

## Chapter IX

### Access to the Museum: Public and Government Opinion, 1810-1836

After the trustees removed the restrictions and 'opened' the Museum to the public in 1810 some of the preoccupations with access changed. Restrictions and inconveniences that had always been around gained prominence. Before, the emphasis lay on how people gained access to the collections - for free, by ticket, in a tour, and other ways. By the time of the Regency two topics predominated: when the Museum should be open, and access to the Reading Room.

It was a basic prerequisite that in order to see any of the collections, one had to have access to the Museum. Before 1810 comments were private or personal, and people rarely questioned the trustees or demanded a full account. There were few articles in the press, and Parliament debated little about access. After 1810 the expressions towards access were more numerous, refined, and more public. Habermas defined this behavior as that of private individuals who had come together to form a public to debate the general rules governing relations and the state authority itself. These private individuals were those "who were excluded from public authority because they held no office."<sup>1</sup> At the British Museum the trustees established the statutes and thereby determined who would gain access. As a result of this demarcation there were individuals who could not gain access but came together to challenge publicly the rules governing access and the trustees. According to Chartier in his work on the public sphere and public opinion, "the exercise of public reason by private individuals was to be

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<sup>1</sup>Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 27; Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article," *New German Critique*, trans. Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, no. 3 (Fall 1974): 51-52. (Originally appeared in Fischer Lexicon, *Staat und Politik*, new ed. (Frankfurt am Main, 1964), p. 220-226)

subjected to no limit, and no domain was to be forbidden." He attributed this lack of reservation to a large number of outlets for publicity, especially periodicals.<sup>2</sup>

In this British case the 'public' used The Times and other newspapers and magazines to debate, challenge, and attack access at the British Museum and the trustees. Members of Parliament were interested in access to the British Museum, and The Times recorded many debates when M.P.s questioned the Museum's representative in Parliament about access. There was a growing realization that the British Museum was a public institution, because the people paid for and supported it, and that the trustees and officers should account for the policies and statutes. So when the 'public' debated the relation between taxes and the British Museum as a public institution, it is important to determine whether they were seeking access for the educated property owner or for everyone.

When Henry Ellis penned that there was a spirit of hostility against the Museum, it was in reference to three letters to the editor of The Times. While one was about issues concerning the Reading Room, the other two dealt with the hours of the Museum. In the first letter 'Z' asked, ". . . Why are we subjected to the reproach of those foreigners, who, on applying at this period [September] to view the British Museum, are told they may see it if they come in October, when it will be open. Surely, sir, a public and national Museum ought to be open throughout the year."<sup>3</sup> The British Museum was closed for the summer holiday in August and September, and while European museums were not open to the public for as many days in the year, they were not closed for a solid two month period. In the second letter (on the next day) 'Viator' expressed similar sentiments but pushed the point further. Numerous foreigners were prevented from visiting the British Museum, and Viator was ashamed that no Englishman who went to Paris

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<sup>2</sup>Chartier, The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution, p. 21-22.

<sup>3</sup>The Times (8 September 1814), p. 2e.

would find the Louvre closed for two months. "We read in every session of the Parliamentary grants which are made to it [British Museum]. . . . Why, then, is this system of exclusion [permitted] to operate?"<sup>4</sup> The British Museum was a 'public and national' museum, and both writers assumed that the Museum's position included the responsibility of a summer service. Viator backed the supposition with the historical fact that the nation supported the Museum.

Ellis' reference to a 'spirit of hostility' was in regards to a 'public' that had begun to make its sentiments known ten years earlier in publications and were expressed in Parliament. Because the 'public' had reemerged and appeared three times in 5 weeks in The Times indicated that it was not a fleeting body. As 'Z' and Viator claimed that the British Museum was a public and national museum, the two critics were claiming a part of state related activities as one they could criticize and demand an accounting of.

Another person took issue over the summer closing but stood up for the rights of the British instead. 'Z' began the letter with the House of Commons budget (1831) whereby "the annual expense to the country of the British Museum" was £17,000, and £9,880 was for salaries. 'Z' argued that as the British Museum was closed during August and September, "a period of greater leisure than any other in the year, and therefore affording increased opportunity of inspecting that interesting institution, the public should in future not be excluded during that period."<sup>5</sup> The writer did not lambast the parliamentary grant or the salaries, but by way of introducing finances first, 'Z' took advantage of a period of political and economic instabilities and made the implication that the country was not getting its money's worth. The concept was very well designed to strike at many people whose taxes supported the institution, but who could not visit the Museum. Because the weather was warmer, sunnier, and drier, the summer months

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., (9 September 1814), p. 2b.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., (8 April 1831), p. 3b.

were a popular, and possibly the only time for leisure. The Museum's statistics indicated that June, July, and October had the highest number of visitors. As it was more convenient and popular for the public to visit during the summer, 'Z' argued that the Museum should be open during that period.

The museum public that 'Z' (1814) and Viator were defending were foreigners, most of whom would have been wealthy tourists. The museum public that 'Z' (1831) was defending was the British citizen whose holiday might have been in August or September. 'Z' (1814) and Viator could refer to the British Museum as a public museum in reference to supported financially, but they were defending a museum public who did not pay British taxes. Because 'Z' (1831) referred to the amount of the grant as taxes people paid, he made the relationship between his museum public and a public museum more direct, and therefore, even more justified for all the British to have access.

In light of the criticism for being closed to the public in August and September, a part of the Museum's problems with public relations was the failure to communicate information to people. In 1814 when the trustees wrote a rebuttal to the criticisms in the press, they did not publish it. Critics had heard about museums in Europe, read about the British Museum's budget, and knew that they could not enter in August and September. There was a reason, however, for keeping the British Museum closed. There was a rota for vacations throughout the summer, and the holiday gave the officers more time to catalog, label, and arrange the collections. The trustees did not announce these reasons, and very rarely did the public get a peep through the door to explain what the employees did during the summer. It was a struggle between the secrecy of the trustees and the Museum and the public's curiosity, and the demand to know what was going on.

