The debate, however, did not end. Despite the nearly perfect deco of the occasion, the *Chronicle*'s writers continued to believe that "Assem blages of the whole of the working population are not within the lim of the allowable exercises of liberty" (MC 22 April 1834: 4). A "We Wisher of Old England" wrote the *Times* that the upper and middle clas should revive volunteer forces to combat the working-class menace (T 22 April 1834: 6). In the House of Lords, the Marquess of Londonderr complained that the relative success of the great march had only encou aged the unionists: 15,000 new members had recently signed up, said h workers were using the funerals of their fellow members as pretexts f additional demonstrations in the streets, and "In his neighbourhood, o Sunday last, there were not fewer than 6,000 or 7,000 men congregated and moving in procession and array, to the great terror of the peaceabl and well-disposed inhabitants" (HPD 28 April 1834: 96). As beggars three-card-monte dealers, unlicensed vendors, and street preachers toda take their places on crowded sidewalks, dissident ordinary citizens moved into the ambiguous space provided by public festivals and ceremonies.

The marquess made the same reference to "terror" as had the chie magistrate's declaration two days before the procession; both echoed the phrase *in terrorem populi,* which was sanctified by the 1714 Riot Act: with an hour's warning, magistrates could label as a riot any assembly of twelve or more persons who frightened the public and threatened to break the law; after the requisite hour, magistrates could have such assemblies broken up by force. Yet the Marquess of Londonderry, Chief Magistrate Roe, the Well-Wisher of Old England, and the *Morning Chronicle* all faced a problem: the orderly workers who marched through London's streets were not clearly breaking any law, not even threatening to break any Public officials had to recognize that this sort of mobile meeting stayed just within legal limits and built on many precedents. By 1834 what we now call a demonstration had legal standing as a way of making claims of demonstrating that large numbers of determined people stood behind a particular program, demand, or party.

A Change of Repertoires

What set off this class of events from other public gatherings? Not the large numbers, as such; thousands of people also moved through the streets at such public ceremonies as the procession of Lord Mayor's Day. Nor the public presentation of a petition, which had been common practice for seventy years. The thronged petition march and the funeral processions stood out from other gatherings by the fact that ordinary people clearly identified with formal associations—in this case, trade unions—publicly displayed their numbers, determination, uprightness, and internal discipline in support of a well-defined set of claims. They acted autonomously, and they made demands of the national government: in the event at hand, demands to pardon the Dorchester laborers.

In retrospect, we can see as precedents the behavior of partisans during eighteenth-century elections and the many marches of John Wilkes's supporters during the disputes over his elections to Parliament in 1768 and 1769. By 1780 some public leaders had argued that Committees of Correspondence and similar associations had the right to put pressure on Parliament and the government. The idea of a "mass platform" on which ordinary people could state their views concerning matters coming before Parliament, promoted by such militants as Henry Hunt, had gained credibility after the end of the Napoleonic Wars (Belchem 1978, 1981, 1986). But the right of associations involving relatively powerless people to voice their claims by gathering publicly and marching became well established only in the 1820s and 1830s. The *Morning Chronicle*'s commentators were observing a relatively new form of contention.

The newspaper's editors also mentioned "strikes," "picketing," and "scouting"—not only concerted withdrawals from work, but also organized exclusion of potential strikebreakers from places of employment—as unacceptable novelties. In 1834 these forms of collective interaction hovered at the brink of legality; they were becoming common but lacked the standing of the street march or the public meeting. In a longer perspective, nevertheless, it is remarkable how many different forms of contention that remained standard into the twentieth century began to dominate popular action during the four decades from 1790 to 1830.

The newcomers included the public meeting, the petition by a special-interest association, the demonstration, the single-establishment strike, and the national social movement. As compared with the forms of contention that prevailed in the eighteenth century, the innovations more often took a national scale and aimed at national holders of power. They relied less frequently on patrons and other intermediaries to transmit their entreaties or demands to authorities. The participants spoke more frequently in the name of a self-identified interest. Such a form as the public meeting transferred with relative ease from group to group, place to place, issue to issue. In comparison with relatively parochial, particular, and bifurcated eighteenth-century forms of action, they were cosmopolitan, modular, and autonomous. A new repertoire of contention was crystallizing, and displacing an older one.

