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## Cotton Famine Relief Legislation: A Study in Mid-Victorian Attitudes

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COTTON FAMINE RELIEF LEGISLATION: A STUDY  
IN MID-VICTORIAN ATTITUDES

by

John A. Steidl

Bachelor of Arts, University of North Dakota 1965

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Grand Forks, North Dakota

December  
1970



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This Thesis submitted by John A. Steidl in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota is hereby approved by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done.

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Signature John A. Steidl

Date December 9, 1970

## PREFACE

This thesis will discuss measures introduced in the British Parliament to provide relief for the unemployed cotton operatives of the Lancashire-Cheshire manufacturing region who experienced severe distress during the years 1861 through 1863. This condition, referred to as the cotton famine, resulted from a shortage of prime cotton caused by the Federal blockade of Confederate ports in the American Civil War. As the Civil War continued and the cotton shortage became more acute, at least 500,000 operatives in Britain's second leading industry were thrown out of work.<sup>1</sup> Both private and public efforts were made to relieve the unemployment and suffering.

This study will examine the public relief measures passed by Parliament and consider attitudes that influenced the members of Parliament who opposed or supported relief legislation. More importantly the study will examine these attitudes in the perspective of their age and place them in the larger setting of the mid-Victorian period, as a part of the political, social, and economic philosophies of the time.

I wish to thank my advisor, Dr. Gordon L. Iseminger, for the many suggestions and much assistance offered for the improvement

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<sup>1</sup>David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914, Vol. VIII of The Pelican History of England, ed. by J. E. Morpurgo (8 vols.; Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1950), p. 137.

of the work. I also wish to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Elwyn B. Robinson and Dr. Henry Tomasek, for their assistance and patience throughout the duration. Finally, I would like to thank my wife for her encouragement.

## VITA

John A. Steidl was born in Fargo, North Dakota on February 13, 1942. His home was in Valley City, North Dakota where he attended St. Catherine's grade school and high school. He entered the University of North Dakota in September, 1960 and received his B.A. degree in January, 1965. In his senior year Steidl was inducted into the University of North Dakota chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, national history honor society. He completed work on his M.A. in December, 1970, and is presently employed as an instructor at Northland State Junior College in Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explain the cotton famine and resulting relief legislation as an example of attitudes characteristic of the mid-Victorian period. It is at times easier to understand a period of history by investigating a specific, readily defined event through the primary and secondary source material available and to interpret that period in terms of the forces involved in shaping the event. This reasoning is only valid, however, if the event is truly representative of the thought and behavior of the period. In my estimation the cotton famine was indeed representative, and it will be my task to demonstrate that parliamentary action was a clear example of the legislative application of the ideals of an age.

The procedure will be to examine industrial conditions, especially in the cotton industry, and to record the events of the famine itself. Mid-Victorian attitudes in general will be discussed, and arguments offered by members of Parliament for and against cotton famine relief legislation will be explained in the light of prevailing social, political, and economic theories and attitudes.

## INTRODUCTION

No period in English history is socially and politically more significant than the Victorian era. In terms of progress the reign of Queen Victoria brought England literally into the twentieth century. From 1837 to 1900 material prosperity, individual rights, and social welfare in England were advanced from their nearly Elizabethan concept in the first third of the nineteenth century to a position as advanced as any nation in the world.

In the early Victorian years the greatest hardships of the industrial revolution ended. A new era in British constitutionalism was ushered in more in spirit than in fact by the Reform Bill of 1832. Although preceding the succession of Queen Victoria, the bill was assured of support when the new queen was converted to Whiggism.<sup>1</sup> Reformed electorate laws, factories and hours acts, Corn Law repeal, and the death of Chartism had brought peaceful relations or at least an acceptable truce to English society.

The advent of the mid-Victorian period was signaled in 1851 by the end of a depression of some five years duration and was symbolized by the opening of the Great Exhibition in that year. The mid-Victorian period was characterized by relative prosperity for all

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<sup>1</sup>Walter L. Arnstein, Britain Yesterday and Today: 1830 to the Present, Vol. IV of A History of England, ed. by Lacey Baldwin Smith (4 vols.; Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1966), p. 31

classes, a prosperity that lasted until the depression beginning in 1874. Politically the end of the mid-Victorian period came with the Reform Bill of 1867 and the return of clear-cut partisanship.

