

UK Parliamentary Mention of Malthus

"One philosopher in particular has arisen amongst us, who has gone deeply into the causes of our present situation. I mean Mr. Malthus. His work upon Population has, I believe, been very generally read; and it has completed that change of opinion with regard to the poor-laws, which had before been in some measure begun. Sir, I have studied the works of this author with as much attention as I am capable of bestowing upon any subject. I am desirous of doing the most ample justice to his patient and profound research; to the inimitable clearness of his demonstration, and to the soundness of the principles on which he proceeds. I believe them to be incontrovertible. But in many of the conclusions to which he comes, I materially differ from him. Although I believe the design and intention of the author to be most benevolent, and that so much is to be collected from his writings, I think any man who reads them, ought to place a strict guard over his heart, lest it become hardened against the distresses of his fellow creatures; lest in learning that misery and vice must of necessity maintain a footing in the world, he give up all attempt at their subjugation.—Sir, this philosopher has delivered it as his opinion, that the poor-laws have not only failed in their object, but that they have been productive of much more wretchedness than would have existed without them: that 'though they may have alleviated a little the intensity of individual misfortune, they have spread the evil over a larger surface.'" [Malthus, v. ii. p. 149.]

(Samuel Whitbread, Hansard, Column 869, 19 February 1807 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1807-02-19/debates/e810bade-4722-4624-b9db-4b4a10324c57/Poor-LawsBill?highlight=malthus#contribution-7c20e535-6a44-4b9a-b6cc-9cd0f21f79f7>)

"All that he imputed to the West-India planters was, that they had yielded to the circumstances under which they existed. The children in the islands were accustomed to see an order of beings around them which they were taught to consider as inferior. Thus their prejudices were formed. It was not them, therefore, that he blamed, but those who, though not placed in a situation to be misled on the subject of this traffic, and who had the opportunity of seeing its horrors in their true colours, who possessed the power of putting an end to the evil, and yet had suffered it to exist. He referred to Mr. Parke's [Thomas Parke (1729/30 – 1819) a Liverpool slave trader, merchant, banker and privateer] book, to shew the evils which the slave trade created in Africa. It had been contended that Mr. Malthus, in his Essay on Population, had favoured the slave trade; the fact, however, was not so. Indeed, Mr. Malthus had called upon him that day, and expressed his surprise to have learned, that in some publications of the day he was regarded as a favourer of the slave trade; and stated that he had written an appendix to his work, to remove that impression. It was said, why not put an end to the lottery, and other evils in this country?"

(William Wilberforce, Hansard, Column 869, 23 February 1807 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1807-02-23/debates/b1da6ca2-d035-4249-a0aa-c6832301d30e/SlaveTradeAbolitionBill?highlight=malthus#contribution-cecaf68b-1470-4386-804e-2f2e24d93041>)

"move for leave to bring in a bill for the further encouragement and protection of Friendly Societies, combated the arguments of those who had expressed opinions hostile to the principle on which those societies were formed. Of late years it had been said by high authority, by Mr. Malthus, Mr.

Davison, and lastly by one of whom he was bound to speak with peculiar respect, Mr. Copleston, that to encourage poor people to lay by their earnings under an ensurance of this nature, was a bad thing; and that those whose property was very small should not enter into a mutual guarantee."

(Thomas Courtenay, Hansard, Column 869, 25 March 1819 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1819-03-25/debates/8be8c499-926d-44ba-97ab-eb08b5af05aa/FriendlyAndParochialBenefitSocieties?highlight=malthus#contribution-ccf089c8-1d12-411c-8762-d8347ccb74e5>)

"He wished the House to reflect also, whether it was not calculated to perpetuate the evil, and to legalize that misapplication of parochial funds of which there was already so much reason to complain. There were three classes of persons who took different views on the subject of our poor laws; one class, agreeing with the principle of Mr. Malthus, was for their entire abolition; a second was for retaining them, and merely altering the administration; and the third, to which the right hon. gentleman professed to belong, would confine the benefit and operation of them to the old and impotent. But under the latter description of persons, children were not included, and to grant relief to them, as was the object of the present bill, was not consistent with the principle which the right hon. gentleman professed."

(Joseph Damer (Lord Milton), Hansard, Column 1126, 11 June 1819 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1819-06-11/debates/f0b406d5-cc5f-4b74-a36b-e6e3d870c409/Poor-RatesMisapplicationBill?highlight=malthus#contribution-110f82d8-c031-4286-afd5-26e0d3934f1b>)

"'Then,' pursues Harrison [citing Harrison's 'A Description of England' in Holinshed's Chronicles], 'some also do grudge at the great increase of people in these days.' He says that the better part of the population were driven to emigrate to distant countries, and that the worse turned to rob; that there were in the country 10,000 regular thieves of 23 recognized fraternities, and that there was no county which was not infested by 300 or 400 wandering robbers, living solely by plunder. Harrison goes on to state, that 'Henry 8th hung 72,000 thieves, and now the executions relaxing, those who dwell in the uplandish towns or villages shall live in but small safety or rest,' and finishes by observing, that 'the end must needs be that marshal law shall be executed upon them.' During this period of 60 years there were ten regular insurrections. In thirteen years passed the Poor-law of the 43rd Elizabeth, and we have never had a rising of the Commons from that day to this. As to the clause impeding the marriages of the poor ['No no!' from Mr. Scarlett.] Mr. Gurney said he could hardly trust himself to speak on it. But it was an attempt to bring the detestable system of Mr. Malthus to bear upon the legislation of the country,—a system which every chapter of sacred history condemns, every page of civil history confutes, and every map of a half-unpeopled world, after a duration of near 6,000 years, proves the absurdity of."

(John Henry Gurney, Hansard, Column 1481, 2 July 1821 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1821-07-02/debates/08c5cdb-7dfa-43f9-b0e4-876ef00495aa/PoorReliefBill?highlight=malthus#contribution-8ae70664-c2c8-4648-9d00-ca9bf81456be>)

"the communications and information respecting the state of Ireland, now before the committee in the city of London for the relief of Irish distress. The whole tenor of these communications was of this nature; they stated, in one sentence, that the population was perishing with hunger; and in the next they deprecated the sending them food; that was the general tenor of these communications. The causes of the distress, as collected from those communications, were, the want of money and of employment; these were the main causes, though it was aggravated greatly, by the partial failure of the potato crop. That it was not a deficiency of potatoes alone, which they suffered from, was manifest from this, that it was not desired by the Irish themselves, that potatoes should be sent to Ireland. It was deceiving themselves to confine their views to the failure of the potatoe crop. The potatoe crop was subject to accidental deficiencies at all times; but at no former time bad calamities such as the present followed. [Mr. Peel here said, that as great distress as the present, had on former occasions taken place in Ireland.] He again asserted it: Could any former period be pointed out, when distress in Ireland had been so extraordinary as to call for the universal consideration, and spontaneous assistance of the people of this country? Or was it to be supposed, that at times of greater prosperity for England than the present, the people of Ireland could have perished, as they were now perishing, and no relief be given? The present distress was not confined to the labourers. It reached to persons not dependent on potatoes, or existing on them, or suffering from any deficiency in the crop. The want of food (in the midst of its cheapness) had reached to the farmers and smaller shopkeepers those above the labourers. Let them consider what state of things that was. There was a famine—but it was not accompanied with dearth: the people perished with hunger—but there was no deficiency of food. The farmers were destroyed for want of a market for their productions—the people died without the means of purchase. That was a condition, extraordinary, unnatural, monstrous—a famine which it was in the power of a government to relieve; which could never have had existence but in its measures. The right hon. member for Kilkenny might well say, there was something in the condition of Ireland, mysterious, obscure, and difficult to be solved. He requested his attention to some observations applying to that subject, of Mr. Malthus, printed in 1815. That gentleman had inquired into the effect of the fall of prices which then took place, on the different interests and orders of society, and he referred to its effects on Ireland, and there it was his opinion, that if the low rate of prices should continue, if corn should remain as low as 50s. or 60s. a quarter, the effect on the population of Ireland,—always somewhat redundant, protected by no poor-laws, where there was little surplus capital, and little trade—the effect on that population, he expected would be one which was indeed nearly similar to that now existing. He recommended this opinion to the consideration of the right hon. secretary, who believed that low prices would better the condition of the poor. Mr. Malthus had come to a different conclusion. "

(Thomas Attwood, Hansard, Column 1632, 10 July 1821 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1821-07-02/debates/08c5cdbc-7dfa-43f9-b0e4-876ef00495aa/PoorReliefBill?highlight=malthus#contribution-8ae70664-c2c8-4648-9d00-ca9bf81456be>)

"that the evils of Ireland arose from an excessive and redundant population, and from a want of the means to afford employment to the people. Of these the former was the greater, and he thought that, in some measure, it might be mitigated, by giving the people different habits of living.—At present,

they lived, or rather existed, on the very lowest means; and when those failed, through an accidental bad season, they could have recourse to no other. Another evil produced by these low means of subsistence was, the prevalence of early and inconsiderate marriages; by which poverty and wretchedness were introduced into a family, and by which a man made himself and his children the slaves of the landlord. In this respect, the greatest difference was observable between Ireland and Scotland. The superficial extent of the two countries was the same, and yet in Toggle showing location of Column 491 the former the population was seven, in the latter only two millions. He did not agree with the noble lord (Althorp) who had proposed to take of all taxes on articles of consumption; for that would be a boon to Ireland at the expense of the other two kingdoms. The manufacturers in England and Scotland could not then compete with the manufacturers of Ireland, wages would be the same in all, but in one of the three alone the labourer would receive his wages free from taxation. The remedies he should propose would be to check the increase of the population, to give employment on principles different from those mentioned that evening, to forbid, by an act of parliament framed on the manner of the statute of Elizabeth, any person building a cottage without a certain quantity of land attached to it, as the building of those mud cabins greatly tended to the increase of the population, as had been satisfactorily shewn by Mr. Malthus—to lay a tax of a shilling in the pound by way of land-tax on all absentees, and to introduce the English system of farming. The present motion, if adopted, would only afford employment to about 40,000 people, whilst 300,000 or 400,000 wanted work. It was therefore inadequate; and besides that objection, he disliked the principle of giving relief to Ireland, at the direct expense of England and Scotland."