In August 1828 the Literary Gazette published a short paragraph about the acquisition of George III's library and Sir Joseph Banks' collection. In one sentence the editor explained the

employees' work. "The vacation of this institution [British Museum] commenced this week; but during the holiday there is an immense deal to be done in arranging the library, and other important matters."<sup>6</sup> The editor did not show disapproval of the Museum's policies, and because he understood the work they were doing and the size of the recent acquisitions, he approached the holiday closing from a different perspective. The article, though, told the reader nothing more than that the employees would work on the library during the summer. There had been publicity for a few years about the new collections; nonetheless, the great majority of the public did not know the organization of the British Museum. It did not help matters that the Literary Gazette was a weekly high brow journal whose intended readers were the highly educated. Had the trustees been more forthcoming with information, there still would have been a desire to enter during the summer, but by keeping silent on matters, mystery about the institution permitted damaging rumors to circulate.

Private and government offices were normally open five days a week, while the British Museum was open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (the Reading Room was opened six days a week in 1831). The popularity of the Museum had spread to the country, and many had gone to the Museum without a full knowledge of when it was open but with an assumption that it would be accessible. Although ignorance about the Museum was a handicap, its inconvenient schedule and frequent closure led the 'public' to push the boundaries of the museum public to people who lived outside London. A potential visitor, 'J.M.' lived about 120 miles from London, and his work brought him two or three times a year to the city. He had "an ardent attachment to national establishments, and an unbounded gratification in seeing them properly and beneficially conducted," but in a two year period he had made seven unsuccessful attempts to visit the

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<sup>6</sup>London Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Science, etc., no. 602 (2 August 1828): 491.

Museum, and other acquaintances had suffered similar disappointments. He wrote that if the editor of The Times could be effective in having the Museum "opened to the public at all times, you would be entitled to the thanks of a great part of the community."<sup>7</sup> In a rare show of acknowledgment the newspaper printed the Museum schedule beneath the letter. Without knowing the time of day 'J.M.' visited the Museum, it is hard to know where to place blame. The schedule had not changed in the two years he came to London, and although there were no signs, if he came between 10:00 and 4:00 he could have asked the porter for a schedule. On this occasion he had come to the Museum on a Saturday.

Another man, 'A Reformer', wrote an editorial that echoed 'J.M.'s' thoughts and experience. A Reformer had tried to see the Museum during the Easter week but was told it was closed. He claimed that it did not matter to him, but there were other people applying at the same time who had come from the country purposely to see the Museum, "and they were very much annoyed and very indignant."<sup>8</sup> A Reformer thought the Museum should be open every day of the year, because the money from Parliament was sufficient to pay the officers for the work. Another man, 'Reformator' had been disgusted, when, going with a friend from the country, they were told at the gate that the Museum was not open. In the letter he asked why it was not open every day when [the sergeants] guards were paid for the whole week and blamed the "abominable spirit of public exclusion which has long characterized the aristocracy of this country. . . ."<sup>9</sup>

Unless tourists knew when the Museum was open, there was the possibility of missing a visit to the Museum if they had a short stay in London. Even with such knowledge, the letters

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<sup>7</sup>The Times (17 April 1832), p. 7a.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, (9 April 1833), p. 1f.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, (18 January 1832), p. 3d.

indicated that people in the country thought of the British Museum as a national institution and should be conveniently open for everyone and not simply for those people who resided in London. The people in the country supported the Museum, so 'J.M.' and A Reformer believed that everyone in the nation deserved to be included in the museum public.

During the 1830s when visitors or publishers remarked on the free access to the British Museum it was by way of comparison to institutions that charged. The National Magazine said they were like the temples in Jerusalem that were occupied with money changers. The British Museum was different "where persons of all ranks in society are admitted free," and with 2,000 visitors a day no injury had been done to the collections.<sup>10</sup> Reformato, who was introduced earlier, compared Paris where works of nature and art were open without charge, while in London, one paid to see the Tower of London. It was his understanding that the British Museum and the Angerstein [National] Gallery were the only collections open free of charge.<sup>11</sup> In both cases the writers were finding fault with the English for charging at institutions. They used the British Museum because its policy was a suitable contrast to the point they were criticizing, and the example helped further the argument for a free access to other places.

The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge had similar information in The Penny Magazine. In a fictionalized discourse between the author and a visitor the article sought to inform the reader about the Museum and how to see it, and it dispelled any fears that the public might have about gaining access. The commentator told the visitor that there was "too much of paying in England by the people for admission to what they ought to see for nothing. But here there is nothing to pay." The commentator told the visitor that he had come to see his own property because he paid for the purchase and maintenance; therefore, he should not be afraid of

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<sup>10</sup>The National Magazine, *Devoted Principally to Subjects of Domestic Interest*, no. 19 [1832?]: 145.

<sup>11</sup>The Times (18 January 1832), p. 3d.

"surly looks or impertinent glances", because he had as much right to be there as anyone. He even assured him that although his "garb is homely", he and his wife were clean, if not smart.<sup>12</sup> The publisher had assumed that the British Museum had a reputation for difficulty of access, because the magazine thought that the public feared that it could not gain access. Ordinary folk were not as highly regarded as scholars at the Museum, and the article indicated that it was a lingering feeling when the public was warned not to be afraid of 'surly looks or impertinent glances'. It was by no coincidence that editors and visitors let it be known that the British Museum was free. There were very few cultural institutions in London that did not charge, so there was a necessity to inform people. London was a city full of attractions, and the newspapers had many advertisements for amusements and exhibitions, so when the public commented on the British Museum, it was regarded as a haven for the rich and the poor.

As a 'public' the author in The Penny Magazine addressed the artisan, tradesman, and family man in a paternalistic manner and sprinkled the article with messages of life in a highly classed society. Ward was afraid of people touching or damaging things, and Banks was irritated with people who asked annoying questions. The author's museum public was the very same public that Ward and Banks had tried to keep out. The author assumed that they knew nothing about museum behavior, so he felt a compunction to educate the audience not to touch anything, not to talk too loud, and not to trouble visitors or the artists with questions. The dialog anticipated the reader's next question with an appropriate answer, and it painted the visitor as someone who was unsure and ignorant of his rights. "Will they let me in?" "Is there nothing to pay?" "The officers of the Museum, who are obliging to all strangers, will be glad to see you." With a high wall surrounding the Museum and no public notice of the hours and days the

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<sup>12</sup>"The British Museum," The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, no. 2 (7 April 1832): 14.

Museum was open, the porter at the gate, a sergeants guard in the courtyard, warders, and rules about conduct posted throughout the building, it was not apparent that the officers were glad to see anyone.

