

Taru Haapala

“That in the Opinion
of this House”

The Parliamentary Culture of Debate in the
Nineteenth-Century Cambridge and Oxford
Union Societies



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JYVÄSKYLÄ 2012

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ABSTRACT

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Finnish summary

Diss.

Emphasising the historical role of parliamentary procedure in the formation of the parliamentary culture of debate of nineteenth-century Britain, this study places the Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies in the wider context of the British debating societies. Though the Union Societies have since the late 1800s been considered part of British parliamentary culture, the debating practices of the Unions have not been accorded comprehensive research that would explain why this was so, even though the role of debate in Parliament also grew at the time.

The starting point of the analysis is an idea introduced by Josef Redlich (1869-1936) that a parliamentary body is an assembly of which the primary aim is not to legislate, but to debate according to certain rules. He maintained also that parliamentary bills are reducible to a series of motions, which inspires one to think that the Unions can also be seen as independent sites of a parliamentary style of politics.

I chose to examine the Unions' political activity from two distinct angles: the politics of agenda and the politics of debate. A rhetorical reading of the minute books reveals how members of the societies used the rules of debate for their own political purposes. In the analysis, I identified repeated use of certain rhetorical *topoi*: 'vote of confidence', 'principle', 'character' and 'expediency'. In the Union Societies, these manifested as interrelated rhetorical categories that constituted the politics of the agenda. They also appeared in the politics of debate related to revising and interpreting the rules, which characteristically involved challenges to decisions made by Union Society presidents.

The procedure seems to have been the key element in guiding debates and in framing the rhetorical practices in use. It eventually linked the Union Societies to the parliamentary culture of debate. However, the societies did not just follow the House of Commons model passively, but adapted it to their own political activity. In this way the Union members trained themselves, in a very independent and creative manner, in the parliamentary way of doing politics.

Keywords: Cambridge Union Society, Oxford Union Society, nineteenth century, debate, House of Commons, parliamentary culture, procedure, rhetoric

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Jyväskylä, 9 November 2012

Taru Haapala

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The relevance of procedure in parliamentary politics

A parliamentary bill takes shape through a series of motions. The motions are proposed and debated according to a certain procedure. Political activity in a parliamentary assembly, therefore, centres firstly on influencing what kinds of motions are put on the political agenda and, secondly, on taking part in debates on those motions that have reached the agenda. A parliamentary body is an assembly of which the primary function is not to legislate, but to debate according to certain rules (Redlich 1908b, 215).

Parliamentary bodies are commonly perceived as representative institutions in the context of a state. Here parliamentary politics is seen as an activity that essentially relates to the practice of debate. This also invites one to think that other debating assemblies may be considered ‘parliamentary bodies’ within a certain political culture. Redlich’s definition encourages us to theorise on the idea of a deliberative assembly without the constraints and burdens of representation on a national scale. In fact, debating procedures — the backbone of British parliamentary politics — was already established at a time before democratic representation had even been conceptualised.¹

Challenging the view that the procedural formalisation of debate is only a tool for the political management of a state, this study focuses on examining the ways in which the Union Societies at Cambridge and Oxford adopted and used parliamentary procedure for political purposes of their own. It interprets the Union Societies as being part of the nineteenth-century parliamentary political culture. By the end of the nineteenth century the Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies were considered ‘training grounds’ for statesmen. Indeed, a considerable number of their former members went on to enter Parliament.

¹ However, in its conflict with the government of Charles I the Parliament claimed to ‘virtually’ represent the nation (see Skinner 2005).

For nineteenth-century British politics, Parliament represented a place where debates on matters of national consequence were conducted. Macaulay, for instance, described parliamentary government as ‘government by speaking’ (Macaulay 1859), and Bagehot (1872) equally spoke of ‘government by discussion’. Debates and the skills needed to participate in them were highly regarded in Britain as contributing to the fair transaction of public business. Such high regard for speech and debate was unprecedented, and it had further political implications: it shaped the way politics itself was understood. It became important for parliamentarians to show that they participated in House of Commons’ debates, and they took more opportunities to speak. However, this put the parliamentary forms and practices of proceedings under strain, leading to a situation where solutions were sought through revising the rules of debate. Since 1837 the British parliament had appointed numerous select committees to investigate possibilities to change the rules in order to make the proceedings more efficient. As will be shown in this study, this practice was adopted also in the Union Societies. By the end of the 1840s the Union Societies had set up their own ‘select committees’ to revise the rules as well.

The focus on debate made it increasingly important for parliamentarians to know the rules and traditions of parliamentary work. In the nineteenth century the general public also became informed about House of Commons procedures. The publication of parliamentary proceedings, which had occurred only unofficially in the eighteenth century, played a key role in spreading parliamentary ideas and terminology. The interchange of debate practices between Parliament and debating societies created a unique political culture. In the 1880s it even resulted in the emergence of parliamentary debating societies that emulated parliamentary proceedings. Even after World War II, British debating societies still had distinctly parliamentary qualities. An American debating team made a tour to Britain in 1948 and reported in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* of the debating styles in British universities, the Union Societies in particular:

There is no doubt in our minds that the British student with political aspirations regards the University Union as the training ground for, and the springboard to, national politics [...]. (Temple & Dunn 1948, 50)

Comparing the American debating style to the British, the writers noted that the Union debates carefully followed parliamentary procedure. The Americans commented on the fact that the Union Societies had their own debating halls and the activities were not supervised by the university authorities. They also told of the high quality of debate, even though no Speech Departments or instructors of public speaking were to be found in the universities visited, unlike the case was in the United States (ibid. 52-53). This indicates that the Union Societies played a significant role in British debate instruction in the twentieth century as well.

In this study it will be shown that the Union Societies belong to the tradition of British debating societies. The British debating tradition fostered various

practices that in the nineteenth century acquired more decidedly parliamentary features. The Union Societies were pioneers in this, which was realised, in particular, by their practice of proposing parliamentary-styled motions.

What would be the benefits of knowing parliamentary procedure today? In our times, it is seldom the case that voters in a parliamentary democracy actually know the procedural ways in which parliaments work. Social scientists and political research have not insisted on the importance of understanding the rules and traditions that guide parliamentary proceedings. Given that the procedure actually frames parliamentary debates would it not help democratic politics gain greater legitimacy and make research on parliamentary politics more meaningful if we were to extend our knowledge of procedure? Without examining the democratic developments of the British politics, this study offers an alternative way of seeing this historical building-block which still ultimately legitimises the politics in parliamentary democracies.

1.2 The problematics and approach of the study

The British parliament attained a paradigmatic status as a deliberative assembly during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It also became the model for other assemblies and associations. Despite its relevance for understanding the kind of political action that takes place in a deliberative assembly, parliamentary debate has not been accorded much attention in the field of political science overall. Academic discussion on public deliberation has recently been dominated by the philosophical idea of 'deliberative democracy'. Jürgen Habermas, in particular, has been extremely influential in defining what public deliberation should be in the context of parliamentary politics. One of his main contributions has been to incorporate the concept of 'communicative power' in democratic theory (Flynn 2004, 434). He maintains that 'all political power derives from the communicative power of citizens' (Habermas 1996, 170). Promoting a political setting where state and society are two separate, competing spheres of action, he argues that the dynamics of publicity is a constituent element of politics.

In his *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (1962), Habermas famously argues that the democratisation of Western European countries was achieved by the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere. In his narrative, what we call the 'public sphere', was constituted when private people, for the first time, claimed their right to engage in public debates on matters concerning themselves (Habermas 1989, 27). The British case is taken as the best model of an active public sphere that has formed inside the 'political realm'. The British public sphere is described as having emerged through 'forces' that tried to influence state authorities through appeals to the 'critical public' (ibid. 57).

There are at least two problems with Habermas's argument. He seems to assume that parliamentary politics is legitimately constituted only through the

public sphere. While he considers the influence of the public sphere as the origin of political activity, the underlying assumption seems to be that politics as an activity is only found in opposition to a political system. This view undermines the political activity in a parliament. Secondly, instead of treating political activity as a struggle between opposing views, he sees politics as constituting a realm where 'reason is put to use' (cf. Habermas 1989, 35). In his view the political realm is constituted by the articulation of common aims through popular sovereignty. For him, the public sphere is, essentially, a normative concept that legitimises political decisions.

Procedurally, Habermas's model of 'popular sovereignty' (Flynn 2004, 433) includes the idea that the non-institutionalised public sphere invents and provides issues for the agenda of the political system. The public sphere has the advantage of being able to deliberate on issues without the pressure to make decisions. At the same time, it tries to ensure that the laws legislated are for the benefit of the public (ibid. 440). The political struggles within a political institution, such as parliament, are seen as constituting a threat: the decisions made within that political system are likely to be affected by institutional political struggles that are foreign to the concerns of the public at large. This concern may be related to the contingency of politics itself: political activity is likely to produce unexpected consequences.

The normative aspect of Habermas's public sphere theory limits the approach of political research to 'what it ought to be' instead of 'what it is about'. The study of parliamentary procedure, in contrast, gives the chance to focus on the activity of politics itself (cf. Ihalainen & Palonen 2009, 21), directing attention to the formalised rhetorical struggles on which parliamentary politics is constituted instead of concentrating on the end products. Furthermore, the origin of Parliament is not found in a conflict involving publicity ('Öffentlichkeit'), but rather in the checks and controls on government finances (cf. Tomkins 2005, esp. ch. 3).

The British House of Commons is well known for its ancient traditions and rules which for centuries remained unwritten. John Hatsell's *Precedents of Proceedings in the House of Commons*, published in 1781, was the first attempt to provide a comprehensive account of parliamentary procedure. Previously there had been a few compilations² of established rules, but they did not attempt to cover the proceedings as a whole. Hatsell's (1733-1820) volume remained the authority on parliamentary procedure well into the 1800s. He was followed by Thomas Erskine May (1815-1886) with the first treatise on parliamentary procedure, *A Treatise upon the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, in 1844.³ May's work was reprinted eight times during his lifetime, and after his

² For example, Sir Thomas Smith's *Common-wealth of England and the Manner of Government Thereof* (1612), Scobell's *Memorials of the Method and Maner of Proceedings in Parliament ...* (1656), and Hakewill's *Modus tenendi Parliamentum: or, The Manner of Holding Parliaments in England ...* (1659).

³ Thomas Jefferson's *A Manual of Parliamentary Practice: for the Use of the Senate of the United States*, which covered a vast range of previous sources, was already published

death it continued to be considered the most authoritative work on parliamentary procedure.

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and Josef Redlich (1869-1936) also contributed to the genre of procedural tracts. Bentham's *Essay on Political Tactics* (1791), which addressed the question of the proper workings of a legislative assembly and was to be a guide for the establishment of the French National Assembly, is considered a classic. He had a more theoretical approach to the procedure of a deliberative assembly, whereas Redlich's work provides an historical reading of the British parliamentary procedure. Lord Campion's (1958) manual for members of Parliament also starts with an excursion into the history of the procedure, which offers invaluable information about the contexts in which the procedure was formed and revised.

In more recent studies on British parliamentary politics, the role of procedure has been largely overlooked. Only a few scholarly studies have emphasised its importance. Gronbeck (1982) has paid particular attention to parliamentary procedure of the eighteenth century. He has contributed to Foord's (1964) work on the tactics and techniques that the opposition members used in the period. Lord Norton's (2001) treatment of parliamentary procedure, in turn, concentrates on procedure as a constraining force on government policies. In the field of policy studies, procedure has also been considered in connection with the agenda setting of governments. It is perceived as a set of rules instrumental for the formation of political agendas (Schwartz 2008, 353). In her study on British parliamentary reform in the twentieth century, Kelso (2009) recognises procedure as an important part of the political system. Her starting point is that institutionally established norms and values shape reforms. From the perspective of historical institutionalism, she acknowledges the value of procedure. However, procedure is not treated as a vital parliamentary resource or condition of acting politically.

Norton connects the lack of research on procedure to the early twentieth-century perceptions of the decline of Parliament. The focus of studies on parliamentary procedure, he writes, has been guided by perceptions of a Parliament that is confronted by external pressures (Norton 2001, 14-15). That perspective led to the abandonment of focus on procedure and its political aspects. Instead, it seems that most of the studies conducted on nineteenth-century British parliamentary politics have an emphasis on the representative or party-political aspects.⁴ This is unsurprising, given that this was the century

in 1801. Although it predated May's work, it was not referred to in British procedural tracts due to its specialisation for the American context. However, it is important to note that Jefferson's *Manual* was adopted by the US House of Representatives as the main authority on its procedure.

⁴ For British parliamentary history, see e.g. Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Act*, London 1973; Norman Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel: A Study in the Technique of Parliamentary Representation, 1830-1850*, London 1952; Angus Hawkins, *Parliament, Party, and the art of politics in Britain*, Chicago 1987. For history of political thought, see e.g. Stefan Collini, Donald Winch and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: a study*

when most of the decisive extensions of suffrage were enacted. However, the bulk of the literature seems to lack discussion on the effects these major pieces of legislation had on parliamentary politics. Steinmetz (2002), however, stands apart by focusing on the conceptual changes that took place in the political language inside British Parliament around the 1832 Reform Act.

In the course of this study it will be argued that parliaments are not the only assemblies that can operate in parliamentary terms. It will be shown that the political activities of the Union debating societies established in the two English universities in the early nineteenth century were also framed by an interpretation of politics essentially guided by procedure. The question then follows: *to what extent and in what respects did the Union Societies adopt parliamentary procedure?*

The Union Societies in Cambridge and Oxford are private debating societies founded by university students. Prior to their emergence, there had already existed several student debating clubs in the English universities whose origins have partly been attributed to the inspiration provided by still earlier academic debating societies such as the Speculative Society of Edinburgh (Martin 2000, ch. 1). Many of the Union Societies' members had also participated in the activities of the Eton Society or other public school debating societies before entering university (Hollis 1965, 12).

The Union Societies were not directly involved in party politics on a national scale. They debated on a number of issues which, occasionally, had partisan political overtones, but clearly no single political theme. Compared to such institutions as the Pitt Club, the Reform Club or the Carlton Club,⁵ the Union Societies had a quite different purpose. Whereas the others aimed at strengthening contacts among like-minds with a shared political agenda, the Union Societies were simply founded on the idea of acquiring debating skills.

In his autobiography Charles Wordsworth (1806-1892), a classical scholar and later bishop of St Andrews, described the excitement of the early nineteenth century and how it had turned him into a 'keen politician' eager to attend the debates at the House of Commons (Wordsworth 1891, 82). Wordsworth was Gladstone's private tutor at Oxford, and they were both members of the Union Society. At Cambridge Union Society his contemporaries Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) and Winthrop Mackworth Praed (1802-1839) were both elected to Parliament. Praed was described by Lord Lytton as 'the readiest and most pungent speaker at the Union Debating Society' (Bulwer-Lytton 1883, 227). It would be easy to assume that the Union Societies

in nineteenth-century intellectual history, Cambridge 1983; John W. Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals: continuity and change in English political thought*, Oxford 1988.

⁵ After the death of William Pitt the Younger in 1806 numerous clubs named after him were founded all over the country. The purpose of Pitt Clubs was to preserve the great leader's fame and remember his legacy through annual dinners and other commemorative events (Fletcher 1935, 2-3). The Reform and Carlton Clubs were founded for the promotion of pro- or anti-Reform Act policies, respectively.

had a direct role in national politics.⁶ However, success in a Union Society did not always lead to a political career. Especially in the early years of their existence, a vast majority of members did not become involved in parliamentary politics after graduation (cf. Meisel 2001, 37), and Macaulay and Praed, despite being called the most effective speakers in the Union, never attained the Union presidency (Hudson 1939, 87).

Especially in the latter part of the century the debates of Union Societies drew the attention of the press. Members themselves started to inform the papers about the topics of the debates. In 1873 *The Times* reported on the fiftieth anniversary of the Oxford Union Society. There the history of the society was connected with the parliamentary political culture of the time:

The Oxford Union has now worked for half a century as a school for history, politics, oratory, and conversational logic, with a good deal more than the average success of a regular University department. [...] In the course of these fifty years we have become a nation of public speakers. Every one speaks now, and tolerably well, too. Any country gentleman, or respectable tradesman taking a part in local affairs, might well compound for a speech a day, and be glad of that relief from the speeches of his neighbours. (*The Times* 1873, 1)

References to Union Societies also sometimes appeared in the House of Commons debates. For instance, in the second reading of the Parliamentary Reform Bill in 1866, Disraeli referred to Gladstone's past in the Oxford Union Society, after having just acquainted himself with the Society's records (House of Commons, 27 April 1866, cc94-95). Earlier that year the Union Societies had been mentioned in a second reading of a bill proposed by George Göschen,⁷ a former member of the Oxford Union, regarding the religious restrictions in English university education (House of Commons, 21 March 1866, cc659-715).

Given these parliamentary connections, it is curious that the Union Societies have not previously been studied from the parliamentary perspective in relation to their debating activities. The histories of the Union Societies⁸ have been written mainly by former presidents (e.g. Skipper 1878, Cradock 1953, Hollis 1965, Walter 1984, Parkinson 2009). In numerous political memoirs and biographies the Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies are typically referred to as the 'training grounds' for parliamentarians, Gladstone being the most eminent example (e.g. Reid 1899, also cf. Cradock 1953, 1). In more recent research the activities of the Cambridge Union Society have been studied in

⁶ The two ancient English universities had representation in Parliament until 1950. For a discussion on the history of university representation, see Meisel 2011.

⁷ George Joachim Göschen (1831-1907) was elected a Liberal MP for City of London in 1863. He was educated at Rugby School under Tait and admitted at Oriel College in 1850. During his political career he served in Gladstone's government (1868-1871). In the early 1850s he had been active in the Oxford Union Society: he was a member of the standing committee from Easter term 1851 to Lent term 1853, during which time he served three terms as treasurer and one term as secretary. He was elected president for Michaelmas term in 1853.

⁸ The Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies should not be confused with the student unions or other student organs connected with the university. Students founded the Union Societies, but universities did not initially approve or support their activities.

connection with the Irish question (see Martin 2000). The Oxford Union Society, in turn, has inspired an ethnographical study (see Graham 2005). By far the most interesting study to treat the Union Societies as part of a unique culture of public speech is Meisel's *Public Speech and the Culture of Public Life in the Age of Gladstone* (2001), in which the Union Societies are treated as oratorical training grounds for career advancement.

For Meisel (2001, 42), the Union Societies provided systematised oratorical training for students, as this was lacking in the university curricula. He emphasises the changes in political oratory, considering the Union Societies as the embodiment of 'the new connection between public life and oratory' that was just emerging at the time (ibid. 41-42). His study places the Union Societies in a more general framework of the culture of public speech. However, his approach pays more attention to the 'oratorical' than the 'parliamentary' tradition. Bevis (2010) has also written about the effects of oratory on nineteenth-century literary culture from Romanticism to Modernism. He argues that prose was permeated by a growing fascination with parliamentary politics. It seems that both Bevis and Meisel, even though they acknowledge the relevance of Parliament to the political culture from the perspective of oratory, concentrate more on what was happening outside Parliament than on parliamentary politics itself.

1.3 The sources and my interpretation

This study aims at contributing to research on parliamentary politics from a procedural perspective by focusing on the Union Societies' use of the parliamentary mode of political activity. Most of the previous studies on Union Societies lack a consideration of their actual debating practices, although their links to the parliamentary culture are recognised (e.g. Meisel 2001, Martin 2000). To me it seems relevant to contextualise the Union Societies in that culture by looking at how the contemporary interpretations of parliamentary politics were present in the way Union Societies functioned as debating societies. Therefore, I propose to look at the debating activities of the Union Societies as a form of politics that was immersed in the parliamentary political culture of its day.

What are the benefits of conducting procedural rather than, for example, conceptual research into parliamentary politics? In a parliament it is ultimately the procedure that guides the debate. First of all, procedure ensures the basic rhetorical setting of speaking for and against specific issues. Another point is that procedure formalises and provides legitimacy to the proceedings. In other words, the parliamentary politics of debate would not exist without procedure. Conceptual research on the proceedings is valuable in the sense of investigating the conceptual changes that occur in parliamentary politics over long periods of time (see e.g. Steinmetz 2002, Ihalainen 2010). The procedural point of view, for its part, helps to complement the study of the conceptual changes by revealing the parliamentary political conflicts behind them.

Since the significance of procedure in guiding political action is my starting point, I examine the extent to which procedure defined Unions' debates. The emphasis of my analysis is on the Union Societies, although the House of Commons in the period between the parliamentary reforms of 1832 and of 1867 serves as the most relevant point of reflection. As argued above, a point-for-point comparison would not be relevant, since the institutional frameworks are designed for different purposes. The activities of the Union Societies are, therefore, treated as representing a form of parliamentary politics in a very broad sense.

A feature the House of Commons and the Union Societies do share is that both are deliberative assemblies with sets of rules designed for debating on motions. As mentioned at the outset, my point of departure is the idea presented by Redlich (1908b, 215) that parliamentary bills are, in fact, the result of a series of motions. It then follows that the aims of the political activity of a parliamentary body are twofold: firstly, to persuade what kinds of motions are put onto the official agenda, and secondly, to debate those motions that are successfully put onto the agenda. Looked at from a procedural perspective, the Union Societies have the basic features of deliberative bodies: they operate with motions and resolutions. According to Redlich, the aim of a deliberative assembly is to ensure the fair treatment of issues on the agenda with certain rules for the benefit of the majority, but without forgetting the rights of the minority to express their opinions (*ibid.*). In short, a motion is treated as a matter of debate before it is turned into a resolution by the majority of the House.

The primary sources of this study have been selected for the purpose of investigating the interpretations of parliamentary-styled debate and the use of procedure in the Union Societies between the parliamentary reforms of 1832 and 1867. It is during this period that the concept of 'parliamentary government' was introduced. The political situation after the Reform Act of 1832 required the members of parliament to re-orient their approach to public speaking: '*In Parliamentary Government, as it now exists among us, the contest for power is still substantially a contest for the favour of the People*' (Grey 1864, 27). This important shift in the conception of debate should be seen as the contextual background for analysing the parliamentary culture of debate during the period. It is noteworthy that there has not been any previous research that combines parliamentary procedure tracts and rhetorical literature in a manner informative of this conceptual shift. For that reason I have had to construct interpretations of my own of House of Commons debate practices and procedural revisions after the 1832 Reform Act (Chapter 2) and, from non-parliamentary types of sources, of the British culture of debate more generally (Chapter 3). It was important to identify and acquaint myself with them so that I could use the findings in my subsequent analysis of the Union Societies (Chapters 4 and 5).

By using a rhetorical reading I offer an interpretation of the way the Union Societies became part of the parliamentary culture of debate in the nineteenth century. I have chosen the rhetorical perspective because it has been a neglected part of political science, despite the role of rhetoric in the Western tradition of

government and civic politics (cf. Finlayson 2004, 529). Furthermore, it seems to me that rhetoric should be studied in this type of case, where the political actors have received a classical education. I have analysed how certain debate topics, concepts and procedures correspond to the agenda of the actual parliamentary politics of the time and the rhetorical practices related to them. This kind of rhetorical reading of the Union Societies' proceedings has not been attempted previously.

There are some advantages and disadvantages related to being the first to pursue an enterprise such as this. As I am not writing a history of the Union Societies as associations, I have been unable to rely on previous studies and had to construct my own research design. I needed to reorganise the sources related to the Union Societies debates because they remained largely unindexed and fragmentary. This is the first time that a comprehensive corpus of the debating topics of the Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies has been compiled.

However, the major disadvantage is that I had to devote much time to the collection and categorisation of the relevant material. I collected all relevant sources for my research from the original records. The archives of the Cambridge Union Society are situated in the Manuscripts Department of the Cambridge University Library, and the Oxford Union Society has placed all of its historical documents in the Oxfordshire Record Office in Cowley. The minute books of the Union Societies contain records of both private and public business meetings.⁹ There is also a vast amount of material related to the Union Societies which does not relate to its debates.

Almost all minute books still survive; only Volume 6 of the Cambridge Union Society minutes is missing. The proceedings in the minutes are handwritten in chronological order. The debate topics are rarely indexed, and the volumes usually do not have any page numbers. The fact that at some point the Union Societies started to print records of their public business meetings (i.e. debates concerning public issues) has helped me to go through them more systematically. The printed records most likely began when the Union Societies started to send copies of their transactions and rules to each other.

On the basis of the public business meeting records, I compiled lists of the debate topics (see Appendices 1 and 2). Additionally, the private business meetings containing issues regarding management of the societies had to be transcribed from the original minute books to an electronic form in their order of

⁹ The public business meetings did not refer to debates that were open to the public. The Union Societies are private organisations, and until the 1860s they rarely allowed any information about their activities to be published without their permission. 'Public' refers to meetings in which debate topics relate to matters outside the Society; 'private' refers to meetings on topics internal to the Society, such as maintenance of premises, the collections of the Union Society library and revision of the rules. The House of Commons did not hold 'public' meetings separately from 'private' meetings, and the meanings of 'public' and 'private' are different there: public relates to bills affecting the general public, 'private' to bills affecting localities or smaller groups of individuals (Thomas 1971, 46).

appearance. I then highlighted my notes mainly for meetings in which revision of rules was discussed.

The records of the Union Societies contain printed rules which are relevant for the purposes of my study. The rules and regulations of the Cambridge Union Society were written down almost every year, sometimes even twice a year in cases where additional amendments were made during private business meetings. The records of the society's bylaws between the 1830s and 1870s, unfortunately, are incomplete as the records for 1835 through 1840 are missing. However, as they were frequently altered, we may find traces of what was changed in the private business meetings from the minute books. The oldest surviving records of the rules and regulations of the Oxford Union Society are from 1837. Several years between then and 1867 are missing from the archives. As in the case of the Cambridge Union Society, however, we can trace some changes in the rules from the private business meetings. In some cases the rules were handled in special private business meetings (at Oxford Union Society they were also called 'extraordinary meetings'). The decision to arrange such a meeting was made by the president of the society, who had the discretionary power to call a general meeting on any matter that required special attention (CUS laws 1828, 4; OUS rules 1837, 5).

The minute books are not verbatim accounts of what was actually said in the meetings.¹⁰ They do not reveal the argumentation for and against the motions that were made. The public business meetings were usually documented as follows: first, the date of the meeting as well as the name of the chairman were given; then, the motion and its proposer, and the speakers for and against; and last, the final vote (or 'division') showing the majority for or against. The 'division' represents the act of making a resolution based on the motion. The motions followed parliamentary models such as 'That in the opinion of this House' or 'That this House do now adjourn'.¹¹ Occasionally amendments¹² to the original motion and motions of adjournment were proposed as well.

The manner in which the minute books were written also affected the way I constructed the corpus. The fact that no argumentation is recorded in the sources has influenced the framing of the research questions, namely, it prompted me to analyse the agendas and the procedure debates. Furthermore, the scarcity of records meant that I have had to make maximum use of the records available. It was, therefore, important to select the sources from a relatively long period of time and from two Union Societies. That helped in making the

¹⁰ Reports of the proceedings of Parliament for this period were not written verbatim, either. In fact, that was not the intention of most of the contemporaries (see Section 2.2). Until well into the 1800s the reconstructions of parliamentary debates were mainly compiled from newspaper reports (see e.g. Wahrman 1992, 90; also Jordan 1931).

¹¹ The Oxford Union Society started using the parliamentary style of formulating motions before the Cambridge Union Society. The issue is discussed in Chapter 4.

¹² An amendment is a 'subsidiary motion' that is proposed for the purpose of changing the formulation of the original motion under debate (Redlich 1908b, 218).

comparisons and placing the objects of the study into the more general political context of their time.

In my view, the key way to proceed with this type of corpus is to pay attention to how the debate topics are formulated (see Chapter 4). The records of Union Society meetings are also analysed from a point of view as to what kinds of rhetorical strategies were available and employed in their particular procedural settings (see Chapter 5). My rhetorical reading is based on my earlier knowledge of classical rhetoric. Previously I conducted a study¹³ in which I analysed a consumer advocacy magazine from the perspective of classical Roman rhetoric with the intention of providing an alternative way of looking at public deliberation in our own time. More generally, I am interested in how persuasion is part of political activity in public assemblies, which led me to become interested in Westminster and how its deliberative practices have developed historically.

It has been noted that classical rhetoric is embedded in parliamentary practices and has been since the Renaissance (see e.g. Mack 2002, Skinner 2008, also Palonen 2008). Still, in the majority of British eighteenth-century writings on Parliament, this aspect was not recognised (Pulkkinen 2008, 51). It was not until the nineteenth century that the deliberative aspects of parliamentary debate became accentuated. My aim here is to explore those aspects by providing one way of looking at them from a rhetorical viewpoint.

The ideological notions of the British parliament (Seaward 2011) as well as the concepts of parliamentary functions, such as deliberation, sovereignty and representation, have recently received scholarly attention (e.g. Ihalainen 2010). Furthermore, the parliamentary style of politics has been recognised as being closely connected with the rhetorical paradigm (Soininen & Turkka 2008, also Palonen 2012). Especially in linguistics, the rhetorical side of parliamentary politics has been studied as part of discourse analysis. Ilie (2010, 1-2) has argued that the importance of parliamentary discourse analysis lies in the fact that it provides knowledge of parliamentary rules and practices. Rhetoric is used as a tool to explore parliamentarians' linguistic strategies and to reveal inherent bias.

In debate situations political agents are required to establish their political positions and further their political agendas by speaking to motions. At the same time they are constituting and re-constituting the procedure itself. In this study, I propose to look at the rhetoric of parliamentary politics from the viewpoint of how Union Society political activity was framed and legitimised by it. In other words, rather than focusing on revealing hidden agendas of political agents, I concentrate on the debating practices and how they are carried out in the parliamentary mode.

¹³ I defended my unpublished Licentiate thesis *Poliittinen ironia Adbusters -lehdessä: Analyysi klassisesta pilkkaretorikasta kulutuskulttuurikriittisessä tekstissä (Political Irony in the Adbusters Magazine: An analysis of classical rhetoric of ridicule in a text critical of consumer culture)* at University of Jyväskylä in 2008.

Based on rhetorical and historical literature, I assert, in Chapter 3, that British conceptions of parliamentary oratory largely ignored the deliberative aspects of debate from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. I suggest that the political importance of deliberation and its role in the parliamentary culture of debate was only realised in the course of the nineteenth century. I have focused on finding out the common deliberative aspects that were present in the nineteenth-century British parliamentary culture of debate. In the present study, I have used rhetorical genre and *topos* analysis. These have been employed especially in Chapter 4, in which I have sought to recover the politics of agenda-setting in the Union Societies. This I have done by conducting a rhetorical reading of the minutes of the public meetings, including information on both motions and resolutions, which constituted the public business of the Union Societies.

The analysis prioritises the procedural forms over the substance of the motions, although the examples I provide also show how closely the members of the Union Societies followed the politics of the day. Not only should we concentrate on the parliamentary terminology and procedure, we should also speculate on whether the topics would have been presented in an actual parliament in the first place. In debating societies, certain questions may be proposed merely for the sake of argument or for the purpose of practising defence, which would not be possible in a national parliament.

The Union Society motions indicate a systematic, repetitive use of certain expressions. In Chapter 4 I categorise the expressions under four interrelated *topoi*: 'vote of confidence', 'principle', 'character' and 'expediency'. Even though the *topoi* may seem to overlap, they do indicate starting points for further genre analysis of how political agency was rhetorically conceived in the Union Societies.

The four categories above should be considered as abstractions of the debates, not representations of their substance. In classical rhetoric *topoi* refer to conventions that are learnt and used in appropriate circumstances. Through conducting a genre analysis on the basis of the *topoi* I have identified the deliberative elements involved. The *topos* of 'character' rhetorically focuses attention on certain political conduct as justified or commendable. 'Principle' takes a distance from the conduct itself and focuses the argumentation on what is or is not a desirable course of action. 'Vote of confidence' directs attention to whether or not some policy or action merits approval. The *topos* of expediency refers to action that is concerned with the solving of a practical problem.

I have also highlighted some tropes and figures in the process of getting a clearer, overall grasp of the corpus. For example, I identified the use of the rhetorical figure of *correctio* in an Oxford Union's debate in which the president was accused of 'one-sidedness' (see ch. 5, p. 126). However, I have not tried to identify all of the rhetorical tropes and figures in a systematic manner. Similarly, I have not endeavoured to present in detail the political events that are related to the period.

I argue that the proposing of motions in a parliamentary manner instead of simply raising questions for discussion is what defined the Union Societies as deliberative assemblies. This becomes especially apparent in the records of the private business meetings. In my analysis in Chapter 5, I continue tracing the rhetorical *topoi* identified in Chapter 4 in instances where there was contention over defining the wording and content of the eventual resolutions. The majority of these cases involved challenging the role of the president.

Presidents of Union Societies had considerable powers. They were at the same time heads of the societies as well as chairs of the debates. The procedure of the society meetings gave the presidents the ultimate authority to interpret the rules. In the early years of the societies this created much disorder. However, along with the establishment of codified rules and more liberal membership policies by the 1850s, the Union Societies became better organised and more widely accepted among university students. At the same time the role of the president became even more significant as the officers of the society formed standing committees and adopted some of the characteristics of parliamentary government. However, the presidency remained a political office, even with respect to the duties of the chair. This is one of the differences that shows most clearly that the Union Societies did not always follow the example of the House of Commons. Whereas the Speaker of the House of Commons did not participate in the debates of Committees of the whole House anymore, a president of a Union Society was allowed to participate in the politics.

My intention has been to present an interpretation of a phenomenon that, in my view, has wider political implications in the field of parliamentarism and in the study of political rhetoric. My analysis of Union Society debates shows that the rules of debate and procedure can be considered as empowering members, by allowing them to debate on an equal footing, instead of constraining them, as often understood today (cf. Norton 2001). Of course, parliamentary procedure has undergone changes since the nineteenth century. However, the persuasive element preserved by procedure still remains a provider of political legitimacy in many public assemblies and associations. In that respect the *topoi* identified in this study might be useful in providing a fresh perspective for studies of the political rhetoric used in the public assemblies of today.

1.4 Parliamentary procedure and the practices of the Union Societies

Before I lay out the general narrative of this study, it is first necessary to give a short presentation of parliamentary procedure and the practices adopted in the Union Societies. In both Union Societies, parliamentary procedure was directly or indirectly referred to as an authoritative source of conduct. For instance, at Oxford Union Society one of the members sought precedent in a House of Commons practice (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 4 February 1858). Also, in 1844,

a member of the Cambridge Union Society insisted that the president should 'regulate his conduct as nearly as possible by the precedents of the "House of Commons"' (CUS minute book vol. 13, 26 February 1844). But already in 1839 the Cambridge Union Society, in a special committee formed to recommend amendments to its rules, mentioned parliamentary procedure. In the committee's report, there was a suggestion that the president of the society, while performing the functions of a chairman in a debate, 'should keep to the behavior of the House of Commons' (CUS minute book vol. 10, 130-132).

British parliamentary procedure is based on traditions and precedents that have remained largely unchanged for centuries. Campion (1958, 3) described it as a settled parliamentary practice that is only modified over time. It is adjusted according to constitutional arrangements. In that sense, revision of procedure also implies a redefinition of the power relations between the constitutive parts of Parliament (i.e. the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Crown) (ibid. 1). Awareness of the traditions, learning what is permitted, prohibited or addressed by the rules, opens up new horizons for how to act in the way that is most beneficial for one's own political ends.

The idea of protection of the minority had for centuries been the main purpose of parliamentary procedure (Redlich 1908a, 56). It had a long lasting effect on the debates in the House of Commons:

It is in debate alone that a minority can hope to compete with a majority; the forms of the house can ultimately assist neither party; but, so far as they offer any intermediate advantage, the minority have the greatest protection in forms, while the majority are met by obstructions to the exercise of their will. (May 1851, 221)

May's argument was that the forms of proceedings do not favour any party as such, as they are available equally for all who are involved in a debate. Also, he implies that the procedure is a tool to be used for political purposes, that is, the rules of debate do not specify to what end they should be used. What May seems to be suggesting, is that debate is the occasion where procedure could be freely used for one's own benefit.

The history of the legislative powers of the British House of Commons is connected with petitions. At least since the fourteenth century the House of Commons' proceedings were mainly related to petitions from outside and inside of Parliament. The individual and group petitions from outside of Parliament became later known as 'private bills', and the collective ones from members of the House of Commons were named 'public bills' (Campion 1958, 11).

According to Campion (1958, 13), the collective petitions are what turned Parliament into a legislative assembly. But as the powers of the House of Commons were strengthened in the course of the nineteenth century, its public business became seriously obstructed by private bills that, by this time, were also being proposed by members of parliament. Government business was delayed due to debates on the increasing amount of private members' bills. The increasing demands of dealing with the problem of time shortages, therefore, left a mark on the nineteenth-century procedure of the Commons (ibid.).

The Union Societies debated once a week during every academic term. In deliberative assemblies such as the Union Societies, debates do not have the urgency to conduct business. This used to be the case also in the House of Commons prior to the reform period.

Now that every word is taken down and that the speaker, particularly the prominent or Front Bench speaker, knows that he is addressing, not a private club, but a gathering that may embrace the whole nation, [...]; he cannot frisk and frolic in the flowery meads of rhetoric; he dare not "let himself go" as Chatham or Fox could afford to do. (Curzon 1913, 14)

The growth in the amount of legislation since then has gradually contributed to a change in British parliamentary speech. Curzon contrasts the oratory of the early twentieth-century Parliament to that which he attributes to a century before. There was now very little time left for 'full-dress debate', unlike the 'Golden Age' (Curzon 1913, 13). In comparison, the Union Societies were not affected by such drastic changes. While Parliament had to change its attitudes towards publicity and the press, the Union Societies did not have to confront such issues on a similar scale. However, they did debate on the secrecy of their debates on several occasions (see Section 2.3).

In the early nineteenth century, English university studies did not include substantial ways to practise disputation, though this had traditionally been part of curricula since the Middle Ages. In earlier times, when theology had been regarded as the most important academic subject, universities encouraged debating for the sake of apologetics (Gribble 1924, 41). The practice, however, was gradually lost during the eighteenth century and was part of the decline of the popularity of neo-classical rhetoric in the late seventeenth century (e.g. Skinner 2002, 122). By the early eighteenth century, English moral philosophy and political thought had lost almost all contact with classical rhetoric.

Since then, in the English universities, the classical scholars tended to keep out of controversies (Clarke 1945, 2). In contrast to the university curricula, the Union Societies enabled students not only to practise their debating skills, but also to get acquainted with topics they otherwise might miss. Early nineteenth-century English university studies still relied heavily, however, upon classical Latin and Greek, and students were required to master selected classical texts in the original language (Miller 1997, 157-158). At Cambridge, however, it was mathematics that was more emphasised in the curriculum. In the early nineteenth century, the universities introduced the honours system. Mathematics degrees were the only degrees offered by Cambridge until the 1850s, the classics being regarded only as of secondary importance. At Oxford, students were expected to prepare for an honours degree by learning ancient texts in the original language. Examinations in classics became available in Cambridge in 1824.¹⁴

¹⁴ It perhaps should be added that in the first half of the nineteenth century university teaching of classics was reportedly not up to the same standards as in public schools (Clarke 1959, 103). The university education relied mostly on tutoring which was not

Another important characteristic of the Union Societies, and one that coincided with the Parliament in the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century, was that their members had similar educational backgrounds. Their knowledge of the Classics contributed to a parity of skills between the debaters. The members shared the same classical references and in that way were able to deliberate on equal terms. In the nineteenth century classical references decreased and the rhetorical style expected of parliamentarians became more practical and goal-oriented. The centre role was accorded to procedure and rules of debate which guaranteed the fairness of the proceedings.

Even though most of the rules of Union Society debate were not identical to those of the House of Commons, similar ideas and terminology were applied. The term 'house' was adopted to denote meetings with legitimate powers to make resolutions. From 1845 onwards 'house' was mentioned in the Cambridge Union Society laws in a connection with the parliamentary formulation 'a motion put to the house' (see CUS laws 1845 Lent & Easter, 9). For example, at Oxford Union Society the minute books could be referred to as 'Journals of the House' (OUS rules 1837, 33).

Yet another example of the adoption of the terminology is found in the rules of Oxford Union Society: *'The question shall be put in form of a motion ; when it shall be competent for any Member to move an amendment'* (OUS rules 1837, 6). The questions under debate were not only called 'motions', they were also treated in the parliamentary manner. As was customary in the House of Commons, the issue proposed for debate, once accepted for deliberation, was considered thenceforth the possession of the house.

In the House of Commons a member who has given notice of a motion is considered the opener of the debate, although in some cases the member is allowed to use a proxy (Redlich 1908b, 217). A parliamentary question is formulated in a way that expresses a decision even before the deliberation, e.g. 'That the House do now adjourn' (Campion 1958, 20). Debate is then conducted for and against the motion. In the course of the debate members may propose additional or substitutive motions, also known as riders or amendments. These do not require any prior notice, and thus, may be moved at any time.

A debate begins after a motion has been put to the House in the form of a question by the Speaker of the House (Hansard 1857, 31). Similar procedure was used at Union Societies. On 6 May 1852, Göschen (see fn. 7, p. 15) of Oriel College proposed an amendment that the president of the Oxford Union Society should not have the power of 'closing the debate either in public or private business, at his discretion' (OUS minute book vol. VII, 6 May 1852). Göschen proposed that the phrase 'closing the debate' should be stricken and replaced 'putting the Question'. The amendment was voted on and passed. In this manner Göschen's amendment ensured that the Oxford Union Society rules

at the same level in all colleges. The colleges were financially and administratively independent. Obviously, it also meant that some colleges were better provided for than others.

would follow the parliamentary model: *'In putting any [...] Question, no argument or opinion is to be offered [...]'* (Hansard 1857, 38).

In the British parliament, the proposer of a motion cannot simply withdraw his or her motion without the permission of the House. Once the motion has been moved it ceases to belong to its proposer, and becomes the possession of the House instead (Redlich 1908b, 220). Members of the House of Commons do, however, have the liberty to withdraw motions they have proposed by asking leave of the House. Permission is granted only if the House is unanimous (Hansard 1857, 32). A similar rule was applied in the Oxford Union Society:

No Member shall alter or withdraw any Motion or Amendment which he shall have brought forward, or placed on the boards, without permission of the President; nor (if such Motion or Amendment have been seconded) without the consent of the seconder. (OUS rules 1858, 36)

Related to this, the Union Societies also applied the rule of giving notice (see Section 3.1). In the House of Commons a notice of proposing a motion must be given in advance in some cases, while other motions may be moved without discussion. The reason for providing notices relates to setting the agenda of the House. By receiving notice of what motions will be proposed and in what order, the House is adequately informed of upcoming business beforehand.

Union Society members did not have the right to speak twice during a debate (CUS laws 1824, 8; OUS laws 1837, 7), except in the case of private business meetings and committees of the whole house. That rule was also adopted from the House of Commons procedure:

It is a rule strictly observed in both houses, that no member shall speak twice to the same question, except, 1st, to explain some part of his speech which has been misunderstood; 2dly, in certain cases, to reply at the end of a debate; and, 3dly, in committee. (May 1844, 195)

Debates in committees are governed by slightly different rules than in plenary sessions. In the nineteenth century, parliamentary bills that reached committee stage were usually discussed in the form of the committee of the whole house. At Cambridge, Union Society meetings called to deal with appeals against the president's decisions were named 'committees of the whole house' in 1849 (CUS laws 1849, 8). However, private business meetings of both Union Societies already resembled a committee of the whole house in that members could speak multiple times. A difference was that the private business meetings were not part of any stage in a legislative process.

The Union Societies allowed the opener or proposer of a motion make a final reply at the end of debate, before the division. In the British parliament, no House decision on the basis of a question could become a resolution without a

vote. In practice, the division¹⁵ of votes determined which side of the question enjoys the majority. In some instances the size of the majority is of crucial importance. For example, in some cases a rule applies requiring a motion to receive a two-thirds majority to be carried. If the proponents of a motion expect that it will lose a division, they can have recourse to this procedure in order to ensure attendance of those members who will support them.

A member could postpone a debate to a later date by proposing a motion of adjournment of the House. Motions of adjournment may also be proposed without prior notice. Additionally, they may be used as an 'urgency motion' in cases which there is a specific question that needs the immediate attention of the House (Redlich 1908b, 219). Another form of adjournment is the 'motion of adjournment of debate', which in practice means a proposal to end debate on the question at hand. Redlich terms motions of adjournment 'accommodative' proposals. As such they are used to make room for proceedings in unexpected situations (Redlich 1908b, 219-220).

In the Union Societies as well, any member could propose an adjournment of debate at any time. A motion of adjournment could, effectively, end the debate. At Cambridge, the rule that the debates were supposed to end by 9:45 p.m. (CUS laws 1824, 1-2) was abolished by 1841. At Oxford, there did not exist at first any precise deadline for ending the debate, but a member could move that the House adjourn by a certain time; to pass, the motion required a qualified majority of votes (OUS rules 1839, 31). In 1865 a rule was added that, in cases of private business meetings where a time limit was applied and if no new business was scheduled to be presented after 11 p.m., the president could adjourn the House (OUS rules 1865, 4-5). In the Cambridge Union Society's private business meetings, motions of adjournment in general were used less than in Oxford. Instead, motions for suspending certain rules to deal with private business were frequently used in Cambridge. At first, only the president had the right to move for a suspension of a rule, but in 1853 standing committee members also gained the privilege to propose it. The motion to suspend a rule could be made without prior notice, but it needed a majority of three-fourths of the members present (CUS laws 1826, 4-5).

¹⁵ The term 'division' derives from the actual voting practise of the House of Commons. Usually the vote on motions was made *viva voce*, but in the case that at least two members challenged the vote, the Speaker had to agree to a 'division'. After strangers were asked to withdraw, members who had been present when the question was put were asked to move to either of the division lobbies, which were located adjacent to the House of Commons' chamber. The Speaker gave directions regarding which side was for the 'Ayes' and which the 'Noes'. (Redlich 1908b, 233-235) In the Union Societies, 'division' was adopted as a term to denote voting by any method.

1.5 The outline of the study

The study begins in Chapter 2 with a discussion of the procedure used in the nineteenth-century House of Commons. The chapter focuses on the constitutional setting as well as the procedural revision that was undertaken at that time. In 1832 the parliament passed the Great Reform Act, which was more or less a political compromise. However, it had unexpected consequences in terms of the constitutional setting. As Bagehot (2001, 98-99) described it, the House of Commons became a 'true sovereign' that governed the country in the form of a public meeting. Formerly, speaking in plenary sessions had mostly been left to leading parliamentarians. Now, however, all elected members of parliament were expected to take part in debates.

In Chapter 3 the attention shifts to how 'debate' was interpreted in British culture from the mid-eighteenth to the late nineteenth century. To that end, memoirs, parliamentary debates, committee reports, oratorical and procedural treatises as well as articles from contemporary newspapers and journals have been used. The sources are approached with a focus on the interchange of ideas between Parliament and the wider political culture. The aim of the chapter is to situate the Union Societies in the broader tradition of the debating culture of Britain.

As stated above, my reading of the Union Societies starts from the idea that they are 'parliamentary bodies'. It follows that there are two concomitant aspects for analysing the political activity of such bodies: the first involves how the agenda is formed; the second, how the agenda items are debated. The former I call 'the politics of agenda' and the latter 'the politics of debate'. In this study they are treated in two separate chapters, partly due to the fact that the Union Societies' minute books have mostly separate entries of their public and private business meetings. This feature distinguishes the Union Societies from the House of Commons: all issues on the House of Commons agenda were discussed in the same plenary sessions. As the proceedings in the House of Commons are necessarily different, it is important to treat the Union Societies as distinctly independent 'parliamentary bodies', albeit they all share the same parliamentary culture of debate.

The main analysis of the primary sources concerning the Union Societies has been divided between Chapters 4 and 5. The minute books and compilations of rules cover the period roughly from 1830 to 1870. The time period under investigation, a period when both the Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies were active,¹⁶ coincides with the two major parliamentary reforms of the nineteenth century. In Chapter 4 the Union Societies' public business meetings are analysed from the point of view of the formulation of

¹⁶ Also the Durham Union Society was founded in 1835 but its activities were less regular. Its surviving records are used in the study only as supplementary materials. All of the other Union Societies were largely established in the late nineteenth century.

motions, or a part of what I refer to as the politics of agenda. The starting point for this analysis is that the topics debated were formulated based on members' interpretations of parliamentary debate. In the British parliament it is an ancient rule that no debate is allowed without a motion. This is because a House can only give a definite resolution for or against to issues that take the form of a motion (Redlich 1908b, 215). The same rule was adopted in Union Societies: their topics of debate followed parliamentary procedure in that they were presented as motions. The manner in which the members formulated the motions also suggests that their rhetorical strategies were adopted from parliamentary procedure. In Chapter 4 the aim is to analyse those rhetorical strategies through a categorisation of their *topoi*.

In Chapter 5 the private business meetings of Union Societies are considered from the angle of the politics of debate. Breaking parliamentary procedure intentionally, or even a suggestion of disorderly behaviour, would probably have caused more harm than benefit to the parliamentarian. At stake, then, was the *ethos* of the parliamentarian. However, disorderly behaviour in the Union Societies was quite common, especially before the 1840s. By the end of the decade, both Union Societies had begun to revise their rules. The reason was to minimise the range of interpretation of the rules, which effectively increased the chair's powers to regulate debate. However, the rules were still often interpreted to one's own advantage. Such interpretations were a major source of the politics of debate in the Union Societies. Their private business meetings, which are analysed in Chapter 5,¹⁷ show how Union Society members both adhered to and at times challenged the parliamentary-styled procedural rules of their respective Societies.

¹⁷ Other sources are also referred to, such as Hansard publications and the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, as well as the alumni registers of both Cambridge and Oxford Universities.

2 THE DEBATING PROCEDURES OF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY HOUSE OF COMMONS

The period after the 1832 Reform Act is a time that saw the birth of procedural revisions in the British parliament. It was in this political context that the Whigs introduced the constitutional idea of 'parliamentary government', which in practice, gave the House of Commons the power to set up the cabinet. The aim of this section is to look at the constitutional context and the rhetoric relating to the procedural revision as it was undertaken by the select committees of the House of Commons. The idea of parliamentary government and how it related to the procedural traditions will be further elaborated in the following subsection 2.1. I argue that revision of procedure is a form of politics that has been used for redefining and modifying the accepted rules of debate towards one's own political ends. The emphasis will be on the analysis of committee reports and how they incorporated the arguments presented for and against the procedural reforms. Despite the fact that many of the suggested modifications were not adopted by the House of Commons, the rhetoric shows the politics of the revisions, which will be further analysed in the framework of the constitutional arrangement. The argumentation in Parliament shows that the revision of procedure was not only a question of technical efficiency, but also involved the political position and privileges of the members of Parliament.

2.1 'Parliamentary government' and the role of debate in the House of Commons

The constitutional idea of parliamentary government was dominant during the same period as parliamentary debate was featuring prominently in British political culture. Particularly between the 1832 and 1867 parliamentary reforms, the prominent mode of acting politically was, in Bagehot's words, through 'government by discussion' (Bagehot 1872). As a concept parliamentary government was adopted in 1835. However, the term 'parliamentary government' had ap-

peared already in 1832 and has been attributed to J. J. Park, Professor of English Law and Jurisprudence at King's College, London (e.g. Hawkins 1989, 641). Park's lectures on constitutional theory and practice were published as *The Dogmas of the Constitution* (1832). His main argument is that the practice of the British constitution does not correspond to the prevailing theories. In fact, Park maintains that, for the previous 150 years, there had been two 'concurrent, but essentially different' constitutions at work (Park 1832, 7).

In his view, the constitution actually represented the state of affairs of the time it was written, and had long since become outmoded with the current situation. He directs his criticism against the 'balance of powers' theory.¹⁸ The theory had in particular been endorsed by William Blackstone in his influential *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-1769). Park considers Blackstone's constitutional theory as having no relation to what was actually happening. He contends that the control of Parliament over its own deliberations had long since made the theory untenable since the Crown was simply unable to use its prerogative:

The real truth is, that these, which were at one time considered as practical checks in the constitution, have come, by change of circumstances, to be merely principles of extreme application, the resort to which would be indicative of an approaching dissolution of the constitution itself; and which, therefore, cannot with propriety be represented as *elements* of the constitution. (Park 1832, 58; emphasis in the original text)

Park's critique is directed at eminent constitutional theorists such as Blackstone and Paley who, he claims, have argued for a theory that does not exist in practice:

It was going on all the time that Mr. Justice Blackstone was living, and for a long time before that; and although, if we were to go far enough back to lose sight of this system of *parliamentary* government, we should lose it in a system, if it be possible, still more unlike that of the theory, — *prerogative government*, or government carried out of parliament, by the *Court*, or the *Privy Council*, or the great *officers of state*, amenable rather to parliament for their misdeeds, when grievous, than sharing with them the business of political management. (Park 1832, 40-41; emphasis in the original text)

In short, Park defines 'parliamentary government' as a constitutional practice that, though having been in use for a long time, had not yet been recognised in theory. Later research has supported Park's argument by claiming, for example, that the idea of ministerial solidarity can already be seen in the resignation of Lord North's cabinet in 1782 (Eulau 1942, 35).

The concept 'parliamentary government' dominated the constitutional discussion by the 1850s. In his pamphlet *Parliamentary Government* (1858) Earl Grey formulated it as follows:

¹⁸ According to the constitutional settlement, Britain had been a constitutionally limited monarchy since the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The balance of powers theory was based on an idea of the mutual check of power between three branches of government, the Crown, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons.

The powers belonging to the Crown [are] exercised through Ministers, who are held responsible for the manner in which they are used, who are expected to be members of the two Houses of Parliament, the proceedings of which they must be able generally to guide, and who are considered entitled to hold their offices only while they possess the confidence of Parliament, and more especially of the House of Commons. (Grey 1864, 4)

According to this interpretation of the constitution, the powers of the Crown were executed by ministers who were held responsible for their actions to the House of Commons. Grey was also arguing that parliamentary government had by now replaced the Blackstonean constitution, having taken place 'by gradual development of principles' (Grey 1864, 8).

Furthermore, Grey puts forward a definition of parliamentary ministry in which ministers are expected to be members of one of the houses of Parliament. However, this principle seems never to have been explicitly asserted (Redlich 1908b, 94). Grey's arguments were based on conventions that had by now become the political custom. The direct link created between the government and the parliament legitimised cabinet politics and made it increasingly difficult for the Crown to exercise its prerogative power (e.g. to appoint a government without the acceptance of the majority of the House of Commons). It has been suggested that the Crown's influence in parliamentary business was already declining well before 1832 (e.g. Foord 1947, 486-488). However, it has also been pointed out that as late as November 1834 a British monarch was allowed to use royal prerogative to remove a government that enjoyed the confidence of the House of Commons majority (Hawkins 2007, 152).

While Grey's interpretation of 'parliamentary government' became dominant, not all parliamentarians at the time endorsed the Whig explanation of the constitutional arrangement. Tory administrations prior to 1830 favoured a doctrine that emphasized order and independent executive power (Hawkins 1989, 647). Also, while Tory opposition leader from 1835 until 1841, Peel did not fully act according to the tenets of parliamentary government. Before 1835, when Peel became prime minister, William IV had dismissed the Melbourne government in order to prevent Whigs from aligning with radicals inside the Commons. William IV caused a scandal by asking Wellington to form a Tory government instead. Wellington suggested Peel for the premiership, but, as Peel was at that moment out of the country, he agreed to step in for the time being.

Finally, in its composition, the Peel government became almost indistinguishable from the Wellington government (Andr n 1947, 210). Once returned to Britain, Peel appealed to Lord Stanley to join the new government, and other moderate Whigs to support Stanley's inclusion, according to the wishes of the King (Hawkins 2007, 152). William IV used the royal prerogative to propose this alliance with the Whigs. Though Stanley, as a member of Grey's government, was partly responsible for passing the 1832 parliamentary reform, while the Conservative Peel had opposed it, they did share the same views on the Church question, which made them suitable allies.

Even though Peel supported the royal prerogative to form ministries, he was aware of the benefits of forming alliances inside Parliament as well. De-

spite almost certain victory for the Conservatives in the upcoming elections, Peel recognised that he had to comply with the principle of parliamentary government in order to stay in power. Peel decided to change his view publicly for the purpose of getting the support of the Whigs for his future government. He wrote an electoral programme entitled the *Tamworth Manifesto* after the name of his own constituency. The manifesto was aimed at blunting criticism of the Tory policy on reform. It was rhetorically designed to pre-empt any moderate Whig assertions about the Tories being obstacles to progress (Hawkins 2007, 159). The manifesto was published in *The Times*, which Wellington had earlier managed to persuade to take the side of the future Conservative government. In this way Peel managed to get favourable publicity for his new pro-reform policy. Although some Tories would not be favourable to the new tactics, Peel was counting on the majority of the Tory party to be amenable to compromise in order to remain in office (ibid. 160). By expressing his appreciation for the Whig reform policy, Peel was able to draw support for his election campaign from the opposition and thereby secure a majority in the House of Commons. In this sense Peel's campaign was the first in British electoral history where there were clear parliamentary elements involved (Andr n 1947, 221).

Another new characteristic that marked the 1835 elections was the greater role accorded to electoral organisation of the political parties (Andr n 1947, 221). Hawkins (1989, 642) argues that parliamentary parties were Park's solution to the constitutional dilemmas of parliamentary government. Parties' constitutional function was to protect parliamentary sovereignty from both the prerogatives of the monarch and the rash demands of the uneducated populace. Therefore, parties were considered 'political associations' inside Parliament that worked as safeguards against outside influence.

In Grey's arguments for parliamentary government the Whig effort to legitimise Parliament's educational role is conspicuous:

The mode in which our Parliamentary contests have been carried on, has had the further and great advantage of contributing much to instruct the Nation at large on all the subjects most deeply concerning its interests, and to form and guide public opinion. [...] The value of Parliament as an instrument for the instruction of the Nation, and for enabling it to arrive at just and wise conclusions on matters affecting its welfare, is hardly less than that which belongs to it as the organ for expressing and enforcing the national will when it has been deliberately formed. (Grey 1864, 37)

In Grey's opinion, then, parliamentary debates were a means of educating the nation. In this sense parliamentary government ensured that the representatives of the nation in Parliament would be actively involved in educating the populace in matters that concerned them.

In contrast to the Whig interpretation of the constitution, Peel and his followers did not accept the idea of parliamentary government according to which the legitimate use of executive powers was based on the ability of parties to consolidate opinions (Hawkins 1989, 652). Nevertheless, parliamentary majorities became of increasing consequence when 'parliamentary government' was

accepted as the basis of conduct in Westminster. As shown above, that was certainly acknowledged by Peel as well.

Hawkins maintains that parliamentary party activity in mid-century was actually conducted according to the principles of parliamentary government in the Whig sense (Hawkins 1989, 661). Along with the new emphasis on parliamentary majorities came new requirements and aims. This was echoed not only in Gladstone's 1838 essay (see Reid 1953), but also in Grey's conception of parliamentary government. A serious parliamentarian would now direct his efforts towards acquiring debating skills and securing a position in a ministry.

Grey mentions as one of the prerequisites of parliamentary government that ministers have the ability to gain the confidence of the nation through parliamentary debating contests (Grey 1864, 27). Although he does not consider debating skill the most important quality of a minister, he nevertheless argues that it is necessary if a minister is to secure his position:

Success as a Parliamentary debater is indeed far from being a certain index of a man's fitness for the duties of a Minister, but it is, at least, no bad test of intellectual power, and of the knowledge which a Minister possesses of the affairs entrusted to his management. No prompting by subordinates, and no assistance which can be commanded, can prevent the ignorance of a Minister, when it exists, from being brought to light by the strict ordeal of Parliamentary discussion. (Grey 1864, 34)

A more important quality in a minister than skill in debate, according to Grey, is the maintenance of character. In debate one might win backing for certain policies, but in order to keep such support a parliamentarian must maintain the good opinion of others. In a minister, Grey finds this quality the most significant of all: '*A man who has failed to establish, in the party he belongs to, a character for judgment and for ability, can hardly become, as the leader of the House of Commons, the most important member of a British Ministry*' (Grey 1864, 35). Character is, in his view, formed in the party the speaker belongs to. In rhetorical terms character refers to the ethos of a speaker. In the new framework of parliamentary government with its interplay between parliamentary majorities and the maintenance of ethos, it became increasingly important for parliamentarians to form alliances.