(John Monck., Hansard, Column 491, 4 May 1824 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1824-05-04/debates/12971cdb-00aa-40a4-9ac6-8a4d951bc4ab/AdvanceOfCapitalToIreland%E2%80%94EmploymentOfThePoor?highlight=malthus#contribution-5dddff3c-c8a7-403b-8ad2-044c1491b43e>)

"Every one, who has ever considered the question of Irish population agrees, that the use of the potatoe, as the food of the lower orders, is the principal cause of its superabundance; but this habit of living on potatoes can never be got rid of, even partially, till the people can earn sufficient wages to enable them to afford to live upon a better description of food. Mr. Malthus, who has taken great pains to inform himself of the state of the peasantry of Ireland, and who gives, in his work on the principles of political economy, a very able account of their circumstances, says, "I am persuaded, that had it not been for the potatoe, the population of Ireland would not have been more than doubled, instead of quadrupled, during the last century. * But the use of the potatoe could never have been attended with this great increase of population, had it not been assisted by the long-established and unrestrained practice of subdividing farms. "

(Henry Parnell, Hansard, Column 676, 11 May 1824 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1824-05-11/debates/48ee9130-8ba8-448c-b875-d3a307d3ea45/StateOfIreland?highlight=malthus#contribution-709f9b81-439b-4439-9f34-0a5312525ecf>)

"All these important considerations were interwoven with the question of a redundancy of population. If the redundant portion of the population were extracted from the market, the price of labour would rise. This must be done before it would be possible to withdraw that clause of the

poor-laws, which compelled parishes to find employment for the unemployed part of the population. So long as that clause existed, it would act as a bonus on population. Mr. Malthus was of opinion, that unless emigration was extensively resorted to, an alteration of the poor-laws would speedily be found necessary. The opinions held by Mr. Malthus on the subject of emigration were, he was happy to find, adopted by many persons in this country, and in the colonies themselves. Long before it was possible that either the report or the evidence of the last emigration committee could have reached Canada, he found the following resolutions had been passed at Montreal."

(Wilmot Horton, Hansard, Column 949, 4 March 1828 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1828-03-04/debates/651955c4-f646-4a87-9022-4a097e7ab031/Emigration?highlight=malthus#contribution-71fbc410-63a1-472f-a793-cab5da2667a8>)

"When he was Under Secretary for the Colonial Department, he had received from a most respectable firm, a proposal to take from the settlers in Canada payments in kind for the money expended by government in their transportation and location, and to pay a fair price for it. He now begged leave to read the following passage from the evidence of Mr. Malthus:—'Have you formed any opinion as to what would be the practical effects of introducing a system of Poor-laws into a country circumstanced like Ireland?—I should think that the rates would very soon absorb the rentals of all the estates.' 'Do you think that, on the whole, it would have a tendency to alleviate or to increase the misery that now prevails there?—I think on the whole, and finally, it would aggravate it.' 'Do not you conceive, under the existing feature of comparison between the British islands, that if the population of any district in Great Britain were to be materially reduced by a system of emigration, one effect would be, that the vacuum would be immediately filled up with an increased number of Irish?—I should think so, certainly.' 'Supposing that by any system of emigration an immediate reduction of the population of Ireland to the extent of half a million could be effected, do you not think that there is, in the existing order of things, in that country, a tendency immediately to fill up that vacuum?—There is always a natural tendency towards the filling up of a vacuum; but if the landlords in Ireland were making a change in the management of their estates, and were altering the distribution of their land, I think it is possible, that the vacuum might not be filled up; because those miserable hovels that had been deserted might be pulled down and not be replaced."

(Wilmot Horton, Hansard, Column 1509, 24 June 1828 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1828-03-04/debates/651955c4-f646-4a87-9022-4a097e7ab031/Emigration?highlight=malthus#contribution-71fbc410-63a1-472f-a793-cab5da2667a8>)

"that relief might be given by emigration, and it was the interest of parishes in the southern parts of the kingdom, which were suffering so severely from the pressure of the poor-rates, to contribute to this desirable end. With respect to the fact of the redundancy of our population, he wondered how any Gentleman could entertain a doubt upon it. Experience had proved that the theory of Mr. Malthus was correct. Those who in this country were in a state of abject pauperism, in the colonies would be in a condition of comparative comfort. Only two remedies worth consideration had been suggested:—the one was Emigration, and the other was an alteration of the Poor-laws, reverting to what had been properly called a sound interpretation of that system of enactments. An union of

these remedies might perhaps be effected. Let relief be refused to the able-bodied, but there must be at the same time the means of conveying them to the colonies. This arrangement would remove all the dangers apprehended from a transition from the present system of parish relief to that of refusing relief to the able-bodied. If the poor-rates were applied only to relieve the aged and infirm, and an opportunity were afforded to the young and able-bodied to proceed to the colonies, much might be accomplished for the benefit of this kingdom."

(Henry Baring, Hansard, Column 52, 9 March 1830 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1830-03-09/debates/772ee373-9889-4493-88db-94fe7bfaedcb/StateOfThePoor?highlight=malthus#contribution-469e7407-0904-4313-ab43-b272e54d82ce>)

"That Committee reported—'As the funds which each person can expend in labour are limited in proportion as the Poor-rate diminishes those funds, in the same proportion will the wages of labour be reduced, to the immediate and direct prejudice of the labouring classes, the system thus producing the very necessity it is intended to relieve.' Mr. Malthus also observed, that—' The Poor-laws of England appear to have contributed to raise the price of provisions, and to lower the real value of labour: they have therefore contributed to impoverish that class of persons whose only possession is their labour.' If this were true, a system of Poor-laws would lower the wages of labour in Ireland, and increase the temptation for the Irish labourers to come to England. Every thing, it was said, was paradoxical in Ireland, and perhaps he might be thought guilty of a paradox in saying, that the power now exercised by the parishes in England, of sending the Irish back to their own country, promoted immigration. The fact was, that many of those persons came here for temporary purposes, and were glad to be sent back at the public charge. If the labourers of Ireland who now came here to seek employment, and who returned at the end of the year, were assured of being sent back at that time, they would come over in greater numbers. They came here only for a temporary purpose—they remitted their money home, and Poor-laws, providing them the means of return at the public expense, would only induce them to flock over here more numerously than at present. He had to complain, too, of the cruelty that was sometimes practised under the present system of Poor-laws. A man who had resided forty or fifty years in England, and who had spent the best part of his life in labouring in this country, the instant he demanded casual relief might be sent off to Ireland. This was not sending a man back to his native country, it was rooting him out from the spot where he had grown and flourished. English women, too, who had married Irishmen, were sent to Ireland with their husbands, and had been landed on the quays of Belfast or Waterford strangers in a strange country, and left to the mercy and hospitality of strangers. He considered that the present system of passing Irish labourers back into Ireland required revision."

(Thomas Spring Rice, Hansard, Column 195, 11 March 1830 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1830-03-11/debates/7a082abd-48c8-4d3a-a614-673129e067fb/ThePoorOfIreland?highlight=malthus#contribution-d37d9fe5-ad3a-421c-a9ce-bbf278849cbe>)

"To a political economist he would paint an Irish hovel; he would open the door, and show him enough to make him shudder and confute him. There were two great features of dissimilarity between Ireland and almost every other country, which ought to be noted, before any inference was

drawn from comparison. Arthur Young, fifty years ago, and Malthus, five years ago, observed, that 'the gentry in Ireland have no mercy for the poor.' The law that made slaves of one caste, and tyrants of the other, demoralized both: it sent the people to roll and wallow in the depths of poverty, while it petrified the feelings of the aristocracy, and gave to power an ossification of the heart. It might be said, "Time will cure all this." Ay; but when would the moral Aurora arise? A generation must be laid in the grave, and the field of Irish prosperity must be sought in the church-yards of Ireland. Independently of the general hard-heartedness produced by long and vitiating misrule, Ireland (it was to be recollected) was the island of absentees. Her life-blood was drained away; millions of her acres poured their produce into English harbours, and to the laborious peasant, the sweat of whose brow does not earn his bread, not one ear of all that golden harvest was ever destined to return. The great Lords of England had principalities in Ireland. They never saw the country; or, if they did, their "angel visits" were paid on those days, so auspicious to the prosperity of their tenants—the 29th of September, and the 25th of March. There was another class of proprietors, and they were still worse—the lesser and vagrant aristocracy of Ireland herself, who looked upon their country as a mere receptacle of vulgar provinciality—who preferred being insignificant in London, to being useful and respectable in Dublin; or who in France or Italy vilified their country in all the artifices of accent with which they vainly endeavoured to disguise the original raciness of a genuine Irish intonation. If a poor-law could reach the proud Saxon, who neglected, or the paltry Irishman who despised, the country that owed him a return of scorn, it would confer a benefit. It were well if Ireland could stop, in transitu, some portion at least of the treasure that was poured into patrician coffers; and as to the continental itinerists who would be compelled to return, to prevent their annihilation, a poor-law would have the merit of banishing them to their country, and sentencing them to home. These peculiar incidents to Ireland belong to her gentry; but it should not be forgotten, that the Legislature have, in the infliction of much misery, entered with them into a disastrous co-operation. The "clearing system was sent like a chariot with two scythes fastened to its wheels by the law itself (the Subletting Act, and the Disfranchisement Bill), to mow the people down. He should not discuss the abstract propriety of preventing farms from being broken into fragments, but he complained, and common feeling complained, that no measures of contemporaneous counteraction were provided—that no issue was afforded, even by emigration, for the ejected tenantry, but that thousands upon thousands were driven from the fields where they were born, and hoped to die, without supplying them with a place of refuge in the forests of Canada, or even in the blasted wilds of Australian sterility. But instead of providing this resource, a proceeding was adopted, which ought to make the perpetrators and the participators shudder. A scene of greater affliction was not to be found in the annals of human sorrow. Whole masses of the people were turned out, with the world before them, and with Providence for their guide. Old decrepit men, children scarcely able to crawl, women almost in a state of nudity, and men with brawny arms, and famished faces, went forth in droves of destitution. Some lay down in ditches to die; others raised hovels for the purposes of casual mendicancy on the brow of some hill in the public way; some retreated to excavations in bogs, and hewed themselves out a habitation in a morass. But the greater part found their way into the obscure lanes and alleys of ruined districts in large cities—they swarmed in human clusters in garrets and in vaults; if you looked up, you saw famine glaring from a sashless window in the attics of some deserted house; and if you looked down, you beheld it in a cellar, seated upon its bed of short and pestilential straw. There was no exaggeration in this. The Committee report that the ejected tenantry suffered affliction which it was not in the power of language to describe. But this was called a state of transition. Call it pestilence, famine, death, and men would tremble; but call it transition—envelop it in the technical vocabulary of fiscal science, and a Directory of economists will speak of it with the tranquillity with which a French philosopher would have expatiated on the process of regeneration which his country was undergoing, through the sanguinary celerity of the guillotine. "

(Richard Sheil, Hansard, Column 195, 29 August 1831 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 19.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1831-08-29/debates/f997518a-0d36-44b4-89dd->