The political compromise of the 1850's and the 1860's was important because it reflected the attitude of most Englishmen. Essentially the compromise was the political recognition of mid-century reaction. The excitement and enthusiasm of reform and the ill will of Chartism gave way to apathy in the prosperity of the 1850's. Most of the voters wanted a government that reflected the quiet mood of the period, and members of Parliament, with few exceptions, supported the government of Lord Palmerston. Palmerston, in his liberal foreign policy and conservative domestic policy, personified the desires of most Englishmen. His assurance of support from the whole spectrum of English politics rested on his willingness to assert English interests abroad and to avoid domestic reform.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Philip Appleman, William A. Madden and Michael Wolff, eds., 1859: Entering an Age of Crisis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), pp. 163-79. Palmerston was considered to be the last of the Aristocratic Whigs in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century tradition. His liberalism in foreign affairs consisted mainly of chauvinism and a support for continental nationalism. His domestic conservatism was evidenced by his aversion to further franchise reforms and to reform in general. He pointed out that about all the reforming that was needed had been accomplished, and Parliament could not go on adding to the statute books forever. With the exception of February, 1858 to June, 1859, Palmerston was prime minister from 1855 until his death in 1865. Burn, in *Age of Equipoise*, pointed out that the mid-Victorian period was an age of complacency brought on by prosperity and a reaction against the threats of the 1830's and 1840's. As a result there occurred a succession of weak governments in the 1850's and 1860's that could exist only by doing very little, especially

The Victorian Compromise in politics, the prosperity of the times, and the relatively relaxed social atmosphere were all characteristics of mid-Victorianism. Asa Briggs, William L. Burn, and G. S. R. Kitson Clark contend that the quiet mood of Englishmen during the years 1851-1867 was a special blend of attitudes and circumstances that set the period apart.<sup>3</sup> The uniqueness of the period and the application of its attitudes are the basis of this study. The "high noon of Victorianism" appeared in mid-century like a quiet afternoon, after the morning storm and before the return of darkness.<sup>4</sup>

It was in the middle of these two decades that the cotton famine occurred and the exigencies of this crisis crystalized the attitudes of the period in an effort to preserve the ideals of this age of prosperity and material progress. An industrious, efficient, and enterprising segment of the population was suffering from an unfair turn of events, and the remainder of the population felt obliged to act.

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with domestic reform, and by being willing to humiliate themselves by catering to the politics of apathy and the desire of public opinion to remain quiescent. William L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation (New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 1964), p. 329.

<sup>3</sup>Asa Briggs, Victorian People: A Reassessment of Persons and Themes 1851-67 (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1955), pp. 8-9; Burn, The Age of Equipoise p. 67; G. S. R. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 31-33.

<sup>4</sup>Kitson Clark, Victorian England, p. 31.

## CHAPTER I

### BETTER TIMES

Industry was not the only area of inequity, frustration, and bitter feeling among classes in nineteenth-century England. During the first half of the century, however, England experienced two trends whose combination made industry and industrial relations one of the main areas of friction.

After 1815 England changed rapidly from an agricultural to an industrial nation. By mid-century the change was obvious, and more Englishmen were employed in industry than in any other segment of the economy. England had also become an urban nation, with much of the industry concentrated in northwest England around Liverpool.<sup>1</sup>

Not only were people leaving the land, England was experiencing a population explosion that doubled the population of England and Wales between 1800 and 1851.<sup>2</sup> Many emigrated, but many more, especially of the lower classes, tried to earn their bread as industrial operatives. Since there were always more

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<sup>1</sup>G. S. R. Kitson Clark, An Expanding Society: Britain 1830-1900 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 5-11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

workers than jobs and surplus labor meant low wages, whole families sought work. Many industrialists making a beginning in the first half of the century found the situation to their advantage and built their fortunes on expanding markets and low production costs.

By the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, conditions in most industries were improving. Pressure for improvements came in most cases from Parliament, whose legislation helped to end the most prevalent abuses: long hours, low wages, unhealthy and unsafe factory buildings and working areas, and poor housing and living conditions.