Grey's views on 'parliamentary government' were later echoed in Bagehot's *The English Constitution*, which was published in 1867. Bagehot's conception of 'cabinet government' does not resemble Grey's definition of 'parliamentary government' by accident. In Bagehot's view cabinet government plays an important role in educating the nation, but it also generates critical opposition against itself. Accordingly, he highlights the importance of debate as part of the process:

The great scene of debate, the great engine of popular instruction and political controversy, is the legislative assembly. A speech there by an eminent statesman, a party movement by a great political combination, are the best means yet known for arousing, enlivening, and teaching a people. The cabinet system ensures such debates, for it makes them the means by which statesmen advertise themselves for future and confirm themselves in present governments. (Bagehot 2001, 14)

Parliamentary debate, in Bagehot's opinion, is an educative tool that is created by cabinet government. Furthermore, he argues that the cabinet system benefits the representation of the people by allowing for Members of Parliament to engage with the general public.

[The cabinet system] brings forward men eager to speak, and gives them occasions to speak. The deciding catastrophes of cabinet governments are critical divisions preceded by fine discussions. Everything which is worth saying, everything which ought to be said, most certainly *will* be said. [...] The nation is forced to hear two sides — all the sides, perhaps, of that which most concerns it. And it likes to hear — it is eager to know. Human nature despises long arguments which come to nothing — heavy speeches which precede no motion, abstract disquisitions which leave visible things where they were. (Bagehot 2001, 14; emphasis in the original text)

Bagehot seems to argue against long speeches that have no connection to debate itself. He also makes reference to the age-old rule that speeches should not be conducted without a motion. In his opinion, speakers should avoid arguments that do not address the question or are too heavy and abstract. In this sense Bagehot defends the rhetorical virtues of parliamentary procedure as giving structure to debates and preventing long speeches.

May's *Constitutional History of England*, first published between 1861 and 1863, also became influential in the discussion of parliament's constitutional role. The needs to which parliamentary speaking was a response, May argues, have been completely altered. The state of parliamentary oratory was now, in his view, connected to situations in which parliamentarians who are able to demonstrate outstanding verbal talents raise not only the level of parliamentary oratory, but the quality of Parliament as an institution as well. According to him, the authority of the House of Commons had increased by the introduction of the new rules: '*Indeed, as the Commons have advanced in power and freedom, they have shown greater self-restraint, and a more ready obedience to the authority of the Speaker*' (May 1882, 128). May gives the impression that the revision of the rules of debate was also beneficial for the constitutional position of the House of Commons. His rhetoric was certainly supportive of parliamentary government in the sense that he emphasised the role of the Speaker.

2.2 Revision of debating procedures from 1837 to 1861

The growing political significance of parliamentary procedure was connected with the constitutional shift that gradually took place after the first parliamentary reform, in 1832, as underlined in the previous section. At the time, the House of Commons' management of public business was becoming seriously delayed. The procedural reforms that were made between 1832 and 1867 remained largely respectful of the privileges of individual members, even though the number of speakers had increased. In terms of debate and free speech, it was the ancient privilege of individual members to raise debate on any issue by claiming priority (Fraser 1960, 450). After the establishment of 'order days' in

1811, which in practice set aside Mondays and Fridays for debating government business, such privileges became the most powerful tools for disrupting business. In the nineteenth century these privileges were frequently resorted to as a means to gain public attention by obstructing the work of the government. This was especially the case in connection with petitions. Petitions had been, before the Commons constituted a standing committee for their presentation in the 1860s, a source of numerous debates, which hindered government business since petitions were presented before any other business before the house was transacted. In the 1830s the house began to introduce rules to put an end to the great amount of time expended on petitions (Redlich 1908b, 239).

The problem was first addressed in 1837 when both houses of Parliament decided to appoint select committees to inquire into the delays that had long caused detriment to the transacting of other business. Thereafter, three more select committees were appointed between 1848 and 1861. In this section I will focus on the debates in the reports of four select committees appointed by the House of Commons, in 1837, 1848, 1854 and 1861. The committees were charged with inquiring into the ways through which the forms of parliamentary proceeding could be amended to more efficiently deal with the course of business.

As will be briefly presented below, the politics of procedure revolved around the question of how to limit debates without compromising the privileges of the House of Commons or its members. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Standing Orders¹⁹ of the House of Commons were revised chiefly for the more effective distribution of time (Campion 1958, 38-39). Revision of the rules was conducted for securing the efficient conduct of government business. Procedural changes were, therefore, also a reaction against parliamentary opposition within. The remedy was sought from written rules instead of relying on the ancient privileges and customs (Fraser 1960, 445).

Already in the 1820s, the amount of agenda items in the House of Commons had increased to the point that it disrupted the conduct of business. The select committee report of 1848 argued that the debating procedure was equally put under strain as the number of parliamentarians who spoke in debates grew (Report from the Select Committee 1848, iii). The amount of petitions from constituencies was also growing at a remarkable rate, between 7,436 and 18,450 new petitions per year between 1832 and 1848 (*ibid.*).

A motion to form a select committee to address the problems caused by the petitioning was first moved by Lord Brougham in 1837, during Lord Melbourne's second ministry. Brougham argued that parliamentary business had suffered due to the increased amount of private legislation.

¹⁹ In Kemp's (1971, 1) view, the way the rules of proceeding are named already tells about the times of their foundation. 'Standing' orders suggests that rules that had earlier relied on precedents were made permanent and 'binding for the future'. As the first Standing Orders and Votes appeared in 1678 and 1680, it seems that a stable set of rules was sought in times of political crisis. Precedents were unreliable or were not perceived as the way to conduct parliamentary business in a fair and equal manner. (*ibid.*)

He sought not to cast blame on any party — it was the system, and the system alone, of which he complained, and which by long usage had grown up into an inveterate practice. With regard to Members of the House of Commons the case was peculiar. [...] It, was true that an individual elected a Member of Parliament ought to consider himself the representative not alone of his particular constituents but of the country at large. It certainly was his duty to consult the interests of the public as a whole, but it must also be admitted, that his constituents, in so far as their local interests were concerned, had a peculiar claim on him. (Brougham: House of Lords, 5 June 1837, cc1176-1177)

Brougham's concern was that demands from constituencies, although they needed to be taken seriously, would continue to harm the proceedings of Parliament if nothing was done. He suggested that the House of Lords conduct inquiries into the restriction of private business. In particular, he argued for a revision of the Standing Orders:

It might be said, that to a certain degree the standing orders would apply a remedy for the evil of which he had complained; but he thought that an inquiry would shew the necessity of some legislative provision to expedite the business. This plan had been proposed before; he had heard of it ever since he had possessed a seat in Parliament. (Brougham: House of Lords, 5 June 1837, cc1181-1182)

Brougham was raising a matter that would later be more frequently debated: he wanted permanent rules. He argued in particular for a revision of the Standing Orders, which had only recently been established, in 1811. Brougham's motion passed and, subsequently, both houses of Parliament appointed select committees to inquire into their conduct of business. In the House of Commons report of 1837, practical recommendations for both private and public business were made. The committee suggested, for example, that, in the case of public business, notices of motion should be given well in advance and that they should be written in the Order Book (Report from the Select Committee 1837, 6). However, the committee seemed anxious to suggest limitations on public business.

For the part of private business, it was notable that the 1837 committee did not accept any plans which were suggested or adopted in the upper house. It was made clear that the lower house was an independent body with separate functions:

The Members of the other House are bound to act under a sense of responsibility to the Public generally, but without any special duties towards any particular and special portion of it. The Members of The House of Commons, on the contrary, though bound by the same general rule of duty, are also immediately responsible to particular bodies of electors, and each particular Constituency looks upon its Representative as specially charged with the duty of watching over their interests in matters of private business, and have a right to his services upon any question of the kind. (Report from the Select Committee 1837, 7)

The committee did not deny that there were issues in need of amendment, but it made clear that the means proposed and adopted in the House of Lords could not be directly applied in the Commons. In short, the rhetoric in the report of 1837 strongly supported a separation between the lower and the upper house in the area of private business.

Finally the 1837 committee recommended minor changes to the conduct of public and private business in the House of Commons. On 15 July, after the report had been read and adopted by the House of Commons, Lord Brougham, speaking in a sitting of the House of Lords, expressed his dissatisfaction concerning the changes made in private business. According to him, the Select Committee of the House of Lords had succeeded in improving the conduct of private business in its house, whereas the committee of the House of Commons had failed. He called for more effort on the part of the Commons to revise their procedure accordingly (Brougham: House of Lords, 15 July 1837, cc1913-1914). However, this revision was put on hold.

Another initiative regarding the issue came from the House of Lords in 1848. Lord Stanley, who had been a member of the House of Commons' committee in 1837 and would later three times become prime minister of minority governments, introduced his idea of giving both houses the power to postpone proceedings (Hawkins 2007, 347). According to his view, the House of Lords suffered from the postponements in the lower house, and thus became an 'unwilling accomplice' in the matter. Rhetorically, Stanley suggested that unless an initiative come from the House of Lords, the problems would not be addressed properly and would result in outside criticisms against both houses of Parliament. On 14 April, while presenting his motion, he made references to the constitutional changes as well as to changes in the character of the House of Commons that had occurred over the previous twenty-five years. He also remarked on how the public business and legislation of both houses of Parliament was more carefully followed than before. In that respect, he was particularly concerned about the delays in public business, as the general public was anxious to see legislative measures taken up by the government (Stanley: House of Lords, 14 April 1848, cc330).

Stanley maintained the liberty given by the House of Commons to individual members to speak was to the detriment of consistent government policy (Stanley: House of Lords, 14 April 1848, cc330-331). His disapproval was directed to the way in which legislation was carried out in the House of Commons. In his view it was lamentable that the House of Commons reserved three days of a week for motions proposed by individual members, and only two days for government business. The regularity of conducting government business was disrupted whenever individual members introduced new motions onto the agenda. It was the excessive talk in the House of Commons which, in the view of Lord Stanley, was ultimately destroying the credibility of Parliament as a legislative institution. He argued that the House of Lords did not have enough time to deliberate on all of the bills coming from the lower house, which affected the quality of legislation:

The result was, that almost immediately after the passing of the Acts, defects were found in them, and it became necessary to introduce Acts to amend Acts, so that not only did this mode of conducting the public business result in legislation being enormously and inconveniently increased, but both the Legislature and the legislation suffered in public opinion. (Stanley: House of Lords, 14 April 1848, cc334)

In Stanley's rhetoric, the House of Commons is portrayed essentially as part of a legislature. Debate is, therefore, something that is dispensable to a certain extent and that should be restricted for the benefit of the greater good of passing laws. According to Stanley, legislation, since it is what is primarily expected of Parliament, should be made Parliament's first priority.

Like Brougham in 1837, Stanley also urged the House of Commons to look into the revision of procedure without delay. He even proposed restrictions on its privileges regarding debate (House of Lords, 14 April 1848, cc334). Other speakers in the debate on Stanley's motion agreed with him that some restrictions on debate in the lower house would be necessary. Brougham, however, again argued that this was a matter that was not suitably addressed by proposing new laws, but rather by amending the Standing Orders.

In addition, Lord Campbell spoke against the bill in the second reading: *'The Bill would introduce a very important change in the working of our constitution. We must take care, therefore, that we did not cause greater inconveniences by our legislation than those which the measure was intended to remove'* (Campbell: House of Lords, 15 May 1848, cc981). Here Campbell raised the issue of the constitution. In connection with it Lord Redesdale warned of possible disputes between the two houses of Parliament if a bill like the one Stanley was proposing was passed:

If this door for legislation were once opened, it would never be closed. Legislation ought to be adapted to all periods — as well periods of excitement as of quiet; and it was easy to conceive what serious consequences might follow from a measure of this description in times of public disturbance. Disputes between the two Houses might be greatly aggravated by it. (Redesdale: House of Lords, 15 May 1848, cc982)

Redesdale was concerned of constitutional imbalance between the two houses of Parliament. In his view the House of Commons was more likely than the House of Lords to come under pressure from outside of Parliament in times of crisis. In the event that a bill of this sort was now passed, the upper house would likely not be able to remain unaffected by demands from the general public. Rhetorically, he suggested that the House of Lords should not let the lower chamber take the lead in revising the procedure.

Although Lord Brougham supported the aims of the bill, he agreed with Lord Redesdale that it would possibly lead to legislation unfavourable to the House of Lords. The next speaker, Lord Beaumont, also argued that the House of Lords risked losing the power to propose new measures, as the bill would give the House of Commons the power to make all legislative initiatives (House of Lords, 15 May 1848, cc983-985).

After the Earl of Devon and Marquess of Lansdowne had shortly spoken of the benefits of the bill, Lord Stanley delivered his reply. In his view, the discussion had touched upon both the details and the principles of the bill, but he did not anticipate the kinds of problems that Lord Campbell had predicted:

I think it would be somewhat odd to see the noble and learned Lord [Campbell] resisting innovation, and myself promoting and pushing it forward. And yet no other argument except one equally futile — that of a danger of collision between this

House and the House of Commons — has been urged against this Bill. (Stanley: House of Lords, 15 May 1848, cc987)

A Conservative leader, Stanley rhetorically suggested that it was ironic for a Liberal, such as Lord Campbell, to oppose a measure for reform. Stanley then gave assurances that the purpose of his bill was only to facilitate the dispatch of public business in both houses and would not lead to the dangers Campbell had raised. By mocking Campbell's unwillingness to support the bill, Stanley sought to diminish Campbell's arguments against it.

In the third reading, Lord Campbell moved for a postponement of the vote. He remained convinced that the formulation of the bill was unsuitable. Lord Langdale, also known as Henry Bickersteth,²⁰ argued that Campbell's objections were unfounded. He supported the bill, although he thought it inadequate for solving the problems it sought to address:

I own it appears to me that it will not afford an adequate remedy for the inconvenience complained of, and that after it shall have passed, as I hope it will, further measures will be required; and having made that observation, I hope your Lordships will excuse me for stating my opinion that the best if not the only means of guarding against hasty, rash, and indiscreet legislation is to bestow adequate care on the preparation of Bills before they are introduced into either House. (Langdale: House of Lords, 2 June 1848, cc247-248)

Here Langdale indicates that the best means for tackling the kinds of problems Parliament was facing would be with more expert formulation of the motions. He goes on to argue that legislation would greatly benefit from more consistent government policy and greater ministerial responsibility:

No business is so difficult, or requires so much care, attention, and caution, as the business of making new laws; and I presume to think that no new law should be proposed by the Government without the official report of a responsible Minister, [...]. If this were carefully done, we might reasonably hope to have less of rash and inconsiderate suggestion from ignorant and incompetent persons — less difficulty in dealing with such suggestions when made — less time wasted in idle and unnecessary discussions — more of useful deliberation, and less of hurry — a greater facility of preserving uniformity of enactment and expression — in short, better laws. (Langdale: House of Lords, 2 June 1848, cc248)

Langdale clearly states that he considers it to be the duty of government ministers to take legislative initiatives. He also links debate to cabinet government, as he calls for more care in the formulation of motions on the part of the government for the sake of more purposeful deliberation. In this way Langdale was, in fact, supporting a view that would later lead to what is called the 'modern procedure', where the House of Commons' powers are restricted to criticism of government policy (cf. Champion 1958, 35).

The discussions on Lord Stanley's bill show the increased pressures the parliament as a whole was facing from the growing amount of legislation. Both houses were equally affected, although they had different constitutional

²⁰ He was one of the founders of the Cambridge Union Society, see Section 3.2.

agendas. In the 1848 House of Lords' discussions, those speaking against the bill argued that reforming the procedure of the House of Commons should be undertaken with great care, as it might create a change detrimental to the constitutional balance. In this way the debate on the bill also suggests that it included the question of the power relations between the two houses of Parliament.

The bill was directed to a select committee of the House of Commons on 5 July 1848. The committee compared the amount of business the House of Commons had in the present session with the previous years. Petitions were seen to have increased enormously, which meant more and more committee work for the house. In its report, the committee described how the increased amount of committee work made it difficult to transact public business. It especially pointed out that members, exhausted after working in committees in the mornings, did not attend the evening debates. The party leaders and other main speakers did not consider it worthwhile to address the house half empty, which led to adjournments of debates.

The committee of 1848 highlighted the fact that a number of important topics had lately been adjourned in the House of Commons. As many subjects were in adjournment at the same time, debates were confusing for the members and, consequently, made them lose interest (Report from the Select Committee 1848, iii). On 10 July the Speaker of the House of Commons, Charles Shaw-Lefevre, was asked to describe the state of public business and give recommendations for solving the problems that had been discovered. He responded that more members were generally speaking in debates than previously, and this did lead to adjournments. It was the right of members to speak whenever they wished, which made it difficult to restrict. In his rhetoric the privileges of members of the house should not be restricted.

Instead of reducing the privileges of members Shaw-Lefevre suggested other means of helping the business of the house to run more smoothly. In his view the committee should concentrate on motions of adjournment because they were occasionally misused:

The motion to adjourn The House is sometimes made for the purpose of enabling a Member to make a speech when there is no question before The House; at other times it is made (as well as the motion to adjourn a debate) for the purpose of postponing the decision of The House upon a question. In all cases these motions form a great interruption to public business (Report from the Select Committee 1848, 1).

Shaw-Lefevre concluded that the problems could be solved if the committee proposed a plan to prohibit debate on motions of adjournment. He argued that the management of public business would improve if all motions of adjournment were to be decided without debate.

However, Shaw-Lefevre also pointed out that, in the event that motions of adjournment were decided without debate, members would likely resort to other means of hindering the proceedings. He also said that delays could also be created by constant divisions on motions of adjournment. Therefore, he

proposed a rule that at least 21 members should be present to second a motion of adjournment. Also, he insisted that there should be a further regulation that forbade motions of adjournment being proposed a second time within one hour (Report from the Select Committee 1848, 1-2).

Shaw-Lefevre was again interviewed by a select committee in 1854. The Speaker's involvement in both committees was related to the fact that he represented the interests of the House of Commons. Therefore, his rhetoric usually reflected the interests of the house as a whole and his justifications were given in the name of the institution. As Speaker, Shaw-Lefevre had the authority to propose new rules to improve the dispatch of business.

The Report of the Select Committee of 1854 made reference to the 1848 report. Some of the same hindrances to the proceedings were mentioned as in 1848. For example, disruption of the business in the Commons was again affecting the House of Lords. It was asserted that it had become almost impossible for the Lords to handle any bills due to the delays in the Commons.

The results of the 1848 committee were described as successful even though some of the same recommendations were repeated. For example, the importance of the rule that members speak only to the matter was reiterated. This implies that debates were still allowed on motions of adjournment. Such debates diverted arguments to matters other than the original motion. Even though it was the parliamentary rule that members should only speak to the motion at hand, the Speaker could not prevent members from speaking on a motion of adjournment.

In the committee report, adjournments were singled out as the most important form of proceeding whose rules needed to be more carefully observed. In his *Treatise* May explained the different usages of two types of motions of adjournment:

Members who only desire to enforce the continuance of the debate on another day, often vote for an adjournment of the house, which, if carried, would supersede the question which they are prepared to support. [...] Suppose a question to be opposed by a majority, and that the minority are anxious for an adjournment of debate; but that on the failure of a question proposed by them to that effect, they vote for an adjournment of the house: the majority have only to vote with them and carry the adjournment, when the obnoxious question is disposed of at once, and its supporters have themselves contributed to its defeat. (May 1844, 173)

In short, the motion for adjournment of the house prolonged the discussion to another day. Motion for adjournment of debate, however, ended the discussion altogether. May pointed out that in cases where a minority wished to discuss the motion another time (in hope of a better result in the division), they sometimes mistakenly moved for an adjournment of the house instead, and thus ended the debate altogether, when they meant only to defer the decision. As mentioned in Section 1.4, the procedure had traditionally protected the minorities so that they could introduce matters that had been neglected in the original debate. Motions of adjournment gave minority members a chance to put forward initiatives. However, during the interviews conducted by the

select committee of 1854, even the Speaker was willing to restrict the initiatives of individual members.

While the report of 1854 said the previous committee had contributed to a less frequent use of both motions of adjournment, members were still reported to misuse them, especially on Fridays for postponement of debate for Mondays. That was said to interfere with initiatives from the government, as Monday was one of two days a week when priority was reserved for government business.

Another problem that had emerged was caused by motions of going into committee, which also created opportunities for individual members to open debates on issues they wanted to advance and caused further disruptions to the ordinary course of business. The select committee of 1854 gave the Speaker the power to make proposals for dealing with the problem. Erskine May, now Clerk Assistant of the House of Commons, and Edward P. Bouverie, Chairman of the Committee of the whole House, were also interviewed.

Speaker Shaw-Lefevre was asked to describe the difficulties when the house went into committee. The chairman of the committee, Sir John Pakington, argued that especially motions of going into Committees of Supply, in which supply of funds for various ministries were debated in detail, were taking too much time from all other business. The Speaker confirmed this and gave evidence of how members took advantage of these situations. In his opinion the problem had escalated lately when members had taken to making notices of speaking before going into a Committee of Supply.

Erskine May, whose procedural treatise on parliamentary proceedings was now in its second edition and used as a reference in 1854 committee report, expressed his concern about the great amount of speaking possibilities the old procedure allowed in general. He was not in favour of restricting debates as such, but he called for restrictions on the opportunities for debate granted by the procedure (Report from the Select Committee 1854, 24). In his view, the procedure had to be amended to accommodate the increased volume of business in the House of Commons.

The same understanding of the state of affairs was, indeed, conveyed by the Speaker. He held the opinion that debates on motions of adjournment should be further restricted. He proposed the so-called American plan, whereby questions of adjournment, if moved in the middle of a debate, should be decided without an additional debate.

I think it is not safe to allow matters to remain as they now are, unless you give the House the power of closing debates by a summary process. Cases sometimes occur in which it is necessary to pass a Bill with unusual expedition. (Speaker Shaw-Lefevre: Report from the Select Committee 1854, 62)

Here Shaw-Lefevre uses the rhetoric of efficiency to legitimate the restrictions. He emphasises the detriment to the management of the business of the nation if nothing were done to alleviate the situation.

The Select Committee of 1854 suggested further restrictions on debate. It was proposed that all discussion on the principles of the bills should be confined to the first reading. Members of the House of Commons had a

tendency to open a new debate on the principle of the bill after the first reading. The committee stressed that permitting such debate put time pressures on the second and third readings as well as committee work.

Finally, the report of the select committee resulted in the revision of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. However, of the thirty-six alterations proposed by chairman Pakington, only nine were agreed on in the committee of 1854. According to the select committee report of 1861, only eight of the nine were finally approved by the house, and the committee considered them as mere additions to the changes proposed in the report in 1848 (Report from the Select Committee 1861, iii).

In 1861 the cautious nature of the changes in the previous committee reports and the House of Commons' decisions was not subject to criticisms and was, in fact, praised for respecting the traditions of Parliament:

This respect for tradition and this caution in making changes have proceeded on the principle, that no change is justifiable which experience has not proved to be necessary, and that the maintenance of the old rules is preferable to new, but speculative, amendments. [...] It is also to be observed, that this caution in making changes has not been unproductive of advantage. The new rules, which have been introduced in consequence of Reports of the three Committees above enumerated, have been found to work so well, that not one of them has been hitherto either altered or rescinded. (Report from the Select Committee 1861, iii-iv)

The report stated that a guiding principle for making procedural changes should be the avoidance of unexpected consequences. This rhetoric of risk management was adopted from the previous Speaker, Shaw-Lefevre, who had called for 'predictability of proceedings'. The new Speaker, John Evelyn Denison, was reported to strongly agree with his predecessor. He had also been involved in procedural revision as the chairman of the 1848 select committee. Now, as Speaker, he argued that the main purpose of the committee was to improve the certainty about the proceedings of the house. This rhetoric of certitude had not been mentioned explicitly in the committee reports, but it was generally supported after both Shaw-Lefevre and Denison referred to it.

The pursuit of certainty was expressed as the main impetus of the committee of 1861 when it directed attention to the Speaker's recommendation that debates on motions should be prevented from going into the Committee of Supply. According to the report, the Committee of 1854 had been unable to make suggestions against the practice:

From fear of unduly limiting the opportunities of debate, and of the discussion of grievances, the Committee, while admitting the inconvenience complained of, declined to recommend the adoption of any new rule by the House. This cause of delay, if it be an evil, has now for seven years remained unchecked, and, in the opinion of the Speaker, the delay has increased. (Report from the Select Committee 1861, iv)

The report referred to incidents in which formalities of the proceedings, e.g. the motion 'that the House resolves itself to the Committee', were used as opportunities for debate. They caused further delay in the workings of the

house. The quoted passage, while confirming that delays were a problem, understated their effects. The report also states that the discussion of grievances before the Supply Committee was 'among the most ancient and important' privileges of the House of Commons and 'the surest and the best' opportunity for 'obtaining full explanation from the Ministers of the Crown' (ibid.). Thus, the delays caused by discussion of grievances was portrayed as an unfortunate by-product.

In their rhetoric, certainty was guaranteed by the forms of proceeding, upheld by the Speaker according to the time-honoured practice. The committee argued that the ancient privileges of the house were best served by the principles of parliamentary government:

Although it is expedient to preserve for individual Members ample opportunity for the introduction and passing of Legislative measures, yet it is the primary duty of the Advisers of the Crown to lay before Parliament such changes in the law as in their judgment are necessary; and while they possess the confidence of the House of Commons, and remain responsible for good government and for the safety of the State, it would seem reasonable that a preference should be yielded to them, not only in the introduction of their Bills, but in the opportunities for pressing them on the consideration of the House. (Report from the Select Committee 1861, vi)

The committee suggested the Standing Orders be revised so as to accommodate governmental initiatives. The increased governmental control over legislation would, it was suggested, give more predictability to legislation. By emphasising the importance of ministerial control, the committee was also making a constitutional statement: the principle of parliamentary government was a justification for preserving the privileges of the House of Commons.

2.3 Procedure at the core of parliamentary debating

During the 1830s until the 1870s, the constitutional role of the House of Commons expanded for several reasons. One was the dominating idea of 'parliamentary government': the government had to enjoy the confidence of the majority of the House of Commons. In effect, this meant the attaining of popular sovereignty. The introduction of cabinet government, however, somewhat collided with the ancient debating procedure. Ultimately, cabinet government itself was a political solution to a problem that had arisen with the increased number of motions and bills. The House of Commons, having been designed to control the finances of the Crown, now disbursed grants too specific for such a large collective body. The situation resulted in an arrangement in which ministers of the Crown were given the powers to propose initiatives and the House of Commons was left the duty to oversee and criticise government policies. All of these changes were done through the procedural revisions of the nineteenth century.

In 1837 both houses of Parliament set out to formulate written rules for conducting business. In the meantime, as discussed above, the procedure be-

came a polarising issue between the House of Commons and the House of Lords. In the select committee reports, arguments for and against revision of procedure were also connected with the constitutional arrangement. As the House of Commons had gained more constitutional authority after the 1832 reform, those who advocated for parliamentary government were unlikely to surrender the powers they had already won to either the House of Lords or the Crown. As also indicated in the committee reports, the lower house, dominated by proponents of parliamentary government, made it clear that it would not tolerate any interference in the reform of its own rules of debate.

The powers of the House of Commons were restricted to criticism of government policy, while financial initiatives were a right reserved to the ministers of the Crown. In that sense the House of Commons' procedure of debate had to be revised in order for the parliament to work properly. In the committee report of 1861, the rhetoric of certainty is connected with the idea that written rules had to be set to ensure debates would take place within predictable boundaries. In 1854 Speaker Shaw-Lefevre had already promoted the same rhetoric. It was also during the revision of procedure that the Speaker's role became a political issue. Shaw-Lefevre and his follower Denison promoted the 'impartiality' of the Speaker. Before their time it had been common for the Speaker to cast the deciding vote in cases when the house was evenly divided.

In some ways, it was the debating procedure that defined the newly established constitutional arrangement. The procedure remained largely unchanged, only needing some adjustments in order to legitimise the principles of parliamentary government. The select committee reports were cautious about limiting the opportunities for debate, though some members urged more drastic measures. Erskine May as well as the Speakers of the House of Commons considered it a problem that the procedure gave the opportunity to commence debates at occasions that were purely formal in character. In contrast, members of the House of Lords were generally more inclined to restrict debate in the Commons. Therefore, we may conclude that the practical solutions that were sought for the constitutional situation after the 1832 reform were not merely technical in nature; rather, they involved a considerable political dimension.

3 THE BRITISH CULTURE OF PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

In this chapter the aim is to look at how British parliamentary debate was interpreted in a variety of political contexts roughly from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Three such contexts are the newspaper press, the debating societies and the contemporary tracts on parliamentary oratory. It will be argued that the Union Societies were part and parcel of British parliamentary debating culture.

The focus is mainly on the period from the 1770s to the first parliamentary reform in 1832. The beginning of the period coincides with the time when parliamentary debates were becoming available to the public. The chapter will show how parliamentary debate was interpreted in late eighteenth-century British newspapers and literature as well as over the course of the nineteenth century as parliamentary journalism became professionalised and certain indirect effects of the parliamentary reform of 1832 became part of political practice.

In Section 3.1 the context of the British tradition of debate from mid-eighteenth century onwards will be further explored. In the eighteenth century, debating societies functioned as either popular entertainment or private clubs. Some of their appeal has been attributed to the increase in the reporting of parliamentary debates (e.g. Reid 2000). In the late nineteenth century, British debating societies became explicitly parliamentary in character. This is evident from the popularity of what were then, in fact, called 'parliamentary debating societies' in the 1880s (see van Rijn 2007). The Union Societies, it shall be argued in Section 3.2, should be seen as part of that history.

Section 3.3 deals with press and parliamentary journalism with a special emphasis on the notion of 'publicity'. Around 1770s the newspaper press became a rather influential mediator between Parliament and the general public. Previously, debates had been published despite the fact that Parliament had not given permission for it. By the 1770s, however, the House of Commons had given its tacit approval for newspaper reporting. This kind of publicity of parliamentary proceedings also affected how the people of the time conceived of

political agency. Their interpretations, in turn, indicate what was required of parliamentary politics or, indeed, of Parliament itself.

In Section 3.4 the focus will be on the contemporary writings on parliamentary speaking. From 1770s onwards the literature on parliamentary eloquence was concentrated on the great orators of the day. Parliamentary speaking was mainly written about in a way that left out the key element of debating, namely, the procedure. Indeed, in the nineteenth-century tracts on parliamentary oratory the period stretching from the 1770s to the early nineteenth century was referred to as a 'Golden Age'. These works show that outsiders either had very little knowledge about the procedure of debate inside Parliament, or they were unaware of its relevance. A reason for this oversight concerning the traditions and conventions is that written guidebooks on the parliamentary rules of debate were not widely available until the late nineteenth century.

3.1 The politicisation of debate

In 1882 *The Times* reported on a national conference of parliamentary debating societies held at Liverpool. It was the first of its kind ever held in Britain. The president on the occasion was Thomas Cope, a tobacco manufacturer, Justice of the Peace and one of the founders of the Liverpool Parliamentary Debating Society.²¹ He described the aims of the societies as follows:

Debating societies [...] did not follow the lines of the House of Commons in a spirit of burlesque imitation, but the House of Commons' model was followed because it gave precisely what they required. The desirability of members of societies assuming the names of constituencies was shown in the fact that it enabled people of every social position to meet on one common platform and take part in any debate as members for particular places, though one might be a barrister and another a shoemaker. (*The Times* 1882, 4)

One year later the famous journalist Blanchard Jerrold wrote in *The Nineteenth Century* an article where he referred to the societies as a new phenomenon:

It will surprise even many students of contemporary politics to learn that at the present moment there are upwards of one hundred Houses of Commons flourishing in various parts of the empire, the majority of which are modelled on the House of Commons at Westminster, have their speakers, prime ministers, and chancellors of exchequer, and observe with solemnity the forms of the parent assembly [...]. (Jerrold 1883, 1085-1086)

Jerrold had himself read the minutes of the proceedings and interviewed the 'prime minister' of the national conference, Mr Mead Corner, a ship owner and broker, who was an MP for Midlothian in the Sydenham and Forest Hill in the mock House of Commons. He was particularly impressed by the educational

²¹ See *Liverpool Mercury*, 22 September 1884.

value provided by the parliamentary debating societies for their 35,000 members:

It is already an educational machine of national proportions, for instructing politically thoughtful members of the community, thus creating a public opinion worthy of the freedom which the English people enjoy. (Jerrold 1883, 1089)

From Jerrold's account it becomes clear that parliamentary debating societies had a civic purpose. They gave a sense of equal opportunity to act in a political community, as they taught the procedural forms by which the House of Commons worked.

In Britain the politicisation of debate occurred through the interchange of parliamentary ideas between Parliament and the debating societies. By the 1770s, the number of debating societies in Britain had increased (Clark 2000, 119) due to the political tensions and also partly related to the publication of the proceedings of the House of Commons, which, ultimately, made possible the imitation and adoption of parliamentary practices by the debating societies in the late nineteenth century. Until the nineteenth century, the debating societies had been unaware of the procedures due to the reluctance of Parliament to make its proceedings public. Eighteenth-century debating societies mostly had their own procedures and rules, usually with the aim of providing opportunities to practise oratorical skills.

Political clubs and societies have a long history in Britain. It has been suggested that politics was introduced to English club life already in the mid-seventeenth century (Timbs 1899, 4). In the eighteenth century there were numerous literary and dialectic as well as debating societies that dealt with topics ranging from political to religious issues. Debating societies were different compared to other clubs and meetings of the time as they distinguished themselves by conducting formal debates. The formality of debating societies was shown in their careful manner of choosing topics, to which they kept while speaking, adhered to rules of procedure, and dealt with such subjects as morality, religion, politics and aesthetics (Fawcett 1980, 216).

The so-called popular debating societies were originally an English phenomenon. They had become fashionable by late eighteenth century when commercial oratorical platforms, for example, advertised debates in newspapers. The oldest known popular debating society was a London debating club called the *Robin Hood Society* (1742), which had been founded in a tavern by a schoolmaster, Peter Annet (McCalman 1987, 310). Its meetings were attended by 100-300 debaters. As the debates at the Robin Hood Society were relatively public, the speakers tended to acquire a more dramatic style in their oratory than at the House of Commons: *'Some of those who acquired their oratorical graces at the Robin Hood displeased Members of the House of Commons by a theatrical and declamatory manner, which seemed absurd and vulgar when compared with the nobler action and the genuine inspiration of Pitt'* (Macknight 1858, 71-72). The theatrical style was common in public speaking practices of the time. Indeed, one of the most reputable elocutionists of the eighteenth century, Thomas Sheridan, was an actor.

Another actor, Charles Macklin, established a debating chamber in London after becoming convinced of the endurance of popularity of Robin Hood Society. It was called *The British Inquisition* (Fawcett 1980, 217).

McCalman (1987, 311) argues that the role of London debating clubs in promoting radical political ideas, up until the Chartist movement in the late 1830s, was significant. By the turn of the nineteenth century the clubs had gained a reputation of having connections to revolutionary activities. William Hamilton Reid, a provocateur and a journalist, wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in This Metropolis* (1800), in which he accused the Robin Hood Society of being the source of radical uprisings in the capital (McCalman 1987, 309). Reid himself had been a member of the famous *London Corresponding Society* which was also founded in a tavern in 1791.

The London Corresponding Society was a radical association founded by artisans and shopkeepers advocating parliamentary reform. It was, contrary to what Reid had suggested, the main reason London clubs in general were held in such suspicion because it aimed at changing parliament (Thale 1989, 62). The Society was feared for its revolutionary ideas, which were similar to those of the popular societies of Paris in 1791. They were a gathering-point for anti-parliamentary forces and demanded reforms that would entail popular ratification for all law-making (ibid. 63). Clubs such as the London Corresponding Society represented the political radicalism of the 1790s and served as a substitute for Parliament by representing those who were disenfranchised (Parssinen 1973, 532). According to Thale (1989, 59), they were commonly advertised as 'rational entertainment'. The London Corresponding Society did not hold formalised debates, but its meetings had the marks of other debating clubs in the capital, such as entrance fees and weekly meetings where daily politics were discussed (ibid. 63).

Popular debating societies were open to all who paid for admission. The payment was usually affordable for the lower and middle classes, and accessible even for women. The Robin Hood Society remained a prototype for public forums until 1790s, after which they started to convene in more genteel places than taverns and pubs. *Westminster Forum* was one of the 1770s' imitators of the Robin Hood Society: 'According to its constitution the Westminster Forum was intended for the benefit and instruction of the public at large and as an oratorical training ground for would-be preachers, barristers, and members of Parliament' (Fawcett 1980, 218). The topics under debate were sometimes clearly opposed to parliamentary principles. As an example, the Forum debated on questions such as whether parliamentary candidates should be obliged to pledge themselves to attempts to reform parliament (Andrew 1996, 415).

In popular debating societies politics and religious issues were freely discussed. Debates were usually conducted as 'harangues', referring more to declamations rather than to deliberation. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, popular debating societies spread outside London. They were established, for example, in Manchester, Birmingham, Norwich, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Following the French Revolution the atmosphere in the country was tense, not

least of all due to extra-parliamentary movements advocating radical parliamentary reform. John Thelwall (1764-1834), a renowned orator, was considered by the authorities to be one of the most dangerous people in Britain and was accused of treason in 1794. The Tory government at the time introduced before Parliament the Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act,²² which came into force in May 1794. The state of exception lasted until July 1795. The government also set up parliamentary inquiries on popular movements and societies. In 1795 the Seditious Meetings Act was enacted despite opposition in the House of Commons. Richard Sheridan (1751-1816), for example, suggested that the government's ideas about revolutionary activities, beginning with its reports in 1792, were largely baseless:

It was true that a committee had been appointed, and that from that committee they received accounts of an extensive treasonable plot. The existence of the plot, however, was brought from higher authority, and the trials were deferred till books could be prepared with suitable decorations [...]. (Sheridan: House of Commons 1795, 162)

Sheridan maintained that it was absurd to draw general conclusions about revolutionary activities based on individual actions and rumours. He also compared the circumstances in France with what was happening in England, and argued:

A people who have been used to rational liberty and rational rights, who have not been ground down, nor made the slaves of a corrupt Government, would never be guilty of such crimes. (Sheridan: House of Commons 1795, 165)

Here the rhetoric of rationality was used to appeal to the King. The government and its proponents took the London Corresponding Society as a warning example, for its members had notoriously been charged with treason a year earlier. Lord Eldon (1751-1838), the Attorney General who had been in charge of the Treason Trials, also defended the bill based on the acquired intelligence:

So long as there remained a King in another country, the Corresponding Society addressed the clubs in France; when the King there was afterwards cut off, through the influence of these clubs, this Society stated, that they hoped soon that that country would send over congratulations to a National Convention in England; whilst, at the same time, the English and French Societies professed to affiliate with each other, and those in France concluded that they hoped soon to send the soldiers of England pikes and bonnets of liberty. (Lord Eldon: House of Commons 1795, 177)

The concept of convention was used by radical movements with reference to past and current Anglo-Saxon political institutions. It has been argued elsewhere that the conventions provided a strong tool for radical orators whose

²² In 1679 Parliament had passed the Habeas Corpus Act, according to which any person charged of a crime had the right for appeal in a court of law. But in the case of public unrest, Parliament had the right to suspend the Act, and anyone on criminal charges could be sentenced without trial.

rhetoric made a distinction between those who had political power and those who did not (Parssinen 1973, 532).

In the quotation above, it is shown that Lord Eldon rhetorically uses 'liberty' in connection with the revolutionary societies in France. He goes on to distinguish private gatherings from the clubs that are under suspicion:

A regard to the public safety calls upon us to sacrifice a part of public liberty for a time, that we may more firmly secure a continuance of the remainder. I wish at present merely to rectify one mistake. — When persons suppose that this bill goes on to disturb private and family meetings, and the enjoyment of innocent mirth, they egregiously mistake its tendency; nor is it calculated to disturb any club which any rational lover of freedom would wish should exist in this country[...]. (Lord Eldon: House of Commons 1795, 178)

Lord Eldon makes it clear that the revolutionary rhetoric of liberty should be separated from that of 'rational lovers of freedom'. In this way he legitimises the restrictions against a distinct set of clubs. Furthermore, he argued that it was made for the benefit of the nation as a whole. Charles James Fox (1749-1806) countered the statement by suggesting Lord Eldon had ulterior motives:

Was it in consequence of the result of the trials that the bills were brought in? He was told that not from these trials only, but from their subsequent proceedings that the dangerous temper of these meetings had been proved, and that their mischievous tendency could not be corrected, except by some new legislative regulation. (Fox: House of Commons 1795, 179)

Fox maintained that the accounts of Corresponding Society proceedings at Copenhagen House seemed biased, and the case against the societies had been drawn from rumours of the King's life being endangered in a theatre on the night of 29 October. He also remarked that a new governmental measure would not necessarily be effective. It was then Pitt the Younger (1759-1806) who addressed the House:

From the moment the suspension of the Habeas Corpus act was taken off, all the plans of these societies revived, and continued in a progressive state till the meeting of Parliament. But the right honourable gentleman called for some proof, to shew the connection of the meeting at Copenhagen House and the attack upon His Majesty. He had stated before, that he could not prove this by strict legal evidence; but it was almost impossible to reason fairly, and come to two conclusions upon the subject. (Pitt: House of Commons 1795, 187)

In Pitt's rhetoric, Fox's arguments on the subject were not 'fair'. He viewed the bill under discussion as necessary because all of the other measures taken had failed. He also accused the opposition of taking the side of the revolutionaries:

Could it be supposed that this daring outrage was committed without some hope of support from some party or other? certainly not — with respect to the alliance supposed to be formed between the right honourable gentleman and his friends with the London Corresponding Society, he wished to caution that gentleman and his friends, that that society was still persisting in its original plan for the destruction of the Constitution[...]. (Pitt: House of Commons 1795, 188)

The Whigs had, indeed, connections with clubs and societies that advocated parliamentary reform. Some radical Whigs had even publicly declared their sympathies for the French revolution (Foord 1964, 405-407). Notoriously, under the leadership of Fox, the Whigs had been using the press for their own political purposes, writing pamphlets on the important topics discussed in Parliament and then circulating the ideas in the newspapers for publicity (ibid. 407). Already in 1784 Fox argued that forming a coalition with extra-parliamentary movements was necessary for the Whigs to carry on their opposition politics and keep the steady support of the public (ibid. 422). In short, the Whigs realised the potential of making alliances across a wide political field.

Significantly, the idea of political opposition in eighteenth-century Britain was connected with the notion of party activity. In writings of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the notion of 'party' was frequently synonymous with 'faction', and political opposition was considered tantamount to treason (Ball 1989, 167). Opposition in Parliament was largely considered 'disloyal' towards the government and the state (cf. Skinner 1974). Foord (1964, 10-11) has argued that the concept of 'opposition' was only applied in British parliamentary politics in the modern sense after 1830. By 'modern' parliamentary opposition Foord means the way the opposition became a generally accepted part of the sovereignty of the British parliament. It was a crucial step towards the idea of parliamentary government, and an idea the Whigs capitalised on after the passage of the 1832 Reform Act.

The Seditious Meetings Act, along with the Treason Act, was passed at a time when free discussion in debating societies on political and religious issues was suspect due to the French Revolution. Tighter control was enacted and popular debating societies had problems in getting licenses for their activities, which resulted in their disappearance by the turn of the century (Clark 2000, 120). Thereafter, debating societies continued to operate, but in a more private capacity, also becoming more exclusive. However, there were some transitional societies, such as the *Select Society of Edinburgh* (Fawcett 1981, 220).

As the name suggests, the Select Society was judicious in choosing its members, though its membership was quite large. Established in 1754, it eventually attracted one hundred members, of which the majority were lawyers. It folded, however, ten years later. It was succeeded by another famous academic debating society, the *Speculative Society of Edinburgh* (1764). Its membership was restricted to twenty-five members at a time. In 1780 the number rose to thirty, where it stayed until the early twentieth century. The Speculative Society was founded by university students 'for improvement in Literary Composition and Public Speaking' (The Speculative Society of Edinburgh 1905, 2). Its activities attracted students as well as those with well-established credentials in such fields as law, literature and politics. Its more distinguished members included Lord Lansdowne, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1806, and Henry Brougham, one of the founders of the *Edinburgh Review* and who was to become one of the most influential Whig leaders in the country.

The activities of the Speculative were related not so much to parliamentary conventions as to literary and oratorical pursuits, as was common during the eighteenth century. Although topics such as *'What is the best duration of parliaments?'* were debated, the normal procedure was for a selected member to read a paper, which the Society then debated. The title for the oldest student debating society in the United Kingdom is accorded to the *College Historical Society of Trinity College* in Dublin (e.g. Samuels 1923). First established as 'The Club', also called the 'Academy of Belles Lettres', it has been suggested that the foundation of the Club in 1747 marks the origin of the British debating tradition (e.g. Stewart 1991, 5; Cooke 1898, 273). However, that argument ignores the fact that earlier debating societies were operating in London approximately the same time. For example, it has been suggested that political topics have been debated in clubs since the 1650s (Timbs 1899, 4).

One of the Club's founders was the young Edmund Burke. The aims were, as written down in the first minutes, 'the improvement of its members in the more refin'd, elegant, and usefull parts of Litterature' so that they would be better able to engage their 'minds and manners for the functions of Civil Society' (quoted in Samuels 1923, 204). The founders of the Club were of the opinion that anyone could gain the title of Master of Arts and Science, but only through practice in a society could the benefits of their learning be put to full use. The benefits of practice were considered to include 'enriching our judgement, brightening our wit, and enlarging our knowledge and of being serviceable to others in the same things' (ibid.).

Some of the debate topics at the Club were on current political events, but historical and literary subjects were also introduced. Members were not only required to create orations for delivery, but also to engage in debates on assigned subjects. Sometimes debates were performed as role play in which historical figures appeared. On at least one occasion the Club 'resolved itself into a mimic Parliament' (Cooke 1898, 282). A bill was introduced in the meeting, and all argumentation for and against was recorded. On some occasions whole orations delivered before the assembly were written down in the minutes.

The Club did not remain active for very long, as it only met 35 times. It was re-established as the 'Historical Club' in 1753. From 1777 onwards it was known as the 'College Historical Society', which still exists today. The Society's primary purposes were 'the cultivation of historical knowledge and the practice of the members in oratory and composition' (quoted in Miller 1997, 133). By 1780 it had approximately seven hundred members. The Society then resembled more a popular debating society than a private literary society as its meetings could draw some hundred and fifty members at a time (Miller 1997, 132).

In 1783 the College Historical Society established a 'mutual membership agreement' with the Speculative Society of Edinburgh, as they had similar self-educational aims. The College Historical Society was expelled from Trinity College in 1794. It was readmitted in 1813, but dissolved in 1815, after which it was re-founded in 1843 (Samuels 1923, 205). The Speculative Society dissociated itself from the College Historical Society in 1806, and relations were not re-

established until 1863. This break probably had something to do with the fact that the College Historical Society had become dissociated from Trinity College and become more open to outsiders. From 1797 until 1805 the Speculative Society had enjoyed exceptionally lively discussions due to the political situation after the French Revolution, but it retained its exclusivity.

In 1799 Francis Horner, a member of the Speculative Society and Member of Parliament between 1806-1817, devoted much of his energy to attending the meetings. He was a law student seeking to improve his style and manner for career advancement in the public field. In his journal he wrote how he practised his oratory through observing other speakers at the Society and reading speeches delivered in Parliament (Horner 1843, 78-79). For example, Horner reported of having spoken twice at a debate of the Society, 'both times without any premeditation' (ibid. 93). However, he was not completely satisfied with his performance, and planned to practise by studying the styles and manners of one opponent at a time:

Then I shall proceed to another, and sometimes venture to give a reply at once to both. [...] I thought it prudent to take notes of [Alexander] Copland's arguments, and in speaking, I found it necessary to have frequent recourse to them. [...] I must try to invigorate my powers of attention, and by artifices of arrangement to strengthen my recollection of details. [...] By the habitual study of the best writers, particularly the poets, I must store my imagination with the elegancies of expression, and acquire such a habit that my thoughts will naturally present themselves to me clothed in the most perspicuous and the purest language. (Horner 1843, 95-96)

Horner was very keen to learn public speaking. His main method was to imitate various 'models of eloquence', such as presented in poetry (Horner 1843, 97). In fact, the connection between poetics and rhetoric had already been made by classical writers, such as Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian (Bevis 2010, 27).

The Speculative Society and other debating societies were part of student life in the Scottish universities. At the University of St Andrews a debating society was formed in 1794 called the 'Literary Society' and later renamed the *St Andrews Union Debating Society*. Although no connection to the Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies is evident, it seems probable they inspired the society to change its name. That is indirectly confirmed by the fact that, in the official history, the Society places itself in the tradition of union debating societies starting from Cambridge and Oxford (see Stewart 1991, 5).

The St Andrews society had some peculiar differences regarding its activities compared to the Union Societies. For instance, in its rules of 1832, membership was restricted to twenty-five, similar to the limitation used at the Speculative Society. Until 1841, prospective members were required to have attended classes of Logic or Moral Philosophy to be eligible for the society (Stewart 1991, 7). Membership was, therefore, possible only for certain students. By the end of nineteenth century, however, membership was gradually opened to all students of the arts and sciences. Another feature specific to the society was that it did not elect a president for the first 116 years of its existence (ibid.). Instead, any member of the society could serve as chair in a meeting.

Scottish schools and universities had gained a good reputation in England. Already in the eighteenth century, English medical students were attracted to Scottish universities for their quality of teaching. While there, they participated in various student debating societies and, after coming back to England, were involved in founding their own (Fawcett 1980, 223). The idea of founding academic debating societies seems to have travelled down to England due to the movement of students from Scottish universities during the Napoleonic wars. While it was common for a young aristocracy to make a Grand Tour as part of their education, the war with France, as it grew in the early nineteenth century, led to education being sought from universities in Scotland, especially Edinburgh, instead of the tour. As an example, it has been recorded that students from Oxford were sent up to Scotland to continue their studies (The Speculative Society of Edinburgh 1905, 16).

3.2 The Union Societies: their foundation and promotion of debate

The Cambridge Union Society was founded in 1815 as three debating societies from separate colleges joined together. Henry Bickersteth²³ (1783-1851), later known as Lord Langdale, briefly studied medicine at Edinburgh and, after coming back to England, was one of the founders of the Cambridge Union Society. Charles Fox Townshend (1795-1817) has also been named as one of the founders (see Martin 2000, ch. 5). Townshend was also involved in the founding of the *Eton Society*, or the 'Pop', in 1811, which was later attended by Edward Stanley, John Evelyn Denison²⁴ and Gladstone.

Prior to the foundation of the Union Societies, there had existed several smaller, private student debating societies in the old English universities. As an example, there was a debating club at Oxford founded by George Canning, who later became prime minister (see Fawcett 1980, 227). Also, according to George Pryme (1781-1868), a lecturer of political economy at Cambridge, a club called *The Speculative* had been established before the Cambridge Union (quoted in Craddock 1953, fn. 3). This seems to indicate that the Speculative Society of Edinburgh had, in one way or another, been a predecessor of the Union Society.

After 1815 a whole range of political issues was undergoing a sea change, due to the questions before Parliament at the time (Howarth 1956, 72). Members themselves became increasingly aware of the conditions of people living in their constituencies, whereas previously they had little or no knowledge of what was actually happening (ibid. 73). Between the 1780s and 1830s there was also a

²³ Bickersteth is named as one of the founders of the Cambridge Union Society. He also participated in the procedure reform debates in Parliament in the 1830s (see ch. 2, p. 40).

²⁴ Both Stanley and Denison were involved in the procedural reform debates discussed in Section 2.2.

change in political discourse around the concept of ‘public opinion’ (Steinmetz 2002). Now when discussing the activities of extra-parliamentary movements, parliamentarians tended to describe them as uncontrollable, whereas previously their language had suggested the opposite. This change was also reflected in the language used by movements and associations (ibid. 93-94).

The years following the Napoleonic wars were hit by a financial depression, which affected the poor in particular and created disorder. Demands for parliamentary reform were also rekindled in many large cities. In 1817 the British government appointed a secret commission to address rumours of revolutionary activities in London. In its report the commission informed the Parliament that they had, indeed, identified suspicious meetings and societies that they believed were inciting revolutionary action among workers in the capital. The House of Lords received reports that:

A traitorous Conspiracy has been formed in the Metropolis for the Purpose of overthrowing, by means of a general Insurrection, the established Government, Laws, and Constitution of the Kingdom, and of effecting a general Plunder and Division of Property [...]. (House of Lords 1817, 40)

It was suspected that radical groups were trying to manipulate the uneducated in societies by taking over their meetings and involving discontented workers in illegal activities. The commission reportedly took a particular interest in the ‘Union Clubs’ they saw as advocating for workers’ political rights. These clubs were feared to pose a threat to the constitutional balance of power in the country. The report of the commission warned that:

Others of these Societies are called Union Clubs, professing the same Object of Parliamentary Reform, but under these Words understanding Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments — Projects which evidently involve not any qualified or partial Change, but a total Subversion of the British Constitution. (House of Lords 1817, 41)

As a consequence of the report, the Act of Seditious Meetings, of which the objective was to restrict free association, was passed in Parliament in March 1817. Since its establishment, the Cambridge Union Society had received neither academic nor financial support from the university. In the political context of 1817, the Union Society was prevented from acting as a debating society at Cambridge²⁵ and existed only as a reading club from 1817 to 1821. Debates did resume later, however, under the provision that only political subjects before 1800 could be discussed. The rule remained unchallenged until 1830 (see Chapter 5).

The Oxford Union Debating Society was established in 1823. Two years later the society was dissolved and renamed. The disruption was not directly due to restrictions by the authorities, as had been the case at Cambridge. Hollis (1965)

²⁵ The university authorities took the action most probably as a precautionary measure because the Union Society had been reported lately to have been discussing the bill of Seditious Meetings and issues surrounding it with President William Whewell, whose father was a carpenter (Martin 2000, ch. 5). Whewell (1794-1866), however, later became an esteemed scholar at Cambridge University.

argues that the incident was a political manoeuvre of President Wrangham²⁶ of Brasenose College. President Wrangham proposed a motion to dissolve the old society. After a vote the motion was carried and the new *Oxford Union Society* was instantly founded. With the re-establishment of the society, the rules could also be renewed. It was now decided that any decision of the society would only require the support of a simple majority, not two-thirds, as had been the case. Disputes between members had prompted Wrangham's motion. With the majority rule in place, the president was now able to pass further rules to maintain order (Hollis 1965, 28).

At first the Union Societies only met for weekly debates for the academic term and had not yet institutionalised their activities. The lack of institutionalised activities was partly due to the restrictions on membership. Union Societies admitted new members through secret elections, more specifically, by ballot. This meant that candidates only had a chance to become elected if they already knew some of the members. At Cambridge, however, this practice ended in 1834. From then on, any student or alumnus of Cambridge University was entitled to become a member of the Union Society by payment of a simple membership fee. This meant that the Cambridge Union Society was not strictly a private club; the election of members was not limited to a small circle of students, but was now open to a larger group of academics. Anyone within the university who wished to join the society only had to state his intention to the treasurer (CUS laws 1834, 3).²⁷

In Oxford Union Society the restrictions remained tighter at least until the 1860s. New members were proposed by those who were already members. Also, before becoming eligible for membership, a candidate had to have resided at the University for at least one term (OUS rules 1839, 13). All the members of the society were responsible for the admission of new members, so the elections were carried out by balloting, and it was the first business transacted at the society's meetings (OUS rules 1839, 14).²⁸ The elected members were entitled not just to take part in the debates, but to use the libraries and other facilities, such as the reading and writing rooms provided by both Union Societies. The libraries included books, magazines and newspapers representing a variety of interests. The selection of the articles ordered for the library was itself a matter of debate. For a period, the Cambridge Union Society's private business meetings

²⁶ Digby Cayley Wrangham (1805-1863) was educated at Ripon and was admitted at Brasenose College in 1822. Lord Dudley, Canning ministry's foreign secretary, offered him a junior clerkship in the foreign office in 1827. Wrangham served as his private secretary and, after a change in government, remained as the private secretary of Lord Aberdeen. He was elected a Tory member for Sudbury in 1831. Wrangham also participated in the formation of the Carlton Club in 1831-1832.

²⁷ However, the matter of membership restrictions was raised again in 1846, following which member candidates had to be proposed by current members (CUS laws 1846, 1). In 1847, the Cambridge Union Society again reopened the matter of elections by ballot (see the discussion in Chapter 5).

²⁸ Later on the rule was amended so that new members were elected only before public business meetings of the Society, whereas no such elections were held during private business meetings (see OUS rules 1863).

were, in practice, dominated by debates on which texts should be admitted to its library and which should be banned. In the 1840s and 1850s the ordering of magazines with overtly provocative theological content, in particular, was frequently debated. This was probably due to the fact that a Library Committee existed for the Cambridge Union Society prior to the constitution of the standing committee. At Oxford Union Society, the library questions were rather limited to debates on the authority of the Librarian to make recommendations what books would be included in the collections. Sometimes this meant that the society had to cancel its public business meetings because of the great amount of private business to discuss. At Cambridge the situation was different: the society had to cancel its private business meetings because it did not have any issues to discuss.

Along with regular members (also referred to as 'contributing members') there were so-called 'honorary members' in both Union Societies. At Cambridge they were not required to pay for membership, although they were subject to fines were they to break any rules (CUS laws 1824, 13). Usually this meant that, while honorary members were allowed to take part in debates, they had to follow the rules and pay the fine if they failed to do so.

In the event that any regular member neglected to pay for membership, he was subjected to a fine and could not become elected to any office or vote in elections (CUS laws 1850, 2, 14). If the member in question did not pay his arrears by the end of the term he was 'posted'²⁹ and expelled. However, he could be re-admitted as a member without need to be re-nominated by paying the fine (*ibid.* 2). Permanent expulsion of a member was also possible, not just by the president of the society,³⁰ but also through the motion of any other member. The motion had to be concurred by a majority of three fourths of the members present (CUS laws 1827, 5). At Cambridge a law was adopted in 1830 that stated a member could also be expelled by a simple majority if he had personally insulted the president (CUS laws 1830).

Unlike Cambridge, in the Oxford Union Society rules the non-payment of membership fees or fines were not mentioned as grounds for barring members from voting or from eligibility for office. In the case of newly elected members, the fine for such omissions had to be paid by the next meeting, failing which the member's name would be removed from the society's list by the president (OUS rules 1851, 19). Existing members had to pay their membership fee for the term by the second meeting; otherwise, they were subjected to fines which increased daily. Once the amount of fines reached a certain level, the treasurer posted the offender within three days and, if the amount was still not paid within the space of the next two meetings, the president announced 'to the House that he has struck off such member's name from the list of the Society'

²⁹ The term refers to the act of posting the offence and the name of the offender in a public place.

³⁰ In both Union Societies the president had the right to expel a member who continuously disrupted the debates.

(ibid. 20). The expelled member had to pay his debts before he could be re-elected. In 1853 the rule was amended and it stood that if a member was re-elected he was required to pay the entrance fee again (OUS rules 1853, 17).

The honorary members of the Oxford Union Society were also exempted from membership fees as long as they did not reside in Oxford. By paying a one-time payment, a contributing member was allowed to become an honorary member after leaving the society (OUS rules 1839, 16). Cambridge Union Society eventually allowed anyone to become an honorary member by a simple payment without even having been a member in the first place. The rate was different for undergraduates and others (CUS laws 1848 October, 6). This rule indicates that Cambridge Union Society had already gained a reputation outside the university and was making use of it by allowing outsiders to become members for a fee.

Oxford Union Society permitted university graduates (who were also given the chance to attend its debates) to become honorary members by a single payment. Before they could be considered honorary members, however, graduates were subject to election by ballot in the same manner as new members (OUS rules 1839, 15). In 1853, however, the rule changed so that any member of the Society who had paid for at least nine membership subscriptions was entitled to become an honorary member without going through the election process. Furthermore, the appointed trustees of the Society were given the power to nominate any graduate of Oxford University as an honorary member (OUS rules 1853, 14).

All in all, it seems that the Oxford Union Society kept more restrictions of membership than Cambridge. However, both Societies considered the members of its sister society eligible to become honorary members. At Cambridge honorary membership was also extended to all the members of the Historical Society of Dublin (referred to as the *Dublin Literary and Historical Society* in the Society's laws). At Oxford, honorary membership was also granted to members of Durham Union Society from 1856 onwards. Members of London Union Society only had the right to participate in the debates if resident if they resided in the city of Oxford (OUS rules 1851, 18). London Union Society members could also take part in Cambridge Union Society debates after 1853, but they were not entitled to use other facilities unless they paid the membership subscription. (CUS laws 1853, 7)

The Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies kept in close contact over the years, which also explains why they granted honorary memberships to each other's members from very early on. At some point, some of the rules and regulations of the Oxford society distinctly resembled those of Cambridge. For example, the rules for 1839 gave the president of Oxford Union Society the role of 'sole interpreter of the laws' (OUS rules 1839, 27). Rules were distinctly referred to as 'laws' in the Cambridge Union Society as well. The similar formulation adopted in Oxford was not a coincidence, as one Cambridge Union Society minute books explicitly mentions that the secretaries of both societies had sent copies of their proceedings for that year (CUS minute book vol. 10, 116). How-

ever, the term 'rules' was soon afterwards adopted again at Oxford (see OUS rules 1843).