"In the third Report, in 1826, of the Select Committee on Emigration, this effect seems to have been foreseen. In that Report, it is said, "Mr. Malthus was asked whether he had taken into consideration what may be the effect of the continued increase of the population of Ireland upon the condition of the labouring classes of England? He stated, that, in his opinion, the effect will be most fatal to the happiness of the labouring classes in England; because there will be a constant and increasing emigration from Ireland to England, which will tend to lower the wages of labour in England; and to prevent the good effects arising from the superior prudence of the labouring classes in this country. He stated, that he has understood, that, in the western parts of England and Scotland, in the manufacturing districts, particularly in Manchester and Glasgow, the wages of labour have been lowered essentially by the coming over of Irish labourers; which opinion, your Committee beg to observe, is confirmed by the evidence that has been given by witnesses resident in those districts. Mr. Malthus is of opinion, that this emigration will tend materially to alter the habits of the labouring class in England—to force them into the habitual consumption of a sort of food inferior to that to which they are now accustomed, namely, potatoes; and the danger of the use of the lowest quality of food is, that it leaves no resource in a period of scarcity; whereas, in the case of a population habitually living on wheat, there is always the resource of potatoes to compensate for the failure of an average crop. He is also of opinion, that it will necessarily throw a great number of English labourers upon the Poor-rates; inas much as, if there be a redundancy of labour in any English parish, the presence of Irish labourers, universally seeking for employment, would prevent such English labour from being absorbed. He stated, that he was satisfied no permanent improvement would take place in the case of the English poor, even if a portion of them were removed by emigration, as long as this influx of Irish labourers continued without a check." But even the extract which I have read will fail to give the House an adequate notion how much of the pauperism and distress in England is occasioned by the enormous and overwhelming influx of Irish poor. In some parishes within the precincts of the metropolis, the amount given for the relief of the pauper Irish, who have come over to England flying from beggary and want in their own country, in search of employment and subsistence here, almost exceeds belief. "

(Charles Manners-Sutton (speaker of the house), Hansard, Column 850, 2 May 1833 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 22.6.23: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1833-05-02/debates/02183740-801f-46d3-a131-aed25bcae606/PoorLaws\(Ireland\)?highlight=malthus#contribution-07e82fa3-b401-45c9-a71a-18f41a0eae2](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1833-05-02/debates/02183740-801f-46d3-a131-aed25bcae606/PoorLaws(Ireland)?highlight=malthus#contribution-07e82fa3-b401-45c9-a71a-18f41a0eae2))

"[Henry Warburton] The question was—whether the system proposed was the best? What would be said, if, at the University, the fellowships were to be granted at the very moment of the students entering into the College? He thought that they ought to admit the principle of competition at the time of their leaving the College, as well as at their entrance. He was sorry that the latter part of Mr. Malthus's plan had not been adopted—that of admitting a great number of young men, who were afterwards to be sent out to India. Instances were frequent of men obtaining distinction at College, and gaining fellowships, who afterwards settled down into college monks.

(Henry Warburton, Hansard, Column 850, 19 July 1833 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved

22.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1833-07-19/debates/d17fb003-9686-4267-974c-0348ee9c556a/East-IndiaCompanySCharter?highlight=malthus#contribution-f62217e7-f85a-4d7c-8cd8-723dfcc26aed>)

"The hon. member for Marylebone had said, that what the poor received of their parishes was of the nature of alms or charity, but everybody knew or ought to know, that the right of the English poor to relief in cases of indigence was as sound and as good a right as that of any gentleman or nobleman to the possession of his lands. It was their right by law, founded in nature and on the principles of civil society; and if this were not a right, what right, then, had they to call on the poor to become militiamen to defend their estates, those lands on which they could not come for relief, even in cases of starvation? A noble Lord in another place had said, that he would bring in a Bill to alter the Poor-laws; but, after a Session or two had passed, he thought it prudent to appoint a Poor-law Commission, and this was the history of the present Bill. That noble Lord had said, that the principles of Malthus were sound and just, and that he would defend them to the utmost extent. Now, what were the principles of Malthus, but to deny relief to the poor altogether? Malthus had proposed that an Act should pass saying, that if the poor married after the passing of that Act, the consequences should be entirely their own. He said to the poor, "There is no relief for you, no relief at all; at nature's board there is no seat for you." It was imprudent in him to refer to the law of nature. If he told the poor to rely on nature, the poor had strength, they had power, they would take, and would not go to ask relief from parish officers. They would go and take the nearest to their hands, and all that they liked the best. The law of England had said, that if a man were in want of food, or the means of sustaining life, he had a right to take it wherever he could find it. Gentlemen might laugh, but he said again, that it was the law of England. Blackstone and Hale contended, that men in England had no right to take the property of others under any circumstances. They had quoted civilians to show, that men in a state of destitution, in want of sustenance, had a right to seize it wherever they could lay hands upon it; but then they maintained that, in England, no such right could exist, because parish officers were always at hand to afford relief. If parish officers, therefore, were not at hand, the right of nature to take would return. Gentlemen were angry with the poor because the Poor-rates were so high; but had they a right to call on the poor to defend their estates whilst they were told that even whilst starving they had no right to relief?"

(William Cobbett, Hansard, Column 1336, 26 May 1834 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 22.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1834-05-26/debates/0173e2e3-311a-495e-a6a4-9f814061dba7/Poor-LawsAmendment%E2%80%94Committee?highlight=malthus#contribution-efd5e57d-fed4-444d-a16d-c25a6bbbbd5b>)

"Then it is needless to say, that the parish pauper regards himself independent of fair weather or foul, of bad health or good, of the full harvest or scanty crop, of all the calamities to which the rest of mankind are subject. Again: all shame of begging is utterly banished—the pauper glories in his dependence—if, indeed, he does not consider the land as his own, and its nominal proprietor as his steward. Nay, instances are to be found of the shame being, by a marvellous perversion of feeling, turned the other way; and the solitary exception to the rule of parish relief under which a whole hamlet lived, "being shamed," as a female said, "out of her singularity, and forced by her neighbours to take the dole like themselves!" But, for all this, I do not blame the pauper; I blame the bad law and its worse administration, which have made him a worthless member of society. The law of nature says, that a man shall support his child—that the child shall support his aged and infirm

parent—and that near relations shall succour one another in distress. But our law speaks another language, saying to the parent, "Take no trouble of providing for your child,"—to the child, "Undertake not the load of supporting your parent—throw away none of your money on your unfortunate brother or sister—all these duties the public will take on itself." It is, in truth, one of the most painful and disgusting features of this law, that it has so far altered the nature of men. It is now a common thing to hear the father say, "If you allow me only so many shillings a-week for children, I will drive them from my doors, and deny them the shelter of my roof;" and it is not unusual to hear the child say, "If you do not allow my aged mother more, I shall take her out of my house, and lay her in the street, or at the overseer's door." I state this from the text of the evidence, and, horrible as it appears, I cannot refuse it my belief. My Lords, those who framed the Statute of Elizabeth were not adepts in political science—they were not acquainted with the true principle of population—they could not foresee that a Malthus would arise to enlighten mankind upon that important, but as yet ill-understood, branch of science—they knew not the true principle upon which to frame a preventive check, or favour the prudential check to the unlimited increase of the people. "

(Henry Brougham [Lord Chancellor], Hansard, Column 229, 21 July 1834 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 23.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/1834-07-21/debates/021a1481-eccc-47d9-b158-6f06a2043d12/PoorLawsAmendment?highlight=malthus#contribution-4f769d69-682f-4b92-8150-b15fe9e7967c>)

"As the Commissioners considered the state of female morals to be thus depraved, it could not surprise their Lordships to perceive how severely they had pressed on that part of the population which they regarded as so depraved. The code of law which they from this view proposed for the females of England was not to be paralleled by the code of any other country. They spoke of the Bastardy-laws, very deservedly, he admitted, in terms of strong reprobation. No one could think them wise and good, and therefore they proposed the abolition of them. "What we propose in their room," said the Commissioners, "is intended to restore things, as far as it is possible, to the state in which they would have been if no such laws had ever existed; to trust to those checks, and to those checks only, which Providence has imposed on licentiousness, under the conviction that all attempts of the Legislature to increase their force, or to substitute for them artificial sanctions, have tended only to weaken or pervert them." He was as much inclined as the Commissioners to trust to those "checks which Providence has placed upon licentiousness;" but in saying that, he must add that his notion of the checks which Providence had placed on licentiousness did not agree with the notions of the Commissioners. Those checks appeared to him to be three. The first, and he hoped the most powerful check, was, the sense of the sinfulness of the act. The second was also very powerful; it was the apprehension of the responsibility of becoming a parent in consequence. That was admitted on all hands to be a strong preventive check even on the male; some persons regarded it as the strongest of all the checks; and it was that check on which Mr. Malthus based the whole of "his moral restraint in the case of marriages." If he understood that philosopher rightly, the great restraint was conceived to lie in the apprehension of having children without having the means of maintaining them. If that was to be depended upon as a powerful restraint against improvident marriages, he thought it might also be regarded as a powerful restraint upon incurring the responsibility of being a parent from an illicit connexion. The third check was the fear of becoming exposed to those restraints, sanctioned by the law, which were described, as he thought, in the sentence which he had just read to them as neutralizing or weakening the restraints of Providence. That sentence he understood to mean this—that the Commissioners were of opinion that any attempts of the Legislature to check the growth of bastardy interfered with the restraints of Providence. Contrary to the Commissioners, he held, that the restraints imposed by the law, provided the law itself were good, were, in truth, among the restraints of Providence. He regarded

such restraints, as he regarded the restraints imposed by other laws, and should as soon think of denying that the restraints imposed by laws on theft and on murder were parts of the scheme of Providence for checking those crimes, as of denying that the restraints imposed by human laws on licentiousness, particularly by making the man bear the burthens of paternity, were parts of the restraints of Providence. He held, that all human laws ought to be such as carried with them the sanction of Providence, and should, therefore, at least in part, be considered as the Ordinances of God."

(Christopher Bethell [Bishop of Exeter], Hansard, Column 589, 28 July 1834 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 23.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/1834-07-28/debates/1ff02fc2-b9b8-4f39-a566-448bffa959c8/PoorLawsAmendment?highlight=malthus#contribution-9dd49e98-7ae3-4297-a962-ad5014ca16bd>

"The putative father of the Bill must be the best acquainted with the working of the Bill, with its nature and objects; and that putative father had told the country, that he meant the Bill as a stepping-stone to a total abolition of all relief for the poor. The putative father of the Bill had told the country, that the Act of Elizabeth had been an Act of false humanity, of false philosophy, and false legislation, and yet the noble Lord opposite had told the House, that the Bill was not meant to alter the law of Elizabeth. The putative father had told the country, that it had fallen into an error when it had conceived that there had been a threefold distribution of tithes, and that one-third had been devoted to the poor. If he had the putative father of the Bill before him, no doubt his (Mr. Cobbett's) knees would knock with fear; but still he would tell that putative father, that he was wrong. He would show him Baron Gilbert's work, and he would there find that one-third part of the tithes was due to the poor. Such had been the law from the time of introducing Christianity into England. What, therefore, the putative father of the Bill had laid down as law in the other House, was not law as laid down by writers of authority. The noble Lord had said, that the Bill did not call into dispute the rights of the poor to parochial relief, whilst the putative father of the Bill had declared to the other House, that the poor had no right at all. The great object of the Bill was, to teach the poor to live as man and wife without having any children. This was a base and filthy philosophy, and yet a book had been published showing the means of carrying the principles of Malthus into effect. Every farmer knew that the effect of the Bill was to take away the poor-rates from the poor, and to put them into the pockets of the landlord. What harm, he asked the noble Lord, could postponing the Bill do? Oh yes, it could do great harm; it would give the country time to reflect upon the Bill and to understand it, and this was a Treat harm in the eyes of Ministers. The House would not pass the Bill if it had to be brought before them in the next Session. He should support the Amendments of the hon. member for Oxford."