The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge meant well when it encouraged the artisan and tradesman and told him to have no fear, but the Society erred when it assumed that the museum public included persons who wore homely but clean garb. A month before the article was published, an editorial appeared in The Times that damaged the credibility of the story. A man had written to say that he had been denied access because he was a livery servant and was obliged to wait outside while friends toured the Museum. He witnessed soldiers and sailors entering and considered it unjust that because he was a servant dressed in livery he should be excluded.<sup>13</sup> The porter had control of the gate and assessed every visitor who wanted to enter. Parents experienced his authority when, according to the rules, he refused the admittance of children. Potential trouble makers, such as the intoxicated, could not enter, and anyone who did not heed the warnings of the officers or attendants would be asked to leave. The writer did not explain why livery servants could not enter, probably because the porter gave no explanation other than the way he was dressed. This case indicated that the Museum continued to define the public based upon dress and appearance, and simply being clean, as The Penny Magazine stated, was not enough. The editor of The Times commented on the livery servant's letter and suspected that the denial of access was not an aristocratic notion on the part of the directors, but a 'fastidious feeling' which prevailed in Britain more than any other country. The porters, though, received direction from the Principal Librarian, and in this case it was Henry Ellis, and the testimony at the hearings clearly indicted his prejudices.

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<sup>13</sup>The Times (1 March 1832), p. 5b.

Up to the time of the first Parliamentary inquiry in 1835 people were frustrated with the access policies and how they defined who entered. A 'public' had formed, and it challenged the British Museum's practices. The 'public' that criticized the British Museum used The Times and other publications as a medium for debating access, and there was an assumption among the critics that having something in print, especially in The Times, could bring change. In one letter 'R.H.I.' wrote, "Sir, you will render a service . . . by drawing public attention" and concluded with, "Perhaps a hint from you might mitigate the lethargy which has fallen on some learned persons in the neighborhood of Great Russell-street."<sup>14</sup> A 'Constant Reader' concluded a letter with, "I take the liberty of calling your attention to these facts, assured of your general advocacy of the cause of science."<sup>15</sup>

By the 1830s, though, the 'public' began to recognize, that as a body, effective change would not come as a result of the challenge they posed to the British Museum, but that their efforts should be addressed to the state, i.e. Parliament. Because the trustees hardly discussed the affairs at the Museum openly, the institution and its management were a mystery to most people. As a result, it was not difficult for someone to take advantage of the public's ignorance and unhappiness over the situation. The writer, 'X', published a cynical and contemptuous account of activities at the Museum during Easter week. He was astonished that the public allowed itself to be "excluded from the enjoyments and advantages arising from their own property" and accused the staff of treating the Museum as if it were their own property. They 'ear wigged' the trustees whenever the Board made inquiries into the management. 'X' claimed that while the public was shut out, the staff worked and received extra pay above the regular salaries. It was a game the officers played in order to make more money dishonestly, and he

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., (31 August 1832), p. 3d.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., (27 May 1833), p. 3c.

called for a parliamentary inquiry to straighten things. "The public are so much excluded, and there is so much ambiguity about the Museum altogether, that something ought immediately to be done."<sup>16</sup>

Ellis testified at the hearings that a large section of the binding was done during the Easter holiday. Because everyone did not have to be there, the employees who worked during the holiday were paid extra. 'X' represented a far more serious adversary than previous critics. Others had been angry with the statutes or the administrators, but 'X' libeled the staff. Furthermore, most of the previous critics had addressed their editorials or articles to the trustees in a rhetorical fashion but expected a reply in the form of a modification to the Museum's statutes. 'X' realized that in order to make the trustees more open in their affairs, that Parliament would have to investigate things.

When H.S. Peacock published Remarks on the Present State of the British Museum (1835) his only criticism of the access policies pertained to the Museum's restricting the public to three days a week.<sup>17</sup> The Athenaeum critic who reviewed the book told Peacock and everyone else who had written on the Museum to petition Parliament. "It sounds well and plausible to talk . . . of admitting the public every day instead of every other day, of abolishing all holidays, . . . but such changes would require a double or treble set of officers and servants." Adequate funding was the preliminary condition, and until the Museum received it, the changes were impossible.<sup>18</sup> Like Wilkes in the 1770s, he saw through the Museum's problems and diagnosed the condition from a lack of funding. It was a simplistic answer, and one that

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<sup>16</sup>The True Sun (19 March 1834), p. [1a].

<sup>17</sup>H.S. Peacock, Remarks on the Present State of the British Museum, With Outlines For a General Classification of Scientific Objects (London: James Ridgway & Sons, 1835), p. 6.

<sup>18</sup>The Athenaeum Journal of Literature, Science, and the Fine Arts, no. 422 (28 November 1835): 888.

probably received lukewarm support if not hostility from the Museum's critics. All those who had clamored for easier access had valid points, but the book reviewer recognized that all that time and energy was getting them nowhere. Like the writer to The True Sun, he wanted a full account from the Trustees to the people and recognized that it would never come directly. Both men believed that it would take Parliament to make the secrets at the British Museum open to the public. Peacock's book served as a springboard for the critic to advise people to channel hostility, recommendations, and demands to Parliament.

Both 'X' in The True Sun and Peacock alluded to Parliament as arbiter between the public and the British Museum. Habermas offered a critique of public opinion in Great Britain and France in the eighteenth century that accurately reflects the situation and relationship between a 'public', the British Museum, and Parliament. In the discourse Habermas evaluated the etymology of 'opinion' and its use in speech and writing by Hobbes, Locke, and Edmund Burke. Just before the French Revolution the opinion of the public in Great Britain arose "from private reflection upon public affairs and from their public discussion." This "general opinion," as Burke called it, received the name "public opinion" in 1781. In France where a similar meaning was ascribed to the word, Habermas said that the physiocrats asserted "that civil society followed laws of its own versus intervention of the state." Physiocrats and scholars studied this 'natural order' to determine public opinion, and it was the monarch's job to watch over this 'natural order'. "Public opinion did not rule, but the enlightened ruler would have to follow it's insight." At this point Habermas said that with this doctrine of the dual authority of public opinion and of the ruler, "the physiocrats, remaining within the confines of the existing regime, interpreted the place of a public that critically scrutinized political matters."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, p. 94-96.