As has become evident, the rules concerning membership in Union Societies were extremely carefully constituted. They show that, over time, the societies became well organised and their members intended to institutionalise their functions for a longer period than just one term at a time.

The Union Societies themselves became models for other academic debating societies in England. John Stuart Mill, for instance, founded the *London Debating Society* in 1825 on the model of the Speculative Society, but was also inspired by the activities of the Cambridge Union Society (Mill 1955, 106), which he considered an impressive arena for political debate:

The Union Debating Society [...] was an arena where what were then thought extreme opinions, in politics and were weekly asserted, face to face with their opposites, before audiences consisting of the elite of the Cambridge youth [...]. (Mill 1955, 76-77)

The Scottish academic debating societies also remained influential. In the newly founded University College London (1826) students established literary and debating societies that did not seem to follow the example of the Union Societies. *The University College London Debating Society* was formed in 1828, first as the 'Literary and Philosophical Society'. First of all, unlike the Union Societies, it functioned on the premises of the university. Also, its debates did not follow parliamentary procedure.

Along with Cambridge and Oxford, other Union Societies also appeared in the late nineteenth century. Durham Union Society organised an intervarsity debate to celebrate its jubilee on 16 March 1912. Among delegates from the Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies as well as College Historical Society of Dublin there was a group of speakers joining the debate from the *Edinburgh University Union Society* (see *Durham University Journal* 1912). Durham Union Society's forerunner, *Durham University Debating Society*, was established as early as 1835. The University of Durham had been established only a few years earlier, in 1832.³¹ The university was originally based on just one college. In this sense it shares a resemblance with Trinity College of Dublin. Durham University Debating Society only existed for a short period of time and was financially aided by the university. The surviving records of the society only cover the period between 1835 and 1839.

There does not seem to be any other records for meetings earlier than 1885. However, the university journal mentions a Durham University Union Society that was established in 1842. The records of the Oxford Union Society also suggest that a *Durham Union Society* was operating at least in 1856. Additionally the president of Durham Union Society attended the jubilee celebration of the Ox-

³¹ Previously there existed a college at Durham closely connected with Oxford University. It had been established by a community of scholars at Durham Cathedral in the Middle Ages. The religious clerics and scholars continued to be educated at Oxford until early nineteenth century. They provided for academic education and local administration in the Durham area.

ford Union Society in 1873. The Durham Union Society had been revived as 'Durham University Union' a year earlier, when three debating societies merged together (*Durham University Journal* 1912, 204).

Based on the few extant records of their meetings, Durham Union Society seems to have followed the parliamentary procedure of proposing motions from very early on. In the minute book entry of 28 October 1835, the society debated on George Hills' proposal 'that the present state of Cathedral Establishments is of decided advantage to the country' (Durham University Debating Society minute book 1835). From the formulation, it appears that Durham had adopted the parliamentary way of putting motions. It seems likely that the society kept in contact with the Oxford society at the time, although there is no factual evidence of this in the records.

It has been argued that the Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies were forerunners of the late nineteenth-century parliamentary debating societies in relation to their adoption and application of the procedure used in the House of Commons (van Rijn 2007, 54). Their contribution to the training of parliamentarians was recognised by several commentators. It was, for example, declared that 'nearly a fifth of the present House of Commons, and a very considerable number of the House of Lords, have aired their early efforts in the great debating hall [of the Oxford Union Society]' (Harris-Burland 1894, 502). This was, indeed, a significant number. Although it is difficult to say whether or not the figure was correct, the argument itself suggests that the Union Societies were considered a part of parliamentary political culture.

The ceremonial speeches at the inauguration of the Cambridge Union Society's new buildings in 1866 as well as at the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of Oxford Union Society in 1873 also suggest that their parliamentary connections were considerable. In 1866 the Earl of Powis³² opened the inaugural proceedings at Cambridge by expressing his view of the society's contribution to the nation:

Let me ask you to consider for a moment how important the practice of debate is in a country like this, pervaded by constitutional forms — a country in which not only all the national, but all the local business is conducted by representative assemblies of every sort and size. Even in political matters Parliament controls, and I may almost say directs the executive. The Treasury, or Home Office, the Poor-Law Board and the Privy Council have but a power of veto — a consultative power as it were — while the initiative is given to the rate-payers, the parish vestries, the town councils, the improvement commissioners, the magistrates assembled in quarter sessions, and in our great commercial enterprises to the directors and the shareholders themselves. Now these are bodies whom, to influence, you must persuade by discussion. (Lord Powis: Cambridge Union Society 1866, 4)

In short, Lord Powis argued that societies such as the Cambridge Union Society provided its members an invaluable advantage in training to meet the require-

³² Edward Herbert (1818-1891) was educated at Eton and St John's College, Cambridge, where he graduated with an MA in 1840. He was elected in the House of Commons in 1843 and created peer in 1848 when he entered the House of Lords.

ments of national politics. Likewise, the benefits of participating in the activities of the Oxford Union were noted by former members. In his speech at the fiftieth anniversary, the Right Honourable J. R. Mowbray³³ raised the issue:

There are many persons, I know, who regard the Union as merely a debating society, but I think this to be a great mistake (hear, hear). There are imperial politics, and there are Union politics. Regarded on the side of imperial politics, it may be called a deliberative society; but regarded on the side of Union politics, I look upon it as a great school for the development of the combative element (hear, hear). (Mowbray: Oxford Union Society 1874, 6)

Here Sir John Mowbray highlights the distinction between ‘imperial’ and ‘Union’ politics. His speech suggests that, despite the fact that the minute books of the Union Societies never directly express the political side of their activities, the members themselves were fully aware that the debates were not merely academic in character: the debates for and against motions were not conducted merely for the sake of the argument.

As the demand for debating practice grew in the British political culture, parliamentary rules became more familiar to many debating societies. By the twentieth century, debating was not only practised by academics but also by the working classes. In 1926 the *Glasgow Parliamentary Debating Society* celebrated its fifty years of existence. Founded in 1876 its members were mostly workers, which distinguished it from many other such societies at the time. The Glasgow society respected the Scottish tradition of self-improvement, just like so many Enlightenment debating societies had promoted before. However, the society also recognised the importance of following parliamentary procedure:

Wherever a few or many people are found together desirous of improving the mind, there is some measure of common purpose. In this the “House” did not differ, although one should imagine there could be quite a good discussion as to what is the primary purpose of the Association: — whether it is the debating of politics or whether it is the development of public speakers. At any rate, both objects are admirable, and if in the course of developing self-expression one’s knowledge of politics grows, or if in the discussion of politics one’s power of expounding grows, the educational aims of the Association are being served. (Mossman 1926, 5)

Unlike those in Liverpool, Edinburgh and London, the parliamentary debating society in Glasgow did not achieve instant success. As Robert Graham, a former member, described in 1882:

We have never been taken up by the political leaders in the city, we have never been taken up by the civic authorities — unlike many other associations throughout the kingdom, where I know there are a very much higher social grade than what there is in Glasgow [...] But in Glasgow, some years ago, when half-a-dozen almost unknown young men conceived the idea of starting such an Association they were met with derision, and for two or three years they were ignored by the newspapers. If

³³ Sir John Robert Mowbray (1815-1899), also known as John Cornish until 1847, was educated at Westminster School and Christ Church College, Oxford. He was a long-serving MP, becoming first elected to the House of Commons in 1853 for Durham, and then representing Oxford University from 1868 until his death in 1899.

they tried to get an occasional paragraph in the newspapers it was said they magnified themselves too much. But now we have become an institution in the city, not likely to fall back. (quoted in Mossman 1926, 3)

Although the society was not at first taken seriously, it was allowed to function and advertise its activities. The societies in other cities had members with more diverse backgrounds, some being Members of Parliament themselves. They were large assemblies that emulated not only the procedure, but also many parliamentary conventions, such as holding seats for constituencies. *The Liverpool Parliamentary Debating Society*, which was the first of its kind, had 1200 members in 1882 (Mossman 1926, 2).

The British tradition of debating societies would not have been realised without the spread of parliamentary ideas. The great controversies of the eighteenth century relating to newspaper reporting on Parliament and the secrecy of parliamentary proceedings contributed to the general public interest in Parliament.

3.3 Publicity, press and parliamentary journalism

The British parliament did not have an official publisher of debates before the early twentieth century. The Hansard records attained official status only in 1909, although, in practice, they had been considered authoritative for a hundred years (Jordan 1931, 437). The newspaper press and subsequent professionalisation of parliamentary journalism enabled parliamentary ideas to spread in the nineteenth century. However, printers and publishers had been involved in the politics of reporting since the early eighteenth century.

The secrecy of proceedings in Parliament has a long history. It has been realised in the political struggles between Parliament and the Crown since Elizabethan times. It became a tradition to keep parliamentary debates private. The journals of the Houses were kept only for the purposes of the members. In 1680 the House of Commons, for the first time, allowed the votes of the House to be printed. The following year it also granted permission to publish its proceedings. Until the early eighteenth century, *Votes and Proceedings* included simple records of passed motions and received petitions (Hoover 1953, 5).

Parliamentary debates have been reported in periodicals since the 1710s. The reporters were expected to show the different partisan sides in their writings and to provide the general public with an account of the political controversies inside Parliament (Hoover 1953, 6). Their reporting introduced daily parliamentary politics to the coffeehouses and the taverns. Habermas (1989, 64) argues that this reporting led to the creation of a critical public, whose ideas were mediated in the controversies between the governing party and the opposition. However, it has also been argued that Parliament was already conceived as the main public forum for political debate (Black 2008, 217). The growing reading public did not challenge the political authority of Parliament. In fact, in

eighteenth-century British political culture, the importance of Parliament grew even stronger due to the increased publicity given to its debates.

At first, the accounts of debates appearing in magazines were rather brief and erratic. The *Political State* and the *Historical Register* were among the first publications to provide debate reports. In 1731 the *Gentleman's Magazine* appeared, providing summaries of proceedings that had already been published elsewhere (Hoover 1953, 10). Its competitor was the *London Magazine*, which was founded the following year. In April 1738, due to House of Commons' actions against the magazines, the *London Magazine* published an article purportedly written by a secretary of a club³⁴ in imitation of the style and manner of Parliament (ibid. 16). The debate was, in fact, a report of one held at the House of Commons in February. In June the *Gentleman's Magazine*, in its turn, published a supplement with the title 'Debates in the Senate of Magna Lilliputia'.³⁵ In the article the names of the characters were anagrams of real parliamentarians. This disguised manner of reporting parliamentary debates lasted for half a year, after which the magazines were able to resume their regular style of reporting. However, they had to remain cautious not to breach parliamentary privilege, and frequently resorted to their disguising techniques also in the 1740s.

The magazines also included parliamentary speeches that were not disguised. The speakers were usually distinguishable, although the names were blanked out. Samuel Johnson, who was mainly responsible for the speeches in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, confessed that he had written his celebrated piece on a speech delivered by the elder William Pitt without actually hearing him (Macdonagh 1913, 139-140). In fact, Johnson had been informed (by *Gentleman's Magazine* employees, whom the doorkeepers had let in) about the subjects of debate, the names of speakers and their speaking order, and the sides they took and main arguments used. Johnson himself had visited the gallery only once. The speech he ascribed to Pitt the Elder was, basically, of his own imagination completely and written solely for the purposes of the magazine. However, the speech was included in *Parliamentary Debates* and later in collections of orations and school textbooks as an example of the oratory of the Golden Age (ibid. 140).

The competition between the magazines made their activities more and more bold, despite the restrictions of parliamentary privilege. They had hardly any proper access to the sessions of Parliament, but sometimes individual parliamentarians might send their speeches for publication (Hoover 1953, 29). In March 1747 the magazines published genuine reports of a House of Lords hear-

³⁴ Hoover (1953, 17) attributes the article to Thomas Gordon who was known as a translator of Tacitus. The debate report included speakers named 'Honourable Scipio Africanus' as well as 'M. Tullius Cicero' and 'M. Cato'. Additionally, the *London Magazine* had a Dublin edition, which might have inspired Edmund Burke and others to establish the first student debating society, named the 'Club', in 1747.

³⁵ The article seems written in the style of Samuel Johnson, but there is no certainty of the authorship (Hoover 1953, 19).

ing on Lord Lovat, and this resulted in the brief arrest of the editors of the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *London Magazine*. This seemed like the beginning of the end for the reporting of parliamentary debates. The 'Political Club' column of the *London Magazine* did reappear later in the year with a loose connection to the argumentation in Parliament. It ran for another decade (ibid. 30).

In the 1760s the reporting of debates was left to the daily newspapers, which started publishing parliamentary debates in full (Thomas 1959, 629). The manner of reporting was more journalistic in the sense that more attention was paid to reporting the speeches accurately as well as providing political commentary (Macdonagh 1913, 195). There was increasing pressure on Parliament, especially in connection with the Wilkes affair,³⁶ to give up its strict secrecy regarding the printing of parliamentary debates. After the outcome of the Wilkes affair in 1771, when press reporting became more or less accepted in Parliament (although not officially until 1845), the practice was that only one or two newspapers reported on one parliamentary debate at a time. These representations of events were copied by other newspapers, which provided their own summaries of what had happened (Thomas 1959, 631).

One of the early commentators of parliamentary reporting was Jeremy Bentham. In his procedural tract, *Essay on Political Tactics*,³⁷ he discusses the publicity of the proceedings of political assemblies, considering it 'the fittest law for securing public confidence' (Bentham 1843, ch. II). Even though Bentham acknowledged the publication of debates as a 'crime', it served a greater good: 'It is to these fortunate crimes that England is indebted for her escape from an aristocratic government resembling that of Venice' (ibid. ch. II §6). Bentham argued that the publishing of parliamentary debates carried further political benefits: 'The body which speaks in public, and whose debates are published, possesses all the means of conciliating to itself numerous partisans, whilst those who deliberate in secret can only influence themselves' (ibid. ch. II §6, fn.). In this sense, Bentham recognised that the publicising also had the effect of legitimising political action.³⁸ In this manner Bentham participated in the politics of publicity with his notion of it as securing public confidence in Parliament. The publishing of debates was, indeed, a political matter. In an interview before the 1871 select committee on business of the House of Commons, May was asked whether he supported the privilege of individual members of the House to clear the gallery of strangers. He responded that this old prerogative of individual members was based on the assumption that strangers were not present, which was not the case anymore (Report from the Select Committee 1871, 13). Therefore, in May's view, it was not a right at all but rather a 'relic of a past age' (ibid. 20).

³⁶ For a discussion, see Ihalainen 2010, ch. 2.

³⁷ Bentham's pamphlet was not published during his lifetime. For further details about the publication, see editor's note in Bentham (1843).

³⁸ His followers were later involved in an attempt to arrange parliamentary debates in a publication with commentaries. The publication was named *Parliamentary History and Review*. It only appeared twice in the late 1820s.

May's argument was made in the context of a national legislative assembly. In the Union Societies, however, the notion of publicity was still a contested issue. As an example, in the Cambridge Union Society a private meeting was called by the standing committee to discuss a letter that had been published in the *Morning Post* on 21 November 1844. It was argued that the newspaper's deliberate informing the public of the Union Society's proceedings was a breach of privilege (CUS minute book vol. 13, 2 December 1844). This did not remain the only incident. In the Oxford Union Society, the question of publication of its proceedings in newspapers was discussed on several occasions. In fact, already in its second year of existence, in 1824, the United Debating Society (as it was then called) met to discuss such an incident. On 6 June a paragraph had been published in the *John Bull* which had presented the proceedings of the debate of 29 May on the topic 'That the dethronement of Charles I was fully justifiable' (*Transactions of the Oxford Union Debating Society: 1823-1825*, 29). The standing committee of the Oxford Union Society recommended in 1866 that the rule prohibiting the publication of speeches should be amended:

That the following be substituted for Rule LI. "No notice or report of the proceedings of the Society, which mentions or alludes to individual members of the Society, shall be published in any Newspaper or Periodical whatsoever. The President is empowered to take steps to prevent such publication." (OUS minute book vol. IX, 22 February 1866)

The proposal was formulated in a way that, in practice, permitted the publication of proceedings as long as no names of members were mentioned. Another important provision was that the president alone had the authority to prevent such publication. In the rules the president was not, however, allowed to act without first consulting the standing committee (OUS rules 1863, 17). The motion was not passed, but one of the proponents demanded a poll, which was granted by the president. The result was that the majority favoured passage, but the matter remained unsettled as some members still showed reluctance towards permitting publication.

In the aftermath of the Wilke's affair in 1771, parliamentary reporting began to form a specific branch of journalism. It became more professional as the circulation of newspapers continued to rise during the nineteenth century. From 1774 onwards most newspapers started to write their own versions of debates. As demand for parliamentary reporting grew, it eventually led to competition between London newspapers, and they started to specialise in specific aspects of parliamentary debates. However, it was difficult to make accurate reports until 1783, when the ban against taking notes from the press gallery was lifted. By the nineteenth century, the debates were written down in shorthand and then re-written as coherent reports of what had been said (Sparrow 2003, 45). The presence of reporters was also accepted in practice after 1834 when press galleries were installed in the new Houses of Parliament, which had been rebuilt after a fire in 1834.

By the nineteenth century, parliamentary ideas were even penetrating into literary culture. For example, Byron and Tennyson, poets considered among the

greatest of the period, were deeply affected by parliamentary politics (see Bevis 2010). It is also known that Charles Dickens' writings were influenced by his experiences as a reporter, e.g. for the *Mirror of Parliament* and *Morning Herald*, in the early 1830s (Sparrow 2003, 37-38). Already before he was working for newspapers he used to visit the parliamentary gallery. This period in his life was utilised by Dickens in his later literary work. It has even been argued that he wrote his novels in a manner that resembled public speaking, due to his practice as a parliamentary reporter (Bevis 2010, 100).

Dickens's uncle, John Henry Barrow, was the editor of the *Mirror of Parliament*. His aim was to give accounts of parliamentary proceedings that were 'impartial' and 'correct' (Brown 1955, 312). In that way he offered an alternative to the newspaper reports that notoriously took sides and made representations of debates for their own purposes.

Before Hansard became considered the official provider of parliamentary reports, the *Mirror of Parliament* was among its rivals. The first to report full debates was William Cobbett (1763-1835), who had started by attaching parliamentary proceedings as a supplement to his *Annual Register* in 1804. Soon after, *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates* appeared as an independent publication. In 1808 T. C. Hansard appeared as its printer and in a couple of years took over the publishing. At that time, Hansard was just one more publisher of parliamentary proceedings. The *Mirror of Parliament*, which appeared from 1828 to 1841, had for a short period been regarded as the leading publication (Jordan 1931, 438).

The *Mirror of Parliament* sought for the status of official printer of parliamentary reports in 1834 when William Tooke³⁹ presented Barrow's petition to the House of Commons. In it Barrow asked for the House to make sure that the future of the *Mirror of Parliament* was secured as it had provided a 'faithful and impartial parliamentary record' (quoted in Brown 1955, 315). Barrow also warned the House of the possibility of leaving the reporting to others, with their attempts to distort parliamentary proceedings 'under the influence of political or personal motives' (ibid.). While presenting the petition Tooke used similar rhetoric by arguing that 'daily reports are not only, perhaps necessarily incomplete, but are generally tinged with the fairly avowed political principles of the editors' (ibid. 316). Furthermore, Tooke argued that the *Mirror of Parliament* was not in competition with other publications.

It seems that Barrow was using a rhetoric of impartiality, not only in trying to portray the exceptionality of the *Mirror of Parliament* in its competition with other publishers of parliamentary debates, but also in establishing its authority in the House of Commons. However, the Speaker of the Commons denied a discussion on it on the grounds that the petition did involve an acknowledgement of committing a breach of the House's privileges (Brown 1955, 316).

³⁹ William Tooke (1777-1863) was a Member for Truro 1832-1837. He contributed to the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and was a founder of University College London.

On 22 May Tooke moved yet another motion in which he insisted that a select committee should consider ‘the expediency of establishing or encouraging the publication of an authentic report of the debates arising in the House’ (Tooke: House of Commons, 22 May 1834, cc1228-1229). Those in favour of the motion argued for its benefits, whereas those against it in general argued that the competition of the press ensured a wide range of interpretations, which pleased the general public (Brown 1955, 317-318). After a lengthy debate Tooke’s motion ultimately lost. Barrow continued to publish the *Mirror of Parliament* and he even expanded its range of reporting. For example, the *Mirror of Parliament* started to include authorised *Lists of Divisions* (Brown 1955, 319). The increasing parliamentary material as well as the costs of publishing resulted in the discontinuation of the publication in 1841. However, it remained a source of reference in the House of Commons’ debates (ibid. 321-322).

3.4 Rhetoric and parliamentary eloquence

Along with the professionalisation of parliamentary journalism, other writings of the period also affected the way parliamentary debate was understood and discussed. Such related concepts as ‘debate’, ‘rhetoric’, ‘eloquence’ and ‘oratory’ did not bear the same meaning in the contemporary writings on public speaking. In addition, their relations were often interpreted in different ways among the writers of the period. In the following, I will present the range of discussion related to the interpretations of parliamentary debates from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century.

In the late nineteenth century ‘debate’ became connected with parliamentary speaking. The change was described in *The Times*:

In the course of these fifty years we have become a nation of public speakers. Everyone speaks now, and tolerable well too [...] Eloquence is but a facility, or instrument, or weapon, or accomplishment, or, in academic terms, an art [...] We are now more than ever a debating, that is, a Parliamentary people. (*The Times* 1873, 1)

Here ‘debate’ was portrayed as a national characteristic. However, as discussed in Section 3.1, debating was not always appreciated, and was sometimes even interpreted as a constitutional threat. In his posthumous essay, *Public Speaking* (1838), Gladstone took notice of the lack of political and rhetorical education in England. He considered experience in public speaking a prerequisite for a ‘healthy constitution of moral and intellectual character’ (in Reid 1953, 266). He further argued that a student of public speaking should particularly observe how oratory was practised in the House of Commons (ibid. 267). During his studies at Eton, Gladstone had written a short essay in *The Eton Miscellany*, in which he argued for the benefits of public speaking skills acquired in debating societies:

Scarcely any one of the great orators of this country has risen to so proud a distinction without previously trying his strength, maturing his faculties, and remedying his defects, in a private Debating Society. [...] Of the very few distinguished young speakers in the House of Commons, as it exists at present, (altogether, perhaps, not more than four or five) three, and those perhaps the first – I mean Lord Morpeth, the Hon. E. G. Stanley, and Lord Castlereagh – have been members of the ETON DEBATING SOCIETY! (Gladstone 1827, 113; emphasis in the original text)

In young Gladstone's view parliamentary credentials were gained through public speaking skills. At that time, however, the notion of public speaking was still largely being shaped by certain eighteenth-century theories. Howell (1971) distinguishes four distinct strands in British rhetorical thought, most of which he regarded as derivative of Aristotelian or Ciceronian thought or affected by the new sciences (ibid. 696). There was, firstly, a rhetorical program by John Ward and John Holmes incorporating ancient Greek and Roman theorists into popular oratory. They emphasised the grand style of the ancients as opposed to the 'plain unadorned speech of civil life' (ibid. 697). Secondly, there was style-oriented rhetorical thought, aimed at poetry, novels, and drama, and represented by such theorists as Nicholas Burton, Anthony Blackwall and John Stirling. The third variant was the elocutionist movement, which was popular in Great Britain and America until the end of nineteenth century. Its most prominent adherents were Thomas Sheridan, Orator Henley and John Walker. The elocutionists were interested in turning ancient rhetorical theories into a scheme of delivery. Sheridan, for instance, was well educated in the ancient art of oratory and saw a need for educational reform that would emphasise oratorical mastery for public purposes. Finally, the fourth type of rhetorical theory was called 'new rhetoric'. Inspired by teachings of Bacon and Locke and accentuating 'learned communication', it mainly concentrated on creating a general theory of literature (ibid. 697). Its proponents included Adam Smith, George Campbell and Hugh Blair.

Scottish enlightenment philosophers frequently connected the idea of politics with an understanding of mutual courtesy and tolerance. The cultivation of one's manners was part of the general goal of self-improvement and was connected to the idea of the independence of individuals. Blair and Hume were among those who referred to parliamentary eloquence as one form of the British public speaking tradition. In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), Blair discussed eloquence in connection with popular assemblies. The aim was to provide instruction to those who wanted to elevate their social status by improving their public speaking. For that purpose, Blair provides descriptions of various forms of eloquence suited for public assemblies, the bar, and the pulpit. In the case of eloquence in public assemblies, he cited the Parliament of Great Britain as the best example: '*Wherever there is a popular court, or wherever any number of men are assembled for debate or consultation, there, in different forms, this species of Eloquence may take place*' (Blair 1812, 6). He further stresses the importance of persuasion in public assemblies as the attempt to convince an audience:

Nothing can be more erroneous, than to imagine, that, because speeches to popular assemblies admit more of a declamatory style than some other discourses, they therefore stand less in need of being supported by sound reasoning. When modelled upon this false idea, they may have the shew, but never can produce the effect, of real eloquence. (Blair 1812, 7)

It seems that Blair's rhetoric is intended to deflect accusations of demagoguery. He argues that there is no point in making 'mere declamations' without any relation to reasoning. Furthermore, he declares that 'the foundation of all that can be called Eloquence, is good sense, and solid thought' (Blair 1812, 7). He makes a distinction between eloquence and argument. As known in 'new' rhetorical theories, figures and tropes are clearly separate from argumentation:

I know, that young people, on purpose to train themselves to the art of speaking, imagine it useful to adopt that side of the question under debate, which, to themselves, appears the weakest, and to try what figure they can make upon it. But, I am afraid, this is not the most improving education for public speaking; and that it tends to form them to a habit of flimsy and trivial discourse. Such a liberty, they should, at no time, allow themselves, unless in meetings where no real business is carried on, but where declamation and improvement in speech is the sole aim. (Blair 1812, 8)

Blair considers it unwise to use figurative speech, which he claims to be without substance, in assemblies of 'real business' because it might jeopardise *ethos*. Having been one of the founders of the Speculative Society of Edinburgh, Hume, for his part, was less explicit. In his *History of England* (1757) Hume continually refers to parliamentary manners of speaking. However, he does not express his definition of eloquence directly. Rather, he alludes to a connection between English liberties and parliamentary oratory (Hume 1983, 150). The idea that liberties could be strengthened through parliamentary oratory is not explained in detail by Hume, rather, it may have been so common an assumption as to require no explanation.

Howell (1971, 716) argues that rhetoric as a term became mostly associated with 'declamation' or 'ornate expression' in the beginning of the twentieth century. Rhetoric had, according to this view, become by then alienated from its traditional relations to eloquence, particularly from the practice of it. This does not mean, however, that the lack of theoretical attention paid to the connection between rhetoric and public speaking made rhetoric disappear from political life. Sandford shows that there was intensive criticism towards British oratory already at the beginning of the eighteenth century and that this led to much theorisation of public speaking, including on the topic of 'rhetoric' (Sandford 1929, 131-132). One of the main reasons for these differing accounts is that Howell mainly concentrates on the literary theories of rhetorical investigation. Instead of relying on classical rhetorical doctrine, theories that are the focus of Howell's work emphasised 'privatization of literary experience' (Wellbery 2000, 187). The enlightenment ideal of political action related to a concept of originality that superseded the old ideals of upholding cultural traditions. During the eighteenth century, rhetoric was regarded as a subgenre of literature and later, it played a part in the formation of English literature when it became an aca-

demic discipline in its own right (Howell 1971, 716; see also Miller 1997, esp. ch. 9).

In the various places where public speaking was practised, from the pulpits to the parliament, the study of rhetoric remained in the background. Howell does not seem to consider the practical use of oratory as a persisting aspect of the rhetoric of the eighteenth century. Even though rhetoric in general terms was considered more a literary field of study, it had oratorical connections to parliamentary life, as already noted by young Gladstone. As the classics still formed the basis of their education, parliamentarians themselves had a sound knowledge of classical rhetoric. Classical rhetoric did not lose its importance as long as it remained instrumental for various types of public action, such as politics, literature and religion (Wellbery 2000, 189).

From the early nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, a specific genre of literature emerged on parliamentary eloquence. Tracts were written commenting on parliamentarians' styles and manners and including quotations from their speeches. The excerpts were carefully selected to illustrate the heights of British eloquence. Some of the tracts claimed that the peak had been reached in the eighteenth century (e.g. Browne 1808, 9-10). William Pitt the Elder (1708-1778), also known as the Earl of Chatham, was usually considered the greatest British orator due to his classical proficiency and style (e.g. Hazlitt 1810, 4-7). He was described as the model parliamentarian:

Probably no man in the history of senates ever combined in a higher degree the gifts of an orator of the first rank as did the elder Pitt. Voice, presence, delivery, courage and character, unerring instinct for the temper of his auditory, unassailable public and private virtue, imagination, fire, statesmanship, and poetry of expression — all these had Fortune lavished upon her favourite without ungrudging hand. (Lampson 1918, 1)

Speeches of the Earl of Chatham were often written down in the tracts as authoritative examples. However, they were hardly in the original form given the fact that the publication of parliamentary proceedings was strictly censored in the eighteenth century.

Another purpose of including the quoted speeches with the portraits of the parliamentarians was to depict them as possessing a model, public character (cf. Craig 1913, 8). To put it in another way, the texts were selected in order to show reasons for their reputations as parliamentary orators. The orators of the past were seen through the lenses of nineteenth-century reviewers keen to use them as models for their own times. For example, the famous Whig leader Charles James Fox (1749-1806) was more appreciated in terms of oratory than debate:

His education had in some respects furnished him with the weapons of an orator; but he was deficient in statistics, and in scientific acquaintance with the principles of political economy. These gaps in his training he was obliged to make up by prodigious efforts, or by drawing attention from them by brilliance in other directions. He better loved debate than set oratory [...]. (Hawthorne 1900, 400)

It is interesting to note, however, that Macaulay's first essay on the Earl of Chatham (1834) describes him as an unsuccessful debater, though he was otherwise considered a model parliamentarian:

Yet he was not a great debater. That he should not have been so when first he entered the House of Commons is not strange. Scarcely any person has ever become so without long practice and many failures. [...] But, as this art is one which even the ablest men have seldom acquired without long practice, so it is one which men of respectable abilities, with assiduous and intrepid practice, seldom fail to acquire. It is singular that, in such art, Pitt, a man of great parts, of great fluency, of great boldness, a man whose whole life was passed in parliamentary conflict, a man who, during several years, was the leading minister of the Crown in the House of Commons, should never have attained to high excellence. (Macaulay 1913, 18)

While Macaulay's interpretation may be politically oriented, it does represent an exception to the prevailing ideas of parliamentary speaking. Certainly, his interpretation was influenced by the experience he had gained in the Cambridge Union Society. Macaulay did not admire the style of public speaking of the standards of the eighteenth century, in which the individual *ethos* of the speaker played the key role. Instead, he supported the same values as Gladstone for whom training and practice in public speaking, acquired through rising to the occasion in various parliamentary conflicts, ultimately determined style of debate.

Francis's *Orators of the Age* (1847) provides yet another example of the 'conduct and personal character' way of interpreting parliamentarians. His essays had been published as separate articles in *Fraser's Magazine* from 1845 onwards. As typical of the genre, Francis treated his chosen parliamentarians without reference to each other. As he portrayed parliamentarians as individual speakers, he did not consider his subject matter from the point of view of debate and conflictual argumentation. Indeed, he wrote that his portraits were intentionally written so that there would be as little as possible to remind the reader of party politics (Francis 1847, iii-iv).

Here we may contrast Francis's arguments to De Mille's⁴⁰ typology of public speaking in *Elements of Rhetoric* (1878). In the 1882 edition of his rhetorical manual De Mille makes a distinction between 'oratory' and 'debate':

Oratory is the discussion of a subject by one; debate is the discussion of a subject by more than one. Oratory considers the subject from one point of view; debate considers the subject from two or more opposed points of view. (De Mille 1882, 471)

De Mille describes 'oratory' as one-sided speech. 'Debate', instead, is speech from at least two opposing sides. It is further divided into two distinct forms: controversial and parliamentary debate. De Mille argues that the parliamentary form has overtaken the controversial since it provides for a more thorough treatment of a subject:

⁴⁰ James De Mille (1833-1880) was a Canadian novelist and a professor of rhetoric. Rhetorical manuals and public speaking tracts were written on both sides of the Atlantic from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

A parliamentary debate, when carried on by able men, is one of the finest exhibitions of the powers of the human mind that can be witnessed. We see well-informed and well-trained intellects turning all their powers to the discussion of a subject from many points of view, in which two opposite forces struggle for the victory. (De Mille 1882, 473)

Francis, for his part, disregards the consideration of opposing sides and accentuates individual oratorical performances. He further argues that parliamentary oratory is superior to debate:

The House of Commons has often been called a giant debating-club; and very often, at the time of great party struggles, it deserves that name. But ordinarily it takes a higher ground. It is not a mere battle-field for gladiatorial combats, the aim of which is personal distinction and public honor alone, but an assembly in which the opinions and interests of rival classes are set forth and judged by the master-spirits of the time, who are the real legislators, [...]. (Francis 1847, 16)

He portrays debate as an inferior rhetorical activity that is only conducted for the pursuance of self-interest. He also claims that, at the time of his writing, British eloquence had declined compared to the quality of the past. In his view, the only parliamentary orators deserving of their eminence are found in a period from the 1770s until the 1840s, for they were subjected to each other's mutual criticism and scrutiny. Francis described them as 'indifferent' to outside demands:

It is in the *animus* that vivified the speeches of the elder orators — their concentration of soul — their indifference to all external modifying influences, to all but the full development of the spontaneous creations of their intellects, that modern speeches are deficient. (Francis 1847, 18)

Francis's conception of parliamentary oratory was very much an apologetics for the traditions of the past. He further argues that the main reason for the decline of oratory is the outside influence on parliamentarians:

The House has become the property of the public; and deference is paid to the public, by public men merging their private quarrels in the more important contests of the class interests which they represent. [...] Another and a more influential cause of the altered tone of contemporary eloquence is the altered character of the House of Commons. [...] Parliamentary orators now find it necessary to do something more than merely display their own talents. (Francis 1847, 19-20)

In Francis's view parliamentary eloquence is a matter of talent obtained in pristine conditions. Now that the House of Commons had come under greater scrutiny by the general public, parties were more affected by outside influences. Francis's rhetoric seems to suggest that parliamentary oratory is at its purest in the absence of party political expediency or short-term goals:

We are in a state of transition, a condition of things favorable to the development of the wisdom of the statesman or the philosopher, but not to the genius of the poet or the orator. Experience has shown that the more remote the prospect of change, the less an orator hopes for the immediate accomplishment of that for which he is striving, the more earnest and enthusiastic is his advocacy; the more fearless his declara-

tion of principles; the more brilliant and fascinating the picture he draws of the good to be attained [...]. (Francis 1847, 21)

Francis argues that, when there is no immediate need for change, an orator acts without self-interest. Politics is, therefore, only resorted to at times of urgency.

Hawthorne (1900), in his turn, focuses on the role of the British House of Commons as a national 'school for oratory', which, he claims, stretches from as far back in history as the drafting of Magna Carta. According to Hawthorne certain trying historical events, such as the American Revolution, produced 'parliamentary giants' unequalled in oratory. They are portrayed as the great protectors of the liberties of Englishmen (see Hawthorne 1900, iv-v). Hume also connected English liberties to parliamentary oratory. Along with Francis, Hawthorne seems to share the view that the greatest oratory in Parliament is only attained at times of distress. This idea was shared by many eighteenth-century commentators on eloquence as well (Potkay 1994, 26). British oratory was conceived as belonging to a tradition of eloquence stemming from antiquity. The concept of eloquence was, therefore, understood in terms of former ages (ibid. 31).

Other British rhetorical treatises likewise compared the parliamentary style of speaking with ancient models. William Gerard Hamilton's (1729-1796) posthumously published manual entitled *Parliamentary Logick* (1808) serves as an example. In this book for parliamentarians Hamilton explicitly applied ancient Roman rhetoric to parliamentary speaking by advising about what techniques were the most persuasive to use in the British parliament. For instance, his book included a variety of examples about how and when to use oratorical wit:

Reductio ad absurdum is the best style of argument for a popular assembly. Consider there for not only the mere weakness of your adversary's argument, but the absurdities of which it is necessarily productive. (Hamilton 1927, 40)

Hamilton's fragmentary manual shows an attempt to compile the first comprehensive treatise on parliamentary rhetoric in a way that would serve the needs of the political culture. The aspect of collecting rhetorical devices for the use of parliamentary orators makes his tract clearly part of the classical rhetorical tradition. Hamilton's attempt proves that classical rhetoric was not altogether absent from the political thought of the eighteenth century.

In light of the great changes affecting the House of Commons, however, the ideals of the past were increasingly difficult to realise. The concept of eloquence was redefined by some writers who saw a need to reconcile the ideal of oratory with the practice of parliamentary politics. One of them was Gladstone, who defined 'eloquence' as a practical activity as well as a subject of study. For him, the substance used by eloquence as an art form are passion and prejudice (in Reid 1953, 268). 'Eloquence of the study' refers to a written form, whereas practical eloquence is defined as debate. Like Blair, Gladstone deplors any style of public speaking that takes place without conviction. In his view, a subject can be treated brilliantly in a written declamation, but appear too didactic

and pompous when performed in front of an audience. In short, the artificiality of a written speech becomes clear when it is uttered.

For Gladstone the highest form of eloquence is debate. Debate is dependent on a 'principle of sympathy' (in Reid 1953, 269), where the passions are moved by confrontation. The aim of the debater is to win over the sympathy of the audience. The key is to carefully observe the 'mood of the moment': *'The ultimate construction therefore of his speech is the work of the moment'* (in Reid 1953, 269). The reason why written speeches fail to convince in debate, he suggests, is that they undermine the contingency of the speech situation. In a case where the situation is imagined beforehand and the speech is delivered regardless of what has been uttered by the others before, the parliamentary audience will not be convinced. If we take Parliament as a model for debate, it is imperative to recall that parties play a significant role. Therefore, the debater must consider his fellow party-members, as he 'rises as it were on behalf of those among whom he sits' (in Reid 1953, 270).

Gladstone's definition of public speaking was conspicuously influenced by the rules of parliamentary debate. For example, he takes into consideration the rule that a member is only allowed to speak once in a plenary session, which he does by calling to mind that speeches must be concise and to the point. However, Gladstone also follows Blair's description of the contingency of debate:

Debate, in popular courts, seldom allows the speaker that full and accurate preparation beforehand, which the pulpit always, and the bar sometimes, admits. The arguments must be suited to the course which the debate takes; and as no man can exactly foresee this, one who trusts to a set speech, composed in his closet, will, on many occasions, be thrown out of the ground which he had taken. (Blair 1812, 9)

According to Blair, the opening of a debate is the only time when a set speech is appropriate. But as the debate develops, set speeches become unsuitable:

They want the native air; the appearance of being suggested by the business that is going on; study and ostentation are apt to be visible; and, of course, though applauded as elegant, they are seldom so persuasive as more free and unconstrained discourses. (Blair 1812, 9)

It seems that Gladstone incorporated Blair's notion into his own idea of the 'mood of the moment'. But Blair's suggestion is rather about acquiring a method of one's own than following parliamentary procedure.

De Mille also acknowledges the role of procedure in parliamentary debate. He divides 'debate' into two categories: 'controversial' and 'parliamentary'. Controversial debate is a 'natural' form of expressing dissent: people are by their nature prone to engage themselves in controversies, and therefore debates are unavoidable. Parliamentary debates, for their part, are something more refined: *'The peculiarity of parliamentary debate is that the subject to be examined is presented in a formal statement, called a resolution, or question, to which alone the discussion must refer'* (De Mille 1882, 472).

Earl Curzon of Kedleston gave his Rede Lecture at the University of Cambridge on 6 November, 1913. For the lecture he prepared a presentation entitled *Modern Parliamentary Eloquence*, which covered the previous fifty years. Its purpose was to provide an analysis of contemporary British eloquence to his fellow public speakers in Parliament. George Nathaniel Curzon (1859-1925) had been educated at Eton and at Oxford University, where he participated in the activities of the Union Society, becoming its president in 1880. He entered Parliament as a representative of the Conservative party in 1886. He was soon sent to Asia to serve as Undersecretary of State for the Conservative government, and was later nominated Viceroy of India (1898-1905). After his return to England, Curzon was appointed Chancellor of the University of Oxford (1907), and created Earl in 1911. During World War I he returned to Parliament and served in the cabinets of Asquith and Lloyd George.

Curzon argues that it would be ridiculous to claim that the existing practice of oratory in Parliament was the same as before. This is because, for him, the term refers to 'a very high and superlative degree of excellence', which public speakers aspire to, but only rarely attain under the present conditions. More specifically, Curzon avoids the term 'oratory', arguing that no such art as was taught or practised by the ancients. 'Eloquence', however, means something that exists irrespective of the age. For him it is 'the highest manifestation of the power of speech', and one which the public speakers of his time were still capable of performing. So, even though 'oratory' in its classical sense was not practised at the present time, it was still dependent of 'eloquence'. In short, oratory is a secondary manifestation of eloquence.

When it comes to parliamentary eloquence, Curzon, contrary to Francis, does not seriously consider it as being in a state of deterioration or long for a time long gone. He maintains that eloquence in Parliament is always tested in practice by whether the audience is impressed or not. In this sense Curzon is more inclined than Francis to view parliamentary eloquence as contingent and adaptable in its form.

The occasions of speech in our public life have so enormously multiplied, parliamentary business lies so much more in debate than in exposition, there is so little leisure on the part, either of speaker or of audience, for sustained display, that the speaker who can improvise has a great advantage over the speaker who requires notice. (Curzon 1913, 19-20)

Curzon also takes into consideration the fact that parliamentary audiences now prefer shorter speeches to declamations lasting for hours as the agenda has become more diverse.

In the first place the House of Commons is much more concerned with legislation and much less with administration than a century ago. In those days there were but few bills, and the main business of the House was to keep an eye on Ministers, to question their policy — particularly their foreign policy — to check their expenditure, and, for the party in opposition, to expose with as much vituperation as possible their alleged misdeeds. (Curzon 1913, 13)

It is, in Curzon's view, only natural that, in the past, the purpose of debate in the House of Commons created occasions for oratory. But since then, the increasing amount of legislation has prevented individual members from displaying their oratorical talents.

Now Parliament is immersed in the harassing details of legislation; it has become a gigantic workshop, in which the hum of the machinery is always ringing, and the dust from the spindles is flying thickly, in the air. A good deal of time is spent on interrogating Ministers; four-fifths of the remainder in the Committee Stage of Bills or the conversational discussion of the Estimates. The residuum that is left for full-dress debate is very small. (Curzon 1913, 13)

In fact, Curzon points out that the style of speaking in the so-called Golden Age would now seem ridiculous. Although the fineries of classical rhetoric are not present or even appreciated any more in the House of Commons, he argues that the general level of oratory has risen. What is now expected from a parliamentary orator is the standard of a public meeting:

In the House of Commons the general level of speech is certainly higher than it was fifty years ago — the direct consequence of the practice acquired on the platform and in the hard mill of contested elections. It is scarcely to be conceived that so wretched a speaker as Castlereagh could ever again lead the House of Commons — that he should have been preferred to the brilliant Canning is to this hour one of the puzzles of history. (Curzon 1913, 21)

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the leaders of the Commons were expected to be excellent speakers. Indeed, Curzon considers speech talent as a 'condition of existence': *'The man who would lead the people and control the State may not perhaps succeed without character; but he will undoubtedly fail if he has not the gift of tongues'* (Curzon 1913, 21).

In a *Times* column marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Oxford Union Society, debate was mentioned in favourable terms:

Debating implies comparison of opinions and occasional submission. It is vastly better than the wordy declamation of the platform or the table, where there is no reply, and, consequently, little fairness. It is vastly better, too, than the endless overflow of the aristocratic visionary or the plebeian demagogue, who never listens to anything but his own sweet voice, or consults anything but his own admired egotism. (*The Times* 1873, 1)

In Curzon's opinion the practice of speech is vital for national politics. This idea was repeated in the practices of various debating societies and clubs, which by the late nineteenth century had become ever more parliamentary. Several manuals of the parliamentary style of debate were in circulation at the time. One was by the Speaker of the Liverpool Parliamentary Debating Society, Charles Willett, in 1880. In the rule book, Willett describes his debating society as serving as 'an *educational medium* for Parliamentary Debate, and for the purpose of discussing "Political and Social Topics," according to the rules and forms of the House of Commons, as far as may be practicable' (Willett 1880, 5; emphasis in the original text). It had now become commonplace to discuss political topics in public venues with a special emphasis on procedure.

3.5 Nineteenth-century interpretations of parliamentary debate

Clubs and societies were, according to Clark (2000, 2), 'one of the most distinctive social and cultural institutions of Georgian Britain'. As discussed above, however, the British debating society tradition was not limited to that period. It has been the aim of this chapter to show that there was indeed a tradition of societies in nineteenth-century Britain that followed politics and adopted parliamentary ideas. More importantly, it was not just that associations affected Parliament, but Parliament affected the associations as well.

In the eighteenth-century tracts, parliamentary speeches were presented as individual displays of oratory. The literature on parliamentary speaking focused on the eloquent speeches of leading parliamentarians. These interpretations of parliamentary debate show quite clearly that procedure was considered of little note. In the nineteenth century, however, speeches were more likely to be interpreted as parts of debate. The significance of parliamentary procedure was realised more widely only in the nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century interpretations of parliamentary debate would not have been possible without the publicity of the press. The demand for parliamentary journalism both broadened the variety of press coverage and increased popular knowledge of parliamentary politics.

The wider circulation of reporting on parliamentary debates and consequently greater interest in how politics was conducted in the House of Commons gradually contributed to ideas of parliamentary political agency. In the latter nineteenth century, 'parliamentary debating societies' emerged, emulating the parliamentary forms of debate and party organisation inside Parliament. Their aim was to inform and empower the public (*The Times* 1882, 4). In this chapter the Union Societies have been placed within the parliamentary political culture of debate, of which the parliamentary debating societies were also part. At first, the Union Societies had mostly operated within small circles, and were prone to rivalries and disorder. By the 1840s, however, both Union Societies had opened their doors to all university members. The membership became available to anyone within the universities who paid the membership fees. Once the Unions' debates became better attended they became potential opinion-builders among the students. They not only promoted debate but, more importantly, how to debate in a parliamentary manner. In that sense they were becoming something like independent parliamentary bodies with their own rules and proceedings.

4 THE POLITICS OF AGENDA IN THE UNION SOCIETY DEBATES

By the nineteenth century there existed three types of associations relating to the parliamentary political culture of the time, all with a different relationship to the parliamentary model of acting politically. Firstly, there were extra-parliamentary movements demanding parliamentary reform in the 1830s and 1840s that attracted thousands of people. Such political associations — the best example of which had been the Anti-Corn Law League — relied on platform oratory (Ostrogorski 1964, 67). While these radical clubs and associations had an important role as pressure groups, they did not remain active after the Parliament started to enact the reforms they called for. These types of movements did not seriously threaten Parliament as a constitutional institution during the period. Rather, their aim was to increase parliamentary representation (*ibid.* 69).

There were also a number of private political clubs that had parliamentary connections. The most famous, and still existing, are the Carlton and Reform Clubs. Conservatives established the Carlton Club after the fall of the Duke of Wellington's government in 1830. It became the political headquarters of the Conservative party until 1853 (Phelps 1983, 1-2). The Reform Club was founded in 1836 with the intention to organise the Whigs and Radicals for the cause of reform (Woodbridge 1978, 2). They have traditionally been described as the first political clubs, due to their connections with the formation of party organisations. This understanding can be challenged for at least two reasons. First of all, there had previously existed political clubs formed around leading parliamentarians, such as the various Pitt Clubs. Second, what is termed 'political' in connection with the clubs of the time fails to take into account those that were not tied to party politics.

My thesis is that both the agenda of debate and the forms of proceeding of the Union Societies were parliamentary, which makes their activities political and an inherent part of British parliamentary political culture. The Union Societies did not participate in the kind of politics that has been attributed to the Carlton or Reform Clubs: they were not founded around a specific policy or by a political group. Nor did they advocate platform oratory, with a view toward

democratic development that emphasises representation and the role of extra-parliamentary demands. Instead, the Union Societies represent a third type of political club, one that connects specifically with parliamentary political culture. This link was created through their incorporation of parliamentary procedure in their debates. In their own historical context, the Union Societies were relatively open in terms of membership, considering how they had started out with the rather club-like characteristics of exclusivity.⁴¹ What ultimately preserved the Union Societies was that they could harness a wide range of members from the universities.⁴²

In the following it will be discussed how parliamentary politics shaped the public meetings of the Union Societies. In terms of sources, the analytical focus is on the public business meetings of the Societies.⁴³ As described earlier, the 'public' nature of these meetings referred to the debates, which were on topics of current public interest. Due to the fact that the sources do not allow us access to the arguments actually presented in the meetings, the analysis here is limited to the formulations of the motions. The analysis is based on the idea that the formulations used are part of the parliamentary culture of debate. Therefore, I focus on the rhetorical patterns of putting questions in the meetings in order to highlight how the language used in the motions provide information about the way political action was conceived and addressed, based on the information available at the time about debates in the Westminster Parliament. In other words, the analysis prioritises the forms over the substance of the motions, although the examples I provide also show how closely the members of the Union Societies were following the politics of the day.

4.1 Agenda setting in the Union Societies

In contrast to the British parliament, the debates of the Union Societies do not bear any subsequent importance in terms of national policy-making or representation in general. Additionally, matters of urgency do not disrupt their deliberations. The Union Societies do, however, meet the traditional characteristics of a parliamentary body. As already stated in the introduction, parliamen-

⁴¹ They should not be confused with gentlemen's clubs such as the Oxford and Cambridge Club, which was established in London in 1830. Its members had the common background of having studied in the old English universities. This qualification of membership was dropped in 1967 due to financial difficulties (Lejeune 1984, 186-187).

⁴² The University Pitt Club at Cambridge was also founded by undergraduates in 1835, and it had already set the example of admitting members widely inside the University. The aim of the Club was to unite Conservative students and to promote party interests (Fletcher 1935, 11). It is noteworthy that some of its members were active also in the Cambridge Union Society (e.g. Hon. G. S. Smythe of St. John's College and Lord John Manners of Trinity College). It offers further proof that the Union Societies were indirectly in touch with party politics.

⁴³ The private business meetings will be dealt with in Chapter 5.

tary bodies tend to follow the pattern of formulating resolutions based on debates that begin with motions.

According to Redlich (1908b, 215), ‘motion’ and ‘resolution’ are the historical building blocks of a parliamentary body. They are the two fundamental components of parliamentary activity. In short, they form the pattern of formulating a decision (i.e. resolution) following a debate on a question (i.e. motion) brought before the parliamentary body. The Union Societies followed the same model: their motions are turned into resolutions after the final vote.

Agenda setting in the Union Societies was limited to a rule that a subject that had already been debated upon during one term was not allowed to be discussed again. That rule is also part of parliamentary procedure (cf. May 1844, 186). Adopted since the seventeenth century, a question once put and decided upon was not allowed to be re-introduced during the same session ‘but must stand as a judgment of the House’ (Hatsell 1818, 125). The rule was applied with the aim of minimising surprises and unresolved questions before the House.

The rule could, however, be bent to a certain extent by moving an adjournment during the debate. May referred to the adjournment of the house as a way of ‘evading or superseding a question’:

In the midst of the debate upon a question, any member may move “that this house do *now* adjourn,” not by way of amendment to the original question, but as a distinct question, which interrupts and supersedes that already under consideration. [...] it is a common practice for those who desire to avoid a decision upon the original question, on that day, to move alternately that “this house do now adjourn,” and “that the debate be now adjourned.” (May 1844, 172)

As discussed in Chapter 2, a motion of adjournment often involved a new debate, which was frequently used in the House of Commons in order to delay the decision. Adjournments and amendments also became part of Union Society politics. In the Oxford Union Society, adjournments could be moved by a member without giving a notice. However, once the motion had been put to and lost in a division, adjournment could not be moved again for at least half an hour (OUS rules 1839, 31). The rule is a precaution against excessive disruption during the debates. Because motions to adjourn the debate could be proposed without notice, someone could have used the rule for obstructive purposes. The laws of the Cambridge Union Society did not recognize a motion of adjournment until 1845.

Unlike their counterparts in the House of Commons, members of the Union Societies had plenty of opportunities to speak for and against motions. Cambridge was somewhat slower in their parliamentarisation of the rules. From very early on, however, both Union Societies had already adopted the parliamentary rule that limited members to speaking only once on the same topic (e.g. CUS laws 1824, OUS rules 1837). In the debates the speakers could only speak for and against a question, which is the most familiar format for parliamentary speaking.

Debating on both sides of a question had already been practised at Burke's 'Club' in the 1740s. At the Speculative Society, which was the main model available during the early years of the Cambridge Union Society, questions were not put in parliamentary form. Their formulations only assumed a simple question of yes or no: *'Ought any permanent support to be provided for the poor?'* (The Speculative Society of Edinburgh 1905, 9). Also at Cambridge Union Society the manner in which topics were proposed did not at first follow parliamentary procedure. Debate topics were delivered as ordinary questions: *'Is the Principle of the Salique Law worthy of adoption in Hereditary Monarchies?'* (CUS 9 February 1830).⁴⁴ That was the usual custom in the eighteenth-century debating societies that served as the models for the Union Societies (see Chapter 3). In the Oxford Union Society the parliamentary style of proposing motions was already applied in 1824 (see *Transactions of the Oxford Union Debating Society: 1823-1825*).

Around 1843 the Cambridge Union Society adopted the parliamentary form: *'That the Salique Law was a proper measure'* (CUS 2 May 1843). Later both Union Societies started adopting new forms of expression that represented more the nature of the resolutions as jointly formed: *'That the House looks with alarm...'* (CUS 22 February 1848), or *'That in the opinion of this House...'* (OUS 17 May 1860). Some of the formulations clearly indicate that the debates were conducted with a view towards a judgment on the matter: *'That this House, considering the National Church should be an integral part of the British Constitution, is opposed to the abolition of Church Rates on grounds of principle as well as of expediency'* (OUS 28 February 1861). As becomes evident, the later formulations of motions were explicitly drafted for the purpose of coming to a decision after the debate. This, of course, was also the aim of parliamentary debate (Campion 1958, 20).

In the Union Societies the agendas for public business meetings were set either by members themselves or by the standing committees. At Cambridge it was the tradition to decide among all the members present in a public meeting after voting on a debate what questions would be debated next. In the early days of the Cambridge Union, members were each in turn required to participate in formulating debate topics: *'Every member shall open a debate in his turn, unless he provide a substitute; but a preference shall be given to the proposer of the question chosen'* (CUS laws 1824, 7). However, two years later the rule was amended so that *'any member may propose a subject for debate, [...] but if no question be proposed, it shall be incumbent on the Treasurer and Secretary each to submit one to the choice of the Society'* (CUS laws 1826, 4). The obligation to submit questions for debate was thereby transferred to the elected officers of the Society. But choosing the topics remained in the hands of the full meeting, not a committee.

⁴⁴ All the references in this chapter to Union Society debate topics can be found in the Appendices. Appendix 1 is for Cambridge Union Society and Appendix 2 for Oxford Union Society.

At Oxford Union Society the committee (later known as the standing committee, see Appendix 3) was mainly in charge of the agenda. However, any member could propose a debate topic by delivering a written notice of it to the standing committee (OUS rules 1856, 40). Debate topics were, at first, chosen and announced three weeks before they were put before the meeting. The rule was, however, later changed and thereafter the announcement was required only five days before the debate (OUS rules 1856, 36), leaving less time to get acquainted with the subject. After the selection of topic was made, the question was put in the form of a motion at the next public business meeting.

Motions for adjournment and points of order, as well as amendments⁴⁵ and riders⁴⁶ to a motion, take precedence in a debate because they can be introduced without notice. They can also be best described as chances to speak about something that was not mentioned in the original motion. In other words, they open up new fields of argument. In comparison with the Cambridge meetings, the Oxford records clearly exhibit more amendments being put forward during its debates. This shows that the original questions put from the chair were more actively amended than in the case of the Cambridge Union Society. The difference may partly derive from the simple fact that, at Cambridge, the debate topics were presented to the house and voted upon for selection, whereas at Oxford the topics were selected and put in the form of motion by the standing committee. The amendments put forward during Oxford Union public meetings might, in some cases, have been more frequent due to the perceived misinterpretations of the standing committee of what the proposer had intended as a motion. But it does not explain the difference altogether, as the comparison shows a distinct divergence from the practice of the Cambridge Union Society.

Members of both Union Societies were subjected to fines for showing any disrespect for the meetings. A member could be fined for neglecting to open a motion that had been approved by the standing committee (OUS rules 1853, 35). At Cambridge, fines were imposed especially in cases when members disturbed the meetings or defied the authority of the president (CUS laws 1834, 4). These kinds of rules show that the Union Societies devised their rules not just to imitate parliamentary politics, but more to make the rules more conducive to facilitate their own political practices.

4.2 Formulation of motions

Rhetorically the setting of political agenda refers to *inventio*. In a parliamentary setting *inventio* is perhaps best described as the necessity to debate either for or against an issue, where the speakers use the commonplaces particular to the

⁴⁵ Amendments are a special case of a motion that challenges the original motion on which the debate is based.

⁴⁶ A rider is an addition to the original motion. In the event that an original motion is accepted by a majority of votes, it will be again put to the vote together with the rider.

debate themes to persuade their audience. In classical rhetoric *topoi* refer to conventions that are learnt and used in appropriate circumstances. The purpose of this section is to investigate the formulations of motions presented in the Union Societies through a categorisation of the *topoi* most commonly seen in the resolutions debated. Before going into the categorisation I will briefly explain how I selected the debate topics for the analysis.

The subjects debated at Union Society meetings were extremely varied. The issues stretch from such topics as the state of drama to questions concerning patriotic duty. Not only was a wide variety of topics represented, resolutions included matters ranging from poetic sensibilities to judgments on the performance of past or present British governments. Analysis of this material may be done in a number of ways. In the following table (Table 1) I put forward one example of selecting formulations of motions that were presented in the Union Societies. Although the Societies did not have to deal with the question of representation themselves, they frequently debated the topic. It was a very politically charged issue, especially around and after the 1832 parliamentary reform. It seems appropriate to take a closer look at how members of the Union Societies formulated their debate topics around the idea of representation. For that reason I have selected the following examples on the basis of expressions of confidence rather than commendation.

Among the examples there are topics that speak explicitly about public confidence and those that deal with it at a more abstract level.⁴⁷ Usually the explicit mentions relate to government actions: *'That the present ministry are undeserving of the confidence of the country'* (Fowler: OUS 9 June 1836). In the early years, as the Union Societies were careful not to attract the attention of the university authorities, motions of votes of confidence were sometimes portrayed in the guise of historical events: *'Did Mr. Grey, in his Bill for reform in 1793, deserve the confidence of the Country?'* (Law: CUS 10 May 1831). As we move further down the list of examples we find that, in the latter part of the period under investigation, the formulations were becoming bolder in their connection to representation and politicians: *'That the Political Conduct of Mr. Gladstone does not entitle him to our confidence'* (Lawrance: CUS 29 May 1860). In short, the formulations were starting to more clearly express formal declarations of the Union Societies.

⁴⁷ In Section 4.2.1, I treat 'vote of confidence' as a rhetorical *topos*, to which I will come back later.