(William Cobbett, Hansard, Column 1216, 11 August 1834 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 23.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1834-08-11/debates/b8701d5d-2012-42f1-85c0-14d198666e62/PoorLawsAmendment?highlight=malthus#contribution-825a2e47-0bf9-41f3-b110-96602b380072>

"England, it is well known, and Scotland, had their system of poor-laws established in the beginning of the 17th century. It is now known that it was contemplated by the Legislature very shortly afterwards to transfer the same valuable institution to Ireland. In the year 1640 an Act, the almost literal transcript of the 43d of Elizabeth, passed both. Houses of Parliament in Ireland, and received

the Royal Assent; but, by some accident, owing most probably to the troubled state of the times, just at the breaking out of the great rebellion, it was never promulgated, and has remained a dead letter ever since. From that time till very lately no attempt was made to introduce any public provision for the poor into Ireland. A few years since some writers in the public press, struck by this contrast of the condition of the poorer classes of the population of England and Ireland, the one without, the other with, the protection of a poor-law, advocated the extension of this salutary institution to the sister island. But their views were discountenanced by the then reigning school of political economy, which had espoused the doctrine of Mr. Malthus, that poverty was solely the consequence of excess of population; that any relief to the poor only led to an increase of their numbers, and consequently to an increase of pauperism and misery. In vain was it urged that the comparative rate of increase of the population of Ireland and England demonstrated the very reverse of this doctrine, and proved that a sound system of Poor-laws acts as a restraint on excessive increase; that want and misery unrelieved, on the other hand, stimulate the multiplication of wretched beings, who cannot be worse off than they are, and therefore are reckless of the future."

(George Julius Poulett Scrope, Hansard, Column 591, 4 May 1836 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 23.6.23: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1836-05-04/debates/d6b5f412-973e-4a35-be17-9d5e6f9e82c9/PoorLaws\(Ireland\)?highlight=malthus#contribution-3f8df8d5-ae5-40c0-805c-c35d9ff104a9](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1836-05-04/debates/d6b5f412-973e-4a35-be17-9d5e6f9e82c9/PoorLaws(Ireland)?highlight=malthus#contribution-3f8df8d5-ae5-40c0-805c-c35d9ff104a9))

"Would the House believe that the distresses of the Irish clergy, instead of meeting with sympathy from their brethren of another Church, had been absolutely made the subject of ridicule and sarcastic allusion, by an eminent dignitary of the Roman Catholic Church. —Dr. Mac Hale, who, in a letter addressed to the Bishop of London, used the following expressions;—"There is something in the very soil and atmosphere of Ireland uncongenial to the growth of error; its people are too quick and intellectual in their conceptions, too lofty in their hopes, ever to bend their necks to the ignominious yoke of an Establishment. He (Mr. Sergeant Jackson) supposed the right rev. Prelate was opposed to all establishments: he, however, was a friend to Establishments—he considered it the duty of every Christian state to establish the Christian religion, and he hoped the country would never be deprived of the blessings which flowed from a Protestant Establishment. However, the right rev. Prelate considered it as an "ignominious yoke," and taught the people to consider it so. But the next part of the letter was far more reprehensible:—"The Parsons, whose deeds united with the decrees of the Lords, have doomed the Establishment to destruction, are already commencing the practices of the Catholic Church. Fasting is becoming a favourite observance. Nay, hateful as celibacy appeared to the Protestant churchmen, they are beginning to agree with Malthus, that it would be unjust to be burdening society with an unprovided offspring."

(Samuel J Jackson [Mr. Sergeant Jackson], Hansard, Column 22, 3 June 1836 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 23.6.23: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1836-06-03/debates/abf1c8ff-7e90-4e6f-b9e6-285cfde8d5db/TithesAndChurch\(Ireland\)%E2%80%94AdjournedDebate%E2%80%94ThirdDay?highlight=malthus#contribution-12b180be-3ff3-4e31-9f2c-927e7e5bbe93](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1836-06-03/debates/abf1c8ff-7e90-4e6f-b9e6-285cfde8d5db/TithesAndChurch(Ireland)%E2%80%94AdjournedDebate%E2%80%94ThirdDay?highlight=malthus#contribution-12b180be-3ff3-4e31-9f2c-927e7e5bbe93))

"On the subject of improvident marriages, on which so much had been said, and which had been so strongly deprecated as the source of evils in this country, he hoped the House would allow him to read part of a letter from a personage whose name must be familiar to many in that House; he meant the Styrian friend and correspondent of Captain Basil Hall, and who had many opportunities of

observing the consequences resulting from the prohibition of any other than what were called prudential marriages among the poor. This personage, a lady, too, of Scottish extraction, thus wrote:

'We have no poor (that is, in the province of Styria), which, owing to the question in England respecting the Poor-laws, is deserving of being noticed. No man is allowed to marry till he can prove he is able to maintain a wife and children: and this, with the law of celibacy of the clergy, and the security required by a pecuniary deposit of the military before they can marry—almost an act of celibacy—are checks on population, which would make the hearts of Mr. Malthus and Miss Martineau burn in them for admiration. The result is, the entire demoralisation of the people. The mask of religion helps nothing. At the last grand jubilee in the next parish seventy-two pairs of single women adorned the procession, dressed in white, and covered with garlands and flowers. In eight months forty-four of them were in the family way. Madame Nature is not a political economist, and she does not let her laws be outraged with impunity.'

From every account that he had heard, he had reason to infer that a great increase of the crime of infanticide had taken place in consequence of the New Bastardy Law; and this result was foreseen and predicted by seventy-one members of the other House. He would content himself with reading one clause in the Leicester petition upon the subject."

(John Walter, Hansard, Column 1006, 24 February 1837 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 23.6.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1837-02-24/debates/a13f6c3a-b3e7-47c2-9297-4f744bdc228d/Poor-LawAmendmentAct?highlight=malthus#contribution-a8a2434c-da3f-4ea5-a9b7-33603a015f31>)

"Far be it from me to depreciate that noble science which is conversant with the laws that regulate the production of wealth, and seeks to make human industry most conducive to human comfort and enjoyment. But I must, at the same time, confess, with all respect for that science and its brightest luminaries, that they have failed to throw light on the obscure and intricate question of the nature and amount of those special burdens upon agriculture which entitle it to protection from foreign competition; and I not only do not find in their lucubrations any solution of the difficulties, but I find the difficulties greatly increased by the conflict of authorities. After reading Adam Smith's doctrine concerning the rent of land, I find that Mr. Ricardo pronounces it erroneous, and that he totally differs from Adam Smith, as to rent forming one of the component parts of the price of raw produce. Adam Smith thinks, that the value of gold estimated in corn will be highest in rich countries; Mr. Ricardo, on the other hand, that it will be low in rich, and high in poor countries. Mr. M'Culloch discusses the question whether there are any peculiar burdens on agriculture. He observes that tithes, land tax, poor and other rates, are said to be such; and says as to tithes:—

'Two different opinions have been advanced. Dr. Smith contends, that tithes are'

'paid out of rent, and have no influence on the price of corn. Mr. Ricardo contends, that the amount of tithe occasions an equivalent rise in the price of corn.'

Mr. M'Culloch declares, that neither the one opinion nor the other is perfectly correct. I turn to the acute and valuable work of Colonel Torrens, treating expressly on the foreign corn trade, and the protection of home produce, and hope to find some reconciliation of the differences of those who had preceded him—some preponderance, at least, of agreement which may lead to a safe

conclusion. But, alas! I learn from Colonel Torrens,

'That Adam Smith is fundamentally wrong in stating that corn has a real value which is always equal to the quantity of labour which it can maintain.'

Perhaps Colonel Torrens harmonises with the French economists. Far from it. He says:—

'That the doctrine of the French economists, as to the degree in which the cost of food influences the value of the manufactured article, is fundamentally erroneous, and cannot, in any possible state, be conformable to fact.'

Does he concur with Mr. Ricardo, or Mr. M'Culloch, or Mr. Malthus? Quite the reverse. He says:—

'Mr. Ricardo and his followers are quite wrong as to the doctrine of rent. That it is self-evident that Mr. M'Culloch cannot be right, in the opinion that the value of the farmer's capital rises in the same proportion with the value of the raw produce he brings to market. Not content with one refutation, he gives a second of the doctrine of Mr. Malthus, that the labourer is benefited by the high value of the articles composing wages.'

The very heads of Colonel Torrens's chapters are enough to fill with dismay the bewildered inquirer after truth. They are literally these:—

'Erroneous views of Adam Smith respecting the value of corn.'

'Erroneous doctrine of the French economists respecting the value of raw produce.

'Errors of Mr. Ricardo and his followers on the subject of rent.'

'Error of Mr. Malthus respecting the nature of rent.'

'Refutation of the doctrines of Mr. Malthus respecting the wages of labour.'

Perplexed by these conflicting authorities, finding, as we proceed, our path more intricate and obscure, we turn for relief to her Majesty's Government, in the hope that from the eminence on which they are placed they will be able, by their superior sagacity to illuminate the darkness and unravel the intricacies of our ways. But we turn in vain. They give us no comfortable assurances. The light they have, if any there be, they studiously withhold from us. They invite us to follow them, and yet they are the very men who have warned us to distrust the guides to whom they would commit us. Can we forget the letter of the noble Lord (Lord John Russell), addressed to his constituents, cautioning them against the party—

'Who wish to substitute the corn of Poland and Russia for our own; who care not for the difference between an agricultural and manufacturing population in all that concerns morals, order, national strength, and national tranquility; with whom wealth is the only object of speculation, and who have no more sensibility for the sufferings of a people than a general has for the loss of men wearied by his operations.'"

(Robert Peel, Hansard, Column 779, 15 March 1839 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 23.6.23: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1839-03-15/debates/188db691-05e4-4c96-9bf0-a0301343db90/CornLaws%E2%80%94AdjournedDebate%E2%80%94\(FourthNight\)?highlight=malthus#contribution-2d0cf1d2-cd53-4dfb-b680-2aadcc234e2c](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1839-03-15/debates/188db691-05e4-4c96-9bf0-a0301343db90/CornLaws%E2%80%94AdjournedDebate%E2%80%94(FourthNight)?highlight=malthus#contribution-2d0cf1d2-cd53-4dfb-b680-2aadcc234e2c)

"I would invite you, also, to contrast our doctrines with the anti-population mania, which, for several years, usurped possession of the public mind in this country;—that philosophical dogma which has sought to annul the mandate of Heaven,—' Be fruitful and multiply,'—given to the early fathers of mankind. We do not ask whether, as a matter of abstract theory, the position laid down by Mr. Malthus and his followers, be or be not true,—'that, whilst population increases in a geometrical ratio, the means of subsistence increase only in an arithmetical ratio,'—but we say, that whilst the unpeopled territories which acknowledge the sway of Great Britain are capable of sustaining twenty-fold the population of the United Kingdom, it is unnecessary to forbid marriage to the young, and, by a cold and often profligate prudence, to defeat the benign intentions of Nature. Passing from these general observations, I now proceed to the proof of the first position which I have undertaken to establish; namely,—'That in Great Britain and Ireland, the working classes are frequently exposed to extreme privation, from inability to procure employment."