So many historians of popular contention have either misread or assumed *a priori* the long-term trends—supposedly toward class-conscious militancy, toward compromise and pacification, toward rationality, or toward something else—that previous historiography leaves unclear exactly what we must explain. Accordingly, my aim in this chapter is not to explain the great changes, but to clarify what happened. Later chapters will wallow in explanation, but this one will skim lightly over its surface. The chapter will, in compensation, plunge deeply into the available evidence.

Problems, Sources, Methods

The analyses that follow do not recount the full history of British collective action. They concentrate on moments in which people gathered to make visible, public claims, acted on those claims in one way or another, then turned to other business. In stressing open, collective, discontinuous contention, the analyses neglect individual forms of struggle and resistance as well as the routine operation of political parties, labor unions, patron-client networks, and other powerful means of collective interaction, except when they produce visible contention in the public arena. They do so in an effort to make the analysis of collective interaction manageable, in the conviction that contention is an important subject for its own sake, and in the hope that the careful analysis of collective contention will also lend insight into individual action, continuous contention, and non-contentious collective interaction.

The central body of evidence on which I draw comes from an enumeration of more than 8,000 "contentious gatherings" that occurred in Southeastern England during thirteen years scattered from 1758 to 1820 and in Great Britain as a whole during the seven years from 1828 to 1834. I chose the earlier thirteen years as a compromise among several partly contradictory desiderata: (1) spread over the entire period from 1750 to 1827; (2) availability of sources (for example Kent's trade directory for London) permitting an analysis of the geographic and social contexts of different kinds of contention; (3) adjacent years, where possible, in order to increase the continuity of the record; and (4) few enough periods that a small group of readers and transcribers could actually get through the sources in four or five years of part-time effort.

Although one might defend 1758 as a starting point because of its situation in the midst of the Seven Years War, in historical perspective nothing sets that year off from its neighbors; as the inquiry began, 1758 merely seemed the first year for which my group, working chiefly in the United States, could assemble broad evidence that would be roughly comparable to evidence available for later years. Sheer lack of time and resources made it impossible for me to collect systematic evidence for all of Great Britain during the thirteen earlier years. When it came to analyzing Great Britain as a whole, continuity became all the more important, not only because of the desirability of following recurrent conflicts through their courses but also because of the necessity of examining a great deal of evidence on the contexts of contention. After a good deal of experimentation with different sets of years, I chose 1828–1834 because in that period the British state made decisions—notably on parliamentary reform—that significantly affected the politics of the rest of the century. These two decisions yielded an odd array of years, but an interesting one.

In a contentious gathering (CG), a number of people—here, ten or more—outside of the government gathered in a publicly accessible place and made claims on at least one person outside their own number, claims which if realized would affect the interests of their object. My collaborators and I searched publications of the time and cataloged a total of 8,088 CGs; the appendix provides a detailed description of our sources and procedures. This catalog constitutes the core of my evidence on changes and variations in collective-action repertoires.

The "contentious gathering" acts as a spotlight. If we run a spotlight slowly across a dark terrain, how much we see at any instant depends as much on the power and focus of the beam as on the contents of the terrain. At any given look, furthermore, the frequency and mix of objects the spotlight brings into view are unreliable guides to their actual numbers and proportions across the whole terrain. If the beam sweeps from a fixed point, it best identifies objects lying close to that location. Slow movement of the light, however, does provide us with useful information about where there are many objects and where few; the spotlight works better in comparison than in description.

Similarly, the boundaries of the category "contentious gathering" are deliberately arbitrary, but broad enough to catch a wide range of collective interaction. The definition takes in just about every event for which authorities and observers used such terms as riot, disorder, disturbance, or affray, but also includes a great many peaceful meetings, processions, and other assemblies that escaped the wrath of authorities. Since salutes, cheers, and professions of support count as claims, the word "contentious" slightly misstates the character of events in the catalog. (Other possible terms—protest, claim-making, and so on—are either more cumbersome, more misleading, or both.) In any case, even professions of support for one party typically involved opposition to another party. Almost all the gatherings identified by the definition entailed genuine conflicts of interest; they included the public taking of stands that could—and often did—cost the actors and the objects of their action something.

