John told her that, "...at moments like these one of course was anxious not to do anything which could cause internal trouble".¹³⁰ A dissentient minister could hold the Government up to ransom and threaten not only to weaken it but very possibly destroy it by his resignation. In the case of Palmerston the Cabinet was obliged to suffer a course of action that in ordinary circumstances would have led to his dismissal. The absence of discipline within the Cabinet reflected its weakness in Parliament. By the end of the session the state of the House of Commons and the

¹²⁹ Lansdowne to Clarendon, May 29, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 4.

¹³⁰ Victoria, Letters, II, 233.

internal politics of the Cabinet pointed to the necessity of attempting a coalition.

CHAPTER IV

On forming the Government in 1846 Russell had invited Lincoln, Herbert and Dalhousie to join him. What posts he proposed to give them is not known, but since they had all previously been members of the Conservative Cabinet, Russell could hardly have expected them to accept inferior places in a Whig administration. After their refusal Russell appears to have abandoned the idea of a Whig-Peelite coalition. During the sessions of 1846 and 1847 the Whigs succeeded in carrying on the Government with their own forces. The division in the Conservative party permitted Russell to dispense with an overt understanding with either the Peelites or the Protectionists. Edward Ellice continued to agitate for a formal coalition with the Peelites, but received no encouragement from Russell.¹ The subsequent overtures that Russell made to the Peelites were restricted to individual members of the party and involved posts outside the Cabinet that carried little or no responsibility for the general policy of the Government. The session of 1848, however, altered the position of the Whigs. The bulk of the Peelites and the Protectionists showed signs of drawing together on the occasion of the sugar-bill debate. Bentinck's death in September 1848 removed an important obstacle to the reunion of the Conservative party. In December Disraeli informed

¹ see above page 77.

Hobhouse that, "...Peel's friends were moving heaven & earth to get the Protectionists to join them but that no corresponding inclination had yet been shewn by him & his friends -- although a junction might & would take place if the occasion offered".² The Liberals on the other hand were bitterly divided. The Radicals had sustained an opposition to the Government on the grounds of retrenchment and franchise reform throughout the session. In December Cobden launched a public campaign to compel the Government to effect a reduction of over eight million pounds in the service estimates for 1849. Mass meetings were held in Liverpool and Manchester.³ Although the agitation came to nothing, it appeared on the eve of the new session as if the dormant forces of the Anti-Corn-Law League were to be revived and turned against the Government. Unless something were done to strengthen the Government, Russell believed that the Peelites would be called "to the entire direction of affairs". "But separated from the Protectionists and uprooted from the Whigs", Russell wrote, "they would probably after a time give way to Lord Stanley and the Protectionist party".⁴ It is in this situation that Russell reverted to his policy of 1846 and attempted to bring the Peelites into the Cabinet.

Circumstances within the Cabinet in January 1849 were particularly

² Broughton Diaries, December 22, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,753.

³ Morely, Cobden, II, 34-36.

⁴ Gooch, Russell, I, 192-93.

favourable for the addition of new members. Lord Auckland's sudden death that month placed the Admiralty at Russell's disposal; the Pay Office, which had been vacated by Macaulay's retirement in the previous April had not yet been filled. In October Lord Morpeth, recently elevated to the House of Lords as the Earl of Carlisle, had asked Russell to replace him at the Woods and Forests.⁵ In addition to these three openings Lord Minto volunteered to make another by giving up the Privy Seal.⁶ "The govt.", wrote Lewis, "have a more favourable opportunity for coalition now than may perhaps recur for some time".⁷ Both Palmerston and Lansdowne advised Russell to approach the Peelites.⁸ Referring to Lord Auckland's death, Lansdowne wrote to Russell on January 4, "...I must say that my own opinion is very decided, that the opportunity which has so unfortunately presented itself should not be passed by without an endeavour to strengthen the Government".⁹ Three days later Minto wrote to Russell, "You will...see that I had taken the same views as Lansdowne of the expediency of endeavouring to strengthen your government even more largely than he contemplates".¹⁰

For the Admiralty, the most important of the four possible vacancies, Lord Lansdowne urged Russell to recruit the Peelite peer,

⁵ Carlisle to Russell, October 9, 1848. This is enclosed in Carlisle to Russell, January 2, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

⁶ Grey Diaries, January 10, 1849, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/14.

⁷ Lewis to Clarendon, January 11, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep c 530.

⁸ Gooch, Russell, I, 192.

⁹ Lansdowne to Russell, January 4, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

¹⁰ Minto to Russell, January 7, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

Lord St. Germans. "...amongst persons unconnected with the Government", Lansdowne wrote, "Ld St. Germans is the first that would occur to me for introduction into the Cabinet, both for his character, recent conduct & general similarity of views".¹¹ Very probably Lansdowne's recommendation was influenced by the need to fortify the Government benches in the House of Lords where the Whigs were even more desperately situated than in the Commons. Russell, however, favoured either Graham or Herbert with a strong preference for the latter.¹² In a letter to Clarendon Russell wrote, "I should like to strengthen the Gov't -- but I should prefer Sidney Herbert to Graham -- not from any personal dislike of Graham -- but agreeing with H.'s views as to the navy".¹³ Graham, like many free traders, opposed the Government's policy of maintaining a fleet in African waters to suppress the slave traffic. Russell believed that it would be difficult for him to take over the Admiralty and assume direct responsibility for a policy which he regarded as expensive and useless.¹⁴ The appointment of either St. Germans or Herbert to the Admiralty would have had the effect of excluding Graham from the coalition unless Russell had been prepared to reshuffle the Cabinet. Graham's reputation rested on his success as an administrator; moreover, he

¹¹ Lansdowne to Russell, January 4, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

¹² Gooch, Russell, I, 192.

¹³ Undated letter in Russell's handwriting, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland

1 b.

¹⁴ Graham to Peel, January 16, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40452.

Russell to Clarendon, January 8, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland

1 b.

had occupied the office of First Lord in Grey's Cabinet. It is most unlikely that he would have accepted an office like the Privy Seal which carried no departmental duties; it is almost certain that he would not have considered either the Pay Office or the Woods and Forests, both of which were junior positions in the Cabinet. Whatever reservations Lansdowne and Russell entertained about Graham were quickly dropped.¹⁵ Although Russell had expected some opposition within the Cabinet, no one objected when he proposed to offer Graham the Admiralty at a meeting on January 10.¹⁶ Palmerston, a supporter of the African squadron, had written to Russell in Graham's favour the day before:

"Graham would be an acquisition...I should say that any opinion he may have expressed about the particular question of the squadron off the African coast need be no objection to his taking the Admiralty. Hutt & Hume & Cardwell & some others made the African squadron a pretext, their real object being to revive & maintain the Slave Trade, but if Graham is as I suppose desirous to put that trade down, he will be more ready to concur in other measures which may enable us to dispense with or much reduce the squadron..."¹⁷

In addition to the Admiralty, Russell proposed to offer Graham a peerage; Lord St. Germans was to be offered the Woods and Forests; the Earl of Carlisle was to be transferred to the Privy Seal and Minto

- ¹⁵ Lord Clarendon appears to have been particularly energetic in urging Graham's appointment.
Lansdowne to Russell, January 7, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/7.
Lewis to Clarendon, January 15, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 530
Lansdowne to Clarendon, January 10, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 4.
Russell to Clarendon, January 8, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 1 b.
- ¹⁶ Lansdowne to Clarendon, January 5, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 4.
Grey Diaries, January 10, 1849, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C3/14.
- ¹⁷ Palmerston to Russell, January 9, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

kept in the Cabinet but without office. Russell intended to fill the Pay Office and any other vacancy that afterwards occurred in consultation with Graham.¹⁸

As is well known, Graham declined the invitation and the Admiralty went to Sir Francis Baring. Graham, nevertheless appears to have been tempted by the offer and refused it only after some doubt and hesitation. On the 12th he met Russell on two occasions and entered into a lengthy discussion of the Government's policy. According to Lansdowne Graham was satisfied with Russell's explanations.¹⁹ He told Russell he had no desire to go to the House of Lords; his income would not support a peerage and he wished to avoid any personal collision with Stanley. Furthermore, he did not look upon himself as a member of a Peelite party; if he joined the Government he would be content to join it alone. Although Graham finally decided to reject the offer on his own initiative, he asked Russell for a few hours so he could discuss the matter with Peel before making up his mind.²⁰ After hearing Russell's report of the conversation Lord Grey wrote, "...though no positive answer has yet been returned I have little doubt that Graham will come in ..."²¹ The news of his refusal took Lord Grey completely by surprise:

"Wood came here while we were at breakfast & we were talking of

¹⁸ Grey Diaries, January 10, 1849, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/14.

¹⁹ Lansdowne to Clarendon, January 13, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 4.

²⁰ Walpole, Russell, II, 98.

²¹ Grey Diaries, January 12, 1849, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/14.

Graham's tak'g the Admiralty as quite a settled thing, feel'g no doubt from what had passed that he wd do so, but to my great regret between 11 & 12 I received an 'immediate' circulat'n box contain'g a letter from Graham to Ld John & a short account of another interview by the latter, by which I learnt that the offer which had been made had been declined & that Ld John had now offered the vacant office to F. Baring. I very much regret the conclus'n of the negotiat'n & I am no less surprised, indeed, I still fully believe that Graham had intended to accept but that at the last his courage failed him. He has I think behaved very ill".²²

Graham may well have wished to return to office and possibly felt no personal objection to serving under Russell. During the session of 1848 Graham's connection with the main body of the Peelite party had been strained. The prospect of a junction between the Peelites and the Protectionists threatened to leave him and Peel in complete isolation. His sympathies as well as his interests lay with the Liberals. Nevertheless his public position was a delicate one. In spite of his talents, Graham had acquired a reputation for shiftiness and unreliability. He had thrown over the Whigs in 1834 and the Conservatives in 1846. Arbuthnot believed that his accession to the Cabinet would bring with it little "moral strength". "Graham", Arbuthnot wrote, "has deserted too many people & returning to the Whigs he would only discredit himself & the Govt."²³ Graham was aware of this. During the negotiations he told Russell that he had already injured the Whigs by his defection and that he must take care not to place himself under "a similar necessity".²⁴ A month later he confided

²² Grey Diaries, January 13, 1849, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C3/14.

²³ Arbuthnot to Bedford, January 14, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 b.

²⁴ Graham to Peel, January 16, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.

to Greville:

" 'I have played some pranks before high heaven in my time. I quitted the Whigs once, and it would not do to quit them again; and unless I could subscribe to all their past conduct and policy, as well as feel quite satisfied for the future, it was better not to join'. "25

Foreign policy and finance were the principal sources of his anxiety about the future. "Palmerston", he wrote to Peel, "has had too much and too long his own way to yield either to the influence of his colleagues or to the control of public opinion".²⁶ The problem of Palmerston, he told Greville, was "the great obstacle".²⁷ On the question of finance, Graham believed that Russell was insufficiently impressed with the importance of retrenchment. The Government had planned some economies, but these were in his opinion inadequate.²⁸ "In short", Graham wrote to Peel, "the preparations to meet Cobden and the coming storm are incomplete and insufficient, and the cry for cheap Government, with all its consequences, will be overpowering..."²⁹ One of Graham's assets as a politician was his prestige among the Radical members of the House of Commons. In the Admiralty with the responsibility of defending the naval estimates, Graham would have been placed in the middle of the struggle with the Radicals.

²⁵ Greville, VI, 154.

²⁶ Graham to Peel, January 16, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.

²⁷ Greville, VI, 154.

²⁸ Graham to Peel, January 16, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.

²⁹ Graham to Peel, January 12, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.

Conceivably, his presence in the Government would have mitigated somewhat the force of the Radical onslaught, but if his scruples about resigning from the Cabinet were genuine, his position would have become intolerable. Unwilling to resign and unable to produce a large reduction in the Navy, he would have gradually forfeited whatever authority he possessed over the Radical members.

If the overture to Graham represented an attempt to consolidate the free-trade members behind the Government, Russell did not completely ignore the Protectionists. In his conversation with Graham, he appears to have hinted that a combination with the Protectionists was not out of the question. Graham wrote to Peel:

"Lord John seemed rather to anticipate a High Tory 'Reaction'. Without anything expressly said, he contrived to convey to me that against the Radicals he might be driven to some such combination, and in speaking of the management of the Royal Forests he let me know, that he had been in communication with Lord Lonsdale".⁵⁰

Graham's suspicions were not entirely groundless. The Whigs had acted with the Protectionists to defeat Peel. A number of Whigs in 1846 had looked forward to a coalition between the two parties. Subsequently the Government received support from Protectionist members in important divisions and Russell seems to have modified his policy on occasions to ensure the continuation of that support. In April 1848 Graham told Peel that "Ld John appeared to me to court most sedulously the favour of the Protectionists, and to be regardless of both principles and of measures which alone could command the confidence of

⁵⁰ Graham to Peel, January 16, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.

the more liberal of your adherents".³¹ The Protectionists themselves saw that circumstances could bring them into a union with the Whigs. R.A. Christopher, a regular debater and figure of some importance in the Protectionist Party, wrote to Disraeli in October 1849:

"Let us... direct our course so as to expose our grievances without compromising our principles & if possible let us create a division between John Russell & the Manchester school. If that were once achieved the better class of whigs would join us & we should get rid of the Peelites.

.....
"It appears clear that the new Reform agitators will open a crusade against the Government. Let us come to their rescue at first only by votes not in debate & when the breach is fairly made we may act with effect".³²

As long as the Corn-Law question was still in dispute, a coalition between the Whigs and the Protectionists could not be regarded as anything more than a remote possibility. It is probable, however, that after his offer to Graham, Russell wished to make a friendly gesture to the Protectionists and did so by appointing Mathew Talbot Baines to the Presidency of the Poor Law Board. Baines's position in the House was ambiguous. Although a nominal Liberal, as the representative of Hull he was pledged against the Government's resolution to repeal the Navigation Laws and had acted with the Protectionists on this issue in 1848.³³ Moreover, through his father, Edward Baines of the Leeds Mercury, he was connected with the anti-

³¹ Graham to Peel, April 30, 1848, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.

³² R.A. Christopher to Disraeli, October 8, 1849, Hughenden, box B, file H.

³³ Hansard, 3rd series, CII, 680-82.

Catholic forces in Yorkshire.³⁴ Russell was particularly eager to have Baines and offered him the post on the understanding that he would be free to vote against the repeal of the Navigation Laws.³⁵ The appointment of Baines coming within a month of the offer to Graham moved the Protectionist, Stafford O'Brien, to write the following lines:

"Two offices vacant, Ld John
Slights each political brother
To give a Protectionist one
And to offer a Peelite the other.

"So principle now is a scoff
All parties have broken their tether
Since even the Whigs have left off
Their practice of sticking together".³⁶

The failure of the overture to Graham seems to have been taken very lightly. Before the offer was made, Lansdowne wrote to Clarendon that it was most desirable that Graham should accept, but added that "...it will not be without advantage that he should have received the offer & decline..."³⁷ Both Lord Grey and Sir George Grey expressed strong disappointment at the outcome of the negotiations.³⁸ But Russell was rather relieved and wrote to Clarendon, "I conclude I need never ask him [Graham] again, which is personally a comfort".³⁹ If Graham's presence in the Cabinet

³⁴ Leader, Roebuck, 208.

³⁵ Russell to Clarendon, January 22, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.Ireland 1 b.

³⁶ G. Grey to Clarendon, February 14, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 2 c.

³⁷ Lansdowne to Clarendon, January 10, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 4.

³⁸ Grey Diaries, January 13, 1849, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C3/14.
G. Grey to Clarendon, January 15, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.Ireland 2 c.

³⁹ Russell to Clarendon, January 22, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.Ireland 1 b.

promised to strengthen the Government by uniting the free-trade parties, it would also have antagonized the Protectionists. Graham according to Greville was the "favourite aversion" of the Protectionists.

"The Protectionists", he wrote, "who ... can always do some mischief, would have been more disposed to thwart and embarrass the Government when Graham had become a part of it..."⁴⁰

On the other hand Spencer Walpole, Russell's biographer and a member of Parliament in 1849, believed that the offer to Graham laid the foundation for a better understanding between the Peelites and the Whigs and removed "the strange distrust which had so frequently separated Sir Robert Peel and Lord John".⁴¹ On the surface there is some justification for this view. During the session of 1849 the gulf between the Whigs and the Peelites was noticeably narrowed. This was in part due to the Protectionist party, which as a result of the agricultural depression of 1849 was actively campaigning for the restoration of the corn duties. Individual members of the Government, such as Clarendon and Wood, continued to consult Peel on problems affecting their own departments. Peel actively assisted the Government in carrying the repeal of the Navigation Laws.⁴² Nevertheless Spencer Walpole's argument does not stand up to close examination. This relationship between Peel and the Government had existed before

⁴⁰ Greville, VI, 147.

⁴¹ Walpole, Russell, II, 98.

⁴² Parker, Peel, III, 504, 512-21.

Conacher, "Peel and the Peelites", E.H.R. LXXIII, 445-46.

the offer to Graham was made. Moreover, there is no evidence for any direct connection between Peel and Russell arising out of the offer. If any good-will had been inspired by the overture, it was rapidly dissipated by the events of the session. At the beginning of the session Russell criticized Peel's conduct on the Appropriation Clause and the Coercion Bill of 1846. Peel took offence at Russell's remarks and replied sharply.⁴⁵ His speech, according to Lewis, placed Russell in a "disadvantageous light", and was "much cheered" by the Protectionists.⁴⁴ Graham wrote to Peel the next day:

"...I cannot postpone thanking you for your inimitable speech of last night...the combined effect of your moderation and conscious superiority added greatly to the force of the exposure, which John Russell had called down on himself. The pain and shame, which he endured last night cannot be much alleviated either by the joys of his present position or by the prospect of his impending difficulties".⁴⁵

Graham told Greville that Peel had "bitterly resented" Russell's speech and had "latterly been more ill-natured to the Government".⁴⁶ The bond between Peel and Russell was always a political one. Russell had frequently communicated with Graham and Russell's colleagues on occasions communicated with Peel. But Russell and Peel were never on terms of personal friendship; they always approached each other indirectly. Lord Aberdeen told Delane of the Times that Peel had never liked Lord John.⁴⁷ Russell's overture to Graham in no way

⁴⁵ Hansard, 3rd series, CII, 543-55.

⁴⁴ Lewis to Clarendon, February 10, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 530.

⁴⁵ Graham to Peel, February 10, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.

⁴⁶ Greville, VI, 159.

⁴⁷ Ibid., VI, 159.

affected his relationship with Peel.

Although the Whigs had failed to recruit Graham and broaden the base of the Government, their position in Parliament had improved in some respects during the session of 1849. The danger of a combination between the Peelites and the Protectionists did not materialize and early in the new session it became evident that the division between them had widened. Before Parliament met, Lord Londonderry attempted to interest Graham in the reconstruction of the Conservative party, but received no encouragement.⁴⁸ Disraeli wrote in March, "As for the Peelites, they are more mysterious and hostile than ever. No one knows what they are after..."⁴⁹ At the very moment when it appeared that a reconciliation was possible, the free-trade controversy was revived. During the winter the average price of corn had dropped to forty-five shillings a quarter; the nominal duty left by the repeal bill of 1846 was due to expire that year; and British agriculture would be exposed to the full force of foreign competition.⁵⁰ The Protectionist members returned to London in a state of panic. In both Houses amendments were moved during the debate on the speech from the throne regretting the consequences of free-trade. Referring to these motions, Russell wrote to Clarendon, "Stanley and D'Israeli have shewn clearly they do not want to help the Lincoln clique".⁵¹

⁴⁸ Parker, Graham, II, 80-82.

⁴⁹ Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 203.

⁵⁰ The Times. February 12, 1849, 6.

⁵¹ Russell to Clarendon, February 3, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 b.

As long as the Protectionists were determined to agitate the corn question, they could not hope to reach an agreement with the Peelites. In April Disraeli wrote, "The agricultural distress is so great and the general prosperity is so doubtful that, even if we were inclined, fusion under the standard of Peel, or with his adherents even, seems impossible!"⁵² An additional wedge was driven between the two parties, by the Government's decision to bring forward a bill to repeal the Navigation Acts. This measure had been under consideration in previous sessions but had been postponed for other business. Early in 1849 the Government decided to give it priority. In June after it was passed Russell wrote to Clarendon, "The Navigation Bill being well settled gives great advantage to the Govt. and the two sections of the once Tory party, far from being reconciled are more embittered than ever".⁵³

If the revival of the free-trade controversy prevented the re-unification of the Conservative party, it also restored to the Protectionists an element of unity and cohesion.⁵⁴ The breach which had occurred over the Jew bill was repaired. Disraeli, as Bentinck's principal lieutenant and political heir, made his peace with the ultra-Protestants and on the first day of the session announced that he no longer saw any cause for the endowment of the Catholic clergy in

⁵² Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 204.

⁵³ Russell to Clarendon, June 18, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 1 b.

⁵⁴ Lewis to Clarendon, February 4, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 530. Victoria, Letters, II, 256.

Ireland.⁵⁵ The leadership of the party, which had been in abeyance the previous session, was assumed by a committee composed of Herries, Granby and Disraeli. The Whigs regarded the committee with contempt. Clarendon wrote to the Duke of Bedford:

"Israel looks much more as if he shd be offering pencils without led [sic] to the omnibuses at the W.Horse cellars than leading the country party... Granby gets over the ground very slowly as he is heavily weighted by his own ignorance...Herries is old womanish without much character to spare but with ability enough to make him disbelieve $\frac{3}{4}$ ths of what he himself says".⁵⁶

Nevertheless, under their leadership the Protectionists acted during the session with exceptional vigour and decision. It is likely that they wished to take advantage of the agricultural panic by forcing a dissolution.⁵⁷ In March when it appeared that the Government might resign if the Navigation Bill were defeated in the Lords, Stanley told Hobhouse, "...he was ready to take the Government if we resigned... that he should dissolve parliament & thought with great advantage to his party..."⁵⁸ G.C. Lewis told Clarendon that although a dissolution would not give the Protectionists a majority, it would increase their numbers.⁵⁹ Whatever their reasons the Protectionists seized every opportunity that presented itself during the session to attack the Government. Bentinck's old policy of giving the Government

⁵⁵ Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 134.
Hansard, 3rd series, CII, 91-92.

⁵⁶ Clarendon to Bedford, February 16, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.Ireland 21 c.

⁵⁷ Greville, VI, 176.

⁵⁸ Broughton Diaries, March 31, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,753.

⁵⁹ Lewis to Clarendon, April 23, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 550.

occasional support as the best means of keeping the Peelites out of office was repudiated. The Government was opposed relentlessly with every weapon at their disposal.