TABLE 1 Motions related to confidence presented in the Union Societies

Date	Cambridge Union Society	Oxford Union Society
1830 November	Was the Duke of Wellington's Administration deserving of the support of the Independent Members of Parliament? (motion: Matthew)	That the administration of the Duke of Wellington is undeserving of the confidence of the country (motion: Gladstone)
1831 March	Ought Ministers to receive the confidence and cooperation of the People in bringing forward measures for general Reform? (motion: Gardiner)	
1831 May	Did Mr. Grey, in his Bill for reform in 1793, deserve the confidence of the Country? (motion: Law)	That the present Ministry is incompetent to carry on the Government of the country (motion: Knatchbull)
1832 March	Are his Majesty's Ministers deserving of the Confidence of the Country? (motion: Yonge)	
1833 May		That the conduct of the ministry , since the passing of the Reform Bill, has not been such as to deserve confidence of the country (motion: Tickell)
1833 December	Is Lord Grey's Ministry deserving the confidence of a British Parliament? (motion: Fearon)	
1835 February	Is the present administration worthy of the confidence of the country? (motion: Drake, opened: Jones)	
1836 June		That the present ministry are undeserving of the confidence of the country (motion: Fowler)
1838 November		That the present ministry by the Conservative tone of their recent policy at home and in the Colonies have forfeited the confidence of the country (motion: Moncreiff)
1839 February	Is the conduct of the present Government with regard to the British Navy, likely to inspire the nation with confidence , in the event of a war? (motion: Drury)	

Date	Cambridge Union Society	Oxford Union Society
1839 May	Does the conduct of the Ministers for the last three years entitle them to the approbation of their country? (motion: Rudd)	
1840 March	Has the conduct and policy of the Melbourne Government since its return to office in 1835, been entitled to the confidence of the country? (motion: Bullock)	
1840 May		That of the various parties which divide the country, the conservative is the least entitled to our respect and confidence (motion: Congreve)
1840 November	Is the Irish Policy of the Present Government unworthy of our confidence? (motion: Stock)	
1840 December	Has the policy of the Ministry with respect to the Syrian Question been such as to deserve our approbation? (motion: Galton)	
1841 May	Has the Budget produced by the Melbourne Administration (May 1841,) deserved the confidence of the Country? (motion: Bullock)	
1841 November	Is the Present Administration worthy of the confidence of the country? (motion: Crawshay)	
1843 May		That the present Government deserves the gratitude of the nation (motion: West)
1843 November	That the proceedings of the present Government towards Ireland , are disgraceful to it as an executive , and absurd in policy (motion: Tooke, opened: Compton Hutton)	

Date	Cambridge Union Society	Oxford Union Society
1845 April		That Sir Robert Peel's government has forfeited the confidence of the country (motion: Giffard)
1846 February	That Her Majesty's Ministers are unworthy of the confidence of the country (motion: Cayley)	
1847 March	That the conduct of Her Majesty's Ministers , in their having rejected Lord George Bentinck's measure for the permanent relief of Ireland, does not meet with the approbation of this House (motion: Prest)	
1847 April		That in the present state of politics in England, the Protectionist party appears to have most claims on our confidence (motion: Bedford)
1847 June		That the three gentlemen nominated as candidates for the representation of this university at the next election, Mr. Round, of Balliol, is the only one entitled to our confidence and support (motion: Latham)
1848 March	That the Manchester school of politicians is unworthy the confidence of the Country (motion: Colt)	
1848 November		That the present ministry is incompetent to carry on the government of the country, and that it is only from an union of the Conservative party that we can expect an administration which shall possess the confidence of the nation (motion: Knatchbull)
1849 March	That this House approves the foreign policy of the present ministry during the last three years (motion: Louis)	That whatever its partial defects, the new Poor Law has successfully remedied the evils with a view to which it was devised, and is as a whole deserving of our commendation (motion: Stowe)

Date	Cambridge Union Society	Oxford Union Society
1851 March	That Lord Stanley's proposal [...] is calculated [...] to endanger the institutions of the country, which can only rest with safety upon the confidence and good will of the great masses of the people (motion: Vernon Harcourt)	
1851 November	That the Foreign Policy of the present government has been conducive to the honour and dignity of this country; and deserves the approbation of this House (motion: Cust)	
1852 June		That Mr. Gladstone is deserving of the confidence of the Church, the Country, and the University (motion: Oxenham)
1852 November	That this House reposes confidence in the fitness of the present Ministers to govern the country ; and in the purity of their motives (motion: Swanston)	
1852 December		That the conduct of Lord Derby's government since their accession to office entitles them fully to the support and confidence of the country (motion: Cazenove)
1853 February	That the present Administration is so constituted as to demand the confidence of the Country (motion: Littlewood)	
1854 May		That the intention of government to re-constitute, reform, and extend the University of Oxford demand our sympathy and support (motion: Brodrick)
1855 April		That Mr. Gladstone's political career has rendered him unfit to represent this University in Parliament (motion: Wilberforce)

Date	Cambridge Union Society	Oxford Union Society
1855 June		That the conduct of Lord Palmerston's government with reference to the present war has not been such as to deserve the confidence of the country (motion: Bayley)
1857 March		That Mr. Gladstone is a fit and proper person to represent the University of Oxford in the ensuing Parliament (motion: Fogg)
1858 March		That the general policy of Lord Palmerston's government has not deserved the confidence of the country (motion: Austen)
1859 February	That the stringent measures adopted by Government with reference to the Seditious Societies lately discovered in Ireland, are deserving of approbation (motion: Raikes)	
1859 June		That Mr. Gladstone deserves the support of this University (motion: Puller)
1860 January		That the present government is unworthy of the confidence of the nation (motion: Robinson)
1860 February		That the Budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer merits the cordial approbation of the House (motion: Farrell)
1860 May	That the Political Conduct of Mr. Gladstone does not entitle him to our confidence (motion: Lawrance)	
1860 October	That the Garibaldi volunteer movement is deserving of confidence (motion: Geary)	

Date	Cambridge Union Society	Oxford Union Society
1861 February		That the political antecedents of Lord Palmerston justify us in placing the greatest confidence in his administration of public affairs (motion: How)
1861 May		That the conduct of the Conservative party in Parliament for the last three years has not entitled it to the confidence of the country (motion: Urquhart)
1861 November	That this House views with satisfaction the policy pursued by Lord Palmerston's government (motion: Beard)	
1862 November		That Mr. Disraeli's political conduct fully deserves the confidence of the country (motion: Dombraun)
1863 May		That Mr. Gladstone is unworthy to represent this University in Parliament (motion: Thomas)
1864 February	That this House disapproves of the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston's government (motion: Jones)	
1864 March		That this House wishes to express its full confidence in the present ministry (motion: Slipper)
1865 May	That this House considers the ministry entitled to the confidence and support of the nation at the ensuing general election (motion: Peto)	
1866 February	That the conduct of Governor Eyre in suppressing the late insurrection in Jamaica, deserves the approval of this House, and the thanks of the country (motion: Anderton)	
1866 March		That in the opinion of this House the present Government has not as yet proved itself worthy of the confidence of the nation (motion: Campbell MacKinnon)

Date	Cambridge Union Society	Oxford Union Society
1867 February	That, in the opinion of this House , Her Majesty's Government has exhibited a patriotic sense of duty , and a sincere desire to settle the Reform Question in the scheme they have laid before Parliament on the subject (motion: Lindsay)	
1867 May		That the government ought to be supported in their endeavours to carry a sound and Constitutional Reform Bill (motion: Smith)
1868 April		That this House disapproves of the course taken by the Liberal Party in Parliament in the recent debate and division upon the Irish Church (motion: Dale)
1868 May	That the present Government has justly forfeited the confidence of the country (motion: Wilkins)	
1868 October		That Sir Roundell Palmer is the fittest and worthiest Representative of this University (motion: Geldart)
1869 February	That the present Government is deserving of the confidence of the Country (motion: Symes)	
1870 February		That the candidature of Odger for Southwark deserves the approval of this House (motion: Cotton)
1870 May	That the present Colonial Policy of the Government deserves the condemnation of the Nation , as tending to the ultimate disintegration of the Empire (motion: Rocke)	

As shown in the table, 'confidence' was also expressed in other terms. One example of expressing confidence without explicit mention is the question presented at the Cambridge Union Society: *'That this House views with satisfaction the policy pursued by Lord Palmerston's government'* (Beard: CUS 5 November 1861). Here the formulation of motion indicates a debate about whether or not the Society would express confidence in the ministry's policy. Similarly, in the Oxford Union Society a motion was proposed: *'That the present Ministry is incompetent to carry on the Government of the country'* (Knatchbull: OUS 16 May 1831). The Society's debate for and against the competence of the ministry was carried out presumably to test the balance between government and opposition supporters inside the Society.

The politics of the day were hardly forgotten in the Union Societies' debate agenda, even when discussing past events. In his ceremonial speech on the inauguration of the new Cambridge Union Society building, Edward Herbert (see ch. 3, fn. 32), by then the Earl of Powis, spoke about the debates at the Union of his time:

You address, as hereafter you seldom will, a wholly cultivated and educated assembly — an assembly every member of which is intellectually and by cultivation on a level with the speaker, before which he cannot presume, and which he dare not attempt to cajole, misinform, or despise. [...] You must study the questions on which you speak. You must not content yourselves with repeating the well-worn platitudes of the Revolution of 1688, or of the Repeal of the Union; or when you treat the subjects of the day, as for instance, in discussing the comparative merits of a Liberal or of a Conservative Government (cheers and laughter), you must not content yourselves with merely reproducing the articles in the daily newspapers (hear, hear). (Powis: Cambridge Union Society 1866, 5-6)

Here Lord Powis encourages the speakers of the Union to put careful effort into the debates. Furthermore, he maintains that the best manner of taking part in a debate was to 'treat political questions as topics of philosophical and historical inquiry':

If the wonders of a seven days' war should allure you to trace the causes which have made the rise of Prussia so constant, and the persevering ambition of the successors of Frederick so successful in spite of their selfish policy on several critical occasions, or if you should be led to investigate the causes which have made Austria a mass of indigested provinces and the house of Hapsburg so constantly unfortunate and like Athestane the Unready often unprepared and always too late, you will command the attention of your fellows, and you will beneficially exercise the powers of your own minds (cheers). A little practice in debate will enable you to study with effect, and to contrast the ornate, diffuse, didactic rhetoric of Lord Brougham, full of epithet and amplification, with the severe simplicity of Lord Lyndhurst, [...]. (Powis: Cambridge Union Society 1866, 6)

In Lord Powis's speech, the debates of the Union Societies are portrayed as a leisurely activity without an explicit mention of a party politics dimension. He suggests that persuasion of the audience involved references to historical cases rather than to parties, in contrast to Gladstone's assertion that the consideration of parties marked the 'peculiar character of British debating' (cf. in Reid 1953, 270). However, it has been acknowledged that discussion of past events usually

arose from political conflicts in the current Parliament (Thomas 1971, 9). In that sense Powis's omission to mention the connection with party politics might have been due to the obviousness of the fact for him. Speaking after Lord Powis, Lord Houghton⁴⁸ also suggest how societies such as the Union encouraged political discussion:

For my own part, I do not see how any man, however young, or even any boy, can be brought to the serious study of history without at the same time awakening in his mind political associations, and to a certain degree conveying political ideas. [...] When a youth connects the history of the past with the political life of his own time, he is able to realise that past, and apply it to the present. (Houghton: Cambridge Union Society 1866, 16-17)

Houghton seems to affirm what Powis left unsaid: references to the past were used for presenting political arguments. Both Houghton and Powis seem to suggest that, indeed, the debates provided rhetorical and political training: the more you debated, the more tropes you were able to use for political argumentation.

The way to recover the politics related to agenda-setting in the Union Societies is to conduct a rhetorical reading of the minutes of the public meetings, including information on both motions and resolutions, which constituted the public business of the Union Societies. The aim here is to find out what kind of rhetorical *topoi* members of the Union Societies used in their motions for debate. Given that the motions entail resolutions, the following categorisation provides a tool for understanding what kind of resolutions the debates were aimed at. For example, in the event that a motion was formulated 'That the administration of the Duke of Wellington is undeserving of the confidence of the country' (Gladstone: OUS 11 November 1830) it is fair to assume that the debate for and against included arguments either supporting or opposing the government. The object of the debate, therefore, and ultimately the resolution, was a vote of confidence.

The *topoi* of the Union Societies' resolutions can be divided into four categories:

- vote of confidence (on a policy or conduct)
- principle (whether or not something is desirable)
- character (justified or commendable action, or the opposite)
- expediency (whether or not something is beneficial to some party or is convenient)

⁴⁸ Richard Monckton Milnes (1809-1885), later Lord Houghton, entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1827. He became a poet, and was elected to the House of Commons in 1837, where he represented Pontefract until 1863.

As stated, while making the categorisation above, it was assumed that the formulations used are directed towards certain resolutions: the speakers of each debate spoke for and against the given motion before voting on them. The vote taken after the debate is the moment when a motion turns into a resolution.

Even though the *topoi* are not all-inclusive and may even overlap, they do indicate starting points for further analysis of how political agency was rhetorically conceived in the Union Societies. The four categories above should be considered as abstractions of the debates, not representations of their substance. For example, a ‘vote of confidence’ directs attention to a course of action. At the same time, it refers to representation: whether or not the actions of elected representatives merit approval.

4.2.1 Reform, representation, and past references: ‘votes of confidence’

The formulations of motions that were selected for this analysis date from 1830 and until around 1870. The four decades coincide with a period in British history when petitions for reform constantly appeared before the House of Commons. For the Whigs, in particular, reform as a political idea represented a means to maintain the constitutional *status quo*. After the passing of the 1832 Reform Act, however, further reforms became seen more generally as ‘improvements’ demanded by the times though they had to be reconciled with the past requirements (Briggs 1984, 437).

A great majority of the debate topics in the Union Societies related to reform questions in general. In the following analysis of the Union Societies’ resolutions, some attention will also be paid to the way the discussion themes vary according to certain periods. The question of the extension of the suffrage, for instance, was not explicitly mentioned in the debate topics before the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁹ However, the reform question in general was a staple among debate topics during the whole period under investigation.

Subjects concerning parliamentary representation may be divided into at least two categories. First, those that concern the extent of reforms, e.g. ‘That the Franchise should be extended to ten-pound householders in the Counties’ (Noel: CUS 3 March 1857); and, second, those that discuss their quality, e.g. ‘That it is desirable that the qualification for the Franchise in towns should be education not property’ (Webb: OUS 30 May 1861). These instances show the different emphases of reform questions in general. In the former instance, reform is debated from the point of view of extension of suffrage, and in the latter from the perspective of what the eligibility qualifications for voting rights should be. Both examples treat reform as connected with the voting franchise.

Instead of looking at the formulations on reform in terms of substantive matters of the extent or of the quality of representation, one may consider the

⁴⁹ There was only one exception, the question ‘That it is the duty of the legislature to endeavour by the Political Education of the people to render the inevitable extension of the suffrage desirable and safe’, which was posed at the Oxford Union Society on 13 April 1837.

rhetorical aspects. (This abstract level was mentioned above while discussing Table 1.) The rhetorical formulations tend to address the question of what kind of representation is legitimate. These types of questions tended to refer to approbation or disapprobation of the actions of the government or of a parliamentarian. Presumably the arguments for and against such questions would have been acts of commending and of condemning. In that sense the *topos* of 'vote of confidence', at which this type of resolution aims, is a case of epideictic rhetoric in the Union Societies' debate subjects.

What kind of rhetorical strategies did the votes of confidence entail? The *topos* is most frequently employed in such instances as the motion 'Has the internal policy of the Whigs for the last seven years been such as to merit our approbation?' (Barrett: CUS 26 February 1838). The rhetorical aspect of agenda is best illustrated by debates that included an additional motion, such as a rider or an amendment. As an example, on June 9 in 1836, the Oxford Union Society debated the motion 'That the present ministry are undeserving of the confidence of the country', which was proposed by Fowler⁵⁰ of Pembroke College and to which Hussey of Balliol moved the rider:

That our want of confidence is occasioned by their cowardice in shrinking from the obvious duty of destroying the present Church Establishment in Ireland, and of adapting generally the institutions of the country to the inevitable progress of Democracy. (Hussey: OUS 9 June 1836)

Hussey's⁵¹ rider disapproves of the present situation. Had his rider gained a majority of votes, it would have been added to the original motion.⁵² In that sense it would have added more argumentative power to the resolution. Those who would have been in favour of the original motion in the first place would, however, have to be persuaded that these were the precise reasons for their disapproval of the ministry. The house was then adjourned and the debate resumed on 11 June, when Cornish⁵³ of Christ Church College moved another rider:

That our want of confidence is grounded as well on the degrading alliance with O'Connell, as on the miserable experience which the English people have had of genuine Whig policy, the supporters of which have consulted the interests of a faction at the expense of a nation, have preferred tortuous paths to an honest and straightforward course, *availing themselves of temporary expedients, instead of relying on fixed principles*, and have ever been found the ready tools for measures, the disastrous consequences of which they were not sagacious enough to foresee, or too unprincipled to regard. (Cornish: OUS 11 June 1836; emphasis added, TH)

There were now two competing riders to the original motion. In the one put forward by Cornish, the Whig policy in general is rhetorically portrayed as unreliable. In the rider proposed by Hussey, however, the disapprobation is di-

⁵⁰ John Coke Fowler (1815-1899) became a barrister.

⁵¹ William Hussey (b. ? 1814-d. unknown) became a barrister.

⁵² Riders are always in support of the original motion.

⁵³ Cornish was later known as Sir John Robert Mowbray, see ch. 3, fn. 33.

rected against only one incident. Formulation of Cornish's rider reveals two additional *topoi* of Union Society debates: principle and expediency. Cornish formulated the Whig policy as resorting to 'temporary expedients' and naming it as 'unprincipled'. This indicates that the two *topoi* were often used in opposition to each other.⁵⁴

It was not uncommon in either Union Society to find motions expressing the 'confidence of the House' on the present ministry or on a certain policy. These types of formulations, which began to appear in the late 1840s, were most likely used to measure the general power relations between political parties within the Union Societies. In his essay on public speaking (1838) Gladstone (in Reid 1953) emphasised that a debater has to take into account his audience and the 'mood of the moment'. Debating on whether or not the house should give its confidence to a ministry, members of the Union Society were trying to persuade the audience of whether or not they should make a resolution for or against the party that held the confidence of the majority of the House of Commons. Also, it shows how parliamentary debates of the period could potentially still pose a threat to ministries due to the non-established character of political parties. This helps to explain why the contemporary press was so keen to publish even the most minimal information about the debates in the Union Societies: the result of voting for and against the present ministry was considered of importance because it potentially affected and reflected opinion-building inside the universities.

The formulations of debate topics also suggest that the past was commonly referred to in Union Society debates. It was not unusual for nineteenth-century political language to refer to past events (eg. Collini et al. 1987; see also Anderson 1967). Historical events were often used for legitimating political arguments and decisions. Thomas Babington Macaulay, who was both a former member of Cambridge Union Society and a Whig member of parliament, was also one of the few historians of the time to emphasise the benefits of history in providing political wisdom (Collini et al. 1987, 192). A reference to past events or people indicates an application of forensic rhetoric. Based on the records of public business meetings, it seems that Union Society debates, especially in the 1830s and 1840s, made clear references to the past. In substance, they mostly related to the Glorious Revolution or to the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII.

The past references to the dissolution of monasteries were also related to contemporary political debates. A similar example had been used by Burke in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), in which he discussed the fate of the French monasteries. His writings on the matter have not received much attention, which is partly due to the fact that most studies on Burke's *Reflections* have not considered the monasteries relevant to the French revolution (Beales 2005, 420). But, according to Beales, Burke, when beginning his discussion of the property rights of the Church in France by referring to the dissolution of the

⁵⁴ I will elaborate further on this point in the Section 4.2.3.

English monasteries in the sixteenth century, was writing as much about the British politics of his time as he was about the French case.

In the Union Societies the matter of Church property rights appeared decades later, though without a clear historical reference. In 1849 the reverend Robert Whiston, headmaster of the cathedral school at Rochester since 1842, had accused the dean and the chapter of the Cathedral of financial misconduct. His complaints were published in a pamphlet *Cathedral trusts and their fulfilment* in 1849. It became a best seller and was also commented upon in Parliament (Yates & Welsby 1996, 121). Subsequently, the Whiston matter resulted in a Royal Commission inquiry on Cathedrals and revision of legislation. The reports of the commissions, also known as 'Blue Books', were also very sought after by the general public (Briggs 1984, 275). In 1850 the Cambridge Union Society debated on 'That we heartily sympathise with Mr. Whiston in his endeavours to obtain an equitable distribution of Cathedral property; and we believe that the Church of England will be considerably strengthened by the inevitable consequences of these endeavours' (Childers: CUS 5 February 1850). The reason for not resorting to past references in this instance was perhaps that Whiston had been educated at Trinity College and the Society only intended to raise the subject due to Whiston's connection with the university. In this particular case, then, the motion did not directly involve a vote of confidence, though it did involve epideictic rhetoric as well.

Especially in connection with national political events, debates on votes of confidence were questions of setting an historical precedent. For example, the Cambridge Union Society debated the topic: '*That this House desires to record its satisfaction at the Reform Bill lately introduced by the Conservative Government, and its admiration at the brilliant leadership of Mr. Disraeli, in the House of Commons*' (Owen: CUS 29 October 1867). Here the formulation of the resolution is shown to be particularly official. It gives the impression that the debate and vote on this topic would be an addition to the nation's historical record. The incident refers to the political conflict caused by Disraeli's decision to support parliamentary reform. Only a few days earlier, on 24 October 1867, the Oxford Union Society topic of debate was: '*That the passing of the Reform Bill by Mr Disraeli has ruined the character of the Conservative Party for consistency and principle*' (Cotton: OUS 24 October 1867). The formulation implied that Disraeli's political action had affected the *ethos* of the whole Conservative party. The passing of the law was rhetorically portrayed as directly involving a loss of confidence. In this case the formulation contained two *topoi*: 'vote of confidence' and 'character'. In short, the Union Societies' debates in relation to votes of confidence did not necessarily refer only to certain policies but could be personalised with a reference to 'character'.

4.2.2 Personalisation and de-personalisation of politics: 'character' and 'principle'

The category of votes of confidence somewhat overlaps with the category of character in that they are used here to refer to the political conduct that is under

evaluation. 'Character' also is an example of epideictic rhetoric. 'Principle', in its turn, relates to an underlying theory or idea that supports certain actions. Both 'character' and 'principle' are commonplace concepts in nineteenth-century British politics (see Collini et al. 1987). 'Character' was attached to various political arguments. It was employed to add force to certain ideas in party political struggles (Collini 1985, Ledger-Lomas 2004). For example, the 'character' of William Pitt the Younger was employed as representing certain Tory principles decades after he had passed away. Whigs, in their turn, would define Pitt's character in a negative light in order to advance their own political agenda. (Ledger-Lomas 2004, 642) Related to this type of politics, the Oxford Union Society debated in 1830 on whether the conduct of Fox and the Whigs deserved approbation: *'That the conduct of Mr Fox and his party in reference to the Treason and Sedition Bills, which were passed in the year 1795, deserved the admiration and gratitude of their country'* (Moncrieff: OUS 11 February 1830). With reference to the conduct of Fox as the head of the party, it appears that a strong personalisation of politics as exhibiting a 'character' still existed. A party could be judged on the basis of its former leader (cf. Ledger-Lomas 2004, 642). Additionally, in the above motion the *topos* in question could be easily changed from 'character' to 'vote of confidence' if the person and the bill in question were changed to a more contemporary 1830s example.

The concept of national character likewise appears in a Cambridge Union Society debate: *'That Vote by ballot would fail to accomplish its intended object; and would be productive of great injury to the National Character'* (Smith: CUS 11 March 1851). The concept is also used indirectly. For example, on 25 November 1851, the Cambridge Union Society debated the proposition 'That the Foreign Policy of the present government has been conducive to the honour and dignity of this country; and deserves the approbation of this House' (Cust: CUS 25 November 1851). In terms of recent British political theory, 'national character' has been described as 'a subtle move from participation to detached observation' (Collini et al. 1987, 173). This also involves an idea that a nation may learn from its own traditions. In that sense, 'character' can also have an historical reference.

However, most statements about 'character' referred to an individual conduct in the present: *'That Mr. Gladstone's political conduct since the General Election has been dignified, consistent, and patriotic'* (Wetherell: OUS 10 February 1853). In this particular instance the question was debated in four separate meetings. The first debate was adjourned and continued on 17 February when there appeared four amendments to the original motion. Amendments always proposed a new formulation. Usually they were not allowed to be in complete opposition to the original. Rather, they presented a modified alternative to the kind of resolution the original motion would have resulted in.

The first amendment was offered by Hunt⁵⁵ of Christ Church: *'That Mr. Gladstone's position in the present ministry cannot as yet be sufficiently appreciated'* (Hunt: OUS minute book vol. VIII, 17 February 1853). Hunt's formulation is more cautious than Wetherell's. A longer formulation appears in the amendment by Rogers⁵⁶ of Wadham College:

That we view with unmingled regret and disappointment the position assumed by Mr. Gladstone towards Lord Derby's Government, and his subsequent coalition with the Whigs, as uncalled for by political exigencies, inconsistent with his whole past career, and tending to render permanent the disruption of the Conservative Party. (Rogers: OUS minute book vol. VIII, 17 February 1853)

Rogers's amendment seems to be the most critical of Gladstone's conduct. It blames Gladstone for having secured his own political position by abandoning his party. The third amendment is proposed by Fowler⁵⁷ of Merton College: *'That the general conduct of Mr. Gladstone deserved the support of the Members of this University at the last election'* (Fowler: OUS minute book vol. VIII, 17 February 1853). Fowler's amendment explicitly refers to the main reason why the debate was so interesting to the members of the society, which was due to the fact that Gladstone represented the University of Oxford in the House of Commons. Gladstone also represented a direct link between the Union Society and the House of Commons. Therefore, resolutions of the society over his conduct had particular importance.

Fremantle⁵⁸ of Balliol College presented the fourth amendment: *'That Mr. Gladstone's conduct in joining the present Government is honourable to himself and beneficial to the country'* (Fremantle: OUS minute book vol. VIII, 17 February 1853). Fremantle extends the idea of Gladstone's conduct from his character to the benefit of the country. In a way, he reformulates Wetherell's original motion, but accentuates the beneficial aspect of Gladstone's actions.

On 24 February, as the society met again to discuss the same topic, another amendment was moved by Pearson⁵⁹ of Exeter College: *'That Mr. Gladstone's*

⁵⁵ George Ward Hunt (1825-1877), B.A. 1848, M.A. 1851, was elected a Conservative MP for North Northamptonshire in 1857. He served as Secretary of the Treasury under Lord Derby in 1866-1868 and as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1868 in the Disraeli government.

⁵⁶ Benjamin Bickley Rogers (1828-1919) was a scholar at Wadham College 1846-1852. He was elected a Fellow in 1852 and became a barrister.

⁵⁷ Thomas Fowler (1832-1904) was educated at King William's college on the Isle of Man. After taking his honours degree at Merton College, he was elected to a Fellowship in Lincoln College. He became Professor of Logic in 1873 and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University in 1899.

⁵⁸ William Henry Fremantle (1831-1916) was educated at Eton. After graduating from Balliol College he was elected a Fellow of All Souls College in 1854. He became an eminent Anglican priest.

⁵⁹ Charles Henry Pearson (1830-1894) was educated at Rugby School and was admitted at Oriel College in 1849. He changed to Exeter College the following year. He was elected president of the society in 1852 and 1853. In 1853 he received his B.A. degree and was elected a Fellow of Oriel College in 1854. The following year he became lecturer of English language and literature at King's College, London. Shortly afterwards he was nominated professor of modern history. In 1873 he became professor

conduct in recognizing the necessity of a Liberal Government by joining the coalition has been eminently patriotic' (Pearson: OUS minute book vol. VIII, 24 February 1853). Here, too, the emphasis is on the benefit the country would receive from Gladstone's conduct. The president adjourned the house due to disruption during one speech.

In the fourth meeting, on 28 February, Hunt withdrew his amendment by leave of the house. A vote was then taken on Rogers' amendment, as it had been presented following Hunt's. The majority voted for it, which meant that all the other amendments and the original motion were never voted upon and, subsequently, considered lost.

The term 'political' was not often used in the formulations. It appeared mostly in connection with words such as 'conduct', 'character', and 'career': *'That this House entirely disapproves of the Political career of the Right Hon. B. Disraeli'* (Duggan: OUS 23 February 1865). Grainger (1969) argues that it has been characteristic of English politics, in contrast to the American political system, that representatives were required to gain certain reputation before they could be entrusted with political office. That meant a show of skills, which, by the middle of the nineteenth century, was judged by performances in parliamentary debate (Grainger 1969, 15). Therefore, party political struggles became defining moments for gaining a reputation as a statesman:

That Lord Ashley's uniform advocacy of a law to keep down the hours of labour, while supporting those laws whose object is to keep up the price of food, together with his recent letter to his constituents, entirely vitiates his claim to be considered a Statesman. (Fripp: OUS 13 November 1845)

In the case above, it is suggested that to be called a 'statesman' had a connection with an acquired 'character'. But, in some instances historical characters are subjected to debate on their 'political' qualities as well: *'That the Political character of Themistocles is not deserving of our esteem and admiration'* (Karslake: OUS 9 December 1841). This shows that the idea of 'political' was not only connected with contemporary agents, but was used to make moral judgments of the actions of past characters.

In cases where a motion suggested that a course of action should be based on a certain theory or question of morality, it is here considered a resolution based on 'principle'. It is the most frequently employed *topos* of the four as it represents a form of opinion based on political preference in relation to a course of action: *'That it is desirable the British possessions at the Cape of Good Hope be abandoned'* (Stephen: CUS 26 October 1852). An amendment to the motion was formulated as follows:

That all after the word 'That' be omitted, and the following substituted: "this House, considering the Cape of Good Hope, in its present state, a very unprofitable posses-

of history at University of Melbourne. Pearson's subsequent political career took place in Australia.

sion, is of opinion, that more energetic measures for subjugating the Kaffirs should be immediately adopted." (Carte: CUS minute book vol. 15, 26 October 1852)

In Stephen's⁶⁰ motion there seems to be no indication of the grounds for the argument. In Carte's⁶¹ amendment, however, one reason for why the possession of the Cape of Good Hope should be abandoned has been provided. This reveals that motions that are formulated in the form of 'principle' usually entail a value judgment that is not always directly expressed.

The motions that included some kind of principle suggest that, in order to pass them as resolutions, the debate had to include a judgment on conduct that was more speculative than based on immediate experience. Furthermore, debates with the intention to decide about a principle often had the qualities of deliberative rhetoric with an orientation towards future or present action: *'That the government of this country ought to use all its influence in order to secure the liberties of Poland; but it would not be justified in making war with Russia on behalf of that country'* (Peto: CUS 17 November 1863). In relation to this motion an amendment was moved:

That all after the word 'That' be omitted, and the following substituted: "the Government of this Country ought to abstain from all diplomatic action for the settlement of the dispute between the Russian Government and the Poles, as worse than nugatory, unless they are prepared for the alternative of War. (Goodman: CUS minute book vol. 18, 17 November 1863)

In this case as well, it seems that the amendment specifies the matter to which the original motion is referring. It must also be noted that here we see both the *topos* of 'vote of confidence' and that of 'principle' in a case where government policies are mentioned. Although they may both refer to certain policy decisions, votes of confidence usually dealt with past conduct and principles with present or future decisions. In short, a vote of confidence either approves or disapproves of an action and principle suggests a course of action.

As a further example, in 1839 the Oxford Union Society debated the topic 'That in the present state of the Empire, it is the duty of an enlightened Government to propose a free and liberal measure of National Education' (Blackett: OUS 9 May 1839). The original motion is formulated in a manner that suggests a debate on the duties of a government in general. It is rhetorically implied that the present government, in order to prove itself enlightened, has to make an initiative towards national education. Northcote⁶² of Corpus Christi College moved the amendment: *'That National Education, to be conducted on any sound and efficient principles, ought to be carried on in connection with the National Religion'*

⁶⁰ Leslie Stephen (1832-1904), the father of Virginia Woolf, was educated at Eton and King's College, London. He was admitted as a scholar at Trinity Hall in 1851. He became an eminent author and critic.

⁶¹ Thomas Sampson Carte (1829-d. unknown), B.A. 1852, M.A. 1855, became assistant master at King's College, London, around 1864.

⁶² James Spencer Northcote (1821-1907) was a scholar of Corpus Christi College from 1837 to 1842. He became a catholic priest and president of Oscott College in Birmingham.

(Northcote: OUS minute book vol. V, 9 May 1839). He suggests additional principles that should be considered in the drafting of the future policy.

The debate was adjourned till the following Thursday, 16 May, on which date two additional amendments were proposed:

That it is an universally acknowledged principle, that the State is bound to provide for her members; so, since the alteration of our Constitution by the Acts of 1828 and 1829, the Government is bound to provide for all those Non-conformists, who, by our present Constitution, are members of the State, such education as they can accept, and as seems most calculated to improve the condition of our lower classes; and further, that it is the bounden duty of every individual, who would promote the peace and welfare of every society, to further such education. (Arnold: OUS 16 May 1839)

Arnold's⁶³ formulation suggests that there is only one 'principle' on which government policies should be based. In terms of contemporary political language, 'principle' had a strong connotation to Utilitarian philosophy. The utilitarians, also known as the Philosophic Radicals, combined the idea of scientific progress with ethics in order to create practical reforms. For Bentham, the principle of utility was a universal that should be used as the basis for judicial revision in Britain (Halévy 1955, 76). He argued that legislation would best serve the interests of individuals by identifying the interests of the community. The utilitarian moral science was remarkably influential, perhaps because it coincided with the reforming spirit of the age.

Presumably Arnold's amendment has a connection to utilitarian philosophy. He formulated his argument as a motion in a very particular manner, firstly, by presenting a 'universally accepted' principle and then by drawing certain conclusions from it of the duties of individuals. Rawlinson,⁶⁴ however, reverts to the rhetoric of duty without any direct reference to principles:

That in the present circumstances of the Empire, it is the duty of an enlightened Government to strengthen and support the National Church in the efforts which she is making to adapt her Educational System, and the existing wants of the Nation. (Rawlinson: OUS 16 May 1839)

Rawlinson's amendment seems to combine the arguments of the original motion and Northcote's amendment. It mentions the duty of an 'enlightened government' of the original motion along with a consideration of religion given in Northcote's amendment.

'Principle' is found especially in those formulations that imply a potential action without reference to a specific case. These kinds of motions clearly suggest deliberative rhetoric, although there might not be any immediate contextual reference in the formulation. Whereas 'character' implied personalisation of political activity, 'principle' rather connotes de-personalisation. In that sense the

⁶³ Charles Thomas Arnold (1818-1878), B.A. 1840, M.A. 1843, became a priest. He was nominated Assistant master of Rugby School in 1841 and later Headmaster.

⁶⁴ George Rawlinson (1812-1902), B.A. 1838, was a Fellow of Exeter College in 1840-1846. Rawlinson was ordained a priest the following year.

topos of 'character' rhetorically focuses the attention to certain political conduct and 'principle' takes distance from it.

4.2.3 Questions of policy and political benefit: 'expediency'

The *topos* of expediency refers to action that is concerned with the solving of a practical problem. Along with 'principle' it is one the most frequently applied *topoi* in the Union Societies' resolutions. Even in classical rhetoric, they appeared as opposites of each other. As discussed earlier, 'principle' is the classic rhetorical *topos* of morality as opposed to the political convenience that 'expediency' represents.

As was the case with 'principle', 'expediency' is mostly used to argue for or against some future action. The two are often used in the same formulations: '*That while we condemn the Norman Invasion, as in principle unjust, with reference to its effects we must pronounce it highly beneficial*' (Tickell: OUS 20 October 1842). This type of formulation was associated with the Sophists in particular: '*Ought one to do what is expedient or what is just?*' (Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations*, Sect. 2, Part 12). But the same also appears in Roman rhetorical literature. For example, in Cicero's writings there appears a standard division between 'honorable' (*honestum*) and 'expedient' (*utile*) topics (Morstein-Marx 2004, 61). This suggests that the Union Society debates had links to the rhetorical tradition followed by British parliamentary culture since Renaissance.

In some cases 'principle' and 'expediency' were not put as opposites, but used to rhetorically complement each other. This type of formulation was presented on 13 November 1851 in the Oxford Union Society when it debated: '*That the French Revolution of 1789 was justifiable, and has conferred the greatest benefits on mankind*' (Göschel: OUS 13 November 1851). Here the first part of Göschel's (see ch. 1, fn. 7) motion introduces the *topos* of principle and the latter conveys the one of expediency. When Göschel uses the expression 'greatest benefits' he implies that the French Revolution was conducted with good intentions and, therefore, may be considered 'justifiable'. He uses the *topos* of principle not to contrast with, but to complement that of expediency. An amendment was, then, proposed:

That a Revolution was necessary in France, but that it is premature to pronounce definitely concerning the good effects resulting from it, in consequence of the excesses in which the Revolution terminated. (Butler: OUS minute book vol. VII, 13 November 1851)

Butler's amendment seems to be formulated in a way that only accentuates 'expediency'. The rhetoric of necessity implies that the revolution was the only available means to change the situation prevailing in France, though Butler added a cautionary remark concerning the assessment. The 'house' was then adjourned and another amendment was presented, by Nussey⁶⁵ of Oriel Col-

⁶⁵ Edward Richard Nussey (b. ? 1828-d. unknown) became a priest.

lege, in the following meeting: *'That the French Revolution has conferred the greatest benefits on mankind'* (Nussey: OUS minute book vol. VII, 20 November 1851). Unlike Göschen's motion, where 'principle' was used to support 'expediency', in Nussey's amendment it has been altogether abandoned. Nussey seems to suggest that the practical outcome of the revolution itself should be commended. In this way his rhetoric emphasises 'expediency'.

In the Union Societies' debates, 'expediency' appears often in connection with national benefit. In the Cambridge Union Society, for instance, it was debated in connection with the question of national education: *'Is the universal extension of education a national benefit?'* (Smythe: CUS 4 December 1838). Later the formulation related to national benefit was usually put in the words 'the best interests of the country':

That this House, on account of the unsettled state of Europe, does not think the present a fitting time to remit taxes, and is of opinion that the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his budgets pays too much attention to beauty of language, and too little to the best interests of the country. (Curtis: OUS 2 May 1861)

The example shows also that the Union Societies followed the occurring changes of parliamentary speaking. Here the oratorical fineries of the pre-Reform period are rhetorically portrayed as opposed to carrying out the best interests of the country. The idea that political arguments should be based on facts and figures dates from the 1830s, when parliamentary and royal commissions were founded to supply statistical information about the empire (Young 1986, 29). The reports were in such high demand that they began to be sold to the public in 1835. Subsequently, the rhetoric of expediency became more of a norm in the parliamentary culture.

The rhetoric of expediency in the formulation of motions in the Union Societies is evidence that they were deliberative assemblies with a strong interest in parliamentary politics. Whenever 'expediency' is the object of a debate the attention is on policy-making, the weighing of necessities and political consequences for future action. It is about persuading in terms of political circumstances, not just in the level of what is good or bad, but what seems to be necessary and therefore beneficial in a present context. The following motion is a good example of the change of tone in Union Society debates: *'That Parliamentary Reform on the principles of 1832, is not required by the interests of the Country'* (Young: CUS 9 March 1858). Although the proposition includes a reference to principles of a reform, the actual focus of the debate is the utility or necessity of those principles in terms of the well-being of the country.

It should be noted that there also appears debates where 'expediency' and 'principle' seem to be included in competing arguments. For example, on 17 November 1859 the Oxford Union Society met to debate on a motion *'That Universal Suffrage is desirable, and that, while it may be questioned whether we are ripe for it at present, this House will never regard Reform as completed until it is carried'* (Tollemache: OUS 17 November 1859). The rhetoric of desirability refers to a value judgment, and therefore to the *topos* of principle, whereas 'expediency' is argued with the question of circumstantial appropriateness. The

formulation of the motion points to the idea that the reform may be accomplished only if certain circumstances obtain in the future. Therefore, the future goal has not yet been reached, even though the necessity for change is implied. In this way the realisation of 'principle' is made conditional on 'expediency'.

Then an amendment was moved 'That Universal Suffrage is not desirable, and that this House will never approve of any Reform Bill, which has not for its basis a property qualification' (Blennerhassett: OUS minute book vol. VIII, 17 November 1859). The formulation of the amendment has a very strong connotation to 'principle', at least the principle of property, but does not include any reference to 'expediency'.

An adjournment was moved and passed, and the debate resumed a week later. After several speakers, Burney⁶⁶ moved the following amendment:

That this House, whilst it fully recognizes the justice and desirability of Universal Suffrage, whenever we may be ripe for it, considers that it would be neither just nor desirable that this Suffrage should give an equal voice to all who possess it. (Burney: OUS minute book vol. VIII, 24 November 1859)

Before the division, adjournment of debate was proposed by Messenger⁶⁷ of Lincoln College, but it was opposed by the majority. The decision prompted Messenger to move an amendment of his own:

That the leading interests in the nation, not the mere predominance of numbers, are what mainly claim to be represented in the National Legislative Body; and that *this principle will be most efficiently carried out* by allowing a certain number of the learned, professional, and commercial bodies to send members to the House of Commons. (Messenger: OUS minute book vol. VIII, 24 November 1859; emphasis added, TH)

In Messenger's amendment there is a juxtaposition of 'principle' and 'expediency'. But it rather emphasises 'expediency' than 'principle' in that the first part of the motion, which defines Parliament as representing interests, is supported by the rest of the argument as being a principle itself. In short, Messenger seems to use a principle as an argument for 'expediency'. Messenger's amendment shows how the increasing rhetoric of expediency related to parliamentary work (see Section 2.3) had an effect upon the rhetoric used in Union Societies. However, the other amendments in that particular debate emphasised 'principle'. It seems that the classical juxtaposition between 'principle' and 'expediency' was still the main use of the *topoi* in the Union Societies' debates.

⁶⁶ Charles Burney (b? 1841-d. unknown) was admitted at Corpus Christi College in 1859. He became a B.A. in 1863.

⁶⁷ John Farnham Messenger (b? 1836-d. unknown), B.A. 1859, M.A. 1862, became a priest.

4.3 Formulating political resolutions in the Union Societies

The purpose of this chapter has been to investigate how the formulation of motions in the Union Societies was connected to the parliamentary culture of debate of the time and with the theory of rhetorical invention. The formulations reveal how the members conceived of political action on the basis of their knowledge of parliamentary politics. As mentioned above, the Union Societies, at first, did not follow the parliamentary manner of proposing motions. The debates were conducted in the form of questions: *'Is the present generation likely to witness the dismemberment of the United States of America?'* (CUS 16 February 1841). Parliamentary forms of debate were gradually adopted. In terms of style, the debates moved from the declamatory manner of academic debating societies to a more deliberative rhetoric of the House of Commons.

In a sense, the proposing of motions in a parliamentary manner instead of simply raising questions for discussion is what defined the Union Societies as deliberative assemblies. In the course of the debates, original motions were amended and additions to them were moved. The amendments show that the contents of the motions were sometimes challenged during the argumentation. In short, there was competition over defining the contents of subsequent resolutions. The motions indicate a systematic, repetitive use of certain expressions. Here I categorised the expressions under four interrelated *topoi*. To sum up, 'vote of confidence' and 'character' are connected with the notion of reliability in political conduct. 'Principle' and 'expediency' both relate to some future line of action or policy. All of the *topoi* essentially belong to deliberative rhetoric, but they represent different aspects of it. A 'vote of confidence' is evaluation of future action in terms of representation, and action based on 'character' is judged by the skills acquired by the actor and by the action itself. 'Principle' refers to the desirability of political activity on moral grounds, and 'expediency' on the basis of necessity or utility.

The formulations of motions showed that members of the Union Societies became more inclined to include issues related to government policies in the latter part of the period under investigation. In relation to British political thought the motions also had references, for example, to utilitarian philosophy. An important finding here is the frequent use of references to the past in the formulations. In the House of Commons, the use of historical precedents was a commonplace and often related to present political conflicts (Thomas 1971, 9). However, in the politics of setting the agenda in the Union Societies, references to historical events seemed eventually more often to give way to formulation of political statements that could potentially become precedents themselves. The resolutions of the Union Societies, especially in relation to the 'vote of confidence', began showing signs of joint statements of a 'united will' (cf. Redlich 1908b, 215). In this way, in relation to national politics, the political significance of the public debate meetings of the Union Societies began to grow once their members started to act more like members of a parliamentary body. Further-

more, to place the focus on political activity instead of end results, it seems fair to conclude that it is precisely this way of acting that ultimately made the Union Societies parliamentary.

5 THE POLITICS OF DEBATE IN THE UNION SOCIETIES

At the inauguration of the new building of the Cambridge Union Society, Lord Houghton spoke about the benefits of participating in the society's activities:

It is in such societies as this that you will learn the value of political forms, forms in themselves perhaps apparently frivolous and pedantic, but which you will find to be absolutely necessary for the government of these societies, and, in fact, of all societies of men. (Houghton: Cambridge Union Society 1866, 18)

Houghton accentuates the overall significance of the forms that governed the activities in the society. In his view, the political forms are taught through the practices of the societies. His own experience taught him the importance of possessing knowledge particularly of such forms.

The forms that Houghton described as necessary for the government of the Union Societies will be considered in this chapter. In the private business meetings, members were able to participate in the management of the societies. Before going into the analysis, the adoption of parliamentary characteristics will be discussed in the Section 5.1. As has been presented above, the Union Societies were connected to parliamentary proceedings and parliamentary terminology. Here it is shown that the Union Societies were also acquiring parliamentary characteristics that had only recently been taking shape in the House of Commons. It will be argued that the adoption of parliamentary forms, for its part, legitimated the political argumentation of Union Society proceedings. However, the societies' politics did not follow the parliamentary model in all respects.

In Section 5.2 I will analyse how the acquired rules were used politically. As was the case with the public business meetings, the arguments for and against motions were not recorded in the minute books. Therefore, the analysis of the politics of debate is based on instances where the rules were somehow challenged or tested. Those kinds of cases will reveal the rhetoric — and the politics — that were practised. It has proved essential to use their compilations of rules as well as their minute books as primary material. The rule compila-

tions show the result of the work that was done in the select committees. But parts of them derived directly from the debates in the private business meetings, where changes to the rules were mainly decided. In the minute books, the secretaries of the Union Societies have recorded the motions and amendments concerning the revision of rules as well as reports of committees that proposed alterations to the rules. By comparing the minute books to rule compilations it is possible to get a sense of how the rules changed over time. To facilitate comparison I have attached a summary of the rule changes in both Union Societies below (Appendix 3).

5.1 Parliamentary references in the Union Societies' politics of debate

Traditionally the business of the House of Commons has been regarded as analogous to a 'grand inquest of the nation' (Thomas 1971, 14). In the eighteenth century it was used to describe parliamentary business as continuous conflicts between the opposition and the Crown's ministers. As described in Chapter 2, the constitutional practice of cabinet government changed the configuration in that the cabinet, consisting of members of parliament, was now held responsible for their policies to the majority of the House of Commons. Therefore, the business of the House, which was still based on procedure favouring the minority, had to accommodate to a new setting. The cabinet was reliant on the majorities, and these were more difficult to maintain in circumstances where individual members had strong privileges.

In the following sections I will present the constitutive elements of the politics of debate in the Union Societies. First I will elaborate on the connections the Union Societies' politics of debate had to the political situation in the House of Commons. The powers of the Union Society presidents and standing committees are analysed particularly in relation to the notion of parliamentary government. Highlighted will be how the powers were modified according to the parliamentary example.

5.1.1 Powers of the standing committees

The most distinctive characteristic of parliamentary government was that the cabinet became responsible to the majority of the House of Commons. The historical development of the cabinet is traceable to the Privy Council, of which it was originally a committee (Blauvelt 1902, 4). Essentially, the cabinet is a political committee that is chosen by the House of Commons to govern the nation. It is responsible both for the execution of legislation and its control. In other words, cabinet government is 'the government of a committee elected by the legislature' (Bagehot 2001, 23).

Bagehot has compared the House of Commons to a club. In fact, he argues that one does not fully understand parliamentary government without realising

this 'standing wonder' of government by club (Bagehot 2001, 99). Bagehot's comment might have been somewhat ironical, but it highlights the difference between publicly responsible government and a private association. Since antiquity, membership in clubs was usually determined by a consensus of the members (Timbs 1899, 2). The Union Societies, too, first used the ancient 'black-ball' method to elect its members: a certain amount of black balls placed in a box would deny membership.

Timbs (1899, 6) distinguishes clubs from other associations. He takes Johnson's definition as the authoritative account of a truly English style of a club: '*an assembly of good fellows, meeting under certain conditions*' (ibid.) However, Todd's edition (1818) of *Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language*, which was more widely circulated and criticised, a club is 'an association of persons subjected to particular rules' (quoted in Timbs 1899, 6). In this sense, the British House of Commons certainly had club-like qualities, even though 'club' usually connotes a more closed society.

The House had become more dependent on outside opinion than it had been before the 1832 Reform Act. It had become a public meeting that elected its own 'rulers' and performed the duties of a representative legislature (Bagehot 2001, 99). Although the Union Societies elected their own officers and acted in the form of a 'house', passing resolutions, etc., the members were not responsible to an electorate. Therefore, representation was not an issue in the workings of the Union Societies.

The officers of the Union Societies⁶⁸ were elected by the whole society every term with specific rules. At Oxford, a candidate for any office had to be someone who had, firstly, been a member of the society for at least one term, and, secondly, taken part at least once in the debates (OUS rules 1837, 18). On the day of the election all candidates were submitted to the society in the form of a motion, of which a notice had been given. The election was conducted by secret suffrage.⁶⁹ After the president had put the motion, the votes were examined by the previous committee members. (OUS rules 1839, 21-22)

In the Cambridge Union Society the requirement for a candidate for office was that he was not in debt to the society. The candidate was required to place his name with that of his proposer in the Reading Room of the society before the election. If there was only one candidate, he was declared elected. In the case of a competition between candidates, the proposer and seconder of a candidate were allowed to address the society and describe their nominee's merits (CUS laws 1834, 4). However, this rule was changed in 1853 when the proposers were no longer permitted to address the house in support of their candidates (see CUS laws 1853, 21).

⁶⁸ 'Officer' here refers to the president, the treasurer, or the secretary, which were the most basic offices in the societies. Also, e.g. a vice president or librarian could be elected.

⁶⁹ Secret suffrage was a recurring theme in the public business meetings of the Union Societies. It was also an issue contested by parliamentarians and adopted in 1872.

The elected officers of the Union Societies sat in the standing committees, which by the 1850s were responsible for making initiatives to revise the rules. Rules became frequently revised in both Union Societies, with the new rules written down and circulated among the members. This regulation of procedure was itself adopted from parliamentary practice. The House of Commons' procedure in the period after the 1832 reform was characterised by two aspects: first, how to deal with time in the debates, and second, how to regulate the procedure by Standing Orders (Campion 1958, 36). In relation to the former aspect, on 24 November 1851, the Cambridge Union discussed and voted on a motion proposed by R. J. Cust of Trinity College: 'That the following be inserted under Cap. VIII: No member shall rise to address the House on any Debate, after half past nine o'clock; except for the purpose of reply, or to move an amendment' (CUS minute book vol. 15, 24 November 1851). The motion was lost in a vote and again in a poll that had been demanded afterwards. Even though the motion was not passed as a rule of the society, the incident shows that the question of time was for the first time raised on the agenda of the society. The idea to limit the time of debates was derived from the House of Commons as well. In the nineteenth century the sittings of the Commons tended to be prolonged. Restrictions were gradually put in place in an effort to make the business of the House more efficient (Campion 1958, 38-39).

Polls⁷⁰ were a peculiar characteristic of the Union Societies' private business meetings. Such polls did not take place in the House of Commons. In the Cambridge Union Society any member was allowed to request of the president that a poll be taken concerning any motion presented in a private business meeting. This had been written into the laws at Cambridge since 1848. A rule concerning polls was also in force at Oxford from 1856 on. The use of the polls suggested that divisions⁷¹ were not considered as final but, in principle, could be contested. They, in effect, delay the final vote and give the chance for a minority to persuade others to vote in their favour.⁷²

According to its minute books, the Cambridge Union Society had its entire compilation of rules revised and codified by standing committee for the first time in 1845. Before that the rules had mostly been amended in an *ad hoc* manner, which had posed the problem that members could not keep up with the alterations. The committee report presented at Cambridge in February 1840 contained suggestions to amend the existing laws as well as to create new ones. The committee had also read the minute books and decided to make a collection of the resolutions that had been passed in the previous private business meetings, but not written down in the rules:

⁷⁰ A poll could be called after the final vote on a motion. It was used as a way to test the majority in any decision of the house.

⁷¹ A division refers to the act of voting where the votes are 'divided' for and against a motion. As mentioned earlier, the term 'division' derives from the parliamentary practice of physically moving to different parts of building to perform the vote.

⁷² I will come back to the question of polls in Section 5.2.2.

The Committee in revising the Minute Books have found the following laws which do not appear in the present printed copy, but which it seems desirable should be embodied with the others: In all cases for which no express provision has been made by the Laws it is expedient that the President should regulate his conduct as nearly as possible by the Precedents of the House of Commons. (CUS minute book vol. 10, 13 February 1840)

The rhetoric of expediency was here used for incorporating parliamentary precedents in the ‘standing orders’ of the society. In 1845 the question of regulating the proceedings also appeared in a discussion concerning a newspaper report. A newspaper had violated the rules by publishing Cambridge Union Society proceedings. Due to the incident, the society decided to turn its rules into ‘laws’:

That it is essential to the well-being and respectability of the “Union Society” that Members should be aware of the Rules by which the Society is governed, in order to avoid any violation of them. That to this end it is expedient that all such rules should be embodied in the form of Laws. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 9 December 1844)

The rhetoric of expediency was used to legitimise the change from ‘rules’ to ‘laws’. The rules of the society had already been alternatively referred to as ‘laws’ but the argument here was, more or less, that governing the society would become more effective with laws instead of rules. In practice the society had no internal authority to enforce the laws. Therefore, it seems that ‘laws’ were here rhetorically portrayed as a more reliable method of keeping order than ‘rules’, without any more severe punishments proposed in the event of their being breached.

Subsequently, in the laws of 1845, a resolution was written down that all previously enacted resolutions and rules of the society that did not appear in the new code of laws would become invalid (CUS laws 1845 Lent & Easter, 13). This break with the past was deliberately done for minimising references to past resolutions in the debates. It is noteworthy that the rhetoric of minimising unpredictability was also used in the House of Commons, in relation to the revision of procedure in 1861 (see Section 2.2). In the report of Parliament’s select committee, respect for tradition and caution in making changes to procedure were named as the two most important characteristics of procedural revision in the House of Commons. It was stated that the amendments to procedure had been done on the principle of making no changes unless ‘experience has [... proved it] to be necessary’ (Report from the Select Committee 1861, iii). But in the case of the Union Societies the threat was not a potential loss of tradition, but of order: the rhetoric of minimising precedents was used for the government of the societies, not for the preservation of privileges already acquired. Also, in this sense, it is possible to understand why the Cambridge Union Society preferred the term ‘laws’ instead of ‘rules’: they rhetorically helped to establish the *ethos* of the society as a well-organised institution.

The first time Oxford Union Society appointed a committee to revise its rules was in 1842. However, the revision concerned the rules relating to the of-

office of president only.⁷³ In 1848 a revision of all of the rules of the society was undertaken by a select committee appointed. The committee's suggestions for alterations were presented in an extraordinary meeting on 31 May 1848 which, however, as was noted by secretary Meyrick⁷⁴ of Trinity College, was not attended by the required 20 members.⁷⁵ After the recommendations of the committee were discussed, treasurer Melville Portal⁷⁶ of Christ Church moved that the rules be approved by the house. The vote passed, however, not enough members were present so the rules remained officially unchanged (OUS minute book vol. VII, 31 May 1848).

On 2 February 1849 the committee, with Meyrick now the chair as well as society president, suggested changing its name and role in the revision:

That the President, Treasurer & Librarian be a Standing Committee with power to amalgamate & revise the Rules as often as they are to be reprinted; provided that in case of disagreement any of the said Committee may bring the question before the Society. (OUS minute book vol. VII, 2 February 1849)

The motion was carried, and the practice henceforth was that the revision of rules was reserved for the standing committee only. It was already the practice at Cambridge that the standing committee made the initiatives on rule changes. It seems, then, that in terms of revision of rules, Cambridge adopted qualities of cabinet government earlier than its Oxford counterpart.

The standing committee at Cambridge was first mentioned in the laws in 1841: *'The standing Committee shall consist of those Members who are in, or who have served any office'* (CUS laws 1841, 7). This meant that the society's 'cabinet' consisted of those who were elected, but also of those who had already retired from their duties. The general management of the society was left to the three elected officers (i.e. president, treasurer, and secretary), who served for one term at a time, and to the two clerks, who were employed by the society for the administration of finances.

The functions of the standing committee remained unwritten until 1845 when a rule was added: *'The Standing Committee shall meet on the Friday before each Private Business Meeting; and any Officer shall be at liberty to call together the Standing Committee on any matter affecting the interests of the Society'* (CUS laws 1845 Lent & Easter, 10). Further, in the laws in effect during the October term of

⁷³ The debate related to the establishment of a committee to revise the rules concerning the president will be dealt with in the Section 5.1.2.

⁷⁴ Frederick Meyrick (1827-1906) was a Fellow of Trinity College 1847-1860. He was a lecturer of rhetoric as well as philosophy in 1850, a public examiner in Literae Humaniores in 1856 and a tutor 1856-1859. During his career he was an inspector of schools, a rector of St. Andrew in Blickling, Norwich, and an active member of the Anglo-Continental Society which promoted church reforms.

⁷⁵ It was a rule of the Oxford Union Society that the president adjourned the house in the case that only twenty members were present (see OUS rules 1843, 13).

⁷⁶ Melville Portal (1819-1904), B.A. 1842, M.A. 1844, was elected a Conservative MP for North Hampshire 1849-1852, and for Winchester 1852-1857.

1848, the standing committee with its retired officers was merged with the officers of the society:

The Standing Committee shall consist of the President, Treasurer, and Secretary; and also of those Members who have held any of these offices; provided, that they shall have signified their intention of serving, during the Term, on this Committee, by inscribing their names in a book kept by the Secretary for that purpose. (CUS laws 1848 October, 15)

The fact that retired officers were also admitted as committee members shows that there was some continuity in the policies of the standing committee, even though the terms of office were very short. The newly elected president was named the chair of the standing committee. The role of the committee was described as follows:

The Committee shall meet [...], to consider all proposed new laws, or alterations of laws, which have been placed on the boards; at which meeting, the proposers of new laws, or alterations, shall be invited to attend, or to communicate the reasons for their proposals. (CUS laws 1848 October, 15)

The primary function of the merged standing committee was, in short, the preparation of the laws of the society before they were debated in private business meetings. In that respect the committee became a preparatory institution that dealt with motion initiatives regarding the rules. This is a clear example of adopting the functions of cabinet government in the Cambridge Union Society. The standing committee also decided whether proposals of other members were debated in the meetings or not. The decisions of the committee were afterwards announced to all the members of the society (CUS laws 1848 October, 15).

The committee of the Oxford Union Society was first composed of ten members (OUS rules 1837, 18). The standing committee of the society was constituted in 1849. When the standing committee and the library committee were divided as separate entities, the standing committee, consisting of seven members, became officially in charge of the affairs of the society (OUS rules 1851, 20). The standing committee met once a week, and in all its meetings at least one of the following officers of the society were required to be present: president, treasurer, or librarian.

There was a special characteristic of cabinet government in the Oxford standing committee as well. During public debates, and after a ballot had taken place, members could pose questions to members of the committee without notice (OUS rules 1856, 40). However, the president was allowed to stop the discussion or postpone it. This practice of questioning the committee resembled the way members of the House of Commons criticised the government policies. A difference, however, was that in the Union Societies the criticising did not have the dimension of representation. But it is noteworthy that it was only done in the public business meetings, which were open to visitors. This meant that the audience for the speeches was potentially more diverse than in the private business meetings.

Already before the establishment of the standing committee it had been a custom of the committee to propose motions. For example, on 17 May 1844, Cazenove of Brasenose College was reported to have moved 'the following motion, by recommendation of the committee. That Rule LXIII stand thus 'That no member of the Society shall be eligible to serve on the committee unless he shall be of six terms standing at least in the university, and shall have been in the Society at least one term' (OUS minute book vol. VI, 17 May 1844). Although at Cambridge there were no similar committee recommendations, motions of the standing committee were moved individually by the elected officers.

It seems that the committees of the Union Societies were not at first considered as 'cabinets'. The elected officers had their own roles as specified in the rules and, as a committee, they could propose recommendations. Only after the establishment of standing committees and acquiring the power to make initiatives did the government of the Union Societies approximate parliamentary practices.

At Cambridge, revision of rules was reserved for the standing committee. At Oxford, select committees were first appointed for this purpose from 1849 to 1852. The rule from 1849 stated that the standing committee had the ultimate power to revise the rules of the society and only had to consult the house whenever there were disagreements about the changes between members of the standing committee. On 4 March 1852 it was decided that revision was no longer possible without the approval of the whole house. The president, Walter W. Shirley⁷⁷ of Wadham College, moved:

That a Select Committee be appointed to revise the rules of the Society printed on the basis of the edition of 1843: with power to make alterations in the rules & order of the rules & so incorporate subsequent resolutions of the House. That if they shall see reason to recommend any changes [...] in the rules these shall be proposed by them, after the usual notice, at least week previous to the presentation of their general report. That the Rules of the Society as revised by them shall lie on the table of the Reading Room for one week & full notice of their being put be placed on the notice boards of the Society. The whole report shall then be submitted rule by rule to the House. That the following gentlemen shall compose the Committee. Mr. Conington, University; Mr Sotheby, Exeter; Mr. Boyle, Exeter; Mr. Fitzgerald, University; Mr. Johnstone, Exeter. (OUS minute book vol. VII, 4 March 1852)

The motion was carried unanimously. The work of the committee took several years. However, some adjustments to the old rules were already made before the submission of the committee report. For example, on 10 March 1853 the revising committee presented some of the alterations, but it was then moved that they would not 'come into operation before the general Report of the Revising Committee' (Johnstone: OUS minute book vol. VIII, 10 March 1853).