A 'public' had clearly reflected upon the access policies at the British Museum and made it an open discussion. The trustees noticed the 'public's' comments but hardly conceded to their wishes. Parliament was interested in the British Museum and in the opportunities to visit it, and in the nineteenth century there was always an advocate for the museum public in Parliament who fought for their access to the British Museum. In fact, the debates in Parliament reflected in timing and content, a large measure of the 'public's' discontent. Just like the physiocrats who interpreted the place of a public, the M.P.s were critical commentators who interpreted the place of a public and the validity of its criticisms about access and which public could visit the British Museum.

In the debate over the British Museum budget for 1815 General William Thornton, M.P. for New Woodstock, could not understand why the public was not admitted every day, instead of three days a week.<sup>20</sup> Ten years later when M.P.s were considering whether to purchase the Rich collection of manuscripts and antiquities, questioning had steered off course to the cost of museum catalogs, and Joseph Hume, the M.P. for Montrose who was devoted to financial matters, asked if there was any objection to adding one or two days in the week to the three on which the Museum was open to the public.<sup>21</sup> In the following year, Hume complained that the regulations were inconvenient to the public and could be remedied if the Museum were open four days a week.<sup>22</sup>

Present in the House when both Thornton and Hume spoke was Henry Banks, the M.P. for Corfe Castle. In the following year he was elected a trustee of the British Museum and acted as its spokesman in the House. Banks staved off a definitive answer to Thornton, because the

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<sup>20</sup>Parliamentary Debates From the Year 1803 to the Present Time 31 (9 May 1815): 226.

<sup>21</sup>Parliamentary Debates new series 12 (5 February 1825): 666.

<sup>22</sup>The Times (21 March 1826), p. 2d.

General had encapsulated the question within a larger one concerning the Reading Room. Banks merely replied "that the system upon which the Museum was at present conducted scarcely admitted of any improvement" and proceeded with answering the rest of the inquiry.

By the time of Thornton's query in 1815, the ticket system had not been in use for five years, and visitors had the 'ready and uninterrupted access' that Banks had advocated ten years earlier. Banks was not contradicting himself by supporting the Museum's policy, because M.P.s were articulating access based on 'when' a person entered, and not 'how' as Banks had done in 1805. However, 'when' dictated the public that got in. To Hume he said that the two private days were "made to accommodate foreigners and other curious persons, and whose object would be frustrated by the admission of a crowd." Hume did not think that it was fair that two days were reserved for special purposes, while the public received but three, but John Wilson Croker, the Secretary for the Admiralty,<sup>23</sup> reassured him that it was obvious to everyone who visited the Museum on a public day that it was necessary for students to have undisturbed access. Thinking that he still had the trump card, Hume then asked about the one unoccupied day, Saturday. That day, according to Croker, was used for cleaning the building.<sup>24</sup> Banks provided Hume with the same answers when he complained the following year.<sup>25</sup> Although no one was denied entrance on a Tuesday or Thursday if he could prove acquaintanceship with an officer or trustee, the 'foreigners' were people of rank and affluence; otherwise, they were not encouraged or made aware of special access on the closed days as the letter to The Times<sup>26</sup> from 'Z' (seen earlier) indicated.

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<sup>23</sup>Croker took considerable interest in the arts and sciences. During a period of agitation for retrenchment he supported the purchase of the Elgin Marbles. He was one of the founders of the Quarterly Review and The Athenaeum.

<sup>24</sup>The Times (26 February 1825), p. 2a.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., (21 March 1826), p. 2d.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., (8 September 1814), p. 2e.

By the 1830s the mood in the House had become more somber towards the British Museum. Construction of new galleries had been going on since 1823 when the Museum acquired George III's library,<sup>27</sup> and the number of visitors had dramatically dropped since 1827, because many of the collections were covered and moved to the unopened new wings. In 1830 Banks moved for the approval of the Museum's budget, and in a repeat of episodes, Hume matched wits with his adversary. This time the questions were machine gunned to the Museum's spokesman, and they were more pointed and laced with barbs. They bore the marks of a person who agreed with the critics and wanted to enlarge the museum public. Why were greater facilities not afforded to the public? Why was the Museum open but three days a week, "and even then but for a few hours?" He saw no reason the Museum should not be open five days a week instead of three, "for the salaries paid to the officers were sufficiently liberal to command a greater portion of their time and services." Even when the Museum was open, it was not made sufficiently public, and he suggested a sign with the days and hours it was open be placed on the gate. "The public paid for the Museum, and therefore had a right to insist on every facility of ingress."<sup>28</sup> He further contended that if the problem were money, the public could pay to enter on the additional days. A free-for-all erupted with debate on the Reading Room, but with the exception of William Trant who remarked on the exclusion of children, Hume was the sole M.P. to concentrate on the 'museum' side of access to the institution.<sup>29</sup> Banks made no attempt to give his adversary an answer that was any different from previous ones. The officers were engaged six days a week. He elaborately explained what occurred on the closed days, and that those days were reserved for those who sought a private visit.

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<sup>27</sup>Crook, *The British Museum*, p. 109-110, 114.

<sup>28</sup>*The Times* (9 March 1830), p. 1f, 2a.

<sup>29</sup>*Parliamentary Debates* new series 22 (8 March 1830): 1352-54.

When Hume asked about access, he spoke like a person who was in tune with the feelings of the 'public'. In 1792 Fox gave a speech in the House of Commons that recognized public opinion and the public's involvement in the debate of political issues so "that in the role of a permanent critical commentator it [public] had definitely broken the exclusiveness of Parliament and evolved into the officially designated discussion partner of the delegate." In Fox's speeches the public was not treated as if it could be excluded from the deliberations.<sup>30</sup> Hume asked the same questions and made the same criticisms that the 'public' had in The Times and in other periodicals, which indicates that he read the criticisms and articles and considered the 'public' a valid commentator on the proceedings at the Museum. Hume had 'interpreted the place of a public' in matters concerning the British Museum and thought their criticisms should be addressed in the House, and by virtue, he had become the advocate of the 'public'. He took their criticisms and linked them with the argument that the British Museum was a tax supported institution, so that access concerned everyone, because the populace, as well as the 'public', paid taxes.