In order to overthrow the Government by a vote in the Commons, the Protectionists had to enlist the support of either the Peelites, the Radicals or the Irish. In the House of Lords, where Russell relied on "a casual & fluctuating majority" of no more than ten votes, the Protectionists could endanger the Government with their own forces alone.⁶⁰ Before 1849 Stanley had used this advantage with restraint and caution. He had succeeded in defeating the Whigs on a number of minor questions, but had avoided a situation where the Lords would be brought into collision with the Commons on a question that could decide the fate of the Government. His opposition to the Navigation Bill represents the first attempt by the Protectionist peers to dislodge the Government.

The bill had passed in the House of Commons by a relatively small majority of fifty-six votes.⁶¹ "...We were much disappointed..." wrote Hobhouse, "...the real cause of our diminished numbers was the low price of corn".⁶² With only a small majority in favour of the bill in the Commons, the Government could not hope to coerce the Lords into submission. If Stanley managed to defeat the bill in the Lords the

⁶⁰ Memorandum by Russell, June 19, 1848 or 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

⁶¹ Hansard, 3rd series, CIII, 625-29.

⁶² Broughton Diaries, March 12, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,753.

Cabinet would be left with the choice of either abandoning it or resigning office. Russell wrote to Clarendon, "Our majority last night was very small & may lead to the dissolution of the ministry by a vote in the House of Lords".⁶³ Most of the Cabinet agreed with Russell that if the bill were defeated they had no choice but to resign. Lord Grey felt even more strongly than Russell the necessity of either carrying the bill or giving up office. "For my part", he wrote, "nothing shall induce me to stay in office unless this bill is carried".⁶⁴ Hobhouse and Palmerston, however, believed that their resignation would play into the hands of their opponents. "If this resolution is persevered in", wrote Hobhouse, "our doom is sealed".⁶⁵ Both Palmerston and Hobhouse believed that if Stanley took office and dissolved Parliament, the returns would favour the Protectionists and the Radicals.⁶⁶ Palmerston was particularly alarmed at the danger of a Peelite ministry. Russell, he felt, would be obliged to support Peel and some members of the present Cabinet would not hesitate to take office under the latter. The Radicals would prefer the Peelites to the Whigs and Russell would find himself at the head of "a much reduced band". Russell did not deny the force of Palmerston's objections and admitted that the consequences of their resignation

⁶³ Russell to Clarendon, March 15, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 b.

⁶⁴ Grey Diaries, April 18, 1849, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C3/14.

⁶⁵ Broughton Diaries, March 31, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,753. Gooch, Russell, I, 194.

⁶⁶ Broughton Diaries, March 31, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,753.

could be "very injurious". Nevertheless, he tended to believe that with a show of resolution on the part of the Government the Lords could be induced to pass the bill.⁶⁷ Lord Lansdowne and the other members of the Cabinet took the same attitude and on April 18 it was decided that they would resign if the Lords rejected the bill.⁶⁸

In spite of Russell's optimism, no effort was spared to ensure its safety. Hobhouse wrote that, "Russell ...told us that each of us ought to do his utmost with individual Peers to get a vote for our bill..."⁶⁹ In addition to Clarendon and Normanby, who were summoned for the division, Lord Ponsonby was recalled from Vienna to support the Government.⁷⁰ Greville wrote on May 11:

"For the last fortnight everybody has been occupied with the division in the H. of Lords on the Navigation Bill; the greatest whip-up was made on both sides that ever was known, and the lists made and re-made out with such accuracy that every vote was 71 pretty well ascertained, and the number quite correctly calculated".

Individual Whig peers, like the Duke of Hamilton and Lord Carrington who disapproved of the bill were approached and persuaded to give their votes in its favour.⁷² On the eve of the first division which

⁶⁷ Gooch, Russell, I, 195-95.

⁶⁸ Grey Diaries, April 18, 1849, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C3/14.

⁶⁹ Broughton Diaries, March 31, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,753.

⁷⁰ Hansard, 3rd series, CV, 117-20.

Gooch, Russell, I, 195.

Normanby to Russell, May 22, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

⁷¹ Greville, VI, 176.

⁷² Hamilton to Russell, May 6, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

Carrington to Russell, May 7, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/7.

took place on May 8, Tufnell was confident of a majority of ten votes.⁷³ Russell was less certain and wrote to Clarendon, "I expect a majority of 4 or 5 -- but it may be the other way".⁷⁴ The division confirmed Tufnell's prediction, and the Government by a lavish use of proxies managed to obtain a majority of 175 to 165 votes.⁷⁵ A change of six votes would have reversed the result and it is impossible to attribute the Government's victory to any single factor. G.C. Lewis believed that the result owed much to the exertions of Peel and the Court with individual peers.⁷⁶ Certainly all the peers who normally acted with Peel voted in favour of the bill. Russell, on the other hand, believed that Stanley had failed to mobilize all of his supporters. A majority of the bishops, from whom Russell had not expected any help, had voted for the bill.⁷⁷ He was convinced, moreover, that a number of Protectionists who ostensibly opposed the bill did not wish to defeat the Government and did not fully exert themselves on Stanley's behalf.⁷⁸

⁷³ Lewis to Clarendon, May 9, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 530.

⁷⁴ Russell to Clarendon, May 7, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 b.

⁷⁵ Hansard, 3rd series, CV, 117.

⁷⁶ Lewis to Clarendon, May 9, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 530.

⁷⁷ Russell to Clarendon, May 8, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 b.

⁷⁸ Russell wrote to Clarendon on May 7, 1849, "...Lonsdale & other shrewd men dread a Stanley ministry & will not march thro' Coventry with him", and on May 8, "Glengall told me yest'y that several Irish peers would not vote against us from regard for you". Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 b.

In the House of Commons the strategy of Disraeli and a section of the Protectionist party appears to have been directed towards a combination with the Radicals. During the session of 1848 the Radicals and the Protectionists had occasionally voted together against the Government. Both parties had opposed the budget of 1848 and the extension of further loans to relieve Irish distress. There is no reason to believe that the leaders of either party did anything to promote these combinations, which appear to have been brought about solely as a result of their independent opposition to specific measures introduced by the Government. At the end of the session of 1849, however, Disraeli embarked upon a line of opposition that was obviously intended to win the support of the Radicals. Towards the end of the session the Protectionists brought forward motions for the reduction of public expenditure and took up the policy that had hitherto been the exclusive property of the Radicals. There is little doubt that this was a completely factious move on the part of the Protectionists, probably prompted by their failure to make headway against the Government in the House of Lords. In February when Cobden had introduced his motion for the reduction of expenditure by ten million pounds, the Protectionists had voted with the Government.⁷⁹ But on the 16th of July Henley and Newdegate moved for a ten per cent reduction of all public salaries. This motion was defeated by 149 to 102 votes,

⁷⁹ Hansard, 3rd series, CII, 1300-03.

but a number of Radicals, including Cobden, Bright, and Hume had given it their support.⁸⁰ Three days later H. Drummond and R.A. Christopher, two Protectionists who were particularly close to Disraeli brought forward a similar motion urging a general reduction of taxes.⁸¹ The division took place at an hour when the attendance in the House was thin; the Radicals again supported the Protectionists; and the Government was defeated by a majority of three votes.⁸² Lewis wrote to Clarendon that, "Seven official members were absent if the debate had last another quarter of an hour, we shd have had a majority of 10".⁸³ In the circumstances the defeat did not give the Government grounds for resignation. Lewis wrote, "...I do not consider it as of real importance, but it was a disagreeable incident and Ld John was a good deal annoyed by it".⁸⁴

In the long run the Protectionists probably did more harm to themselves than to the Government by taking up the retrenchment question. It is doubtful whether the Radicals were prepared to support a retrenchment motion coming from the Protectionists in sufficient strength to endanger the Government. Beresford wrote to Disraeli in March 1850 on the reduction of official salaries, "The

⁸⁰ Hansard, 3rd series, CVII, 408-52.

⁸¹ H. Drummond to Disraeli, November 8, 1848, Hughenden, box B. Bentinck file.

Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 116-18, 128, 152, 213.

Hansard, 3rd series, CVII, 571.

⁸² Hansard, 3rd series, CVII, 602-03.

⁸³ Lewis to Clarendon, July 20, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 530.

⁸⁴ Lewis to Clarendon, July 20, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 530.

only thing in which I differ from you is in your hopes that we shall get the support of a considerable portion of the Radicals".⁸⁵ The Radicals very likely lacked the cohesion and discipline that were necessary to bring all their forces into battle beside the Protectionists. Roebuck in a letter to his wife described the condition of the Radical party in July 1849:

"We had a dinner last night at Sir Joshua Walmsley's with the leading Radicals...Hume, Milner Gibson, Charles Villiers (a fish out of water), Cobden Bright, Rev. W.J. Fox... The object was to see if any combined system of action could be devised and it soon became plain that amongst these men a leader or a system was impossible. Villiers came there to prevent any such result, ditto Milner Gibson".⁸⁶

More important was the fact that a number of Protectionists appeared to resent what was so evidently a cynical and factious manoeuvre to combine with the Radicals. Herries spoke and voted against Henley's motion.⁸⁷ The day after the Government was defeated on Drummond's motion, Herries informally raised the subject of protection in debate, and a controversy ensued which clearly put an end to further co-operation between the two parties.⁸⁸ Lewis wrote, "...Cobden & Dizzy have been abusing one another, quite in their old style, so that the alliance of last night has proved short lived".⁸⁹ Disraeli's adventure into the field of retrenchment had the consequence of nearly

⁸⁵ Beresford to Disraeli, March 30, 1850, Disraeli Papers, Hughenden, box A. file B.

⁸⁶ Leader, Roebuck, 230.

⁸⁷ Hansard, 3rd series, CVII, 452-56.

⁸⁸ Hansard, 3rd series, CVII, 744-86.

⁸⁹ Lewis to Clarendon, July 20, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 530.

destroying the unity that the Protectionist had so recently recovered. In a mood of perhaps excessive satisfaction the Duke of Bedford wrote to Clarendon at the end of the session:

"They [the Protectionists] are in a charming state of disunion, & many of the oldest & most eminent of them, such as the D. of Beaufort are shocked at the motions that have lately been made by Mr. Drummond, Mr. Henley and [one word illegible, it may be "Dizzy"] -- Arbutnot told me yest'y that the latter was positively 'blackguard' -- I do not think that but it was foolish & injudicious...

"The opposition have made a complete hash of their affairs & are all to pieces".⁹⁰

The events of the session established that neither the Peelites and the Protectionists on the one hand nor the Protectionists and the Radicals on the other could enter into a successful combination against the Government. The Whigs, nevertheless, saw little reason for complacency. If the opposition failed to unite, the Cabinet had not succeeded in strengthening its position. It had done nothing to prevent the danger of a hostile combination taking place in the future. The Radicals were still acting independently; the Peelites had refused to join the Whigs in a coalition; and the Protectionists had intensified their opposition. Russell held office in the constant fear that some new issue would arise which would remove the obstacles to the joint action of the Radicals, the Peelites and the Protectionists.⁹¹ In February Clarendon wrote to the Duke of Bedford:

⁹⁰ Bedford to Clarendon, July 25, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 7 b.

⁹¹ Bedford wrote to Clarendon on February 6, 1849, that Russell "...thinks it very possible there may be such a juncture of Tories of diff't colour & of Radicals, that the Govt may be left in a minority upon some question of Foreign or Colonial policy". Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 7 b.

"...however disunited Peelites, Protect'its & Radicals may be, some point will some day arise upon wch the disjecta membra of opposition will be gathered together for a reckless but successful onslaught on the Govt." 92

Russell and Clarendon believed that the Government was vulnerable on questions connected with the administration of the colonies and foreign affairs.⁹³ Although Grey and Palmerston were normally at odds within the Cabinet, both had been particularly unfortunate in the management of their own departments. During the session it became evident that both men were in some sense liabilities to the Government. A general sentiment was in evidence that neither Grey nor Palmerston were equal to their posts. This feeling, if properly exploited, threatened to provide the scattered forces of the opposition with the means of uniting and of defeating the Government.

Palmerston's reputation had declined chiefly because of the failure of his Italian policy. During the continental upheavals of 1848 and 1849, he had vigorously supported the cause of Piedmont and the Italian liberals against Austria. By the summer of 1849, however, the Italian revolution had been crushed. The Austrians had defeated Piedmont; the French had intervened in Rome and restored the Pope; and the King of Naples had re-established himself in Sicily. It appeared as if Palmerston's policy had been fruitless

⁹² Clarendon to Bedford, February 5, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 d.

⁹³ Bedford to Clarendon, February 6, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 b.

Clarendon to Bedford, February 5, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 d.

Russell to Clarendon, February 3, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 b.

and that its only consequence had been to alienate the great powers and to leave Britain isolated. His failure was aggravated by the fact that he had more or less pursued this policy without consulting his colleagues. In spite of the assurances he had given them in May 1848, he persisted in his old habit of sending important despatches abroad before they could be examined by Russell or the Queen.⁹⁴ At one point when it was discovered that he had allowed Ordnance stores to be shipped to the insurgents in Sicily, Lord Grey had resolved to resign and was persuaded to remain only by the efforts of Wood and Sir George Grey.⁹⁵ Clarendon and many others were convinced that Palmerston's opposition to Austria and his interference in the internal affairs of the Italian states had been inspired by nothing more than "personal spite".⁹⁶ In July Clarendon wrote to the Duke of Bedford.

"Where is it all to end? Palm. may at this moment be frightened into quiescence but his animus is not changed -- he is only lying by & his hand is agst every man -- Eng'd cannot altogether withdraw from the arena of European politics & whenever Palm'n is called upon to act or to speak the same hatred of existing Govts wch hate him & the encouragement of revolution under the mask of constitutional doctrine will be at work again & with the same result of making us detested & powerless".⁹⁷

The immediate reactions in Parliament, however, were not as grave

⁹⁴ Wood to Russell, October 17, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/8 part 1.
Wood to Russell, December 19, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/8 part 1.
Victoria, Letters, II, 250 and 263.

⁹⁵ Grey Diaries, January 20 and January 25, 1849, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/14.

⁹⁶ Clarendon to Bedford, July 11, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 d.

⁹⁷ Clarendon to Bedford, July 19, 1849 (enclosed in envelope post-marked January 22, 1850) Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 d.

as Russell and Clarendon had expected. In the Lords, Aberdeen and the other Peelite peers found it increasingly difficult to submit silently to Palmerston's transgressions. "Lord Aberdeen", wrote Campbell, "is quite mad from envy and hatred of Palmerston".⁹⁸ In July Lord Brougham moved a resolution censuring the Government's Italian policy; this was defeated by a majority of twelve.⁹⁹ Lord Campbell wrote:

"...not a single Peelite voted with us. The enmity between Protectionists and Peelites in the House of Commons is greater than ever, but the Peelite peers, headed by Aberdeen, now seem very much inclined to enlist under Stanley".¹⁰⁰

In the House of Commons on the other hand the opposition seemed deliberately to avoid any discussion of foreign policy. On the subject of the Ordnance stores Greville wrote in January:

"...in the H. of Commons there will be nobody to attack Palmerston, and between those who won't grapple with him, and those who can't, he will come off unscathed, as he has always done".¹⁰¹

Although the danger was ever present that the Peelites would follow the lead of Aberdeen, Bedford believed that Peel was reluctant to start a debate which could lead to the overthrow of the Government. "Graham", Bedford wrote to Clarendon, "...is even less disposed than Peel to make any attack at all, however he may feel with Palmerston

⁹⁸ Hardcastle, Campbell, II, 255.

⁹⁹ Hansard, 3rd series, CVII, 616-726.

¹⁰⁰ Hardcastle, Campbell, II, 254.

¹⁰¹ Greville, VI, 148.

& our foreign policy".¹⁰² When Graham and Peel attacked Palmerston during the Don Pacifico debate in 1850, they did so only after much hesitation.¹⁰³ The forbearance of the Protectionists was widely attributed to a private understanding between Palmerston and Disraeli. Lewis wrote "...between Palm'n & Dizzy there is an occult or rather a patent sympathy which seals the mouth of the latter". According to Lewis, the rumour was current in Protectionist circles that Disraeli had asked Palmerston for the Brussels embassy.¹⁰⁴ "You know" wrote Graham to Peel in November, "my constant suspicion of a secret intercourse between Palmerston & D'Israeli".¹⁰⁵ It is impossible to determine whether or not this suspicion was justified. At the time of the Don Pacifico debate, Lord Stanley alluded to it in a letter to Disraeli and warned him not to spare Palmerston for fear "of reviving, in suspicious minds, old misconceptions".¹⁰⁶ Lord Londonderry wrote more directly, "The Protectionists rather (I hear) suspect your intimacy with Pal. & that you will not strike home when the moment comes".¹⁰⁷

Lord Grey's position seems, on the whole, to have been more

- ¹⁰² Bedford to Clarendon, May 31, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 7 b.
¹⁰³ Parker, Peel, III, 536 - 38
¹⁰⁴ Lewis to Clarendon, January 27, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 530.
¹⁰⁵ Graham to Peel, November 13, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 40,452.
¹⁰⁶ Stanley to Disraeli, January 22, 1850, Hughenden, box XII, 14th Earl of Derby.
¹⁰⁷ Londonderry to Disraeli, June 26, 1850, Hughenden, box B. Londonderry.

precarious than Palmerston's. Hobhouse told Lady Palmerston that Grey had succeeded her husband as the bête noire of the Cabinet. "...Many people said, Hobhouse added, "we could never go on except some change took place in the Colonial office".¹⁰⁸ The difficulties that confronted Grey in 1849 are perhaps too vast and too complicated to be easily summarized. The entire Empire seemed to be united in protest against his administration. A rebellion had broken out in Ceylon. The West Indies, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada were all in a state of continual agitation against the Colonial Office. In September Grey wrote to Russell, "It is impossible for me to disguise from myself that whether by my own fault or not my administrat'n of Colonial affairs has been an unsuccessful one".¹⁰⁹ Grey, perhaps more than any other Colonial Secretary, deserves the credit for furthering the cause of colonial autonomy; nevertheless, during his period of office he had acquired a reputation for officious and inept interference in local administration. The opposition to him in the colonies quickly found expression in the British press, particularly in the Peelite Morning Chronicle.¹¹⁰ In February Clarendon wrote to the Duke of Bedford:

"How far Grey deserves the unpopularity he has earned for himself I know not but of its existence there can be no doubt & the public loves to run after a dog with a kettle tied to his tail".¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Broughton Diaries, February 7, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,753.

¹⁰⁹ Lord Grey to Russell, September 22, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/8 Part 1.

¹¹⁰ Lord Grey to Russell, September 22, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/8 Part 1.

¹¹¹ Clarendon to Bedford, February 5, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 21 d.

In contrast with Palmerston Lord Grey enjoyed no special immunity from criticism in the House of Commons. During the session three resolutions were moved demanding inquiries into various aspects of his administration. Much of the opposition was inspired by the belief that Grey should allow the colonies a greater measure of independence and self-government. In February H. Baillie, a Protectionist, moved for a select committee to examine the grievances of Ceylon and British Guiana.¹¹² Russell had originally intended to resist the motion, but was finally obliged to accept it in order to avoid being placed in a minority.¹¹⁵ Lewis wrote to Clarendon:

"The feeling displayed in the House against Ld Grey in the debate on Baillie's motion was very strong, and unmistakable.... if the Colonial office had not been personally unpopular, the committee might have been resisted -- as it was we sh'd have been beat by 3 to 1, if the motion had not been granted. The present state of things with regard to the Colonial office is the strongest case of the extent to which people are influenced in their opinions by personal feelings that I happen to remember".¹¹⁴

In April F. Scott, a Protectionist, and Hume moved for a general committee of inquiry.¹¹⁵ The motion was defeated by a comfortable majority, but Gladstone took the occasion to attack the Colonial office for its failure to promote colonial autonomy.¹¹⁶ Two months

¹¹² Hansard, 3rd series, CII, 938.

¹¹³ Broughton Diaries, February 17, 1849, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,753.
Hansard, 3rd series, CII, 1037.

¹¹⁴ Lewis to Clarendon, February 25, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 530.

¹¹⁵ Hansard, 3rd series, CIV, 355.

¹¹⁶ Hansard, 3rd series, CIV, 341, 352-361.

later Lincoln, Gladstone and a number of Protectionists supported W. Molesworth in another motion to set up a committee of inquiry.¹¹⁷

At the finish of the session several members of the Government believed that they had managed to successfully hold their ground against the opposition. "Parties, wrote Lewis, "stand pretty much in the same position as at the beginning of the session".¹¹⁸ In Lord Campbell's opinion the session had ended "very creditably for the Government". "Every move in either House... either by the Protectionists or any other hostile section of politicians", he wrote, "has ended in their own discomfiture".¹¹⁹ In so far as the Government continued to hold office and obtained safe majorities in most divisions this view was justified. "Certainly, the Whigs had escaped a repetition of the humiliating defeats which distinguished the session of 1848. The movements which emerged in 1849 in opposition to Lord Grey and Palmerston, however, represented a more serious danger to the Government than the somewhat artificial combinations of 1848. In 1850 they were to serve as the basis for a more formidable threat to the Government's existence.

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¹¹⁷ Hansard, 3rd series, CVII, 969, 1002 - 04.

¹¹⁸ Lewis to Clarendon, July 20, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 530.

¹¹⁹ Hardcastle, Campbell, II, 254.

CHAPTER V

The session of 1850 marked the turning-point in the history of the Russell Ministry. Although they remained in power until 1852, the balance of forces in Parliament moved decisively against the Whigs, and in spite of various shifts and expedients they never recovered the lost ground. At no time had Russell ever commanded a reliable majority in either House, and to a large extent the fate of the Government depended on factors beyond his control. "The present Government", Lewis wrote in November 1849, "is a minority, & always has been -- Nothing would have been easier than to turn it out by a coalition of parties during any period of the last session..."¹ Its main source of strength lay in the division of its opponents. Russell, whom the Protectionist whip described as "a crafty, knowing tactician",² played upon these divisions and often managed to win deceptively large majorities. Nevertheless, the Government's basic position was weak, and from 1848 its influence in Parliament had been declining. The discordant elements of the opposition showed signs of increasing exasperation with its policies and from time to time entered into combinations against the Whigs. These combinations were generally nothing more than ad hoc arrangements, designed to defeat or promote

¹ Lewis to Clarendon, November 27, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 530.

² Beresford to Disraeli, March 30, 1850, Hughenden, box B, file B, Bers.

specific pieces of legislation and proved short-lived and sterile. But in 1850 these combinations acquired a more deliberate and threatening character. Almost every aspect of the administration came under attack. Towards the end of the session, in the Don Pacifico debate, all the principal leaders of the Protectionist, Radical and Peelite parties united for the first time in opposition to the Government. The Whigs were faced at the end of the session with a coalition of parties which was capable not only of defeating them but of forming an alternative Government.