⁷⁷ Walter Waddington Shirley (1828-1866) had been educated at Rugby School under Thomas Arnold. He matriculated at University College, Oxford, in 1846 and was elected a Fellow of Wadham College in 1852. Shirley became Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History in 1863 and a canon of Christ Church.

In the British parliament, committees are formed on the basis of a very specific practice. Traditionally, the business of both Houses of Parliament has had two forms of proceeding: that of the House and that of a committee. The distinctive feature is that both the proceedings of the House and the Committee of the whole House are performed as plenary sessions. This means that there is no difference between either session in terms of the members present. In a strict sense the Committee of the whole House is not a 'committee' at all, but simply the House deliberating in a different form (Redlich 1908b, 180-181). The actual committees in the British parliament function as preparatory institutions. Until the nineteenth century the House only had select committees for the purpose of inquiring into matters of interest and planning how they would be dealt with (ibid. 187). Standing committees were constituted in the nineteenth century for dealing with the increasing amount of administrative work of the House of Commons.

In proposing committees for various purposes, members of the Oxford Union Society were again following parliamentary precedent. Before the revising committee appointed by the society had presented its report, the standing committee on Michaelmas 1855 decided to move that a 'Standing Committee of appeals' be appointed, which would consist of at least three former presidents of the society and would be charged with interpreting and revising the rules. The specific duties of this committee would be:

- 1) To decide appeals against any decision of the President which may involve the interpretation of rules, or the settlement of a point of order. 2) To revise the rules of the Society, previous to reprinting whenever they shall be empowered to do so by a vote of the House. (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 3 December 1855)

The motion was defeated by a majority of one. The following term another standing committee suggested 'That a Committee of four be appointed to revise the rules of the Society' (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 11 February 1856), which was agreed.

The newly appointed revising committee gave its report on 28 May 1856, stating as one of the difficulties that they had not received any definite instructions or found any clear precedents in the written records, which prompted them to turn to recent customs and practices: '*On this point they have, as far as the lamentable imperfect state of the minutes enabled them, followed the precedent, afforded by the proceedings of the last committee appointed for a similar purpose*' (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 28 May 1856). According to the revising committee, other hindrances had been caused by the long periods between the revisions as well as the dereliction of the duty of earlier committees to examine the minutes of the society regularly.

On this point your Committee feel that they cannot too strongly express their sense of the impropriety of permitting so lax a system to obtain in keeping the journals of the House, or too strongly censure those officers of this Society who have failed during their short period of terminal office, to fulfill one of its plainest and most necessary duties, or of those committees which appear habitually to have omitted the duty

to which the rules bind them, of auditing the minutes weekly. (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 28 May 1856)

The committee report claimed that in terms of consistency the rules were deficient due to the fact that the minute books were so badly kept. The standing committee had the duty to examine and correct the minutes of the meetings (OUS rules 1853, 30). Because the amended rules did not appear in the records, it made the work of the revising committee extremely difficult:

From this neglect a larger amount of confusion and trouble than they can easily describe has, as was natural, been entailed upon your committee; for example, an entire chapter of rules, concerning the election of officers passed in November 1855 was in April 1856 unentered in the Society's rules. [...] In several instances unfortunately [...] many omissions and inaccuracies still disgrace the minutes [...] and Book of Rules. Some of them have been rectified by your Committee: others it is feared are of too long standing to be easily corrected inasmuch as omissions of a grave character are to be found throughout the entire period of the past 8 years [...]. (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 28 May 1856)

Due to the inconsistencies of the rules, the committee had decided 'to carry out a more intelligible classification'. One of the principal alterations proposed was that public and private business should be discussed on separate occasions. Furthermore, it was argued that copies of the rules and of the proceedings should be published with a calendar indicating the society's meeting days:

This arrangement would in the opinion of your Committee not only provide an authentic account of your society, and obviate the inconveniences of which your Committee have such abundant reasons to complain, but would, in all probability, materially benefit the finances of your society from the extensive circulation which so popular a publication would assuredly command. (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 28 May 1856)

The societies had benefited from relatively liberal policies regarding visitors. At Cambridge the rules concerning visitors attending its debates were somewhat stricter, whereas Oxford from early on allowed for a certain number of visitors to attend its debates. However, the publication of debates had been as vigorously condemned as at Cambridge.⁷⁸ It seems that, for the sake of expediency, the revising committee at Oxford was now prepared to publish the society's proceedings. The argument was that the regular publishing of the society's transactions would benefit it in the long term and help with its finances. But publication of speeches that had been delivered at society's public business meetings remained banned.

At the Cambridge society, the strict exclusion of non-members from its public debates partly contributed to a decline in its attendance in the late 1840s. The problems began in 1843 when the society was confronting financial difficul-

⁷⁸ The most recent instance had occurred in 1852 when an anonymous letter was sent to the *Record* newspaper 'containing several misstatements in reference to a Debate at the Society's meeting of the previous Thursday, and also a personal criticism on the character and opinions of the mover' (OUS minute book vol. VII, 27 May 1852).

ties. According to a report of the October term 1846 written by Vaughan, the secretary,⁷⁹ in March 1847, the Cambridge society had also ceased to attract university students in the same manner as previously:

The Secretary cannot but regret the slight interest taken by the Majority of the Members in the Public Debates; the consequence of which, is that the Society is very far from sustaining its former character as a school for public speaking; nor does there seem to be any hope of great improvement in this particular, until some general interest shall have been excited, which shall lead to improvement and increase of number in the speakers as well as to larger and more attentive audiences. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 22 March 1847)

In Vaughan's view a change in the character of the business of the society had occurred. In 1846 the financial situation was declining rapidly.⁸⁰ While reporting on their financial straits, the treasurer of Lent term 1847, Davies⁸¹ of Trinity College, argued that there was a 'want of vitality' in the society's activities: *'The recent Debates can scarcely be said to have been very successful; they have generally called forth less energy in speaking than the private business of the Society'* (CUS minute book vol. 14, 26 April 1847). The private business Davies was referring to included the constitution of the standing committee in 1845 as well as the revision that turned the rules into the 'laws' of the society. According to Davies, the main problem was general indifference toward elections to choose the officers of the society: *'A contested election besides being a symptom of interest, is in itself beneficial to the Society, by enlisting new Members and procuring early payment of subscriptions and arrears'* (CUS minute book vol. 14, 26 April 1847). Davies used the rhetoric of expediency in arguing for the benefits of using electoral competitions for attracting more members. In his view the society needed to become more popular in order to become successful again. This kind of rhetoric was also indicative of the change of character pointed out by Vaughan earlier. For the purposes of expediency the Cambridge Union Society was turning from a 'school for public speaking' into a more parliamentary type of deliberative assembly.

Vaughan argued that the society's character would only improve by some increase of 'general interest'. The decline of speakers in public business meetings had already appeared during Easter term 1846. The usual number of participants in a public debate had been around 60 a year before, but in 1846 the number was closer to 15 (CUS laws 1846, 13-23). Vaughan's argument that the Cambridge Union Society was losing its 'character' was made at a time when, on the level of national politics, Peel's repeal of the Corn Laws shook the Con-

⁷⁹ The acting secretary was David James Vaughan (1825-1905) who was educated at Rugby School and admitted to Trinity College in 1844. He became a priest and a founder of Working Men's College of Leicester in 1862.

⁸⁰ Whereas there were 107 members paying the membership fees of the society in the October term 1845, only 7 did so in the Easter term 1846 (CUS laws 1846, iv).

⁸¹ John Llewelyn Davies (1826-1916) was twice elected President of the Union, in 1847 and 1849. He was educated at Repton School and admitted to Trinity College in 1843. In his long career as a priest he served, for example, as Chaplain to Queen Victoria. With Vaughan he translated Plato's *Republic* into English.

servative party (see Ostrogorski 1964, 34). The old party was in the middle of a crisis, which had more general repercussions for party politics.

At the level of political agency, the rhetorical premise of Vaughan's argument represents an interpretation that emphasises 'character', whereas Davies' utterance suggests the position of 'expediency'. Davies was more practical in his assessment of the situation. His position was that the political struggles in the elections for officers were the reason for the renewed interest.

Davies proposal to focus on contested elections to attract new members was addressed in the following term. At the time, the society's public and private business meetings were attended by Liberal politician William Frederick Campbell,⁸² who in 1847 became elected Member of Parliament for Cambridge as well as president of the Cambridge Union Society. On 14 December 1846 Campbell commenced a discussion regarding the election of new members, by moving for a return to voting by ballot. As the society met for a private business meeting, he proposed:

That a select Committee be appointed to inquire into the grounds on which the election by ballot was abolished in the Society, the expediency of restoring it, and the results which have been found to attend the existence of it in the Oxford Union. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 14 December 1846)

Campbell suggested that the Union Society inquire into the benefits of election by ballot. In this way he seems to have suggested a means to solve the issue of attracting new members. John Kynaston⁸³ of Trinity Hall moved an amendment that the debate concerning Campbell's motion should be postponed to following term. Kynaston's effort to postpone the matter was, however, blocked by a vote on his amendment, after which Campbell's motion was put and carried by a majority of one. The following term, Campbell was elected president of the Union Society.

Campbell's initiative was partly responsible for a revival of the Union activities and launching a new style of politics. In March 1847 Vaughan acknowledged that the financial problems of the society had almost been resolved because a considerable number of new members were entering the society (CUS minute book vol. 13, 22 March 1847). As Vaughan had predicted, the character of the society only improved through the renewed interest. With Campbell, the Cambridge Union regained its popularity among university students.

⁸² William Frederick Campbell (1824-1893), a son of Baron Campbell, was elected a Liberal MP for Cambridge 1847-1852 and for Harwich 1859-1860. After inheriting the title of Baron Stratheden from his mother in 1860, he entered the House of Lords and remained in his seat until his death in 1893.

⁸³ John Kynaston (b ? 1825-d. unknown), B.A. 1848, M.A. 1851, was admitted at the Inner Temple in 1846.

5.1.2 The president's role in the interpretation of rules

The duties of the president in both Union Societies included acting as the head officer of the standing committee as well as chairing all private and public business meetings. In both societies, presidents were given the power to interpret the rules. The president was in charge of identifying and acting against disorderly behaviour. This gave authority over the proceedings much like that of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

The powers of the president were as great at the Cambridge Union Society as at its Oxford counterpart. However, at Oxford there was less room for challenging the presidents' decisions during their terms in office than at Cambridge. The rule at Oxford was that a president's decisions could not be questioned until the end of the term, and then only if a written appeal notice had been submitted 'within a week of the occurrence complained of' (OUS rules 1839, 29).

The decisions of the president of the Cambridge Union Society could be subjected to an appeal at any time. The method of doing so was through a 'requisition', which had to include at least 100 signatures. After receiving such an appeal the president had to declare a committee to inquire into the matter (CUS laws 1829, 4). This Committee of the whole House (a term derived from the usage of the British parliament) inquired into the propriety of the judgments made by the president:

If a requisition of One Hundred Members, with their Names and Colleges affixed, be presented to the President, it shall be incumbent on him to appoint an early day for a Committee of the whole House, to inquire into the propriety of any decisions from the Chair. (CUS laws 1848 October, 16-17)

When a Committee of the whole House⁸⁴ was formed in the House of Commons, the Speaker had to resign his chair, and the proceedings were presided over by another (May 1844, 224). Until well into the 1850s, Speakers took part in the committee debates (Campion 1958, 76). However, in the Union Societies the presidents continued to participate in the committee and other debates even after the 1850s. In this respect, the Union Societies did not follow parliamentary practices.

If a Union Society president chose to participate in a private or public debate, the meeting was presided over by a substitute who was not allowed the full powers of the president. At Oxford the substituting chair only had 'the full power and responsibility of the President so far as relates to the conduct of that Meeting: provided always that he shall not rule any point of order, or interpret

⁸⁴ In a Committee of the whole House, members of parliament are allowed to speak more than once. This kind of practice is needed for a detailed consideration of matters: '*When a member can speak only once, he cannot omit any argument that he is prepared to offer, as he will not have another opportunity of urging it; but when he is at liberty to speak again, he may confine himself to one point at a time*' (May 1844, 226). At both Union Societies, it was possible to speak more than once at any private business meeting. Although Committees of the whole House are mentioned in the rules of the Union Societies, they had a different character in practice.

any law, in opposition to an announced decision or interpretation of the President' (OUS rules 1863, 11). This meant that the president, by taking part in a debate, did not lose his authority on questions of order or interpretation of rules. He, in fact, had the right to make an appeal against the acting chair, which had to be settled before the next public debate. The acting chair's decisions were also subject to appeal if questioned, but the matter was to be discussed at a private business meeting.

By 1853 the Cambridge Union Society had added a rule that the acting chairs were to be 'invested with all [the president's] functions' (CUS laws 1853, 8). The rule limited the time of the substitution until the end of the discussion that had prompted it. Similar to Oxford, presidents at Cambridge who wished to take part in a debate had to temporarily resign their chair and appoint a standing committee member to act as a *locum tenens* for the remainder of the discussion (CUS laws 1848 October, 8).

In the early years the decisions of the president could be reversed through a charge of 'illegal' conduct. In the 1830s the powers of the president of the Cambridge Union Society were debated several times. One of the main discussions was related to the rule that political matters of the day could not be debated. On that issue Orde,⁸⁵ of Queen's College and president of the society, arranged a special meeting to discuss a letter, sent by the Proctor of the University⁸⁶ who had been informed of the society's decision on 9 November 1830 that would introduce a rule to allow discussions on current political topics. In the minute book it is shown that some members of the society made 'objections to the legality of the meeting on the ground that the President had no right to call it under the circumstances' (CUS minute book vol. 6, 11 November 1830). These objections were, however, overruled. The meeting was then dissolved into a committee on the motion of James Heaviside⁸⁷ of Sidney College, with Henry Dupuis⁸⁸ of Kings College to act as chair of the committee just formed. The treasurer, William Brookfield⁸⁹ of Trinity College, moved that the twenty-year rule should be added to the laws of the Society again.⁹⁰

The motion created disorder and the president was accused of breaking the law, according to which, as it stood, a question already brought before the house cannot be decided again during the same term. Lord Kerry⁹¹ of Trinity

⁸⁵ Leonard Shafto Orde (1807-1895) served as the President of the Union Society twice in 1830. He became a priest.

⁸⁶ Proctors were university authorities in English universities, and their duties included disciplinary and other functions.

⁸⁷ James William Lucas Heaviside (1808-1897), B.A. 1830, M.A. 1833, became Proctor of the University in 1835. He had been ordained a priest a year earlier.

⁸⁸ Henry Dupuis (1808-1867) was educated at Eton and was elected a Fellow of King's College in 1830.

⁸⁹ William Henry Brookfield (1809-1874) was the President of the Union Society in 1831 and 1833. He became a priest.

⁹⁰ Previously, the Cambridge Union Society had a rule barring debate on political topics that had occurred within the past twenty years.

⁹¹ The Earl of Kerry, William Thomas Petty Fitzmaurice (1811-1836), was the elder son of the third Marquess of Lansdowne, who was a Whig leader. Lord Kerry was elect-

College moved for adjournment *'sine die'*, meaning he wished the house to make no resolution on the matter. The issue would have been completely abandoned and failed to become a precedent had the adjournment motion been carried in a division. However, Matthew⁹² of Sidney College then proposed an amendment that the debate be adjourned until the next Tuesday. Matthew's amendment was defeated, and Lord Kerry's indefinite adjournment was carried by a show of hands (CUS minute book vol. 6, 11 November 1830). No debate, therefore, could be continued on the same subject.

When the society convened again, on 16 November, president Orde tendered his resignation. However, the majority of the society voted to decline it. The following week the matter was raised again when Laing⁹³ of St. John's College moved a 'vote of censure': *'That a Vote of Censure be passed on the President for his illegal and unconstitutional conduct while in the chair on Thursday the 11th of November'* (CUS minute book vol. 6, 23 November 1830). Laing's motion again raised havoc and almost led to several offending members being expelled from the Society. President Orde overruled the motion 'on the grounds that no motion reflecting upon the conduct of the President could be discussed whilst he was in office unless at a special meeting called upon a requisition signed by 100 members' (CUS minute book vol. 6, 23 November 1830). Subsequently, Laing and some of his supporters were fined.

In the meantime, the law that permitted discussion of politics of the day was passed by the society. Soon after a motion was moved by Dupuis that a note of protest against the new law should be placed in the records of the Society. A majority agreed and the protest was written down in the minutes. In it the protestors explained that they acted out of fear that Proctors would intervene again and the situation might deteriorate to the point where members would be prohibited from debating matters of any kind.

The law was under constant revision for several terms, and stood from 1832 onwards without the twenty-year rule. However, again in 1839 there was an attempt to return to the old rule. For a reason undisclosed in the records, on 12 November 1839 president Craufurd⁹⁴ insisted upon going back to the laws of the year 1824. Despite the existing rules that permitted discussion on current politics, he declined to put two topics of debate before the house. Hodson⁹⁵ of Trinity College moved to, if it garnered a majority, declare a formal condemnation of Craufurd's decision.

ed Member of Parliament for Calne in 1832, succeeding Thomas Babington Macaulay, also a former member of the Cambridge Union.

⁹² Henry Matthew (1807-1861) was a former President of the Union Society.

⁹³ Samuel Laing (1812-1897) graduated as Second Wrangler, received a Second Smith's prize in 1832 and was elected a Fellow. He was elected MP for Wick Burghs as a Liberal in 1852.

⁹⁴ Edward Henry John Craufurd (1816-1887) had been admitted at Inner Temple two years previously. He was known as a Radical politician. In 1852 he was elected to Parliament as a member for Ayr Burghs.

⁹⁵ George Hewitt Hodson (1817-1904) became a priest.

On 22 November, to discuss a requisition written by members to oppose the decision of the president 'that no political subject subsequent to the year 1800 should be allowed as a question for debate', the house was dissolved into committee. Then Hodson moved the following: '*That the late decision of the President by which two subjects proposed for debate were struck off the board in direct contravention of the first law of the society and consequently illegal*' (CUS minute book vol. 10, 22 November 1839). The resolution was seconded by Shaw of Trinity College, and after Craufurd had said a few words, the motion was debated for and against.

An amendment was moved by former president Bartlett,⁹⁶ of Clare Hall: '*That the President's decision respecting the subjects of debate be reversed, and that the Society be always considered "as a debating society, to discuss any subjects, except those of a theological nature"*' (CUS minute book vol. 10, 22 November 1839). The amendment was carried unanimously. It contained a suggestion to reverse the decision of Craufurd, which was an alternative to declaring Craufurd's it 'illegal'. The house voted in favour.

The reversal of Craufurd's decision coincided with the report of the committee that had been summoned to revise the laws of the society. The report recommended that the president should act according to the House of Commons' procedure in those instances where there was no precedent in the society's own laws: '*In all cases for which no express provision has been made by the Laws it is expedient that the President should regulate his conduct as nearly as possible by the Precedents of the House of Commons*' (CUS minute book vol. 10, 130-132). The reference to the House of Commons, however, could also be ignored by the president. On 26 February 1844 Holmes⁹⁷ of St. Peter's College proposed: '*That a Committee be appointed, with powers to direct some Solicitor to draw up a case for the opinion of counsel, as to the means by which the Union Society may securely possess property*' (CUS minute book vol. 13, 26 February 1844). Brame⁹⁸ of St. John's College moved an amendment 'That the motion be postponed to this day six months', after which there was a division, and the amendment was carried by a majority of five votes. The result was opposed and a poll was demanded by Delacour⁹⁹ of St. Peter's College. Disorder ensued, with Thomson¹⁰⁰ of Jesus College moving twice for adjournment, but remaining unsupported. Ritson¹⁰¹ of Jesus College moved that the poll, if granted, should take place immediately. The president, Ogier¹⁰² of Trinity College, was of the opinion that the poll was

⁹⁶ Symeon Taylor Bartlett (1812-1877) had been president of the society in 1838. He became a priest.

⁹⁷ Richard Holmes (1823-1893), B.A. 1845, became a priest.

⁹⁸ John Brame (1817-1889) became assistant master at Derby School in 1845 and also a priest.

⁹⁹ Robert William Delacour (1822-1888), B.A. 1844, became a priest.

¹⁰⁰ William Thomson (1816-d. unknown), B.A. 1837, M.A. 1840 was a chaplain of St. Nicholas, Guildford, 1845-1848.

¹⁰¹ John Ritson (1823-d. unknown), B.A. 1845, M.A. 1850, became a priest.

¹⁰² John Creuzé Hingeston Ogier (1820-d. unknown) was educated at Eton and called to the bar in 1842.

to be taken by the mover and seconder of the amendment after the adjournment of the meeting. Ritson then reminded the president of the rule in the society's *Index of Precedents* stating 'That in all cases, for which no express provision has been made by our Laws, it is expedient that the President should regulate his conduct as nearly as possible by the precedents of the "House of Commons"' (CUS minute book vol. 13, 26 February 1844). This precedent was, however, ignored by the president, who 'declined revoking his decision' (CUS minute book vol. 13, 26 February 1844).

It seems that the presidents were allowed to interpret precedents to their own liking. But, as was evident in Craufurd's case, the president's decisions could be reversed if a member was able to gather a majority behind a motion. What is also noteworthy here is the priority given to Union politics over a strict adherence to parliamentary procedure.

At Oxford, appeals against any decision of the president or acting chair of society were discussed in the first private business meeting of the term after the president's or acting chair's resignation (OUS rules 1863, 11). The Oxford Union Society's rules did not specify the manner in which an appeal against the president should be made. Therefore, the rules left ample room for interpretation.

At an extraordinary meeting of the society, which the president had called to discuss private business on 27 April 1839, there was a debate about his decision on an amendment. Tate of University College accused president Moncrieff¹⁰³ of giving Townend of Oriel College permission to speak on an amendment while refusing Kinloch¹⁰⁴ of St. Mary Hall the right to speak to a motion. President Moncrieff declared that he acted according to 'principle', judging that Kinloch had been out of order (OUS minute book vol. V, 27 April 1839). Based on his principle (which was not specified in the records) the president declared the matter settled, although several members wished to speak on a point of order. Then Rawlinson¹⁰⁵ of Trinity College 'advised all members on his side to withdraw opposition on points of order, as they saw we had "a one sided President"' (OUS minute book vol. V, 27 April 1839). Rhetorically Rawlinson suggested that any opposition would be useless in the present situation because the president would only accept action that he considered to be consistent with his 'principle'. As president Moncrieff asked Rawlinson for an explanation, Hodson¹⁰⁶ of Merton College moved that the president inflicted a

¹⁰³ George Robertson Moncrieff (1817-1897) graduated from Balliol College (B.A. 1838, M.A. 1846) and became rector of Tattenhall, Cheshire, in 1842. He had already once been the president of the society, in 1837.

¹⁰⁴ Alfred Kinloch (1819-d. unknown) became a chaplain.

¹⁰⁵ George Rawlinson (1812-1902), B.A. 1838, was a Fellow of Exeter College in 1840-1846. He also became president of the society in Easter term 1840. Rawlinson was ordained a priest the following year. He was a canon of Canterbury and is remembered as an historian.

¹⁰⁶ John Fowden Hodson (b? 1815-d. unknown) was a son of James Alexander Hodson, a Member of Parliament for Wigan. He changed his name to Hodges after the death of his maternal uncle in 1844.

fine on Rawlinson pursuant to Rule 70.¹⁰⁷ Another suggestion came from Fawcett,¹⁰⁸ of University College, who proposed 'that as in common law, half the penalty should go to the informer' (OUS minute book vol. V, 27 April 1839). The following speaker was Kinloch, who supported Rawlinson in the matter, as he 'objected that it was out of the President's power to fine the Honourable member' (OUS minute book vol. V, 27 April 1839). President Moncreiff replied by requesting that the secretary, Arnold¹⁰⁹ of Magdalen Hall, read the rules on the subject. President Moncreiff, then, acted upon Rule 70:

2. The President shall also interfere, when any words are spoken in the Society, which in his judgment impute dishonourable motives or conduct to, or are otherwise injurious to the personal honour and character of, any Member of the Society; and the speaker so called on by the President, shall be bound immediately to explain. (OUS rules 1839, 28)

The president duly asked for an account from Rawlinson, who replied that 'in stating the President to be "a one sided President," he meant to impute no unfairness to him' (OUS minute book vol. V, 27 April 1839). The president accepted this explanation. However, according to Rule 70, the president could have, if still suspecting insult, questioned the meaning of the words before adjournment of the house:

3. All explanations shall be received without question as to the real meaning and intention of the speaker; but it shall be in the power of the President, (if he deem it necessary,) after such explanation, to direct the speaker to withdraw the expression objected to. No words, however, shall be questioned except at the time they are uttered. (OUS rules 1839, 28)

After the incident the discussion continued on the original motion put by the president and was adjourned according to Rawlinson's proposal.

The incident above included the rhetoric of fairness. It was suggested that Rawlinson viewed the president's decision as unfair, despite his denial. This corresponds to the rhetorical figure of *correctio*, used for retracting an utterance and replacing it with a more suitable expression (*Ad C. Herennium ...* 1954, IV. 26, 36). By describing the president as 'one-sided' Rawlinson was surely aware of being out of order. According to the rules an explanation was given, in which instance Rawlinson denied any 'unfairness' being intended. The president did not demand further explanations which, in fact, enhances the rhetorical effect of the figure of *correctio*: '*This figure makes an impression upon the hearer, for the idea when expressed by an ordinary word seems rather feebly stated, but after the speaker's*

¹⁰⁷ Rule LXX. 1. In the meetings of the Society, it shall be the duty of the President to interfere (though not appealed to) whenever there is a breach of order; and it shall be in the power of any Member to call his attention to any conduct which appears to him disorderly, or to request him to fine any Member. (OUS rules 1839, 27)

¹⁰⁸ Ralph Thomas Fawcett (b? 1818-d. unknown) became B.A. in 1840.

¹⁰⁹ Charles Thomas Arnold (1818-1878), B.A. 1840, M.A. 1843, became President of the Union Society in Michaelmas term 1840. A year later he was nominated Assistant-Master of Rugby School.

own amendment it is made more striking by means of the more appropriate expression.' (ibid.) The implicit charge of 'unfairness' is reduced to only a hint by its explicit denial.

Rawlinson's case shows that a president could base his decisions on the simple argument of 'principle' and disregard the rules. The same became evident in another incident at Oxford Union Society. On 3 March 1842 Chase¹¹⁰ of Oriel College appealed¹¹¹ against a decision given by acting chairman in a meeting on 2 December 1841. President Congreve had been absent and his substitute, treasurer Portal, had refused to introduce a topic of debate which Chase had proposed for that occasion. It seems that Congreve had told Portal to refuse the motion beforehand. In the following private business meeting on 9 December 1841, Townend¹¹² of Oriel College asked the president on which rule he based his refusal to receive motions addressed to the society. President Congreve answered that he based his decision on Rule 72, which stated that a president's decisions were not subject to appeal while he was still in office (cf. OUS rules 1839, 29). Tate¹¹³ of University College questioned president Congreve's decision and inquired whether the president was aware of Rule 68: *'If any Member of the Committee shall refuse to transact any business assigned to him, such refusal shall be equivalent to the resignation of his office'* (OUS rules 1839, 27). Tate seems to suggest that, by refusing to put Chase's motion, Portal, acting behalf of Congreve, had failed to fulfill his duties as a member of committee and, therefore, should have resigned his office. Congreve denied the applicability of the rule in that situation. Here Tate employed a different rule than the president had used for his defense. Chase inquired into the president's reasons for refusing his motion for a debate on public business. Congreve answered 'that it was placed by the Rules in the discretion of the President' (OUS minute book vol. VI, 9 December 1841). In short, president Congreve argued that the discretionary powers of the president made it legal for him to reject motions of debate.

The following term Portal (see fn. 76, p. 113) was himself elected president, thus presiding as chair on 3 March 1842 over Chase's appeal. Chase argued that Congreve's refusal to put his motion, of which due notice had been given, in a public meeting of the society was 'wholly unjustifiable & unwarranted' according to the rules of the Society: *'And that therefore a vote of censure be passed upon him by the House and that he shall be declared incapable of holding any office in the Society until after the expiration of one year from the time of his office as President'* (OUS minute book vol. VI, 3 March 1842). In short, Chase's motion included not just a condemnation of Congreve's refusal, but also a proposal to pass a vote of

¹¹⁰ Drummond Percy Chase (1820-1902) became President of the Union Society the following term. He was later the Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford.

¹¹¹ The president of the term in question was Richard Congreve of Wadham College. Congreve (1818-1899) was educated at Rugby School under Thomas Arnold. He became Fellow of Wadham College in 1844 and subsequently a noted positivist philosopher.

¹¹² John Townend (1817-1858), B.A. 1841, M.A. 1847, became a barrister.

¹¹³ Francis Tate (1817-1867) had been matriculated at Balliol College and was a scholar of University College 1838-1844.

censure. He also demanded Congreve's resignation as a member of the standing committee, to which he had been nominated at the end of his presidential term.

Chase's motion created a precedent as no rule to censure a member was mentioned in the existing rules. Neither was there any adopted practice to prevent a former president from applying for a position in a standing committee. Under these circumstances, Chase's motion had the potential to become a precedent that either had to be recognised in the rules of the society or could be used and interpreted as a precedent in other occasions. The motion also undermined the existence of the entire nominated standing committee in the event that the motion should pass. The motion was, therefore, more important and carried wider implications than it might seem at first glance.

The discussion on the motion had not even properly started when Townend was fined for disorderly behaviour, indicating how much the motion stirred passions. After Townend's fine, Chase asked 'leave of the Society to withdraw the latter part of his motion from the words "and he shall be declared" to the end' (OUS minute book vol. VI, 3 March 1842). However, after the alteration proposed, the motion would still have contained the vote of censure. President Portal and Congreve spoke against the suggestion, after which Townend apologised for his conduct. Portal declared that he was satisfied with the explanation provided and moved that the fine should be cancelled. There was a brief discussion on the cancellation of Townend's fine. Parnell¹¹⁴ of St. John's College spoke against the motion, after which the house divided. The votes for the cancellation of the fine won.

The society then resumed debate on Chase's second motion, i.e. that the latter part of his first motion should be withdrawn. The speakers for this motion included two former standing committee members, Plumptre¹¹⁵ of University College and Alban¹¹⁶ of St. John's College. Those speaking against were Blackett¹¹⁷ of Christ Church, a current member of the standing committee, and Cotton¹¹⁸ of Christ Church, the current secretary. The house divided on the second motion, and the majority voted against.

After this defeat, the meeting continued with a discussion of the original motion. But then Chase moved 'for leave to divide his motion with 3 distinct propositions' (OUS minute book vol. VI, 3 March 1842). According to the rules, a member was allowed to alter his own motion by the permission of the majori-

¹¹⁴ Paul Parnell (1821-1852) was a Fellow of St. John's College and later became a barrister and a crown solicitor in Perth, Western Australia.

¹¹⁵ Edward Hayes Plumptre (1821-1891) was elected a Fellow of Brasenose College 1844-1848 and took up an academic career in theology.

¹¹⁶ William John Alban (1821-1862) matriculated at St. John's College in 1839. He became a priest.

¹¹⁷ John Fenwick Burgoyne Blackett (1821-1856) was a son of an MP for Northumberland South. He was educated at Harrow and, before becoming elected a Fellow of Merton College in 1842, matriculated at Christ Church in 1838. He was elected MP for Newcastle-on-Tyne as a Liberal in 1852.

¹¹⁸ Henry Cotton (1821-1892) became a barrister and was nominated Lord Justice of Appeal in 1877. He was also made a Privy Councillor.

ty of the Society (OUS rules 1839, 11). Plumptre seconded Chase's proposal. Tate as well as Chase himself took part in the discussion. The house finally approved the division of Chase's motion into three separate propositions.

The decision was beneficial for Chase in the sense that it provided him the chance to get at least some part of his motion passed in the divisions of the house. In the event that the whole original motion was opposed by the majority of the house, there would not be a second chance to propose the issue during the term.¹¹⁹ As the house had now given permission to divide the original motion, there was still a chance for Chase's motion to carry, in one form or another. It should also be noted that there is a certain peculiarity in British parliamentary debate practice, which Chase must have known about when dividing his original motion, that once an amendment on the original motion has been proposed, the amendment, once carried, leads to a situation where there may not be a division on the original motion, as the amendment has superseded it. By now Chase had managed to prevent, firstly, a total rejection of his original motion in a division, and, secondly, the risk of someone else proposing an amendment, which could have superseded his own motion.

The debate now continued so that president Portal put the first proposition to the house: *'That the conduct of the late President [Congreve] in refusing on the evening of December 2nd to put to the house a motion of which due notice had been given was wholly unjustifiable and unwarranted by the laws of the Society'* (OUS minute book vol. VI, 3 March 1842). After a number of speakers on both sides had spoken (Parnell, Tate, Alban and Plumptre having supported the motion), the house voted against the first proposition. It had been the one that was most likely to survive the vote, as it contained the least controversial part of the original motion. However, the house seems to have been unwilling to oppose the rule that the president possessed the ultimate authority to interpret the rules of the society. A house vote in favour of the first proposition would have been against the existing rules. Also, despite the fact that president's decisions could not be challenged before the end of the term of office, Chase's original appeal could be interpreted as a questioning of the president's decision as a breach of the rules, since it occurred within a week of the incident. In that sense, Chase and his supporters had been out of order by questioning the president in the first place.

The negative result of the division prompted Plumptre to move an adjournment of the debate. He was supported by Cazenove¹²⁰ of Brasenose College. After a discussion, the motion of adjournment was put to the vote and lost. Plumptre's attempt to postpone the debate to another private business meeting being defeated, Chase asked to withdraw his second proposition. The permission to do so was granted, and the president reformulated Chase's final motion:

¹¹⁹ The rule stood: *'No motion, if rejected, shall be brought forward a second time in the same Term, but the repeal of any motion may be moved in the same Term in which it has been carried'* (OUS rules 1839, 11).

¹²⁰ John Gibson Cazenove (1821-1896), B.A. 1843, M.A. 1846, became Chancellor of Edinburgh Cathedral.

'The first meeting on Private Business after the expiration of the present Presidents office, Mr. Chase in accordance with Rule LXXII will appeal against a fine inflicted by the President on him December 9th' (OUS minute book vol. VI, 3 March 1842). Townend and Parnell, among others, spoke for Chase's appeal, while Congreve, the former president, was the only speaker against it. The house supported Congreve and voted against the appeal by a majority of one.

This debate shows that the private business meetings, otherwise very plainly recorded in the minute books, may, by a close reading of the proceedings of the Society, reveal how skilfully the members were able to use the established rules and procedures. Even though this particular debate did not have any specific outcome that might have affected the organisation of the society as a whole, it certainly provides us with an understanding of how well the members knew the rules and acted accordingly. In other words, the right to appeal for a president's decision was not just another rule in the rule book, but it was actually used and tested.

In the example above, it was a decision by president Congreve, not treasurer Portal, that was subjected to appeal, even though it had been Portal who had declined to put Chase's debate topic before the house. However, Portal had acted as a substitute for the president and thus had reduced powers. According to the rules, the substitute only had authority as regards the conduct of the meeting.

The vote of censure that Chase had included in his appeal was not codified in the rules. Politically it was a bold move that potentially could have become a precedent. In this case the basis was the accusation that a president's actions had been 'unjustified and unwarranted by the laws'. As discussed above, this kind of rhetoric of illegality as to the decisions of the president had also been practised at Cambridge Union Society. As a result, the presidents of Union Societies could be made to resign their office or their decisions could become reversed.

5.2 Rhetorical strategies in the Union Societies' politics of debate

The Union presidents had vast powers over the management and debate proceedings of the societies. As the standing committees took charge of making initiatives on questions of procedure, they gained greater executive power. They were also responsible for the committee work relating to private business meetings. In some respect, presidents had gained powers like those of a prime minister. The president's authority was now challenged when other members proposed their own interpretations of the rules or tried to prevent the president from resorting to precedents. The increased authority of the president coincided with the beginning of a comprehensive revision of rules in the Union Societies. For example, at Cambridge there were attempts to minimise the use of precedents in 1845 when the old rules and resolutions were declared inapplicable.

Nevertheless, it remained possible to challenge the president's interpretation of rules.

It will be argued here that the politics of debate in the Union Societies took the shape of rule interpretation. The authority to interpret the rules was in both Union Societies vested primarily in the president. But, since the role of the president was not impartial and the rules were open to interpretation, their application in practice was a constant source of the politics of debate in the Union Societies. Due to the 'double capacity' of acting as head of the standing committee and as the main chair of debate, the president had considerable powers. As discussed in Section 2.2, the powers of the Speaker of the House of Commons had also become more explicit with the revision of procedure. The Speaker was used as counsel in the select committees in matters of procedural revision. In the Union Societies the president did not only provide counsel in questions of procedure, but was actively involved in the politics.

At the Oxford Union Society amendments, were subject to the discretionary powers of the president. The president could refuse to put an amendment or a rider¹²¹ to the vote if deeming it irrelevant to the motion (OUS rules 1839, 8). The reasons for such refusal were, therefore, contingent. At Cambridge, president Campbell announced before a debate that a previously elected member of a ballot committee had resigned, and he moved that Thrupp¹²² of Trinity College be appointed instead. The house gave the president its approval through a vote. Afterwards, an appeal signed by 147 members was presented to the society and claimed the election was invalid (CUS minute book vol. 13, 2 March 1847). The claim was based upon Law 56, which read: '*Notice of any motion except motions for adjournment, shall be placed upon the boards on or before the Thursday previous to the meeting at which it is to be discussed*' (CUS laws 1846, 7). Members who had signed the requisition argued that, according to the laws of the society, president Campbell should have given advance notice of the motion to elect Thrupp for the ballot committee. They also asked for 'the President to call a meeting, for the purpose of asserting the validity of that Law, and of electing a Member of Committee' (CUS minute book vol. 13, 2 March 1847). The argument was that it was the duty of the president to act according to the laws of the society and, by his actions, to validate them. It was intimated that the president had not acted according to the laws.

Campbell answered with a letter that was placed on the boards of the Society on 12 March:

On March the 2nd before the Debate I informed the Society that the Members of the Ballot Committee were even, and it became requisite, without delay, to obtain a New Member. I therefore requested the permission of the House to add Mr Thrupp of

¹²¹ The difference between an amendment and a rider is that an amendment is a motion which is intended to supersede the original motion, whereas a rider is an addition to any motion, whether an amendment or original motion.

¹²² Joseph Francis Thrupp (1827-1867) was educated at Winchester School and was admitted to Trinity College in 1845. He was elected President of the Union Society in 1848. He became a priest.

Trinity College, as the nomination of the Committee rests with the Member who proposes it. The permission thus asked at once was unanimously granted. I had felt that it involved some apparent irregularity (and the necessity itself was not one provided for) and invited any Members to object to it as I should have been disposed to yield to any symptoms of objection. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 12 March 1847)

By resorting to the rhetoric of expediency Campbell argued that there was a need to replace Thrupp without delay. And as he had proposed to appoint the ballot committee, it was his duty to nominate its members. However, such a duty was not mentioned in the laws of the society. Although it might have been an unwritten custom, the laws of the Cambridge Union Society had only three years previously been revised for the purpose of avoiding excessive interpretation. So it seemed unlikely that such broad interpretation was permitted.

The election of Thrupp had been, according to Campbell, a matter of urgency:

Gentlemen, by this means the Ballot Committee was put in a position to perform its duties, which otherwise it could not have been until the next private business meeting: so that no progress could have been made during the whole term. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 12 March 1847)

Campbell then turned to criticise the requisition as being itself a breach of the law: *'Such a requisition ought according to the Laws only be resorted to for the purpose of impugning a decision of the President on some point of order'* (CUS minute book vol. 13, 12 March 1847). Campbell was referring to Law 27, which stated: *'If a requisition of One Hundred Members, with their names and colleges subscribed, be presented to the President, it shall be incumbent on him to appoint an early day for a committee to inquire into the propriety of any of his decisions'* (CUS laws 1846, 4). The laws of the Union Society did not specify that a requisition was the means to address questions about points of order of the kind Campbell had referred to in his statement. In that sense the requisition was valid.

In the requisition Campbell had been accused of not giving due notice of his intentions to nominate Thrupp. Campbell turned the question around and accused the requisition of being not only against the law, but also a personal attack against himself:

Notwithstanding the pleasure I derive from at its debates, and the honour which in my opinion, such an office confers, engagements with other parties uninteresting to the House, and of a wholly different nature, are such as to prevent me from consenting, if it is avoidable, to become the cause or subject of a personal contention at the Private Business of the Society. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 12 March 1847)

Furthermore, Campbell suggested that 'personal contention' would negatively affect the society as a whole:

As another reason you will forgive me for reminding you that personal debates generally lead to scenes of disorder, which however disapproved by the majority, are more calculated to lower than to raise it (and the latter has been my constant object) the reputation of the Society. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 12 March 1847)

Rhetorically Campbell seems to suggest that the requisition was an attack on his character as well as that of the society as a whole. While engaging in the rhetoric of character, he seeks to persuade those who are concerned of the society's reputation. Campbell then informs the society of his request that Thrupp withdraw from the ballot committee. Campbell himself as well as the president of the previous term, Arthur Garfit,¹²³ also decided to withdraw in order to prevent the increasingly partisan atmosphere:

I have also to announce that Mr Garfit and myself feel ourselves justified in likewise retiring from it, as we now perceive the jealousy and party spirit it excited, and these are evils which we cannot hope to outweigh by any advantages to be derived from it. In this manner it has seemed to myself and the Gentlemen I have consulted that harmony will be restored to the Society, which as things now stand, is unfortunately suspended. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 12 March 1847)

By this political move of denouncing 'party spirit' Campbell both portrays himself as a proponent of 'harmony' and the ones who signed the requisition as those causing disruption. In his rhetoric the requisition had been against the laws and he had only acted in good faith to ensure the prosperity of the society.

On behalf of those who had signed the requisition Dacre¹²⁴ of Trinity College responded to Campbell's letter. His notice was publicly displayed on the boards of the society. He replied that the undersigned had consented to withdraw the demand that there should be a special business meeting arranged to discuss the matter. However, they would still bring forward the 'substance of the Requisition' in the next private business meeting. On 22 March 1847 Dacre, indeed, moved 'That this house considers the proceedings by which, on Tuesday March 2nd Mr Thrupp (Trin. Coll.) was appointed to serve on the Ballot Committee, to have been contrary to Law 56 and subsequently invalid'. The motion was, however, withdrawn, most probably due to lack of support (CUS minute book vol. 13, 22 March 1847).

In the first meeting of Easter term 1847 Dacre returned to the issue. The meeting was not well attended and, therefore, new office holders were not elected. However, Dacre's motion 'That the appointment of any Member to serve on a Committee is always subject to Law 56, as involving a Motion' was carried by the majority of members present. This undoubtedly prompted Campbell to arrange a special private business meeting on 26 April 1847. The secretary, Edward Prest¹²⁵ of St. John's College, proposed

To amend and alter the Law 56 to the following "Notice of any motion, except Motions for adjournment, or for the suspension of any Law, or for leave to withdraw any motion or amendment, shall be placed upon the boards on, or before, the Thurs-

¹²³ Arthur Garfit (b. unknown-1884) entered Trinity College in 1843. He became a priest.

¹²⁴ Joseph Dacre (b. unknown-1868) was educated at Rugby School and admitted to Trinity College in 1843. He was called to the bar in 1854 and subsequently became a magistrate for Cumberland.

¹²⁵ Edward Prest (1824-1882) was educated at Uppingham and admitted at St. John's College in 1843. He became a priest.

day previous to the Meeting at which it is to be discussed". (CUS minute book vol. 14, 26 April 1847)

The motion was subsequently carried. It appears likely that Law 56 was revised in order to counter Dacre's motion, which had carried one week before. The intention most probably was to make the law as explicit as possible for the sake of its application and in order to limit the president's interpretive latitude.

Thorough revision and writing down of the rules failed to resolve the issue of interpretation at Oxford, too. For instance, the distinction between public and private business meetings that during Easter term 1856 had been established became a matter of interpretation. The question was important in the sense that the rules regarding the different types of meetings were ambiguous. It was, therefore, possible to use the rules of debate and meeting venue for one's own political purposes if a member was able to persuade others to shift the proceedings to a more advantageous type of meeting.

On 10 November 1856 Wetherell¹²⁶ of Brasenose College moved for an adjournment of debate in a public business meeting because he wanted 'to make a statement in a matter strictly personal to himself' (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 10 November 1856). The treasurer, Bennet¹²⁷ of University College, rose on a point of order to ask whether there were precedents in the minute books of similar situations. The president, Oakley¹²⁸ of Brasenose College, did not mention any but answered that a member was permitted to introduce a subject of debate on a motion of adjournment. Adjournments as well as points of order could be moved without notice by any member during public debates. However, the rule already included a limitation that president Oakley did not mention: '*No speaker on any such motion for adjournment shall introduce any matter not bearing solely on the question for adjournment or conduct of the meeting*' (OUS rules 1856, 41). In short, the decision to allow Wetherell to speak can be seen as entirely an interpretation on the president's part of the rules related to public business meetings.

Davey¹²⁹ of University College, then, enquired whether the present meeting was to be considered public or private:

For if it were one on Public Business the discussion in hand was injurious to the interests of the Debates of the Society, and, if Private Business, how it could be introduced on a Public Business night? (Davey: OUS minute book vol. VIII, 10 November 1856)

President Oakley decided that a public business night that was interrupted as it was, by the adjournment of Wetherell, became private business. However,

¹²⁶ Thomas Frederick Wetherell (1831-1908) became a civil servant and a journalist. He served as a clerk in the War Office in 1856-1878 and, in early 1859, acted as editor of the *Weekly Register* run by Henry Wilberforce, a fellow Catholic convert.

¹²⁷ Edward Kedington Bennet (b? 1834-1890) became a priest and in 1885 rector of Bunwell, Norfolk.

¹²⁸ John Oakley (1834-1890) had been the secretary of the revising committee. During his later career he became Dean of Carlisle.

¹²⁹ Horace Davey (1833-1907) became a judge and was elected a Liberal MP 1880-1885 and 1888-1892.

treasurer Bennet persisted in arguing that Wetherell's motion of adjournment had been a breach of order. President Oakley insisted that Wetherell continue and explain his reason for moving adjournment. Bennet rose on a point of order again and asked Oakley to consider the standing rule that, on a meeting for public business, no private business was allowed to be introduced (cf. OUS rules 1856, 39-40). Oakley refused and 'ruled that the Honourable Member had not transgressed the Rules of the Society' (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 10 November 1856). This incident shows how the president's authority to interpret the rules could be challenged by a member of the standing committee. However, it seems to have been done in vain, as other members of the standing committee could not challenge the president's position as the 'Speaker' of the house.

But in a private business meeting on 2 December, treasurer Bennet proposed a motion:

That in Rule LXIII,¹³⁰ after the words "all other speakers" the following to be added "But no Speaker on any motion for adjournment shall introduce any matter not bearing solely on the question of adjournment". (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 2 December 1856)

It seems that with this motion Bennet was seeking to prevent the president from making multiple interpretations of the same rule. At Oxford, unlike Cambridge, references to past precedents had not been prohibited. If one wanted to challenge the authority of the president, it was best conducted through passing resolutions that would complicate the president's future interpretations.

Bennet's motion in itself indicates that there were differing opinions inside the committee, since the motion was presented by him individually. Members who wished to propose motions of their own were referred to as 'private members' for the first time in the rules of 1856:

LXXIII. Private Members must give notice of all Motions to be discussed at such Meetings at the least Four Days previous to the Meeting; but Motions recommended by the Standing, Library, and Select Committees, provided that they do not affect any Rule or Standing Order, may be discussed without notice, and shall take precedence of all other Private Business. All such Motions shall, however, be announced to the House by the President immediately before the commencement of the Business of the evening. (OUS rules 1856, 44)

The rule implies a distinction between the standing committee and the other members. Generally, Union Society motions recommended by standing committees took precedence over those suggested by individual members and were

¹³⁰ 'LXIII. Amendments on such Motions [referring to motions that have been announced beforehand in writing], or Riders to such Motions or Amendments, may be moved without notice in the course of the Debate; and at any time during the Meeting any Member may bring forward a Motion which has reference solely to the Conduct or Adjournment of the then Meeting, and the Mover of such Motion shall have precedence of all other speakers.' (OUS rules 1856, 40-41)

discussed without prior notice.¹³¹ These were all characteristics of cabinet government that had been adopted from the House of Commons.

Wetherell had used the motion of adjournment as an occasion to discuss a matter that had not been announced beforehand. President Oakley had taken the liberty of interpreting the motion of adjournment as an occasion where a public business meeting could be turned into a private one. At that moment the president used his discretionary powers as 'Speaker' to perform a political act: he interpreted the rules for the benefit of a member instead of for the whole house. In contrast, the Speaker of the House of Commons has traditionally been considered as a servant of the House, and the House vests its authority in the Speaker (Laundy 1964, 67). The Speaker has, therefore, powers that he uses on behalf of the House. President Oakley, however, had ignored the multiple points of order that Bennet had raised and decided to interpret the rules for his own purposes. In this manner, he acted politically.

By proposing the addition to the existing rule Bennet's intention was to minimise the potential for any similar incidents that could interrupt debates. Byrth¹³² of Brasenose College, who had opposed Wetherell's motion in the earlier debate, also moved now for an amendment to Bennet's motion: '*But no speaker on any such motion for adjournment shall introduce any matter not bearing solely on the question of adjournment or conduct of the then meeting*' (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 2 December 1856). The amendment shows Byrth trying to prevent motions of adjournment from being used as occasions for speaking on other subjects than proposed in the original motion. It is noteworthy that similar problems had been addressed in the procedural revisions of the House of Commons since 1848 (see Section 2.2).

After a long discussion for and against Byrth's amendment, the house voted by division on it. President Oakley declared Byrth's amendment defeated by majority of one. However, a claim was made of 'an informality in the taking of the numbers' (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 2 December 1856), though the rules of the society had previously recognised some degree of 'informality' in elections since 1843. After the revision work done by the committee, the rule now stood:

¹³¹ See also the Cambridge Union Society's rule in Chapter XII. §2. : '*Notices of motions must be given into the Clerk's office before five p.m. on the third day previous to that on which they are to be discussed; except such motions as shall be proposed in the Standing Committee*' (CUS laws 1859, 13). The House of Commons had certain weekdays for handling government business. The so-called order days were constituted already in the seventeenth century, but their significance grew over the course of the nineteenth century. From 1806 onwards the House began reserving one to two weekdays for the business of government, which prioritised governmental 'orders of the day'. This custom led to the notion that the government's duty was to 'lead the House' (Redlich 1908a, 70-71). Additionally, some motions were dealt with unannounced if they were unopposed, such as questions of privilege and motions concerning unexpected contingencies (May 1844, 169).

¹³² Henry Stewart Byrth (1831-1895), B.A. 1854, M.A. 1856, was ordained a priest.

XXXII. In any case of Informality, whether of Division or Election (of Officers or Members), the President shall annul such Division or Election, and shall post a notice, at the furthest within forty-eight hours, to the effect that such Division or Election shall be brought again before the Society at their next Meeting. (OUS rules 1856, 29)

President Oakley, accordingly, decided 'That on account of the informality declared he should act upon Rule XXXII and ensure, by the entry on the minutes the introduction of the subject on the next Public Business night' (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 2 December 1856). It seems that the rule relating to informality was intended to prevent the president from making decisions in haste. It provided yet another tool for members to postpone resolutions and to continue debates that otherwise would have been stopped by a president's decision.

The matter was raised again on 8 December when Byrth proposed an amendment very similar to the one he had suggested before:

That the following words be added in Rule 63, after the words "all other speakers,"; "That no speaker, on any such motion for adjournment, shall introduce any matter not bearing solely on the question of adjournment or conduct of the meeting." (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 8 December 1856)

This time the amendment was carried by a clear majority. The rule concerning informality could potentially be used in a similar manner as polls in the Cambridge Union Society. However, no reason for proposing a poll was needed. Polls had been permitted by presidents of the Cambridge Union Society already before October term 1848, when they were inscribed in the laws for the first time: '§7. *It shall be competent for any Member to demand a poll on any motion in Private Business; but the President shall have a discretionary power to grant it*' (CUS laws 1848 October, 18). Whereas the president could also refuse a poll, it was not possible in the case of suggested 'informality'.

It seems that the Cambridge Union Society was now concentrating on revising the rules with more precision than previously. The practice became more common after the public business meetings of the society started to become better attended. According to the reports of secretaries of October term 1847 and Lent term 1848, the number of speakers at the debates was growing and interest in them had grown (CUS minute book vol. 14). The rules of debate were amended in a manner that enhanced the predictability of the proceedings. For example, in 1849 the society introduced a law according to which any member who wished to speak in opposition to a debate topic could place his name on the boards of the society (CUS minute book vol. 14, 19 November 1849). This change suggested that the order of speaking in debates was decided already before the meetings took place.

Whereas at Oxford, challenging a president's interpretations was primarily done by preventing precedence-setting resolutions, in the Cambridge Union Society the aim was to limit interpretation as to the formulation of the rules. At Cambridge, since the rules were so precise, the way to bend the rules of debate was sought from suspension of a rule. The rule regarding suspension had existed for a long time in the laws of the society. But since 1853 the use of suspension became reserved for standing committee members only (see CUS laws 1853,

14). Its use required the concurrence of three-fourths of the members present. Before these new restrictions took place, the law had been used by both standing committee members (the president included) as well as other members of the society. On 22 February 1850 president Louis¹³³ of Trinity College had called a special private business meeting to discuss issues involving a committee that had been appointed to examine certain matters pertaining to the society. However, one of the members questioned whether members had been duly notified of the meeting:

A question was raised by an honourable Member as to the legality of the meeting; on the ground, first, that the President (or in his place the Treasurer, or Secretary) had no power to call a special meeting without first consulting the society. Secondly, that due notice of the meeting had not been given, and that therefore the meeting was not competent to transact any business. (CUS minute book vol. 15, 22 February 1850)

This unnamed member argued that the president did not have the right to call a special meeting without the consent of the society. The member was politicising the president's right to call special meetings by claiming that such could not be done without first consulting the society on the matter. The president reacted by overruling the first objection. The member then moved suspension of the law that required a three days' notice for any special meeting. It was declined on an argument from other members that the present meeting was not 'competent to entertain the question' (CUS minute book vol. 15, 22 February 1850). President Louis, however, decided that the meeting should vote on the suspension of the law 'in order to legalise its proceedings'. The motion was then put 'That the law requiring three days' notice to be given be suspended' (ibid.). The motion required a majority of three fourths to be passed. The motion of suspension of the law did not get the required majority. President Louis' insistence on allowing the vote in order to legalise the proceedings caused the entire meeting to dissolve. It thus seems that this anonymous member who decided to politicise the calling of the meeting actually won the argument, with the help of procedure. After this incident another law was added:

The President (or his Deputy) shall have the power of calling a Special Meeting of the Society, at any time, on giving three days' notice; or less if necessary; but in the latter case, it shall be submitted to the Meeting before any business is transacted, to decide, whether the emergency justified the omission of the usual notice. (CUS laws 1850, 5)

Although it seems that the members of Cambridge Union Society used means other than preventing precedents when they wanted to challenge a president's decisions, there is at least this one exception. As explained above, at Cambridge the president's decisions could be appealed in the form of a requisition signed by a certain number of members. The requisition could be put at any time during or after a president's term in office. If enough members had signed the req-

¹³³ Alfred Hyman Louis (1829-d. unknown) was named as the first Jewish president of the society. Louis was called to the bar in 1855 and was one of the editors of the *Spectator*.

quisition, the president was obliged to call a special meeting where the issue was debated in the form of a Committee of the whole House. This was also the case in February 1873, when the society was given a notice of a special meeting:

In compliance with a requisition signed by 150 members the President appoint a special meeting to be held on Monday February 17th 1873 at 7 P.M. when the House will go into Committee in order to consider the propriety of a decision given by the President on the evening of 26th May 1847. (CUS minute book vol. 20, 13 February 1873)

The requisition concerned a decision made by a former president in a private business meeting held 26 years earlier. It was a very unusual incident, unprecedented in the society's history: the incumbent president was asked to call a special meeting in order to inquire into a decision made by one of his predecessors. The requisition was formulated as follows:

That whereas on Wednesday 26th May 1847 the laws of the society prescribed that any motion to alter an existing law should require the concurrence of three-fourths of those present and that no such motion could be carried save in a house consisting of at least 40 members, and whereas the then President did on that evening declare such a motion carried which was supported by only 28 votes. We the undersigned request the President to appoint a day for a Committee of the Whole House to consider the legality of that decision. (CUS minute book vol. 20, 13 February 1873)

The president in question had been John Llewellyn Davies of Trinity College and the matter in question was related to a division that had taken place after a motion to alter an existing law, which had recently been debated. It was suggested that the manner of passing the alteration of the law was illegal.

The requisition was dealt with in a special meeting on 17 February 1873. First, the president, Frederick W. Maitland¹³⁴ of Trinity College, read the requisition and the names attached to it. Then a chair was appointed, even though in this case the president in office was not the one under examination. This shows how far the rules were adhered to. A committee chair would usually have been someone who was considered to have no attachment to either side of the case.¹³⁵ In this case, Henry Jackson¹³⁶ of Trinity College, a former president himself, was proposed and accepted as the chair.

On behalf of Childers¹³⁷ of Trinity College, Moulton¹³⁸ of Christ's College opened the debate in question. An amendment was then proposed by Matheson¹³⁹ of Trinity College:

¹³⁴ Frederic William Maitland (1850-1906) became a lawyer and England's greatest historian of law. He was elected Downing Professor of the Laws of England in 1888 after having practised as a Reader in English law at Cambridge since 1884.

¹³⁵ As an example, a chair of the Committee of the whole House was usually a professor or other visitor specifically called to the meeting.

¹³⁶ Henry Jackson (1839-1921) had been a president of the Union in 1864. He was chosen probably due to his seniority and his experience in office. He was a Fellow of Trinity College at the time.

¹³⁷ Charles Edward Eardley Childers (1851-1931) was educated at Eton. After matriculating at Trinity College in 1869 he was admitted at the Inner Temple in 1871. He was called to the bar in 1874.

That all after the second "whereas" be omitted, and the following substituted: "for reasons communicated to the Society the President did decide that such a motion having received the support of three fourths of those voting in a house of more than forty members was carried; and whereas the said decision was sanctioned by a Committee of the whole house, has since remained unquestioned and has been acted upon by the officers of this Society for more than a quarter of a century, this house declines to reverse the decision of the said previous committee of the whole house." (CUS minute book vol. 20, 17 February 1873)

In short, Matheson argued that the decision made by president Davies had become a valid precedent, as it had been approved by a committee of the whole house. He argued that the precedent-setting decision should not be reversed since it had been referred to as a rule for over a quarter of a century and had already been accepted as a resolution of the house.

It was reported in the minute book of the society that the debate on the precedent lasted for three hours and twenty minutes in total, and after 'animated discussion' the house voted against the amendment. The original motion was then also put to a vote and was passed by a clear margin, with 323 votes for and 59 against the motion.

On 4 February 1858 the Oxford Union Society debated on the use of precedents with a reference to the House of Commons. Scott¹⁴⁰ of Brasenose College had made an appeal against an acting president, treasurer Bowen.¹⁴¹ He insisted that Bowen should have not made the decision 'That it is illegal for a member in moving the adjournment of a Debate to specify the Time to which he wishes such Debate to be adjourned' (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 4 February 1858), because the precedent of the House of Commons' practice was that debates were adjourned for six months. Bowen, former president Halcomb¹⁴² and the president in office, Fowle¹⁴³ of Oriel College, all 'contradicted the fact & denied the analogy between the 2 case' (OUS minute book vol. VIII, 4 February 1858). They argued that 'it was not the Debate but the Reading of the Bill that was so adjourned, and the effect was merely to put off the question that session' (ibid.). It seems that, here, the former presidents interpreted the rules of the House of Commons as supporting Bowen against Scott.

¹³⁸ John Fletcher Moulton (1844-1921) was a Fellow of Christ's College at the time. He was also Lecturer in Mathematics and assistant tutor. During his long career, he became not only a barrister and Fellow of the Royal Society, but also a Liberal Party member of Parliament and Judge of the Court of Appeal. He was created a life peer as Lord Moulton of Bank in 1912.

¹³⁹ Donald Matheson (1852-1930) had been educated at Harrow. He also studied in Tübingen and New College of Edinburgh. During his career he entered the Ministry of the Presbyterian Church.