In order to shield myself from an otherwise inevitable barrage of accusations and misunderstandings, let me make a few declarations of unfaith. I do not believe national periodicals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contain complete, unbiased enumerations and descriptions of all sorts of conflict. I do not think that "contentious gatherings" exhaust or represent all the means of collective action and interaction that were available to British people back then. I do not pretend that one can sum seizures of grain, parades, mass meetings, machine-breaking incidents, and demonstrations into a single number somehow indexing the quantity of anger, disturbance, or militancy prevailing in a whole complex country. I do not imagine that platoons of machine-readable data, strenuously disciplined, will line up in neat rows and shout out unexpected but true answers to great historical questions. I do not suppose, finally, that the forms of contention in Britain—or anywhere else—fall into a natural progression from traditional to modern, from simple to sophisticated, from expressive to instrumental, from ineffective to effective. Let me hope that readers and critics of this book will avoid attributing to me any of those views.

Yet I do believe some things. I assert that constraining histories of popular contention by reference to large, uniform catalogs of events reduces the temptation to let a few spectacular and well-documented conflicts dominate interpretations of change. My investigations convince me that contentious gatherings, however trivial taken one by one, had a significant cumulative effect on the conduct of public business in Britain. I am ready to argue that reports in periodicals contain sufficient information to document the larger changes and variations in popular contention over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I think it possible to identify and allow for biases in the sources we consult. I claim that Britain's contentious gatherings provide some evidence for alterations in a wider range of conflict and collective interaction, such as the day-to-day use of interpersonal networks. I suppose that large changes in the numbers and proportions of different kinds of gathering constitute evidence of more general shifts in the character of popular involvement in political struggle. I have some confidence that traces of the major social changes affecting popular contention appear in existing accounts of contentious gatherings, if only one has the patience and ingenuity to search them out. The general sense of the ebb and flow of contention conveyed by our sources deserves some credence.

Not everyone will accept that judgment. Roger Wells, who has dug deep into local records of conflict between 1793 and 1801, warns that "The press, even at the end of the eighteenth century, is an inconclusive source" (Wells 1988: 93). If we are looking for utter completeness, Wells is unquestionably correct. Drawing on multiple archives and periodicals, for example, Wells tabulates thirteen "disturbances" in Kent, Surrey, or Sussex from January through May 1795, during the great subsistence crisis (ibid.: 425). My group found reports on only four of these events in the *Times*, the *London Chronicle, Gentleman's Magazine,* or the *Annual Register.* Two of them our stringent rules disqualified because the reports did not establish clearly that ten or more persons had gathered in the same publicly accessible place and made claims on others. However, we also found a fourteenth open conflict over food at Brighthelmstone on 16 April, where "about 200 women and girls assembled before the Inn where the market is held, with a loaf of bread and a steak of beef hoisted on sticks, which they occasionally let fall to express their meaning that those articles must be lowered in price" (LC 23 April 1795: 388). Wells's catalog misses that event. Thus the score runs Wells Only 9, Tilly Only 1, Both

4. Many comparisons of our sample with detailed monographs come out in similar fashion. Wells has suggested, furthermore, that even his sources underestimate the number of "disturbances" (Wells 1990: 157).

So what should we conclude? Certainly that the enumerations drawn from periodicals miss many relevant events, especially smaller and vaguely reported events; that should warn us against attributing much importance to small differences and to comparisons based on small numbers of CGs. Since even Wells's exhaustive search misses events, however, the real question is whether unknown biases in the periodicals' reporting—we can, after all, usually adjust for known biases—vitiate large comparisons among periods, regions, social groups, or forms of action. With due confirmation wherever possible from other sources, I argue that we can draw reliable conclusions from those comparisons (see Appendix 1 for further discussion of reliability). The rigorous, uniform application of well-defined procedures reflects what happened between 1758 and 1834 at an unusual angle. Yet in that reflection we can still observe relations among reflected objects. Knowing the procedures of selection, furthermore, we can correct for the angle of vision they produce.