Each time Hume sought greater access, he came prepared with logic and reasoning. He had heard Banks' answers before, and considering the validity behind them, on every occasion he had to present a case that could shatter or bypass them. He had seen defeat in his cause before, so in order to assure success, this time he hedged the questions with alternative solutions. If one option failed, another might be taken up. To the routine question, 'Why was the Museum open three days a week?', he added, 'and even then but for a few hours?' It gave the opportunity of making the visiting hours longer in the day should the five-day proposal fail, which it had in the past. Other members of the House had interjected with remarks on the library, so Banks tailored an answer to suit them and in the course answered Hume. He "was sure the trustees

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<sup>30</sup>Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, p. 66.

would endeavour to prolong the time, during which it was deemed expedient to keep the reading room open. This, however, must depend on the period of year, for under no circumstances should the introduction of fire or candles into so large and valuable a library be permitted."<sup>31</sup> At this time the library and museum maintained the same hours, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. As a result of this debate, the trustees attempted to shift the hours to 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. but met with resistance from the readers, so they resorted to the old schedule. The trustees did not permit artificial lighting, so there was little hope for increasing or altering the hours.

This debate demonstrated that it was data, and in this case, the dwindling number of visitors, and not public opinion that prompted an examination and alteration in the British Museum's access policies. At the beginning of the century Parliament was interested in easier access to the Museum for a larger number of visitors. By the end of the decade (1810) Parliament requested that when the British Museum submitted its annual budget for a grant, that the request come with visitation statistics for the previous seven years. The Times was very good to publish them as filler or snippets to impress the readers with how well the numbers were increasing. Members of Parliament boasted about how well the Museum looked and were assured they were getting value for the tax payer's money. In 1818 when Bankes submitted the petition to purchase the late Dr. Burney's library for the Museum, he greased the wheel for making a purchase more likely by alluding to the statistics. "The improvements that had been adopted in the arrangements of the British Museum were well known, and satisfactory and beneficial to the public; since now all could have an easy opportunity of visiting this great depository of literature, arts, and curiosities."<sup>32</sup> They measured success by the number of people who came to the Museum.

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<sup>31</sup>The Times (9 March 1830), p. 2a.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., (24 February 1818), p. 2d.

The growing number of visitors offset the impact any articles might have and made criticism appear isolated or the work of a disgruntled critic and not worthy of support in Parliament. In 1823 the very influential journal, The Edinburgh Review, contained an article about the British Museum and accused the zoological collections of being in a state of decay and ruin, lacking labels and references, and using improper scientific names, and that the library in natural history was in a wretched state.<sup>33</sup> The following year when the budget for the Museum was submitted to Parliament, Mr. Bennett, M.P. for Shrewsbury, led other members in an uproar over the article. Sir Charles Long and Mr. Banks defended the Museum by picking at the errors in the article line by line and by offering proof from the Museum's officers.<sup>34</sup> In light of this incident it was evident that M.P.s were aware of articles about the British Museum, and that they chose to believe the articles (The Edinburgh Review) until the evidence proved otherwise. The increasing statistics at the British Museum did not support critics' claims that access was difficult, so M.P.s believed that there was no need to adjust the days or hours the Museum was open. At best Hume could support the 'public' that had challenged the British Museum in The Times and other publications, but until the evidence fell in his favor, as it did by 1830, he could never muster support or enthusiasm in the House.

Because Banks always had an answer to suit the Museum's purposes, Hume was playing what appeared to be a losing game. In this case, the debate aroused Parliament to make a more determined intervention in the affairs of the Museum and to reconsider alterations to access, so that in the following year other members helped Hume carry the charge. For the budget debate in 1831 M.P.s devoted more attention to opening the Museum on Saturday with only a few

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<sup>33</sup>The Edinburgh Review 38 (May 1823): 383-398. For the extent and influence of The Review see James A. Greig, Francis Jeffrey of the Edinburgh Review (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1948), p. 1-13.

<sup>34</sup>Parliamentary Debates new series 10 (29 March 1824): 1466-1476.

questions about the library. Charles Jephson, M.P. for Mallow, began the questioning by asking "whether, with reference to what occurred last session, any alteration would be made in the attendance of the officers of the Museum? and why the Museum could not be open on Saturdays?" Banks avoided the first question by saying that upon inquiry he had found that attendance at the British Museum was greater than at similar institutions in France. He answered the second question with the statement, "that there was an inconvenience attending the keeping the Museum open on a Saturday, independent of its detaining the officers from necessary relaxation, as the rooms required cleaning."<sup>35</sup> It was to Banks' credit but also because of expediency that he investigated the possibility. With a slight variation on the number of days the officers were in attendance, the answer was the same as the one from the previous year. Banks had not defended the Museum's position dishonestly, so that when The Times reported that he had inquired, the answer he gave sounded more authoritative and reaffirmed the Museum's stand.

This session of Parliament did not accept Banks' explanation without expressing irritation with the status quo. Sir John Wrottesley, M.P. for Staffordshire, told a personal anecdote on how he had never been able to see the Museum after repeated attempts. "Saturday was almost the only day that members of that house could devote to that object;" and the remark indicated that people who could not get time from their jobs were not part of the museum public. Wrottesley thought the Museum could be cleaned on a Monday as well as a Saturday and suggested a six pence or a shilling admittance charge which he was sure would provide easier access to the public. Hume did not accept the argument of a Saturday cleaning either, and thought the work could be done before the hour of admission.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>The Times (15 March 1831), p. 2c. Three years later another excuse was given when Lord Althorp "said that the reason of the Museum being closed on Saturday was, that the trustees meet on that day, and that officers were obliged to be in attendance upon them." The Times (23 May 1834), p. 3d. Lord Althorp failed to tell M.P.s that the trustees met once a month.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 2c-d.

Wrottesley's and Hume's questions were a classic example of the government's demands for an accounting of the Museum. No longer were M.P.s willing to accept as truth the Museum's spokesman's statements in the House. The Museum's operations appeared mysterious, and the trustees in the House remained quiet while their critics made demands for information to be made public. The M.P.s did not know that the Museum was cleaned every day before admission with an intense and thorough cleaning on Saturday. Without artificial lighting in the collections or the library the number of hours available for the task, especially during the winter, was limited on weekdays. Had Bankes or any other trustee given this information, M.P.s might have come to a solution instead of assuming there was mismanagement.