¹⁴⁰ George Philip William Scott (1834-1876), B.A. 1857, M.A. 1860, became a priest.

¹⁴¹ Charles Synge Christopher Bowen (1835-1894) was elected the President of the Oxford Union Society the following term. He was Fellow of Balliol College in 1858. He pursued a career in law and became a judge.

¹⁴² Thomas Robert Halcomb (1833-1880), B.A. 1856, M.A. 1858, was elected Fellow of Lincoln College 1860-1880.

¹⁴³ Thomas Welbank Fowle (1835-1903) entered Oriel College as a scholar in 1854. He was a vicar of St. Luke in London 1868-1875 and rector of Islip, Oxfordshire, from 1881 to 1901.

5.3 Political interpretations of the rules in the Union Societies

In this chapter it has been argued that the Union Societies adopted and adapted to their own purposes some contemporary characteristics of the government of the British Parliament. Although the Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies were in contact with each other (which makes their debate practices comparable), there were differences in their adoptions of parliamentary practices and ways of interpreting the rules. For one example, the rules of the Cambridge Union Society were carefully renamed as ‘laws’. The change was deliberate and it was rhetorically used for the purposes of institutionalising the society’s organisation.

The private business meetings of the Union Societies analysed in this chapter seem to have included the use of some of the same rhetorical *topoi* that were present in the public debates. The rhetoric of expediency, for example, not only appeared in connection with the establishment of the laws of the Cambridge Union Society, but also in the Oxford Union Society’s discussions about publishing its rules. In private business meetings ‘expediency’ seems to have been used in the legitimisation of new practices that would ensure the managerial and financial stability and efficiency of the societies.

The revision of the rules together with the growing powers of the presidents was a source of the politics of debate in the Union Societies. The president’s role was strengthened with the introduction of standing committees in both Union Societies. The societies vested all the official powers to interpret the rules in their presidents, who functioned as the ‘Speakers’ of the debates, both in the public and the private business meetings. These presidents tended to have a more political role than the Speakers of the House of Commons. Although the House of Commons Speakers functioned impartially by the mid-century, the presidents of the Union Societies were still politically active. The double capacity in which Union presidents served created political conflicts inside the Union Societies, which were manifested in the private business meetings as competing interpretations of the rules.

In the records of the Union Societies, the challenges to presidents’ interpretations were never explicitly mentioned as ‘political’. However, a rhetorical reading of the minutes reveals that the political aspects of the debates tended to be based on competing portrayals of the meanings of rules. Decisions of the president were challenged with alternative interpretations of the rules as well as by proposing new rules to limit the president’s exercise of discretionary powers. In the Oxford Union Society the tendency was to hinder the president from making decisions that would become precedents. This was meant to ensure that the presidency would not gain more powers than it already had. At Cambridge the validity of the rules and precedents made before 1845 was terminated. In addition, the laws of the Cambridge society tended to be more precise in their formulation in an attempt to minimise the use of precedents by the president.

6 CONCLUSION

In previous studies the political significance of the Union Societies has been overlooked either because their parliamentary connection was considered obvious or because their activities seemed to have little bearing on the furtherance of democratic principles in a political culture. Meisel (2001, 21) has argued that the Union Societies, since they could not fully reproduce the House of Commons' procedure, cannot be considered in parliamentary terms. Although he acknowledges the parliamentary characteristics of the societies, he seems to suggest that the only reason why we cannot consider the Union Societies as parliamentary bodies is the fact that they did not legislate. In his view the Union Societies were mere debating societies without any other 'real effect' to national political culture (ibid. 26).

Instead of concentrating on the effects of the Union Societies it has been my intention to place them in the parliamentary culture of debating of their time, which I consider to be their primary context of political activity. While Meisel underlined that parliamentary politics differs from the politics of the Union Societies, rather than treating this as an indication of deficiency on the part of the societies, I have suggested that we should consider the Union Societies as independent political arenas with parliamentary characteristics. I have argued that the Union Societies adopted parliamentary procedure as the framework of their own political activity, which, ultimately, constitutes them as parliamentary bodies. In the beginning of this study I described parliamentary business as consisting of a series of motions. This description underscores the fact that parliamentary debates would not be possible without motions. They are the fundamental units of political activity in a parliamentary body. My thesis is based on the idea that we should follow, firstly, how the motions are formulated, and secondly, how they are debated, in order to understand the political activity that is guided by parliamentary procedure. The primary aim of this study was to find out the extent to which parliamentary procedure defined the political activity of the nineteenth-century Union Societies. To this end, I chose to examine the politics of the Union Societies from two distinct angles: the politics of agenda and the politics of debate. Both are based in the idea that

motions should be regarded as the fundamental building blocks of parliamentary political activity. The agenda aspect refers to the formulation of motions, the debate aspect to the conduct of the business that is based on the forms and motions.

The formulation of motions was treated in Chapter 4 and the Union Society public business meetings were used as primary sources. The analysis concentrated on four rhetorical *topoi* used in the motions: 'vote of confidence', 'character', 'principle' and 'expediency'. These were treated as interrelated rhetorical categories that constituted the politics of agenda. Based on the analysis I argued that the formulations of motions in the Union Societies were connected with the national politics as well as the political thought of the time. Even though some of the Union Society motions could not have been presented in the House of Commons (e.g. 'That the French Revolution of 1789 was justifiable, and has conferred the greatest benefits on mankind'), the political nature of the Union Societies was made clear through the rhetorical reading of the *topoi*. It was shown that the formulations of the motions indicated political conflicts on a variety of issues. The topics of the public debates were becoming bolder in their connection with daily politics. They show that the Union Societies were starting to debate with the intention of making public statements.

In Chapter 5 the focus of the analysis was on the proceedings used in the Union Societies' private business meetings. It was argued that the politics of debate, as seen in the conduct of the meetings, was based on a revision and interpretation of the rules that were part of the parliamentary politics of the time. Once the Union Societies started to revise their own rules, the role of the president grew in significance and the politics of debate took a form whereby it employed procedure as a rhetorical resource. Most of the interpretations of the rules were used to challenge the president's authority and decisions. The rhetorical reading revealed that the rules were interpreted for political purposes, even by the president. Presidents of the Union Societies, therefore, were not expected to be as impartial as was becoming the practice with the Speaker of the House of Commons. What this suggests is that while members of the Union Societies decided to adopt some of the rules and practices of the House of Commons, they did not imitate them to the letter. This seems to have been a deliberate choice.

At first glance, the politics related to the agenda-setting of the public debates appeared to be separate from the politics of debate of the private business meetings. This is because the two were kept separate by the Societies themselves. However, with a rhetorical reading of the proceedings, one can see that both had common deliberative characteristics. Members tended to make use of the same rhetorical *topoi* of the public business meetings while arguing for their own interpretations of the rules in the private meetings. For instance, the *topos* of vote of confidence was also used in challenges to the president's authority in the private meetings. In the debate on Chase's motion (see ch. 5, p. 127-130), an appeal against a former president was proposed by Chase through using a vote of censure. Chase interpreted the rules in a manner benefitting

himself while rhetorically portraying them as justifying the vote of censure for the common welfare of the society. However, it seems that he was unable to persuade the audience to support his appeal.

In the private business meetings the rhetorical strategies tended to revolve around interpretation of procedure. Interpretations were proposed that challenged those of the president. In the Oxford Union Society, interpretations of precedents were commonplace, whereas at Cambridge it was more the practice to prevent interpretation of the rules. Cambridge's means of doing this was to make the rules as explicit as possible. In the case of President Campbell (see ch. 5, p. 131-133), for instance, a law limiting the election of committee members was added due to the politics the question had raised.

The interpretation of rules is the basis of the politics of debate in the Union Societies. In light of British parliamentary politics, this comes as no surprise, as it is the procedure that underlies its legitimacy. The suggestion in parliamentary procedure manuals, most clearly in those of May, is that interpretation of the rules of debate was the cause of the procedural revision in the House of Commons as well.

I began this study with a discussion of the House of Commons' revision of procedure that took place after the 1832 parliamentary reform. Traditionally, Parliament's role in British political culture has been very substantial. In terms of the parliamentary culture of debate, the critical point arose in the eighteenth century when Westminster faced demands for the publishing of its proceedings. In considering the extent to which the Union Societies adopted parliamentary aspects, we should not only take into account how Parliament modified its traditions and customs in order to accommodate to the demands for publicity and reform, but also how the Union Societies situated themselves in the context of the parliamentary culture of debate. Such thinking motivates the elaboration in Chapter 3 of the British parliamentary culture of debate, which I consider to be the framework of the political activities of the Union Societies.

As keen observers of the parliamentary affairs of their time, the members of the Union Societies were informed about political developments in the House of Commons. They made explicit references to the House of Commons' procedure in their private business meetings. The adoption of parliamentary procedure was conducive to the quick learning how business was conducted in the House of Commons. It directed their attention to the rules and how they could be interpreted. This knowledge led to a greater awareness of how the rules could be used as a political tool in the Union Society, or indeed, in any deliberative body.

In parliamentary bodies such as the nineteenth-century Union Societies the members are all aware of the possibilities inherent in having the shared rules. The rules of debate are part of the politics because, though they apply to everyone equally, the process whereby they are amended, revised and adjusted for practical purposes is often marked by divisiveness. What makes the debates analysed here so valuable for further political studies is that they show the significance of understanding procedure. By studying the process of revising

the rules, one gets a sense of what kind of political purposes they were originally meant for. In addition, by recognising the significance of procedure and the uses to which it has been put in the past, scholars as well as parliamentarians may become better aware of its potential political uses.

But the Union Societies did not remain the only 'training grounds' for parliamentarians, as a number of parliamentary debating societies appeared in the 1880s. The political parties also became more organised. By the end of the Second World War the parliamentary political culture of debating, which had been so specific to nineteenth-century British politics, was challenged by new political ideas. Whether the Union Societies had to reinvent themselves once the voting rights were further extended and the universities became more open for students of different backgrounds are matters for another study. Based on the findings of this study, I would say that the politics of the nineteenth-century Union Societies shows that, in parliamentary democracies, procedure has not received the attention it deserves. It is still a fundamental part of democratic politics, even though it was not designed for that purpose.

What I have tried to achieve here is to enhance awareness of the significance of procedure, not only as a tool for parliamentary politics, but in a wider sense. In the field of parliamentary research, an emphasis on procedure would raise political conflicts to the foreground. Procedure highlights political activity, because without it, there would be little legitimacy to parliamentary decisions. But, however perfect a set of rules may be, they do not themselves guarantee the anticipated results. At the end of the day, whether we want to call it parliamentary or democratic politics, politics of a state or politics of a debating society, it is politics nonetheless. Parliamentary procedure does not eliminate the contingency of political activity. Furthermore, although it is obvious that the forms of proceeding of the nineteenth-century Union Societies do not exist anywhere else, this does not alter the fact that it is precisely because of the forms they (as well as the Westminster Parliament) employed that the politics of our present-day parliamentary democracies are considered legitimate.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan 1800-luvun Cambridgen ja Oxfordin Unionidebattiyhdistysten yhteyksiä Britannian parlamentaariseen debattikulttuuriin, joka muodostui vuoden 1832 reformin jälkeisenä aikana. Tavoitteena on myös asettaa kyseiset yhdistykset laajempaan brittiläiseen debattiyhdistysten traditioon. Vaikka Unionit on nähty 1800-luvun loppupuolelta lähtien osana parlamentaarista politiikkaa, niiden varsinaisia debattikäytäntöjä ei ole tähän mennessä tutkittu. Tämän tutkimuksen lähtökohtana olikin tarkastella niitä siitä näkökulmasta, kuinka ja miten pitkälle parlamentaarisia menettelytapoja hyödynnettiin yhdistyksissä.

Tutkimuksessa korostetaan parlamentin ja debattiyhdistysten välisten keskinäisten yhteyksien muodostumista. Parlamentaarisen debattimuodon leviäminen mahdollistui 1700-luvun jälkipuoliskolta lähtien, jolloin brittiparlamentin alahuoneessa käydyt puheenvuorot tulivat vähitellen julkisiksi. Unioneja tarkastellaan itsenäisinä parlamentaarisen politiikan tiloina, joissa parlamenttiviitteitä ja terminologiaa hyödynnettiin omiin poliittisiin tarkoituksiin.

Parlamenttipuheen poliittinen merkitys muuttui 1830-luvulta lähtien. Aiemmin tärkeimmät linjapuheet oli jätetty harvoille ja valituille parlamentaari-koille. Heidän puheensa nähtiin vielä 1800-luvun alkupuoliskolla osoituksena brittiläisen puhetaidon kulta-ajasta. Tällainen ajattelutapa oli yleistä kirjallisuudessa, jossa keskityttiin parlamentaarikoiden puheiden arviointiin erillään niiden poliittisesta asiayhteydestä. Vuoden 1832 reformin jälkeisenä aikana parlamenttidebattien poliittisuus alkoi olla jo ilmeistä. Kun alahuoneen perustuslaillinen merkitys vahvistui, myös puheen rooli kasvoi. Debatteihin osallistumisesta tulikin tärkeä osa parlamentaarista edustusta. Tämä vaikutti myös siihen, että parlamentaarisiin menettelytapoihin kohdistui muutospaineita. Vuodesta 1837 lähtien parlamentti perusti lukuisia erikoisvaliokuntia ('select committees') selvittämään menettelyjen tehostamismahdollisuuksia. Menettelytavoista muodostui ensin poliittinen väline ala- ja ylähuoneen perustuslaillisissa kamppailuissa, mutta ne eivät johtaneet suuriin muutoksiin.

Verrattaessa Unionien debattikäytäntöjä niiden alkuvuosina ja myöhemmissä vaiheissa voidaan päätellä, miten brittiparlamentin alahuoneen merkityksen kasvu vaikutti poliittiseen kulttuuriin konkreettisin tavoin. Yhdistykset perustettiin Ranskan vastaisten sotien jälkeen, jolloin debattiyhdistysten maine oli Britanniassa huono. Monien yhdistysten epäiltiin olevan vallankumouksellisen toiminnan väyliä. Vasta ensimmäisen parlamenttireformin toteuduttua vuonna 1832 yhdistystoiminta vähitellen vapautui epäilyistä. Cambridgen ja Oxfordin Unionidebattiyhdistyksissä tämä näkyi muun muassa siinä, miten debattien aiheet alkoivat olla entistä näkyvämmiin poliittisia. Kun aiemmin yliopistot olivat puuttuneet yhdistysten aihevalintoihin, Unionit saivat nyt vapaasti päättää tapaamistensa sisällöstä. Unionit omaksuivat myös piirteitä hallituspolitiikasta sekä menettelytapojen uudistamisesta, joista oli samanaikaisesti muodostunut tunnusomaisia Britannian alahuoneelle. Debattiyhdistysten poliittinen toiminta alettiin 1800-luvun lopulla nähdä yhteydessä parlamenttiin.

Väitettiin, että merkittävä osa parlamentin jäsenistä oli Unionien entisiä jäseniä 1890-luvulle tultaessa. Näihin aikoihin Iso-Britanniassa oli myös toiminnassa niin kutsuttuja parlamentaarisia debattiyhdistyksiä. Näitä yhdistyksiä oli noin sata ja niiden tuhannet jäsenet osallistuivat tapaamisiin, joissa jäljiteltiin alahuoneen toimintaa tarkasti sen menettelytapoineen, rituaaleineen ja puoluepoliittisine jakoineen. Jäsenistöön kuului parlamentaarikoiden ja paikallishallinnon edustajien lisäksi rivikansalaisia. Toiminnan tavoitteena ei ollut ainoastaan imitoida alahuoneen poliittisia valtasuhteita, vaan taata tasa-arvoiset mahdollisuudet ymmärtää ja oppia parlamentaarista menettelyä.

Unionit olivat parlamentaaristen menettelytapojen edelläkävijöitä, sillä parlamentin alahuoneen korostunut merkitys näkyi sen omissa menettelytavoissa jo vuosisadan puolivälissä. Erityisenä piirteenä näyttäytyy se, miten niissä alettiin omaksua puolesta ja vastaan puhuminen esitysten pohjalta. Tutkimuksen analyysin lähtökohtana onkin ollut itävaltalaisen juristin Josef Redlichin (1869-1936) ajatus siitä, että Westminsterin kaltaisen parlamentaarisen instituution päätavoitteena ei ole tehdä lakeja, vaan debatoita esitysten pohjalta tiettyjen sääntöjen mukaisesti. Käsitelyssä korostuu se, että myös debattiyhdistykset voidaan nähdä parlamentaarisina instituutioina, jos ne täyttävät edellä mainitut tavoitteet.

Analysoin Unionidebattiyhdistysten poliittista toimintaa kahdesta näkökulmasta: esityslistan politiikan ja debatoinnin politiikan kautta. Esityslistan politiikan kohdalla tutkin, miten esityksiä laadittiin ja miten ne muotoiltiin. Debatoinnin politiikassa kiinnitin huomiota erityisesti siihen, miten sääntöjä käytettiin politiikan välineenä. Retorisen luentatavan avulla löysin yhdistysten pöytäkirjamerkinnoista toistuvia retorisia ilmaisuja. Esityslistan politiikan analysoinnin yhteydessä tyypittelin ne neljään eri kategoriaan: 'vote of confidence' (luottamuslauseäänestys), 'principle' (periaate), 'character' (maine, olemus) ja 'expediency' (tarkoituksenmukaisuus). Kyseiset retoriset kategoriat eivät aina sulkeneet toisiaan pois, vaan ne saattoivat esiintyä jopa samassa esitysformulaatiossa. Niitä saattoi myös lukea debatoinnin politiikassa, jossa keskeisenä piirteenä oli sääntöjen muuttaminen ja yhdistysten puheenjohtajan päätösten kyseenalaistaminen.

Unionien politiikassa keskeisessä roolissa olevat yhdistysten puheenjohtajat toimivat kahdessa ominaisuudessa, sekä yhdistysten hallitusten puheenjohtajina että debattien puhemiehinä. Kun 1850-luvulle tultaessa alahuoneen puhemiehen asema oli muodostunut ehdottoman puolueettomaksi, Unioneissa puhemiehet olivat henkilöitä, joilla oli varsin poliittinen rooli. Tämä ero väritti Unionien politiikkaa ja teki siitä niille ominaista. Voidaankin sanoa, että parlamentaarisen kulttuurin leviäminen debatoitinkäytäntöjen kautta ei määrittänyt itse politiikkaa, vaan Unionien poliittinen toiminta oli itsenäistä ja luovaa suhteessa Iso-Britannian parlamenttiin.

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APPENDIX 1: PUBLIC BUSINESS OF THE CAMBRIDGE UNION SOCIETY

The following is a list of debate topics presented at public business meetings of the Cambridge Union Society from Lent term 1830 to Easter term 1870. The list is not exhaustive, as there are some gaps in the surviving records. In the entries I have included the date, the formulation of the debate topic, as well as the names of those who proposed the motions. Additionally, I have noted down the opener of the debate only in cases where the proposer of debate did not also open the debate. Proposers of amendments and adjournments are named whenever they appeared. If a motion of adjournment was passed in a meeting and the debate topic remained the same in the following meeting, I have marked it "(adjourned debate) same as above".

1830

Lent Term:

February 9: Is the Principle of the Salique Law worthy of adoption in Hereditary Monarchies? (motion: Morrison)

February 16: Has the Increase of Education been productive of an Increase of Crime? (motion: Law)

February 23: Is it expedient that a restraint should be placed upon the Public Press in a free Country? (motion: Roberts)

March 2: Is a Severe Code of Laws, executed with lenity, or a Lenient Code with severity preferable? (motion: Matthew)

March 9: Would it have enhanced the glory or welfare of England to have substituted in the year 1810, a Republican form of Government for that virtually established in these Dominions? (motion: Symons)

March 15: Was the Union with Ireland in 1800, a justifiable measure, or conducive to the welfare of that Country? (motion: Warburton)

March 23: Is a Taste for Oratory desirable? (motion: Carne)

March 30: Had Corruption in the Representation of the People previous to the year 1810 increased, and ought it to have been diminished? (motion: Dupuis)

Easter Term:

April 27: Does Sir Walter Scott deserve the Reputation of a great Poet? (motion: Kemble)

May 4: Ought some heavier punishment to be adopted in lieu of a pecuniary fine for the crimes of Seduction and Adultery? (motion: Matthew)

May 11: Is the Literary Character or the Military Hero more deserving of the applause of mankind? (motion: Price)

May 18: Was the English Government justified in going to War with France in 1790? (motion: Dupuis)

October Term:

November 2: Do William Wordsworth's Poems entitle him to the Reputation of a great Poet? (motion: Kemble, opened: Alford)

November 16: Can the extended Education of the lower Orders be dangerous to a good Government? (motion: Matthew, opened: Law)

November 23: Was the Duke of Wellington's Administration deserving of the support of the Independent Members of Parliament? (motion: Matthew)

November 30: Would it be expedient to adopt the Ballot in Elections? (motion: Law, opened: Merryweather)

December 7: Was the conduct of Ministers during the Trial of the late Queen, constitutional? (motion: Shillito, opened: Layton)

December 14: Was the conduct of Thomas Wentworth, first Earl of Stafford, worthy the admiration of Posterity? (motion: Alford, opened: Burrows)

1831

Lent Term:

February 8: Ought Church and State to be separated? (motion: Yorke, opened: Carne)

February 15: Is an early and entire abolition of Slavery in the British Colonies desirable? (motion: Dupuis)

February 22: Would the Abolition of Capital Punishments in all cases, except for Murder, be productive of an increase or a diminution of Crime? (motion: Law)

March 1: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 8: Is it consistent with sound policy, for Great Britain to interfere in favor of Poland, in the contest between that country and Russia? (motion: Dupuis)

March 15: Ought Ministers to receive the confidence and co-operation of the People in bringing forward measures for general Reform? (motion: Gardiner)

March 18: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 19: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 22: Is Sir John Moore's Campaign in the Peninsular deserving of our admiration? (motion: Sullivan, but no debate as Sullivan failed to be present or provide an opener; Sullivan fined one Guinea)

Easter Term:

April 26: In case of an immediate War in Europe, would it be good policy in England to unite with France? (motion: Law)

May 3: Would it be expedient to adopt legal measures for affording to the art of Surgery an adequate supply of Anatomical subjects? (motion: Gardiner, opened: Sullivan)

May 10: Did Mr. Grey, in his Bill for reform in 1793, deserve the confidence of the Country? (motion: Law, adjourned)

May 17: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 24: Is the cultivation of English Literature worthy of admission into an Academical Education? (motion: Blenkinsopp, opened: Yorke)

October Term:

November 1: Was the conduct of Warren Hastings, Esq. deserving of impeachment? (motion: Layton, opened: Kennedy)

November 8: Has the Study of Political Economy been productive of benefit to the best interests of society? (motion: Blenkinsopp)

November 15: Is the custom of Duelling beneficial to Society? (motion: Kennedy?)

November 22: Have the two French Revolutions been a benefit or an evil to mankind? (motion: Creasy)

November 29: Has the agitation of the Reform Question been productive of good to the country? (motion: Mereweather)

December 6: Has the immediate interference hitherto exercised by many Peers in the return of the Members to the lower House, been in accordance with the principles of the English Constitution? (motion: Gardiner)

December 13: Would a Republican form of Government be better adapted towards the forwarding of the prosperity of England, than that which she now enjoys or labours under? (motion: Warburton, only speaker was Gardiner who spoke against the adoption of a Republic)

1832

Lent Term:

February 14: Does the Character, Political and regal, of George the Fourth merit the approbation of his country? (motion: Johnstone, who was the only speaker and spoke in affirmative)

February 21: Would a Republican form of government be better adapted to the forwarding of the prosperity of England than that which she now enjoys or labours under? (motion: Warburton, opened: Merewether)

March 6: Should prose works of Fiction be withheld from youth, as compositions injurious to the youthful mind generally? (motion: Johnstone)

March 13: Have the poor laws been beneficial to England (motion: C. Kennedy, adjourned)

March 20: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 27: Are his Majesty's Ministers deserving of the Confidence of the Country? (motion: Yonge)

Easter Term:

May 22: Is it desirable that legal provision should be made for the supply of anatomical objects, and is the bill at present before parliament calculated to effect that object? (motion: Davidson, opened: Johnstone)

October Term:

November 6: Have continental wars been on the whole beneficial to England? (motion: R.C. Kennedy, opened: Creasy)

November 13: Is the System of Emigration likely to prove Beneficial to this Country? (motion: Hon. W. Henniker)

November 20: Is a monarchical or republican form of Government the more favourable to the advancement of literature? (motion: Alford, opened: North)

November 27: Would a War with Holland under existing circumstances be either politic or justifiable? (motion: Ellis, adjourned)

December 3: (adjourned debate) same as above (opened: Matthew as proxy for Creasy)

December 4: Is a separation between Church and State desirable? (motion: Fearon)

1833

Lent Term:

February 12: Has the Revolution of 1688, been beneficial to this Country? (motion: Matthew)

February 19: Is a Repeal of the Union between England and Ireland desirable? (motion: Warburton)

February 26: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 5: Was England justified in going to war with America, in 1775? (motion: Myers)

March 12: Is the immediate emancipation of the Slaves in the West Indies desirable? (motion: Fearon)

March 19: Have the proceedings of the Common's House of Parliament, during the present session, been such as to warrant a belief that its Reform was a salutary measure? (motion: Kempe)

March 26: Should the present System of Corn Laws be continued? (motion: Laing, opened: Bowstead)

Easter Term:

April 23: Is it desirable to place restrictions on the Press of a Free Country? (motion: White)

April 30: Was the conduct of Warren Hastings deserving of impeachment? (motion: Hon. W. C. Henniker)

May 7: Whether vote by Ballot in the election of Members of the Commons House of Parliament is beneficial? (motion: Burke)

May 14: Would the Resignation of his Majesty's Ministers, on their late defeat, have been advantageous to the country? (motion: Stocks)

May 21: Is the Ambition of Russia dangerous to Europe? (motion: Creasy)

October Term:

October 29: Was the conduct of Queen Elizabeth, in signing the warrant of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, justifiable? (motion: Hon. W. C. Henniker, opened: Gregory)

November 5: Has the conduct of the English Government towards Ireland, been consistent with sound policy or justice? (motion: White, opened: Burke, adjourned)

November 12: (adjourned debate) same as above

November 19: Whether Triennial Parliaments be an institution contrary to the British Constitution or not? (motion: Johnson, disorderly conduct by Leathly who was fined by the President)

December 3: Is Lord Grey's Ministry deserving the confidence of a British Parliament? (motion: Fearon)

1834

Lent Term:

February 4: Would the abolition of Capital Punishments, be a measure either just or politic? (motion: G. Ferguson, spoke in negative and was the only speaker)

February 11: Whether the principle of Non-interference, as advocated by his Majesty's Government, is calculated to promote the best interests of Europe? (motion: J. Ellis)

February 18: Was not the Puritanical Spirit of the Fanatical Strictness, prevalent in the time of the Stuarts, productive of great evils to the Country? (motion: Fearon)

February 25: ["On account of private business no Debate took place."]

March 4: Should there be a Dramatic censorship? (motion: Burke, opened: Spankie)

March 11: Is the character of Lord Edward Fitzgerald entitled to approbation? (motion: Burke, opened: Redlington)

March 18: Can the conduct of the English government towards Ireland from the time of the first invasion of the English upon the latter country be considered consistent either with sound policy or with justice? (motion: White, opened: Burke)

Easter Term:

April 15: (adjourned debate) same as above

April 29: Is it expedient that Dissenters should be permitted to graduate in Arts, Law or Physic in this University? (motion: Ellis)

April 30: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 6: Would the abrogation of the Bishops privilege to sit in the House of Peers, be either just or polite? (motion: Watson)

May 13: Is it expedient that a Charter for granting degrees be given to the London University? (motion: Townsend)

May 20: Is the Law of Primogeniture worthy of our approbation? (motion: Jones)

October Term:

November 11: Would the introduction of vote by ballot in parliamentary elections be productive of good to, or would it entail evil on, the country? (motion: Watson)

November 18: Was the principle of the late English poor law system consistent with sound policy? (motion: Johnstone)

November 25: Has the Army or Navy of England contributed most to its glory? (motion: Walmesley)

December 2: Is there not every reason to rejoice that the Whig Administration has ceased to exist? (motion: Watson)

December 3: (adjourned debate) same as above

December 9: Does the system of flogging in the Army or Navy tend to degrade the character of our soldiers and sailors? (motion: Drake)

1835

Lent Term:

February 17: Whether the office of Lord Chancellor ought to be separated from political duties ex officio? (motion: Burke)

February 24: Is the present administration worthy of the confidence of the country? (motion: Drake, opened: H.B. Jones)

March 10: Whether a strict political connection with France is desirable for England? (motion: Ferguson)

March 17: Is the analogy which has been attempted to be established between the state of England at the present day; & that of France before the first revolution borne out by the actual circumstances of the two countries? (motion: Williamson, opened: Timins)

March 3: Would emigration and free trade afford any prospect of relief from our present financial embarrassment? (motion: Truman)

March 24: Is a systematic opposition to an administration conducive to the happiness of a country? (motion: Mackinnon, opened: H.B. Jones)

Easter Term:

May 5: Is one nation justified in interfering in the domestic policy of another? (motion: Redington, not debate due to Redington failing to be present and to provide a substitute)

May 12: Does the present state of Political Affairs in this Country tend towards a Republic? (motion: Timins)

May 19: Is or is not the permission to entail property advantageous to Great Britain? (motion: Latham)

May 26: Does a Republican or a Monarchical form of Government tend most to the political freedom of the people? (motion: Townsend)

October Term:

November 3: Does the principle of Lord John Russell's Irish Church Resolution meet our approbation? (motion: Townsend)

November 9: Is an Hereditary Peerage beneficial to this country? (motion: H. Roberts)

November 17: Does the formation of Tory Political Unions commonly called Orange Lodges merit our approbation or not? (motion: Drake, who was fined 1 pound for not providing an opener for the debate)

December 1: Does the conduct of ministers in permitting and encouraging Col. De Lacy Evans to raise a body of men for the service of the Spanish Government merit our approbation? (motion: Waldegrave, opened: Spranger)

December 8: Have the benefits which were expected from the Roman Catholic Emancipation been realised? (motion: H. Bullock)

1836

Lent Term:

February 9: Do the character and actions of Daniel O'Connell up to the year 1835 bear any resemblance to those of Maximillian Robespierre up to 1789? (motion: Townsend, opened: Morrison)

February 16: Has the conduct of the House of Lords during the last five years been beneficial to the country (motion: Ball)

February 23: Have the measures of the Whig Government since passing of the Reform Bill been such as to promote the interests of the lower classes? (motion: Pollard, opened: Morrison)

March 1: Did the conduct of Napoleon Bonaparte viewed either in a military or civil light merit his banishment to St. Helena? (motion: Trelawney)

March 8: Do the writings of Jeremy Bentham entitle their author to the gratitude of mankind? (motion: R. G. Latham)

March 16: Is it probable that a measure for the separation of Church and State would either secure more extended toleration of religious belief or be productive of any beneficial result to the nation at large? (motion: A. J. Watson)

March 22: Is the monopoly of the patent theatres calculated to advance the interests of the drama? (motion: A. J. Ellis)

Easter Term:

April 19: Is the existence of party feeling in a state productive on the whole of injury or benefit? (motion: Goldfinch)

April 26: Is the character of the Puritans of the time of Charles Ist deserving of our esteem? (motion: Morrison)

May 3: Whether imprisonment for debt should not be abolished? (motion: R.B. Seale)

May 10: Was Queen Elizabeth justified in signing the warrant for the execution of Mary Queen of Scots? (motion: Spranger, due to lack of members present the debate did not take place)

May 17: Whether the House of Commons in 1649 was justified in proposing the following resolution: That the House of Lords is a nuisance, and therefore should be abolished (motion: Mackenzie, opened: Haggard)

October Term:

November 8: Does the past conduct of the R. Catholics of Ireland justify an expectation that further concessions on the part of the Protestants of England will be productive of any beneficial result? (motion: Watson, opened: Mones)

November 13: Whether the conduct of James Graham of Clavesbourne has been truly appreciated by posterity? (motion: Waldegrave)

November 22: On the demise of Ferdinand 7th was Don Carlos or Donna Isabella the rightful successor to the Throne of Spain? (motion: Hopwood)

November 29: Do Alfred Tennyson's poems show a true poet? (motion: Heath, opened: Hardcastle)

December 1: (adjourned debate) same as above

December 6: Is Mr O'Connell a benefactor to this country? (motion: Cochrane)

1837

Lent Term:

January 31: Is the introduction of the ballot advisable in Parliamentary elections? (motion: Christie)

February 7: (adjourned debate) same as above

February 14: Had William of Nassau any just claim to the sovereignty of Ireland before the surrender of Limerick? (motion: Tower)

February 21: Is the Law of Primogeniture as established in this country conducive to the interests of Society? (motion: Weightman)

February 28: Does the existence of the established Church of England in Ireland conduce to the moral happiness of the people? (motion: A. Watson)

March 7: Would the presence of ladies at parliamentary debates refine the language used by Honourable Members, and check the brawls which are so frequent in the discussions of the House? (motion: Tower, opened: Wood)

Easter Term:

April 11: Is the existence of Corporate bodies beneficial and desirable? (motion: Philipps)

April 18: Does the political character of Mr. Burke entitle him to the approbation of posterity? (motion: Hopwood)

April 25: Is the maintenance of the Established Church in Ireland in its present condition consistent with justice and good policy? (motion: Ball)

May 2: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 4: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 9: Is the present system of providing for the Clergy by the payment of Tithes beneficial to the Clerical as well as Lay interests of the Country? (motion: Weightman)

May 16: Is the payment of Church Rates by Dissenters consonant with justice? (motion: C. Orme)

October Term:

October 31: Has the foreign policy of the Melbourne Ministry been conducive to the honor and interests of this Country? (motion: Hopwood)

November 7: Has the introduction of the New Poor Law been beneficial to the pauper population of this Country? (motion: Maitland, adjourned)

November 14: (adjourned debate) same as above

November 21: Is the political character of Fox deserving of our approbation? (motion: Christie, adjourned)

November 28: (adjourned debate) same as above

December 5: (adjourned debate) same as above

December 12: Was the Parliament justified in taking up arms against Charles I.? (motion: Newell)

1838

Lent Term:

February 12: Does the political conduct of Mr. Pitt entitle him to the admiration of posterity? (motion: Hopwood)

February 19: Has the political conduct of the King of Hanover since his accession to the throne been such as to merit our approval? (motion: Bullock)

February 26: Has the internal policy of the Whigs for the last seven years been such as to merit our approbation? (motion: A.C. Barrett)

March 6: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 7: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 13: Is the occupation of Algiers by the French, likely to be detrimental to the general interests of Europe or not? (motion: Lord Napier)

Easter Term:

April 3: Was the conduct of the House of Commons in voting that Daniel O'Connell, Esq., MP, be reprimanded, either justifiable or expedient? (motion: Kirwan)

May 1: Was the ministerial measure of 1833 for the emancipation of the slaves in the West Indies consistent with justice and humanity? (motion: Hopwood, adjourned)

May 3: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 15: Is it desirable that dissenters should be admitted to the degree of B.A. in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge? (motion: Vaughan, adjournment: Christie)

May 22: (adjourned debate) same as above (At half past nine a motion made by Hon E. Herbert that the debate should be continued till ten by the suspension of laws 65 and 70 was carried and the debate accordingly was continued till the abovementioned hour when further adjournment till quarter 10 was moved by Mr Hopwood Queens and carried)

May 28: Is the abolition of rotten boroughs desirable? (motion: White, opened: Donaldson)

October Term:

October 30: Did the conduct of James II, and his abdication of the throne justify the revolution of 1688? (motion: Weightman, opened: Hope, adjourned)

November 6: (adjourned debate) same as above

November 13: Is the Ecclesiastical Commission as at present constituted, either expedient or legal? (motion: A. B. Hope)

November 20: Will the provisions of Serjeant Talfourd's Copy-right Bill prove beneficial? (motion: T. Frere)

November 27: Is the conduct of the present Ministry towards Lord Durham justifiable? (motion: Thackeray, opened: Fozer)

December 4: Is the universal extension of education a national benefit? (motion: Hon. G. Smythe)

December 11: Did the conduct of Nechar at the commencement of the French Revolution merit approbation? (motion: Williams)

1839

Lent Term:

February 5: Was Charles I. justified in endeavouring to re-establish Episcopacy in Scotland? (motion: Thackeray, opened: Williams)

February 12: Does England really owe a great debt of justice to Ireland? (motion: T. Frere, opened: R. Williams, who was the only one who spoke)

February 19: Is the conduct of the present Government with regard to the British Navy, likely to inspire the nation with confidence, in the event of a war? (motion: B. H. Drury)

February 26: Is Phrenology a science entitled to our belief? (motion: Neale)

March 5: Has the political life of Daniel O'Connell been such as to entitle him to the gratitude of the Irish people? (motion: Bayley)

March 12: Is Astrology a science entitled to our credit? (motion: Ellicott)

March 19: Whether laws for the regulation and restriction of the Press be not to the furtherance of good government? (motion: Hope)

Easter Term:

April 16: No debate due to insufficient number of members present, postponed

April 23: Was Sir F. B. Head, sufficiently supported by Her Majesty's Ministers in his government of Upper Canada? (motion: Baggallay)

April 30: Is the practice of Flogging in the Army deserving of our approbation? (motion: Craufurd)

May 7: Is the connection of Church and State advantageous to the Constitution, or not? (motion: Wright)

May 14: Does the conduct of the Ministers for the last three years entitle them to the approbation of their country? (motion: A. Rudd, but was not present and did not provide a substitute, Rudd fined for one sovereign according to Law 68, adjourned)

May 21: (adjourned debate) No debate due to insufficient number of members present

October Term:

November 5: Ought Instruction in the National Religion to be made the basis of any system of National Education? (motion: J. Pearson)

November 12: Does the Philosophy of Locke deserve the approbation of posterity? (motion: W. J. Butler, who was the only speaker and spoke in the negative)

November 19: Is the Public Character of Dean Swift worthy of the grateful recollection of the British nation? (motion: J. Pearson)

November 26: Would it be to the advantage of Britain, to support the policy assumed by Mehemet Ali, towards the Ottoman Empire? (motion: T. H. Galton)

December 3: Whether the nomination of Lord Normanby to the Office Of Home Secretary, was an unwise and mischievous appointment? (motion: M. Ware)

December 10: Did Mirabeau confer a benefit upon his country, by abolishing the law of Primogeniture? (motion: T. H. Galton)

1840

Lent Term:

February 18: Has the House of Commons been justifiable in its pretensions in the matter of Stockdale v. Hansard? (motion: B. Shaw, adjourned at quarter to ten o'clock)

February 25: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 3: Is the theory of Apparitions consonant with wisdom and experience? (motion: Sheringham)

March 10: Has the conduct and policy of the Melbourne Government since its return to office in 1835, been entitled to the confidence of the country? (motion: Bullock)

March 18: Would the repeal of the Corn Laws be conducive to the interests of the country? (motion: Brooks)

March 24: Whether the passing of Sir Robert Inglis' motion for Church Extension prove beneficial to the nation at large? (motion: Christian, who was the only speaker and spoke in the affirmative)

March 31: Is the Education of Women sufficiently carried out in this country? (motion: J. W. Sheringham)

April 7: Was the Roman Catholic Relief Bill of 1829, a measure of wisdom, justice, and expediency? (motion: Bullock)

Easter Term:

May 5: Ought the Crusades to be viewed in a favourable light among Christian Nations? (motion: J. Slade)

May 12: Is the Progress of the System of Railroads likely to prove of advantage to the Country? (motion: J. A. Beaumont)

May 19: Has Secretary Stanhope's Limitation Peerage Bill received the sanction of Parliament, would it have proved prejudicial to the interests of the State? (motion: J. R. Stock, only speakers in the affirmative)

May 26: Is the democratic principle suitable to the genius of the British Nation? (motion: C. P. Shepherd)

June 2: Is the present declaration of War against China justifiable or expedient? (motion: J. R. Stock, but no debate due to insufficient number of members present, adjourned till next term)

October Term:

November 3: (adjourned debate) same as above (opened: H. L. Young)

November 10: Does the general character and conduct of Archbishop Laud deserve the admiration of posterity? (motion: T. H. Bullock)

November 17: Is the Irish Policy of the Present Government unworthy of our confidence? (motion: Stock)

November 24: Would the Abolition of Capital punishments in this Country be consistent with justice and morality? (motion: Hewitt)

December 1: Has the policy of the Ministry with respect to the Syrian Question been such as to deserve our approbation? (motion: Galton)

December 8: Is the Establishment of Political Societies a legitimate method of opposing Opinions prejudicial to the State? (motion: M. Ware)

December 15: Should England have interfered in behalf of the Poles in the war of independence, in 1830-31? (motion: G. Crawshay, no debate due to insufficient number of members present, adjourned till next term)

1841

Lent Term:

February 9: (adjourned debate) same as above

February 16: Is the present generation likely to witness the dismemberment of the United States of America? (motion: J. C. Conybeare)

February 23: Was the dissolution of Monasteries in the reign of Henry the Eighth, consistent with justice? (motion: J. Slade)

March 2: Was the conduct of the Americans in asserting their independence justifiable? (motion: T. S. Western)

March 9: Is dueling a necessary evil of society? (motion: W. C. Brooks)

March 16: Are Dissenters from Established Church entitled to an exemption from liability to support that Church? (motion: H. L. Young)

March 23: Was the conduct of the House of Commons in the reign of Charles I. (up to their final breach with the King inclusive) such as to deserve our approbation? (motion: W. C. Brooks, opened: T. H. Bullock)

March 30: Was the conduct of the House of Commons towards Wilkes, constitutional and proper? (motion: T. H. Bullock, but no debate due to insufficient number of members present, adjourned till next term)

Easter Term:

April 27: (adjourned debate) same as above (opened: J. Slade)

May 4: Ought Capital Punishments to be retained in the English Law? (motion: J. Slade, who was the only speaker and spoke in the affirmative)

May 11: Would the method of voting by ballot in the election of Members of Parliament be an improvement upon the present system? (motion: E. Rudge, adjourned)

May 18: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 24: Has the Budget produced by the Melbourne Administration (May 1841,) deserved the confidence of the Country? (motion: T. Bullock)

October Term:

November 2: Are the writings of Wordsworth likely to exercise a greater influence than those of Byron on a future generation? (motion: J. Slade, who was the only speaker and spoke in the affirmative, but lost the division with a majority of 26)

November 9: Is the Present Administration worthy of the confidence of the country? (motion: G. Crawshay)

November 16: Were the Penal Laws passed against the Papists calculated to be beneficial to the country? (motion: J. Slade)

November 23: Would a Repeal of the Corn Laws be beneficial to the country? (motion: J. Hardcastle, adjourned)

November 30: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjourned)

December 7: (adjourned debate) same as above

December 14: Are the Characters and Conduct of William the Third, deserving approbation? (motion: J. Slade, but no debate due to insufficient number of members present, adjourned till next term)

1842

Lent Term:

February 8: Are Theatrical representations conducive to the benefit of the country? (motion: T. H. Bullock)

February 15: Are Capital Punishments inhuman & impolitic? (motion: Cox, opened: Rohrs)

February 22: Was the reign of Puritanism beneficial to the character of the English people? (motion: T. H. Galton)

March 1: Is it for the best interests of this University that its members should be compelled to take Mathematical honors before competing for Classical? (motion: Cox)

March 8: Was Archbishop Laud legally executed? (motion: Farr)

March 15: Would the method of voting by ballot in returning members to Parliament be an improvement upon the present system? (motion: T. S. Western)

Easter Term:

April 12: Are the financial measures proposed by Sir R. Peel such as will tend to the prosperity of the country? (motion: Galton)

April 19: (adjourned debate) same as above

April 26: Ought the dissenters to be excluded from degrees in the Universities? (motion: Chisholm)

May 3: Ought corporal punishment to be discontinued in the Army and Navy? (motion: Cox)

May 10: Is prize-fighting deserving of couragement? (motion: J. Armitage)

October Term:

November 1: Was the Long Parliament of 1642 justified in taking up arms? (motion: Chisholm, no debate due to proposer having not turned up or provided a substitute)

November 8: That the Penal Laws which existed against the Roman Catholics were in the highest degree unjustifiable; and that the Emancipation Bill of 1829 was a wise and expedient measure; but that its earlier adoption would have been beneficial to the interests of the country? (motion: George M. W. Peacocke, amendment: Farr)

November 15: That the Poor Law amendment Bill was a wise and humane measure (motion: Cox)

November 22: That the modern political movement is to democracy; and that there are no visible means of staging it; and that its results have been, are, and will be in the highest degree beneficial (motion: Tooke, adjournment: Peacocke, Western)

November 29: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: Campbell)

December 6: (adjourned debate) same as above

1843

Lent Term:

February 14: (adjourned debate) same as above

February 28: That the mass of the population of England are in a state of destitution inconsistent with the resources of the country, that those evils are caused chiefly by the restriction on the importation of corn (motion: Cox, amendment: W. J. Metcalfe, adjournment: T. S. Western)

March 1: That the war between England & China was justifiable and that its results will prove conducive to the prosperity of both countries (motion: J. C. H. Ogier)

March 14: Was the Long Parliament justified in taking up arms against King Charles the First? (motion: G. W. King)

March 21: That the late government were justified in the invasion of Affganistan (motion: Ogier, adjournment: Hutton, seconded by Dougan)

March 21: (adjourned debate) same as above

Easter Term:

May 2: That the Salique Law was a proper measure (motion: G. E. Pat-tenden, opened: W. R. W. Delacour)

May 9: That Capital Punishments are inexpedient, and ought to be abol-ished (motion: G. W. King, opened: J. Kay, adjournment: F. Galton, adjourned)

May 16: (adjourned debate) same as above (opened: T. S. Western in be-half of F. Galton, adjournment: G. W. King, adjourned)

May 23: (adjourned debate) same as above (opened: R. Hooper in behalf of G. W. King)

October Term:

October 31: That the Drama has a tendency to improve Society in general (motion: Hon. A. R. Spring-Rice, who was the only speaker and spoke in the affirmative)

November 7: That the proceedings of the present Government towards Ireland, are disgraceful to it as an executive, and absurd in policy (motion: T. H. Tooke, opened: Crompton Hutton, adjournment: H. Cox, adjourned)

November 14: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: J. S. Bou-cher (a simple negation of the original motion), adjournments: H. Lindsay, J. L. Fitzpatrick, amendment carried)

November 21: That the existence of a body like the "Anti-Corn Law League" is a sign of weakness and incapacity in the present Government (mo-tion: Hon. A. Spring Rice, amendment: G. Crawshay)

November 28: That the English Nation are indebted to William III, Prince of Orange, for assisting them to assert their liberties by the just and glorious revolution of 1668 (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell, amendment: J. Brame, against amendment: F. D. Astley, the President decided to not put the amendment due to its irrelevance to the original motion)

December 5: That the principles of Democracy has been, and is encroach-ing on the British Constitution (motion: J. L. Fitzpatrick)

1844

Lent Term:

February 6: That the exclusion of Dissenters from the University is just and politic (motion: J. Brame, adjournment: W. M. Cooke, adjourned)

February 13: (adjourned debate) same as above

February 20: That the policy of Sir Robert Peel, has been beneficial to the country (motion: T. H. Jones, adjournment: Röhrs (twice))

February 27: That the suppression of Monasteries by Henry VIII has been most injurious to this Country; and the circumstances of the present times im-peratively demand the restoration of similar institutions (motion: J. Brame, ad-journment: A. Garfit, adjourned)

March 5: (adjourned debate) same as above (motion for division of question: O. Budd, not granted, adjournment: J. L. Fitzpatrick, adjourned)

March 12: (adjourned debate) same as above (opened: W. M. Cooke in behalf of J. L. Fitzpatrick)

March 19: That capital punishments are not beneficial to the country (motion: W. M. Cooke)

Easter Term:

April 23: That the Drama is beneficial to the morals of the People (motion: J. Brame, adjournment: T. H. Jones, adjourned due to very few members present)

April 30: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: G. Brimley, adjourned)

May 7: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: G. Brimley, adjourned)

May 14: (adjourned debate) same as above

October Term:

October 29: That Inheritance is a necessary and fundamental principle of the Peerage (motion: E. F. Fiske)

November 5: That the limitation, by legislative enactment, of the hours of labour for the Operatives in this country, would be attended by beneficial effects (motion: H. B. Smyth)

November 12: That the party in the House of Commons, which has been designated "Young England," will be productive of effects, in the main, beneficial to the Country at large (motion: C. Babington, adjournment: T. H. Tooke, adjourned)

November 19: (adjourned debate) same as above

November 26: That the present system of Game Laws is generally prejudicial to the Country (motion: H. Lindsay)

December 3: That the institution of the Jesuits has been mischievous to Society (motion: T. H. Tooke, adjournments: G. Brimley, H. T. Gibbins, J. H. Röhrs (withdrawn))

1845

Lent Term:

February 4: That the public character of St. Thomas à Becket was such as to merit our approbation (motion: J. Brame, adjournment: H. W. Thomson)

February 18: That the public character of Archbishop Cranmer, was such as to merit our approbation (motion: H. W. Thomson)

February 25: That states, like individuals inevitably tend, after a certain period of maturity, to decay (motion: H. B. Smyth, adjournment: J. P. Pitcairn)

February 28: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: W. F. Campbell, actually more like a rider but the term is not used in CUS)

March 4: That a modification of the existing Corn Laws would be beneficial to the Lower and Middle classes of the country (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell, opened: J. Kay)

Easter Term:

April 8: That the (so-called) Rebellion of 1745 was a justifiable and praiseworthy attempt to upset the "Revolution Settlement" of 1688 (motion: H. Lindsay)

April 15: That the abolition of the civil disabilities of the Jews is a good and Christian measure (motion: H. W. Thomson)

April 22: That the plan of the Government for the Endowment of Maynooth is unconstitutional and dangerous to the country (motion: J. Brame, adjournment: C. Babington, adjourned)

April 23: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournments: H. T. Gibbins, T. W. Morley)

May 13: That a suitable provision for the Irish Roman Catholic Priesthood, ought to be made by the State (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell, opened: H. Hallam)

October Term:

November 4: That the Commonwealth's men of the 17th century endeavoured to model the "British Constitution" after the "Republic of Venice," and their efforts have been attended with partial success (motion: Churchill Babington)

November 11: That Queen Elizabeth was not justified in putting to death Mary, Queen of Scots (motion: T. Dealtry)

November 18: That the character and conduct of Oliver Cromwell were not such as to entitle him to a place among the "Eminent Men" in whose honour Statues are about to be erected in the New Palace of Westminster (motion: J. Ingle)

November 25: That a Barrister is not necessarily bound to regard the moral guilt of his client (motion: H.W. Thomson)

December 2: That the alleged principles of Mesmerism are contrary to reason (motion: A. Codd, adjournment: J. Ingle)

December 9: (adjourned debate) same as above (Ingle was not present to open the debate and was fined one Sovereign by the President in accordance with the Law 46)

1846**Lent Term:**

February 10: That the introduction of the New Poor Law has been beneficial to this country (motion: A. Garfit)

February 17: That our present system of Transportation is fraught with much evil (motion: A. Codd)

February 24: That Her Majesty's Ministers are unworthy of the confidence of the country (motion: E.S. Cayley, adjournment: C. Bristed)

March 3: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 11: That the agitation carried on by the Anti-Corn Law League has not been unconstitutional (motion: R.D. Baxter, amendment: E.S. Cayley)

March 17: That the circumstances of the present age tend amply to prove the great evils of the Democratic Principles embodied in the Reform Bill (motion: R. A. Barlow)

March 24: That a pacific policy towards the surrounding states in ordinary circumstances, is best calculated to promote the interests of India (motion: J.F. Thrupp)

Easter Term:

April 28: That it would be for the interests of Great Britain to afford increased facilities for extensive emigration (motion: A. Garfit, who moved for adjournment due to "thin attendance in the House" and late hour of the evening)

May 5: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 12: That the most effectual remedy for our excessive population and its accompanying evils, is to be found in the efficient extension of the parochial system (motion: J. Ll. Davies, amendment: A. A. Van Sittart)

May 19: That the most equitable division of the Oregon Territory, would be one based on the parallel of 49. *not* on the Columbia River (motion: C.A. Bristed)

October Term:

November 3: That our present knowledge of Ireland would not justify the endowment (as proposed by some reasoners) of the Roman Catholic Religion in that country (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell, adjournment: J. Ll. Davies)

November 10: (adjourned debate) same as above

November 17: That the annexation of Scinde to our Empire in India is a measure at once just and expedient (motion: D. J. Vaughan)

November 24: That the Crusades were productive of wholesome effects upon European Civilization (motion: J. Ll. Davies)

December 1: That the recent abolition of the Corn Laws in consequence of the conversion of Sir Robert Peel, from the principles on which he came into power, was not a triumph of sound opinion; or a boon to the Public (motion: Hon. W.F. Campbell, adjournment: W.P. Hale)

December 9: (adjourned debate) same as above

1847

Lent Term:

February 9: That the annexation of Cracow to the Empire of Austria, - combined with the previous destruction of the Kingdom of Poland, - affords us just grounds of apprehension as to the ultimate results of the policy pursued by the three allied powers of Russia, Prussia, and Austria (motion: W. P. Hale, who was fined one sovereign due to breaking law 46)

February 16: That the assertion that by some law of re-action the laxity of the Restoration naturally succeeded the strictness of the Puritanical period is not founded upon facts (motion: J.Ll. Davies)

February 23: That the Political opinions of the late Mr. Pitt were not, as is frequently assumed, coincident with those of the Conservative or Tory Party (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell)

March 2: That any attempt at the joint education of Churchmen and Dissenters would be founded in error and must be injurious in its results (motion: A. Garfit, amendment: J. Edlin, adjournment: J. F. Thrupp)

March 8: (adjourned debate) same as above (Edlin withdrew his amendment)

March 16: That the conduct of Her Majesty's Ministers, in their having rejected Lord George Bentinck's measure for the permanent relief of Ireland, does not meet with the approbation of this House (motion: E. Prest)

Easter Term:

April 27: That the democratic principle is unsuited to the genius of the British Nation (motion: Edward Prest, adjournment: Finnie)

May 4: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 11: That the light Literature of the present day, (as for instance the works of Mr. Dickens) is in a great measure vicious in taste, and unhealthy in tone (motion: R.D. Baxter, adjournment: H. Twells, amendment: H. Twells)

May 18: That the Policy pursued by Cicero, was the best calculated to preserve the Roman Commonwealth, from the peculiar dangers which threatened it, during his public life (motion: Hon. W.F. Campbell, opened: J. Ll. Davies)

October Term:

November 2: That Tennyson is inferior to no English poet of the present century (motion: A. A. Van Sittart)

November 9: That the public character and merits of King Henry VIII., have not been generally appreciated (motion: J. F. Thrupp)

November 16: That the abolition of Jewish disabilities would not prove injurious to the State (motion: W. Finnie)

November 23: That there are causes in operation which threaten the decline of the greatness of Britain (motion: F. H. Colt)

November 30: That it is inexpedient to abolish the punishment of Death (motion: C. B. Locock)

December 7: That from the present state of political of parties in Parliament, we cannot reasonably expect that its legislation will prove beneficial to the Country (motion: J.F. Thrupp, "In consequence of the very thin attendance in the House at the hour of Meeting, it was moved by Mr. J. F. Thrupp, Trinity. "That the Debate be adjourned until next Term." (Carried))

1848

Lent Term:

February 15: That the existing relations between the Church and State of England are anomalous and unsatisfactory, and should be modified (motion: H. C. E. Childers ("The subject of debate, adjourned from last term, was changed (with the sanction of the Proposer) by order of the Standing Committee))

February 22: That the House looks with alarm upon the probable admission of the Jews into Parliament (motion: W.R. Wroth, amendment: H. C. E. Childers)

March 1: That the Manchester school of politicians is unworthy the confidence of the Country (motion: F.H. Colt, amendment: H. Finnie)

March 7: This House regards with sympathy and satisfaction the liberal and progressive tendencies of the movement at present going on in different parts of the Continent of Europe (motion: R. Sedgwick, adjournment: H. C. E Childers)

March 14: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: C. B. Locock)

March 21: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: R. H. Parr)

March 28: That the Establishment of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Ireland as at present constituted, is just and impolitic; and requires immediate and extensive alterations (motion: R. Temple)

April 4: That the primary object of punishment is the prevention of crime, not the reformation of the criminal (motion: J.L. Davies, who moved adjournment of debate due to "the attendance in the House being very thin")

Easter Term:

May 9: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 16: That to all human appearance we are warranted in tracing for our country, through the dim perspective of coming time, an exalted and glorious destiny (adjournment: R. Sedgwick, motion: R. Sedgwick, amendment: J. F. Stephen)

May 22: That the Game Laws are unjust in principle, injurious in operation, and ought to be repealed (motion: W. V. Harcourt, adjournment: R. Temple)

May 26: (adjourned debate) same as above (W. Finnie opened the adjourned debate as proxy for Temple)

October Term:

October 31: That the means adopted by Great Britain for the suppression of the Slave Trade, defeat their object, increase the horrors of the traffic, cause an unnecessary waste of life and money, and ought to be abandoned (motion: Hon. A. Gordon)

November 7: That the Graces which have this day, (the 31st of October,) passed the Senate, are highly deserving of approbation, and are likely, in their results, to be beneficial to the University (motion: G.W. Hastings)

November 15: That this House looks with disapprobation upon all attempts to introduce voting by ballot at the election of Members for Parliament (motion: C. Piffard)

November 21: That it is alike our duty and interest to pay the Roman Catholic Clergy of Ireland (motion: W. G. Saurin, opened: W. V. Harcourt, adjournment: F. J. A. Hort, adjournment: G. W. Hastings)

November 28: (adjourned debate) same as above

December 5: That Byron is not entitled to rank as a poet of a very high order (motion: J. F. Stephen)

1849

Lent Term:

February 13: That the Revolution of 1688, does not deserve the name of glorious; but is rather to be considered inglorious and unjustifiable (motion: J. N. Luxmoore, amendment: R. Temple)

February 20: That the provision for the education of the people is totally inadequate; and that a large measure of State Education, ought to be immediately adopted (motion: W. V. Harcourt, amendment: A. Barry)

February 27: That the policy of Ministers during the last few years, towards our West Indian Colonies, has proved prejudicial, alike to the interests of those colonies, and to the advancement of the great principles of Liberty and Emancipation (motion: R. Stuart Lane, adjournment: T. P. Orde)

March 7: That this House approves the foreign policy of the present ministry during the last three years (motion: A. H. Louis, adjournment: F. J. A. Hort)

March 13: That this House regards with satisfaction, the bill brought into the House of Commons by Lord John Russell, for the Reform of Parliamentary Oaths (motion: R. Temple)

March 20: That this House does not regard with any satisfaction the prospect of constitutional development held out by the Royal Charter lately granted to Austria (motion: A. H. Louis, adjournment: R. Temple, due to "the number of Members in the House being very small")

Easter Term:

April 24: That the principle which asserts that education is a necessary previous condition of the conferring of the Suffrage, is unsound (motion: A.H. Louis)

May 1: That it is the opinion of this House, that the democratic principle of the British Constitution is best preserved, by the present civil position and formation of our Parliamentary Aristocracy (motion: H. Philips)

May 9: That the two first volumes of Mr. Macaulay's 'History of England' are utterly wanting in the most essential characteristics of a great history (motion: F. J. A. Hort, amendment: R. Temple, adjournment: H. Leach)

May 15: (adjourned debate) same as above

October Term:

October 30: That we consider the present system of indirect taxation as unjust in principle and injurious in practice; and therefore regard it as highly expedient that a system of direct taxation should be substituted in its stead (motion: H. Crookenden, opened: S. P. Butler)

November 6: That the policy pursued by Lord Elgin, and the English Government in Canada, is alike impolitic and unjustifiable (motion: H. Bramley, amendment: J. Ll. Davies)

November 13: That this House, while recognizing the sound judgment of the Hungarians in discontinuing a hopeless struggle, sympathizes with their efforts to preserve their national existence and constitution (motion: J. Westlake, adjournment: W. V. Harcourt, adjournment: G. Strachey)

November 20: That it is the opinion of this House, that the late armed French intervention in Italy, was alike unwarrantable and impolitic (motion: H. Leach)

November 27: That this House considers Mr. Cobden and his party to represent the rising good sense of the nation (motion: R. Sedgwick, adjournment: R. S. Lane, adjournment: H. C. E. Childers)

December 4: That the exclusion of the inferior clergy from Parliament is unconstitutional; and that the admission of a certain number of clerical representatives of that body into the House of Commons, would be a measure of sound policy (motion: J. Ll. Davies, amendment: G. M. Gorham)

1850

Lent Term:

February 5: That we heartily sympathise with Mr. Whiston in his endeavours to obtain an equitable distribution of Cathedral property; and we believe that the Church of England will be considerably strengthened by the inevitable consequences of these endeavours (motion: H.C.E. Childers, who was fined one Sovereign for not providing a substitute to open the debate)

February 12: That the agitation in favour of Protectionist reaction is short-sighted and mischievous (motion: R. Temple, amendment: R. Lane, adjournment: F. Richardson)

February 20: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: H. Bolland)

February 26: That in the opinion of this House, the present ministry has culpably neglected the commercial as well as the social interests of our colonies (motion: H. Leach, the debate was adjourned because of thin attendance)

March 5: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 12: That in the opinion of this House, the present condition of the suffrage requires alteration (motion: R. Stuart Lane)

Easter Term:

April 16: That in the opinion of this House, the dismissal of Lord Roden, from the Irish Magistracy, was not justified by the circumstances of the case (motion: R. Stuart Lane)

April 23: That it is the opinion of this House, that the principles promulgated by Mr. Carlyle, in his 'Latter-day Pamphlets,' are judicious; and their practical adoption would be beneficial to the country (motion: H. Leach, amendment: J. Ll. Davies, adjournment: F. J. A. Hort)

April 30: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 8: That a property qualification is an unfit basis for the electoral franchise; and that the suffrage should be extended - excluding only such persons as have been convicted of crime, or are in receipt of parochial relief (motion: W. V. Harcourt, adjournment: H. Leach)

May 15: (adjourned debate) same as above (T. Chenery opened the adjourned debate as proxy for Leach, amendment: H. Leach)

October Term:

October 29: That it is the opinion of this House, that the 'Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations,' to be held in 1851, will not be conducive to the true interests of this country (motion: H. Leach)

November 5: That this House coincides with the House of Lords, in condemning Lord Palmerston's policy on the Greek Question (motion: H. Leach, adjournment: A. Cohen)

November 13: (adjourned debate) same as above

November 19: That this House is of opinion, that the System of Education proposed by Mr. Fox, is contrary to the principles of true national education (motion: H. Morris)

November 26: That it is the opinion of this House, that the restoration of the legitimate line of princes to the throne, can alone restore stability to the government, and security to the people of France (motion: H. Leach, adjournment: H. Morris due to thin attendance and a concert taking place at the Town Hall)

December 3: (adjourned debate) same as above

1851

Lent Term:

February 19: That in the opinion of this House, the conduct of the Government in appointing a Royal Commission to examine into the state of the Universities, is both ungenerous and unwise (motion: S. Gedge, amendment: H. J. Roby)

February 25: That this House regards with deep indignation the late Papal Aggression; and heartily approves of Lord John Russell's conduct in the present crisis (motion: P. Laurence, amendment: S. Gedge)

March 5: That this House believes the lasting gratitude of the country is due to those, who – in the great Rebellion by their opposition to an unjust King – secured the Civil and Religious Liberties of this Realm (motion: H. A. Bright, amendment: P. Laurence)

March 11: That Vote by ballot would fail to accomplish its intended object; and would be productive of great injury to the National Character (motion: P. A. Smith)

March 18: That Lord Stanley's proposal to remove the Income Tax for the purpose of imposing a duty upon the subsistence of the people, violates every principle of sound taxation and good government; by relieving the rich at the expense of the poor; and is calculated – by alienating the confidence of the industrious classes in the justice of Parliament – to endanger the institutions of the country, which can only rest with safety upon the confidence and good will of the great masses of the people (motion: W. Vernon Harcourt)

March 25: That the withdrawal of the British Squadron, for the suppression of the African Slave Trade, would be inconsistent, impolitic, and unjust (motion: W. C. Bromehead)

April 1: That the present state of our trade, renders the principle of co-operation amongst workmen not only expedient, but absolutely necessary (motion: A. Turner, amendment: F. S. Powell)

Easter Term:

May 6: That this House, lamenting the death of Sir Robert Peel, considers that the country has lost in him a wise legislator, an honest statesman, and a true patriot (motion: P. Laurence)

May 13: That this House regards the conduct of the State, in withholding from the Church of England her ancient right of self-government (by Convoca-

tion) as arbitrary, unconstitutional, and unwise (motion: R. J. Livingstone, amendment: R. Temple)

May 19: That this House is of opinion, that the 'Society for the Promotion of Universal Peace' deserves the support of all Christian men (motion: James Payn)

October Term:

November 1: That the Policy of an Annual Grant to Maynooth College, is neither wise nor conciliatory (motion: S. P. Butler, adjournment: P. A. Smith)

November 10: That this House is of opinion, that the public manifestations in favour of M. Kossuth, are alike impolitic and ridiculous (motion: H. Leach)

November 18: That this House regards our present system of transportation as opposed to the dictates of enlightened policy, morality, and justice (motion: R. J. Livingstone)

November 25: That the Foreign Policy of the present government has been conducive to the honour and dignity of this country; and deserves the approbation of this House (motion: R. J. Cust)

December 2: That the existence of an hereditary Aristocracy is inimical to the best interests of all political communities (motion: James Payn)

December 9: That the political and social history of England, since the peace of 1815, has been one of real and great improvement; and that there is reason to trust – unless by the willful fault of the present generation – the future will be still happier than the past (motion: P. A. Smith, adjournment: W. J. Hall)

1852

Lent Term:

February 10: That a large and comprehensive extension of suffrage would be both expedient and advantageous (motion: James Payn)

February 17: That this House considers the conduct of Louis Napoleon, since the 2nd of December, 1851, utterly indefensible; and fraught with the greatest danger to the peace of Europe (motion: H. A. Bright, adjournment: E. Dicey)

February 24: That the Colonial policy of this country – as at present administered – is in principle and detail opposed to the true interests of Great Britain (motion: R. J. Livingstone)

March 3: That the Novelists of the present generation are superior to those of the preceding generation (motion: F. J. A. Hort)

March 9: That this House is of opinion, that the punishment of death – especially in its public infliction – is injurious to the community, and inefficient in its prevention of crime (motion: James Payn, amendment: W Mathews)

March 16: That the intellectual capacities of both sexes are equal (motion: W. E. Littlewood, amendment: E. G. Highton)

March 23: That it is the duty of the State to provide for the education of the people; and that that education – while not disassociated from religion – can only be conducted irrespectively of religious sects (motion: A. W. Pearson)

Easter Term:

April 28: That the Conservative is the only true and safe policy for Englishmen; and that the theories of Reformers – whether called Radicals, Chartists, or Christian-Socialists – are fraught with the greatest danger to the welfare and dignity of the country (motion: C. T. Swanston)

May 4: That the hesitation of the present Ministers to declare their opinion on free trade, and on other questions of the greatest importance, is particularly unworthy of those men who so violently attacked Sir Robert Peel on his repeal of the Corn Laws (motion: A. Cohen)

May 12: That this House views with much satisfaction the present government scheme for a Militia; and firmly believes in the expediency, the propriety, and the efficiency of that measure (motion: Sydney Gedge)

May 19: That the line of policy pursued by Mr. Cobden and the leaders of the independent party in the House of Commons, is upright, consistent, and commendable (motion: James Payn, adjournment: S. P. Butler)

May 25: (adjourned debate) same as above

October Term:

October 26: That it is desirable the British possessions at the Cape of Good Hope be abandoned (motion: L. Stephen, amendment: T. S. Carte)

November 2: That the revival of Convocation is undesirable (motion: F. V. Hawkins)

November 9: That a speedy emancipation of their slaves by the Americans would be right, practicable, and politic (motion: Sydney Gedge, amendment: W. F. Robinson)

November 16: That the Roman Catholic Emancipation Bill was founded on principles of justice no less than demanded by necessity; and has been productive of beneficial consequences to Great Britain (motion: V. Lushington)

November 23: That the establishment of the empire is likely to prove decidedly beneficial to the interests of France (motion: L. Stephen, amendment: C. Piffard, which was subsequently withdrawn)

November 30: That this House reposes confidence in the fitness of the present Ministers to govern the country; and in the purity of their motives (motion: C. T. Swanston, adjournment: E. G. Highton)

December 7: That the division of this country into Equal Electoral Districts, and a further extension of the franchise, would not be conducive to the interests of this country (motion: G. Bulstrode)

1853**Lent Term:**

February 1: That the late Whig Government has claims to our respect and esteem; on account of their able administration of public affairs, and the measures of high public usefulness which they brought forward and carried (motion: V. Lushington)

February 8: That the present Administration is so constituted as to demand the confidence of the Country (motion: W. E. Littlewood, Gibbons was fined because he had been named as 'opposer' and failed to attend the debate)

February 16: That this House regards the projects of the Peace Society as visionary and dangerous (motion: Vernon Lushington)

February 23: That all legislation for the Colonies should have in view the unity of the British Empire (motion: G. Bulstrode)

March 1: That the Principles of Democracy are most conducive to the intellectual and material advancement of a Nation (motion: S. P. Butler, amendment: J. Ll. Davies)

March 8: That the Foreign Policy of the English Government ought to be exerted in favour of Consitutional Government abroad; and ought not to be merely neutral, or inactive (motion: A. Cohen)

April 12: That this House is of opinion, that the introduction of Vote by Ballot is desirable, as a means of securing the purity of elections (motion: E. Dicey)

April 19: That the late Sir Robert Peel was one of England's most enlightened statesmen, and most conscientious patriots (motion: C. S. Grubbe, adjournment: W. E. Littlewood)

April 26: That such an alteration be made in the Oath administered to Members of Parliament, as to permit a conscientious Jew to take his seat (motion: G. Bulstrode)

Easter Term:

May 3: That the principles of competition, assailed by the Christian Socialists, is the natural and necessary principle of commercial dealing; and, therefore, also, the basis of all commercial prosperity (motion: Vernon Lushington)

May 10: That the recent letters of Mr. Cobden have wholly failed in their attempt to ascribe the origin of the French Revolutionary War to the policy of Mr. Pitt's "First Administration" (motion: J. W. Wilkins)

May 17: That in the present condition of England, may be traced signs of National Decay (motion: F. Kelly)

October Term:

October 25: That the present existing Game Laws are injurious to the Agriculturist, as well as detrimental to the morality and well-being of the lower classes (motion: J. E. Hill)

November 1: That the demands of Russia upon Turkey are inadmissible; and that it is the duty - and for the interest - of England to oppose them, even at the hazard of war (motion: H. M. Butler, adjournment: C. S. Grubbe)

November 8: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: H. E. Tracey)

November 15: That the number of recent strikes amongst all classes of workmen requires careful investigation, and some firm measure for their repression (motion: C. S. Grubbe)

November 22: That an extensive measure of Parliamentary Reform is, at present, uncalled for, unnecessary, and would probably be injurious (motion: A. G. Marten)

November 29: That the suppression of Monasteries by Henry VIII was highly beneficial to the country; and that their restitution, in the present day, would be inexpedient (motion: C. T. Swanston)

December 6: That Tennyson is the Poet of the 19th century (motion: S. E. Bengough, amendment: W. E. Littlewood)

1854

Lent Term:

February 14: That our present system of education, whereby classical literature is generally required as the first and chief knowledge, is unwise; and should be reformed (motion: Vernon Lushington)

February 21: That in the English Universities, as national institutions, Academical Tests ought to be abolished (motion: G. Alston)

March 1: That this House considers that the conduct of Ministers in bringing forward the question of Reform, at the present time, is judicious (motion: H. W. Elphinstone)

March 7: That the principles of Toryism are essentially adapted to the government of the British Empire (motion: G. Bulstrode, amendment: S. E. Bengough)

March 14: That the Crown should be empowered to confer Peerages for life (motion: A. G. Marten, amendment: C. Pearson)

March 21: That any scheme for the restoration of a Christian Empire in European Turkey, must be at once impolitic and chimerical (motion: J. W. Wilkins, amendment: H. W. Wilkins)

March 28: That since the time of Egbert there has been no royal line ruling in England, so incompetent and contemptible as that of Stuart (motion: C. S. Grubbe, amendment: W. Heeley)

Easter Term:

May 3: That a Representative Government would be conducive to the healthy action of the Established Church (motion: H. R. Droop)

May 16: That England should look, for her future greatness, rather to her agricultural than to her manufacturing industry (motion: G. Bulstrode)

May 24: That a system of compulsory education is imperatively required by the condition of the country (motion: A. G. Marten)

May 30: That this House views with pleasure the introduction of a bill into Parliament, for the abolition of Church Rates (motion: E. G. Alston)

October Term:

October 24: That National Character is deteriorated by the influence of the Drama (motion: G. Bulstrode, amendment: S. E. Bengough)

October 31: That the Allies should make the reconstruction of the Kingdom of Poland a condition of peace (motion: A. G. Marten)

November 7: That the acquisition of Cuba by the United States, would be advantageous to the interests, both of Europe and of that island (motion: W. C. Gully)

November 14: That this House views the proposed admission of Dissenters to the Universities as an act of wisdom and justice (motion: Fitzroy Kelly)

November 21: That Thackeray is the Novelist of the Age (motion: H. W. Elphinstone)

November 28: That it is the duty of Austria and Prussia to give active support to England and France during the present struggle (motion: Fitzroy Kelly, amendment: E. Latham)

December 5: That Shelley is the greatest poet that has appeared in England since the accession of George III (motion: H. M. Moule, amendment: J. C. Valentine)

December 12: That it is the duty of Her Majesty's Ministers, at the earliest possible opportunity, to attempt the carrying out of a system of national education, entirely freed from all sectarian conditions (motion: H. Fawcett)

1855

Lent Term:

February 6: That the restoration of conventual system, in a modified form, would be useful to the Church, and advantageous in the spread of religion (motion: G. Bulstrode, amendment: R. C. Burra)

February 13: That the recent resignation of Lord John Russell, was an act unworthy of a British statesman (motion: J. E. Gorst)

February 20: That it is desirable to impose some check upon the power of the Press in Great Britain; which has now reached a dangerous height (motion: W. D. Maclagan, amendment: H. R. Droop)

February 27: That the principle of hiring foreign troops, subjects of neutral government, is wrong (motion: H. M. Butler)

March 6: That a new system of promotion by merit should be substituted in the British Army, for the present system of promotion by interest and money (motion: W. C. Gully, amendment: H. W. Elphinstone)

March 13: That the character of the late Emperor of Russia, judged as a whole, is worthy of respect (motion: H. E. F. Tracey)

March 19: That the Public Parliamentary Inquiry into the state of the Army before Sebastopol is desirable; and will, probably, be highly beneficial (motion: A. G. Marten)

Easter Term:

April 24: That the party commonly called 'Cobdenite,' has done the country good service (motion: W. C. Gully, adjourned by the Chairman due to very few members present)

May 1: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 18: That, judging from present appearances, the results of the war will not be satisfactory, unless 'Independence of Poland' is restored (motion: H. Fawcett)

May 22: That the opening of the Crystal Palace on Sundays would not promote the welfare or the happiness of the people (motion: H. E. F. Tracey, adjourned due to insufficient number of members present)

October Term:

October 23: That the projected alliance of the Court of England with that of Prussia, would be dishonourable to the Crown (motion: H. E. F. Tracey, amendment: H. Fawcett)

October 30: That the 'Crystal Palace Company' might, probably with advantage both to themselves and the public, open a gallery of such works of art, as they could collect for sale, in aid of different charities (motion: R.C. Burra, who was not present and did not provide a substitute)

November 6: That the House views with dissatisfaction the operations in the Baltic during the past summer (motion: E. Latham)

November 13: That the conduct of the 'Times' Newspaper since the commencement of the present war, has been most unprincipled and unpatriotic (motion: J. E. Gorst)

November 20: That the present time is so favourable for the re-establishment of Peace, that it is the duty of the Western Powers to shew themselves ready to negotiate with Russia for that object (motion: E. E. Bowen)

November 27: That the present attitude of Sardinia affords the best hope for the freedom of Italy (motion: H. W. Elphinstone)

December 4: That this House fully approves of the late expulsion of the French Refugees from Jersey (motion: E. H. Fisher)

December 12: That an immediate and considerable extension of the Franchise is highly desirable (motion: W. C. Gully)

1856

Lent Term:

February 5: That the proposals accepted by Russia contain the basis of an honourable peace (motion: A. C. Elliott)

February 12: That the Income Tax is both unjust in theory, and absurd in practice (motion: A. L. Wyatt)

February 20: That the introduction of Life Peerages is a measure worthy of our approval (motion: C. Puller)

February 27: That it is highly desirable the term of tenure of Fellowships should be limited; that the restriction of celibacy should be abolished; that all who ever have been Fellows should have an equal claim with present fellows to College Livings, and should have a voice in the presentation to Church Patronage (motion: H. Fawcett)

March 4: That Lord John Russell deserves the gratitude of his country (motion: J.W. Mellor, amendment: C.A. Jones)

Easter Term:

April 8: That the character of Queen Elizabeth ought to stand high in our estimation (motion: R. B. Somerset)

April 15: That the system of National Education embodied in the resolutions put forward by Lord John Russell, seems most likely to conduce to the moral welfare of the country (motion: E. H. Fisher)

April 21: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 2: That the Annexation of Oude, was a justifiable and laudable act on the part of the British Administration in India (motion: W. L. Heeley)

May 6: That France is a declining power (motion: E. Bell)

May 13: That the 'Fall of Kars' is not attributable to any fault on the part of Her Majesty's Government (motion: C. Puller)

May 22: That the admission of Dissenters to the full privileges of the Universities would be a just and right measure (motion: J. W. Mellor)

October Term:

October 28: That the true principles of international justice, forbid the threatened interference of England and France at Naples (motion: E. E. Bowen)

November 4: That a system of National Education on a compulsory basis is much to be desired (motion: R. O'Hara)

November 11: That the Colonies should be represented in the Imperial Parliament (motion: J. J. Lias)

November 18: That the present peace with Russia affords no security against her endangering, at a future time, the freedom and independence of Asiatic and European Nations (motion: E. Bell)

November 25: That it is the duty of government to legislate with a view to the prevention, rather than the punishment of crime (motion: E. Noel, amendment: P. Spencer)

December 2: That the Jews ought not to be excluded from the British Parliament (motion: Hon. R. Noel)

December 9: That the interference of the King of Prussia with the affairs of Neufchatel is unwarrantable, and unjust (motion: W. S. Smith)

1857

Lent Term:

February 3: That it is not desirable to return to the ancient method of disposing of the dead by concrementation (motion: J. W. Dunning)

February 10: That the recent conduct of the British Authorities at Canton, is inconsistent with justice (motion: C. Trotter)

February 17: That the present war with Persia is a just and necessary one (motion: W. S. Thomason, adjournment: Lord Royston, amendment: J. J. Cowell)

February 23: That the establishment, under proper supervision, of religious brotherhoods and sisterhoods, would be advantageous (motion: J. J. Lias)

March 3: That the Franchise should be extended to ten-pound householders in the Counties (motion: E. Noel)

March 10: That this House would regret a change, at the present time, in Her Majesty's Government (motion: C. A. Jones, adjournment: J. W. Dunning)

March 17: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 24: That Sir John Pakington's Education Bill is a measure sound in principle, and at the present time expedient (motion: P. W. Bunting)

Easter Term:

April 28: That this House would desire to see a measure of Parliamentary Reform passed by the New Parliament, either in the ensuing or in the subsequent session (motion: C. A. Jones)

May 5: That the present relations of Church and State are anomalous and unsatisfactory (motion: J. J. Lias, amendment: E. Bell, which was withdrawn by the leave of the House)

May 19: That the Government of Louis Napoleon being founded on injustice, offers no security for the permanent welfare of France (motion: H. J. Matthew, amendment: R. C. Raikes)

May 27: That this House would regret to see the Bill for the Admission of Jews to Parliament, again rejected by the House of Lords (motion: C. A. Jones, adjournment: J. E. Palmer)

June 2: (adjourned debate) same as above

October Term:

October 27: That any clemency shown to the mutineers now in arms in India, would amount to a national crime (motion: H. C. Raikes)

November 3: That the conduct of the government of India since the beginning of the mutiny has been most injudicious and improper (motion: J. J. Cowell)

November 10: That the system of purchase in the army should be retained (motion: Hon. E. M. Ashley)

November 18: That 'Punch' is a public benefactor (motion: W. T. Edwards, amendment: Hon. A. Canning)

November 24: That Capital Punishment enforced uniformly and without appeal, would be a just and efficient check on the crime of murder (motion: G. O. Trevelyan, amendment: H. C. Raikes, adjournment: J. J. Cowell)

December 1: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: J. J. Cowell)

December 8: That Currer Bell [pseudonym of Charlotte Brontë] is not justly entitled to the great popularity her works enjoy (motion: W. S. Thomason, amendment: H. Sidgwick)

1858

Lent Term:

February 2: That the late suppression of public journals by the Emperor of the French, is an impolitic and tyrannical measure (motion: T. J. Clarke)

February 9: That this House would regret to see the abolition of the political power of the East India Company (motion: C. Trotter)

February 16: That the measure proposed by Lord Palmerston for the alteration of the Law against Conspiracy is inopportune and uncalled for (motion: H. J. Matthew, adjournment: G. O. Trevelyan)

February 23: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 2: That Juvenile Reformatories are likely to be affective in repressing crime and are worthy of support (motion: S. E. Bartlett, amendment: H. Geary)

March 9: That Parliamentary Reform on the principles of 1832, is not required by the interests of the Country (motion: Sir G. Young, adjournment: H. C. Raikes)

March 16: (adjourned debate) same as above

Easter Term:

April 20: That this House having considered both bills that have been submitted to Parliament for the transfer of the government of India from the East India Company to Her Majesty, considers that neither of them is sufficient to insure the better government of India (motion: R. O'Hara)

April 27: That this House considers the present condition of France to be very lamentable (motion: J. J. Cowell)

May 4: That this House regrets that Bernard escaped punishment (motion: H. C. Raikes, opened: H. Hanson)

May 19: That it is the duty of England to afford a firm support to Sardinia, in the event of a war between her and Naples (motion: O. Browning)

May 25: That Her Majesty's Government were bound to signify to Lord Canning their disapproval of his Oude Proclamation (motion: H. J. Matthew)

June 1: That the principles of the Pre-Raphaelites are true, and worthy of imitation (motion: W. S. Thomason, adjourned till the October term due to insufficient number of members present)

October Term:

October 25: That Homeopathy recommends itself to our reason, and is not irreconcilable with experience (motion: H. Hanson)

November 2: That the present system of Examination for the Civil Service of the Crown is likely to interfere with the prosperity of the great educational establishments of this country (motion: R. O'Hara, amendment: E. L. A. Clarke)

November 9: That England should have protected Portugal from the demands of France respecting the ship 'Charles-et-Georges' (motion: H. Geary, adjournment: A. J. Patterson)

November 16: That this House views with disapprobation and distrust the principles enunciated by Mr. Bright (motion: H. C. Raikes)

November 23: That this House would regret to see any measure again introduced into Parliament having for its object the total and unconditional abolition of Church Rates (motion: R. D. Pierpoint)

November 30: That this House would regard with satisfaction the introduction of the system of voting by ballot at the election of Members of Parliament (motion: J. J. Cowell)

December 7: That this House disapproves of any interference with the internal affairs of foreign nations (motion: H. Brandreth, amendment: E. H. Fisher)

1859

Lent Term:

February 8: That the stringent measures adopted by Government with reference to the Seditious Societies lately discovered in Ireland, are deserving of approbation (motion: H. C. Raikes)

February 15: That the position taken for England by the present government with reference to the Italian Question, is the only one tenable (motion: E. H. Fisher)

February 22: That the recent demand of the inhabitants of the Ionian Islands for union with Greece was founded on justice (motion: H. Sidgwick)

March 2: That this House would rejoice to see the Nursing in our hospitals entrusted to religious sisterhoods (motion: H. J. Matthew)

March 8: That the Bill of parliamentary reform introduced by Lord Derby's government, is not satisfactory to this House (motion: M. C. Buszard, amendment: R. D. Pierpoint)

March 15: That the Resolutions of Sir A. H. Elton seem to point to the best practicable solution of the Church-Rate Question (motion: C. Trotter, adjournment: E. T. Arden)

March 22: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 29: That this House condemns Lord John Russell's amendment on the reform bill (motion: H. C. Raikes)

April 5: That this House strongly disapproves of the Bill for legalizing marriage with a deceased wife's sister (motion: F. Ll. Bagshawe)

Easter Term:

May 10: That it is the duty of England immediately to make preparations for war (motion: J. J. Cowell, which was withdrawn by the proposer due to "very few Members present")

May 17: That the Policy of Sardinia is injurious to the true interests of Italy (motion: T. W. Beddome)

May 31: That Non-interference is a principle of British policy (motion: H. Hanson, no debate due to very few Members present)

October Term:

October 25: That the present system of anonymous journalism is by no means satisfactory (motion: F. Ll. Bagshawe)

November 1: That this House finds it impossible to justify the conduct of the working classes in the recent strikes (motion: M. C. Buszard)

November 9: That the only way to check bribery at elections, is punishment of the bribed (motion: H. C. Raikes)

November 15: That the conduct of the Emperor Napoleon since the conclusion of the late war is deserving of the severest censure (motion: H. Geary)

November 22: That the existence of parties in a state is favourable to the public welfare (motion: C. Dalrymple)

November 29: That it is the duty of the English Government to insist at all risks upon the evacuation of the Island of San Juan, before consenting to any discussion of their title with the Government of the United States (motion: J. J. Cowell)

December 6: That it is the opinion of this House that it is necessary for the true administration of justice that a Criminal Court of Appeal be instituted (motion: W. Savory)

1860

Lent Term:

February 7: That this House would strongly disapprove of the abolition of the system of fagging in our Public Schools (motion: E. Huxtable)

February 14: That the power of the third estate in England ought to be diminished (motion: R. C. Lush)

February 21: That the Government have been guilty of neglect in not adopting more vigorous measures for the suppression of the Outrages in St. George's in the East (motion: F. Ll. Bagshawe)

February 28: That the study of Politics is unduly neglected in this University (motion: H. Sidgwick)

March 6: That it is incumbent on us to refuse adherence both to the Liberal and Conservative factions (motion: Sir G. Young, amendments: E. T. Carey, H. Geary)

March 13: That the Great Powers ought to make the annexation of Savoy to France a 'Casus Belli' (motion: C. Trotter)

March 20: That the abolition of the compulsory celibacy of Fellows of Colleges would be an undesirable innovation (motion: H. Geary, amendment: P. Kent)

Easter Term:

April 24: That every possible means ought to be taken to put a stop, by law, to Prize-fights (motion: F. Ll. Bagshawe)

May 1: That the system of inducing men to take the Temperance Pledge is not consistent with our National Character (motion: W. Bettison)

May 8: That the Bill now before the House of Commons for the better representation of the people, ought not to pass into Law (motion: A. Rogers)

May 22: That Lord Derby, as the leader of English Conservatives, will be justified in using all his influence to prevent the repeal of the Paper Duty (motion: R. C. Lush)

May 29: That the Political Conduct of Mr. Gladstone does not entitle him to our confidence (motion: W. J. Lawrance, debate was adjourned to June 5 when the motion was withdrawn)

October Term:

October 30: That the Garibaldi volunteer movement is deserving of confidence (motion: H. Geary)

November 6: That the Emperor of the French has entirely forfeited the good opinion of the English people (motion: P. Kent)

November 13: That the general tone of the 'Saturday Review' is subversive of the principles of true criticism (motion: C. Dalrymple)

November 20: That the Colonists in New Zealand are engaged in iniquitous war (motion: Sir G. Young, amendment: A. H. Hill)

November 27: That the Dissolution of the English Monasteries was justifiable and beneficial (motion: R. F. Woodward, amendment: W. L. Bull)

December 4: That so-called 'Spiritualism' deserves a more serious consideration than it has hitherto received (motion: W. S. Coward)

December 11: That the better Education of Women is now desirable in this Country (motion: A. H. Hill)

1861

Lent Term:

February 5: That, so far as expediency alone is concerned, this House sees no reason for the abolition of capital punishment (motion: R. C. Lush)

February 12: That this House sees no cause for regret in the probable separation of the United States (motion: Sir G. Young)

February 19: That this House cannot approve the conduct of Garibaldi during the last year (motion: W. M. Lane)

February 26: That Mr. Carlyle is not justified in stigmatizing the present age as peculiarly an age of Shams (motion: R. H. Wilson, amendment: H. Sidgwick)

March 5: That, in the opinion of this House, Fellowships ought to be held exclusively by Members of the Church of England (motion: F. Ll. Bagshawe)

March 12: That this House sees no reason to despair of the Regeneration of the Austrian Empire; and considers its permanence important to the welfare of Europe (motion: C. Trotter)

Easter Term:

April 16: That this House is of opinion that the concessions lately made by Russia to Poland are for the present sufficient (motion: N. G. Armytage)

April 23: That the recent spread of Periodical Literature in this country is prejudicial to the promotion of true taste (motion: V. W. Hutton)

April 30: That the interests of Europe demand the speedy termination of the Pope's residence in Rome (motion: W. Everett)

May 7: That it is the opinion of this House that, for the prevention of corruption practices in elections, the ballot is desirable (motion: W. Savory)

May 28: That the introduction of military studies into this University would be prejudicial to the present system of university education (motion: G. A. Skinner)

June 4: That this House is of opinion that the fall of the Government during the present session would be prejudicial to the true interests of Conservatism (motion: F. Ll. Bagshawe, which was withdrawn due to very few Members present)

October Term:

October 29: That this House sees reason to doubt the efficiency of competitive examinations, as applied to the Civil Service of this country (motion: W. Everett, amendment: E. L. O'Malley)

November 5: That this House views with satisfaction the policy pursued by Lord Palmerston's government (motion: T. Beard)

November 12: That the remarks made on the 'Cambridge Proctorial System' in the ultra-radical *Daily Telegraph*, of Monday, November 4th, 1861, were impertinent and uncalled for (motion: G. F. Radford)

November 19: That the idea of national unity, or common nationality with another people, does not justify revolutionary proceedings either in governors or governed (motion: Sir G. Young)

November 26: That the time has now arrived when the European Powers should interfere in affairs of America (motion: J. Greatheed)

December 3: That it is the opinion of this House that the abolition of the system of Commission-Purchase in the Army is an undesirable measure (motion: W. G. Wrightson)

December 10: That the seizure of Messrs. Slidell and Mason, by the American ship 'San Jacinta,' was a breach of international law, and demands immediate reparation (motion: V. W. Hutton, amendment: H. Y. Thompson)

1862

Lent Term:

February 4: That the present position of Church and State in this country calls for a reform, which shall give a greater independency of action to the Church (motion: G. Body)

February 11: That the tone adopted by the 'Times' newspaper with reference to the American Crisis, has been hasty and impolitic (motion: E. H. McNeile)

February 18: That the other University pursuits ought, as little as possible, to interfere with the efficiency of the Volunteer Corps (motion: J. Greatheed)

February 25: That a revision of the Common Prayer-Book of the Church of England would be an undesirable measure (motion: E. L. O'Malley)

March 4: That it is necessary for the welfare of the Church that the Pope should not be possessed of temporal power (motion: N. G. Armytage, amendments: Sir G. Young, H. Sidgwick)

March 11: That the step proposed in the Revised Code of making the government grant to Elementary Schools dependent on an examination, is unsatisfactory (motion: C. S. Isaacson)

March 18: That it is impossible for a Civil Government to maintain strict impartiality towards all forms of religion (motion: E. H. McNeile)

March 25: That the expenses incurred by the English troops in the war in New Zealand, ought to be paid by the inhabitants of New Zealand (motion: W. M. Lane)

April 1: That the theory of Absolute Monarchy is totally alien to the spirit of the age (motion: W. Everett)

Easter Term:

May 13: That the principles of Homeopathy deserve our confidence and support (motion: E. H. McNeile)

May 27: That it is expedient to open college fellowships to the University (motion: H. Lee Warner)

October Term:

October 28: That the cause of the Northern States of America is the Cause of Humanity and Progress: and that the wide spread sympathy for the Confederates is the result of ignorance and misrepresentation (motion: S. R. Calthrop, adjournment: E. H. McNeile)

October 29: (adjourned debate) same as above

November 4: That the French occupation of Rome justifies the recent attempt of General Garibaldi (motion: R. D. Bennett)

November 11: That it would be expedient to legalize Marriage with a deceased wife's sister (motion: Lord Amberley)

November 18: That there is no sufficient ground, in the present relations of the English Colonies to the mother country, for proposing to put an end to them (motion: J. B. Payne)

November 25: That the manner in which the affairs of the International Exhibition have been conducted by her Majesty's commissioners, has tended to throw discredit upon a great and useful undertaking (motion: H. M. Hyndman)

December 2: That the present Ticket-of-Leave system is unjustifiable in theory and unsuccessful in practice (motion: B. Champneys)

December 9: That Prince Alfred should be permitted to accept the throne of Greece (motion: A. G. Shiell)

1863

Lent Term:

February 3: That the recent Foreign policy of our government is open to grave censure (motion: S. B. Phillpotts)

February 10: That the Polish Insurrection is ill-advised and undeserving the sympathy of the English nation (motion: J. B. Payne)

February 17: That it is the duty of England to maintain her protectorate over the Ionian Islands (motion: E. G. Wood)

February 24: That the conduct of the Federal Government towards General McClellan has been characterized throughout by gross injustice (motion: P. V. Smith)

March 3: That it would be expedient to abolish capital punishment (motion: G. Shee)

March 11: That it is expedient that England should obtain the independence of Russian Poland by diplomatic intervention; and, if necessary, by force of arms (motion: R. Ramsden, amendment: P. Kent)

March 17: That the character of Henry VIII, as presented by Mr. Froude in his 'History of England,' is more just than that which previously obtained (motion: S. B. Phillpotts as proxy for N. Goodman)

Easter Term:

April 21: That this House regrets the prosecution, on the grounds of non-conformity, of Professor Jowett and others: and this House cannot in general approve of the infliction of social penalties, as a means for suppressing the utterance of conscientious opinion (motion: E. W. Chapman, amendment: W. Everett)

April 28: That the policy of the Emperor Napoleon III. has been beneficial to Europe (motion: H. Peto)

June 2: That it would be inexpedient to admit non-conformists to fellowships in the University (motion: H. D. Jones)

October Term:

October 27: That too much favour has been shewn by the public opinion of the country, to the cause and conduct of the Confederate States (motion: H. N. Mozley)

November 4: That a change in our system of Coinage, Weights, and Measures is much needed (motion: C. W. Dilke)

November 10: That the seizure of the steam rams 'El Tousin' and 'El Monnassir' by the government is an act to be deprecated (motion: A. G. Shiell)

November 17: That the government of this country ought to use all its influence in order to secure the liberties of Poland; but it would not be justified in making war with Russia on behalf of that country (motion: H. Peto, amendment: N. Goodman)

November 24: That this House has no expectation that any substantial benefits would accrue to the nations of Europe, from the deliberations of an International Congress (motion: E. W. Chapman)

December 1: That Mr. Darwin's 'Theory of the Origin of Species' is more consistent with the facts of natural history than any other (motion: N. Goodman)

December 8: That, in the opinion of this House, women should be admitted to University Degrees, and to Professional Diplomas (motion: W. H. Winterbotham)

1864

Lent Term:

February 2: That armed interference by England on behalf of the Danes has become necessary (motion: C. W. Dilke)

February 9: That the efforts of the members of the French Opposition, in the cause of liberty, are deserving of our warmest sympathy (motion: H. M. Hyndman)

February 16: That this House disapproves of the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston's government (motion: H. D. Jones, adjournment: C. W. Dilke)

February 17: (adjourned debate) same as above

February 22: That the influence of the cheap Press has upon the whole been beneficial (motion: T. G. Osborn)

March 1: That the conduct of the present administration towards France, has been unworthy of the country (motion: L. Sergeant)

March 8: That it is the opinion of this House, that the English Church, as established in Ireland, is an injustice to the Irish people (motion: N. Goodman)

Easter Term:

April 12: That Great Britain ought not to part with any of her colonies at present (motion: H. N. Mozley)

April 19: That the results of the Public Schools Commission will, in the opinion of this House, be materially beneficial to education (motion: F. Pollock, amendments: R. Collier, S. B. Phillpotts)

May 24: That the honours recently shown in England to General Garibaldi, were calculated to excite reasonable alarm and distrust of this country (motion: J. B. Payne)

October Term:

October 25: That this House would view without regret the voluntary separation of Australia from England (motion: C. W. Dilke)

November 1: That the conditions of the Franco-Italian Convention meet with the approbation of this House (motion: H. Peto, amendment: C. Greene)

November 8: That the limitation of fellowships in the universities to members of the Established Church is inexpedient (motion: J. R. Hollond)

November 15: That the House views with disapproval the amount of hostility which has been directed against the efforts of 'Brother Ignatius' (motion: C. Greene)

November 22: That in the opinion of this House the character of Oliver Cromwell ought to meet with the disapproval of every true Englishman (motion: R. A. Palmer)

November 29: That this House would approve a moderate extension of the Franchise, as a measure likely to benefit the nation (motion: F. T. Payne)

December 6: That this House disapproves of the compulsory attendance at the College Chapels as at present enforced (motion: J. R. Hollond)

1865

Lent Term:

February 7: That in the opinion of this House, there is no sufficient reason to believe that spiritual agency is concerned in the manifestations of the so-called Mediums (motion: S. Colvin, no other member rose to speak so the motion was declared carried unanimously by the President)

February 14: That this House would view with regret the success of the Confederates in the present American War, as a fatal blow to the cause of freedom, and to the stability of all government (motion: F. T. Payne, adjournment: C. Greene)

February 21: (adjourned debate) same as above

February 28: That in the opinion of this House, capital punishment as at present administered is injurious to public morality (motion: H. L. Anderton, amendment: G. Shee, adjournment: F. T. Payne)

March 7: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 14: That in the opinion of this House, the Established Church in Ireland ought to be maintained as an endowed establishment by our government (motion: F. A. Mather, amendment: F. Bingham, adjournment: C. Woodroffe)

March 21: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 28: That the outcry against sensation literature, is illiterate and illiberal (motion: H. N. Grimley)

Easter Term:

May 9: That in the opinion of this House, the adoption of the ballot in parliamentary elections, would be unadvisable (motion: H. L. Anderton)

May 30: That this House considers the ministry entitled to the confidence and support of the nation at the ensuing general election (motion: H. Peto)

October Term:

October 24: That this House views with satisfaction the result of the late general election (motion: H. Peto)

October 31: That while this House condemns the recent Fenian Conspiracy, it nevertheless considers that the disaffection in Ireland has been produced by English mis-government (motion: H. L. Anderton)

November 7: That this House would view with approval a moderate extension of the Franchise, in both Counties and Boroughs (motion: Lord E. Fitzmaurice)

November 14: That this House views with satisfaction the present course of affairs in America; and the Re-construction Policy of President Johnson (motion: S. Colvin, no one else rising to speak on the motion the opener added a few words after which the President put the question to the House which was carried unanimously)

November 21: That this House views with satisfaction the recent rejection of Mr. Gladstone as Member for the University of Oxford (motion: W. A. Lindsay)

November 28: That this House would disapprove any alteration in the Game Laws, which would make Game the property of the Tenant (motion: C. Woodrooffe)

December 4: That this House believes the existing connexion between the State and the Church to be wrong in points of morality and public policy (motion: F. T. Payne, amendment: J. W. Tipping)

1866

Lent Term:

February 6: That the conduct of Governor Eyre in suppressing the late insurrection in Jamaica, deserves the approval of this House, and the thanks of the country (motion: H. L. Anderton, adjournment: C. W. Dilke)

February 13: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendments: W. A. Lindsay, B. M. Haggard)

February 20: That this House would view with satisfaction the abolition of Church Rates (motion: H. A. Rigg)

February 27: That the generous offer of Mr. Thompson to endow an American Lectureship for this University, meets with the approval of this House (motion: F. A. Mather, adjournment: Lord E. Fitzmaurice)

February 28: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 6: That, in the opinion of this House, the principle embodied in the bill proposed by Mr. Clay, M.P. for Hull, placing the Electoral Franchise on an intellectual basis, is the scheme of Reform that will best promote the welfare of the nation (motion: S. J. Rice)

March 13: That this House would view with satisfaction, the abolition of all Religious Tests and Subscriptions, now required for admission to fellowships in this University (motion: A. S. Wilkins)

Easter Term:

April 17: That this House accepts the Government Reform Bill (motion: C. W. Dilke, amendment: W. A. Lindsay, adjournment: N. Moore)

April 18: (adjourned debate) same as above

April 24: That this House disapproves of the system of enforced attendance at the College Chapels in this University (motion: H. L. Anderton)

May 1: That with reference to the recent election for the Borough of Cambridge, this House – first, Expresses itself satisfied with the result; secondly, Is of opinion that, in future, every resident Master of Arts should have a vote for the Borough (motion: J. W. Tipping, amendment: W. Vincent, with permission of the House the second clause of the motion and the amendment were withdrawn)

May 8: That the government, by remaining in office, have shewn a most disinterested and praiseworthy desire to settle the Reform Question (motion: R. Collier)

May 29: That the election of one who is not a Member of the Church of England to a teaching office in this University, is a precedent in the highest degree dangerous (motion: M. J. Sutton)

October Term:

October 30: That this House views with regret the late substitution of a Conservative Government for a Liberal Government (motion: F. T. Payne, amendment: W. Vincent)

November 6: That this House looks back with grief and shame upon the Act of Uniformity of 1662 (motion: A. S. Wilkins)

November 13: That the total exclusion of women from the Franchise, who are otherwise qualified, is an insult to the sex, an injustice to the claims of property, and a loss to the Country (motion: G. C. Whiteley)

November 20: That this House would disapprove of a purely secular system of national education (motion: W. R. Kennedy)

November 27: That the suppression of Monasteries by Henry VIII, has been most injurious to this Country; and the circumstances of the present times imperatively demand the restoration of similar institutions (motion: W. Vincent, amendments: C. Greene, W. A. Lindsay, adjournment: A. S. Wilkins)

November 28: (adjourned debate) same as above

December 4: That this House regrets the issue of recent events in Germany, and desires particularly to express its sympathy with the misfortunes of Austria and Saxony (motion: W. A. Lindsay, amendment: A. S. Wilkins)

December 11: That this House views with satisfaction the late Reform Demonstration; and is thereby confirmed in the opinion that the desire of the Working-man for the Franchise, has been greatly exaggerated (motion: C. Greene)

1867

Lent Term:

February 5: That in the opinion of this House the maintenance of the Irish Established Church on its present footing, is an injustice to the people of that country (motion: H. L. Anderton)

February 12: That, in the opinion of this House, the present lamentable state of the British Drama is owing to the want of dramatic talent on the part of writers of plays, and not to any falling off in public taste (motion: G. A. Critchett)

February 19: That, in the opinion of this House, Her Majesty's Government has exhibited a patriotic sense of duty, and a sincere desire to settle the Reform Question in the scheme they have laid before Parliament on the subject (motion: W. A. Lindsay)

February 26: That in the opinion of this House the prosecution of Ex-Governor Eyre is unjust and uncalled for (motion: W. Vincent, amendments: H. L. Anderton, C. Greene)

March 5: That this House while strongly disapproving of the Mormon Institution, yet thinks any attempt to repress it forcibly, unjustifiable (motion: W. R. Kennedy)

March 12: That in the opinion of this House the Hebdomadal Council at Oxford have neglected an opportunity of adding fresh luster to their University by the refusal of an honorary degree of Mr. R. Browning; and that this House would view with marked approbation the conferring that honour on so distinguished a poet by our own University (motion: G. W. Forrest, amendment: W. Lee-Warner)

March 19: That in the opinion of this House the present Irish Rebellion, though ill considered, is by no means dishonourable to the Irish people (motion: N. Moore, amendments: N. E. Hartog, W. Vincent)

March 26: That in the opinion of this House, some system of compulsory education should be adopted in England (motion: E. Armitage)

April 2: That this House considers that it is expedient that, for the present, Candia should remain under the dominion of Turkey (motion: A. Colvin)

Easter Term:

May 7: That this House would view with regret the passing of Mr. Fawcett's Bill for admitting Dissenters to Fellowships (motion: N. Moore, amendment: W. Cullinan)

May 14: That Wordsworth is the great regenerator of modern English poetry (motion: F. G. Luke, amendment: A. S. Wilkins)

May 28: That in the opinion of this House, women should be admitted to University Degrees and Professional Diplomas (motion: G.C. Whiteley)

June 4: That, in the opinion of this House, the substitution of Stipendiary for Unpaid Magistrates would be beneficial to this Country (motion: J. W. Cooper)

October Term:

October 29: That this House desires to record its satisfaction at the Reform Bill lately introduced by the Conservative Government, and its admiration at the brilliant leadership of Mr. Disraeli, in the House of Commons (motion: E. A. Owen, adjournment: N. Moore, amendment to adjournment: W. Lee-Warner)

October 30: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: F. T. Payne, adjournment: W. Vincent)

November 5: That this House disapproves the French intervention in Rome (motion: A. S. Wilkins)

November 12: That, in the opinion of this House, the British Museum and other similar institutions should be opened on Sunday, in order the better to

bring the people of this Country in contact with national works of art (motion: W. A. Lindsay)

November 19: That this House would view with satisfaction the abolition of religious tests in the university (motion: H. D. Warr, opened: F. T. Payne)

November 26: That, in the opinion of this House, any party legislation against the Ritualists is unadvisable (motion: C. Greene, amendment: A. S. Wilkins)

December 3: That, in the opinion of this House, the enthusiasm and energy of the present day are equal to the enthusiasm and energy of any previous age (motion: N. Moore, amendment: W. A. Lindsay)

December 10: That this House considers that the Middle Classes of our Country are, in the main, responsible for the great existing national evils (motion: R. T. Wright)

1868

Lent Term:

February 4: That this House approves of the conduct of the Government in allowing the late Fenian Executions in Manchester to take place (motion: J. F. Popham)

February 11: That, in the opinion of this House, the educational system of this University does not meet the educational wants of the times (motion: H. G. Seeley)

February 18: That this House would approve of the extension of the Franchise to Women, who are otherwise qualified (motion: G. C. Whiteley)

February 25: That this House would regard with satisfaction the Abolition of Capital Punishment (motion: W. R. Kennedy, amendment: H. G. Seeley)

March 3: That this House considers the existence of any Political Constituency from which Dissenters are excluded, to be discreditable to the country (motion: W. Wiles, amendment: H. H. Jeaffreson)

March 10: That, in the opinion of this House, the recent appointment of Mr. Disraeli is a sign of decay in the political life of this Country (motion: N. Moore, amendments: C. Fagan, W. Vincent)

March 17: That the state of Ireland justifies the use of extraordinary conciliatory measures (motion: J. F. Moulton, amendment: N. Moore, adjournment: Fitzgerald)

March 18: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 24: That this House disapproves of the system of compulsory chapels existing in the University (motion: J. E. Symes)

Easter Term:

May 5: That the present Government has justly forfeited the confidence of the country (motion: A. S. Wilkins, adjournment: E. S. Shuckburgh)

May 6: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 12: That, in the opinion of this House, the present unlimited and dangerous power of 'trade unions' would be best controlled by establishing them as corporate bodies with definite rights (motion: N. Moore)

May 19: That this House approves of the proposal to admit to the University students not connected with any college (motion: A. S. Wilkins, amendment: J. D. Fitzgerald)

June 2: That this House views with admiration, the efforts of women to establish for themselves colleges, on the principles of those existing for men (motion: H. G. Seeley)

October Term:

October 27: That, in the opinion of this House, anonymous journalism is a thing to be discouraged (motion: W. K. Clifford)

November 3: That, in the opinion of this House, no modern scheme of reform in this University would be so efficacious as the restoration of those ancient principles of its constitution which have been unnecessarily abandoned (motion: N. Moore)

November 10: That, in the opinion of this House, the present College Kitchen System in this University is execrable; and no permanent improvement is possible until irresponsible cooks exchange their practical monopoly for the position of college servants (motion: Frank Watson)

November 17: That, in the opinion of this House, the recent charges of reckless expenditure brought against the present Government, are unjust; and deserving of the strongest censure (motion: J. Adam, amendment: N. Moore)

November 24: That this House watches with interest the progress of the scheme by which students not connected with any college have been admitted members of the University of Oxford, and looks forward with approval to the introduction of a similar scheme in our own University (motion: S. Thackrah)

December 1: That this House views with satisfaction the result of the General Election (motion: J. D. Fitzgerald, amendment: R. Purvis, adjournment: H. G. Seeley)

December 2: (adjourned debate) same as above

December 8: Believing that the Artizans are the hope of the Country, this House would view with admiration the passing of an Education Bill (motion: H. G. Seeley, amendment: J. E. Symes)

1869

Lent Term:

February 1: That the proposed abandonment of Gibraltar by the English is in every respect unnecessary and inexpedient (motion: R. Purvis)

February 9: That this House would view with dissatisfaction the use of the Ballot at Parliamentary Elections (motion: D. Campbell)

February 16: That the Girl of the Period is worthy of our admiration (motion: H. G. Seeley, amendment: A. C. P. Coote)

February 23: That the present Government is deserving of the confidence of the Country (motion: J. E. Symes)

March 2: That this House would approve of the opening of the British Museum and National Institutions on Sunday (motion: I. Davis, amendment: J. E. Johnson)

March 9: That this House would view with satisfaction the abolition of Triposes (motion: R. J. Watson)

Easter Term:

April 13: That this House is of opinion that horse racing in its present state is injurious to the welfare of this Country (motion: R. T. Wright)

April 27: That in the opinion of this House the increase of convents in this Country requires some immediate check (motion: S. Leeke)

May 4: That in the opinion of this House the Colonies of British North America and Australia, when ready for independent government, should be separated from the mother Country (motion: C. H. Pierson)

May 11: That this House would approve of legislative checks on the increase of Population (motion: H. G. Seeley)

May 18: That in the opinion of this House the settlement of the Land Question in Ireland is of far greater importance than any measure in connexion with the Church (motion: A. C. P. Coote, amendment: J. D. Fitzgerald, adjournment: H. Fox)

May 19: (adjourned debate) same as above

October Term:

October 26: That there is no truth in the statement that England is becoming a second-rate power (motion: I. Davis, amendment: J. Adam)

November 2: That, in the opinion of this House, any system of national education to be efficient must be of a denominational rather than a secular character (motion: G. Warrington, amendment: D. L. Boyes)

November 9: That, in the opinion of this House, the power at present possessed by Trades-Unions is dangerous to the commercial interests of the Country, and any undue use of this power ought to be checked by Legislation (motion: J. E. Johnson, amendment: J. E. Symes)

November 16: That a re-organization of the policy of the Conservative party is desirable (motion: Hon. C. H. Strutt)

November 23: That this House would view with satisfaction the Abolition of Religious Tests in the University (motion: J. E. Symes)

November 30: That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that the connection at present existing between the Church and the State in this Country, should be dissolved (motion: A. Foster)

December 7: That this Society watches with interest and sympathy the career of the Ladies' College at Hitchin (motion: I. Davis, opened: J. F. Moulton, amendment: E. H. Shears)

1870

Lent Term:

February 8: That this House would strongly condemn any Irish Land-bill which in the least degree violated the rights of existing proprietors (motion: J. De Soyres, amendment: D. L. Boyes)

February 15: That, in the opinion of this House, the scheme of the Educational League is worthy of the support of the nation (motion: A. W. Dilke, adjournment: W. F. J. Romanis)

February 18: (adjourned debate) same as above

February 22: That this House approves of the extension of the Franchise to women (motion: T. O. Harding)

March 1: That this House would view with satisfaction the abolition of Compulsory Chapels (motion: E. K. Purnell)

March 8: That this House supports the Church Establishment in this Country; but is of opinion that its basis should be enlarged (motion: C. H. Pierson, amendments: J. E. Symes, D. L. Boyes, adjournment: J. De Soyres)

March 15: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 22: That this House would view with satisfaction the abolition of Capital Punishment (motion: W. B. Odgers)

March 29: That this House views with regret the present unsatisfactory state of the English Drama (motion: H. F. Dickens)

Easter Term:

May 3: That this House, while approving of the establishment of a Second Parliamentary Chamber, considers that its character should not be hereditary (motion: D. L. Boyes)

May 10: That the present Colonial Policy of the Government deserves the condemnation of the Nation, as tending to the ultimate disintegration of the Empire (motion: R. Rocke)

May 17: That this House would view with gratification the abolition of the Office of Master in the Colleges of this University (motion: H. I. Owen)

May 24: That, in the opinion of this House, Conventual Establishments of every kind, and irrespective of sects, ought to be under Government inspection (motion: J. Adam)

APPENDIX 2: PUBLIC BUSINESS OF THE OXFORD UNION SOCIETY

The list below includes debate topics presented at public business meetings of the Oxford Union Society from Lent term 1830 to Michaelmas term 1870. As was the case with the Cambridge Union Society, there are some gaps in the list. The main reason here is that I had to be more selective with the Oxford records due to limitations in access and reproduction of copies. Therefore, I mainly concentrated on documenting the years after 1845. From 1845 onwards the list is more comprehensive.

1830

Lent:

January 28: That the purity and independence of Parliament is better secured at present than it would be under any system of reform (motion: Sir John Hanmer, amendment: Manning, Hanmer withdrew the original motion)

February 11: That the conduct of Mr Fox and his party in reference to the Treason and Sedition Bills, which were passed in the year 1795, deserved the admiration and gratitude of their country (motion: Moncrieff)

March 25: That Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham, ought to be represented in Parliament (motion: Moncrieff as proxy for Lyall)

Easter:

April 29: That the Battle of Navarino was unjustifiable, and that its consequences have proved prejudicial to the interests of England and France, the two principal powers engaged in it (motion: Lord C. Osborne)

May 20: That the disabilities of the Jews ought to be removed (motion: Lyall, amendment: Oakes)

June 17: That the establishing of Colleges in London for the education of the Middle Classes, is beneficial to the interests of the society (motion: Chamberlain)

Michaelmas:

October 28: That the foreign policy of the Duke of Wellington has been derogatory to the dignity, and injurious to the best interests, of the country (motion: Gaskell)

November 11: That the administration of the Duke of Wellington is undeserving of the confidence of the country (motion: Gladstone)

November 18: That Free Trade is essential to the prosperity of the country (motion: Denison, amendment: Acland, Denison withdrew his motion and acceded to amendment)

1831

Lent:

January 27: That it behoves all lovers of their country to unite against the spirit of democracy, which is tending to destroy the constitution in church and state (motion: Allies, amendment: Acland, sen.)