(William S.O'Brien, Hansard, Column 835, 2 June 1840 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 20.7.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1840-06-02/debates/f0a4b6c4-914c-4f39-9586-c164b1584914/Emigration?highlight=malthus#contribution-229c5aef-fa20-466e-b1f5-fe372e0d8bc3>)

"True it was that the former law of 1815 made an absolute exclusion up to 80s., and the amount was thus lowered by the present law; yet the practical effect of the law was the same at both periods; namely, to exclude the foreign corn. The principal argument in favour of the exclusion of foreign corn was propounded at that time by an eminent man out of Parliament, and was adopted by many persons in Parliament, he meant Mr. Malthus—who proposed the exclusion of foreign corn, because he wished for a national independence, and to make us independent of foreign supply, we must secure for ourselves a domestic supply. There might or might not be sound policy in that view. He was not going into that question. His noble Friend said, that it was an important question; it might have been an important question; but when all experience had since shewn them that they could not do without foreign corn, there was an end of the importance of the question."

(Charles William Wentworth Fitzwilliam, Hansard, Column 1003, 11 June 1840 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 20.7.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/1840-06-11/debates/985403a6-1ebc-4e62-87de-a71715111b90/Corn-Laws?highlight=malthus#contribution-f4b60a33-a02e-47f4-9ffc-b4a9836b922d>)

"But the Government, in proposing the plan now before us, have laid down a principle which is far more doubtful—though it is a principle which has indeed been sanctioned by one great writer, I mean Mr. Malthus, and acted upon by the Legislature on former occasions—namely, that you ought to make this country independent of foreign nations. Thais the principle on which the existing law and the proposition of the right hon. Gentleman opposite are framed, and which tends to prevent, by prohibitory duties, other nations from sending food into this country. I confess that although that principle might be an excellent one for some remote and sequestered state, such as that city which is supposed to exist somewhere in Mexico, which is said to have no communication with the rest of mankind, I cannot conceive how it is applicable to this great commercial country. But, supposing it

to be desirable, in what manner could you establish such independence? Recollect that, even with respect to corn, you are not now independent of foreign nations...The right hon. Gentleman has said, that a great advantage in argument enjoyed by those persons who support the free admission of corn, and who declare they will have no restrictions upon trade, no protection which can impede it. Not only do they enjoy an advantage but they are invincible, unless you can show good and sufficient reasons for the duty that you impose. For a small fixed duty I think such reasons could be given; but if you have a prohibition through the instrumentality of a sliding scale, then, I think, you cannot possibly give any such reasons. It must be said in favour of a fixed duty, that it has been recommended at different times by persons of great authority. It was first recommended by Mr. Malthus, in 1815, when the Corn-law was proposed. Mr. Ricardo proposed that after a certain time a 10s. duty should be imposed. He proposed that the duty should be 20s. and then fall 1s. a-year until it descended to 10s., and there to remain."

(John Russell, Hansard, Column 338-350, 14 June 1842 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 20.7.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1842-02-14/debates/4df5a21b-f662-4545-bb0d-db90e57ca30d/Corn-Laws%E2%80%94MinisterialPlan%E2%80%94AdjournedProceedings?highlight=malthus#contribution-5cd34e7a-8c01-428c-9f71-e87e56e4f751>)

"There was, indeed, one ground for the protection of agriculture which the noble Lord disavowed, and that was, an intention on the part of the Legislature to make this country independent of foreign supply. The noble Lord asserted that a great writer and authority, Mr. Malthus, was in favour of the principle of independence of foreign supply. With respect to Toggle showing location of this topic, and without discussing its abstract validity,

he was surprised that the noble Lord, when referring to authorities, did not bear in mind a far higher name, or that, if he recollected, he did not quote the sanction of Mr. Huskisson, who had held that, not indeed to all extremities and for all circumstances, but within moderate bounds, it was a legitimate design for Parliament to pursue, to render the country independent of foreign supply. Mr. Huskisson strongly supported this proposition in 1815. It was true, that at a subsequent period he modified some of the opinions which he then expressed; but the question arose was this opinion amongst those upon which his judgment was altered? In 1827, six years after the publication of that report which the noble Lord had made the subject of such high, and he must add in his humble judgment such just commendation, when on some occasion the question before the House turned upon the independence of foreign supply, he declared in his place in Parliament that he adhered unequivocally and unreservedly to the opinion which he had announced in 1815. He would now contend, with respect to the general subject of debate, that the evils attributed to the existing law were only owing to it in a limited degree, and that the statements made upon that head were full of very gross exaggerations...Member for Dumfries (Mr. Ewart) to become the evening star: ever singing, as he twinkles, "the blessings of free trade," and for the two noble Lords to become the sun and moon, in this expansive, well-defined, social system. With the permission of the House, I will give them M'Culloch's contradictory opinions as to the soundness of free trade. In page 13 of his work, entitled "Commerce;" he says:— "" It is clear, therefore, that in estimating the comparative advantageousness of the home and foreign trades, it will not do to look merely at the number of transactions in each. The real question is, which occasions the greatest subdivision of employments, and gives the most powerful spur to industry? This, however, is a question that does not, perhaps, admit of any very satisfactory resolution."" Adam Smith, too, in the second chapter of his 4th Book on the Wealth of Nations, asserts, that "" By restraining, either by high duties or by absolute prohibition, the importation of such goods from foreign countries as can be produced at home, the monopoly of the home market is more or less secured to the domestic industry employed in producing them. Thus the prohibition of importing either live cattle or salt provisions from foreign

countries, secures to the graziers of Great Britain the monopoly of the home market for butcher's meat. The high duties upon the importation of corn, which in times of moderate plenty, amount to a prohibition, give a like advantage to the growers of that commodity. The prohibition of the importation of foreign woollens is equally favourable to the woollen manufacturers. The silk manufacture, though altogether employed upon foreign materials, has lately obtained the same advantage. The linen manufacture has not yet obtained it, but is making great strides towards it." In the 7th chapter you will find the following passage, referring to the following policy of the country; — "Secondly, this monopoly has necessarily con- " Toggle showing location of Column 432 tributed to keep up the rate of profit in all the different branches of British trade, higher than it naturally would have been, had all nations been allowed a free trade to the British colonies. The monopoly of the colony trade as it necessarily drew towards that trade a greater portion of the capital of Great Britain than what would have gone to it of its own accord; so, by the expulsion of all foreign capitals, it necessarily reduced the whole quantity of capital employed in that trade below what it naturally would have been in the case of a free trade. But by lessening the competition of capital in that branch of trade, it necessarily raised the rate of profit in that branch. By lessening, too, the competition of British capitals in all other branches of trade, it necessarily raised the rate of British profit in all those other branches. Whatever may have been at any particular period since the establishment of the Act of Navigation, the state or extent of the mercantile capital of Great Britain, the monopoly of the colony trade must, during the continuance of that state, have raised the ordinary rate of British profit higher than it otherwise would have been, both in that and all the other branches of British trade." Malthus, too, in his "Principles of Political Economy," revised by himself, just before his death, states that, "Since that era of these distinguished writers, the subject had attracted the attention of a greater number of persons, particularly during the last twenty or thirty years. All the main propositions of the science have been examined, and the events which have since occurred, tending either to illustrate or confute them have been repeatedly discussed. The result of this examination and discussion seems to be, that on some very important points there are still great differences of opinion. Among these, perhaps, may be reckoned, 1st. The definitions of wealth and productive labour; 2nd. The nature and measures of value; 3rd. The nature and extent of the principles of demand and supply; 4th. The origin and process of rent; 5th. The causes which determine the wages of labour and the profits of stock; 6th. The causes which practically retard and limit the progress of wealth; 7th. The level of the precious metals in different countries; 8th. The principles of taxation, &c." And at page 418, he adds: "With regard to these causes (alluding to the causes of distress), such as the cultivation of our poor soils, our restrictions upon commerce, and our weight of taxation, I find it very difficult to admit a theory of our distresses so inconsistent with the theory of our comparative prosperity. While the greatest quantity of our poor lands were in cultivation, while there were more than usual restrictions upon commerce, and very little corn was im. ported, and while taxation was at its height " Toggle showing location of Column 433 the country confessedly increased in wealth, with a rapidity never known before. Since some of our poorest lands have been thrown out of cultivation, since the peace has removed many of our restrictions upon commerce, and notwithstanding our Corn-laws, we have imported a great quantity of corn, and since seventeen millions of taxes have been taken off from the people, we have experienced the greatest degree of distress both among capitalists and labourers." Had it not been so late a period of the evening, I could have quoted Mr. Huskisson to show that during the last few years of his life, he too clearly perceived, that the principles of free trade, as defined by hon. Members opposite were wild and visionary; he even went so far as to declare in his last speech on the Corn-laws, that the farmer is not only justly entitled "to remuneration and protection," but that "a permanent fixed duty was out of the question." The noble Lord has quoted these "enlightened men" as his authority to show that the "soundness and truth of the principles of" free trade have long been demonstrated in reasoning;" but, Sir, I think they prove quite the reverse, and I have therefore trespassed thus on the time of the House, in order to correct his error; as my doing so may be beneficial to himself as well as to the country. Before I sit down I will once more appeal to the landed proprietors of England. I ask you whether you intend to join in

assisting the anti Corn-law League in their deep design of tyranny and oppression against the working classes. The labouring poor have never yet appealed to you in vain—you have ever been ready to relieve them in their distresses, and to stand by them in their necessities. They now look to you;—to you, and the right hon. Baronet, so long as he continues to walk in the light of the Constitution,—and I feel convinced that they will not look in vain; I feel convinced that they will find you now as they ever have done, their best friends and protectors. "

(William Ewart Gladstone, Hansard, Column 361-443, 14 Feb 1842 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 20.7.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1842-02-14/debates/4df5a21b-f662-4545-bb0d-db90e57ca30d/Corn-Laws%E2%80%94MinisterialPlan%E2%80%94AdjournedProceedings?highlight=malthus#contribution-02b86944-e397-407a-bf63-83f363ba4fdc>)