Excessively long hours was one of the most prevalent abuses, with women and children often suffering the most. All factory employees worked in excess of eleven hours, but shifts frequently consisted of twelve, thirteen, and sixteen hours. Women and children, less able to tolerate such conditions, were paid less as well. Dirty, low-roofed, ill-ventilated, ill-drained, unsanitary and unsafe factories were typical.<sup>3</sup>

Factory inspection and in 1847 the Ten Hours Bill were an indication that Parliament was assuming a growing sense of responsibility

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<sup>3</sup>G. M. Young and W. D. Handcock, eds., English Historical Documents: 1833-1874, Vol. XII of English Historical Documents, ed. by David C. Douglas (12 vols; New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 934-37. Children were especially poorly paid, and in the 1830's they sometimes received as little as three shillings a week for six fourteen and one-half hour days.

for the problems of industrial operatives. Between 1850 and 1870 cotton operatives were given a ten-and-one-half-hour day with a work week of sixty hours. The worst abuses in women's and children's labor had been corrected. There was, however, ample room for improvement in wages and hours, and any depression or mechanization of an industry meant unemployment.

As industries grew through the first third of the nineteenth century, masses of people came together in the industrial areas to work in the factories or to provide services for the new population:

Where an existing town like Leeds or Manchester formed the nucleus of the settlement, there was further crowding in the already overcrowded and insanitary quarters of the poor, but growing suburbs soon encircled the old centre . . . suburbs which were slums when they were built.<sup>4</sup>

Often employers had to provide housing, and in most cases they spared any expense they could.<sup>5</sup> John and Barbara Hammond, who described these conditions in The Bleak Age, intended, of course, to paint a dark picture of industrialization in England. Unfortunately, the examples they portrayed were far too common. Much of the housing constructed by the manufacturers was of poor quality, and the Hammonds described it as follows:

An immense number of small houses occupied by the poorer classes in the suburbs of Manchester are of the most superficial character. New cottages are erected with a rapidity that astonishes persons

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<sup>4</sup>John L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, The Bleak Age (New York: Penguin Books, 1947), p. 53.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

who are unacquainted with their flimsy structure. They have certainly avoided the objectionable mode of forming underground dwellings, but have run into the opposite extreme, having neither cellar nor foundation. The walls are only half brick thick, or what the bricklayers call brick noggin, and the whole of the materials are slight and unfit for the purpose. They are built back to back without ventilation or drainage; and, like a honeycomb, every particle of space is occupied. Double rows of these houses form courts with, perhaps, a pump at one end and a privy at the other, common to the occupants of about twenty houses.<sup>6</sup>

Abuses were eventually corrected, but in many cases it was a disaster in the form of cholera or fire that forced their removal.<sup>7</sup>

Agencies of the state such as the Board of Health worked especially hard under the Earl of Shaftesbury and Edwin Chadwick to correct health hazards that existed in industrial housing.<sup>8</sup> Such agencies were often opposed by local entrenched interests who feared losing money and influence if restrictions were imposed. More often, however, the men who opposed reform of working and living conditions did so out of a belief derived from Christianity and held just as

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 53-54.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>8</sup>Kitson Clark, Expanding Society, pp. 34-35. In an essay by Christopher Dawson appearing in Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: An Historic Revaluation of the Victorian Age, Anthony Ashley Cooper, seventh Earl of Shaftesbury was described as an "Eminent Victorian" and the greatest of the Christian humanitarians whose actions cut across the existing divisions of ideological groups and political parties. Although Shaftesbury was a Tory he often sided with Radicals especially on reform legislation for improving working and living conditions for the working class. Edwin Chadwick, a Benthamite, will be discussed later in the paper under Administrative Radicalism. British Broadcasting Corporation, Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: An Historic Revaluation of the Victorian Age (London: Sylvan Press Limited, 1950), p. 249.



devoutly as the humanitarian Christianity of Shaftesbury. The argument of these men stemmed from their belief that each man must be left alone in whatever situation he might find himself. No individual, and certainly not the state, could interfere with the will of God had chosen for another individual in preparing him for eternity. Many middle-class businessmen combined this religious individualism with a form of laissez-faire doctrine known as competitive individualism, in support of their attack on state intervention. This idea of self-help and free competition grew from the earlier struggle against mercantilism and reflected the confidence and determination of self-made men.<sup>9</sup>

Fortunately this rather narrow view of social welfare was gradually overcome as England moved further toward state action to protect those incapable of helping themselves. In the cotton famine many manufacturers were especially quick to see the advantage of relief legislation when a major segment of the manufacturing economy was threatened by disaster. Somehow the hand of God was not seen in the Northern blockade of Southern cotton ports.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>British Broadcasting Corporation, Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, p. 373; Young and Handcock, eds., Historical Documents, XII, 920.