That reply, to be sure, leads immediately to another objection: Mark Harrison has complained that my research employs "a method for search for data related to collective behaviour which is designed to satisfy the retrieval needs of the computer, rather than a rich appreciation of context" (Harrison 1988: 17). On the contrary, I have had to push and bend computers ruthlessly in order to make them accept the rich material in the files of contentious gatherings. In fact, Harrison's basic procedure—the inventorying of crowd events from newspapers, supplemented by other sources—strikingly resembles my own. If Harrison's observation contains a legitimate reservation, it is that by including a large number of events in comparable form, the machine-readable record sacrificed some of the available detail on the contexts and internal sequences of the best-documented events; beyond a certain limit, comparability, coverage, and density pointed in somewhat different directions. But over 8,000 events, comparability of documentation and coverage of a considerable block of time and space have considerable advantages. One measure is this: From his compilation of crowd events in four English cities between 1790 and 1835, Harrison detects no significant changes in their character or settings; whatever defects my catalogs have, they provide abundant evidence of alterations in the same sorts of events within the Southeast between 1758 and 1834, and a reasonable case for shifts on the national scale as well.

Much depends, in any case, on what we are trying to measure. Wells assumes that historians should be studying something called "social protest," presumably because it gauges ordinary people's attitudes toward such changes as enclosures, freeing of the grain market, proletarianization, and imposition of the New Poor Law (Wells 1990). He is essentially searching for the "hidden transcripts" carrying shared but concealed resentments and aspirations that James Scott (1990) argues become the property of every durably subordinate group and serve as the bases of their concerted action. For that reason, Wells insists on the importance of going beyond the examination of big public events to the accumulation of evidence on arson, cattle-maiming, machine-breaking, perhaps even petty crime.

Indeed it is important to recognize that depending on the current tactical situation the same people turn from making public demands to burning hayricks and vice versa; coming to the Swing rebellion of 1830, we will observe exactly that sort of alternation. It is likewise important to see how risky it would be to infer a general state of mind and its changes from only one variety of action. But I reject that enterprise on two different grounds: first because it conflates the action with the presumably underlying attitude without allowing for the problematic connection between the two; second because it hinders treatment of this book's central problem, how and why the very means of collective interaction change and vary so dramatically in history. How and why, in particular, did mass national politics take shape? The study of changing attitudes, however profound, will not solve that problem. We must displace the inquiry toward social interaction, toward relations among groups, toward struggle, toward contention.

My doughty band of explorers was not the first to tread the ground of contention. We often encountered events already described by R. B. Rose, George Rudé, Eric Hobsbawm, the Hammonds, the Webbs, E. P. Thompson, John Bohstedt, John Stevenson, Andrew Charlesworth, and other cartographers of British conflicts. Although consulting their analyses seldom identified outright errors in the narratives we had drawn from our own sources, it provided essential context and interpretation while offering

Forms of Contention, Old and New

The following graphs portray some of the relevant changes. Figure 2.6 presents the proportions of meetings and violent gatherings in the Southeast over the span from 1758 to 1834. (*Meetings* include gatherings of named associations, official assemblies, and other preplanned public gatherings; *violent gatherings* include hunter-gamekeeper encounters, fights of smugglers with customs officers, attacks on blacklegs, and similar events.) The news is obvious: violent sorts of events declined from three-quarters of the total in the 1750s to around one-tenth in the 1830s. Meetings of one kind or another rose from 15 or 20 percent to over 80 percent of all CGs. With the exception of 1801 (when celebrations of the temporary peace, of the king, and of popular heroes swelled the number), the omitted category of nonviolent gatherings other than meetings continued to run from 5 to 10 percent of the total.