The impediments to any effective concert among the opposition parties sprang fundamentally from the Corn-Law question. As long as the Protectionists kept the question alive, they could not enter into any permanent arrangement with either the Peelites or the Radicals. The Corn Laws had brought the Whigs into office in 1846 and for the next four years they kept them in power. In July 1849 Peel wrote to Graham that the Government's chief safeguard would be "the declared resolution of the Protectionists to restore protection as a principle". If the Government adhered to free trade, Peel continued, and maintained "that the test of party difference is now Protection or no Protection", they would be able to remain in office.⁵

At the beginning of the new session the corn laws still appeared to be the chief issue. The agricultural panic had not abated and the price of corn continued to fall. Charles Wood wrote to Clarendon in

⁵ Parker, Peel III, 523.

December 1849:

"The agricultural mind is in a state of prodigious excitement; full of fight & anxious for anything to produce a dissolution. I have great confidence nevertheless in the general state of prosperity & that they will fail in any attack".⁴

Outside Parliament the Protectionist agitation had made considerable headway and Clarendon predicted that in the event of an immediate dissolution Ireland would return ninety Protectionists.⁵ Even within Whig circles there was evidence of a reaction against free trade.⁶ Bedford and Lansdowne both urged Russell to do something about agricultural distress.⁷ Russell, however, was determined to stand by the settlement of 1846; beyond noticing the depressed condition of agriculture in the speech from the throne no step was taken to conciliate the Protectionists.⁸ In fact, Russell welcomed the opportunity to open the session with a debate on Protection and selected Charles Villiers to move the address in answer to the speech from the throne. This move was bound to provoke a Protectionist demonstration. The Duke of Rutland wrote, according to Bedford,

" 'Everyone is talking of the selection by the Govt. of a mover of the

4 Wood to Clarendon, December 11, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 5 b.
5 Wood to Peel, December 19, 1849, Parker, Peel, III, 527.
6 Disraeli to Lady Londonderry, April 20, 1850, Monypenny & Buckle, Disraeli, III, 248.
Bedford to Clarendon, January 5, 1850, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 7 c.
7 Lansdowne to Russell, November 19, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/8 part 1.
"I believe your brother considers me as his representative in the cab't & he has written to me within these few days urging the importance of doing something that will give satisfaction to landed proprietors & he has formerly spoken to you on the subject".
8 Russell to Bedford, December 18, 1849 & Russell to a correspondent, December 31, 1849, Gooch, Russell, I, 197-200.
Hansard, 3rd series, CVIII, 4.

address in the H. of Coms as throwing down the gauntlet at Protect'ts and unmistakably shewing that they must expect no mercy' ".⁹ Bedford, himself doubted the wisdom of this move and complained to Clarendon:

"...I am against making the landed interest more angry and hostile than they already are -- I am for peace with them so far as it can be carried consistently with public measures & right policy -- In the present excited state this move with respect to your brother wd be considered as a declaration of war".¹⁰

In both Houses protectionist amendments to the address were defeated by comfortable majorities.¹¹ The general opinion seems to have been that the Government's position was secure. Lord Clarendon wrote on February 2, 1850:

"I felt pretty sure the Protect'ts wd not shirk an amend't & if they had been payed to serve the Govt. & advance the cause of free trade theyd not have taken a better course for after being defeated in a pitched battle of their own seeking they can't carry on a guerrilla warfare thro' the session".¹²

Lord Campbell wrote in the same sense, "Our Government is now identified with the Free Trade cause, and any combination of the Protectionists with the Radicals to turn us out is rendered very difficult".¹³

The debate on the address, however, did not reflect the intentions of either Stanley or Disraeli for the coming session. Lord Londonderry told Graham that the amendments had been adopted to satisfy

⁹ Bedford to Clarendon, January 15, 1850, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland, 7 c.

¹⁰ Bedford to Clarendon, January 5, 1850, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 c.

¹¹ Hansard, 3rd series, CVIII, 79-82, 253-57.

¹² Clarendon to Bedford, February 20, 1850, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 c.

¹³ Hardcastle, Campbell, II, 269.

the farmers.¹⁴ In fact, both Stanley and Disraeli were secretly arranging to repudiate protection once and for all.¹⁵ In supporting the amendment in the House of Lords, Stanley declared that he had no desire to abrogate the 1846 settlement immediately and regarded it as an experiment which deserved a fair trial. Disraeli spoke in the same vein.¹⁶ He wished, Russell wrote, "to give up protection without the manliness of saying so".¹⁷ Neither had given any encouragement to the agricultural agitation outside of Parliament. This had been largely carried on under the leadership of George Frederick Young and the Protection Society. Disraeli, although Stanley was reluctant to go to the same lengths, did everything in his power to dissociate Young's movement from the Protectionist party.¹⁸ The agitation prevented the Protectionists from providing, in Disraeli's words, "a golden bridge to the many who are prepared to join us, if we do not unnecessarily wound their self-love"¹⁹ In January Disraeli wrote to Stanley:

"The injurious effects of this movement are... not inconsiderable. It has forced us into an extreme position when circumstances

¹⁴ Parker, Graham, II, 95.

¹⁵ Stanley was less precipitate than Disraeli in this matter and while gradually retreating from protection as a policy, he repeatedly stated his adherence to the principle. Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 212-33.

¹⁶ Hansard, 3rd series, CVIII, 71, 229-30.

¹⁷ Russell to Clarendon, February 5, 1850, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 b.

¹⁸ Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 212-33.

¹⁹ Ibid. III, 228.

counselled a very moderate one. It has terribly cut away golden bridges... I don't say that our friend Mr. Young has been ineffective. He has done a good deal, but what he has done he had better not have done. He has gained the trick by trumping his partner's best card".²⁰

The keystone of Disraeli's "golden bridge" was a policy of agricultural relief. As a substitute for protection he proposed to transfer the poor rates, which fell chiefly on land and agriculture, to the consolidated fund. He justified this not simply as a measure of compensation to the farmers for the loss of protection, but as an extension of the free-trade system. Land, he argued, was a species of raw material like coal and cotton and should not be subjected to inordinate taxation.²¹ But primarily the scheme was intended to serve as a means of reconciling the Peelites and the other free-trade members of the opposition. In February Disraeli approached Graham through Lord Londonderry. Disraeli, according to Londonderry, "had long seen that Protection was out of the question, and he was looking to practical measures". Referring to the plan of agricultural relief, Londonderry continued, "It was his [Disraeli's] intention so to shape his motion that he thought Peel's friends would not object to it. It was his utmost desire now to conciliate them..."²² While Graham did not respond to this overture, Disraeli's scheme was taken up by a number of Peelites, including Gladstone and Sir Frederick Thesiger.

²⁰ Ibid. III, 259.

²¹ Ibid. III, 254-5.

²² Parker, Graham, II, 95-6.

When it was introduced as a formal motion at the end of February, it received 252 votes against 273 for the Government.²⁵ Lord Grey wrote:

"I was not a little surprised to find... that D'Israeli's mot'n had been only rejected by a majority of 21... though the Irish in general behaved very well -- Almost the whole of Peel's party voted against the mot'n -- many of our best friends went away (as Ld H. Vane, Wrightson & c.) & some voted against us -- This is a very serious affair. ²⁴

According to J. Young, the Peelite whip, thirty-five of Peel's party voted with Disraeli and only twenty-six with Peel and Graham in support of the Government.²⁵ After a conversation with Peel and Graham, Clarendon wrote to the Duke of Bedford, "...they are much alarmed at the vote ... wch does not seem the result of pre-arrangement between Gladstone & the Protect'ts, but there is doubtless an understanding between them now. It is very serious..."²⁶

There is no evidence at this point of a direct understanding between Gladstone and Disraeli, but the debate had precipitated a schism within the Peelite party and a drift to the Protectionists. J. Young warned Peel that many members were dissatisfied with his policy of continually supporting the Whigs.²⁷ In a letter to his wife Gladstone implied that he no longer recognized Peel as his

²⁵ Hansard, 3rd series, CVIII, 1272-75.

²⁴ Grey Diaries, February 21, 1850, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C 5/15.

²⁵ Parker, Peel, III, 533.

²⁶ Clarendon to Bedford, February 23, 1850, Bodleian Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 d.

²⁷ Parker, Peel, III, 533.

leader and looked forward to the formation of a new party under the leadership of Lincoln or Herbert.²⁸ On March 1, two more official Peelites, Goulburn and Sir George Clerk, joined Gladstone in a vote with the Protectionists in opposition to a Government bill to extend the Irish franchise.²⁹ A few days later Bedford wrote:

"Peel's old supporters appear to be leaving him very fast. The main object of the Protect'its is now a vigilant endeavour to recruit their ranks with deserters from his camp. In this they are indefatigable, & not altogether unsuccessful. A few waiters on Providence have already joined them -- Even Goulburn (et tu Brute) & Clerk are acting independently".³⁰

In Clarendon's opinion, the Peelites asked no better than to have a bridge made for them to the Protectionists. "...The manner in wch Thesiger has lately come forth to make an opposition about everything", Clarendon wrote, "proves that Peel's friends are now bidding for office without him".³¹

During the month of April the Government was subjected to a series of minor but nevertheless embarrassing reverses. The budget was badly mauled: the window tax escaped defeat by only three votes; and the stamp duties, which Wood had slightly increased, were defeated by twenty-nine votes.³² On the tenth a Government measure affecting the county courts was thrown out by seventy-seven votes, and on May 2

²⁸ Morely, Gladstone, I, 262-63.

²⁹ Hansard, 3rd series, CIX, 255 & 289.

³⁰ Bedford to Clarendon, March 6, 1850, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 7 c.

³¹ Clarendon to Bedford, March 10, 1850, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 21 d.

³² Hansard, 3rd series, CX, 99-100, 340-42.

an amendment was carried against the Government by a majority of nineteen.⁵³ None of these reverses was important by itself. Most of them were the result of casual combinations between the Radicals and the Protectionists, but they had a demoralizing effect on the Government. "...The H. of C.", Wood wrote, "goes on in such a way that there is no comfort in one's life.... It really is disheartening to a degree that is painful".⁵⁴ Disraeli was correspondingly elated: "The Government are very shaky", he wrote to Lady Londonderry, "and if we could only agree among ourselves, could be extinguished in eight-and-forty hours..."⁵⁵ And later to his sister, he wrote, "The Whigs could be turned out in a week if we were ready".⁵⁶

Early in May the rapprochement between the Peelites and the Protectionists received a temporary set-back. Grantley Berkeley, a county Whig, brought forward a motion in favour of protection, which forced the leading Protectionists and the Peelites to vote on opposite sides.⁵⁷ The motion was defeated by 114 votes. Bedford wrote, "John is much pleased with the division... It is amusing to think that the well planned tactics of Stanley & Israel have been spoilt by the

⁵³ Ibid. 3rd series, CX, 152, 1106-8.

⁵⁴ Wood to Clarendon, May 3, 1850, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland, 3 b.

⁵⁵ Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 246.

⁵⁶ Ibid. III, 247.

⁵⁷ Hansard, 3rd series, CXI, 19-97.

move of a [one word illegible] from our own camp".³⁸ It was difficult for Disraeli to throw over protection as quickly as he would have wished without destroying the Protectionist party. It was equally difficult for the Peelites to co-operate fully with Disraeli as long as the latter was committed to Protection as an unattainable ideal. But in spite of the vote on Berkeley's motion, protection was a dead issue, serving only as the party cry and not as the programme of the Protectionist party. The "golden bridge" had been opened and it appeared in 1850 that many members of the Peelite party were prepared to cross it.

At the same time as the Government was in danger of being out-flanked on the free-trade question, the opposition to Lord Grey and his colonial policy was renewed. "The H. of Commons", Greville wrote, "swarms with his bitter enemies, and he commands very few friends".³⁹ In January The Society for the Reform of Colonial Government was organized by a number of Grey's opponents with the object of advancing the cause of colonial autonomy. The membership of the society included men from every section of the opposition: Peelites like Lord Lyttelton; Protectionists like C.B. Adderley, Stafford O'Brien, and Spencer Walpole; and Radicals like Molesworth and Cobden.⁴⁰ Although Gladstone refused to take part in an extra-Parliamentary movement, he was connected with the society through his brother-in-law, Lord

³⁸ Bedford to Clarendon, May 8, 1850, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 c.

³⁹ Greville, VI, 198.

⁴⁰ Morrell, British Colonial Policy in the Age of Peel and Russell, 488-89.

Lyttelton, and was known to be in sympathy with its aims.⁴¹ Disraeli, on the other hand, had little respect either for its aims or its members and dubbed it the "Colonial Diletante Society".⁴² But he saw in it, nevertheless, a possible ally for an attack on the Government. On December 17, he wrote to Stanley:

"...there is no doubt that these Colonial Reformers have organised their force, and are determined to be troublesome to the Government. It is, therefore, of importance that we should decide upon the course to be taken by the party.... To obtain our support, Molesworth and Co. would modify their motions and movements a good deal, and it is not impossible that a deadly blow might be struck in this district of the Administration."⁴³

After ascertaining that the Society was prepared to co-operate with the Protectionists, Disraeli wrote again to Stanley on December 28:

"Now it appears to me... that it would be possible to arrange a motion on the part of the Colonial Reformers that our party as a party, might support, provided they held their tongues as much as possible, while myself, or someone else, might make a speech which, while it justified our voting for the motion, should, at the same time, completely develop our own Colonial system..."⁴⁴

Though Stanley agreed to this arrangement, no colonial-reform motion, as such, was proposed during the session.⁴⁵ Instead, the opposition was focused on Lord Grey's bill to establish governments for the colonies of South Australia and Van Diemen's Land. When the

⁴¹ Knaplund, Gladstone and Britain's Imperial Policy, 56-65.

⁴² Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 234-35.

⁴³ Ibid. III, 234.

⁴⁴ Ibid. III, 236.

⁴⁵ Stanley to Disraeli, January 8, 1850, Hughenden, box XII, 14th Earl of Derby.

bill was introduced into the Commons in February, it was severely criticized on the grounds that the Government had not consulted the colonists beforehand and that it proposed to set up in each colony a nominated second chamber.⁴⁶ Graham told Greville that the "Government would infallibly be beat".⁴⁷ Both Grey and Russell shared Graham's anxiety and the second reading was postponed.⁴⁸ In the subsequent stages of the bill, the opposition did not in fact obtain more than 150 votes in any division, and the Government managed to pass the bill with a comfortable majority. For the Government, however, the combination in these divisions of the colonial-reform movement with Gladstone, Herbert, and Thesiger, on the one hand, and Disraeli and Beresford on the other, was ominous.⁴⁹

If the movement failed to upset the Government or even to alter its colonial policy, it did do serious harm to Lord Grey's influence in Parliament and in the Government. In Disraeli's opinion, he was "open to all attack".⁵⁰ Bedford wrote: "It will be impossible for him, even if he weathers this session, to go on another, such a source of weakness as he is to the Govt. and affording so many [one word illegible] of attack from all quarters!"⁵¹ Russell had written to

⁴⁶ Hansard, 3rd series, CVIII, 976-1021.

⁴⁷ Greville, VI, 207.

⁴⁸ Grey Diaries, February 23, 1850, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C 3/15.

⁴⁹ Hansard, 3rd series, CX, 618-21, 1233-34, 1193-94, 1423-26.
Roebuck to his wife, April 19, 1850, Leader, Roebuck, 237.

⁵⁰ Monypenney and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 236.

⁵¹ Bedford to Clarendon, March 17, 1850, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 c.

him in the previous September, "...as a friend, I am not sure that it is for your credit to remain in office where such a host of enmity is raised up against you".⁵² At the beginning of the year, according to Bedford, Grey had offered to resign, but was persuaded to remain until the end of the session. "It was", wrote Bedford, "a generous consideration for Grey himself that induced John to do this, because he thought it wd be less injurious to his reputation than to retire... while the run was so strong against him".⁵³ In March Russell appears to have had second thoughts and considered transferring Grey either to Ireland or to the Privy Seal.⁵⁴ Although Grey managed to hold on to the Colonial Office until the break-up of the Government in 1852, he remained only on sufferance.

Lord Grey had come into office as the champion of the liberal element in the Whig party. He constantly supported the extension of free trade and wished to strengthen the liberal forces within the cabinet by the exclusion of Palmerston and the addition of the junior Peelites. During the sessions of 1849 and 1850, however, he abandoned this policy and began to move closer to Palmerston and the Protectionist sympathizers within the party. Grey had come to believe that much of his unpopularity was due to the Peelites. In August 1849 he wrote

⁵² Russell to Lord Grey, September 24, 1849, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 119, file 4.

⁵³ Bedford to Clarendon, March 22, 1850, Ms.Clar. Ireland 7 c.

⁵⁴ Bedford to Clarendon, March 17, 1850, Ms.Clar. Ireland 7 c. Victoria, Letters, II, 281.

to Russell:

"I agree very much in your views as to the true interests of this country in maintaining the colonies & it is on that account that I am alarmed by perceiving so strong a leaning on the part not only of Lincoln & Gladstone but of Peel and Graham to encourage the popular object'n to their expense -- I think you undervalue the strength of the party which not choosing openly to [one word illegible] the colonies is yet prepared to push reduction of expenditure to an extent which wd involve it".⁵⁵

At the time of the Don Pacifico crisis he declared, according to Hobhouse, "that he thought Peel a most dangerous minister & he could never support that man".⁵⁶ During the crisis, moreover, he stood squarely behind Palmerston's policy towards Greece and the Great Powers.⁵⁷ A year later he circulated a memorandum in the cabinet in favour of a junction between the Whigs and the Protectionists and stressed, in his own words, "the imutility of a junct'n (even if it cd be honourably effected) with the Peel party".⁵⁸

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- ⁵⁵ Lord Grey to Russell, August 23, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/8 part 1.
⁵⁶ Broughton Diaries, June 18, 1850, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,754.
⁵⁷ Broughton Diaries, May 27 and June 18, 1850, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,754.
⁵⁸ Grey Diaries, March 2, 1851, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/15. Appendix I.

In spite of the growing opposition to Lord Grey, the real crisis of the session was precipitated by Palmerston. The latter, like Grey, provided the Peelites, the Protectionists and the Radicals with an issue on which they could mobilize for a joint attack against the Government. In the long run, however, Palmerston was to prove an even greater embarrassment than Grey to the Whigs. His wilful and high-handed management of foreign policy not only aroused wide-spread anxiety in Parliament but had become a constant source of friction between Russell and the court. By the beginning of the session, the Queen had come to regard Palmerston as an object of almost personal hatred.⁵⁹ Early in the previous session, she told Bedford of her wish to have Palmerston transferred to Ireland and Clarendon put in charge of the Foreign Office.⁶⁰ The repeated warnings and complaints of the Queen and Prince Albert to Russell made little or no impression on Palmerston's conduct. It was evident that Russell was either unwilling or unable to control his colleague and to enforce any form of supervision on the administration of foreign affairs. The Duke of Bedford was convinced that the court was gradually turning to the Peelites for advice and support. In February 1849, he wrote to Clarendon, "I wish I could think the Queen & the Prince were not in the habit of talking to Aberdeen on foreign affairs & about Palmerston -- or that he avoids the subject..."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Memorandum by Prince Albert, March 3, 1850, Victoria, Letters, II, 279-80.

⁶⁰ Bedford to Clarendon, January 29, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 7 b.

⁶¹ Bedford to Clarendon, February 6, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 7 b.

And again, in May, he told Clarendon:

"I must add in strict confidence, what I wd not tell even to John, viz. that I heard from undoubted authority a curious instance of the unreserved communication that takes place between the court & Peel on this subject. I wd not tell John because it wd annoy & hurt him, but I did think it right to name it to Ld Lansdowne only with the same confidence that I tell you --"62

Whether or not Bedford's particular suspicions were justified, the Queen and the Prince were beginning to circumvent Russell and take other members of the Cabinet into their confidence on the subject of Palmerston's insubordination. In the Autumn of 1849, the Prince approached Lord Grey to secure his support in amending one of Palmerston's despatches. "I was placed", wrote Grey, "in a somewhat awkward posit'n by what the prince said to me upon this subject & afterwards upon foreign policy generally..."⁶³ In February of the next year the Prince discussed the matter with Clarendon. The latter wrote to Bedford:

"The Prince in desiring me to call upon him had evidently a settled purpose wch was to deposit with me all his own & the Queen's complaints about Palm'n & to tell me that the manner in wch Ld J. invariably defended his colleague wch they knew he disapproved impaired the Q's confidence in Ld J. & placed a kind of barrier between her & him upon the subjects wch to her were of primary importance. I suppose they thought I was a kind of outlying deer who might be trusted with such matters & I might have tact enough to turn this to useful acc't".⁶⁴

Both Clarendon and Grey reported their conversations with the Prince to Russell, and there is no reason to suspect that either of them and

⁶² Bedford to Clarendon, May 31, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 7 b.

⁶³ Lord Grey to Russell, September 12, 1849, P.R.O. 30/22/8 part 1.

⁶⁴ Clarendon to Bedford, February 27, 1850, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 21 b.

the court were engaged in an intrigue against Palmerston. Nevertheless, the fact that the Prince had singled out and confided in the two members of the Government who were reputed to be enemies of Palmerston was ominous.

Although Russell usually upheld Palmerston at court, he appreciated the force of the Queen's complaints. Indeed, in the matter of despatches Palmerston tended to neglect not only the Queen but the Prime Minister as well. In the autumn of 1848 Russell wrote to Palmerston:

"That the Queen is constantly suffering under uneasiness is too true, but I own I cannot say it is always groundless. It is surely right that a person speaking in the name of her Majesty's Government should in important affairs submit his despatches to the Queen and her Government. This necessary preliminary you too often forget... I confess I feel some of the same uneasiness..."⁶⁵

Palmerston's behaviour presented a constant problem for Russell at court, in the Cabinet and in Parliament; there is little doubt that he would have been happy to see Palmerston transferred to another department. In fact, it was Russell, who first suggested the possibility to the Queen on the occasion of the Sicilian-guns dispute.⁶⁶ Russell hesitated, however, to run the risk of alienating Palmerston, who in 1845 had refused to waive his claims to the Foreign Office even to facilitate the formation of a Whig government. Moreover, if Palmerston had made many enemies in Parliament, he still enjoyed considerable personal support. His foreign policy was popular among

⁶⁵ Walpole, Russell, II, 47.

⁶⁶ Victoria, Letters, II, 250-51.

a majority of the Radicals, and the Protectionists, particularly those in the House of Commons, had been suspiciously tolerant and patient in the face of his repeated excesses. Russell feared that if Palmerston were forced to resign the Foreign Office and refused to remain in the Government, he would drift into the opposition camp. According to Prince Albert, Lord John warned the Queen that Palmerston:

"...was very popular with the Radical part of the House of Commons as well as with the Protectionist, so that both would be ready to receive him as their Leader; he (Lord John) was therefore anxious to do nothing which could hurt Lord Palmerston's feelings, nor to bring about a disruption of the Whig Party, which at this moment of Party confusion was the only one which still held together".⁶⁷

Lord Clarendon was particularly alarmed at the danger of Palmerston's accepting the leadership of the Radicals. In July 1850, he wrote to Bedford:

"The more I think of our recent conversations the more I am impressed with the difficulty of effecting any change in the F.O. & I cannot avoid expressing to you my earnest hope that no attempt of the kind will be made without a reasonable prospect of its succeeding....