<sup>10</sup>Hammond and Hammond, Bleak Age, p. 225. Charles Villiers was described as a Philosophic Radical or Benthamite who represented the Manchester School in the cabinet of Lord Palmerston. Villiers worked to soften the harsh effects of the 1834 Poor Law and generally

Authorities on Victorian England agreed that the most important relief for the economic and social problems of industrialization was the prosperity of the mid-Victorian period. The failure of earlier trade unions beginning in the 1850's, allayed upper class suspicion and the fear of a revolution. After 1850, a better life for most Englishmen, together with fewer class distinctions and restrictions, opened the way for greater unity in thought and attitude. This unity in turn made it easier for Englishmen to work together to continue to improve their way of life and to help one another in bad times.<sup>11</sup>

As the industrial revolution progressed and industries became well established, less austere practices were required to show a profit. Factories and machinery were paid for and the earlier large reinvestment of earned capital was no longer necessary. More profit, higher wages, and a lower cost of living gradually effected an

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tried to relieve the plight of the poor and distressed. During the cotton famine, as in other times of distress, measures passed to relieve the plight of the workers were also used to relieve their substandard living conditions. Villiers, president of the Poor Law Board, took advantage of the cotton famine emergency, to convince Parliament that a double purpose could be served by adopting a public works program. The government granted loans for improvements in the manufacturing towns of Lancashire, and in two years nearly £2,000,000 was spent on the construction of sewers, drains, parks and gardens, roads, and wells or other water sources.

<sup>11</sup>Burn, Equipoise, p. 67; Kitson Clark, Victorian England, pp. 136-39; Briggs, Victorian People, pp. 130-31; British Broadcasting Corporation, Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, p. 377.

improvement in working and living conditions for industrial operatives, together with a general softening of attitudes on both sides. The lower classes were less dissatisfied with their situation. Employers and middle and upper classes gained faith in the workers, admiration for their patience and industry, and sympathy for their problems.<sup>12</sup>

Prosperity for the working classes also brought a chance for self-improvement. A cooperative movement that began among factory workers in Lancashire in 1844 was extremely successful and helped in lowering the cost of living for members. By 1851 there were 130 cooperative stores owned by their members and sharing their profits in the north of England and in Scotland. Membership in English cooperative societies had grown to 250,000 by 1871.<sup>13</sup> Savings banks also became a popular means of encouraging thrift among workers, and their savings protected them during times of sickness or unemployment. By 1828 more than £14,000,000 had been invested in the

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<sup>12</sup>Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, p. 143; Burn, The Age of Equipoise, p. 94. As the general economic growth of England proceeded at a rate of 3.2 per cent per year between 1850 and 1874, real wages for the average laborer increased by about one-third for the same period. In terms of a base of 100 in 1850, wages had risen to 156 by 1874. In 1860 a Lancashire family of five could be housed, clothed and well, but plainly fed, on thirty shillings per week. In the previous ten years while expenses had been falling, the wages of cotton operatives had risen from ten to twenty-five per cent depending on skill and position. This trend had begun to be noticed even before mid-century.

<sup>13</sup>Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, p. 150.

savings banks, and in 1850 there were over a million depositors.<sup>14</sup> Working people also formed insurance societies, burial societies, and similar organizations to protect themselves and their families and to share the costs of misfortune.

With a growing stake in society came a greater respect for law and order and a desire for respectability. By 1860 rules enforced in the newly revived trade unions required members to conform to all the laws of the land and the association and to be respectful and respected. Members conforming to these rules would thus imitate the behavior of "higher forms of associations" and gentlemen's clubs.<sup>15</sup> Kitson Clark indicated that the new found respectability of the lower middle class and working class was vigorously defended and enforced by the members of these classes in the mid-Victorian period.<sup>16</sup>

The working classes had accepted prosperity as a satisfactory return for their adoption of the values of the higher orders of society. "Dignity and loyalty as well as deference lay at the heart of the mid-Victorian constitution. Deference and dignity were more than

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<sup>14</sup>W. O. Henderson, The Industrialization of Europe, 1780-1914 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1969), pp. 144-45.

<sup>15</sup>Briggs, Victorian People, pp. 168-76.

<sup>16</sup>Kitson Clark, Victorian England, p. 129.

safeguards of social peace and political tranquillity; they were necessary conditions."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Briggs, Victorian People, p. 92. The recognition and adoption of middle class values by all classes will be discussed in Chapter Two.