In the capital and elsewhere, meetings rose in prominence over the entire period from the 1750s to the 1830s and dominated contention from 1807 onward. The complex, mobile events of the eighteenth century gave way to the standardized meeting, in which an audience assembled in a hall or another enclosed space heard a relatively small number of

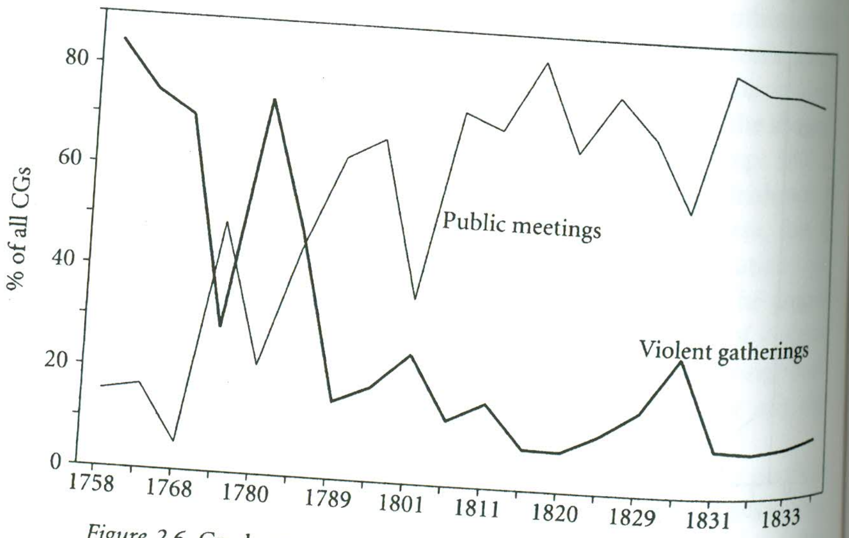

Figure 2.6. Crude event types, Southeastern England, 1758–1834

speakers pass through a familiar routine, often culminating in a resolution or a petition directed to Parliament or other national holders of power.

In the same process, groups taking part in contention altered significantly. The kinds of *individuals* participating probably changed much less than the guises in which they participated. Workers, for example, sometimes joined contention as workers, but they also appeared as parishioners, as members of crowds, as participants in Friendly Societies, as supporters of candidates, and in many other roles. In creating our records of contentious gatherings, we recorded and used the names our sources gave to formations: even if we suspected, for example, that the "mob" reported in the *Times* consisted entirely of workers, we transcribed the label *mob;* if the sources gave more than one name to the same formation, we recorded them all but gave priority to the one that was more precise or, failing that, more prominent in the accounts. Of the possible 10 million people who took part in one or another of the 8,088 CGs in the sample, we know the names of only about 26,000, and of them we rarely know much more than the names and the particular identities they brought to the gathering. The evidence therefore says little about changing patterns of individual participation in contention. It says a great deal, however, about the kinds of constituted groups publicly involved.

Figure 2.7 provides information for greatly aggregated categories of formation. I use these broad, debatable rubrics here in order to avoid burying the major trends in mounds of detail. ("Repressive formations" include military units, constables, police, sheriffs, gamekeepers, and others who have the legal right to coerce members of the public, while the term "inhabitants" refers to freeholders, electors, parishioners, ward members, inhabitants at large, and other sets of people identified by attachment to a common locality.) We might summarize the chief changes—including information from tabulations not shown here—in a series of observations:

1. Crowds, repressive formations, and economically designated groups fell from major to minor importance in British contention, with each one stabilizing at around 5 or 10 percent of the total after 1811.
2. Parliament (which "participated" in CGs chiefly as the absent object of other people's demands) rose from insignificance in the 1750s to a dominant position in the 1830s.
3. The king, ministers, and high officials (who likewise appeared in