Hume adhered to a utilitarian philosophy and thought the problem was a financial one. The crux of the problem was the dwindling number of visitors. It baffled Hume. Beginning with the earliest accounts to Parliament the number of persons admitted had steadily increased until the late 1820s.<sup>37</sup>

Years	No. of Persons	Years	No. of Persons	Years	No. of Persons
1805	11,981	1816	40,500	1827	79,131
1806	11,824	1817	50,172	1828	81,228
1807	13,046	1818	63,253	1829	68,101
1808	15,390	1819	53,614	1830	68,802
1809	15,197	1820	62,543	1831	75,164
1810	29,152	1821	91,151	1832	147,896
1811	31,402	1822	98,801	1833	210,495
1812	31,309	1823	89,825	1834	237,666
1813	29,595	1824	112,804	1835	289,104
1814	33,074	1825	127,643	1836	383,157
1815	35,581	1826	123,302		

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<sup>37</sup>Original Letters and Papers, "Account of the Number of Persons Admitted to a Sight of the British Museum in each Month from the 1st January 1805 inclusive to the 27th of June 1807," 2: fol. 860\*-860\*\*; "Number of Persons Admitted to a view of the British Museum from the 10th day of May 1807 to the 9th day of May 1812," 3: fols. 1047, 1066, 1076; John Pye, Patronage of British Art: an Historical Sketch (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1845; a facsimile reprint, London: Cornmarket Press, 1970), p. 277.

Hume did not believe the public's satiation could account for a drop from 120,000 in former years to 68,000 in 1829 and 1830; therefore, based on the context of his other statements, Hume thought the cause lay with the Museum's inefficiency. In both sessions he put forth the idea that the annual grant was sufficient to complete the purpose of exhibiting the Museum. To him the Museum could afford to be open five days a week, but as it was not, it led him to speculate publicly whether the grant could not be used more efficiently, and the Museum made more useful to the public. If the institution were open five days a week, the number of visitors would increase to the old levels. As the reporter for The Times paraphrased Hume, "He thought that more time ought to be devoted to the public."<sup>38</sup> Hume's attitude symbolized the growing conflict that lay before the Museum. "Whom was it to serve?" For more than seventy years the trustees and officers had catered to the reader first. Hume never suggested that any services be taken away from the scholar, but he clearly meant to enlarge the museum public to include those people who paid taxes or who could not visit on one of the open days but could visit on a Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday, which meant practically everyone.

The questioning came to a dramatic end when Wrottesley asked Bankes 'whether he would open the Museum on Saturdays', for if he did not, he would oppose the vote. Bankes said he could pledge nothing without consulting the other trustees and assured him that they would do all they could to make it more convenient for the public. It was the first time a threat had been used against the Museum, but it indicated the level of strength that M.P.s had to challenge the trustees over the procedures. As long as the Museum had valid reasons for being closed on certain days or to a certain public, the M.P.s had been willing to accept excuses from the Museum's representative in Parliament, but now too many members thought that the rooms could be cleaned some other time besides Saturdays and that the Museum had enough money to

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<sup>38</sup>The Times (15 March 1831), p. 2c-d.

stay open more frequently. When M.P.s realized that the Museum's reasons had no validity, it appeared that the policies were designed in order to keep people out, and it was the intention of M.P.s who fought for the 'public' to expand the museum public as far as they could.

Banks gave the impression he was willing to concede to the requests. His response and defense were beginning to wither in front of such an onslaught. If something did not happen soon, support in the government would be harder to obtain, and the reasons that had worked so well in the past would be useless. In a matter of days the trustees had Ellis study the arrangements for opening the Reading Room on Saturdays, and by the end of April the library was opened at the same hours on Saturdays as the other weekdays.

The next debate over access erupted quite by accident, but it demonstrated that it was a simmering issue. In 1833 the government had been considering whether Sir John Soane's collection should be housed in the property at Lincoln's Inn Fields or at the British Museum. Sir Samuel Whalley, M.P. for Marylebone, thought the British Museum was a better choice but complained that it was not continually open. On two or three occasions he had been disappointed in attempts to see it, because he had gone on days when it was closed. He suggested that the Museum occasionally advertise when it was open in the daily papers.<sup>39</sup> James Morrison, M.P. for Ipswich, had a more unfortunate record, for he claimed to have made at least a dozen attempts within the last two years but had always called on the wrong day.<sup>40</sup> Parliament's deliberations on access had the appearance of public deliberations of the public in general.<sup>41</sup> Although M.P.s were a part of the state and not part of the 'public' as Habermas

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<sup>39</sup> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates third series 16 (1 April 1833): 1340.

<sup>40</sup> Although James Morrison's initials were identical with those of the 'J.M.' of The Times (17 April 1832) and the stories bore a striking resemblance, the J.M. in The Times said he lived 120 miles from London and came to the city 2 or 3 times a year. The M.P. lived at Basildon Park and would have been in London almost daily after having been elected in 1830. Therefore, the writer and the M.P. were not the same person.

<sup>41</sup> Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, p. 100.

defined it, from the recorded testimonies in the House, M.P.s felt as helpless as the 'public' that had challenged the British Museum, so that by the 1830s members in the House had united like a 'public', and the chambers were their salon or cafe.

Sir Robert Peel believed that immense benefits would occur "if the most public notice possible was given of the hours and days on which the Museum was open."<sup>42</sup> He knew that many people from the country happened to go to the Museum on a day it was closed. The members' comments were an appalling testimony, mirroring the public's criticisms on the Museum's failure to be more receptive to people's anticipations. On other issues relating to access, the trustees or officers claimed financial, security, or other reasons for not making alterations. In this case consistent advertising in the form of a sign would have been an easy task, so the trustees had no excuse for not dealing with the problem, and it indicated a less than welcome attitude towards visitors. Peel's speech was a sad commentary on the trustees' management. The Secretary of State for the Home Department was an ex officio trustee of the British Museum, and Peel was a more active member when he held the position from 1822 to 1827 and 1828 to 1830. It was ironic to suggest more advertising when signs were put up and taken down when he was a member of the Board.

Banks had retired from politics, so Alexander Baring, M.P. for North Essex and a trustee for the British Museum and the National Gallery, spoke for the Museum. He was quite amenable to the members' suggestions and complaints and agreed that public notice should be made of the open hours and days. He stated that on open days more than 2,000 people visited the place, but if they were admitted every day, it would be impossible for the officers to perform other duties. He assured Whalley and the other members that if a visitor made an application to a librarian in connection with science or art, he could see the collection on a closed day. Also, Whalley and

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<sup>42</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates third series 16 (1 April 1833): 1342.