## CHAPTER II

### ATTITUDES AND POLITICS

The English way of life, by the mid-Victorian period, was built on social rank. Englishmen were proud of the fact, however, and pointed out that their society was the perfect balance. The equality, fraternity, and democracy of France and the United States were considered a delusion of the people to the social and political facts of life. Nor was England a caste society such as existed in eastern Europe or in Asia, where a man could never rise to a higher rank. Most importantly, the balance was a workable one because English society had accepted middle class values. Together with this, stratification was made more acceptable since social position implied social responsibility.

Gertrude Himmelfarb asserted that the Victorian ethic with its pieties and proprieties originated with the middle class. The most influential members of the aristocracy as well as the working classes shared the ideals and values of the middle class.<sup>1</sup> Briggs pointed out that "middle class ideals set the standard for the nation."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gertrude Himmelfarb, Victorian Minds (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 277.

<sup>2</sup>Briggs, Victorian People, p. 20.

The ideals most often attributed to the middle class ethic included efficiency, thrift, hard work, seriousness of character, respectability, self-help, honesty, and above all, morality in all things.

In the application of the middle-class ethic, success was the greatest goal and failure was the greatest loss. Hard work and effort were, however, important qualities and those who failed through no fault of their own were worthy of help and sympathy. In hard times this help and sympathy went a long way in relieving the distress of those less fortunate. The best example of the middle class way of life was the royal family itself. Unlike earlier royalty, the Queen and her family lived a wholesome and virtuous life and provided a "golden model" of home life for all classes.<sup>3</sup>

Ambitious people from all English social classes had been impressed by the material success of the middle class. The rise of the middle class had begun during the reign of the Tudors, and reached its peak in the industrial revolution. Their material prosperity was the result of opportunity, but also of thrift and virtue born of reformed religion and self-help.

Frugality and uprightness of character were typical of Reformation Puritans; however, the excesses of the Civil War and

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<sup>3</sup>ibid. Walter Edwards Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 189-91.

Commonwealth made the Puritans and their creed unpopular among both upper and lower class Englishmen.

The spirit of the Reformation was reawakened in 1738 when John Wesley began a career of revivalist preaching that lasted fifty-three years. By 1784, 356 Methodist chapels had been erected, many in areas that previously had no churches. Methodism became especially popular among the lower classes and its adherents prospered materially as well as spiritually. I. H. Plumb contended that "thrift, abstinence, hard work, and concentration were the essential virtues of Methodists seeking salvation and those saved. The Puritan ideal was reborn shorn of its political radicalism."<sup>4</sup>

The Anglican hierarchy was completely hostile to Methodism though Wesley wanted to remain in the church. The fundamental and unyielding character of Methodism doomed its popularity among the upper classes, though many recognized the importance of a strong personal religion of the kind absent in the ritual form of Anglicanism. Eventually, in 1784, Wesley broke with the established church.

Wesley's conservatism, however, found a place after 1789. With the French Revolution and the threat of Napoleon, rationalism was condemned and the emotionalism of Methodism gained a wider

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<sup>4</sup>I. H. Plumb, England in the Eighteenth Century, 1714-1815, Vol. VII of The Pelican History of England, ed. by J. E. Morpurgo (8 vols.; Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1950), pp. 94-95.



appeal. Gradually the moral and spiritual regeneration spurred by Wesleyanism influenced all of the Christian sects in England; Kitson Clark held that a significant aspect of the Romantic reaction in post-Napoleonic England was a great religious revival. The Romantic cult of benevolence inspired revived religion, or evangelicalism, with sentiment, sympathy, and a strong sense of humanitarianism.<sup>5</sup>

Evangelicalism supplied real Christianity and not merely form. Its emphasis was on moral conduct, its basis biblical and its highest virtue was self-improvement.<sup>6</sup> Under the influence of evangelicalism Christians of all classes began to adopt the virtues and attitudes that had been characteristic of the middle class. By the mid-Victorian period the middle class way of life was the model for all of English society.

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<sup>5</sup>Kitson Clark, Victorian England, pp. 178-79; Houghton, Victorian Frame of Mind, p. 274.