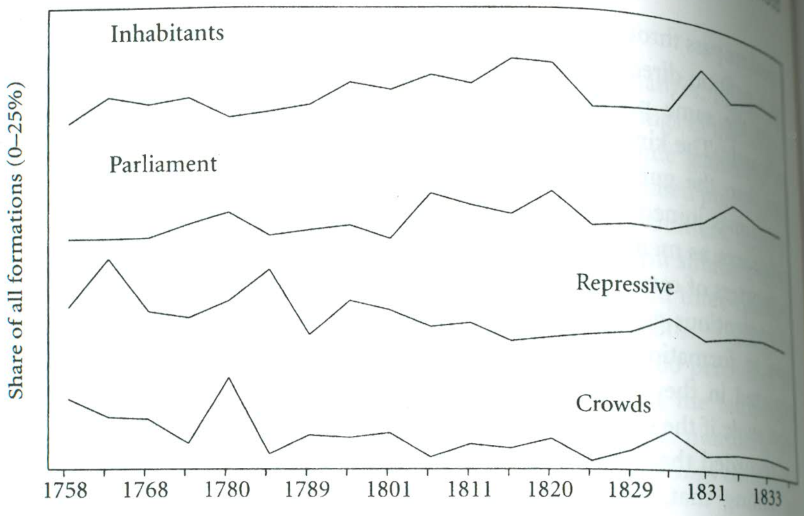

Figure 2.7. Selected formations, Southeastern England, 1758–1834

contentious gatherings primarily as objects of claims) swung considerably in importance, but typically constituted from one-twentieth to one-tenth of all formations.

4. Fluctuations in the participation of inhabitants and local officials generally occurred together, but over the long run inhabitants gained in relative importance while officials stayed in the vicinity of 15 percent of all formations.
5. Named individuals, religious groups, and organized interests neither rose nor fell decisively, but all had a few years of fairly extensive involvement in contention.
6. Between 1828 and 1834 changes in the relative involvement of different kinds of formation generally occurred simultaneously in the Southeast and the rest of Great Britain; named individuals, religious groups, local officials, and Parliament offered partial exceptions to the rule.

If we restrict the analysis to formations that participated directly in the CG, rather than watching or serving as absent objects of claims, the trends move in the same directions, but obviously the values for such categories as Parliament, royalty, and national officials run considerably lower; see Appendix 1, Tables A.3, A.4, and A.6, for details.

All in all, the evidence about broad categories of formations describes the rise to prominence of a pattern in which people united by common residence and/or a shared special interest gathered to call on Parliament to act. In later chapters we will see the pattern forming: freeholders, parishioners, association members, religious congregations, or local residents gathering publicly, even ostentatiously, to announce their preferences on action by the national government, especially by Parliament. In politics local standing and national standing acquired a new connection. If we define citizenship as a set of categorically defined rights and obligations between agents and subjects of a state, then citizenship came into being; it became an accepted basis for making claims on the national state.

Members of my research group transcribed the principal verb our sources used (or that we inferred from the sources) to describe each action, and called it an action-verb. The course of action-verbs within CGs refines the picture of changes in contentious repertoires. In Figure 2.8 we find the verbs from actions having an object, which excludes such actions as "move" and "end." (Roughly half of the 51,000 verbs in the entire set had objects.) The verb dictionary for the entire file covers 2,474 different verbs, from *abate* and *abuse* to *yell at* and *yield.* Here I have grouped the verbs in extremely broad categories in order to bring out

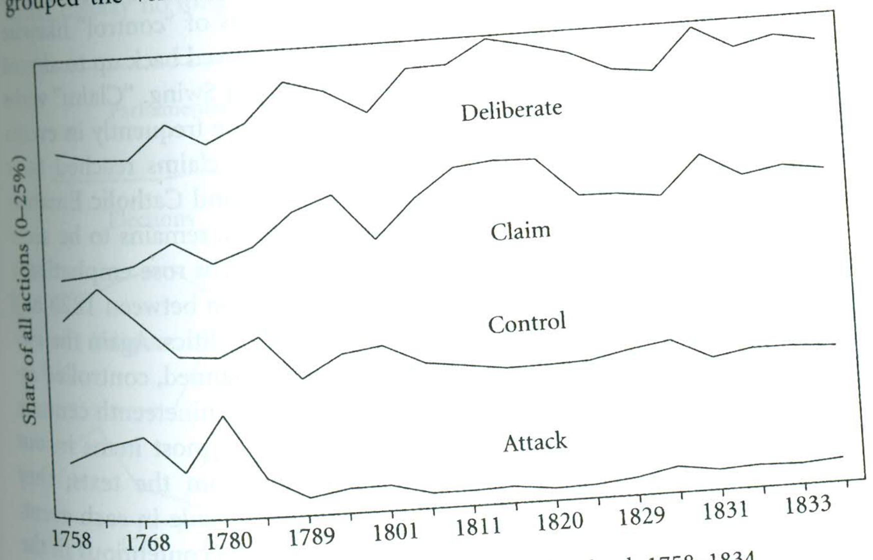

Figure 2.8. Selected actions, Southeastern England, 1758–1834

major trends. Examples of the verbs subsumed under the major headings are as follows:

ATTACK: alarm, annoy, assault, attack, batter, beat, beat off, besiege, beset;

CONTROL: apprehend, arouse, arrange, arrest, calm, capture, carry off, catch, caution;

CLAIM: accede, accept, admit, agitate, agree, allow, assert, claim, dare, defy, egg on;

DELIBERATE: add to, address, adopt, amend, answer, appoint, argue, bring before, call on.

(See Appendix 1, Table A.5, for more details on verb categories.) Altogether, these four portmanteau categories plus the trendless "support" (for example acclaim, acknowledge, admire, aid, applaud, approve, assent, assist, avow) contain 85 percent of the 25,239 actions having objects.

Even with this gross grouping of verbs, the trends between 1758 and 1834 are unmistakable. "Attack" verbs declined irregularly from the 1750s (when they ran about 30 percent of all verbs) to 1811 (when they reached about 10 percent), then remained in the range from 10–20 percent of all actions. The peaks arrived in 1768, 1780, and 1801, years respectively of Wilkes, Gordon, and subsistence struggles. Actions of "control" likewise fell rapidly, but reached their nadir in 1820 and moved back up to almost a quarter of all actions in 1830, the year of Captain Swing. "Claim" verbs had no decisive long-term trend, and appeared more frequently in events outside the Southeast than in London itself; why claims reached their highest level in 1828, during the mobilizations around Catholic Emancipation and repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, remains to be seen. Consistent with the rise of meetings, "deliberate" verbs rose emphatically over time, although the dramatic drop in deliberation between 1828 and 1830 indicates a temporary return to out-of-doors politics. Again the evidence describes a great shift of repertoires toward planned, controlled assemblies, and a pivot during the second decade of the nineteenth century.

The *major issues* of contentious gatherings, unlike most items in our machine-readable records, do not come directly from the texts; they represent our summaries of the major claims being made in each event, especially those claims which qualified the gathering as contentious in the first place. We recorded just one set of issues per CG. They are therefore

not as subtle as the distinctions among individual actions, but they give a sense of themes that connected actions with one another. Altogether, the 8,088 CGs took up about 3,000 different issues, some of them (for example, the many variants on parliamentary reform) barely distinguishable from one another. The alphabetical list begins with these entries:

abolition of slavery pro (that is, in favor of abolition)
additional bishops in India pro
Additional Church Bill anti
Administration Bill anti
Admiralty anti, food demands
admission to infirmary
affray between military
agricultural distress

Figure 2.9 again uses broad categories: attack on a person or object; religious issues of any kind; elections; parliamentary reform. These rubrics plus misery, government, and labor include 77 percent of all principal issues.

Except for the now unsurprising decline of attacks, the graphs of major issues display no long-term trends. They do, however, reveal wide swings