"Now it must be borne in mind that P's whole ambition is centred in the F.O. & that on two occasions he has resolutely refused to take any other office -- Ld Melbourne & Ld John on the formation of their Govts. both thought it desirable that he should not return to the F.O. but he would not listen to their requests... It is impossible to deny that the radical party in England make a great distinction between P. & his colleagues, they hope more from him than from them, & they look to him as the man who will one day lead the democratic movement wch they are endeavouring to prepare -- They wd gladly therefore withdraw their support from the Govt. & form a compact party under P's guidance if they had the pretext of saying that he had been sacrificed to the antipathy of the Court & the intrigues of foreign Govt....

"Whether he wd avail himself of such support or be content to retire into comparative obscurity it is impossible to say

⁶⁷ Ibid. II, 279.

beforehand, but we know how much P's public conduct is influenced by his personal feelings, we know that in self-confidence & daring energy he has no equal & that he never yet rested quietly under a sense of supposed injury to himself. I think there can be little doubt of the course he would pursue & as little of the embarrassment to the crown & the injury to the Govt. wch it wd occasion".⁶⁸

Russell, however, found it increasingly difficult to defend Palmerston's conduct and meet the complaints of the court. Early in the session Palmerston's insubordination in the Don Pacifico question forced his hand. Palmerston had taken up the claims for damages of two British subjects against the Greek Government; after failing to obtain reparations in Athens, he ordered the Mediterranean fleet under Admiral Parker to blockade the Piraeus and seize Greek shipping. Russell had consented to this with considerable reluctance. "I think", he wrote to Palmerston on January 12, "the complaint is hardly worth the interposition of the British Lion".⁶⁹ His misgivings were soon justified: the Russian Government came to the aid of the Greeks and lodged a protest in London. To avoid further complications with the Russians the Cabinet suspended the blockade and submitted their demands to the French Minister in Athens for mediation. Although Palmerston did not openly resist this move, his policy seems to have been designed to ensure the failure of the French mediation. The first indication of this occurred in February, when he ignored the resolution of the Cabinet to authorize the British minister in Athens to modify the amount of the Don Pacifico claims. In spite of the decision of

⁶⁸ Clarendon to Bedford, July 28, 1850, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 e.

⁶⁹ Walpole, Russell, II, 56.

the Cabinet, which was supported by the Queen, his despatch to Athens contained no reference to the possibility of a compromise with the Greek Government. Russell wrote on February 18:

"Here... is a despatch gone on an important subject which is not in conformity with the Queen's opinion, or mine or that of the Cabinet. This is a serious deviation from the usual and the right course on such subjects. It can only be, in part, repaired by your preparing a draft immediately to go by the earliest opportunity".⁷⁰

Palmerston complied with Russell's orders and excused the omission on the grounds that the departure of the courier for Athens had not left him sufficient time to amend the original despatch.⁷¹ But before three months had passed the negotiations broke down and the blockade was resumed. The French Government suspecting that Palmerston had not accepted their mediation in good faith recalled their ambassador from London in protest. The Queen wrote to Russell on May 15:

"We are not surprised...that Lord Palmerston's mode of doing business should not be borne by a susceptible French Government, with the same good humour and forbearance as by his colleagues".⁷²

Three days later Prince Albert wrote to Russell in a threatening vein, hinting at the possibility of the Queen's taking action herself:

"We cannot reproach ourselves with having neglected warning and entreaties, but the Queen may feel that her duty demands her not to be content with mere warning without any effect, and that for the sake of one man the welfare of the country must not be exposed..."⁷³

⁷⁰ Ibid. II, 58.

⁷¹ Ibid. II, 58-9.

⁷² Ibid. II, 59.

⁷³ Victoria, Letters, II, 288.

Before this last incident Russell had already decided on removing Palmerston from the Foreign Office and had discussed a plan with the Queen and Prince Albert early in March. His original intention was to offer Palmerston at the end of the session the leadership of the House of Commons combined with the Home Office. He proposed himself to go to the House of Lords and take over the leadership there from Lord Lansdowne. Lord Minto would be transferred to the Foreign Office, Lord Grey to the Privy Seal, and Sir George Grey to the Colonial Office.⁷⁴ This arrangement possessed the advantage of settling several problems at the same time. During the previous session Lord Lansdowne because of his advanced age had asked to be relieved of the leadership in the Lords. Russell was troubled at the prospect of replacing him: neither Minto nor Clarendon were debaters; Clanricarde lacked sufficient weight and authority; and Lord Grey's reputation had been damaged by the failure of his colonial policy. The Duke of Bedford believed that in any event Russell would be compelled to go to the Lords on Lansdowne's retirement as leader.⁷⁵ Also, the plan provided for Lord Grey an opportunity to retire from the Colonial Office. But above all else, it promised to supply a means of inducing

⁷⁴ Ibid. II, 279-82.

⁷⁵ Bedford wrote to Clarendon on March 5, 1850:

"Grey's succeeding him [Lansdowne] wd be totally out of the question -- I suppose John wd go to the H. of Lds himself -- There is one man from your side of the water [Clanricarde] who is doing us no good there or in the Cabinet".

Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 c.

Palmerston to relinquish the Foreign Office. He had been sounded by Russell and, according to the latter, was willing to accept the arrangement.

The Queen and the Prince, however, received the plan with marked lack of enthusiasm. The proposal to give the Foreign Office to Lord Minto was rejected outright and Russell was urged to give the post to Lord Clarendon, or, failing that, to take it himself. The Prince, furthermore, objected to giving Palmerston the leadership of the Commons as "a serious risk". If the Whigs went into opposition and Palmerston took an independent line, he "might so easily force himself back into office as Prime Minister".⁷⁶ After the rupture with France in May, Russell deferred to the Prince's objections and abandoned his intention of offering Palmerston the lead. Instead, it was settled that at the end of the session Palmerston would be asked to take the Colonial Office and in the event of Russell's going to the Lords the lead in the Commons would be given to Sir George Grey.⁷⁷

It was precisely this arrangement, which Palmerston had refused in November 1845 and the prospects of his accepting it at the end of the session, Russell feared, were slight. When the Prince had first suggested it in March, Russell replied, according to the former:

"...that he would likewise prefer this arrangement, but considered it rendered impossible from its having been the very thing Lord Grey had proposed in 1845, and upon which the attempt to form a Whig Government at that time had broken down, Lord Palmerston

⁷⁶ Victoria, Letters, II, 281.

⁷⁷ Ibid. II, 289.

Walpole, Russell, II, 60-1.

having refused to enter the Cabinet on those terms".⁷⁸ Russell's volte-face two months later may have been caused by the opposition of the court. Lord Lansdowne, who originally favoured giving Palmerston the lead, appears to have urged Russell to drop the proposal.⁷⁹ But, even so, Russell must have recognized that by forcing Palmerston to give up the Foreign Office in exchange for the Colonial Office, he would be inviting trouble, and Palmerston in all likelihood would resign from the Government. His decision to comply with the Queen's terms may have been influenced to a large extent by the Government's position in Parliament. During April and the first weeks of May the Government had suffered a number of defeats on minor questions in the Commons. The combination of the Peelites and Protectionists on agricultural relief and colonial policy had assumed a particularly dangerous character. In a letter to Prince Albert written on May 18th Russell indicated that it was not impossible that the Government would be forced to resign in the course of the session.⁸⁰ Two days later he told the Queen that, "...there were some questions pending in Parliament which might make ... resignation necessary."⁸¹ It may very well have been, then, that Russell consented to this arrangement in the expectation that the Government would not survive the session and that

⁷⁸ Victoria, Letters, II, 281.

⁷⁹ Ibid. II, 289.

⁸⁰ Ibid. II, 288.

⁸¹ Walpole, Russell, II, 60.

he would not be obliged to fulfil his promise to the Queen.

Moreover, the Don Pacifico crisis itself drastically increased the odds against the Government. Its chief significance lay not merely in forcing Russell to submit to the terms of the court, but in accelerating the threatened fusion between the Peelites and the Protectionists. In spite of the shifts and manoeuvres of Disraeli on the one hand and the junior Peelites on the other, both Peel and Graham had refused to lend their support to the re-unification of the Conservative party. In April, Lord Aberdeen repeatedly pressed them to modify their policy of giving the Government general support, to the extent of voicing their private fears and misgivings about Palmerston.⁸² The Duke of Bedford suspected that Peel was biding his time until an opportunity occurred which would enable him to attack Palmerston without destroying the Government. In the previous session Bedford wrote to Clarendon:

"...Peel has been longing to engage in the assault [against Palmerston] to any extent short of turning out the Govt -- but that is his difficulty -- He wd make a strong speech of reprobation but not join in a vote of censure....By that course he thinks he might attain these objects--

"1. A declaration of his real feelings & sentiments with respect to Palmerston, which he wd be glad of an opportunity to manifest.

"2. The chance of damaging Palm. so far to lead to his removal from the Foreign Office, by which he shld greatly please the Court.

"3. The opportunity that wd give, after the support of his party to the Navigation bill, of getting in his wedge & opening the door for some of his late followers".⁸³

⁸² Parker, Peel, III, 535-36, 537-38, 539-40.

⁸³ Bedford to Clarendon, May 31, 1849, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 c.

In fact, Peel and Graham both dismissed Aberdeen's recommendation.⁸⁴ Graham wrote: "It is a choice of dangers and of evils, and I am disposed to think that Palmerston and his foreign policy are less to be dreaded than Stanley and a new Corn Law!" Palmerston was so closely identified with the Government that a successful attack on the former would inevitably destroy the latter. According to Graham, "...no one who is not prepared to incur the evils of a ministerial crisis can safely venture on a home thrust at the Foreign Secretary".⁸⁵ The Don Pacifico crisis, however, provided Lord Aberdeen with the means of leading Peel and Graham, in spite of their obvious reluctance, into an open combination with the Protectionists against Palmerston's foreign policy.

In June, Aberdeen joined forces with Stanley in the Lords and a motion was tabled censuring the Government's policy in Greece. Graham informed Greville, "that a negotiation was evidently going on between Stanley and Aberdeen, and that the latter was to support some of Stanley's domestic questions, and in return Stanley would fight vigorously the foreign policy". Greville commented in his diary, "I did not pay much attention to this, for Graham is always dreaming of this connexion and its results".⁸⁶ It is improbable that either Stanley or Aberdeen had committed himself to such a specific contract, but there

⁸⁴ Parker, Peel, III, 535-59.

⁸⁵ Ibid. III, 536.

⁸⁶ Greville, VI, 224.

is no doubt that both were working in close and active concert over the motion of censure.⁸⁷ When the division took place on June 17, Aberdeen succeeded in mustering almost the full strength of the Peelite party in the House of Lords and the Government was defeated by a majority of thirty-seven votes.⁸⁸ "Every one of the 'Peelite' peers who was present", wrote Lord Grey, "voted against us including Ashburton, Wharncliffe, Harrowby & c. --St. Germans, Hardinge-- I ds Seaton & Gough did not vote at all..."⁸⁹

Roebuck, who attended the debate, observed Graham and the younger Peelites seated together in the gallery and "all excited". "This proved", Roebuck inferred, "that the Peelite party were no longer willing to support the Government".⁹⁰ At what stage of the crisis Peel and Graham threw in their lot with Aberdeen, and for what reasons, it is impossible to determine. Peel's death and the eruption of the Papal Aggression crisis must have confused, even for contemporaries, the party implications of the Don Pacifico debate. Peel may have simply been exasperated by Palmerston and have felt that he had no alternative, or he may have been reluctant to break with the majority of his followers on a matter of such importance. He probably knew that by joining the opposition to Palmerston in the Commons he exposed

⁸⁷ Malmesbury, Memoirs, I, 262.

⁸⁸ Hansard, 3rd series, CXI, 1401-04.

⁸⁹ Grey Diaries, June 18, 1850, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/15.

⁹⁰ Leader, Roebuck, 240.

the Government to the danger of defeat and himself to the responsibility for forming another administration. It is possible that Peel feared that if he held himself aloof from the combination against Palmerston and the Government were defeated, the younger Peelites would drift into the Protectionist party. Gladstone, Lincoln and Herbert had given every indication in the past of preferring a Protectionist to a Whig alliance. Once having turned out the Whigs in combination with the Protectionists, it would be difficult for them to refuse office in a Protectionist Government.⁹¹ Peel's participation in the debate, however, would place a barrier in the way of their joining Stanley. At least, it would supply the junior Peelites with a decent pretext for rejecting any overtures from the Protectionists, since Peel could not enter a Protectionist administration. There is some evidence that at this point Peel had not entirely excluded the

⁹¹ Several years after the debate Disraeli wrote as if he had expected a coalition between the Peelites and the Protectionists if the Government had been defeated:

"Lord Aberdeen, of course would have been Secretary for Foreign Affairs. There was all reasonable room for the other Peelites, for Lord Derby had at that moment no men with pretensions to Cabinet Office, except old Herries and myself. Indeed, his difficulty would have been to have had sufficient friends of his own in his own Cabinet; and perhaps Peel, or at any rate the Peelites, saw all this, and looked upon him only as a stopgap.

"The great difficulty would have been the Leadership of the House of Commons....There was no confidential intimacy at that time between Lord Derby and myself, and I don't think he would have much hesitated in suggesting a Peelite, one of his old and even recent colleagues, as Leader, if I consented and the party generally...I have always thought that old Gouldburn was the man whom Sir Robert Peel and Lord Derby ... would have brought forward, and furbished up like an old piece of dusty furniture, under whom we might have all served without any great outrage of personal feelings. But I could never penetrate this.." Morypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 259-60.

possibility of returning to office himself, presumably as the head or one of the members of a Whig-Peelite coalition. Shortly before his death he told Cardwell of his determination to do anything to prevent the restoration of the Corn Laws.⁹² By taking a leading part in the debate and re-asserting his leadership over the Peelites, he may have intended to facilitate the formation of a liberal Government to succeed the Whigs in the event of their defeat.

The debate in the House of Commons, which followed the Government's defeat in the Lords, turned on a resolution moved by Roebuck, giving general support to Palmerston's policy.⁹³ Originally the Cabinet had intended to ignore the vote in the Lords; fearing the outcome of a division in the Commons, they decided to wait for the opposition to make the first move. Lansdowne, however, emphatically opposed the decision of the Cabinet; in the course of the meeting on June 18, he declared: "...his position in the Lords had long been disagreeable & would be untenable under the vote of last night unless some counter move were made in the Commons".⁹⁴ The next day he wrote to Russell:

"It is manifest to me that it is impossible in the present temper of the H. of Lords & of Stanley who is their real leader [that] the Government cannot [sic] be satisfactorily carried on without some unequivocal proof of support from the Commons. Last night a very objectionable clause of Ld Westmeath's ...was carried by Stanley's vehemently supporting it... this alone would be of little consequence, but it is what will occur again & again, & makes the

⁹² Parker, Peel, III, 534.

⁹³ Hansard, 3rd series, CXII, 255.

⁹⁴ Broughton Diaries, June 18, 1850, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,754.

position of the Govern't & mine in so far as I represent it quite humiliating".⁹⁵

Russell finally agreed to take the initiative in eliciting a vote of confidence from the Commons and an arrangement was reached with Roebuck to provide an ostensibly independent motion in favour of the Government.⁹⁶

As in the Lords, the Peelites and Protectionists developed their attack in close co-operation. Gladstone stated in a memorandum written almost fifty years later that Peel wished to avoid direct collaboration with Disraeli.⁹⁷ Stanley and Aberdeen seem to have taken charge of the general direction of the debate; the following letter from Stanley to Disraeli illustrates the degree of concert that was achieved:

"I have just seen Lord Aberdeen, and have had a long conversation with him as to the probable course of the debate on Monday --
x Peel will certainly speak & strongly -- Graham still more so --
Gladstone will also be prepared -- so that the danger rather seems lest it should bear too much the character of a Peelite debate....

"...I apprehend Thesiger will desire immediately to follow Roebuck; but I suppose that if Anstey claims the right of moving his amendment, he may insist on doing so -- Have you any idea whether he can be induced to withdraw it.... In case he perseveres, I have requested Aberdeen to try to ascertain the feelings of

⁹⁵ Lansdowne to Russell, Wednesday 1850, P.R.O. 30/22/8 part 2.

⁹⁶ Leader, Roebuck, 240.
Hansard, 3rd series, CXII, 102-08.

⁹⁷ Morley, Gladstone, I, 273.

According to Disraeli, Peel discussed the debate with Forbes Mackenzie, the Protectionists Whip and a former Lord of the Treasury in Peel's Government. But the tone and content of the conversation does not suggest indirect concert between Peel and Disraeli. Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 259.

the Peelites as to the line to be taken of opposing it, or supporting it. I think the point immaterial, but very desirable that we should act together".⁹⁸

Although a few people like Hobhouse and Grey thought it was possible that the Government would be defeated,⁹⁹ the general expectation seems to have been that it would obtain a majority of around forty votes.¹⁰⁰ It actually obtained a majority of forty-six: 310 votes to 264. Tufnell reckoned that seventeen Conservatives voted with the Government and eight Liberals with the opposition.¹⁰¹ The eight, however, included Bright, Cobden, Hume and Molesworth.¹⁰² On the whole, it was a straight party-division, in which cross-voting played a minor part. If the result was decided by any single factor, it was by the abstentions. Excluding pairs, fifty-seven members were absent, the greater portion of which were Conservatives.¹⁰³ Gladstone blamed the defeat primarily on the abstention and cross-voting of the Peelite members.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, Disraeli wrote several years later the defeat "was caused by a section of the Tories, who saw through the affair, and looked upon it as a plot to bring the Peelites

⁹⁸ Stanley to Disraeli, June 22, 1850, Hughenden Papers, box XII, 14th Earl of Derby.

⁹⁹ Broughton Diaries, June 22, 1850, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,754.
Grey to Clarendon, June 21, 1850, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 81, file 3.

¹⁰⁰ Greville VI, 230.

¹⁰¹ Broughton Diaries, June 29, 1850, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,754.

¹⁰² Hansard, 3rd series, CXII, 742-43.

¹⁰³ Broughton Diaries, June 29, 1850, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,754.

¹⁰⁴ Morley, Gladstone, I, 276.

back, and put them at the head of the party, and acted accordingly".¹⁰⁵ But in the last analysis, since the margin of failure was so narrow and the importance of a relatively small number of abstentions so great, it is impossible to assign the cause of the minority exclusively to either the Peelites or the Protectionists.

Superficially the debate and the division represented a triumph for the Whigs. On the 29th of June, the day after the division, Lewis wrote to Clarendon in a spirit of exultation:

"The result of the debate & division is to shew the great strength & resources of the liberal party in the H. of Commons. We had a majority of nearly 50 over the combined forces of Peelites & Protectionists, assisted by a section of Radicals, with this combination too they were completely outspoken. We had by far the best of the debate.... The Peelites have been much battered & shattered in this debate: they will resent the attacks made upon them by men whom they will regard as set on by the govt.: but on the other hand they have been much damaged by these attacks; their value in the market has been lowered -- & the prestige as to the deadly effect of an alliance between them & the Protectionists is dissipated".¹⁰⁶

But the fact that virtually all the Peelites and Protectionists had combined along with their leaders in a major assault on the Government was more significant than the Government's escape by a margin of forty-six votes. Far from being strengthened by the division, the Government was actually weakened, and early in the next session it was compelled to resign office in particularly humiliating circumstances. With greater insight and realism than Lewis, Clarendon wrote:

"I suppose 46 will do & I hardly know whether to be glad or sorry

¹⁰⁵ Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 260.

¹⁰⁶ Lewis to Clarendon, June 29, 1850, Bodleian Ms. Clar. dep. c 550.

for tho' I rejoice that we have escaped the disgrace of defeat it is impossible to shut one's eyes to the difficulties that now beset the Govt. Both at home & abroad they must be nearly powerless & business will be brought to a dead [halt?] This is a state of things that will just suit Stanley. The Govt. will every day get weaker & the union of Peelites & Protect'its will every day become closer. It is a bad look out both for our party & for the public".¹⁰⁷

If the Don Pacifico crisis signified a triumph for anyone, it was for Palmerston. The Government's victory was widely attributed to his speech. "Tufnell told me", Greville wrote, "the enthusiasm he [Palmerston] had excited was immense, and he had decided many doubtful votes".¹⁰⁸ Whatever hopes Russell entertained that Palmerston could be persuaded to accept the Colonial Office, completely vanished in the Government's victory. At the end of the session Russell made a formal attempt to redeem his promise to the Queen, but Palmerston declined to co-operate, and the matter was dropped.¹⁰⁹ "The Peelites", wrote Lewis, "have nailed him to our mast, & he is henceforth an integral & necessary part of a whig cabinet".¹¹⁰

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¹⁰⁷ Clarendon to Lewis, June 30, 1850, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 532.

¹⁰⁸ Parker, Graham, II, 109.

¹⁰⁹ Victoria, Letters, II, 314.

¹¹⁰ Lewis to Clarendon, June 29, 1850, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 520.

CHAPTER VI

Early in July the fortunes and the prospects of the Government, which had already been shaken by the Don Pacifico crisis, were further damaged by the death of Sir Robert Peel. To some extent Peel had in the past contributed to the Government's difficulties: his presence in Parliament, his continued participation in politics offered to the free-trade members an alternative to the leadership of Russell and the Whigs; he represented a possibility which was eventually realized on the formation of the Aberdeen Government in 1852. Without Peel standing in the wings, any serious opposition on the part of the free-trade members to the Government would have played into the hands of the Protectionists. But for the Radicals, for the Peelites, and for discontented Whigs Peel served as a guarantee against the consequences of Russell's resignation. Whatever Peel's own plans and ambitions were, he figured as a factor in Russell's failure to win the regular support of the free-trade parties in Parliament. In 1845 Lord Grey had frustrated Russell's attempt to form a government in the expectation that he could come to terms with Peel. In 1848 Lord Jocelyn, a minor Peelite, justified his opposition to the sugar-bill on the grounds that Peel would be forced willy-nilly to form a government if Russell resigned.¹ The Radicals made no effort to

¹ Greville, VI, 85.

disguise their preference for Peel and their readiness to support a Peelite administration.² In the long run Peel's popularity with the free-trade members of Parliament represented a challenge to Russell's position as the head of a free-trade administration. Peel, nevertheless, had scrupulously refused to exploit this authority to his own advantage; excepting his opposition during the Don Pacifico debate, he had given Russell's government unstinting support; and his death appeared to deprive the Whigs of their most valuable ally in the House of Commons. Reporting a conversation with the Queen and Prince Albert, Hobhouse wrote:

"I confessed that the loss of Sir Robert Peel would add greatly to the difficulties not only of the present Govern't but of any ministers -- and added, wch I felt, that his conduct to Ld. J. Russell's govern't had been past all praise".³

Moreover, in the summer of 1850 the immediate danger confronting the Government was not the defection of their own free-trade supporters but the reunion of the Peelites and the Protectionists. The division on the Roebuck motion had followed party lines; and with a handful of exceptions the Liberals stood united, for the moment at least, against the combined forces of the old Conservative party. In this context Peel's death possessed a special significance. For Peel, like Bentinck, had acted as an obstacle in the way of Conservative reconstruction and consequently as an assurance of power for the Whigs. Lewis, who had

² Bagenal, Osborne, 101-2.
Gooch, Russell, I, 193-95.