<sup>6</sup>Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, p. 107. Himmelfarb indicated that "In the end what sustained the Victorian ethic was essentially what had first inspired it - an unsectarian, latitudinarian evangelicalism." Himmelfarb, Victorian Minds, p. 291. All classes and all religions were affected by some form of Christian evangelicalism. Among the upper classes evangelical morality and a sense of duty inspired more Anglicans than did the Oxford movement. Baptist and Congregationalist members of the middle class were naturally sympathetic toward evangelical principles, and among Methodists of the lower class the revival of evangelical morality had its beginnings. Kitson Clark, Victorian England, pp. 184-85. Charles Smyth contended, "It is not too much to say, that more than any other single factor, the Evangelical Movement in the Church of England transformed the whole character of English society and imparted to the Victorian Age that moral earnestness which was its distinguishing characteristic." British Broadcasting Corporation, Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, pp. 98-99.

Self-help was axiomatic among the English middle class, and was a virtue constantly preached to the working classes. This demonstration of self-sufficiency and independence was given its widest definition and greatest circulation in 1859 when Samuel Smiles published his first work, Self-Help. Smiles' work read like a catalog of Victorian virtues, with Thrift, Character, and Duty following the initial success.<sup>7</sup>

Smiles has been criticized for the ease with which he exhorted those unable to do so, to raise themselves up from poverty. Actually Smiles' life and work showed that he wanted a movement for mass education of the working classes so they could all improve their situation. Briggs points out that Smiles felt employers and those well off should have helped the working class to improve themselves and their position. Smiles called for greater sympathy and understanding among all classes.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the intent, the idea of self-help, supported by laissez-faire economics, became a comfort to those who were successful and a goad to those lost in the cycle of poverty.

People of all classes deferred to middle class values because these values were an acceptable standard of behavior, and also because the reformed public schools had incorporated the values

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<sup>7</sup>Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, p. 101.

<sup>8</sup>Briggs, Victorian People, pp. 120-33.

into the education system. Public school and university education was still limited in scope and availability in the mid-Victorian period, as it had been in the early years of Victoria's reign. Beginning in the 1830's however, such men as Thomas Arnold began to reform the public school system. Arnold and his disciples worked within the existing system at Rugby and elsewhere to make earnest Christian gentlemen out of the boys. Arnold hoped to teach a sense of duty and service to society and humanity, and the values he stressed were the same honesty, uprightness, and devotion to duty espoused by the middle class.<sup>9</sup>

Beyond this the public schools brought together the sons of aristocrats and the sons of the wealthy middle classes. The common experiences of these boys cemented relationships and values for the new ruling class, composed as much of wealthy manufacturers as country squires. The public schools and universities provided for a softening of attitudes between the upper and middle classes and towards the lower classes. Graduates, whether liberal or conservative, were more concerned with the problems of English society.<sup>10</sup> Although education was gradually made more available, its greatest impact was undoubtedly that beginning in the 1830's England's future legislators and civil servants were taught that

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<sup>9</sup>Briggs, Victorian People, pp. 156-57.

<sup>10</sup>G. M. Young, Victorian England: Portrait of an Age (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 132-33.

their duty lay in service to their country and its people.

Social responsibility was another important factor in lightening the burden for the lower classes and improving relations among all classes. The social responsibility of mid-Victorian England was, in fact, the charity that William L. Burn indicated was widely practiced by the upper classes of English society. Charity ranged from the actual giving of alms to nursing the sick and wounded, comforting and educating convicts, teaching parish schools, and serving on all manner of boards and committees. Almost every kind of social welfare in mid-Victorian England was or had been carried out as a form of private charity. The motives of benevolence could at times be questioned, but the results were admirable. Contemporaries such as John Stuart Mill felt that charity was of benefit to everyone, a social obligation that uplifted those who gave as well as those who received.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, those who depended on the benevolence of the upper classes were also required to exhibit higher standards of behavior and morality. Mutual improvement of manners and behavior was effected, at least in appearance, as members of the upper classes felt compelled to act as models. Gradually appearances were more deeply absorbed.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Burn, Equipoise, pp. 114-15.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 238-39.

Most members of mid-Victorian society were unwilling to criticize class position and rank too strongly, because of the possibility of individuals rising in rank. Class rank determined social prestige and position in the affairs of men, but rank was becoming less distinct and much more accessible in the middle of the nineteenth century. The purchase of army commissions for the nobility was not abolished until the 1880's; common values and common education, however, provided a great degree of social mobility even before the 1850's. The sons of wealthy manufacturers or businessmen educated at Rugby and Oxford and inheriting enough wealth to purchase a country estate could through service to the country in government or commerce gain an eminent position in terms of influence and title. As prosperity and success allowed men to advance socially, wealth and influence also gave these successful men political power.<sup>13</sup>

The industrial revolution brought a turnover in wealth and power from England's old landed aristocracy to the new lords of manufacturing. Wealth and power made the social influence of middle class manufacturers and businessmen decisive as it gained for them political as well as financial eminence.<sup>14</sup> The Great Exhibition of 1851 symbolized the deference of all classes to

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<sup>13</sup>Kitson Clark, Victorian England, pp. 214-15.