Morrison may not have known a librarian, but had they known the procedure, they could have secured a recommendation from a trustee who a member of Parliament to visit on a closed day. With the chronic reluctance to post information about access, and the Museum's spokesman forced to repeat information year after year in the House, more and more the evidence points to an institution that was very difficult to use and one that did not encourage people to try to use it.

Whereas Bankes was afraid to commit to anything without conferring with the trustees, Baring took the M.P.s' comments a step further and proposed a step that was clearly out of line with past policy. He thought the public notice should state that any person from the country who "was obliged to leave town the next day would find ready access given."<sup>43</sup> He had redefined the museum public, for the Museum was now expected to encourage people who did not reside in London to ask for access.

The issues did not end with publicity and the closed days. Other members raised the principle of access and the museum public. William Cobbett, who had been elected that year (1833) for Oldham, took another opportunity to snipe at the Museum.<sup>44</sup> According to Baring, during the holidays "no foreigner or any person decently attired in pursuit of particular information was ever refused admittance." Cobbett made an issue out of the remark. He said that Baring "had not defined what he meant by a decent dress", but whatever he meant, Cobbett thought that those who did not have decent clothing should not be required to support the Museum. He turned the Museum into a battleground for class warfare. If the "chopstick in the country, as well as the poor man who mended the pavement in town . . . derived no benefit from it" then they should not be forced to pay for it. The hours were inconvenient for laborers and

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>see [Hansard's Parliamentary Debates](#) third series 16 (25 March 1833): 1003-04; and [Cobbett's Weekly Political Register](#) 79 (30 March 1833): 785-87.

tradesmen and were intended for idlers and loungers. It was closed for two months in the summer "when all the lawyers and parsons, and lords and loungers, were out in the country enjoying shooting." If it was to be useful, then the Museum should be open during the summer from six in the morning to ten at night.<sup>45</sup> Although the interpretations were pedantic, the facts themselves were accurate.

Cobbett made some valid points on access, and others like John Roebuck, M.P. for Bath and George Pryme, M.P. for Cambridge, agreed. Roebuck advocated opening the Museum during the holidays when the working classes were able to attend, such as Christmas, Good Friday, and Sundays, but was met with cries of "No, No." Pryme thought that if the Museum were kept open to a later hour so the mechanic could attend, there would not be a necessity of keeping it open on a Sunday.<sup>46</sup> Baring had already confessed that the trustees were in the process of reducing the two months summer holiday to one month, and he agreed with Pryme and the other House members and would be sorry to keep the Museum open on Sundays and other religious days. Within three weeks of the debate the Board of Trustees voted to reduce the summer holiday to one month in September.

Before, people who had written or given speeches about greater access had done it for the benefit of foreigners or a general public. Although Planta had worked to make access greater, he did not specifically fight for the lower classes. With the exception of The Penny Magazine Cobbett was the one person who fought specifically for the poor or working man, and he held nothing back when he addressed those policies that had hindered their access. In this debate the poor were not addressed in the same manner as the public had on previous occasions. Many times the public were Sennett's or Williams's public of known and unknown people, but Cobbett

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<sup>45</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates third series 16 (1 April 1833): 1341-42.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 1342.

and Pryme identified the poor or those who could not gain access in sociological terms, such as laborers, tradesmen, and mechanics. Based on the letter from the livery servant and Baring's remark, there had not been a historical change in the dress code at the Museum. In a period when appearance indicated one's class, rich and middle class people would not dress shabbily, so the rule was addressed to the poor and working classes. Critics in Parliament and in publications had advocated making the Museum more accessible for the public, but Cobbett, more than anyone before him, forced Parliament to consider which public.

On the face of it, Cobbett's speech had the appearance of concern for the working classes, but his greatest anxiety was financial matters. His speeches and writings were laden with references to the costs of things. If a tax were too expensive or frivolous, he would compare the monetary value in relation to how it could be spent on the poor, or how a lower tax on goods bettered the poor man's buying power. The harangues about access problems were merely a way of conveying the impression that it was a rich man's institution supported by poor men who could not visit it and should not be forced to support it.

While Cobbett had been asking about the British Museum's use for the working man, other members of Parliament were beginning to put forward the notion that greater access benefited manufacturing. People had recognized for a long while the value of art in relation to manufacturing and an improved taste for the fine arts. Wedgwood acknowledged the debt to Hamilton's collection of Etruscan vases when he said that he made far more money in profits than the £8,400 spent to purchase them for the Museum. One of the arguments for the purchase of the Elgin Marbles was that manufacturing would benefit from improved taste. Sir Robert Peel, Lord Ashley, and Joseph Hume argued for the construction of a suitable building for the National Gallery, because it would help improve and benefit the artistic aspects of

manufacturing.<sup>47</sup> William Ewart was an M.P. who advocated the opening of public museums and galleries as free from every restriction as possible, and in a debate on the Royal Academy he noted the benefits to manufacturing and the fine arts by alluding to the relationship between Wedgwood and Hamilton.<sup>48</sup>

Mr. Morrison (the M.P. who had failed to see the Museum in a dozen attempts), said that in the spring "a vast number of persons interested in manufactures of the country came to the metropolis for the purpose of obtaining information," and if it were possible, the British Museum should be open every day from April through June. Morrison was a wealthy M.P. who had been a trader and landowner before being elected to Parliament in 1830 and was the head of a large commercial house, James Morrison & Company. He was self educated and had formed a large library and collection of old Dutch and Italian masters. From his personal and professional background and experience he thought that the country was deficient in institutions that taught the higher branches of art and science.<sup>49</sup> Two years later John Bowring, M.P. for Clyde burghs, defended the Museum in opposition to another of Cobbett's criticisms. Bowring was a friend of Jeremy Bentham and was a businessman who was very interested in commercial interests and free trade.<sup>50</sup> He believed that the works of art in the British Museum had done much to help art and industry in the country, and he regretted that the hours the Museum was open were those in which workmen could not attend, but he hoped a means could be found to solve the problem,

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., third series 12 (13 April 1832): 467-69.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., third series 29 (14 July 1835): 554.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., third series 16 (1 April 1833): 1340-41.