³ Broughton Diaries, July 3, 1850, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,754.

previously dismissed the danger of Conservative reconstruction, wrote to Clarendon on July 5:

"His [Peel's] presence was a restraint on his party -- whom he kept in check by his experience, his constant moderation, & his disregard for office. Deprived of his control, they will follow their own devices, & may well incline to a close union with the Protectionists. With reference to an actual junction for purposes of govt. there is great difficulty in reconciling the pretensions of Gladstone & Dizzy -- Moreover I do not believe the principal Peelites have any idea of surrendering the principle of Free Trade -- though they might perhaps agree to some slight modification of import duties".⁴

It is true, of course, that Peel's influence over his own followers was waning, and the Don Pacifico crisis indicated that they were prepared to seize the initiative and act with the Protectionists in spite of him. Given favourable conditions--the settlement of the corn question and a satisfactory distribution of offices -- Peel would probably have failed to prevent a Peelite-Protectionist coalition. But coming when it did, Peel's death could only promote this contingency and shorten the life of the Government.

Peel's death coincided with and, perhaps, to some extent prompted a radical change in the character of Russell's administration. Up to this point the policy and the tactics of the Government had been essentially timid and cautious in character. In some respects the Russell Government can be regarded as a continuation of Peel's. The Whigs had inherited Peel's executive responsibilities and for all practical purposes had inherited his Parliament as well. Like Peel, Russell had been prepared to experiment with free trade, but had

⁴ Lewis to Clarendon, July 3, 1850, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 550.

carefully avoided any far-reaching reforms in the church or the constitution. Very probably, Russell and his colleagues found Peel's brand of liberal conservatism more congenial than either Cobdenism or Protection, and given a completely free hand they would not have wished to act otherwise. However, regardless of their own inclinations, this policy had been imposed upon the Government by force of circumstances. It can be seen as a consequence of the dilemma which faced them in the House of Commons. On the one hand they were obliged to retain the support of their Radical followers and avoid provoking a crisis which would drive them into a combination with Peel; on the other hand they could not ally themselves completely with the Radicals and submit measures which would encourage the reunification of the Conservative party. By the end of the session, however, it was evident that the Whigs had failed to resolve the contradictions of their position. Confronted with the prospect of a Conservative coalition and by no means confident of Radical support, Russell discarded his former attitude in favour of a more resolute and more daring policy.⁵

The first indication of this new departure can be seen in Russell's decision to take up the reform of the franchise. As early as 1849 he had shown signs of yielding to the Radical campaign, and in October of that year had proposed a scheme of reform to the Cabinet. However the matter was dropped. According to Lady John Russell, "All looked grave.

⁵ Peel's death was one of the reasons why Russell gave up his intention of going to the House of Lords. Victoria, Letters, II, 511.

Sir Charles Wood and Lord Lansdowne expressed some alarm..."⁶ In August 1850, the Duke of Bedford informed the Queen that his brother had decided to raise the question again.⁷ The scheme which Russell proposed to introduce was of a fairly modest character: it provided for a reduction of the borough franchise to six pounds and the county leasehold-franchise to twenty pounds. Although the scheme fell considerably short of Radical demands, the reaction within the Cabinet was no more favourable than in the previous year. On the first occasion it was discussed Hobhouse reported:

"Ld Grey stated his objections very forcibly to any such reform or any great reform -- He thought the House of Commons as now constituted quite capable of doing anything really required by or for the country & moreover quite willing -- everything was quiet & prosperous -- there was no call for such changes & we should incur a heavy responsibility by raising a new agitation -- without which our Reform could not be carried. G. Grey confirmed the fact there was no call for Reform -- so did Charles Wood, who, however, said he had no objection to the scheme if it could be carried -- Palmerston said it was a question [of?] time & hoped it would be deferred a year -- The most decided opposition was given to it by myself -- & Russell was not pleased with this -- & said when Hume brought forward his motion for reform he (R.) would not oppose it -- but would leave the task to me".⁸

In January, on the eve of the new session, Russell reverted to his proposal and again met with unanimous opposition.

"R. said", wrote Hobhouse, "his plan would not make any essential changes -- if so, said I what is the good of bringing it forward to the almost certain discomfiture of the government -- R. replied

⁶ MacCarthy and Russell, Lady John Russell, 105.

⁷ Victoria, Letters, 310.

⁸ Broughton Diaries, November 12, 1850, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755.

that it would give satisfaction & shew we were not afraid of introducing more of the popular element in the constitution -- Labouchere & Grey & Wood said it would not satisfy the reformers who were now trying to rouse the people -- but all in vain -- for never was so little feeling for reform... Lord Grey & Lansdowne and many others declared there was not the slightest chance of carrying the bill in the Lords -- Francis Baring said it would not get a second reading in the Commons -- for the Protectionists & Peelites would join in some vote against the Income tax & throw out the Gt. in order to avoid a vote on reform... Palmerston did not object to the plan but asked delay -- R. said that if he could be assured that the Cabinet would agree to such a measure next year, he should have an answer to give enquirers -- but he had no reason to think we should agree with him next year".⁹

In the course of subsequent meeting Palmerston, who appeared less intransigent than the majority of his colleagues, indicated that he would be prepared to support a reform bill if it were delayed until 1852 and proposed that the Cabinet should authorize Russell to make an explicit promise of reform in the present session. But even this compromise was resisted.

"Lord Grey strongly protested -- ", wrote Hobhouse, "so did I -- saying that as we pretty clearly foresaw that whenever the measure was really brought forward it would break up the government there was no use in anticipating that event now by making a promise to which some of us could not consent -- Lord John said he did not propose any such promise -- and Palmerston having remarked he only expressed his individual opinion about reform Lord Grey was satisfied. ¹⁰

It was plain that there was no support in the Cabinet for a reform bill for either this session or the next. Initially, Russell yielded to the opinion of his colleagues, and in reply to a question by Sir Joshua Walmsley on February 11 refrained from committing himself or the Government.¹¹ Nine days later, however, during the debate on

⁹ Broughton Diaries, January 17, 1851, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755.

¹⁰ Broughton Diaries, January 28, 1851, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755.

¹¹ Hansard, 3rd series, CXIV, 373-74.

Locke King's motion to lower the county franchise, which resulted in the defeat and resignation of the Cabinet, Russell changed his ground and promised to introduce a bill in the following session.¹²

If Russell was primarily concerned with the necessity of conciliating the Radicals, an element in the Government favoured a policy which would appeal to the Protectionists. Indeed, very early in the new session several of the leading Whigs, including Russell himself began to think in terms of a direct alliance with the Protectionist party. This development in part was a consequence of agricultural distress which affected Whig no less than Protectionist landlords. Lansdowne and Bedford had both pressed Russell in the autumn of 1849 to consider a measure of relief. In a letter to the Earl of Clarendon in September 1850 Greville reported a conversation with Bedford:

"He talked of the alarm which was still prevailing in the landed interest, and of his own apprehensions that we should be swamped by immense importations from America... and he told me that he had been writing to John to entreat him to turn his mind to what could be done for the landowners -- in short he is evidently in a great fright on this subject -- wants to have something done, but has no idea what".¹³

Previously, the agricultural grievances had been ignored by Russell and the majority of his colleagues. In so far as it found expression in a demand for the return of protection, the agitation had served to strengthen the Government by consolidating the free-trade parties in

¹² Ibid. 3rd series, CXIV, 863.

¹³ Greville to Clarendon, September 17, 1850, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.dep.c 522.

Parliament. But in the form of a demand for the transfer of local burdens to the Exchequer, which permitted the Peelites and the Protectionists to act together, the movement acquired a more dangerous character. Russell wrote in January 1851 with reference to agricultural distress, "...I perceive that our course will be of great importance not so much to the weal or woe of the landed interest, as to our position as a ministry".¹⁴ In addition to the general dangers which had been foreshadowed in 1850, the Government expected to meet with particularly intense opposition in passing its budget during the impending session. The precise problem was the renewal of Peel's income tax.¹⁵ It had already been renewed once before, in 1848, but at the cost of a prolonged struggle against Radical and Protectionist opposition. Wood now commanded a small surplus of three million pounds, two million of which he was prepared to allocate for the remission of taxes.¹⁶ It was generally feared that unless that surplus could be effectively employed to win over support in the Commons, the income tax would be rejected and the Government obliged to resign. A number of the Whigs, including Russell, George Grey, Baring, Lansdowne, Bedford and Clarendon, were inclined to use the surplus to

¹⁴ Russell to Clarendon, January 2, 1851, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 c.

¹⁵ Lord Grey wrote to Russell, October 4, 1850:

"The income tax next year will I fear be a great difficulty -- but have you any hope of so great an improvement in the revenue or diminut'n of the expenditure as to enable you to do without it". P.R.O. 30/22/8 part 2.

¹⁶ Wood to Russell, December 31, 1850, P.R.O. 30/22/8 part 2.

reduce the local burdens on land, that is, to adopt the very same policy which had been urged in the preceding session by Disraeli and the Protectionists.¹⁷ Clarendon wrote to Bedford in August 1850:

"I had some talk with Wood upon the necessity of agricul'l relief next year & he seemed disposed to agree with me tho' not quite to the extent I desired -- still it was something not to be pooh-pooed by him as usual -- I shd be sorry to stand in his shoes next session with the Income tax to propose & the financial adjustment that the country will expect & the H. of C. one year nearer dissolution. He must look for support where he can & as no practicable measure will ever satisfy the radicals & economists he shd fish for the country Gent'n who are justly entitled in my opinion to relief from local burdens & particularly county rates which press heavily upon them as producers as a tax on raw materials does on manufacturers".¹⁸

In spite of his initial sympathy for Clarendon's proposal, Wood in the end refused to consider either the transfer of local burdens or any other tangible concession to the agricultural interest. "I don't

¹⁷ Bedford wrote to Clarendon, December 28, 1850:

"He (John) wrote the other day to George Grey about relief to the landed interest. He rec'd the letter at [one word illegible] - spoke to Francis Baring & has sent a favourable answer for both.

"The case therefore will now stand thus --

For relief

John (of course)

Ld Lansdowne

Geo. Grey

F. Baring

agst relief

Chas. Wood

"None of the others have been spoken to". Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland, 7 c.

George Grey wrote to Russell, December 27, 1850:

"I agree with you in thinking it desirable to give the agricultural interest some further benefit in the remission of taxation than they will derive from their share of the repeal or commutation of the window tax....

"I certainly concur in thinking we ought if possible to give some direct relief of local burdens". P.R.O. 30/22/8 part 2.

¹⁸ Clarendon to Bedford, August 19, 1850, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 21 e.

feel by any means easy on the subject", wrote Clarendon in December, "as Wood is upon his high horse & then he always rides rough shod over the Cabt..."¹⁹ And again, in January, Clarendon wrote, "He finds plausible obstacles to whatever is proposed but the animus to suggest a substitute is wanting".²⁰ Wood's own preference was for what he described as "a really good popular budget", one which would provide for the reduction of the window tax and the duties on coffee, tea, and timber. Wood's opposition may have been influenced by the interests of his own department without reference to considerations of tactics and strategy. It was obvious that the transfer of local rates would place a permanent and increasing burden on the revenue, whereas the loss of revenue which would be entailed in a reduction of indirect taxes could well be recovered through increased consumption.²¹ Moreover, at least one-half of the poor-rate was payed by non-agricultural property, and Wood doubted whether its transfer would provide any real relief to the land.²² With reference to the transfer of local burdens, Wood wrote to Russell in December "...my own belief is that

¹⁹ Clarendon to Bedford, December 15, 1850, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 d.

²⁰ Clarendon to Bedford, January 18, 1851, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 d.

Clarendon wrote to Bedford, December 5, 1850:

"He [Wood] is always so cocksure of everything as if by intuition that he needs no inquiry & he bullies Ld John & the Cabt. as if he was born a Grey instead of being only connected by marriage with that family". Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 d.

²¹ Wood to Russell, December 31, 1850, P.R.O. 30/22/8 part 2.

²² Wood to Clarendon, January 12, 1851, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 3 c.

it is used more as a 'standard' than from any conviction of its being right & I doubt the sober practical country gentlemen being seriously in favour of any very extensive change".²³ Nothing, Wood believed, could serve to reconcile the country interest, and the Governments safest course lay in consolidating its regular supporters by a liberal budget. The alternative, he condemned as "an attempt to please people who cannot be pleased".²⁴ In January he wrote to Russell:

"If a sop can be given to the Squires at no great expense I do not deny the possible advantage of such a step but I very much doubt whether you can satisfy them, & if not we ought to combine the greatest possible strength in all other quarters".²⁵

Before the budget was finally settled and submitted to the Commons, Wood agreed to a reduction of the duty on imported clover-seed and the transfer of the maintenance of pauper lunatics from the counties to the Exchequer.²⁶ But excepting these token concessions, the question of agricultural distress was ignored, and the terms of the budget were essentially calculated to appeal to the manufacturing and urban interests in the House.

The anxiety of at least a part of the Cabinet over the opposition of the country members re-emerged in a more positive form after the Cabinet crisis in February. At this point, of course, the position of the Government seemed desperate. They had been deserted by the

²³ Wood to Russell, December 31, 1850, P.R.O. 50/22/8 part 2.

²⁴ Wood to Russell, December 31, 1850, P.R.O. 50/22/8 part 2.

²⁵ Wood to Russell, January 2, 1851, P.R.O. 50/22/9.

²⁶ Hansard, 3rd series, CXIV, 731, 734.

Radicals on the Locke-King motion; Russell's attempt to arrange a coalition with Aberdeen and Graham had failed; and the Whigs were obliged to resume office without the prospect of additional strength in the Commons. In the circumstances it was natural for them to speculate on the possibility of a junction with the Protectionists. In March, after the Whigs returned to office, Greville wrote, "Labouchere told me that it was very true that most of his colleagues disliked and distrusted Graham.... He told me moreover that half the Cabinet were disposed to make up to the Protectionists..."²⁷ The most persistent and forthright advocate of this policy was Lord Grey. At the end of the crisis when it appeared evident that Stanley would fail to form a government and that Russell would be compelled to return, Grey composed a memorandum for the consideration of his colleagues in which he proposed a scheme for conciliating the Protectionists and ultimately inducing a number of their leaders to join the Government. Grey wrote:

"...I think an endeavour ought to be made to adopt a line of policy calculated to conciliate all the moderate & reasonable of the country party -- I am quite sensible that this cannot be done without gradually estranging the radical party & leading by degrees to a new divis'n of parties in which Lord John Russell wd be at the head of the country gentlemen, & wd be opposed by a decided democratic party led by Mr. Cobden & probably Sir James Graham. I doubt however whether this is not the natural tendency of things, & whether the persons I have mentioned would not be far less dangerous in the posit'n of a regular opposit'n looking to taking office & capable of doing so when they cd obtain a majority than as they now are".²⁸

²⁷ Greville, VI, 285.

²⁸ Appendix I.

Grey believed that the best foundation for the union of the two parties would be provided not by the transfer of agricultural burdens but by the abolition of the income tax. Herries had already given notice of a motion condemning the tax, and Grey was convinced that its abolition would give the most effective relief to agriculture.²⁹ Although Grey was probably unaware of it, Stanley was beginning to think along the same lines in regard to the tax, and in November 1850 had written to Disraeli:

"Many of our friends will be for strongly resisting the continuance of the Income Tax at all hazards, and I am rather disposed to think that it is the only course by which the Government can be driven to the re-imposition of import duties, to the policy of which I still adhere..."³⁰

Grey admitted that an immediate coalition between the two parties was out of the question, but he saw no reason why Russell should not approach respectable Protectionists like Herries, Lord March, Lord Granby, and the Duke of Richmond to ascertain their views on the budget and agricultural relief. Once this connection had been established and the regular support of the Protectionists assured, Grey believed there could be no objection "against the admission of any of the party who are fit for it into Lord John Russell's administration".³¹

²⁹ Appendix I.
Hansard, 3rd series, CXV, 1135.

³⁰ Stanley to Disraeli, November 15, 1850, Hughenden, box XII, 14th Earl of Derby.

³¹ Appendix I.

At least two members of the Cabinet, Lansdowne and Baring, supported the plan, although the former was less optimistic than Grey as to its possible success.⁵² Russell's attitude was somewhat ambiguous, however. On February 28, he wrote to Lord Grey, "I return your paper -- it contains much that is valuable, but I fear not practicable at present".⁵³ But in a memorandum addressed to the Queen, written only three days later, Russell displayed a greater measure of agreement with Grey's proposals. The Government, Russell stated, could look to neither the Peelites nor the Radicals for additional strength; the alternative course lay in seeking aid "from the Party which has followed Lord Stanley". "This", he continued, "cannot be done by means of official connection; but some-thing might be effected by adopting measures calculated to convince the Landed interest that their sufferings were not disregarded".⁵⁴ Shortly afterwards Russell raised Lord Grey's income-tax scheme in the course of a Cabinet meeting.

"Both Lord John & Lord Lansdowne", wrote Hobhouse, "urged that as we had recognised the distress of owners & occupiers of land it would not be right to meet every proposal to assist them with a negative -- and this of taking off some of the income tax being proposed by the Protectionists might be a fair way of doing some good -- Id Grey declared himself in favour of falling in with the views of the Stanley party rather than the Peelites -- Nothing was settled but it was agreed that the budget should be put off for a fortnight".⁵⁵

⁵² Appendix I.

⁵³ Russell to Grey, February 28, 1851, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 120, file I.

⁵⁴ Victoria, Letters, II, 377-79.

⁵⁵ Broughton Diaries, March 5, 1851, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755.

If Russell did not fully concur in the purpose and object of Grey's memorandum, he showed no reluctance to entertain the intermediate steps which the latter had recommended.

In the end, the demand for agricultural relief and the conciliation of the Protectionists came to nothing. The Cabinet adhered to the substance of Wood's original, budget and no attempt was made to consult any of the leading Protectionists. The episode, however, is intriguing. And it is a matter for legitimate speculation whether this anxiety over Protectionist support played a part in the papal-aggression crisis. As is well known, the Vatican in September 1850 issued a brief which re-established the regular Catholic hierarchy in England and authorized Catholic bishops to assume territorial titles. This publication, followed, by a rather offensive letter by Cardinal Wiseman, the designated Archbishop of Westminster, provoked widespread alarm and excitement in the country. On November 4th, Russell gave official sanction to the no-poper movement by sending a public letter condemning the action of the Vatican to the Bishop of Durham. Almost half of the Durham letter was devoted to an attack on the Tractarians, but he wrote of the papal brief in uncompromising terms.

"I agree with you", he assured the bishop, "in considering the 'late aggression of the Pope upon our Protestantism' as 'insolent and insidious' and I therefore feel as indignant as you can do upon the subject.

.....
"Upon this subject...I will only say that the present state of the law shall be carefully examined, and the propriety of adopting any proceedings with reference to the recent assumption of power, deliberately considered".⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Walpole, Russell, II, 120-21.

In consequence of this letter the Government prepared and introduced in the first month of the session the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, which prohibited Catholic bishops from usurping territorial titles.

Russell's reasons for writing the Durham letter are somewhat obscure. He had not taken the trouble to consult his colleagues beforehand,³⁷ yet it is unlikely that he was carried away by any sense of outrage and indignation. In fact the sentiments expressed in the letter did not reflect his feelings on the question. Five years earlier, in the course of a debate on the regulations which denied to Catholic bishops the use of territorial titles employed by bishops of the established church, Russell remarked that, "He could not conceive any good ground for the continuation of these restrictions".³⁸

Immediately before the publication of the Durham letter, he wrote to the Queen:

"It strikes him [Russell] that the division into twelve territorial dioceses of eight ecclesiastical vicariats is not a matter to be alarmed at. The persons to be affected by this change must be already Roman Catholics before it can touch them".³⁹

Moreover, since Russell had taken office in 1846, the territorial titles of Catholic bishops in Ireland and the colonies had been officially recognized.⁴⁰ In publishing the Durham letter and in

³⁷ Bedford to Clarendon, November 26, 1850, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7c. Broughton Diaries, March 2, 1851, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755.

³⁸ Hansard, 3rd series, LXXXII, 290.

³⁹ Victoria, Letters, II, 326.

⁴⁰ Broughton Diaries, December 11, 1850, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755. Clarendon to Grey, January 19, 1851, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 81, file 2.

introducing the ecclesiastical Titles Bill, Russell may well have wished to capture public support and seize direction of the no-popery movement which was sweeping the country. He could not be entirely indifferent to non-conformist opinion in the constituencies at a time when the existing Parliament was only a few years away from a dissolution. On the other hand, it is possible that he intended to anticipate further demonstrations by taking official notice of the question. The text of the Durham letter itself suggests that he wished to divert public indignation from the Catholics to the Tractarians. If so, his purpose was defeated. Far from being reassured, public opinion was aggravated by the letter. Between the date of its publication and the opening of Parliament meetings were held in every one of the English and Welsh counties to petition the Government.⁴¹ With the exception of Russell and George Grey, the Cabinet was reluctant to introduce legislation to prohibit the usurpation of territorial titles. "Certainly" wrote Hobhouse, "the great majority expressed a disinclination to doing anything".⁴² But in the end they were compelled to accept the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, according to Hobhouse, "as a foregone conclusion".⁴³ If the Government proposed nothing, "...others", he wrote, "would propose a violent measure which it would be difficult to resist".⁴⁴

⁴¹ Annual Register, 1850, 200].

⁴² Broughton Diaries, December 11, 1850, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755.

⁴⁵ Broughton Diaries, March 2, 1851, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755.

⁴⁴ Broughton Diaries, December 11, 1850, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755.

Lord Clarendon wrote to Lord Grey in January:

"Under the cir'ces...it wd not only have been impossible for the Govt. to do nothing but it wd have been injurious as the matter wd certainly have been taken out of their hands & some measure going further than what you intended wd have been carried, for the constituencies in general believe that they are about to be burned at the stake & want to have a go at the Pope".⁴⁵

It would be too much to say that the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill was deliberately calculated to win Protectionists and ultra-Protestant support in Parliament in the same sense as the projected measures of agricultural relief. At the very least, however, it was regarded as a concession necessary to prevent the Protectionists from overwhelming the Government in the House of Commons.