<sup>14</sup>Houghton, Victorian Frame of Mind, p. 5.

industrial success and assured the industrialist a place in the governing process only partly recognized in 1832.

There was, of course, a struggle for recognition of the business class and their interests. The struggle turned generally on the application of laissez-faire principles in employer-worker relationships and on free trade. The contest crystalized in an effort by the largely middle class Anti-Corn Law League to abolish agricultural protection and provide cheap bread "for the workers." The abandonment of protection with the repeal of the Corn Laws and Navigation Acts signaled a general acceptance of free trade. At the same time manufacturers and aristocrats closed ranks against Chartism. Prosperity convinced agricultural interests of the efficacy of free trade, and middle and upper classes were willing to cooperate in the peace and prosperity of mid-century.

In the 1830's and 1840's politics had been decisive in the emergence of the middle class, but with the general prosperity and class harmony of the mid-Victorian period, the causes of struggle dissipated and party alignments blurred. The Whigs were responsible for franchise reform in 1832 and were generally more favorably disposed toward free trade and the commercial classes. Because of acceptance and support by the old Aristocratic Whigs, most of the manufacturers and middle class businessmen joined or supported the Whigs. Franchise reformers and anti-aristocrats like Bright, Benthamites, non-conformist opponents of the established church,

and extreme laissez-faire advocates made up the radical wing of the Whigs.

Followers of Sir Robert Peel also supported the Whig party after breaking with the Tories over the repeal of the Corn Laws. Thus, during the mid-Victorian period the Whigs, led by Lord Palmerston, generally had the support of Peelites, Aristocratic Whigs, middle class Whig-Liberals, and Radicals. To remain in office, however, a Whig government had to please a broad spectrum of interests and opinions. From 1855 until 1865, Palmerston followed the most judicious course in offering an experienced leadership that acquiesced in the wishes of the members of Parliament.<sup>15</sup>

When the Tories finally abandoned protection in 1851 there was an even greater blurring of party lines. With the prosperity of the mid-Victorian period came a general adoption of free trade that the Tories had to accept if they were to attract electoral support. Once the Tories accepted free trade, the common experience of a fear of Chartism and revolution brought landed aristocrats together with the now entrenched interests of manufacturing and business. The attitude of these interests toward domestic policy was now more similar. Differences still existed of course, but during the 1850's and 1860's

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<sup>15</sup>Kitson Clark, Victorian England, pp. 208-209. Kitson Clark asserted that there was very little difference between Palmerstonian Whiggism and the Tories. Palmerston was able to hold power only with Tory support. As a result, the party politics of the 1850's and 1860's were confused.

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most Whig businessmen and Tory squires wanted an end to agitation and the preservation of domestic tranquility.<sup>16</sup>

In the mid-Victorian years members of Parliament took party names according to their broad philosophies, but with unsophisticated political organization and a lack of specific issues to polarize support, the members themselves were uncertain where to sit. Englishmen had settled down into an "easy genial compromise between progress and tradition." This was a period when political candidates of all parties and persuasions could claim to be liberal conservatives. Whatever their party label members of Parliament agreed with the statement: "Our old institutions have served us well, and I see no reason to change them. But I have an open mind, and if there are any improvements which Public Opinion demands then I am ready to consider them."<sup>17</sup>

The 1850's and 1860's were thus the high point of independence for individual members of Parliament. The shifting support and precarious majorities of governments, especially in the 1850's, indicated that individuals felt no strong allegiance to a party or prime minister. Only a man like Palmerston who represented the vague liberal-conservative attitude of the period could hold the support of

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<sup>16</sup> Burn, Equipose, p. 329; Kitson Clark, Victorian England, pp. 208-209; Briggs, Victorian People, pp. 48-49.