<sup>50</sup>Jeremy Bentham founded The Westminster Review in 1824 to publish the views of philosophical radicals. John Bowring was editor of the political department and eventually editor of the magazine.

because "he was convinced great improvement would follow to the manufacturers of the country."<sup>51</sup>

By 1836 Parliament had managed to secure a shorter summer holiday at the Museum from two months to one, and it benefited the foreign and British tourist who came to London during the summer. Also, persons from the country who had to leave town the next day were to be advised that they would be given access that day. Otherwise, if the library is treated separately, the policies remained as they had since 1810. At the hearings in 1835, M.P.s had heard the Museum officers explain their interpretation of the Museum. It was foremost an institution for scholarly research, and many M.P.s recognized that fact. They had forced the Museum to become more open or public about its purposes and operations. Things that were unclear or secret were questioned and explained. In the following year the Committee summoned outside witnesses who were scientists, authors, artists, and other professional people who used the Museum, or would like to, on a serious basis. The Committee did not call people to testify on the basis of visiting the Museum for sheer pleasure or would like to visit it once or twice like so many of those who did. As the Committee called witnesses who used or would use the Museum for practical purposes, the hearings were set up to suit the needs of research and scholarly purposes. Members of Parliament and the public had expressed many of the same dissatisfactions with access, but when the Committee on the Management of the British Museum met and questioned the witnesses, they provided different interpretations of a museum public.

A majority of the witnesses thought it would be useful and convenient to extend the hours of exhibition. Generally, they thought it would benefit the public, and a few men like Thomas Bell, a surgeon and fellow of the Royal Society, and Edward Lear, an author of a monograph on parrots, had professions that precluded coming to the Museum between 10:00 to 4:00, or stated

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<sup>51</sup>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates third series 27 (18 May 1835): 1186-87.

that longer hours would enable them to complete research sooner.<sup>52</sup> While the Committee was willing to accept testimonies from James De Carle Sowerby, a mineralogist, and John Gage, director of the Society of Antiquaries, who were satisfied with the hours as they were, the Committee was not above pressing a witness to their point of view. William Yarrell owned a business and was able to visit the Museum whenever he pleased. When Benjamin Hawes, M.P. for Lambeth, could not get Yarrell to admit to the inconvenience of the hours in his own life, he attempted to have him do it by getting Yarrell to empathize with other professional men. This ploy did not work, because Yarrell thought that no one who worked during the day would go to the Museum at night. Undaunted, Hawes revived the testimony of Thomas Bell who said he could not attend during the day because of his work, but would if it were open at night. Yarrell knew Bell very well and finally came round and agreed that it would be beneficial to the public to open the Museum to later hours.<sup>53</sup>

The M.P.s were just as anxious to elicit as favorable a response for opening the Museum during the holidays, and a majority of the witnesses satisfied the expectations. There was a consensus that many people could attend the Museum only when they had a holiday from work, and those occasions were during the religious holiday weeks. George Rennie, a sculptor, went so far as to say that he had no objections to having the Museum open on a Sunday.<sup>54</sup> Thomas Bell had not formed an opinion, but expressed mild trepidation that damage might occur to the exhibition cases if too many people entered the rooms.<sup>55</sup> Mr. Hawes asked Bell whether the

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<sup>52</sup>"Report from the Select Committee appointed in the following Season to consider the same subject," par. 459, 465, 3207.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, par. 2068-81.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, par. 1237.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, par. 472-73.

problem could be prevented by the addition of more attendants, and he replied that it could be decided by experiment. Subsequently, the Committee asked witnesses whether damage would occur if the public were admitted during the holidays, and there was agreement that there probably would not be.

The possibility of opening the Museum to the public on the student days, Tuesdays and Thursdays, received scant attention at the hearings. Thomas Bell disapproved of having the Museum open to the public on the student days, because scientists had the opportunity of consulting the collections with the officers, and he thought it was of great value.<sup>56</sup> George Rennie disagreed when he said that no inconvenience or interruptions would come to artists who studied the sculpture in the presence of the public. He had intentionally gone on the open days and had never been bothered.<sup>57</sup>

Without necessarily intending it, the hearing was a condescending forum whereby the government asked those who already had access whether they should let anyone else in. The questions about opening during holiday weeks were veiled references as to whether the lower classes should be admitted and whether such people could behave themselves. The M.P.s were relying on witnesses who were 'experts' on how the public performed, and the prize for the public's good conduct was opening the Museum during holiday weeks. The witnesses were not in total agreement over which public should have access, or when the Museum should be open, but the second Committee was impressed with the favorable answers towards the public. As a result, the Committee recommended that the Museum be open on public days from 10:00 until 7:00 from May through August, and that the Museum be opened during the Easter, Whitsun, and Christmas weeks, except Sundays and Christmas Day. The Committee justified the

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<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, par. 462.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, par. 1224-27.

recommendations based on "the increasing interest taken in it [British Museum] by all classes of the People. . . ."58

As the evidence indicates, a 'public' had developed, according to Habermas' definition, because people became concerned about access to the British Museum and thought that the topic was no longer confined to the trustees but was one that was properly theirs to discuss. In the press the 'public' challenged the trustees to justify the British Museum's policies, and it shows that they were critically thinking when they offered judgment on access. From their own experiences, they understood what the statutes were and how they determined who visited the Museum. In spite of the 'public's' opinion and the power of the press, they alone did not bring change. As 'X' in The True Sun and the Athenaeum book reviewer stated, people needed to take complaints to Parliament. The 'public's' discussions were available for everyone to read, though, and M.P.s, such as Mr. Hume, brought the issues before the House and demanded an account from the Museum. After the Museum's attendance dropped in the late 1820s the M.P.s who spoke for the 'public' got support from fellow M.P.s and succeeded in having the Museum opened to the public in August and for notice to be given to visitors who arrived on Tuesday or Thursday and who could not come back on the following day that they could have access.

When the 'public' and M.P.s challenged the trustees, they redefined the museum public. They spoke as, and for, a segment of the population that was either under-represented among visitors (The Penny Magazine's tradesmen and artisans, Cobbett's working and poor man, and Morrison's manufacturer) or had too much difficulty gaining access (foreigners and people who lived outside London). When the 'public' and Mr. Hume stated that the institution was supported by taxes and should be open everyday of the week, they indicated that it was a public

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. v. On 11 February 1837 a meeting was held in which the Treasury sanctioned extra money, and the British Museum began opening on Easter Monday 1837. Other changes according to the Committee's recommendations followed.

museum and had pushed the definition of a museum public to its broadest limits to include everyone.