“There was another point to which he would allude, that of independence of foreign supply. He would not deny that, to a certain extent, we were dependent upon foreigners, but still he contended that every endeavour should be made to avoid being as little dependent upon foreigners as possible for the staple food of the country. Agriculture had always been considered infinitely preferable to trade or commerce. The noble Lord had said that there was no authority but Malthus, who had advocated an independence of foreign supply. Now, he contended that Adam Smith was also an authority in favour of that position. He said, that trade was, in addition to the danger from the winds and the waves, exposed to danger from the folly and injustice of absurd laws. He did not think it would be prudent of this country to give up the idea of being in most years independent to a certain extent of a foreign supply. Besides the land bore exclusive burdens. ["No," "What?"] The land-tax, the county tax, and the bulk of the Poor-rates were borne by the land. If that were not the case, he would be prepared to go to a Committee of Inquiry, as proposed by the hon. Member for Sheffield. Considering also the various ways in which protection was afforded to the manufactures, he thought it was undeniably no more than fair to give some protection to the agriculturists. (The hon. Member then read from the returns a list of the various articles of manufacture which were protected by a duty, and also of some articles of agricultural and colonial produce which were protected by duties.) Now, as the right hon. Baronet, the First Lord of the Treasury, had said, if the duty on corn were entirely abolished, it would be necessary to alter our fiscal system. If the protection were taken off corn, it could not be continued upon linens, cottons, and the like. He should like to know, if such were the case, how they could raise the revenue, and pay the national debt? He did not believe it would be possible. Mr. Deacon Hume had said that if they repealed the duty on corn, they ought to repeal it on all others simultaneously. He had heard a great deal of talk about the distress in the country, and the effect of the Corn-laws on it; he did not deny that they might have had some effect on the distress of the country, but that other concurrent and concomitant causes had a much greater effect. There was one cause mentioned by the right hon. Baronet, which he believed had a great effect, it was the war with China, and the disturbance of the monetary system of America; the over-issue of paper currency, and the over-trading and speculating which occurred in 1838 were other causes; and it appeared to him that the over-issue of paper money and derangement of the currency resulted from there not being a sufficient regulation with regard to country bankers. The hon. Gentlemen opposite had represented this as the landlords question, and not as the question of the farmer's and labourer's. That appeared to him to originate from the fallacy that rent did not enter into the cost of production. That had been stated about the same time by Mr. Malthus, Mr. Ricardo, and a barrister named West; it was quite evident, however, that rent did enter into the cost of production. In the price of every article, there were three shares; first, the labourer's share, then the capitalist's share, and then the proprietor's share. Take cotton for example; there was the labourer's

share, the manufacturer's share, and the grower's share, and so it might be argued with respect to land. There was the labourer's share, the share of the farmer, and also the share of the landlord, who is the proprietor of the raw material. Rent did therefore enter just as much into the cost of production as other articles; and he could not understand the reasons alleged by those who argued on the other side. This measure he thought, therefore, was calculated to benefit not so much the landed proprietor as the farmer and the labourer.”

(Walter James, Hansard, [Column 547](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1842-02-16/debates/d092cf89-f88d-4377-9227-a90f9b2f74b8/Corn-Laws%E2%80%94MinisterialPlan%E2%80%94AdjournedProceedings(ThirdDay)?highlight=malthus#contribution-3773344e-7e60-428d-8925-b6dba7113482) , 16 Feb 1842 UK Parliamentary Record, Retrieved 23.8.23: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1842-02-16/debates/d092cf89-f88d-4377-9227-a90f9b2f74b8/Corn-Laws%E2%80%94MinisterialPlan%E2%80%94AdjournedProceedings\(ThirdDay\)?highlight=malthus#contribution-3773344e-7e60-428d-8925-b6dba7113482](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1842-02-16/debates/d092cf89-f88d-4377-9227-a90f9b2f74b8/Corn-Laws%E2%80%94MinisterialPlan%E2%80%94AdjournedProceedings(ThirdDay)?highlight=malthus#contribution-3773344e-7e60-428d-8925-b6dba7113482))

“Coming from so humble an individual as himself, the suggestion might perhaps have been treated with derision, but still he would frankly tell the right hon. Baronet, that if ever the system of unions was to work satisfactorily to the country, instead of paying 80,000*l.* a-year to the Poor-law Commissioners, they must at once reduce the size of the unions. That was absolutely necessary, and if this bill were read a second time, he trusted the House would assist him in making it imperative on the Poor-law Commissioners to reduce the size of the unions. For this purpose altogether new machinery must, of course, be introduced, and he should propose where any rule, order, or regulation was to be confirmed, it might be done by Order in Council. Some machinery of this sort, he was convinced, would be infinitely more satisfactory to the country than the administration of the Poor-law commissioners. While on his legs, he could not help adverting to one portion of the speech of the right hon. Baronet in introducing this measure. He quoted the authority of a great and distinguished man, who undoubtedly would always stand high in the estimation of the public—he meant Lord Brougham—who, in his speech on this subject, had thought it right to animadvert on those who were the framers of the salutary and mild statute of Elizabeth. Lord Brougham said, “Those who framed the statute of Elizabeth were not adepts in political science. They were not acquainted with the true principles of population; they could not foresee that a **Malthus** would arise to enlighten mankind.”

The present bill, then, was intended to carry out the principles of **Malthus**, who insisted that no man came into the world with any title to relief from his fellowman. He had thus been led to look into the early history of pauper legislation in this country, and he found, that in 1388, the 12th of Richard 2nd, c. 7, prohibited persons from departing from the hundred in which they lived without a testimonial, which continued to be the law for 107 years. In 1495, the act 11th of Henry 7th, c. 2, required beggars to go to their place of birth without begging out of the hundred. The 19th of Henry 7th, c. 12, required them to go to the place of birth, or the place of abode for the last three years, without begging out of such place; which continued to be the law twenty-seven years. By the 22nd Henry 8th, c. 12, justices were to assign limits for begging. If out of the limits the beggar was to be imprisoned two days and nights in the stocks, and then sworn to return to the assigned limit; the able-bodied to be first whipped. The 27th of Henry 8th, c. 25, enacted compulsory relief. Every parish was to maintain its own poor, or forfeit 20*s.* per month. Sturdy beggars to be punished, first offence, whipped, second, the right ear to be cropped, third, to be tried at Sessions and suffer death as a felon. This law remained in force five years, but its severity prevented its execution. By the 1st of Edward 6th, c. 3, the able-bodied labourer was to be branded with the letter V, and serve as a slave for two years on bread and water, and refuse meat, and caused to work by beating, chaining, &c. If he ran away to be branded on the cheek with the letter S,—a slave for life. Second time to suffer death as a felon. Obligation of each parish to maintain its own poor on pain of forfeiture, if a city, 5*l.*, borough, 40*s.*, village, 20*s.*, for not setting labourers to work. In 1550, 3rd and 4th Edward

6th, c. 16, repealed the last act, and revived the 22nd of Henry 8th, c. 12. The 5th and 6th Edward 6th, c. 2, confirmed 22nd of Henry 8th, and the 3rd and 4th of Edward 6th, and directed collections. In 1556, 2nd and 3rd of Philip and Mary, c. 5, re-enacted 3rd and 4th of Edward 6th, c. 16, in precisely the same words. The 5th of Elizabeth, c. 3, gave powers to justices to enforce contributions. The 14th of Elizabeth, c. 5, recited,

"That all parts of this realm of England and Wales be presently with rogues and vagabonds and sturdy beggars exceedingly pestered, by means whereof daily happeneth horrible murders, thefts, and great outrages;"—

and assigned punishment for the first offence to be grievously whipped and burnt through the ear with a hot iron, of the compass of one inch about. Second, felons. Third, to suffer death as felons without benefit of clergy. Under this act, justices were to assess all the inhabitants, 1598, 39th of Elizabeth, c. 3, and 39th Elizabeth, c. 4, altered the punishment, and mitigated the severity in some degree—whipping until the body be bloody; transportation beyond the seas, or to the galleys. Four years afterwards, by 43rd of Elizabeth, c. 2, provision was made for setting to work the able-bodied, and relieving the poor and impotent. The punishment of the able-bodied was to be imprisonment in the House of Correction on a refusal to do the work set for him. There was no further alteration of the law till 3rd and 4th William and Mary, c. 11, which was the first foundation of the justices' power to order relief. The 9th of George 1st, c. 7, prohibited relief to those who refused to enter workhouses. Then came the 36th of George 3rd, c. 23rd, which gave power to the justices to order relief generally, under which the abuses so much complained of had grown up. But he contended, the present was not the law to cure those abuses. It was said, that the law in the manufacturing districts had been relaxed, and it was very proper that it should be so, for it could not be enforced. The population of those districts was of a character altogether different from that of the agricultural districts. In the report of the Assistant Poor-law Commissioners, who had been recently sent down to inquire into the state of Stockport, he found the following passage. They stated, that

"Eighty accounts of provident institutions had been opened at the savings'-bank in that town; a proof of a wide-spread prevalence of habits of economy. In addition to these we must, in justice to the manufacturing population of the northern counties, state, that they exhibit a degree of hardihood in the endurance of distress, and a spirit of pride and independence in regard to the receipt of parochial relief, which are not commonly prevalent in other parts of England."

Again:—

"Those among them who have not been able or willing to leave a place where at present their labour is of little or no value, have been found enduring distress with patience, and abstaining, sometimes to the injury of health, from making any application for relief, while others, who have been driven reluctantly to that extremity, we have seen receiving a degree of relief sufficient only to support life, often with thankfulness and gratitude, and generally without murmur or complaint."

He put it to the House, whether these were a class of persons who should be driven into the workhouse, their little habitations destroyed, their goods and chattels sequestrated, when a little temporary relief in sickness or distress, for a week or even a day, perhaps, might enable them to recover themselves? He believed, it was the desire of the Poor-law Commissioners to do the best they could, but it was impossible that they could have a proper acquaintance with the condition of all the various unions in the country.

(Thomas Grimsditch, Hansard, Columns 126 - 129 , 17 Jun 1842 UK Parliamentary Record,

Retrieved 23.8.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1842-06-17/debates/d249be37-84f3-4ac0-b21a-a4c19088b922/NewPoor-Law?highlight=malthus#contribution-0bd7f1d8-2365-44c6-b342-5053d430b533>)

“The present measure was framed on the principles of *Malthus*, and was designed for the purpose of lessening the population of this country by reducing the poor to such a condition of hardship that they could not live. The poor considered that this bill originated in a desire to oppress them, that it proceeded from a conspiracy of the rich against the poor; and was it safe in the House to give them ground for such an opinion. The double effect of the New Poor-law had been to raise rents and reduce wages. This had been proved by the most incontestible evidence, adduced in that House by the hon. Member for Oldham, and also by several most respectable witnesses before the Wages Committee. He had another grave objection to this bill, founded on its unconstitutional character. The 1st, 15th, 21st, 25th, 26th, and 32nd clauses gave the most arbitrary and unconstitutional powers to the Poor-law commissioners. They were invested with power to tax the people and to make laws; indeed, every power which the Legislature itself possessed had been transferred to these commissioners. He could not conceive on what grounds those who professed to be the friends of the people and the advocates of public liberty could give their assent to such a bill as this. It not only destroyed all the local boards of guardians, but it struck at the very root of all representation. If this bill passed, representation would be a humbug.