February 10: That the extent to which the liberty of the Press is now carried is injurious to the peace and welfare of Society (motion: Ward)

February 16: That the Catholic Relief Bill has not justified by its results the expectations which were held out by its supporters (motion: Jelf)

Easter:

March 3: That a reform in the system of parliamentary representation will ultimately prove destructive of the constitution, and consequently of the prosperity of this country (motion: Hon. Sidney Herbert)

May 16: That the present Ministry is incompetent to carry on the Government of the country (motion: Knatchbull)

May 17: (adjourned) same as above (rider: Gladstone, adjournment: Moncreiff, Rickards)

May 19: (adjourned) same as above

Michaelmas:

November 10: That the King ought to create new Peers to pass the Reform Bill (motion: Lowe, amendment: Massie)

November 17: That Triennial Parliaments ought to be restored (motion: Massie)

November 24: That the recognition of the Birmingham Political Union by Lord Althorp and Lord John Russell was highly imprudent and unconstitutional (motion: Doyle who was fined by the President for not being present to open the debate, amendments: Knatchbull, Massie)

1832

Easter:

May 17: That an absolute monarchy is a more desirable form of government than the constitution proposed by the Reform Bill of Lord John Russell (motion: Ward, amendment: Cole)

May 31: That a creation of Peers for the purpose of carrying the Reform Bill would be an unconstitutional exercise of the Prerogative of the Crown (motion: Goldsmid, amendment: Hussey, which was withdrawn at the suggestion of the President)

June 7: That the political character of Mr. Pitt is entitled to the highest approbation (motion: Tait)

June 28: That the recent attempt of the Duke of Wellington to form an administration with the view of carrying a modified measure of reform was justifiable (motion: Hussey, amendment: Mayow)

Michaelmas:

November 8: That there being at present no hope of the establishment of any permanent Tory Ministry, the Conservative party will best consult the interest of the country by firmly supporting the present Government (motion: Ward, amendment: De Visme, Ward accepted De Visme's amendment, adjournment: Garnier, amendment to adjournment: Baynton, seconded by Tait)

November 15: That the conduct of the present ministry as regards the King of Holland has been unjustifiable (motion: De Visme, amendments: Brandreth, Lowe)

November 22: That the complete abolition of slavery should be immediately enforced (motion: Alston, amendments: Cox, Chapman)

1833

Lent:

February 27: That vote by ballot is an unnecessary expedient, unlikely to effect the objects which are professedly designed by its supporters (motion: Cother, amendment: Ward, Cother accepted the amendment)

March 14: That the Six Acts of Lord Castlereagh were highly conducive to the peace and tranquility of the country, without any too great infringement on the liberty of subject (motion: Mayow, amendment: Harding, Mayow accepted the amendment)

March 21: That a Cordial Union between Great Britain and France would be highly conducive to the welfare of both countries, as well as to the happiness and peace of Europe (motion: Barne, amendment: Allen)

Easter:

April 25: That an hereditary aristocracy is an evil (motion: Thomas)

May 9: That the conduct of the ministry, since the passing of the Reform Bill, has not been such as to deserve confidence of the country (motion: Tickell, amendment: Capes, amendment should not be admitted: Ward, adjournment: Pearson, amendment to adjournment: Ward)

May 11: (adjourned) same as above (rider: Palmer, who later amended his rider, adjournment: Ward)

May 23: That the general conduct pursued by Sir Robert Peel, since the passing of the Reform Measure, has been in the highest degree creditable to him and beneficial to the country (motion: Lyall, amendment: Ward, Lyall agreed to the amendment)

June 13: That the reign of George the Third up to the year 1811 is to be considered a disastrous period in English History (motion: Woollcombe, amendment: Cardwell)

Michaelmas:

October 31: That in the event of a general movement in Europe, the ascendancy of popular principles is to be ardently desired (motion: Pearson)

December 5: That the civilization of Europe is at present in its infancy (motion: Thomas, amendment: Fowler)

1834

Lent:

January 30: That the measures taken for the suppression of the rebellion in 1745 were disgraceful to the government of that period (motion: Lowe)

February 27: That the reign of Charles 2nd was a less disastrous period of English History than the Commonwealth (motion: Faber)

Easter:

April 24: That the conduct of the present ministry, during the agitation of the Reform question, as regards the Political Unions is in the highest degree reprehensible (motion: Campbell)

May 22: That Wordsworth is in every respect a superior poet to Lord Byron (motion: Faber)

June 6: That the late separation between the members of Earl Grey's administration is deeply to be deplored; and that no ministry can hope to carry on the government of the country, which is not formed as well upon a principle of extensive practical reform, as of preserving the established rights of property (motion: Cardwell, amendment: Trevor)

Michaelmas:

November 20: That the policy of Lord Grey's administration was opposed to the first principles of sound practical reform (motion: Trevor, amendment: Ward, who withdrew his amendment, new motion: Trevor)

December 4: That the conduct of the majority of the House of Lords during the last session of Parliament was highly noble and patriotic; and that the formation of a strong government by that party under the Duke of Wellington, is an event to be hailed with satisfaction by every well-wisher to the country (motion: Cornish)

1835

Lent:

February 7: That the hopelessness and absurdity of attempting to construct a Cabinet upon Tory principles have been satisfactorily demonstrated; and that no administration can hope to carry on the government of the country except upon the principles of extensive practical reform (motion: Hussey, amendments: Ward, Cornish)

March 12: That the conduct of the opposition to Sir Robert Peel's Ministry since the meeting of Parliament has been factious and unjustifiable in the extreme (motion: Hussey as proxy for Capes)

Easter:

May 21: That in the present state of Parties, it is the duty of the Conservatives in Parliament to give their disinterested support to Lord Melbourne's Administration, wherever they can do so without a sacrifice of principle (motion: Hussey)

Michaelmas:

November 5: That the safety and happiness of the United Kingdom demand the immediate introduction of a judicious Poor Law in Ireland (motion: Trevor, amendment: Cripps)

November 12: That the suppression of the Foreign Enlistment Act in favor of the Queen of Spain was injurious to the honor and true interests of this country (motion: Mellish)

December 3: That restrictions upon the freedom of commerce are indefensible in theory and injurious in practice (motion: Cardwell (the President), amendment: Highton)

1836

Lent:

February 4: That Lord Stanley as a Statesman is entitled to our respect and admiration (motion: Phinn, amendments: Ridley, Highton)

February 11: That an administration formed upon the principles of Earl Grey's cabinet, would be best calculated to meet the present exigencies of the country (motion: Cripps)

February 25: That in the present state of affairs, Sir R. Peel's speedy return to Office is absolutely necessary (motion: Ridley, amendment: Fowler)

Easter:

April 28: That the measure of the Duke of Wellington's administration for removing the Civil Disabilities of the Roman Catholics was in itself dangerous and unjustifiable, and has proved highly prejudicial to the welfare of the country (motion: Hodson, rider: Ridley)

April 30: (adjourned) same as above (amendment: Rogers, rider: Cornish)

June 9: That the present ministry are undeserving of the confidence of the country (motion: Fowler, rider: Hussey)

June 11: (adjourned) same as above (rider: Cornish)

Michaelmas:

October 27: That the evils of American Society are to be traced to the pernicious form of government existing in that country (motion: Fowler as proxy for Ridley, amendment: Cardwell)

November 24: That the disgraceful alliance which exists between the Government and the Radical Party, fully justifies their former supporters in separating from them (motion: Phillott)

1837

Lent:

February 9: That the recent political agitation by the Conservative Party throughout the country has been productive of the greatest evil, & cannot be justified on the principle of self defence (motion: Moncreiff, amendment: Poynder)

February 23: That the execution of King Charles the Martyr is to be esteemed an act of atrocious and sacrilegious murder (motion: Tate, amendment: Jackson)

March 9: That the conduct of the present government towards Ireland is contrary to the best interests of that country (motion: Anderson)

Easter:

April 13: That it is the duty of the legislature to endeavour by the Political Education of the people to render the inevitable extension of the suffrage desirable and safe (motion: Brodie, amendment: Courtenay, Tate)

May 18: That those statesmen who refuse to make their principles conform to the spirit of the reform bill are unfit to be at present called to take a part in the government (motion: Fowler)

May 25: That that doctrine which represents the King merely as the Chief Magistrate of the people is in direct opposition to the spirit of the British Constitution (motion: Fagan)

Michaelmas:

November 2: That while national education if conducted on solid principles must be hailed as a valuable boon, it is to be feared that any scheme of that nature proposed by the present ministry would fail of producing a desirable effect (motion: Poynder)

November 9: That the Roman Catholic Relief Bill has been as ruinous in its effects as it is dangerous in principle and ought immediately to be repealed (motion: Tate)

December 7: That the Athenian Government, from the time of Pericles, was conducted on principles most injurious to Society, and affords a practical illustration of the evil influence of democracy (motion: Campbell)

1838

Lent:

February 1: That the proceedings of the convention on the retreat of James II were unjustifiable (motion: Tate, rider: Hodson)

March 29: That the present system of transportation is deserving of strong condemnation (motion: Highton)

Easter:

May 17: That the present facilities of acquiring knowledge through the medium of the press are on the whole productive of more harm than benefit (motion: Ridley)

May 31: That votes for Members of Parliament ought to be taken by ballot (motion: Moncreiff, adjournment: Brodie)

June 8: (adjourned) same as above

Michaelmas:

November 1: That the present ministry by the Conservative tone of their recent policy at home and in the Colonies have forfeited the confidence of the country (motion: Moncreiff, amendment: Tate)

November 22: That the circumstances of the present times demand more than ever the immediate repeal of the Catholic Emancipation Bill (motion: Highton, rider: Hodson)

1839

Easter:

April 18: That the present system of Corn Laws is based on sound principles of politics and justice (motion: Northcote, amendment: Paterson, adjournment: Gee)

April 25: (adjourned) same as above

May 9: That in the present state of the Empire, it is the duty of an enlightened Government to propose a free and liberal measure of National Education (motion: Blackett, amendment: Northcote)

May 16: (adjourned) same as above (amendments: Arnold, Rawlinson, Blackett agreed to Arnold's amendment, after which Northcote withdrew his amendment with the leave of the House)

May 22: That by the desertion of true Tory principles, the so-called Tory party fully merited and partly caused their precipitation from power in 1831 (motion: Rawlinson, amendments: Forster, Northcote)

June 6: That the return of Lord Melbourne to office was fully justified by the circumstances under which it took place (motion: Forster)

Michaelmas:

October 31: That from the renewal of the war with France in 1803 till its close in 1815 the direction of the resources of England was in the hands of men who were unequal to the task, & consequently that for the success of that war they deserve no credit (motion: Congreve, amendment: Townend)

1840

Lent:

February 27: That the recent proceedings of the House of Commons in professed vindication of their privileges, are utterly subversive of the true principle of the Constitution (motion: Rawlinson)

March 5: That an hereditary legislative body is an essential element of a good form of Government, and is well calculated to preserve the Constitution against the inroads of popular interference (motion: Lempriere, rider: Palmer)

Easter:

May 7: That of the various parties which divide the country, the conservative is the least entitled to our respect and confidence (motion: Congreve, amendments: Seymour, Clements, adjournment: Hotham)

May 14: (adjourned) same as above (adjournment: Fox)

May 16: (adjourned) same as above (Seymour withdrew his amendment)

June 11: That bribery and intimidation at Parliamentary Elections are mainly attributable to the system of open voting; and that the opposite, or secret system, commonly called the vote by ballot, affords the only efficient remedy for the evils complained of (motion: Sanderson, amendment: Forster)

June 25: That the public life of Cicero is deserving of high admiration (motion: Powles)

Michaelmas:

November 19: That the rise of Chartism was natural, and that its increase is to be expected (motion: Coleridge, amendment: Forster, rider: Tate)

1841

Lent:

February 10: That the character of John Hampden entitles him to the veneration of Englishmen (motion: Tickell, amendments: Gregory, Bowen)

Easter:

May 13: That the imperfections and anomalies in the Representative and Elective systems at present employed in the formation of the House of Com-

mons are such as to deserve the attentive consideration of every Statesman (motion: Parnell)

May 27: That our system of Colonization is defective in principle, and most injurious in tendency (motion: Frith)

June 3: That the present Corn Laws are alike impolitic and unjust, and that the best interests of the country, more especially with reference to commerce and manufactures, require an immediate alteration of them (motion: Townend, amendment: Plumptre)

Michaelmas:

October 21: That as the principles upon which the British Constitution is based are essentially opposed to the spirit of Romanism and since therefore Romanists are not fit persons to be put into offices of trust, it is necessary for the safety and welfare of the Country that the Roman Catholic Emancipation Act should be repealed (motion: Tate)

November 25: That the gratitude of the nation is due to the successive administrations of Lords Grey and Melbourne, for having, by timely concessions and vigorous course of policy, checked the course of revolutionary principles, and that tendency to organic changes, which was manifesting itself in the country on the retirement of the preceding administration (motion: James, question on point of order: Parnell, President decided that Parnell was out of order, amendment: Cazenove)

December 9: That the Political character of Themistocles is not deserving of our esteem and admiration (motion: Karslake)

1842

Lent:

February 10: That the character of John Hampden entitles him to the veneration of Englishmen (motion: Tickell, amendments: Gregory, Bowen, adjournment: Humbert)

March 10: That the British Government were justified in their treatment of Napoleon Buonaparte after the Battle of Waterloo (motion: Gladstone)

Easter:

May 19: That the income tax proposed by Sir Robert Peel is in principle a salutary measure (motion: Parnell, amendment: Lucas)

June 2: That the character of Algernon Sidney does not entitle him to the name of Patriot (motion: Pott, adjournment: Pott)

Michaelmas:

October 20: That while we condemn the Norman Invasion, as in principle unjust, with reference to its effects we must pronounce it highly beneficial (motion: Tickell)

November 3: (adjourned debate) same as above

November 24: That the genius of Buonaparte was not greater than that of Cromwell, & that his character & conduct were more reprehensible (motion: Bowen, amendment: Patterson)

December 1: That the Reform Bill of 1831 was in itself a just and salutary measure, and that the evils attendant on it are to be ascribed partly to the cir-

cumstances of the country and partly to the reprehensible conduct of a section of its supporters (motion: Chase, amendment: John E. Gladstone, adjournment: Cazenove)

December 8: (adjourned debate) same as above (moved that debate do proceed: Cazenove)

1843

Lent:

February 16: That no system of religious education however extensive can be really efficient till the social condition of the poorer classes be improved (motion: Arnold, amendment: Cazenove)

Easter:

May 18: That the present Government deserves the gratitude of the nation (motion: West, amendment: Cholmondeley, adjournment: Chase)

May 24: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Chase, Cholmondeley's amendment declared irrelevant)

June 8: That the condition of France since the Revolution of 1789 has not been so favourable as it was before (motion: Bowen, adjournment: Pott)

June 22: (adjourned debate) same as above

Michaelmas:

October 26: That in a system of national education, the doctrine of the established Church ought to be taught as the foundation of all other knowledge (motion: West as proxy to Seymour, amendment: Chase)

November 23: That the study of oratory is too little valued and insufficiently cultivated at the present day, more particularly in this University (motion: J.C. Higgin, amendment: Edwards)

December 7: That the Roman Catholic Bill is just, expedient, and in strict accordance with the principles of the British Constitution (motion: Cumin, amendment: Sandford)

1844

Lent:

February 1: That the cultivation and encouragement of the language of Ireland are necessary for the enlightenment and conciliation of its people (motion: Alexander, amendment: Walford)

February 29: That a Barrister is not necessarily bound to regard the moral guilt of his client (motion: Cumin, adjournment: Chermiside)

March 7: That a repeal of the present Corn Laws would be highly beneficial to all classes of society (motion: Banner, amendment: Tristram, adjournment: Lawson, Alexander)

Easter:

April 25: That Queen Elizabeth was by no means justified in putting to death Mary Queen of Scots (motion: Simpson)

May 2: That to require candidates for a seat in Parliament to pledge themselves before election to support or oppose particular measures is on the whole injurious to the interests of the State (motion: Chermiside)

May 9: That the profession of an advocate as at present practised, impedes justice, and is injurious to public morality (motion: Chase)

June 6: That the practice of dueling is unjustifiable, and cannot be defended on any grounds (motion: Fripp)

June 13: That the conduct of those Members of Parliament who voted against the government in March, and with them in May, upon the Factory Bill, is perfectly justifiable (motion: Sandford) opposed by Cazenove, and was not carried by the division of votes

Michaelmas:

October 24: That the Secretary of State was justified in exercising the power given him by Act Parliament to open Mr. Mazzini's letters (motion: Pott)

1845

Lent:

January 23: That since the passing of the Reform Bill there has been the greatest falling off in the character of debates of the House of Commons (motion: Cholmondeley)

January 30: That the contemplated increase of the Parliamentary grant to Maynooth College is opposed both to right and expediency, and ought to be strenuously resisted (motion: Conington)

February 13: That the unprincipled tone of the Times newspaper, as shewn in its violent attempts to foment agitation, as well by inflammatory articles as by the artifices of correspondents, is a serious evil to the country (motion: Sandford)

February 20: That the system of transportation, in whatever light we view it, is fraught with the greatest evil (motion: Simpson, point of order: Chase)

Easter:

April 10: That vote by ballot is eminently calculated to produce a beneficial effect on the present state of the country, and ought to be adopted (motion: Cumin as proxy for Harvey without speaking on the question)

April 17: That Sir Robert Peel's government has forfeited the confidence of the country (motion: Giffard, adjournment: Chermiside)

April 24: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: Pakington)

May 2: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: Pott)

May 8: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 22: That the merits of Oliver Cromwell have not been sufficiently acknowledged (motion: Hon. P. Smythe, adjournment: Conington)

Michaelmas:

November 6: That the principles advocated in the later writings of Dickens are of a prejudicial tendency (motion: Sellar)

November 13: That Lord Ashley's uniform advocacy of a law to keep down the hours of labour, while supporting those laws whose object is to keep up the price of food, together with his recent letter to his constituents, entirely vitiates his claim to be considered a Statesman (motion: Fripp, Pakington declined voting)

1846

Lent:

February 6: That the present system of Union Workhouses is to be condemned (motion: Hunt, adjournment: Bere)

February 12: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: Rev. A. Pott, Robbins)

February 19: (adjourned debate) same as above

February 26: That a dissolution of Parliament, in the present position of affairs, would be inexpedient (motion: Stanton)

March 20: That the generality of newspapers at the present time are conducted on principles which render them prejudicial to the best interests of the country (motion: Thornton)

Easter:

April 31: That the timely dispatch of assistance from England at the outbreak of the Vendean war might have materially checked the rise of Napoleon's power (motion: Browning)

May 22: That the present cry for the Repeal of the Union with Ireland has arisen from our neglect of that country (motion: Blackett, adjournment: Smith)

May 28: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Portal)

Michaelmas:

October 22: That Landlords are justified in influencing the votes of their tenants (motion: G.W. Hunt)

November 5: That the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in 1794 was a just and necessary measure (motion: Hulme)

November 12: That at the present juncture, England would not be justified in interfering with the affairs of Spain (motion: Morgan)

November 20: That the public career of Sir Robert Peel is deserving of our warmest admiration and sympathy (motion: Burrows, adjournment: Blackett)

November 26: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Hulme)

1847

Lent:

February 11: That the miseries of Ireland may be attributed rather to the faults of its own people than to any mismanagement of government (motion: Latham, adjournment: Richardson)

February 25: That the Occupation of Cracow, by the three absolute powers of Europe, renders a war on the part of England and France justifiable in principle, and not inexpedient in policy, when we consider the state of liberal principles throughout Europe (motion: Congreve, adjournment: Hunt, Portal (overruled because not half an hour had passed since the last motion for adj.))

March 11: That Mr. Carlyle's recent work confirms Oliver Cromwell's right to the title of the greatest of English Sovereigns (motion: W. Arnold, amendment: Portal, adjournment: Tristram)

Easter:

April 29: That in the present state of politics in England, the Protectionist party appears to have most claims on our confidence (motion: Bedford, amendment: Temple, adjournment: Blackstone)

May 4: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 13: That a more stringent and direct censorship of the public press than is at present exercised would be expedient (motion: Hardy)

May 20: That the proposed interference of the legislature in university matters is uncalled for, unconstitutional, and highly detrimental to the interests of this university (motion: Temple, adjournment: Blackstone, Congreve)

May 27: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Portal)

June 10: That the three gentlemen nominated as candidates for the representation of this university at the next election, Mr. Round, of Balliol, is the only one entitled to our confidence and support (motion: Latham, amendment: Tidman)

Michaelmas:

October 28: That the present condition of parts of Ireland requires the adoption of martial laws in those districts (motion: Portal)

November 11: That Mr. O'Connell's merits and services are not sufficiently appreciated in this country; and that however we may differ from him in some of his political opinions, the memory of so great a man is entitled to our respect (motion: Waters, amendment: Burgon, adjournment: Temple)

December 2: That an appointment of a bishop without a seat in the House of Peers involves the breach of a constitutional principle, and is a precedent tending to subvert the Union of Church and State (motion: Hayman)

1848**Lent:**

February 3: That the admission of Jews and Dissenters into Parliament involves a separation of Church and State (motion: Portal, amendment: Milman, declined to vote: Waters)

March 2: That the political conduct of Lord Stafford merits the admiration of posterity (motion: Boyle)

March 9: That however we may rejoice in the abdication of the late King of the French, still we must anticipate the most serious evils both for France and Europe from the establishment of the Republic (motion: Latham, adjournment: Sclater, declined to vote: Earle, Hulme, amendment: Benson, additional note: Knatchbull)

March 23: That an hereditary peerage is not conducive to the best interests of a country (motion: Ward, adjournment: Blackett, Sandford)

March 30: That Ireland has a claim to the restoration of its national legislature, and that it is simply a question of expediency whether that claim should be allowed (motion: Waters, amendment: Blackstone, additional note: Milman)

Easter:

May 18: That while the introduction of Universal or Household Suffrage is to be deprecated, a considerable extension of the franchise is imperatively called

for by the present circumstances of the country (motion: Shirley, amendment: Milman, additional note: Blackstone)

June 2: That the discouragement of dramatic representations must always be attended with loss to the moral and literary character of the nation (motion: Vance)

June 15: That the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688 was not a popular but oligarchical measure, and has been the primary cause of the defects in the representation of this country (motion: Bedford, amendments: Portal, Knatchbull, adjournment: Austin)

June 29: (adjourned debate) same as above

Michaelmas:

October 26: That the amelioration of the social and moral conditions of the working classes is the only means of preserving the present constitution of this country (motion: Latham, adjournment: Milman)

November 2: (adjourned debate) same as above (rider: Portal)

November 9: That the present ministry is incompetent to carry on the government of the country, and that it is only from an union of the Conservative party that we can expect an administration which shall possess the confidence of the nation (motion: Knatchbull, adjournment: Waters)

November 16: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: Boyle, amendment: Bayly)

December 7: That the state of our present electoral system calls for a speedy reform, and especially the disfranchisement of some of the smaller boroughs no longer entitled to the privilege of returning Members to the House of Commons (motion: Lomer as proxy for Money-Kyrle, amendment: Knatchbull)

1849

Lent:

February 15: That any endowment of the Romanist priesthood, or of any Romanist place of education, will prove an insuperable obstacle to the social or political improvement of Ireland (motion: Lord R. Cecil, adjournment: Hunt)

February 22: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Whately, rider: Temple)

March 1: That as Free trade has been recognized as a principle of legislation, it is the duty of Conservatives to unite in carrying it out, so that all classes may share equally its benefits and its disadvantages (motion: Whately, amendment: Knatchbull)

March 8: That whatever its partial defects, the new Poor Law has successfully remedied the evils with a view to which it was devised, and is as a whole deserving of our commendation (motion: Stowe, adjournment: Robins, Austin)

March 15: (adjourned debate) same as above

Easter:

April 26: That this House, while it is of opinion that the re-establishment in all its strength of the Austrian Empire is to be hoped for as advantageous to Europe, nevertheless sympathizes with the revolted Hungarians (motion: Grant Duff)

May 10: That the dissolution of monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII was politically speaking a most injurious measure, and one which deserves our utmost condemnation (motion: Robins, adjournment: Whately)

May 18: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Whately)

May 24: That our present system of Colonial government is fundamentally bad (motion: Shirley, adjournment: Lomer)

June 8: That the Jewish disabilities ought to be removed (motion: Whately, adjournment: Knatchbull)

June 14: (adjourned debate) same as above

Michaelmas:

October 25: That the present want of restraint on the liberty of the press is highly injurious to the interests of the country (motion: Mitchell, adjournment: Austin)

November 1: (adjourned debate) same as above

November 15: That the past policy of this country, as carried out towards the Church, renders it imperative on Churchmen to demand either a total and immediate severance of the connection between Church and State, or an entire change of the ecclesiastical policy of our governments (motion: Dimsdale)

November 22: That an extensive financial reform is highly necessary for the welfare of this country (motion: Blackett as proxy for Clements, adjournment: Lomer)

November 29: (adjourned debate) same as above

December 6: That with the exception of Lord Byron, Percy B. Shelley is the greatest English Poet of the last half century (motion: Austin, amendment: Girdlestone, fined 1 pound as not being present to open the debate: Austin)

1850

Lent:

February 7: That the dismissal of the Earl of Roden from the commission of the peace was an uncalled for and arbitrary act (motion: Ralph, adjournment: Fitzgerald)

February 14: That the state of the nation imperatively requires a return to the principles of protection (motion: Lygon, adjournment: Fitzgerald)

February 21: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: Lord Ingestre)

February 28: (adjourned debate) same as above (a non-member spoke without President being aware of the fact)

March 7: That the recent behaviour of the Foreign Office towards Greece calls for grave censure (motion: Howard)

Easter:

May 2: That the State is bound to enforce on its members a system of education neither purely secular, nor exclusively inculcating the views of any one religious body (motion: Pearson, amendment: Lygon, adjournment: Whately)

May 10: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 16: That to sever, as has been suggested, the tie between England and her colonies, would be the first step towards her becoming a second rate empire (motion: Sotheby, adjournment: Lygon)

May 23: (adjourned debate) same as above (rider: Lygon)

October 24: That Eclecticism is the only sound philosophy (motion: Gir-dlestone, amendment: Lygon)

Michaelmas:

November 7: That any attempt to interfere by Act of Parliament with the management of university or collegiate property would be a perilous violation of the principles upon which all rights of property are based (motion: Lord R. Cecil)

November 21: That the conduct of Thomas à Becket in resisting the ag-gressions of the State on the Church is, especially at this time, deserving of our sympathy (motion: Lygon, amendment: Money-Kyrle)

November 28: That Debating societies are on the whole injurious to their members (motion: Ogle)

December 6: That the spirit of the age is wholesome, hearty, and vigorous (motion: Blackburne)

1851

Lent:

January 30: That the merits of Oliver Cromwell have not been sufficiently acknowledged (motion: Johnstone, amendment: Lygon)

February 6: That the conduct of Lord John Russell, towards the Church in general, and this University in particular, is unworthy the Prime Minister of England (motion: B.B. Rogers)

February 13: That the conduct of the promoters of the Revolution of 1688 deserves our disapprobation (motion: Lygon, amendment: Stowell)

February 27: That the recent appointment of a Papal hierarchy in this country, has produced an unnecessary excitement (motion: Harrison, amend-ment: Lathbury, adjournment: Stowell)

February 28: (adjourned debate) same as above (Hunt withdrew his amendment)

March 6: (adjourned debate) same as above (rider: Money-Kyrle, ad-journments proposed by Baring and Fitzgerald which both were lost)

March 13: That a considerable and speedy extension of the Franchise is necessary for the securing the efficiency of the House of Commons and satisfy-ing the demands of the country (motion: Stapley)

Easter:

May 8: That the present state of England imperatively calls for a remedy against the concentration of large masses of capital in the hands of a few indi-viduals (motion: Pearson)

May 15: That the admission of the Jews into Parliament is demanded by the principles of political justice (motion: Oxenham, adjournment: Parry se-conded by De Quetteville)

June 3: That the State endowment of the College of Maynooth is inconsistent and impolitic (motion: Stowell, adjournment: Wetherell)

June 12: That the writings of Thomas Carlyle have proved injurious to the literary tastes of the present day (motion: Shirley, adjournment: Oxenham)

June 26: That a National system of secular education, based upon liberal and comprehensive principles, is urgently required by the circumstances of the times and the present state of the country (motion: Coleman, amendments: Lygon, Johnston)

Michaelmas:

October 23: That France cannot hope to regain permanent prosperity and order without a return to the ancient principles of hereditary monarchy (motion: Lygon, amendment: Godson)

November 6: That the evils of Ireland are generally attributable to the unjust and unworthy policy pursued by England towards that country, not least to the Established Church having been placed in a position alike prejudicial to its own interests, and injurious to the welfare of the people as the Church of the minority (motion: Fitzgerald)

November 13: That the French Revolution of 1789 was justifiable, and has conferred the greatest benefits on mankind (motion: Göschen, amendment: Butler, adjournment: Collier)

November 20: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Nussey)

December 4: That any legislative moments toward Liberalism or Reform would, at the present time, rather aggravate than remedy our existing social evils (motion: Godson, amendment: Lygon, adjournment: Wetherell)

December 11: (adjourned debate) same as above

1852

Lent:

January 29: That the adoption of Universal suffrage is urgently needed, as alone realizing the ancient idea of our representative system (motion: Wetherell)

March 4: That the Coup-d'état of December 2nd was in itself justifiable, and is likely, in its results, to promote the best interests of France (motion: Collier, adjournment: Shirley, Fitzgerald)

March 18: That the accession of the Earl of Derby to power is an event to be hailed with unmingled satisfaction by the nation at large (motion: Griffith, adjournment: Collier)

March 12: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Griffith)

March 22: (adjourned debate) same as above

Easter:

May 13: That association is the only principle by which the welfare of the people can be secured and the true ideal of a state attained (motion: Wetherell, adjournment: Oxenham)

May 20: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 27: (adjourned debate) same as above (Johnston asked whether mover would substitute word 'association' to that of 'socialism, to which Wetherell agreed)

June 10: (adjourned debate) same as above

June 17: That Mr. Gladstone is deserving of the confidence of the Church, the Country, and the University (motion: Oxenham)

Michaelmas:

October 21: That the principles of the Union between Church and State, demand the restoration of independent action to the former (motion: Rogers, adjournment: Lushington seconded by Fremantle)

October 28: That the increasing praise of the Peak Towns is opposed to the idea of the English Constitution, and [??].

November 4: That Shelley is the greatest poet that has appeared since accession of George III (motion: Byrth)

November 11: That the result of Pitt's policy with regard to France, is a warning against interference with foreign states (motion: Butler)

November 18: That any religious test whereby Englishmen are excluded from the university is an unnecessary evil (motion: Lushington, amendment: Oxenham, adjournment: Stapley)

November 25: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Butler)

December 2: That the conduct of Lord Derby's government since their accession to office entitles them fully to the support and confidence of the country (motion: Cazenove)

December 9: That the newspaper press of England has on the whole contributed beneficially to social and political progress (motion: Göschen)

1853

Lent:

February 10: That Mr. Gladstone's political conduct since the General Election has been dignified, consistent, and patriotic (motion: Wetherell, adjournment: Johnstone (seconded by Göschen))

February 17: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendments: Hunt, Rogers, Fowler, Fremantle, adjournment: Hon. F. Lygon, seconded by Watson)

February 24: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Pearson, adjournment by President because of disorder caused by Grant-Duff's speech)

February 28: (adjourned debate) same as above

Easter:

April 14: That the institution of the ballot is demanded by the necessity of the times (motion: Lushington, adjournment: Watson)

May 7: That all religious communities have a right to participate in the advantages of a State endowment (motion: Lathbury, amendments: Ormerod, Daniell, adjournment: Fitzgerald)

May 13: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 27: That the existence of a Jesuit Society is incompatible with the due security of a Kingdom (motion: Bartrum, amendment: Oxenham, adjournment: Watson)

June 2: (adjourned debate) same as above

Michaelmas:

October 27: That in this age of Political Inconsistency Mr. D'Israeli's conduct is a fair example of statesmen (motion: Stopford, amendment: Wetherell)

November 3: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendments: Bartrum, Allen)

November 14: That the aggressive conduct of Russia is dangerous to the peace of Europe and the interests of England, and that the present ministry have not resisted it with sufficient firmness (motion: Montgomerie, amendment: Oxenham)

November 21: That Mr. Thackeray is superior to Mr. Dickens as a novelist (motion: Hon. F. Lygon)

November 28: That the present classical system is wholly unfit to be the general standard of education at the present day (motion: Watson, amendment: Fowler)

December 5: That no religious differences should be suffered to exclude any persons from the privilege of a National Secular Education (motion: Lushington, amendment: President (Göschen), adjournment: Beesly)

December 12: (adjourned debate) same as above

1854**Lent:**

January 30: That John Bright is an enlightened and patriotic statesman (motion: Beesly, adjournment: Butler)

February 6: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Ormerod)

February 20: That it is just and expedient that the Jews should be admitted to Parliament (motion: Lushington)

March 6: That the recent strikes may be in a great measure attributed to the mismanagement of the masters (motion: Wilkinson)

March 13: That the principles on which the new Reform Bill is based are sound, wise, and practical (motion: Göschen)

March 20: That our foreign policy during the last 40 years has been one deeply disgraceful to a free people (motion: Harrison (brought forward by Bridges as Harrison was "suddenly called away"), amendment: Brown)

Easter:

May 8: That the intention of government to re-constitute, reform, and extend the University of Oxford demands our sympathy and support (motion: G.C. Brodrick, adjournment: Turner)

May 15: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Turner, adjournment: Winstanley seconded by Bull)

May 22: (adjourned debate) same as above (rider: Pearson, adjournment: Lathbury)

May 29: (adjourned debate) same as above

June 19: That the Monitorial System, as at present existing in our Public Schools, is right in principle and beneficial in its results (motion: Bartlett)

Michaelmas:

October 30: That a complete system of popular education must ever form the basis of all national philanthropy (motion: Turner, mover did not have to reply as there was no opposition to the motion)

November 13: That the existing influence of the newspaper press in this country shews that the taking off of the so-called "taxes on knowledge" is a very undesirable measure (motion: Wilberforce, adjournment: Bartlett)

November 20: (adjourned debate) same as above

November 27: That the Political Works of Thomas Carlyle are visionary and unpractical (motion: Dunlop)

December 11: That the conduct of Lord Aberdeen in retaining office at the present crisis is prejudicial to the country (motion: Montgomerie, rider: Johnston)

1855**Lent:**

January 29: That our Foreign Policy as dictated by the Governing Classes is selfish, shortsighted, and unworthy of a Free People (motion: Beesly, adjournment: Bridges)

February 4: That the position and policy of Mr. D'Israeli have been, and continue to be, disgraceful to the Conservative Party (motion: Fowle, adjournment: Byrth seconded by Oakley)

February 6: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendments: Brodrick, Lathbury, rider: Byrth)

February 26: That the principle of Free Competition established in the East India Civil Service is in itself highly beneficial, and furnishes a salutary precedent to all other branches of the Public Service (motion: Turner, rider: Byrth)

March 5: That the proposed establishment of Halls for Dissenters in Oxford would be detrimental to the interests of the University and of the Dissenters themselves (motion: President (Bartlett), amendments: Grier, Knatchbull-Hugessen)

March 12: That the Whig party has done good service to its country, but is now come to a timely dissolution (motion: Lushington, amendments: Hon. F. Lygon, Dunlop, adjournment: Lathbury seconded by Wilberforce)

March 19: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: Knatchbull-Hugessen)

Easter:

April 30: That Mr. Gladstone's political career has rendered him unfit to represent this University in Parliament (motion: Wilberforce, adjournment: Lathbury seconded by Grier)

May 14: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Lathbury)

May 28: That the Endowment of Maynooth is erroneous in principle and injurious to the interests of the country (motion: Thompson, adjournment: Oakley seconded by Byrth)

June 4: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Byrth, rider: Wild)

June 11: That the conduct of Lord Palmerston's government with reference to the present war has not been such as to deserve the confidence of the country (motion: Bayley, rider: King-Smith, adjournment: McHeane seconded by Morris)

Michaelmas:

October 22: That all continuance of the present war is inconsistent with the interests of Europe (motion: President (Bridges), adjournment: Bowen seconded by Thompson)

October 29: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Gardner, adjournment: Wickham seconded by Brodrick)

November 5: (adjourned debate) same as above (E. D. Wickham was fined 1 pound because he did not show up to open the adjourned debate)

November 12: That the "Times" has deserved well of its country (motion: Fowle, amendment: Knatchbull-Hugessen, adjournment: King Smith seconded by Dicey, Bennet seconded by Thompson)

December 10: That the Patriotism of the day is the bane of England (motion: Eliot, Knatchbull-Hugessen suggested to the mover that words "so called" be inserted before the word "Patriotism" which was accepted, amendments: Wilberforce, Byrth, President refused to put the first amendment to the House because it involved the "direct contrary of the motion")

1856

Lent:

February 11: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Thompson)

February 25: That the Revolution of 1688 was wrong in principle and has been pernicious in its results (motion: Wilberforce, adjournment: King-Smith seconded by Kett)

March 3: (adjourned debate) same as above

Easter:

April 28: That it is not desirable that the Oaths on admission to Parliament should be altered or repealed (motion: Thompson)

May 15: That every Englishman ought to possess the Franchise (motion: Byrth, amendment: Fowle, adjournment: King-Smith seconded by Thompson)

May 19: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: Scott)

May 26: (adjourned debate) same as above

Michaelmas:

October 20: That any system of national education must, to be acceptable to the Country, be secular and unsectarian (motion: C.E. Turner, amendment: Alabaster, adjournment: Wyld)

October 27: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Tyacke, adjournment: Wilberforce seconded by Dicey)

November 3: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Walford)

November 10: That the Austrian occupation of Lombardy is better adapted to its present condition than a State of Independence (motion: Daniel, amendment: Davey, adjournment: Green seconded by Thompson)

November 17: (adjourned debate) same as above

November 24: That the total suppression of the monasteries under Henry VIII was a wanton interference with the rights of property, from the evil consequences of which we are suffering at the present time (motion: Alabaster, amendment: Tyacke, amendment was accepted by the mover)

December 1: That the abolition of Local Restrictions, and of the claims of indigent men in respect to Scholarships, is a flagrant injustice, and brings with it no advantage to the cause of Learning (motion: Wilberforce, amendment: Wild, adjournment: Fowle)

December 8: (adjourned debate) same as above (mover accepted the amendment)

1857

Lent:

February 23: That the reformation of the criminal, rather than retribution for the crime, should be the aim of our penal laws, and that greater leniency of punishment would promote this end (motion: Lambert, amendments: Hill, Knatchbull-Hugessen, Majendie, adjournment: Baird)

March 9: That the establishment of colleges for working men would materially conduce to the social welfare of the community (motion: Messenger, amendment: Charley)

March 16: That Mr. Gladstone is a fit and proper person to represent the University of Oxford in the ensuing Parliament (motion: Fogg, adjournment: Talbot)

Easter:

May 4: That the Opium Trade carried on with China is a disgrace to the English Nation (motion: Fogg as proxy for Nihill, a non-member spoke at the debate without being detected by the president)

June 8: That a Second Reform Bill is called for by the circumstances of the times (motion: Le Poer Wynne, amendment: Arnold, adjournment: Bush)

June 15: That the proposed scheme for extending Academic examinations to the Working classes is undesirable (motion: Penny)

June 22: That the Irish branch of the Established Church merits our warmest sympathy under recent attacks (motion: Charley)

Michaelmas:

October 26: That a more general and equal distribution of wealth (though not to be attempted by any violent or artificial means) is of great importance to the social and commercial welfare of the country (motion: Green)

November 9: That the admission of Jews to Parliament ought to be no longer delayed (motion: Dickson)

November 16: That the recent Divorce Bill is in the main wise and just enactment (motion: Messenger, adjournment: Rev. C. Alabaster due to concerns that the discussion would involve theological questions, adjournment: Morley)

November 23: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Baird)

November 30: That Conservative principles are fallacious and Conservatism a failure (motion: Daniel, amendment: Ryder, adjournment: Ormerod seconded by Scott)

December 7: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Knatchbull-Hugessen)

1858

Lent:

February 1: That the evils arising from the present political position of Clergymen should be remedied by the revival of Convocation, and by special representation of the clergy in the House of Commons (motion: President (Fowle), amendment: Baird, adjournment: Wild)

February 8: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendments: Wild, Arnold, adjournment: Scott seconded by King Smith)

February 15: That the country is bound, under present circumstances, to protest against any alteration in the Laws relating to refugees on conspiracy (motion: Green, amendment: Gale, Wilberforce's amendment was ruled to be irrelevant by the president)

February 22: That the Political career of Sir R. Peel has exercised an unfavourable influence on the Statesmanship of the day (motion: King-Smith, adjournment: Neale)

March 1: That the general policy of Lord Palmerston's government has not deserved the confidence of the country (motion: Austen, amendment: Dickson)

Easter:

May 17: That any change in the system of Indian government ought to tend to strengthen the power of that government (motion: Butler-Johnstone, amendment: Dicey, adjournment: Wace)

May 24: That the University Commission was greatly wanted, has conferred many benefits on Oxford, and may profitably extend its functions (motion: Hon. E.L. Stanley, adjournment: Arnold seconded by Knatchbull-Hugessen)

May 31: (adjourned debate) same as above

June 14: That Lord Macaulay, whether viewed as an Essayist or as a Historian, has conferred great benefits on the Country (motion: Tollemache, amendment: Baird, Wilberforce to the amendment which was overruled by the Chairman)

Michaelmas:

October 25: That it is just and expedient that vote by ballot should be employed in the election of Members of Parliament (motion: Dicey, adjournment: Beaumont)

November 1: That the political, social, and literary influence of Mr. Carlyle has been most important and beneficial (motion: Morley, amendment: Coldwell, adjournment: King-Smith which was opposed by Rutson)

November 8: (adjourned debate) same as above

November 15: That the principles of Foreign policy recently enunciated by Mr. Bright, demand the support of the nation (motion: Green, adjournment: Butler-Johnstone, amendments: Dicey, Jackson (latter was not allowed by the President), adjournment: Knatchbull-Hugessen)

November 22: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: Hall)

December 6: That no Reform Bill can be accepted by the Country which does not provide for a liberal extension of the franchise and a further redistribution of representatives according to the ratio of population (motion: Fowle, amendment: Thompson, adjournment: Beaumont)

December 13: (adjourned debate) same as above

1859

Lent:

February 10: That French interference in Italy is not only objectionable in itself, but prejudicial to the cause of liberty in Italy (motion: Hon E. L. Stanley, rider: MacKay, adjournment: Arnold)

February 17: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Arnold)

March 3: That there is no urgent necessity for an Extension of the Franchise, and that the provisions of Mr. Bright's proposed Reform Bill are too sweeping (motion: Crawford, amendment: Beaumont, adjournment: Dickson)

March 10: (adjourned debate) same as above (rider for Beaumonts amendment: Dickson, adjournment: Jackson)

March 17: (adjourned debate) same as above

Easter:

June 2: That John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, is worthy of our highest admiration, alike for his inviolable loyalty, his constancy, and consummate excellence as a leader, and that the cruelties laid to his charge were no more than acts which the necessity of the times and his duty to the Crown, fully justified and required of him (motion: Urquhart, amendment: Overton)

June 9: That the hasty execution of Tantia Topee [Indian freedom fighter] was impolitic and unnecessary (motion: Webb)

June 30: That Mr. Gladstone deserves the support of this University (motion: Puller, amendment: Urquhart)

Michaelmas:

October 27: That England being indebted for her present greatness to the excellence of her manufactures, all interests should be held subservient to the manufacturing interest (motion: Cutler, amendments: Hon. E. L. Stanley, King)

November 17: That Universal Suffrage is desirable, and that, while it may be questioned whether we are ripe for it at present, this House will never regard Reform as completed until it is carried (motion: Tollemache, amendment: Sir R. Blennerhassett, adjournment: Cutler seconded by Little)

November 24: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Burney, adjournment: Messenger which was opposed by Arnold, amendment: Messenger)

1860

Lent:

January 26: That the present government is unworthy of the confidence of the nation (motion: Robinson)

February 9: That a belief in supernatural appearances is not wholly inconsistent either with our natural instincts or an enlightened reason (motion: Smith, amendment: Coldwell, adjournment: Magrath)

February 16: (adjourned debate) same as above

February 23: That the Budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer merits the cordial approbation of the House (motion: Farrell, amendment: MacKay, adjournment: Rutson seconded by Harrison)

March 1: (adjourned debate) same as above

March 8: That any extension of the franchise should tend to give increased influence to education and separate representations to the learned professions (motion: Cutler, amendment: Hon. R. C. E. Abbot)

Easter:

April 26: That the dissolution of the Monasteries and other religious houses in the reign of King Henry VIII was as impolitic as it was unjust (motion: Jackson, amendment: Hon. R. C. E. Abbot)

May 17: That in the opinion of this House the War with the French Republic in 1793 was wise, just, and necessary (motion: Hon. R. C. E. Abbot, adjournment: Urquhart seconded by Bullocke)

May 24: That Garibaldi's expedition deserves our warmest sympathy and support (motion: Mackay, adjournment: Urquhart, opposed by Mackay and Dicey, amendments: Oxenham, Hon. R.C.E. Abbot, adjournment: Lockhart)

May 31: (adjourned debate) same as above

June 14: That Mr. Disraeli has shewn himself unfit to lead the Conservative party (motion: Butler)

Michaelmas:

November 1: That the tendency of the stage is immoral (motion: Magrath as proxy for Robinson, amendments: Hon. R. C. E. Abbot, President (Beaumont))

November 8: That the general policy of England towards China has been unworthy of so great a nation; but that the present war was rendered necessary by the conduct of the Chinese themselves (motion: Bassett-Key, amendment: Burney)

November 22: That the Times newspaper exercises a world-wide influence for evil (motion: Robinson, amendment: Hon. R. C. E. Abbot)

1861

Lent:

January 24: That in elections to Fellowships, it is very undesirable that regard should be had solely to intellectual qualifications (motion: Robinson)

January 31: That Mazzini has been grossly maligned, and deserves our sympathy and respect (motion: Beesly)

February 7: That the final dismemberment of the United States of America is an event greatly to be desired (motion: Butler, amendments: Hon. E. L. Stanley, Hon. R. C. E. Abbot)

February 14: That the political antecedents of Lord Palmerston justify us in placing the greatest confidence in his administration of public affairs (motion: How)

February 21: That England is bound at all hazards to check the slave trade in America (motion: Blair, amendments: Brown, How)

February 28: That this House, considering the National Church should be an integral part of the British Constitution, is opposed to the abolition of Church Rates on grounds of principle as well as of expediency (motion: Hon. R. C. E. Abbot, amendment: Cuthbert, adjournment: Beaumont)

March 7: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendment: Gorman, but was not put as president ruled it not having anything new to offer; Gorman gave notice of appeal against president's decision, which was lost by a majority of 55 on April 21st)

Easter:

April 18: That the Poles, in the event of their endeavouring to regain their independence, will be entitled to the sympathy of this country, and that the re-establishment of the kingdom of Poland is greatly to be desired (motion: Vidal, adjournment: Farrell)

April 25: (adjourned debate) same as above

May 2: That this House, on account of the unsettled state of Europe, does not think the present a fitting time to remit taxes, and is of opinion that the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his budgets pays too much attention to beauty of language, and too little to the best interests of the country (motion: Curtis, adjournment: Oxenham, opposed by Mackay)

May 9: That the conduct of the Conservative party in Parliament for the last three years has not entitled it to the confidence of the country (motion: Urquhart, amendment: Gem)

May 30: That it is desirable that the qualification for the Franchise in towns should be education not property (motion: Webb, amendment: Lister)

Michaelmas:

October 24: That the organization of the trade unions is necessary, and their policy on the whole justifiable (motion: Simcox, amendment: Bagwell)

November 7: That in their quarrel with the Austrian government the Hungarians have taken up a position which is deserving of our sympathy (motion: Bagwell)

November 21: That the so-called Conservative Reaction in England is a Conservative Delusion (motion: Beesly)

December 5: That this House approves of that part of the Constitution lately granted by the Emperor of Austria to his subjects which confers the Franchise on Women (motion: Lister)

1862

Lent:

February 13: That the opposition of Dissenters to the Church of England has been of late years malicious and unreasonable (motion: Moore, amendment: R. C. Crosthwaite)

February 20: That England's colonies and foreign dependencies are the main elements of England's strength and that to emancipate them or give them up would be most dangerous (motion: Gribble)

February 27: That the use of euphemisms, inasmuch as they tend to conceal the deformity of vice, is highly prejudicial to morality (motion: Bazely)

March 6: That the Saturday Review, though a paper of great ability, in its general tone is not to be commended (motion: Sandford)

March 20: That such reforms in the University are wanted, as will make it more accessible generally to the nation (motion: Hon. E. L. Stanley)

March 27: That Universal Suffrage, so graduated as to leave the Middle Classes supreme, should be the great aim of modern English Statesmen (motion: Reade, amendment: George)

Easter:

May 29: That this House views the attitude of the Conservative party towards Italy with great dislike (motion: O'Hanlon, adjournment: Fearon)

June 5: (adjourned debate) same as above

June 12: That the state of pauperism in London calls for interference on the part of the government (motion: Hon. A. E. W. M. Herbert)

June 19: That no scheme of parliamentary reform can be regarded as final which leaves the system of representation on an exclusively local basis (motion: Berkley)

June 26: That the present high character of the periodical press of England is principally due to the system of anonymous writing (motion: Tancock)

Michaelmas:

October 30: That a public inquiry ought to be held to decide whether it be politic and just to retain Gibraltar (motion: O'Hanlon)

November 6: That a state of comparative barbarism is preferable to one of advanced civilization (motion: Babington, amendments: Berry, Hatch)

November 20: That the present ministry is a disgrace to the country (motion: Towgood, amendment: Hon. R. C. E. Abbot)

November 27: That Mr. Disraeli's political conduct fully deserves the confidence of the country (motion: Dombrain)

December 11: That in any Society or Body, a perception of its faults should lead members to endeavour to reform, and not to secede from that society (motion: Girdlestone)

1863

Lent:

February 5: That it is the duty of England to use every endeavour to prevent for the future the importation of slave-grown produce (motion: Rogers, amendments: Morris, Ilbert)

February 19: That the moral support accorded by England to the Southern Confederacy is a disgrace to the Country (motion: Berkley)

February 26: That a study of the Classics ought to form the basis of every Lady's education (motion: Black, amendment: Girdlestone)

March 19: That the Daily News and the "Advanced School" which it represents deserve the highest reprobation (motion: Jeune)

Easter:

April 30: That the abolition of religious tests in the University would be neither unjust nor prejudicial to the University (motion: Benett)

May 14: That Mr. Gladstone is unworthy to represent this University in Parliament (motion: Ll. Thomas, amendment: Langmead)

June 4: That the foreign policy of the present government in Europe has not deserved the approval of the Country (motion: Webster)

Michaelmas:

November 5: That party administrations are fatal to the best interests of the nation (motion: Hatch)

November 12: That it is expedient that the votes at parliamentary elections be taken by way of ballot (motion: Strachan-Davidson)

1864

Lent:

February 11: That in the opinion of this Society the Established Church of Ireland should be Roman Catholic and not Protestant (motion: Reade, opener: Slipper, amendment: Strachan-Davidson, adjournment: Mylne)

February 18: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: Batson)

March 3: That this House wishes to express its full confidence in the present ministry (motion: Slipper, amendment: Crawley, adjournment: Phillimore, opposed by Morris and supported by Walker)

March 10: (adjourned debate) same as above

Easter:

April 14: That this House would view with regret any considerable changes in the systems of our Public Schools (motion: Acland, adjournment: Cobham supported by Mackinnon and opposed by Slipper, Morris, Black, adjournment: Tinné, opposed by Black and Morris, supported by Acland, Mackinnon, Batson and Slipper)

April 21: (adjourned debate) same as above

April 28: That the conduct and moral opinions of M. Mazzini and his party are deserving of the reprobation of Europe (motion: Phillimore, rider: Jackson (Fearon objected the rider as irrelevant but was overruled), adjournment: Nash opposed by Williams and Black, supported by Robinson (Higgins moved for division on the motion but was overruled))

May 19: England ought to go to war with Germany, should the latter persist, after the Conference, in occupying Jutland, or in demanding of Denmark payment of the German war-expenses (motion: Girdlestone, amendment: Browne)

May 26: That it would be unworthy of the dignity of the Legislature to defer a fair consideration of the question of Parliamentary reform (motion: Duggan, adjournment: Freeman, opposed by Slipper, Morris and Girdlestone, adjournment: Freeman, amendment: Phillimore)

Michaelmas:

October 27: That it is expedient that Mr. Gladstone should continue to represent this University (motion: Maurice, adjournment: Mylne opposed by Phillimore)

December 1: That the abolition of religious tests in the University ought to be no longer delayed (motion: Strachan-Davidson, amendment: Beavan (was not put because President ruled it to be "equivalent to the negative of the Motion"), adjournment: G.A. Simcox seconded by Duggan)

December 8: (adjourned debate) same as above

1865

Lent:

February 2: That the restoration of the Monastic Orders would be beneficial to Society (motion: Bromby, adjournment: Geldart, opposed by Black and supported by Robinson)

February 9: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: Rev. E.W. Urquhart opposed by Nash, Girdlestone rose to order and was given a reply by the President, adjournment: Braithwaite seconded by Morris, amendment: Phillimore)

February 14: (adjourned debate) same as above

February 23: That this House entirely disapproves of the Political career of the Right Hon. B. Disraeli (motion: Duggan, adjournment: Butler)

March 9: That it is unjust that woman should be excluded from any political or social rights (motion: Tinné, amendment: Williams)

March 23: That the frequency of strikes is due to the superficial education of the working classes (motion: Girdlestone, amendment: Robinson)

Easter:

May 4: That this house deeply regrets the late successes of the Federal arms and believes the triumph of the government at Washington to be fatal to the freedom of America (motion: MacKinnon, adjournment: Beaven)

May 11: (adjourned debate) same as above (adjournment: Bousfield, opposed by Robinson, Freeman and Simcox, Bousfield withdrew his motion with the sanction of the President, adjournment: Nash, opposed by Russell, Phillimore and Clive, supported by Lawes, adjournment: Nash, opposed by Phillimore, Williams, Geldart and Robinson; at 11.30pm the House closed the debate "in accordance with the Rule XLIV as amended.")

May 18: That in the choice of a University Representative regard should be paid rather to character and attainments than to adhesion to a party creed (motion: Geldart, amendment: Wood)

May 25: That every man, not morally or intellectually disqualified, ought to have a voice in the representation of the country (motion: Russell)

June 15: That an ample justification of Liberalism in Politics is to be found in the history of the last half-century (motion: Duggan)

Michaelmas:

October 26: That this House sees no reason to regret the introduction of the Great Western Company's works into Oxford (motion: E.E. Morris, amendment: R. Robinson)

November 16: That the disgraceful way in which Parliamentary elections are conducted affords a main argument against any extension of the franchise (motion: S. Theodore Wood, amendments: C. MacKinnon, Beaven)

December 7: That the extension of the University by the removal of the qualification of college residence for a degree is highly desirable (motion: Cockin, amendments: Braithwaite, Geldart, Beaven)

1866

Lent:

February 8: That this House is of opinion that the severities lately practiced in Jamaica were unnecessary and unjustifiable (motion: Phillimore, amendment: Lord Warkworth)

March 8: That in the opinion of this House the present Government has not as yet proved itself worthy of the confidence of the nation (motion: Campbell MacKinnon, amendment: Robinson)

Easter:

April 19: That an extension of the franchise is highly undesirable (motion: Nash, amendment: Northcote, adjournment: Batson, opposed by Mackinnon, Oddis and Northcote, Russell pressed for adjournment, amendment: Wood)

April 26: That whenever all classes of the community are adequately represented in Parliament it will be the duty of government to propose a system of compulsory education (motion: Duggan, amendment: Simcox)

Michaelmas:

October 18: That the late change of government is highly beneficial to the English nation (motion: Hardy (?), amendment: Arbuthnot)

October 25: That the policy of Count Bismarck has been conducive to the best interests of Europe (motion: Hatch)

November 8: That in the opinion of this House Mr Bright is a reproach to the country that gave him birth (motion: Geldart, amendment: Treasurer, adjournment: Fyffe, adjournment: Beaven, amendment: Beaven)

November 22: That in the opinion of this house there is urgent need for a large measure of University Reform (motion: C.S.D. Acland)

December 6: That a more frequent discussion of literary and historical subjects would be advantageous to the public debates at the Union (motion: W.R. Anson)

1867

Lent:

February 14: That the establishment of a system of compulsory education in this country is both desirable and practicable (motion: Brown, amendment: R. Smith)

March 14: That a generous concession on the Reform question will be a real benefit to the Conservative Party (motion: J.E. Stocks)

Easter:

May 2: That the government ought to be supported in their endeavours to carry a sound and Constitutional Reform Bill (motion: R. Smith, amendment: Richards)

May 20: That international morality demands from England the future relinquishment of India (motion: Cotton, proposal to enforce Rule 52: Nash, Pres-

ident did not enforce the rule, Nash enquired when he could make an appeal against President's decision)

June 13: That the events of the last 30 years render necessary the reconstruction of the Upper House of Parliament (motion: Stocks, adjournment: Coles supported by Treasurer and Jackson, opposed by Geldart, the mover corrected his statement, adjournment: Stocks, supported by Coles and opposed by Nash)

June 20: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendments: Nash, Browne)

Michaelmas:

October 24: That the passing of the Reform Bill by Mr Disraeli has ruined the character of the Conservative Party for consistency and principle (motion: Cotton)

November 21: That Wordsworth is the greatest poet of the country (motion: Hollings)

November 28: That the abolition of capital punishment for crimes other than treason is demanded by expediency and morality (motion: Nicholson, amendment: Williams)

December 5: That this house dissents from the doctrine of culture taught by Mr Matthew Arnold (motion: Ward)

1868

Lent:

February 13: That in the opinion of this House Education ought to be made compulsory in this country (motion: Dale)

February 27: That all the present projects of University Reform are unadvisable (motion: Cornish)

March 12: That this House regrets that it should have been necessary to entrust the Post of Prime Minister to so dishonest a politician as Mr. Disraeli (motion: Doyle, amendment: Moore)

Easter:

April 23: That this House disapproves of the course taken by the Liberal Party in Parliament in the recent debate and division upon the Irish Church (motion: Pope as proxy for T.F. Dale, adjournment: Colley)

April 30: (adjourned) same as above (adjournment: Robertson)

May 7: (adjourned) same as above (amendment: W.W. Wood)

May 21: That this House desires to see Mr Gladstone speedily invested with the Premiership (motion: A. Bathe)

June 11: That an absolute monarchy in England would improve our foreign policy, our domestic legislation, our art, our literature, and our morality (motion: Morice, adjournment: Fyffe, who withdrew his motion)

Michaelmas:

October 29: That Sir Roundell Palmer is the fittest and worthiest Representative of this University (motion: Geldart, amendment: Lewis, adjournment: Morice, seconded by Lindon)

November 6: That the first duty of a Statesman is to preserve his own honour (motion: Morice)

November 12: That Mr. Bright is the greatest statesman of the age (motion: Bernays, amendment: Lewis, adjournment: Harrison)

November 19: (adjourned debate) same as above (amendments: Reith, Nicholson, adjournment: Pead, seconded by: Birkett, at 11.30 pm the President moved adjournment of debate)

December 10: That this House views with apprehension and regret the accession of the self-styled 'Liberal' party to power, and earnestly hopes that the exclusion of Mr. Disraeli and the Tory party from office will be of short duration (motion: Beaven, point of order: Figgins, amendment: Geldart)

1869

Lent:

January 28: That Mr. J. S. Null's exclusion from Parliament is a national loss (motion: Bernays)

February 4: That the time is now come for separation of Church and State (motion: Jeans, adjournment: Gregory, Duffan)

February 11: (adjourned debate) same as above (rider: Lewis, adjournment: MacClymont)

February 18: (adjourned debate) same as above

Easter:

April 22: That the establishment of a system of compulsory education for the lower classes would be beneficial to the social and political condition of England (motion: A.C. Garbett, amendment: Cotton)

April 29: That the admission of women to the suffrage is desirable (motion: J. Cross, amendment: Tanner)

May 6: That Toryism in England is defunct and deservedly so (motion: S. Dawes, amendment: Smith)

Michaelmas:

October 28: That the House of Lords should cease to exist (motion: Richards, adjournment: Jeans)

November 18: That clubs open to working men should be established at the public expense (motion: Higgs)

1870

Lent:

February 10: That the candidature of Odger for Southwark deserves the approval of this House (motion: Cotton, rider: Richard Smith)

February 17: That vote by ballot violates the true principles of political freedom and ought to form no part of the programme of the Liberal government (motion: C.R. MacChymont, amendment: Robertson)

March 24: That any scheme for the promotion of female suffrage is absurd and impracticable (motion: Mowbray)

Easter:

April 28: That the increase of democratic principles in England is to be deeply regretted (motion: Ellis Ashmead Bartlett)

May 5: (adjourned debate) same as above

June 9: That extensive reforms in the system of university education at Oxford are desirable (motion: J.R. Sturgis)

Michaelmas:

November 3: That it is desirable that the Bishops should retain their seats in the House of Lords (motion: Forbes)

APPENDIX 3: A SUMMARY OF THE RULE CHANGES IN THE UNION SOCIETIES

Cambridge Union Society:

1815: Cambridge Union Society is established.

1817: The society is dissolved on the orders of the university authorities. It continues as a reading club.

1821: Debates are resumed.

1824: The aim of the society is written down as the 'discussion of any subjects, but those of a theological nature, and political questions of a date subsequent to the year 1800'.

1826: Oxford Union Society is first mentioned in its records.

1828: The rules of the society are named 'laws'.

10 November 1830: President Orde receives a letter from University Proctor regarding the fact that Cambridge Union Society has raised an issue relating to politics of the day in its meeting.

3 May 1831: Debates on political events of the past twenty years become prohibited.

8 November 1831: The law to restrict debates on political issues was demolished.

1834: For the first time, new members are admitted without balloting.

Any member of the University is accepted as a member of the Society for a payment.

16 May 1836: It is proposed for the first time that the Cambridge Union Society begins to put questions of debate in the form of resolutions.

13 December 1836: There is another proposition for putting questions in form of resolutions.

1841: The secretary is given the duty to keep in contact and send copies of the society's Laws to Oxford Union Society and Historical Society of Dublin.

The standing committee of the society is founded.

1842: The rooms the society occupies in Park Street are enlarged and renovated.

17 May 1842: Galton of Trinity College proposes that the Union Society adopts the form of making motions.

21 November 1842: Ogier of Trinity College suggests that the Union Society orders *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* instead of the *Mirror of Parliament* which is no longer published.

1843: The Cambridge Union Society runs into financial difficulties caused by the costs of renovation as well as incorrect accounting conducted by its former Senior Clerk.

29 May 1843: Ogier of Trinity College proposes that the Cambridge Union Society sells its collections of the *Mirror of Parliament* to Hansards who had offered to buy them for 15 £.

1844: The standing committee revises the Laws of the Union Society.

1845: The aims of the society written in the laws are now the following: first, the promotion of debate, secondly, the maintenance of the library, thirdly, the supply of newspapers and other periodicals.

All the resolutions and laws of the society previous to those made after 11 February 1845 are repealed.

1848: Members of Oxford Union and Dublin College Historical Societies are made honorary members of the Society.

Appeals against president's decisions are subjected to a 'Committee of the whole House'.

For the first time laws concerning public and private business meetings of the society are separated.

The mover of adjournment of debate is named as the opener of the next debate in the following public business meeting.

It becomes the duty of the chairman to make sure that the number of members present is forty before any vote is taken.

The standing committee now includes also the president, treasurer, and secretary.

Any member is permitted to demand a poll on any motion in private business.

1849: Any member may announce his wish to speak in opposition of the motion chosen for debate before the next public business meeting.

1853: Members of London Union Society are permitted to participate in the debates of the society.

The office of vice-president is established as the head of 'executive department'.

The office of treasurer becomes annual.

The rule is added to the Laws of the society that no motion that has been put for debate can be withdrawn 'without leave of the House'.

In case no proposals for debate is offered for public business meeting it becomes the duty of the vice-president or secretary to provide one.

Members are allowed to record their vote in a book in case they want to leave the debate before the division.

Motions and amendments are only put in case they are proposed and seconded.

1855: Adjournment of discussion of a motion *sine die* requires a simple majority.

1858: Rule concerning amendments is changed that votes on them are conducted only after the reply of the opener of the debate.

President is given the discretionary power to refuse a vote on a motion or an amendment, unless it is proposed by a member who has taken part in the debate on them.

The building fund of the society is established.

1863: 'Strangers' are permitted to attend the public business meetings of the society with an endorsement of a member.

1866: Inauguration of the new buildings of the society.

1867: The procedure of voting is written down in the laws.

1868: A rule is added that a proposer of a motion for adjournment should only speak to that motion.

Members of the Society are given the right to publish the subject of debate, the result, and the names of the speakers.

1870: Any member may ask questions from the vice-president on anything that affects the Society at the beginning of private business meetings after giving a notice.

Oxford Union Society:

1823: The Oxford Union Debating Society is founded.

1824: Adopts the form of making motions instead of questions in its debates.

1825: The society is dissolved and re-established as Oxford Union Society.

1837: The aim of the society is declared to be the 'discussion of any subject not immediately involving Theological questions'.

In the rules it is stated that the questions for debate shall be put in the form of a motion.

Members of Cambridge Union and Dublin Historical Societies are named as honorary members.

'Strangers' are admitted to the public business meetings.

1842: The society appointed a committee to revise the rules concerning the role of president.

1848: All the rules of the society were revised by an appointed select committee.

1849: Standing committee of the society was constituted. It became in charge of the revision of rules.

1851: Members of London Union Society and all Masters of Arts are permitted to take part in the public debates of the society.

Roundell Palmer, MP for Plymouth, was "reinstated" as a member of the society.

1852: The suggested amendments to the rules were submitted to the society.

1853: Members of Cambridge Union and Dublin Historical Societies are allowed to participate in the public debates of the society.

Any member who has proposed a motion or adjourned a debate on one and fails to open a new debate is fined.

Standing Orders of the society are written down in the rules of the society for the first time.

1856: Members of Durham Union Society are made honorary members of the society.

The rule that the president decides every question of order is amended so that it is explicitly stated that president cannot decide against the established rules or interpret a rule in contradiction to another.

Members of the society were permitted to pose questions to standing committee before the commencement of public debates.

Public and private business meetings are more clearly kept apart. Also the rules regarding the proceedings of the two types of meetings are separated.

Motions of 'private' members and standing committee are distinguished in the rules.

Polls were mentioned in the rules for the first time.

1858: A Standing Order prohibits publication of speeches delivered at society's meetings.

1859: H. R. H. The Prince of Wales was elected honorary member of the society.

1863: The society moved to a new building.

1864: All new members of the university, by payment of a fee for one term, were allowed to attend the debates and enjoy privileges of the society, except taking part in private business meetings.

1867: A rule was added that no speech should be permitted to last more than half an hour.

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