In the end Russell's management of the question probably multiplied the Government's difficulties and precipitated its final collapse. By publishing the Durham Letter and seizing the initiative, he may have forestalled a Protectionist attack; but in so doing he alienated the Irish Catholic members without gaining the confidence and support of the ultra-Protestants. Before the opening of the session there were grounds for believing that his pronouncement had succeeded in winning over a number of Protectionists.⁴⁶ "Lord Lonsdale", wrote Disraeli, "thinks that we have lost a great opportunity by the precipitation with which our friends gulped down Lord John's

⁴⁵ Clarendon to Lord Grey, January 24, 1851, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 81, file 2.

⁴⁶ Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 268.

letter".⁴⁷ Referring to the future tactics of the party on the speech from the throne, Lord Stanley wrote: "...I think we ought to avoid any amendment as there is no doubt that for the present the Government have gained some credit with Churchmen which would indispose them to support an opposition to the address".⁴⁸ Disraeli, however, did not share this anxiety. He shrewdly recognized that in competing for Protestant support the Whigs could never out-bid Stanley and himself. The Durham letter had encouraged the ultra-Protestant members of the party to expect comprehensive measures which would in some way regulate and curb the activities of the Catholic church. In fact it was unlikely that the Government would do more than introduce a bill dealing with the specific question of ecclesiastical titles. In this event, Disraeli intended to support the ultra-Protestants in demanding stronger and more wide-sweeping legislation.

"If beat on this, which we probably should be," he wrote, "we should at least have outmaneuvered Lord John from his 'insidious position' as Protestant leader, and then we shall have the legitimate Protestant feeling on our side".⁴⁹

Disraeli, moreover, was less concerned with the problems which the papal-aggression issue presented to the Protectionists than with the opportunity it offered to them of winning Irish support. While never

⁴⁷ Ibid. III, 272.

⁴⁸ Stanley to Disraeli, November 15, 1850, Hughenden, box XII, 14th Earl of Derby.

⁴⁹ Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 272.

committing himself to the policy of courting the Irish at the expense of the Protestants, a course of action which had destroyed Bentinck, Disraeli wished to subordinate the papal question to agricultural distress. Whatever the state of feeling among the ultra-Protestants, he was inclined to give priority to a motion on agricultural relief, which he expected would receive Irish support.

"If there be any discontent among the Irish", he wrote, "it would, I think, be carried; and if the Government are placed in a minority by these means, and at such a moment, with the Protestant question unsettled, and the Income Tax looming in the distance, I think their position would be distressing".⁵⁰

The Irish Radicals had played up to this point a relatively minor role in Parliament. After O'Connell's death in 1847 the Repeal movement seems to have lost all sense of unity and discipline. "...The leaders of the party", wrote Clarendon in 1847, "are without influence, money or ability & they are all quarrelling among themselves as to who [sic] the ragged remnants of O'Connell's mantle shall fall upon".⁵¹ Lewis wrote two years later that they were "...not a party but an aggregate of individuals, who act simply in partisan warfare, & as often attack one another as the Govt".⁵² Their relationship with the Whigs during these years is difficult to establish with any exactitude. Although they continued to receive patronage, which was discontinued only in 1851,⁵³ they cannot be numbered among the Government's regular

⁵⁰ Ibid. 272.

⁵¹ Clarendon to Lord Grey, August 8, 1847, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 81, file 2.

⁵² Lewis to Clarendon, July 20, 1849, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 530.

⁵³ Russell to Clarendon, July 27 and August 2, 1847, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 1 a.
Clarendon to Bedford, May 29, 1851, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 21 c.

supporters. In 1849 Tufnell was driven to complain that they were "as unpleasant & impracticable as possible".⁵⁴ On the whole, however, they represented at worst a nuisance for the Government and not a threat. Their opposition seems generally to have been restricted to issues in which the fate of the Government was not involved. It is possible that the eclipse of the Irish Radicals after 1847 was in some measure a consequence of the famine. As long as Ireland was threatened with starvation and the Irish Poor-Law Unions with bankruptcy the demand for Repeal was relegated to the background. The Irish members were confronted with a situation in which they compelled to agitate not for Irish independence but for Imperial subsidies and relief. In this respect their best allies were the Whigs. Under Bentinck's leadership the Protectionists had briefly flirted with a policy of large-scale assistance, but after his resignation and death they took up the general cry for economy and retrenchment. If the Government failed to relieve Ireland to the extent the Irish Radicals demanded, it was largely because of the opposition in Parliament. In 1848 George Grey wrote to Clarendon, "I must do the Irish members the justice to say that they are not unreasonable. They know and make allowances for the difficulties which they see are not attributable to the Govt."⁵⁵

Whatever the circumstances were which had prevented them from

⁵⁴ Bedford to Clarendon, July 31, 1851, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 b. J.H. Whyte, The Independent Irish Party, 1850-59. 16.

⁵⁵ G. Grey to Clarendon, April 7, 1848, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 2 b.

making their weight felt in Parliament, there is no doubt that the papal-aggression crisis represented a direct challenge to the Irish Radicals to break with the Government. After the publication of the Durham letter Lord Clarendon wrote:

"...We must look upon the whole R.C. body as alienated from the Govt. & it will be upon Income Tax, Af'n Squadrons, & Votes of Confidence that the defection of R.C. members may be severely & perhaps fatally exhibited next session".⁵⁶

As Clarendon predicted, the Irish embarked on an opposition as soon as Parliament convened. On the first reading of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill thirty-nine of them voted against the Government.⁵⁷ But more ominous was the division on Disraeli's agricultural motion on February 15. Although the Irish had not joined him in the numbers Disraeli had expected, twenty supported the motion, leaving the Government with a bare majority of 281 against 267 votes.⁵⁸ "I doubt", wrote Clarendon, "if the Govt. has ever been in so tottering a position. The coalition of the Radicals, Irish, and Protect's can at any moment put them out & you may be sure that such is their intention".⁵⁹

The defeat of the Government on the Locke-King motion and Russell's decision to resign, however, cannot be entirely attributed to the defection of the Irish members. At the end of the previous session

⁵⁶ Clarendon to Lewis, November 21, 1850, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep c 532. J.H. Whyte, The Independent Irish Party, 1850-59, 21-22.

⁵⁷ Hansard, 3rd series, CXIV, 699-703.
J.H. Whyte, The Independent Irish Party, 1850-59, 21.

⁵⁸ Hansard, 3rd series, CXIV, 604-07.
J.H. Whyte, The Independent Irish Party, 1850-59, 22.

⁵⁹ Clarendon to Bedford, February 18, 1851, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 21 d.

Locke King had divided the House on an identical motion to broaden the county franchise. On that occasion the Government received a majority of fifty-nine votes, a hundred members voting for the motion and 159 against. Eleven Irish Liberals voted for the motion and seven, including official members, with the Government.⁶⁰ When Locke King submitted his motion a second time, on February 20, 1851, it was passed by a majority of forty-eight, a hundred for the motion and only fifty-two against. There was not, however, any significant difference in the Irish vote, twelve voting for the motion and six against.⁶¹ The Irish did not support the motion in greater strength nor was their vote crucial to the out-come of the division. The real difference between the two divisions lay not in the Irish vote but in the abstentions of the Peelites and Protectionists. The composition of Locke King's support was more or less the same on both divisions, but on the first occasion ninety-nine Peelites and Protectionist opposed the motion and on the second only seventeen.⁶² It is certain, moreover, that these abstentions were in some measure deliberate. W.G. Hayter, who had succeeded Tufnell as the Liberal whip, had foreseen that the ordinary supporters of the Government could not be relied upon to oppose the motion and had taken steps to ensure Protectionist attendance.

⁶⁰ Hansard, 3rd series, CXII, 1184-86. July 9 1850.
J.H. Whyte, The Independent Irish Party, 1850-59. 178-79.

⁶¹ Hansard, 3rd series, CXIV, 870-74.
J.H. Whyte, The Independent Irish Party, 178-79.

⁶² W.G. Hayter to Russell, March 1, 1851, P.R.O. 30/22/9.

"I...requested", he wrote, "Mr. Forbes Mackenzie and I believe Colonel Beresford, but of this I am not perfectly certain, that as it was a question on which last year the majority was due to the opponents of the Government, they would secure if they could the attendance of those with whom they acted. I received from Mr. F. Mackenzie certainly, and I believe from Colonel Beresford, the assurance on more than one occasion that all the Protectionist members that were in Town would be requested to come down to the House".⁶³

Although the Protectionists and Peelites may have been present in sufficient numbers to have turned the division in favour of the Government, they did not remain. "Disraeli with his Protectionists", wrote Hobhouse, "moved off almost in a body -- leaving Locke King to fight his battle with the Gt... The opposite benches were nearly empty -- Graham was the last to go away -- but he did go".⁶⁴

The news of the Government's resignation provoked wide-spread surprise and criticism. The general feeling seems to have been that the Locke-King vote had been an accident and did not represent an implicit censure on the Government. Vernon Smith, one of the Liberal members who had supported the motion wrote to Russell, "You must allow me to protest against my vote... being construed as any vote of want of confidence....I and many others are much hurt at your resignation".⁶⁵

Later in the year Lewis wrote:

"Several similar divisions on suffrage questions especially the ballot had occurred in previous sessions, when the Govt. was beat, & no notice was taken....Lord John's resignation took the whole house & his party by surprise & it was in my opinion uncalled for

⁶³ W.G. Hayter to Russell, March 1, 1851, P.R.O. 30/22/9.

⁶⁴ Broughton Diaries, February 20, 1851, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 45,755.

⁶⁵ V. Smith to Russell, February 25, 1851, P.R.O. 30/22/9.

& impolitic. I doubt extremely whether a majority would have deliberately turned us out".⁶⁶

On the night the division took place there was no expression of alarm or excitement among the members of the Government. "Russell gave no sign of disappointment -- ", wrote Hobhouse, "nor did anyone appear to think that there would be any serious result".⁶⁷ On the following day when Russell asked for leave to postpone further debate on the budget, Lewis wrote to Clarendon in a state of perplexity:

"People are at a loss to know what this means -- It seems to indicate either resignation, or an alteration of the budget. But there has not been hitherto any parliamentary ground for either of these steps....I confess I am unable to construe this move -- but it seems the beginning of the end".⁶⁸

Whether or not the defeat on the Locke-King motion represented an adequate reason for the resignation of the Government, Russell believed that taken in conjunction with the vote on Disraeli's motion it left them with no alternative. "...It was certain", he told the Cabinet, "that shortly Govert. would be compelled to give way -- and the present was a fitting opportunity".⁶⁹ On February 22, Lansdowne wrote to Clarendon:

"...It had become inevitable, tho' the particular vote did not make it so.

"I have been quite satisfied from the commencement of the session that our days were numbered -- wch a desire for power in the protectionists, & constant intrigue with the Peelites & Irish members to enable them to obtain it, could not fail to succeed at last, tho' the shabbiness of the former & the open buy & sell principles of the latter made a bad foundation to build upon".⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Lewis to Clarendon, November 24, 1851, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 530.

⁶⁷ Broughton Diaries, February 20, 1851, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755.

⁶⁸ Lewis to Clarendon, February 21, 1851, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 530.

⁶⁹ Broughton Diaries, February 21, 1851, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755.

⁷⁰ Lansdowne to Clarendon, February 22, 1851, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 4.

The ensuing crisis lasted from the 22nd of February until the 3rd of March, when Russell resumed office with his original government unchanged. Immediately on receiving Russell's formal resignation, the Queen had summoned Lord Stanley. The latter, however, declined to take office except as a last resort and advised the Queen to ascertain first whether a coalition could be arranged between the Whigs and the Peelites. Stanley's caution and hesitancy at this point are somewhat inconsistent with the tactics of his party in the Commons. In this and in previous sessions the Protectionists had done everything in their power to drive the Whigs out of office. They had combined with the Radicals, the Peelites, and ultimately the Irish in order to form a majority. It is unlikely that at this moment Stanley actually intended to promote a coalition, which, if successful, would ensure his own exclusion from office for the indefinite future. Certainly, the prospects for a Protectionist government were poor. The party was in a minority in the Commons and the state of public business prohibited a dissolution before Easter. Moreover, with the exception of Herries and Stanley himself, none of the Protectionist leaders had ever held cabinet office.⁷¹ It may be that when actually confronted with the task of forming a government, Stanley simply took fright and tried to shift the responsibility on to the shoulders of his opponents. On the other hand, he may have been influenced by tactical considerations. In a subsequent conversation with the Queen, Stanley laid great emphasis

⁷¹ Victoria, Letters, II, 349-52.

on the fear that unless he could count on her permission to dissolve Parliament, "...he would not have the slightest chance in the House of Commons; he would be opposed and beat, and then his adversaries would come in and dissolve".⁷² As long as a Whig-Peelite coalition was possible, his power to dissolve would remain in doubt; but once the impossibility of such a coalition had been demonstrated, his claim would be irresistible.

Although the Queen was favourable to Stanley's suggestion and immediately invited Russell to open negotiations with Aberdeen and Graham, the prospects of success were poor. Russell had already approached Graham a few days before the crisis with the intention of offering him Hobhouse's place at the Board of Control.⁷³ Graham responded to the overture with marked friendliness, expressing a desire to join the Whigs in opposition after they had resigned, but he declined to join them in office. He could not bring himself to accept responsibility for the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. Moreover, he believed that the Government was doomed. By taking office at that point he could only injure his own reputation without postponing Russell's resignation.⁷⁴ The negotiations between Russell and Graham and Aberdeen never really got past the difficulty of papal aggression. Although Russell was prepared to modify the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill,

⁷² Ibid. II, 366.

⁷³ Broughton Diaries, July 15, 1851, Brit.Museum, Add. Mss 43,755.

⁷⁴ Victoria, Letters, II, 343-45.

he refused to abandon it entirely. The Peelites refused to associate themselves with it in any shape or form.⁷⁵ In the unlikely event of Russell's withdrawing the bill, it is doubtful whether Aberdeen and Graham would have consented to a coalition. During the negotiations they produced objection after objection, embracing Palmerston's management of foreign affairs, Russell's commitment on reform, and the indifference of the Whigs to public economy.⁷⁶ On the occasion of the first meeting Prince Albert wrote, "...Sir James Graham raised nothing but difficulties, though professing the greatest readiness to be of use..."⁷⁷ It is highly probable that the Peelites had no intention of allowing the negotiations to succeed. Lincoln (now the Duke of Newcastle) wrote at the time that if his friends held off, "the summa rerum" would be placed in Peelite hands.⁷⁸ Gladstone, on the other hand, seemed more inclined to a junction with the Protectionists than with the Whigs.⁷⁹ It is unlikely that Graham at this time reflected the general views of Gladstone, Newcastle and the other Peelites to any great extent. On two occasions he had implied recently that he had lost their confidence and was isolated in Parliament.⁸⁰ But there is little doubt that he intended to delay

⁷⁵ Walpole, Russell, II, 124-28.

⁷⁶ Victoria, Letters, II, 552-59.

⁷⁷ Ibid. II, 556.

⁷⁸ C.H. Stuart, "The Formation of the Coalition Cabinet of 1852", Trans. R. Hist. Soc., 5th series, IV, 58.

⁷⁹ Morely, Gladstone, I, 501-02.

⁸⁰ Victoria, Letters, II, 544, 553.

any union with the Whigs until a Stanley government had been formed. By laying the chief emphasis on the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, he may have hoped to gain a following among the Irish members and play a more prominent part in any future negotiations.⁸¹ At the end of the crisis, Clarendon wrote that Graham had become the "Demi-God of the R.C.s":

"...he is the only man who has turned the week's work to his own acc't for he has gained what he wanted -- a position & tho' I daresay he is already frightened at his eminence & embarrassed by it yet it will prove no less embarrassing to the Govt."⁸²

If the papal-aggression crisis prevented Russell from forming a Peelite-Whig coalition, it also served his interests by preventing anyone else from taking office with the same combination. It was believed in certain quarters at the time that Clarendon and Graham might come to terms and form a government. Lewis wrote to the former on February 27:

"There is a general impression that you as Prime Minister, with Graham as leader of the H. of C. are destined to put an end to the interregnum. But in that case, what is to become of Lord

⁸¹ C.H. Stuart, "The Formation of the Coalition Cabinet of 1852", Trans. R. Hist. Soc., 5th series, IV, 58-59.

⁸² Clarendon to Russell, March 6, 1851, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 81, file 2.

John? The anti-papal bill is the great difficulty".⁸³

No liberal government could survive unless it was prepared to proceed with the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill or some equivalent measure. By coming out against the bill, Graham and Aberdeen had in effect barred themselves from taking office either with or without Russell. When asked by the Queen to consider the possibility of forming his own government, Aberdeen spoke of papal aggression as an insurmountable difficulty.⁸⁴ Neither Aberdeen nor Graham believed they could form an administration which "could stand a day". "They were", they told the Queen, "most likely at that moment the two most unpopular men in England, having declared that nothing should be done in Parliament against the Papal Aggression..."⁸⁵

⁸³ Lewis to Clarendon, February 27, 1851, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep c 530. Clarendon did not take part in this conspiracy. On February 27 he wrote to Bedford:

"You know what my feelings are about office & how small is my taste for political turmoil & you may judge how horrified I was on receiving 3 or 4 letters this afternoon to say that I was looked to as the person to form a Govt. --- Among others was one from Brougham assuring me that Denman, Lyndhurst, & many rational Conservatives were of the same way of thinking -- I lost not a moment in settling that matter with him, but I also wrote to Ld J. to say that whether the notion was merely [one word illegible] or went further (for I am told that a paper is in circulation for M.P.s to sign) I concluded that the Queen would not entertain it for a moment without his concurrence & I wished him to know that no power on earth wd make me led myself to a project that cd only end in ridicule & faction..." Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland, 21 d.

⁸⁴ Victoria, Letters, II, 360.

⁸⁵ Ibid. II, 361.

Stanley wrote to Croker on March 14, 1851, "...the declarations of Lord Aberdeen and Sir James Graham debar them from uniting with any party except the extreme Radicals..." Jennings, Croker, III, 230.

After the failure of the Whig-Peelite negotiations, the Queen turned again to Lord Stanley, who, in his own words, "attempted to undertake to form a Government".⁸⁶ The success or failure of his undertaking depended on his gaining outside support. The most important object was to persuade Gladstone to accept the leadership of the House of Commons. Stanley told the Queen that without Gladstone's co-operation "...it was almost impossible for him to go on".⁸⁷ And in addition to Gladstone several other Peelites including, Lord Ellenborough, Lord Canning, Goulburn and even H. Corry, who had held a subordinate office under Peel, were canvassed to accept cabinet posts.⁸⁸ In one respect, at least, the prospects for a Peelite-Protectionist junction were more promising than for one between the Whigs and the Peelites. Stanley enjoyed or apparently believed that he enjoyed a greater freedom of action on papal aggression than Russell. Instead of proceeding with the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, or introducing legislation of his own, he proposed to appoint committees in both houses to inquire into the general position of the Catholic Church and to recommend appropriate measures.⁸⁹ Whether this would have been a satisfactory basis for compromise is difficult to determine. Gladstone's attitude to Stanley's proposal was equivocal: "I told

⁸⁶ Victoria, Letters, II, 368.

⁸⁷ Ibid. II, 364.

⁸⁸ Ibid. II, 369.

Morypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 390-92.

⁸⁹ Victoria, Letters, 365.

him", Gladstone wrote, "I was utterly against all penal legislation and against the ministerial bill, but that I did not on principle object to inquiry".⁹⁰ It is possible that the papal crisis would have exhausted itself by the time the committees had prepared their reports and that many of the ultra-Protestants would have willingly dropped the matter as the price of a settlement of the agricultural problem. The question, however, is purely hypothetical since Stanley's commercial policy stood in the way of any co-operation with the Peelites. Before Russell's resignation, the specific issue of protection for domestic agriculture had been over-clouded by the demand for the transfer of local burdens and the repeal of the income-tax. Protection as a policy had been obscured by Disraeli and Stanley but never explicitly and finally repudiated. On the occasion of Stanley's first interview with the Queen, Prince Albert had complained, "Sometimes it was stated that Protection would be adhered to, sometimes that it was given up, and that it was compensation to the landed interest which the Protectionists looked to".⁹¹ An element within the party, including Granby and the Duke of Richmond, still subscribed to protection as a practical policy, whatever were the leanings of Disraeli and Stanley.⁹² The latter, as he told the Queen

⁹⁰ Morely, Gladstone, I, 302.

⁹¹ Victoria, Letters, II, 352.

⁹² Greville, VI, 270.

Hansard, 3rd series, CXIV, 515-16, 792.

and Prince Albert, wished the word " 'Protection' " to be "merged",⁹³ but felt it necessary to propose a small revenue duty on foreign corn.⁹⁴ It was conceivable that Stanley could persuade his party to discard protection in order to oppose papal aggression; it was conceivable that he could drop papal aggression to promote protection; but it was not conceivable that he could sacrifice both protection and papal aggression merely to secure a coalition with the Peelites.

In the end Russell was compelled to resume office with his original cabinet. Before the formalities for his return were completed, the Queen on Lansdowne's initiative tried to secure an engagement from Russell that he and his colleagues would resign when the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill was safe and open negotiations once more with the Peelites.⁹⁵ With the exception of Hobhouse and Lansdowne, the proposal was generally condemned. "...Ld Grey", wrote Hobhouse, "objected decidedly to our being a mere provisional Gt. -- waiting for others -- It would deprive us of all character & energy".⁹⁶ Baring wrote to Russell, "Nothing shall induce me to return to office on such an undertaking or if it is proposed to limit the confidence the administration has constitutionally a right to claim from the crown".⁹⁷ Their objections, however, represented little more than wishful thinking or perhaps a degree of indignation and outrage with

⁹³ Victoria, Letters, II, 352.

⁹⁴ Ibid. II, 350, 365.

⁹⁵ Ibid. II, 374.

⁹⁶ Broughton Diaries, March 3, 1851, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755. Victoria, Letters, II, 375-76.

⁹⁷ F. Baring to Russell, March 2, 1851, P.R.O. 30/22/9.

the Peelites. Russell himself entertained few illusions about the Government's future and told the Queen "...he was conscious that it would be a very weak Government, and one not likely to last any length of time".⁹⁸ Lansdowne, moreover, consented to return only on the understanding that a stronger Government should be formed after the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill had been passed.⁹⁹ He consented merely to "a temporary return of the ministry" to office. On March 5, he wrote to Clarendon:

"...I am not so sanguine (tho' some of my colleagues I perceive are) as to believe that recent events will be found to have added to the strength of the Govt. & secure for it an accession of votes, without an accession of persons -- This however is the only means by which any attempt can be made to remove one or other of the impediments to some new combination which I continue to think indispensable to any successful Government & I have reserved to myself the right of retiring if it should then appear that nothing of the sort can be accomplished..."¹⁰⁰

Although Russell finally returned to office without submitting to any formal conditions, it was clearly evident that his Government was provisional in all but name.