(William Sharman-Crawford, Hansard, Columns 498 - 499, 22 Jun 1842, Retrieved 23.8.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1842-06-22/debates/5e5b9feb-6d25-4e2b-9555-9a10d5e15d81/AmendmentOfThePoor-Law?highlight=malthus#contribution-e8008a35-c62a-4ce8-9a4d-06a827cc5f3c>)

“The right hon. Baronet had declared that this Bill was founded on the principles of the Act of Elizabeth, and it was said that out-door relief under its operation would be carried to a greater extent than ever. Why make such bold assertions, if they were never intended to be acted on? If it was meant that the feelings and prejudices of the people were so much against the Government that their principles could not be carried out, why he trusted that the same feelings and prejudices would force that Government now to repeal a law which he believed was totally repugnant to the good sense and humane feelings of the country. It was his belief that the law was totally opposed to the principle of the 43rd of Elizabeth, and he would tell them why. It was opposed to it not merely because it introduced a pernicious system of centralization, and destroyed all local administration, but because that law introduced a labour test of poverty, and this law created a test out of nothing less than suffering. There was a noble Lord in the other House, an active promoter of this Bill, who, on its introduction, had told the House of Lords that, if the old law were continued he should be reduced to the level of a Westmoreland pauper—that those who passed the 43rd of Elizabeth were no adepts in political science—that they did not understand the principles of population, and wanted a *Malthus* to enlighten them with his doctrine. No other than that noble Lord could, he believed, have employed such language respecting the poor as that which he had made use of. Let him cite a passage from that noble Lord's speech:—

"Sickness was a thing which prudent men should look forward to and provide against in prosperity; and old age was before all men, and they should lay up stores for that time."

The Law, then, according to Lord Brougham, was based upon the principle that young men must foresee events that were to occur in old age; that they were, in fact, to lay by from their wages to purchase their coffins. Was anything more fearful ever uttered? Let him contrast such expressions with what had been said by statesmen of past times. Even in these enlightened days, perhaps,

Ministers of State would not entirely discard the opinions of Pitt and Canning. What did Mr. Pitt say, in 1796, in the course of the discussion on the Wages of Labourers' Bill?—

"I am convinced that the evils which the Poor Law occasioned did not arise from their original constitution; and I coincide with the opinion of Blackstone, that in proportion as the wise regulations which were adopted in the long and glorious reign of Elizabeth have been departed from and superseded by subsequent enactments, the utility of the institution has been impaired, and the benevolence of the plan rendered fruitless."

These were the opinions of Mr. Pitt in the year 1796, a period when the country was placed under very different circumstances. Mr. Canning was once asked by Mr. Tierney why he did not touch the Poor Law? To which question Mr. Canning replied:—

"Why do not Governments decide offhand a question growing out of the usages of centuries—interwoven with the habits, and deeply rooted in the prejudices of the people? Of all subjects of legislation on which Governments ought not harshly or prematurely to interfere, without ascertaining, and, if possible, carrying with them the prevailing sentiments of the country, this of the Poor Law appears to me the one on which it would be most undesirable to take a precipitate course."

He considered that he had proved his case as far as he had gone; and the right hon. Baronet would perhaps admit that he had done so, and that he was in so far entitled to maintain the difference in opinion which he had expressed, that the present Poor Law was not based on that of the 43rd of Elizabeth. He had endeavoured last year to prove that the Poor Law now in operation was not framed in conformity with the opinions of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Canning. He had endeavoured, and he believed successfully endeavoured, to prove the difference which existed between the Poor Law of the present day and the opinions which had been expressed in 1796 by the first statesman of the day as to the basis upon which such a measure ought to rest. He was now prepared to go further, and to declare it to be his opinion that every Poor Law ought to have in view two main objects—the first of which was, that relief ought not to be doled out to the suffering poor so as to make them feel all the bitterness of poverty and destitution—that the labouring classes, who were reduced to seek temporary relief under such an enactment ought not to be made to feel that poverty was a crime. The second object which a Poor Law ought to endeavour to accomplish was to administer succour and assistance to the suffering poor in such a manner as to call forth all the grateful sympathies and kindly feelings of the people; and there was not, he believed, a nation upon earth amongst whom such feelings and sympathies were more prevalent or stronger than amongst the English people when not unnaturally repressed and crushed. What was the principle upon which relief was administered to the poor prior to the Reformation? It was that same principle which was prevalent in all Catholic countries, and which might be advantageously observed at work at the present day throughout the whole extent of France. It was the voluntary principle of each arrondissement contributing in proportion to the means of each individual and the necessities of the poor to furnish sufficient funds; and when those funds were not enough, then recourse was had to some measures to stimulate the public benevolence. After the Reformation was effected the statutes of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. were passed, which were subsequently merged in the Act of the 43rd of Elizabeth, and this continued to be the sole law under which relief to the poor was administered until the 9th of George I., when the system of workhouses was first introduced; and from that time until the year 1834 the poor-rates gradually increased until they reached the annual sum of 8,000,000*l*. To relieve the country from this enormous charge the present Poor Law was enacted and brought into operation. Workhouses were built upon a scale and a system of internal management almost similar to that which was enforced in places where criminals were confined; and the nourishment and treatment of paupers were not equal in point of quantity or quality of food, and as regarded humanity, to that experienced by convicts in gaol. It was in evidence that a jury had found a verdict last year, after an inquiry into the death of a pauper, that the wretched individual had actually died

of want. The feeling of the whole country had been roused against such a system. There could be no doubt whatever that there were good reasons for the detestation in which the people held the Poor Laws. The regulations now in force did not even permit a poor worn-out labourer to enter the workhouse unless he was accompanied by the whole of his family; neither was this species of relief given to him until he had sold the last remnant of his furniture, and had become wholly destitute. Forgetful of Pitt's maxim of 1794, to which he had already referred, the Legislature now told the pauper that he must enter the workhouse and submit to its regulations if he desired to derive any benefit from the law which assigned relief to the poor. Thus the wretched aged man found himself, after a life of privation and labour, forcibly separated from all that he loved on earth, and even deprived of Heaven's last boon—hope. And this was the sentence passed upon him in a Christian country! He was told by the Legislature that he could not be permitted to starve. No; that would have been too disgraceful. Therefore the Scripture injunction to feed the hungry and clothe the naked was fulfilled; but in what manner? The garment that was given to him was the garment of shame; the bread that he ate was the bread of bitterness. And with what advantages had the introduction and enforcement of this New Poor Law been attended? He was prepared to show that as the operation of that law had advanced, so had crime increased in a perceptible ratio. If he were allowed he could prove the facts to be as he had stated, and if the House would permit he would number of convictions for crime were 14,771, In 1837 they had increased to 17,690; in 1838 they amounted to 16,875; in 1839 to 17,832; in 1840 they numbered 19,927; in 1841, 20,280 was the amount of convictions; 22,733 in 1842; and in 1843 they were 21,092—a number not very far short of double what they were in 1834. These figures would show what a fearful increase of crime there had been since the New Poor Law had come into operation; and what was still more remarkable, this gradual increase in the number of offences was more observable in the counties that were almost entirely, if not exclusively, agricultural districts. He found that in Berkshire the convictions were nearly double in 1843 what they were in 1836, being as 230 to 137; in Buckinghamshire they were 124 in 1837, and 216 in 1840; in Derbyshire 141 was the amount in 1836, and 254 in 1840; in Devonshire they were 358 in 1836, and 517 in 1840; and in Durham they were 105 at the first period, and 216 at the second. This series of facts, though not conclusive, was at all events a very strong, and an equally available argument against the Poor Law. The effect likewise of the present system of affording relief to the destitute classes under the New Poor Law was one which ought to weigh very strongly against its perpetuation, The industrious poor man, reduced by hard necessity to have recourse to it in consequence of his being unable to procure work, was hardened and rendered indifferent to shame and exposure by the wretchedness to which it reduced him at the very first, whereas the profligate idler and the thief passed callously under its operation, in consequence of their being already dead to the better feelings of human nature. The former shrunk from the degradation of being compelled by the chance of sickness or momentary privation of employment to associate with the incorrigibly lazy habitual inmates of the workhouse, whereas the latter class of persons, as well as those of a more criminal description, utterly disregarded all such considerations. Another of the arguments which might be fairly urged against the Poor Law was that which had formerly been advanced in its behalf, namely, the amount levied under its operation for Poor Rates. The sum raised for the relief of the poor in the year 1835, when first it came into force, was, in round numbers, 8,000,000*l.* In the year 1837, this sum was reduced to 6,300,000*l.* In 1838 it was 5,000,000*l.*; in 1839 it again rose to 5,600,000*l.*; in 1840 it reached 6,000,000*l.*; in 1841 it was 6,350,000*l.*; in 1842, 6,552,000*l.*; and in the last year the rates levied for the relief of the poor reached the sum of 7,000,000*l.* odd, being, with a very small difference, nearly the same amount that the New Poor Law Bill commenced under. The Act of the 43rd of Elizabeth took for its basis the inference that when the labourer was, from whatever cause, unable to support himself, the burthen of his maintenance was thrown upon society at large. The principle of the New Poor Law, on the contrary, threw the poor man entirely upon his own resources, and denied his right to assistance unless upon such conditions as made even privation preferable to their acceptance; and this principle was adopted as the inflexible rule at a period when mechanical science had made such vast progress as to limit in the most perceptible manner, the field of labour of the working classes.

Let him ask, with reference to this very point, did it ever appear that a capitalist sought in vain for labourers in this country? Was not the converse of this proposition the true—unfortunately too true—state of things? Did not the labourer frequently—nay, daily—seek in vain for employment by which to support his family? He asserted, and he did so without fear of contradiction, that it was not the labouring classes who were unwilling to work, but it was the employers who were either unable or unwilling to find them occupation wherewith to support themselves. The labouring classes were those on whom the prosperity and stability of the empire depended, and this country was never more secure and prosperous than when wages were high, whereas the rate of wages never was so low as at present. He would now, having gone thus far, proceed to state an opinion, in which he was already aware a great many hon. Members who heard him would not coincide, namely, his firm belief that the great evils under which the country laboured had been increased by the predominance of manufactures and machinery, which had so vastly multiplied of late years. The stimulus given to the increase in the population by the predominance of manufactures was very observable. In the year 1670, the population of England was about 6,500,000; in 1800, it was about 8,000,000, being an increase of about 1,500,000; whilst from 1800 to 1840, the numbers of the people had nearly doubled, being within a fraction of 16,000,000. He maintained that so sudden and so vast an increase in the number of the inhabitants of any country could not but produce a very great social change, and when he asserted that the manufacturing portion of the community had proved injurious to the other classes, he would assign as one reason for that assertion the fact that the manufacturers contributed nothing, so to speak, towards the relief of the poor. He was prepared to show that the chief burthen fell upon the land, which was assessed at 35,000,000*l.*; house property at 23,000,000*l.*; and all other property at only the sum of 6,000,000*l.*; this latter included the mills, factories, and other manufacturing properties. The hon. and learned Member for Liskeard had stated last year that during the preceding ninety-four years the land had contributed towards the poor-rates 255,000,000*l.*; houses, 123,000,000*l.*; and mills and factories, 16,000,000*l.* Machinery was not rated to the poor according to its value. ["No."] The hon. Member denied his assertion; but he would appeal to the House if what he said was not the case. How much, let him ask the hon. Member, did the manufacturing interests contribute to the poor-rate? A good deal had been said about rating the stock in trade to the poor-rates, but was not the machinery of a mill or a factory to be regarded in this respect as so much stock in trade, and therefore liable as such to be rated? The manufacturers' advocates might argue that they ought not in fairness to be made to contribute to the poor-rate in the same ratio as the landed proprietors; but he would answer, that if they claimed the same protection from the laws and obtained the poor man's labour, they were bound to pay their quota toward his support when in need of relief. Besides, the population of manufacturing labourers was supported by the land and not by the mill-owners. In 1800 the landed proprietors took care that when they let a cottage to their labourers a piece of land should be annexed to each dwelling for his cultivation. Such was not the case in the manufacturing towns, and whenever a period of depression arrived, and the operatives were thrown out of work, then they were driven to seek relief and shelter in the agricultural districts. In that enormous field of speculation which constituted England, the manufacturers always profited by the prevalence of distress and want of employment, because they then got labour cheaper than during more prosperous times. With respect to this very topic Lord Liverpool said in 1822:

"When the noble Lord says, that low prices incident to the distress which agriculture suffers benefit no man, I answer that I sincerely wish that such distress did not exist: but I cannot be blind to the fact, that they certainly do benefit a great majority of the people; do they not benefit the annuitant and mortgagee."

