

Research Notes and Queries

The Warwick Inheritance

Miss Isolde Wigram has sent the following comments:

Dr. Hicks (*Ricardian* no. 81, p.174) is surely guilty of a flight of fancy in implying that one of Richard III's main motives in making a bid for the throne in 1483 was because by the death in May of George Neville, formerly Duke of Bedford (what a pity this is one death which cannot be ascribed to Richard!), he stood to lose the Neville lordships for his heir. As Dr. Hicks noted on p.178, Richard's 'crowning glory' was a county palatine of Cumberland and the hereditary Wardenship of the West March, granted to him and his heirs in perpetuity. Would this not have made another Northern power-base? Moreover if he was as unscrupulous in his pursuit of territorial gain as Dr. Hicks maintains, he would no doubt, even as Protector, have been able to vary the Neville entail to the profit of himself and his son and the detriment of Lord Latimer.

The part played by Richard's Northern retinue in his accession has surely also been exaggerated. When he 'seized' Edward V, it was the young king, travelling with 2000 armed men, who had the advantage over 900 disposed of by Richard and Buckingham, and even if he had had no retinue at all, he could surely have assumed, as Protector, that there would later be somebody to carry out his orders. As to his overawing London, Richard was already king before his Northern retainers arrived—and were promptly sent home again. Far from his imposing his will by force, Polydore Vergil, hardly a friendly witness, concluded: 'notwithstanding that many of his frindes urgyd him to utter himself planely, and to dispatche at once that which remainyd, yeat least his doinges might easily be myslykyd, his desire was that the people might be earnestly delt withall, and the whole matter referryed to the determynation of others . . .' (Polydore Vergil, *English History*, Camden Society vol. 29, 1844, p.185).

Catesby, later the Speaker of the Commons, is also referred to as a 'Warwick retainer', whereas he was originally Hastings's man. Obviously Richard's most powerful allies as Protector were Buckingham, Howard and to some extent Northumberland, besides Catesby and Bishop Stillington, none of whom had any connection with his Northern affinity, Northumberland being in fact a rival for that sphere of influence. It is too easy to say that Richard 'owed his throne to the momentary dominance of a faction.' It would be much truer to say that he owed it to the revelations of Bishop Stillington and the eloquence of the Duke of Buckingham.