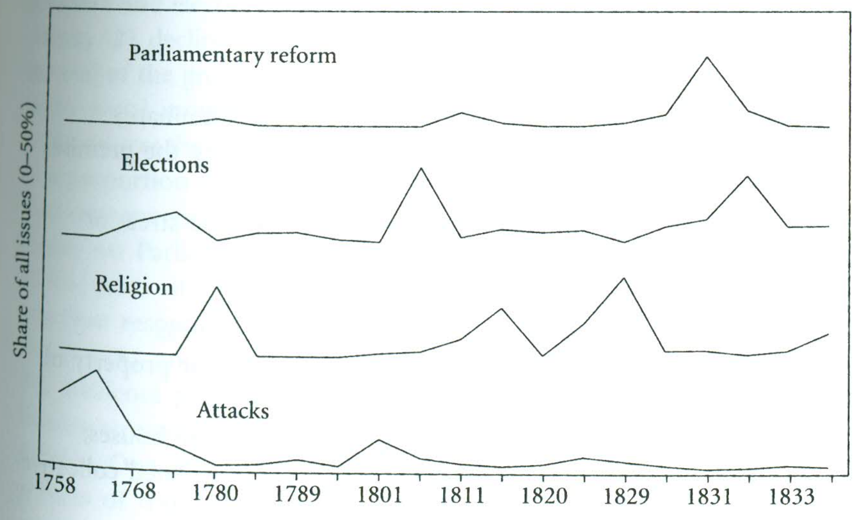

Figure 2.9. Selected issues, Southeastern England, 1758–1834

in the salience of different issues, largely as a function of national politics. Religion, for example, shoots up in 1780 (again, Lord George Gordon), 1819 (a struggle over proposed increases in the tax-supported stipends of London clergy), and 1828–1829 (Test and Corporation plus Catholic Emancipation). The curves for elections emphasize the pivotal polls of 1769, 1807, and 1832.

Most revealing is the chronology of parliamentary reform as a major issue. To be sure, our scattered years miss the grand reform debates of 1782–1785, 1790–1793, 1809–1810, 1816–1817, and 1822. Yet they capture the steps up from 1780 to 1811 to the incomparable heights of 1831, when at least 953 of the 1,645 contentious gatherings in our collection—58 percent—concerned reform, and another 304 events (18 percent) concerned either elections or the national government. Like reform, many other issues ran in surges, building in a few months from low levels of action to high intensity. That tendency became more pronounced with the nineteenth-century transformation of repertoires, as associations formed, existing groups mobilized, public meetings proliferated, and leaders competed for the attention of Parliament as well as for the allegiance of other activists.

Note, however, the disappearances as well as the new arrivals. Forms of contention that occurred frequently in the Southeast during the eighteenth century's middle decades included:

- mutinies of pressed military men;
- breaking windows of householders who failed to illuminate;
- collective seizures of food, often coupled with sacking the premises of the merchant;
- verbal and physical attacks on malefactors seen in the street or displayed in the pillory;
- taking sides at public executions;
- workers' marches to public authorities in trade disputes;
- ridicule and/or destruction of symbols, effigies, and/or property of public figures or moral offenders;
- pulling down and/or sacking of dangerous or offensive houses;
- donkeying, or otherwise humiliating, workers who violated collective agreements;
- breaking up of theaters at unsatisfactory performances;

- liberation of prisoners;
- fights between hunters and gamekeepers;
- battles between smugglers and royal officers.

Outside of the Southeast, the comparable list includes not only all of these but also destruction of tollgates, invasions of enclosed land, and disruptions of public ceremonies and festivals (see Archer 1990; Bohstedt 1983; Brewer 1976; Brewer and Styles 1980; Carter 1980; Charlesworth 1983; Gilmour 1992; Harrison 1988; Hayter 1978; King 1989; Palmer 1988; Stevenson 1992). None of these ever became a standard feature of a national social movement; they inhabited different political worlds. By the 1820s and 1830s all of these once-common routines had become rare or nonexistent. With them declined direct enforcement of public morality, immediate avenging of shared grievances, claims on actors who were present in person or by proxy, and actions whose claims remained within a local arena.

The pivotal years for decline of these common eighteenth-century forms of contention arrived during the Napoleonic Wars. The changeover to meetings, social movements, and related forms, however, actually occurred in three phases: (1) democratization of the once-elite public meeting that became quite noticeable in the 1780s, as the older routines persisted and elections became frequent occasions for popular voicing of claims; (2) decline of many standard eighteenth-century forms toward the end of the great war; and (3) multiplication of meetings, demonstrations, social movements, and related events after the war's end. Figure 2.10 captures the direction of change by graphing, year by year, Parliament as a proportion of all objects of claims against the proportion of all CGs that were meetings. Clearly the trend ran upward for both meetings and claims on Parliament; the major reversals occurred in 1780, 1801, and 1830—years of Lord George Gordon, economic crisis, and the Swing rebellion respectively. The major point of inflection lies somewhere between 1781 and 1807, depending on what we make of 1801's reversal. The bellicose period from the American Revolution to the Congress of Vienna wrought a great transformation of popular contention in Great Britain. One large set of repertoires displaced another. Although the process of transformation continued beyond the 1830s, the pace of innovation, displacement, and new institutionalization greatly diminished.