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⁹⁸ Victoria, Letters, 376.

⁹⁹ Broughton Diaries, March 3, 1851, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,755.

¹⁰⁰ Lansdowne to Clarendon, March 3, 1851, Brit. Museum, Ms. Clar. Ireland 4.

Although the crisis of February 1851 clearly demonstrated that for the moment no alternative to the Russell Government existed, the latter enjoyed no respite from their difficulties in the Commons. "Everything still going as bad as possible", Greville wrote in March, "The Government is now so weak and powerless that its feebleness is openly talked of in Parliament..."¹⁰¹ A week after Russell's return to office, a motion demanding reforms in the administration of the Woods and Forests was carried by a combination of Radicals and Protectionists by a majority of one.¹⁰² On May 2, Hume with Protectionist backing compelled the Government to limit the renewal of the income-tax to one year,¹⁰³ and four days later a motion proposed by a Protectionist to alter the excise on bonded spirits failed only by a single vote.¹⁰⁴ On the occasion of the last division, Bedford wrote, "Another nail last night -- John sent for me...& is, I think, seriously alarmed at the prospect before us The management of the H. of Coms. has become next to impossible".¹⁰⁵ Wood complained, "...there is no comfort except going out for we are tied to a stake to be roasted by slow degrees & inches which is a very disagreeable operation".¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Greville, VI, 283.

¹⁰² Hensard, 3rd series, CXIV, 1266-67.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 3rd series, CXVI, 496-99.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 3rd series, CXVI, 627-30.

¹⁰⁵ Bedford to Clarendon, May 7, 1851, Bodleian, Ms.Clar.Ireland 7 c.

¹⁰⁶ Wood to Clarendon, March 14, 1851, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 3 c.

In some measure Russell's failure after his return to office was due to a collapse of discipline within his own party. At the time of the crisis Lord Ponsonby and Lord Fitzwilliam, both of whom had previously been partial to a Whig-Protectionist alliance, deserted Russell and transferred their allegiance to Stanley. It was this defection which probably encouraged Stanley to write to Croker on March 22, "...I am of opinion that we are more likely to have the support of the old Whigs, few as they now are in numbers, especially in the House of Commons, than of the Peelite section..."¹⁰⁷ Even the inner cadre of ministerialists showed signs of independence and rebellion. On the Woods and Forests question Russell's own nephew deliberately abstained from the division and J. Romilly, Russell's brother-in-law, actually voted with the opposition. "Hayter told J.R.", wrote Greville, "that when such men acted thus, he could not ask independent members to come down and support the Government!"¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Jennings, Croker, III, 256.

Lord Ponsonby to Disraeli, February 26, 1851, Hughenden, box B, file P.

¹⁰⁸ Greville, VI, 285.

Greville wrote to Clarendon on March 15, 1851:

..."There is something wonderful in the levity and insouciance that prevail, the dissolution of all party ties & the rejection of anything like political allegiance -- & this strikes me as being not only mischievous for the present but a general element of danger for the future, for how is any Govt. to go on without any discipline in the ranks of its soi-disant supporters and if people are to ascertain themselves to be so very fastidious & independent". Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep. c 532.

In November, Edward Ellice, who might be regarded as the epitome of party orthodoxy broke with the Government over a patronage matter.¹⁰⁹

"...I suspect", wrote Russell, "he wishes to throw off his party bonds that he may be ready to take service with Tag, Rag, & Bobtail who stand high in the world just now".¹¹⁰

The fact that the Government managed to survive the session was primarily due to circumstances beyond its control. Stanley and Disraeli believed that they held the Whigs at their mercy, and that the Government could be forced to resign or to dissolve whenever they chose. Their original intention was to keep Russell in office until the estimates had been voted and then when nothing stood in the way of an immediate dissolution defeat him on a question of confidence.¹¹¹ As in the February crisis, Stanley's tactics seem to have largely depended on a dissolution of Parliament. As long as agricultural distress and papal aggression were the paramount issues in the country, an election would probably strengthen the Protectionists. By campaigning on the cry of "Protestantism, Protection, and down with the Income Tax", Stanley hoped to obtain a majority sufficiently large to carry his token duty on imported corn.¹¹² If he waited,

however, and allowed Russell time to mature his plans for franchise

¹⁰⁹ Ellice to Russell, November 19, 1851, P.R.O. 30/22/9.

¹¹⁰ Russell to Frederick Peel, November 23, 1851, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 120, file I.

¹¹¹ Stanley to Croker, March 14, 1851, Jennings, Croker, III, 250. Morypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, III, 301-02.

¹¹² Stanley to Croker, March 22, 1851, Jennings, Croker, III, 255. Greville, VI, 281, 285, 287.

reform, the results of a dissolution might favour the Whigs.¹¹³ On the other hand, even if an immediate dissolution did not return a majority for the principle of protection, it would still facilitate the formation of a "Protectionist" government. In the course of his explanations on the ministerial crisis Stanley declared in the Lords that if the result of a general election opposed the imposition of protective duties, he would consider himself released from all pledges and commitments on the question.¹¹⁴ Presumably, the moment he found a plausible excuse for repudiating protection, the way would be clear for an alliance with the Peelites. Although Stanley's plan was probably sound enough, its execution was clumsy in the extreme. Early in May he and Disraeli decided to challenge the Government on the second reading of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, and in concert with D. Urquhart, an independent Conservative, and M. Sadleir, an Irish Radical, they devised a motion blaming the Government for the recent conduct of the Pope.¹¹⁵ Papal aggression, according to Urquhart's motion, "was encouraged by the conduct and declarations of Her Majesty's Government".¹¹⁶ The motion was chiefly

¹¹³ Stanley to Croker, March 14, 1851, Jennings, Croker, III, 230.

¹¹⁴ Hansard, 3rd series, CXIV, 1020-21.
Greville, VI, 286.

¹¹⁵ Stanley to Disraeli, May 8, 1851, Hughenden, box XII, 14th Earl of Derby.

¹¹⁶ Hansard, 3rd series, CXVI, 787.

directed at Russell's statement of 1846 on ecclesiastical titles and was intended to attract the support not only of the Protestant members of the House, but of the Irish and Peelites as well.¹¹⁷ A number of Protectionists, including Inglis and Granby, however, construed Urquhart's motion as an attack on the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill itself, and either abstained from the division or voted with the Government. In the end the motion was defeated by 280 votes to 201.¹¹⁸ On the next day Bedford wrote to Clarendon:

"Tufnell tells me that the gross blunder concocted between the Irish Brigade & the Protect'ts has put the Govt. up... There never was a more ungentlemanlike move... Acland -- Inglis -- and others were thoroughly ashamed of their friends who had joined in itJohn is much pleased with his success....Granby, I hear walked out of the House saying he cd not be party to such a step. However, it has damaged them considerably".¹¹⁹

The split within the ranks of the Protectionist party put an end to Stanley's chances of obtaining an early dissolution.¹²⁰ At the end of May a second attempt was made to turn the Government out -- this time on a motion censuring Lord Grey's policy in Ceylon. Although Disraeli and Stanley had taken the precaution of holding a general

¹¹⁷ Stanley to Disraeli, May 8, 1851, Hughenden, box XII, 14th Earl of Derby.

¹¹⁸ Hansard, 3rd series, CXVI, 854-57.

Beresford wrote to Disraeli on May 11, 1851:

"I have made out a list & calculations of the division that proves without a doubt that if our men had only voted as a Party in a regular Party move our own majority would have been just 43". Hughenden, box A, file B to Bess.

¹¹⁹ Bedford to Clarendon, May 16, 1851, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 c.

¹²⁰ Malmesbury, Memoirs, I, 284.

S. Phillips to Disraeli, May 17 and 21, 1851, Hughenden, box B file P.

meeting of the party before the division, a number of Protestants abstained and the motion failed by eighty votes.¹²¹ "The Protectionists", wrote Lewis towards the end of the session, "have gone back rather than made progress since Easter. They are managed by Dizzy & Bereford, neither of whom has any judgement".¹²² The failure of the Protectionist offensive, however, is not of great significance, except in so far as it prolonged the life of the Government over the vacation. It is possible that if the Whigs by some miracle had managed to remain in office another session, they might have secured the regular support of the dissident Protectionists. Lansdowne wrote in August "I have always thought the present Gov. derived a portion of its security from the preference felt for most of them by a great part of the protectionist opposition as compared with the Peelites..."¹²³ It is more likely, however, that once the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill was out of the way, any understanding between the

¹²¹ Bedford to Clarendon, May 26, 1851, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 7 c. Hansard, 3rd series, CXVII, 250-53.

Londonderry wrote to Disraeli on May 31, 1851:

"I would insist on not leading treacherous or disaffected troops. Every demonstration of desertion weakens the General & detaches even firm adherents. After your meeting & admirable address (as I hear) every man who was not at his post acted dishonourably to you. Had he objected or intended to stay away it should have been boldly stated at the meeting. Sir R. Inglis & Old Conservatives and all culprits should be called on & the question put -- Do you intend to split straws or boldly support me throughout. If I labour night after night to turn the Govt. out I must be upheld & not sacrificed". Hughenden, box B, Londonderry.

¹²² Lewis to Clarendon, June 10, 1851, Ms. Clar. dep. c 530.

¹²³ Lansdowne to Russell, August 10, 1851, P.R.O. 50/22/9.

Whigs and the dissident Protectionists would have collapsed on the first motion for agricultural relief.

If there was any real chance of exploiting the rebellion, Russell ignored it, and turned his attention during the vacation to the Peelites. In September, Graham was offered the Board of Control on the understanding that if he accepted, Cardwell would be invited to join him as Secretary at War with a seat in the Cabinet.¹²⁴ In December Newcastle was offered the Lord Lieutenancy and the same arrangement with regard to Cardwell,¹²⁵ and a month later, Graham and Cardwell were sounded once again.¹²⁶ None of these overtures came to anything; all were rejected without hesitation. It is true that Frederick Peel, a younger son of the late Prime Minister, was persuaded to accept an under-secretaryship, and Graham appears to have encouraged him to do so.¹²⁷ But neither Graham nor Newcastle showed the slightest disposition to accept Russell's offer themselves. As in the preceding February, Graham grounded his refusal on reform and ecclesiastical titles;¹²⁸ Newcastle objected to Lord Grey's colonial policy and the Cabinet's hostility to the Tractarians.¹²⁹ For

¹²⁴ Parker, Graham, II, 135.
Baring to Russell, August 26, 1851, P.R.O. 30/22/9.

¹²⁵ Appendix II.

¹²⁶ Victoria, Letters, II, 494.
Parker, Graham, II, 151.

¹²⁷ Russell to Grey, September 25, 1851, Prior's Kitchen, box 120, file 1.
Lewis to Russell, October 31, 1851, P.R.O. 30/22/9.

¹²⁸ Parker, Graham, II, 154.

¹²⁹ Appendix II.

Graham and Cardwell, however, it was evidently as much a problem of places as of policy. In January the latter explicitly refused Russell's offer because it was restricted to himself. "The wider base was in perspective", he wrote later to Graham, "but not directly in debate".¹³⁰ Three weeks before, Graham had intimated first to Greville and then to Lewis that he wanted Russell to break up the Government, resign office, and then to invite the Peelites to negotiate on an equal footing. Lewis wrote to Clarendon:

"Graham could not be more exacting in his demands if he was the acknowledged leader of a large party -- all of whom were prepared to follow him across the house -- which is very far from being the case -- What he requires is that Ld John shd break up his govt. & that everything shd be a tabula rasa, before negotiation commences".¹³¹

Graham wanted a Whig-Peelite coalition, in which the Peelites would be equal partners with the Whigs. Up to the end Russell under-estimated Graham's price, thinking merely of reinforcing rather than of reconstructing the Government. In January Russell wrote to Lord Grey, "It is quite obvious & always has been to me that we cd not expect to have any of the leading Peelites without giving them some one or two of the leading places".¹³² In view of the danger that confronted the Government, particularly after Palmerston's dismissal in December, Russell's terms were niggardly and inadequate. At the beginning of the new year, Russell had for all practical purposes five major

¹³⁰ Parker, Graham, II, 151.

¹³¹ Lewis to Clarendon, January 14, 1851, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. dep c 530 Greville, VI, 325-28.

¹³² Russell to Lord Grey, January 28, 1852, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, Box 120, file 2.

appointments at his disposal. Clarendon and Fox Maule, the Secretary at War, wished to retire for private reasons;¹³³ Lansdowne had been pressing Russell to be released for several years. Palmerston's dismissal in December created an immediate vacancy at the Foreign Office, and Russell's decision to get rid of Hobhouse because of the latter's inefficiency created another at the Board of Control.¹³⁴ At no point, however, did Russell propose to give the Peelites more than two places in the Cabinet. Lord Grey attributed this to a "determinat'n to engross all real power to himself & to resist any changes which shd bring into the cabinet any persons on whose entire subservience he cd not reckon".¹³⁵ While Grey's statement probably reveals more about Grey's own feelings towards Russell than the latter's attitude to the Peelites, it cannot be denied that Russell's overtures at this stage were somewhat half-hearted. The prospect of a full-scale reconstruction of the Government involving a complete separation from former colleagues

¹³³ Fox Maule to Russell, December 14, 1851, P.R.O. 30/22/9.
Clarendon to Lewis, October 31, 1851, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. dep. c 532.
Clarendon to Bedford, January 31, 1852, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 21 c.

¹³⁴ Russell wrote to Lord Grey on January 28, 1852, "Hobhouse had become of such bad repute for efficiency that I did not like to have enquiry into the E. India charter under his management".
Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 120, file 2.

In fact, Russell was compelled to promote three Whigs in the course of the vacation in order to bring the Cabinet up to strength: Lord Granville as Paymaster and later Foreign Secretary; Lord Seymour as First Commissioner of Works; and Vernon Smith as Secretary at War.

¹³⁵ Grey Diaries, March 10, 1852, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/16.

perhaps demanded more ruthlessness or courage than Russell possessed.

In November he had written to Clarendon:

"In the odious task of strengthening the Govt. I have to consider on one side the prevalent tho' mistaken notion that the Whigs are a clique who will have no [one word illegible] on the bench, & on the other to spare as much as possible the feelings of old friends & colleagues -- the partners of our opposition & the combatants who have stood by my side in power -- I am constantly told that such & such a member wd be very glad to retire, but I know it is not so, & that I have to sacrifice & mortify old & steady friends for the sake of strangers at best".¹⁵⁶

In the end Russell was compelled to join the Peelites in the Aberdeen coalition on terms more unfavourable to himself and to his party than those which he might have obtained a year earlier. Whether a firm offer of four or five places would have induced the Peelites to waive their objections over policy and join the Government is a matter for speculation. It is significant that the difficulties which the Peelites had raised over such issues as reform, ecclesiastical titles, and Tractarianism did not prevent the formation of the Aberdeen coalition. On the other hand those Peelites who looked forward to a union with the Protectionists after the corn question had been settled might very well have preferred to wait upon events rather than to rush into an alliance with the Whigs.

The failure of Russell's overtures to the Peelites during the vacation probably sealed the fate of the Government. The immediate cause of its defeat and resignation, however, sprang from Palmerston's dismissal, which transformed a strong probability into a virtual

¹⁵⁶ Russell to Clarendon, November 1851, Bodleian, Ms.Clar. Ireland 1 c.

certainty. Throughout the vacation Palmerston's behaviour towards the Court and his colleagues became steadily more independent and defiant. In November a rupture over his determination to receive Louis Kossuth had been avoided only at the last minute.¹³⁷ Within the same month he received an address from a public deputation in which the Emperors of Austria and Russia were described as "odious and detestable assassins". This may have been on Palmerston's part an innocent indiscretion, but a week later it was followed by a flagrant act of insubordination in regard to the coup d'etat of Louis-Napoleon. Although the Cabinet had resolved on a policy of neutrality and non-interference, Palmerston privately informed Walewski, the French ambassador, of his entire approval of the coup d'etat. As a result Russell was compelled to demand Palmerston's resignation, after offering him the alternative of going to Ireland as successor to Lord Clarendon.¹³⁸ It is possible that Russell had decided to dismiss Palmerston on this question in order to facilitate an arrangement with the Peelites. The conversation with the Duke of Newcastle took place on December 31, less than a fortnight after the rupture. The balance of probabilities, however, is against this explanation. Russell had decided as early as October to approach Newcastle towards the end of the year.¹³⁹ It is unlikely that Russell waited patiently throughout

¹³⁷ Walpole, Russell, II, 133-36.

¹³⁸ Ibid. II, 138-42.

¹³⁹ Russell to Clarendon, October 22, 1851, Bodleian, Ms. Clar. Ireland 1 c.

the month of November in the expectation that a suitable pretext would arise for dismissing Palmerston in December before he opened negotiations with Newcastle. Moreover, while Palmerston may have stood in the way of an alliance between the Whigs on the one hand and Aberdeen and Graham on the other, he was not necessarily objectionable to the Newcastle wing of the Peelite party. Both Herbert and Gladstone supported Palmerston's amendment on the Militia Bill in the following session.¹⁴⁰ Gladstone, indeed, had more or less placed himself on friendly terms with Palmerston by the publication of his Neapolitan Letters in the previous July.¹⁴¹ Palmerston's dismissal may have made an alliance with the Peelites all the more desirable and necessary, but it is unlikely that the prospective negotiations with Newcastle exercised anything more than a marginal influence on Russell's decision.

Palmerston, as is well known, secured his revenge on the first division of the new session. When Russell moved for leave to bring in a bill to reform the militia, Palmerston took the unusual step of proposing an amendment to the title of the bill. The point of the amendment, to substitute a national organization for the local one which Russell advocated, was not in itself factious.¹⁴² Palmerston had urged Russell to adopt this plan several years earlier.¹⁴³ But since

¹⁴⁰ Hansard, 3rd series, CXIX, 875.

¹⁴¹ Morely, Gladstone, I, 294-97.

¹⁴² Hansard, 3rd series, CXIX, 842-49.

¹⁴³ Gooch, Russell, I, 257, 264-65.

the amendment was moved, before the House had an opportunity to read the text of the bill, it could not be treated by the Government as anything but a question of confidence. "...It was" wrote Lord Grey, "undoubtedly an almost unprecedented insult to a minister thus practically to refuse him leave to bring in his own bill".¹⁴⁴

Palmerston carried the amendment by a vote of 136 to 125. The majority was composed predominantly of Protectionists and Peelites and twenty-six liberals, fifteen of whom were Irish Radicals.¹⁴⁵

Tufnell and Lord Grey attributed the defeat to inefficient whipping on the part of Hayter. "...I myself have no doubt", wrote Grey, "that had the debate been kept up for a couple of hours longer & proper pains been taken to bring down friends a majority might have been secured".¹⁴⁶ Whether or not this was the case, Russell construed the defeat as a deliberate and pre-arranged vote of censure on the administration and on the same night announced his intention to resign.¹⁴⁷

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¹⁴⁴ Grey Diaries, March 13, 1852, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C3/15.

¹⁴⁵ Hansard, 3rd series, CXIX, 875-76.

¹⁴⁶ Grey Diaries, March 13, 1852, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C3/15.
Broughton Diaries, February 22, 1852, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,756.

¹⁴⁷ Victoria, Letters, II, 445.
Hansard, 3rd series, CXIX, 879.

CONCLUSION

"Since 1835", Russell wrote after his resignation, "we have always stood on a three-legged table of Whigs, Radicals, & Moderate Tories".¹ This combination had to a large extent served as the basis of Russell's Government since 1846; it was also to serve as the general formula for the formation of the Aberdeen coalition in 1852; and in the long run this combination was to form the basis of the Gladstonian Liberal-Party. In the end the chief significance of Russell's Government lies not in his administration or in his particular achievements in office, but in the fact that it coincided with the beginning of a more stable and more disciplined liberal combination. In the history of party politics it represents a prologue rather than a complete and independent drama. It is tempting, therefore, to interpret the Russell Government purely in terms of its consequences -- to assess its importance in so far as Russell promoted or retarded the fusion of the Whigs, Radicals, and Peelites into a single party. By this test Russell failed. Neither the Peelites nor the Radicals were ever admitted fully into his confidence. Time and time again he refrained from taking the steps that were necessary to ensure their support. By excluding Cobden from the Cabinet in 1846,

¹ Russell to Lord Grey, September 1, 1852, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 120, file 2.
The date 1835 may be disputed and may represent a slip of the pen for 1845.

he permitted the Radicals in a sense to drift into opposition on the issues of retrenchment and reform. By retaining Palmerston and Lord Grey in their respective offices he antagonized the Peelites. Moreover, when he took up the papal-aggression question in 1850, Russell provoked the simultaneous opposition of both parties. In the confused and complicated negotiations which preceded the Aberdeen coalition, one fact was clear, that neither the Peelites nor the Radicals were prepared to accept Russell in the office of Prime Minister.² When Russell took office in 1846, it might be said that the Whigs bridged the gulf between the Peelites and the Irish and English Radicals. By 1852, however, the Peelites had managed to manoeuvre themselves into the central position which the Whigs had occupied. In August 1852, Wood wrote to Russell:

"Newcastle's views are exactly what I heard before. He cannot submit to come into a Whig administration...

"He has for some time, been holding the language that your presidency was a difficulty.... It is obvious enough that so long as the Irishmen remain in the mood in which they were,

² Russell to Aberdeen, July 21, 1852, P.R.O. 30/22/10.
Bagenal, Osborne, 121-22.

Graham to Russell, July 22, 1852, P.R.O. 30/22/10.

Wood wrote to Lord Grey, November 5, 1852:

"I am afraid that in the nature of things the Whig position is gone. We have carried nearly all that we contended for as leaders of the Liberal party. On 9 points out of 10 which remain to be argued & fought for we disagree with Cobden & Bright & the more active school of liberal politicians.

"We cannot receive their cordial support for they want much more of a change than we are prepared to accede to. They are so strong in their own conceit at any rate to submit to our supremacy-without attempting to exact concessions & quarrelling if we were firm". Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 102, file 3.

that they would have rendered a government of which you were the head, pretty nearly, if not quite impossible & then there is no doubt that we cannot have their support without having Graham & Newcastle in the Govt....

"But Newcastle naturally enough, after what I told you the other day of his constant communication with the Irish party, thinks that Aberdeen as chief would render their support more certain & more zealous as indeed it probably would & he could comfort himself with the notion of its not being a whig administration".³

Wood wrote to Lord Grey in November, "The feeling against Lord John's leadership is so very strong in so many quarters that I think him impossible at present".⁴ In the end it was the Peelites under Aberdeen and not the Whigs under Russell who played the leading part in the formation of the coalition government and the revival of the liberal alliance in Parliament.

At the very moment the ascendancy of the Whigs was challenged by the Peelites and the Radicals, an element within the Whig party were in the process of repudiating Russell. Lord Palmerston, as might have been expected, took the lead in this movement and in October tried to persuade Lord Lansdowne to take the initiative in arranging

³ Wood to Russell, August 13, 1852, P.R.O. 30/22/10.