The argument urged in favour of machinery by its advocates was, that in proportion as manufacturers increased and spread, so likewise did the power of giving employment multiply. Now, machinery had increased thirty-fold within the last thirty-years, and if the first part of the proposition which he had stated were true, the power of affording employment ought likewise to

have multiplied in the same degree, whereas the very contrary was unfortunately observable. For his part, he did not think that the power of England depended on the development of her manufacturing capabilities, but even if that were the fact, he contended, that the more fully this capability of manufacturing became developed, so in like manner increased the misery and privations endured by the people, and he was prepared rather to sacrifice all the benefits resulting from manufacturing prosperity than to entail such consequences as it brought with it upon the people. He did not think he should have much difficulty in proving that every measure affecting the commercial and financial interests of the country that had been passed since the year 1819 had tended directly to the benefit of the capitalist and to the injury and deprivation of the labouring classes; and amongst these measures not the least influential had been the Currency Bill, the Poor Law Amendment Act, and the new Tariff. He heard it asserted on every side that England depended for her greatness on her manufactures. The House would be able to perceive from what he had already said how much the question of that branch of her industry was mixed up with the topic of the Poor Laws. In the Agricultural Committee which sat during the year 1836 the Chairman asked Mr. Langholm,—

"To what do you attribute the impoverished state of the farmer? Mr. Langholm.—I attribute the distress of the farmer chiefly to the diminished quantity of currency. Mr. Wodehouse.—Do you disapprove of the New Poor Law? Mr. Thirnall.—Most assuredly, I think it will compel the labourer to work for low wages. They will not be able to consume our produce. Consequently, I think it will be very prejudicial to the farmers. Is the labourer better or worse off than he was ten years since?—He was better off till the New Poor Law came in. Then he was thrown upon his own resources."

The question was put to Lord Radnor,

"Notwithstanding all philosophical arguments, is it actually true that the result of the Act of 1819 was to pay double what you had borrowed?—Yes. If the House of Commons had known the effect of the Act, would they have passed it?—I believe not. Do you believe the Bill was passed in utter ignorance of its consequences?—I believe it was so. It affected the whole nation?—Yes, it affected every fixed payment that was made."

[The hon. Member next referred to the opinion of Sir James Graham, that the reduction of landlords' rents, consequent on the Act of 1819, had averaged at least 30 per cent.] The right hon. Gentleman allowed that the change would give many and great advantages to the manufacturers, and he presumed the right hon. Baronet would concur in the opinion he expressed, that the alteration was in favour of capitalists, and against the landed interests. He begged to remind the House that the country was now saddled with the whole expenses of the late war, during which the national debt was enormously increased; indeed, a great portion of the national resources was swallowed up by that debt. What was the opinion of Mr. Pitt on this point? In 1796 or 1797 that right hon. Gentleman said,

"I say, fortunately we have at last adopted the redemption fund. The benefits of it are already felt. They will every year be more and more acknowledged; and in addition it is only necessary to say, that instead of consulting a present advantage, and throwing the burthen as heretofore upon posterity, we shall fairly meet it ourselves, and lay the foundation of a system which shall make us independent of all the events in the world."

It was stated in the Report of the Poor Law Commissioners in 1834 that the poor of this country were idle, improvident, and vicious. He would put it to the House whether the poor population of this kingdom were open to such an imputation? He would ask whether any hon. Member of that House would deny that, under the distress and misery the poor of this country had suffered during

the last few years, they had manifested the most exemplary patience? If he (Mr. Cochrane) were desirous to prove that this had been the case, he would refer to the evidence given as to the working of the allotment system; and he must say, that when it was remembered that 2,000,000 of the inhabitants of this country depended for subsistence upon the Poor Law, their patience was highly commendable. The Committee, in reporting upon the allotment system, said,

"We find in this excellent Report, that of all the heads of families holding allotments in Kent, not one of them was committed for any crime during 1841 and 1842. In the parish of Harlow there were thirty-five commitments in 1825. The allotment system was introduced in 1836, and in 1837 the commitments were reduced to one."

In answer to the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Martin said that one-half of the holders of the allotments of two acres would have been on the parish but for that system. But in 1834 the Poor Law Commissioners, referring to the subject of allotments, said,

"The immediate advantage of allotments is so great that if there were no other means of supplying them we think it might be worth while, as a temporary measure, as a means of smoothing the road to improvements, to propose some general plan for providing them."

He believed that the first and best remedy for the existing evils would be to return to the old system of relief, altering and amending it in such respects as might be deemed necessary, but preserving its Catholic spirit. Mr. Professor Grindley, of Lausanne, truly said,

"Workhouses for old men weaken the ties of families, and destroy those feelings of affection which children owe to their parents; they give birth to the monstrous idea that the old are a burthen upon society, of which it must endeavour to rid itself."

In no other country in Europe was such a system carried out as had been introduced into England. If they looked to France, no Poor Law existed there; the workhouses in Germany were only for the impotent poor; in Scotland, though a Poor Law did exist, it was rarely or ever acted upon, and that country was free from the incumbrance and expensive machinery which was in operation here. The Commission which had been sent into Scotland to institute inquiries as to the relief of the poor reported in these terms:—

"A strong feeling in opposition to a legal assessment has, however, existed in Scotland, and the clergy in general have strenuously exerted their influence to prevent recourse being had to any compulsory means for the relief of the poor. It is maintained that the existence of an assessment in a parish has a tendency to encourage pauperism, and to increase the number of the poor and the expense of supporting them, without materially benefiting their condition. The establishment of a fund so raised is said to lead the poorer classes to place an undue reliance on a legal provision, and thus to break down their spirit of independence. The exertions they might thus make in their own behalf are thus supposed to be relaxed, while at the same time the efforts of private charity, the care and kindness of relations, and the sympathy of the poor for the poor, are held to be so much diminished as to render any advantage which the pauper may obtain from the introduction of assessments but a small compensation for what he loses in other respects."

His conviction was, that the Poor Law as now existing in this country tended to diminish and to

repress those kindly feelings which ought to exist in every relation of life. The great object of the Legislature, as he conceived, ought to be this—to endeavour to diffuse, through all classes of the state, a warm spirit of charity—not that charity which was to be found among society-mongers, prize-beast, or prize-labour dealers; not the charity of political economists, or of workhouse disciplinarians; what it was requisite to impress upon all minds was, that those feelings and sympathies were not the results of peculiar refinement, but that the humblest classes were susceptible of the same impulses and affections. What was the course pursued under the present system of Poor Laws? They took the poor man from his cottage, they forgot that his footsteps still lingered on the threshold, and that the roof, however humble, had sheltered him from the cold; they placed him in a large, commodious, roomy building—a workhouse—which was divided and subdivided according to the most approved economical scale, and regulated by a system of machinery and by rules which would delight a *Malthus*; they separated him from those who had hitherto been his support and his glory; and if, in the fulness of sorrow, he turned towards the home he had left—if he accepted in bitterness the pittance which the state doled forth—they then accused him of ingratitude. This was no hypothetical case;—it was a case occurring daily, almost hourly, in every parish in this country. He believed that no good man could enter the workhouses in this country without feelings of shame. In his opinion, the present system of Poor Laws in this country engendered error; and they were leading men into temptation even while giving them, day by day, their daily bread. There were moments in the lives of nations, as of men, when their situation demanded great sacrifices, — when the sense of self must be lost in one great universal interest. It appeared to him that the present was a most critical period in the history of this country; for the condition of the poor was such as might well occasion serious apprehension and alarm,—and certainly this was not a time when an unreasonable economy should find any place in their consideration. He believed that the seeds of vast movements were scattered throughout the land. It was true that, at this moment, there was no outward manifestation of discontent; but it was too hard to test the amount of suffering by that of popular excitement. Happily a moral feeling still prevailed throughout this land, which taught men to bear up against misfortune, and to submit to privation and suffering with patience and resignation. But the people did not on that account feel their sufferings the less; and if the House took no heed of their complaints, the low voice of anguish might become louder and louder, until, with one cry of despair, all classes and all orders were buried in overwhelming ruin. Unhappily, the apparent prosperity and external splendour of a state were too frequently found combined with much internal misery.

...

Mr. Pitt was not the only person whom Lord Brougham considered to be "frantic" on this subject. In the noble Lord's speech he says, speaking of the statute of Elizabeth,

"My Lords, those who framed the statute of Elizabeth were not adepts in political science—they were not acquainted with the true principles of population—they could not foresee that a *Malthus* would arise to enlighten mankind upon that important, but, as yet, ill understood, branch of science—they knew not the true principle upon which to frame a preventive check, or favour the prudential check to the unlimited increase of the people. To all that they were blind; but this I give them credit for—this they had the sagacity to foresee—that they were laying the foundation of a system of wretchedness and vice for the poor—of a system which would entail upon them the habitual breach of the first and most sacred law of nature, while it hardened the heart against the tenderest sympathies, and eradicated every humane feeling from the human bosom; and, therefore, the same statute of Elizabeth which first said that labour and the reward of labour should be separated; the same statute which enacted a law contrary to the dispensation of Providence, and to the order of nature—foreseeing that the consequences would be to estrange the natural feelings of the parent for his child, and of the child for his parent—for the first time in the history of human legislation, deemed it

necessary to declare, by a positive enactment, that a child should be compelled by the statute in such case made and provided, to obey the dictates of the most powerful feelings of nature—to follow the commands of the law implanted in every breast by the hand of God, and to support his aged and infirm parent."

When Lord Brougham and Earl Grey asserted that Mr. Pitt was ignorant of the principles of Nature and of God, they forgot the command which our Creator gave, viz., "to increase and multiply." There would be no redundancy of population if the poor man was not crushed by unjust laws. England was not over-peopled except as they, by mischievous legislation, clogged the springs of industry, and prevented the development of the powers which would enable the labouring people to maintain a respectable position among other classes of the community. "

(Peter Borthwick; Alexander Baillie-Cochrane, Hansard, Columns 322 -332, 337, 4 July 1844, Retrieved 23.8.23: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1844-07-04/debates/d7794c7d-88a8-4dd7-8240-28e3797b3c05/PoorLaw?highlight=malthus#contribution-d65fa32f-4d76-4e29-a008-476fdecd8639>)