Wood wrote to Russell on August 10, 1852:

"Since I wrote to you I have had a long letter from Hayter... He says that the Irish members have acted with Newcastle's approval & under his advice. That they look to him & consider him & Graham as their chiefs -- but it does not seem that the latter has had much conversation with them. I think therefore that we may consider them as constituting the rank & file of the Newcastle party. This is rather an important element in the calculation of forces. They have no opinion except upon one or two points & if they support at all, they will give support on all the main questions excepting of course 'religious questions'." P.R.O. 30/22/10.

⁴ Wood to Grey, November 15, 1852, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 102, file 3.

a coalition of the "Whigs, Peelites, & moderate conservatives".⁵

Although Lansdowne rejected Palmerston's proposal, some such solution was widely discussed within the Whig party. In September Minto had written to Bedford:

"I can...well understand that Palmerston, whom I take to be the prime mover & life & soul of this agitation, should wish for a leader under whom he could consent to serve & I daresay that some small section of Radicals may also have a pet chief of their own in view -- But when I hear of the language held by some of our own friends I confess that it passes my comprehension-- They cast no reproach on Lord John -- They complain of nothing, They are moved by no unfriendly feeling towards him, quite the contrary -- but they would discard him as an offering to others of whom I firmly believe they are the dupes -- In the inferior ranks of our party there may, of course, be many who looking only to selfish objects would make any abject terms for momentary success, it is not however of such that I am speaking -- But do our misguided friends really know what they mean? when they urge the choice of Lord Lansdowne as the head of a new Government, what earthly reason can they have for believing that he would answer such a call involving such consequences as must follow --"⁶

Both Clarendon and Bedford dismissed Minto's belief in the existence of an intrigue to unseat Russell, but neither could deny the fact of wide-spread discontent and dissatisfaction with his leadership.⁷

Russell retained nominal control of the Whigs and in December led the party intact into the Aberdeen coalition. Two years later, however, when he resigned from the coalition on the Roebuck motion, he resigned alone, not as the leader of a party, but as an individual member of the Government. Within three years of the break-up Russell's

⁵ Lansdowne to Russell, October 11, 1852, P.R.O. 30/22/10.

⁶ Minto to Bedford, September 2, 1852, P.R.O. 30/22/10.

⁷ Clarendon to Russell, August 31, 1852, P.R.O. 30/22/10.
Bedford to Russell, September 20, 1852, P.R.O. 30/22/10.

own Government, the leadership of the Whig party had passed first to Aberdeen and finally to Palmerston. It may be speculated whether in fact Russell had led the Whigs into the coalition or whether they had led him. The dissident Whigs, of course, were thinking in terms of a coalition under the lead of Lord Lansdowne and not Lord Aberdeen. The important fact is, nevertheless, that they were promoting a coalition under the lead of someone who would be more acceptable to the Peelites than Russell. Lansdowne's refusal to play the part they had prescribed for him must have strengthened Aberdeen's claim for consideration.⁸ If Russell had opposed the coalition and refused to take office under Aberdeen, it is possible that a section, at least, of his party would have deserted and followed Lord Palmerston into the Government.⁹

Russell's failure to consolidate the Whigs, the Radicals and the Peelites into a more stable and permanent alliance under the leadership of the Whigs reflects in some measure his failure as Prime-Minister between 1846 and 1852. The cause of this failure had been attributed to various factors. The cliquish and aristocratic character of

⁸ Victoria, Letters, II, 502-03.

⁹ In April 1852 when Russell tried to organize an opposition to the Protectionist Militia Bill, he managed to collect only 165 votes in a full house. Nearly fifty Whigs including F. Baring and Lord Seymour vote with Palmerston in support of the Government. Hansard, 3rd series, CXX 1185-88. Hobhouse wrote "...our friends at Brookes talk of Russell as completely lost". Broughton Diaries, April 24, 1852, Brit. Museum, Add. Mss 43,757.

Russell's Cabinet may have disqualified the Whigs to serve as spokesmen and leaders for the liberal interests in Parliament and in the country. Their ineptitude as administrators, their relative indifference to economy and retrenchment invited unfavourable comparison with the manifest talent of the official Peelites. Their love of office, their readiness to withdraw or modify Government bills often on the first sign of opposition, stood in marked contrast with the courage and enterprise of Sir Robert Peel's administration. Russell's own character, moreover, which appeared to consist of a curious mixture of rashness and timidity must have alienated many potential adherents. His sudden conversion to free-trade in 1845 and his later refusal to form a free-trade government, the modest provisions of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill following his provocative publication of the Durham letter suggested at least a lack of ordinary prudence and decision. It would be foolish to underestimate the force of the standard objections to the Russell Government and to dismiss them simply as the inventions of faction. Russell and the Whigs may have failed because their administration did not inspire confidence. It is possible that they did not receive the regular support of the Peelites and the Radicals because they did not deserve it.

This argument, however, greatly under-rates the difficulties which faced the Whigs between 1846 and 1852. The implication that they came into office with an automatic majority which was subsequently

dissipated by their own incompetence and folly must be qualified. The alliance of Whigs, Peelites and Radicals was in fact a very fragile and delicate structure. It had been brought into existence by the corn-law crisis of 1845-46, and its operation was more or less confined to the free-trade controversy. As long as the settlement of the corn laws was disputed by the Protectionists, Russell's tenure of office was assured. But once the Protectionists began to drift towards agricultural compensation and relief, the alliance dissolved. In 1846 the Radicals and the Peelites had voted with the Whigs to keep Stanley out of office; after 1850 it is apparent that large sections of both parties were no longer intimidated by the prospect of a Protectionist Government. Even during the years when protection was still the paramount issue, the Whigs could not depend on the regular support of the Peelites and Radicals for all purposes. The massive majorities which the Government received on the corn-law question, evaporated on questions such as colonial and foreign policy, church administration and Irish relief, retrenchment and political reform. If there was a general reluctance before 1850 to turn Russell out and bring in the Protectionists, there was little disposition on the part of the Radicals and the Peelites to give the Government a measure of support which was necessary for a bold and vigorous policy. As the session of 1848 illustrates, Russell held office by a slender margin: the Government's programme for Irish relief was wrecked; its budget badly mutilated; and its sugar bill carried only with the

greatest difficulty. Neither the Peelites nor the Radicals hesitated to combine with the Protectionists in order to obstruct and harass the Whigs on particular measures. The alliance maintained the Whigs in office but not in power; their mandate was limited and defined. They might defend the settlement of 1846 and extend the principles of free-trade, but in all else they were obliged to proceed with caution and circumspection. The vacillation and floundering which is associated with the Russell Government may to a large extent be traced to the dilemma which confronted it in Parliament. Russell's chief task may be seen in the long run in terms of keeping his allies together or in terms of keeping his opponents divided and isolated. From the very moment the Whigs took office in 1846, Russell was faced with two dangers, both of which arose from the ambivalent position of the Peelites. On the one hand it was possible that Peel would manage to combine with the Radicals and perhaps even a section of the Whig party, and come into office on a free-trade policy. On the other hand it was equally possible that Peel or Gladstone and Lincoln would come to an arrangement with the Protectionists. The fact that it was the former danger that materialized in the end did not obviate the possibility of the latter. In the previous decade the Grey Government had come to power as the result of a rupture within the Tory Party and the Melbourne Government like Russell's had from time to time leaned on the support of Peel. Russell's situation between 1846 and 1852 was not, strictly speaking, novel, and the fact that the Conservatives were for the

moment divided on the question of free trade did not necessarily mean that they could not be re-united on other questions. After 1846, whether the Peelites would combine with the Protectionists or the Liberals depended in a large measure on the Government. If they attempted to cater for the Radicals and out-bid Peel in that quarter, they might very well have provoked a crisis on the Irish church or the franchise which would have promoted the reconstruction of the Conservative Party. The protection question remained in the forefront of politics because Russell refused to embark on a Radical programme and hesitated to provoke the Protectionists to the point of desperation. Russell's solicitude for the Protectionists, however, encouraged the combination of the Peelites and the Radicals and perhaps lay at the bottom of his failure to retain control of the free-trade forces in Parliament.

In the end the "three-legged table" of Whigs, Radicals and moderate Tories remained intact. In spite of the manifest willingness of both Stanley and Gladstone in 1852 to revive Peel's Conservative Party, the future lay with liberal fusion rather than conservative reconstruction. Between 1846 and 1852 Russell and the Whigs had done little in a positive way to strengthen the alliance of the liberal parties and ultimately the control and direction of this alliance passed to the Peelites. But the fact that this weak and almost accidental alliance survived at all owes much to the prudence and caution of the Whigs. If Russell did not consolidate the liberal

APPENDIX I

Memorandum by Lord Grey, March 3, 1851, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 120, file 1.

"The following paper is a copy of the material part of one which I sent to Ld John Russell on the 27th of Feb'y when Ld Stanley's attempt to form an administration was still going on -- The views stated in it I still adhere to, indeed my opinion has been confirmed by what has taken place -- I ought however to add that the financial measures I have proposed are not to be regarded as more than an exposition of the financial policy which I think ought to be followed, the particular measures to be adopted in pursuance of this policy, wd of course require mature consideration.

G. 3/3/51.

"It is impossible not to perceive that there is a great probability of the failure of every attempt to form an administration upon any basis which has hitherto been suggested, & that it may ultimately become necessary that Lord John Russell's administrat'n should be returned & shd endeavour to carry on the government of the country in the best manner that may be practical.

"In case this shd happen, it seems to me that it is not too soon to consider what steps could be taken to increase the strength of that administrat'n, since it is clear that though after what has occurred it might possibly exist by sufferance, it would not without more

strength conduct the affairs of the country with real advantage --

"How then is more strength to be obtained? In my opin'n it is not to be looked for from Sir James Graham & his friends -- Not only does his recent refusal to concur in the format'n of such a cabinet as was proposed by Ld John Russell render this impossible but further I believe that a union with him, had he agreed to it, it would have taken away as much strength as it would have added -- It is true that the proposed junction wd have added at least one very powerful debater to the Government, but this is not what is wanted -- The Government is quite sufficiently strong in debaters in the House of Commons, what is required is the support of more votes in both Houses -- These Sir Jas. Graham cd not have brought, the few he would have added wd have been counter-balanced by the loss of the cordial support of the those adherents of the old whig party whose sympathies are not for free trade but for the landed interest -- I need only point out how strongly the antipathy of this class to what are called the Peelites was manifested on the occas'n of the late attempt to elect Lord Wharncliffe to the chair of comm'ee of the House of Lords --

"Nor is real strength to be gained by conciliating the Radical party -- They do now vote with us in the great struggles with the Protectionists, but they never hesitate to vote against us in many quest'ns in which they think it popular to do so, nor is there the slightest chance that any advance we could make in the direct'n of democratic & economical views would ensure that constant & steady

support from them which alone would be of the slightest value.

"There remains then but one party from which it appears to me possible that additional support could be obtained, & it is that party of the country gentlemen which has always exercised so much power in this country -- Perhaps I ought rather to say the body than the party of the country gentlemen, for it is only by a dissolution of their present party ties that valuable support can be obtained from the persons in quest'n.

"I am aware that at first sight it may seem very visionary to think that any support can be obtained from the persons in quest'n, but I think that upon consideration it will be found that there is much in the circumstances of the present moment to favour the attempt -- In the 1st place, if Lord Stanley's attempt to form an administration should fail, I am persuaded that very many of those who now call themselves protectionists would consider this as the final defeat of the attempt to re-establish protection & would be glad to look in some other direction for relief to the landed interest -- 2ndly I believe it possible to propose measures which would afford very substantial relief to the landed interest & give them a motive for supporting us, for there is no doubt that relief is most urgently wanted; lastly I think that the disposition of the tenant farmers in the country to throw off the control of their landlords is beginning to excite the fears of the latter & makes them well inclined to rally round leaders whom they can trust & respect more than they can their present leaders after what has just

occurred.

"Hence I think an endeavour ought to be made to adopt a line of policy calculated to conciliate all the moderate & reasonable of the country party -- I am quite sensible that this cannot be done without gradually estranging the radical party & leading by degrees to a new divis'n of parties in which Lord John Russell wd be at the head of the country, gentlemen, & wd be opposed by a decided democratic party led by Mr Cobden & probably Sir James Graham. I doubt however whether this is not the natural tendency of things, & whether the persons I have mentioned would not be far less dangerous in the posit'n of a regular opposit'n, looking to taking office & capable of doing so when they cd obtain a majority than as they now are.

"It remains to consider what is the policy to be adopted in order to conciliate the country gentlemen? In my opinion this ought to be attempted mainly be a modificat'n of the financial measures we have proposed -- I would state that the divis'n on D'Israeli's motion must be taken as an expression of the opin'n of the House that measures ought to be taken for the relief of the landed interest, while the notice given by Mr Herries with respect to the reduct'n of the income tax indicates the mode in which the leaders of that large majority consider such relief might be best afforded -- To this expression of the opin'n of a very large party in the House I wd say that the Government is prepared to bow, & with the less reluctance because we have all, from the time when it was first proposed expressed our great object'n

to the income tax, though we have thought upon the whole that it was expedient after it had been imposed to continue it for the purpose of effecting other improvements in our system of taxat'n --- That with this view we sh'd have been glad to keep it up for some time longer, but we are bound to admit that if relief is sought for the landed interest there is no change of taxat'n which wd so greatly contribute to it as that suggested by Mr Herries -- Not only is it notorious that the income tax is very partially levied on trades & professions, & that the incomes returned are far below the truth, but further land is under a great disadvantage even as compared to the funds, because tax is levied upon gross instead of upon net incomes....The more closely the subject is looked into, however, the more clearly it would appear that these strong object'ns to the tax could not be removed by any improvement in the manner of levying it, but are inherent in its very nature -- Hence it may be admitted that the taxat'n is one which there are undoubtedly good reasons for reducing & for getting rid of as soon as possible -- No doubt this implies that it will be necessary to pause for some time in making any further reduct'n in taxes pressing upon commerce, but though some such taxes still remain which wd be highly desirable to reduce or repeal, still so much has been done in the last few years for the relief of trade & industry -- both are now so highly prosperous, & the taxes which continue to burthen them are so much less objectionable than those which have been removed, that no serious inconvenience can result from postponing the further reduct'n of this class of taxes until the rapidly increasing wealth of the

country affords the means of doing so.

"For these reasons I shd state that the reduct'n of the property tax suggested by Mr Herries shd be proposed, but that the adopt'n of these wd necessarily prevent other reduct'ns which had been intended & especially those of direct taxat'n --- That accordingly the transfer of a part of the charge of lunatic asylums from the county rate to the consolidated fund wd be abandoned, & that the House tax wd be made a full instead of a partial commutat'n for the window tax It would further be necessary to abandon the intention of giving up any revenue upon timber, but I am persuaded that this revenue might be maintained without giving up the relief proposed by the plan which has been propounded, by simply raising the duty on colonial timber to the same rate with that intended to be kept on foreign timber....

"The proposed alterat'n in the duties in coffee & seeds ought I think be adhered to, the former because it is obviously necessary as a mere measure of revenue, the second because it cd be a material relief to agriculture

"A modificat'n of the budget on the above principles wd I believe be calculated to conciliate the numerous body of those interested in land in both houses of Parlt. (since there can be no doubt that it wd in every way be a great relief to them) without affording any great ground of complaint to the free traders of its involving a step backwards in liberal commercial policy -- On the contrary it will be observed that the proposal involves the abolit'n of almost the last

of the existing protecting duties.... considering how much has been done for the relief of the consumers & for the promot'n of trade, it seems to me only reasonable that something shd now be done for the only suffering interest of the country.

"But though I am persuaded that the above is a just view of the various interests in the country, it certainly wd not answer to announce our intent'n of thus modifying the budget which has been brought forward without having previously taken some steps to communicate with some of the principal members of both houses of Parlt. connected with the landed interest for the purpose of securing their support.

"How such a communicat'n could be opened with them it is very difficult to say, because unfortunately they have no leaders of sufficient influence to make it probable that by satisfying the leaders the body could be gained -- If D'Israeli had more hold over his own party than I believe he really has, the natural course wd be to communicate confidentially with him & Mr Herries, & if (as I believe) it cd be shown to them that the measures I have pointed [to?] wd do more for the landed interest than any others that cd be carried, it might be hoped that after the failure of protect'n they would support them, nor shd I see the slightest object'n to an understanding being entered into with them that after these measures had been carried & the idea of re-establishing protect'n publicly abandoned there wd be a readiness on the part of Mr John Russell to take some of their number into office -- Their coming into office at this moment wd not

be favourably viewed by the public, but after their having afforded an independent support to measures adopted for the purpose of meeting their views as far as is possible, - there wd be no reason against the admission of any of the party who are fit for it into Ld John Russell's administrat'n.

"Assuming that Mr. D'Israeli is not considered a person who cd be confidentially communicated with in this manner, I will only add that it is a quest'n for considerat'n whether such a communicat'n might not sought with Mr Herries -- Ld March -- & Ld Granby....

P.S.

"Upon reading this over it occurs to me that if such an attempt to obtain support as I have suggested shd be seriously thought of, the better mode of proceeding wd be to suggest indirectly to some of the conservative Peers such as Lord Hardwicke or the D. of Richmond that they shd propose to the Govt. any measures they thought calculated to benefit the landed interest without re-establishing protect'n -- If they cd be brought into communication with Ld J. Russell on their own seeking, the measures which cd be proposed for the benefit of the landed interest might be explained to them".

Lensdowne to Grey, March 1851, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, box 110, file 4.

"Many thanks for your paper.

"Although I am not quite so sanguine as you are to the practicability of gaining support from the opposing ranks without any

leader whom they might at least seem to follow, I quite agree in the expediency (& have not infrequently urged it) of shewing all the consideration we possibly can with any consistency & justice to them & their objects & think it not improbable that such a course at the present moment might very much neutralize or soften any active hostility -- indeed it happened that an hour or two before I received your paper I was endeavouring this view [sic] & concession as to the Income tax on Ld John -- who will I think be induced to apply one half of the surplus this way, but not I am afraid to make the impression upon it that would be desirable without a general House tax....

I do not abandon at the same time my opinion as to the necessity of gaining additional strength -- ultimately by accession to the Govt. & making any reasonable sacrifice to accomplish the object".

Grey Diaries, February 28, 1851, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C5/15.

"I walked down with F. Baring & had a great deal of talk with him on what wd be the proper line for us to take supposing the administrat'n to be re-established as before, which it probably must be -- He agreed with me that in this case we ought to endeavour to secure for ourselves the support of the moderate protectionists & frame our measures as much as possible with that view -- He also takes much the same view that I do of the objections to the income tax".

Grey Diaries, March 2, 1851, Prior's Kitchen, Grey III, C 3/15.

"I walked up with Wood this afternoon to Seamore place....& had a long talk with him on the situat'n of affairs -- I told him that what George Grey had suggested at his house (viz. that we shd probably go with the Govt. till the papal bill is passed with much difficulty, & then receive some new defeat which wd enforce the union with the Peelites which has now failed) seemed to me to be very probable & that there c'd be nothing I sh'd so much object to & that I then was very anxious to endeavour to conciliate the Protectionists & that a modification of the budget involving a reduct'n of the income tax was the most obvious mode of attempting to do so. I made some impression on Wood but not much--".

* * * * *

APPENDIX II

Memorandum by Russell, December 31, 1851, P.R.O. 30/22/9.

"The Duke of Newcastle came to me about five o'clock & stayed about an hour & a half --

"I told him I had wished to see him soon as Lord Clarendon had expressed a desire to leave Ireland in January -- I wished therefore to offer the office of Lord Lieutenant to the Duke of Newcastle. That Lord Clarendon had since informed me that he wished to stay till Easter & therefore there was nothing urgent -- That I still was desirous at that period to obtain [his services] for the country as Lord Lieutenant -- But that I now wished particularly to ascertain the views of his friends respecting a junction with the Government --

"That the separation of Lord Palmerston must weaken our position in the House of Commons, that we were accused of being exclusive, but my wish was to unite in office with us those of Sir Robert Peel's friends who supported him in 1846 & who agreed in a free-trade policy.

"I mentioned the general outlines of the measure for the extension of the suffrage --

"I also mentioned our desire to strengthen the defences of the country --

"I wished to know whether these were any bar in principle to the junction I proposed --

"The Duke said that for his own part he was disinclined to take office -- That if it were an obvious & imperative duty to come into office, he would be ready to do so, but he thought no such necessity existed at present, nor could he anticipate any good could arise to the Queen's Government or the public from his doing so --

"That generally speaking junctions of this kind did not strengthen the existing Government, & injured those who joined it --

.....

"He proceeded -- the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill would form an obstacle to his accepting the office I had named as he could not be a party to enforcing it, & he had said so in the House of Lords that to leave it a dead letter would be as bad --

.....

"I said, however, that the Lord Lieutenant ... would not be responsible for enforcing the Ecclesiastical Titles Act, or at least not alone -- for a direction had been given to the Lord Lieutenant not to commence prosecutions under that act without reference to the Government in England.

"He then said that if he were to mention obstacles to our agreement in office he must mention on the part of himself & he thought he might add Mr. Gladstone & Mr. Sidney Herbert the distribution of the patronage of the Church by Lord John Russell. That he did not disavow, but the reverse, opinions which were called high church, but he was not extreme, & should deprecate the patronage of the Crown being

bestowed upon the Ultra men of one party in the Church as he did in regard to the other -- That he knew the Prime Minister must be uncontrolled in his advice to the Crown in regard to Church patronage, but that my disposal of it after such advice, was not approved by those he mentioned --

"I said upon the subject I could not change, tho' I did not mean to say objections might not be made to particular appointments --

"He then said that the colonial policy of the Government was not approved by some at least of his friends, if not by all --

"I said the difficulty had arisen from Lord Grey's establishing more free constitutions than any other Colonial Minister had done -- that there were naturally dissensions & collisions in settling these new constitutions, but then once established they worked well --

.....

"New Zealand was the only colony mentioned by the Duke of Newcastle, he referred to New Zealand as a bar specially applicable to himself, as he had given notice at the close of the last session of a motion on the subject at the beginning of the next.

"He then asked what I wished him to do --

"I said I should be obliged to him if he would state to Mr. Cardwell that in the event of a vacancy in an office which I mentioned I meant to propose to him to accept that office with a seat in the Cabinet --

"I stated further that I wished him to tell Sir James Graham the

conversation I had had with him (the Duke of N.) & endeavour to ascertain his feelings towards the Government.

"As regards Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Sidney Herbert I desired him to inform them of what had passed, but did not express any such wish as I had done in the other two instances...

"He concluded by saying what he & Sir James Graham had said to me before, that if a Protectionist Government were formed, it would probably be one of the natural results of political discussion that those who agree in free trade would draw closer together".

* * * * *

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