<sup>17</sup> British Broadcasting Corporation, Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, p. 338.

individuals of all persuasions.<sup>18</sup>

Legislation in this period was a result of debate, politics had no discipline, and the outcome of a bill rested on individual attitudes. The course of debate turned entirely on the ability to argue and the power to persuade. One argument could carry today, another tomorrow. Often there was debate and no action. Since no party could control the members of Parliament, the politics of the period were the politics of compromise.<sup>19</sup>

As the individual member of Parliament was extremely independent, and legislation was the result of debate, widely held opinions and attitudes effectively influenced Parliamentary action. Broad laissez-faire liberalism influenced most Whigs and Radicals during the mid-Victorian period. Nineteenth century liberalism meant freedom and liberty and allowing the "utmost scope" to pioneers and new powers. Everything that obstructed the progress of industry and the march of mind was to be removed. Laws and administration had to be controlled

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<sup>18</sup>Briggs, Victorian People, p. 114; Kitson Clark, Victorian England, p. 207; Leeds Mercury, August 4, 1862, p. 2. In the editorial for August 4, the Leeds Mercury, a liberal newspaper that generally supported the Radicals, applauded Palmerston as the man for the times, and both Cobden and Disraeli were criticized for their attacks on Palmerston's foreign and domestic policies. In the work 1859: Entering an Age of Crisis, the editors stated that "the last administration of Lord Palmerston was an interlude before the resumption of clear cut party divisions." Appleman, Madden and Wolff, 1859: Entering an Age of Crisis, p. 163.

<sup>19</sup>Kitson Clark, Victorian England, pp. 43-46.

through public opinion and free discussion. Free trade in products and the means of production, as well as in ideas, were the foundations of the liberal creed. Freedom, liberty, and "let alone" were its slogans.<sup>20</sup> Liberals, however, realized that a complete laissez-faire state was impossible. Someone had to care for those who could not care for themselves and most Whigs were willing to pass new state regulations before all the old restrictions were entirely abolished.<sup>21</sup>

Such a man was Richard Cobden. Whig leader of the fight against protection and spokesman for the Manchester School of free trade, he was also a cotton manufacturer. His attitude, however, was typical of the humanitarian concern shown by many Whigs despite their advocacy of laissez-faire principles. Having been influenced by McCulloch's Principles of Political Economy, he concluded that the unemployed must be given assistance in times of distress. Cobden pointed out that "practical provision for the destitute was as much a part of political economy as theories of rent or of profit."<sup>22</sup>

The Tories had long opposed free trade and laissez-faire and had taken a stand in favor of the Corn Laws and protection. Their opposition stemmed from the landowners' distrust of the industrial revolution, but by the 1830's and 1840's this opposition acquired

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<sup>20</sup>British Broadcasting Corporation, Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, pp. 337-38.

<sup>21</sup>Kitson Clark, Expanding Society, pp. 12-14.

<sup>22</sup>Donald Read, Cobden and Bright: A Victorian Political Partnership (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), pp. 3-4.

a new character. The Tories began to look with pity on the plight of unfortunate factory operatives and out of a sense of duty began to work for hours and factory laws and for a general curtailment of the abuses of laissez-faire industrialism.<sup>23</sup>

Tory paternalism in the tradition of Romanticism found a natural expression in the heroic image of feudal knighthood subduing the wicked and aiding the weak, or in this case protecting exploited workers from greedy manufacturers.<sup>24</sup> One of the best examples of effective action on behalf of Tory paternalism was the career of the Earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury worked all his public life for improvements in working and living conditions for industrial operatives. Described as the great saint of humanitarianism he considered it his duty to God and his fellowmen to labor for the downtrodden. Shaftesbury felt that all classes, but especially the upper classes, had a duty to alleviate the problems of the lowest classes, specifically through "Christian legislation."<sup>25</sup>

The Earl of Derby, Tory leader in the House of Lords and Prime Minister briefly in 1858 and again in 1866, was repaid for his concern. "Derby's local leadership during the cotton famine had not a little to do with turning Lancashire from one of the most Radical into one of

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<sup>23</sup>Kitson Clark, Victorian England, p. 88.

<sup>24</sup>Houghton, Victorian Frame of Mind, p. 327.

<sup>25</sup>British Broadcasting Corporation, Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, p. 100.

the most Tory districts in England."<sup>26</sup>

Working with Whig Liberals and Tories to improve conditions for the working class was Benthamite Administrative Radicalism, which was the legislative and administrative application of Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarian philosophy. Bentham was neither concerned with natural right or duties, nor did he bow before tradition or "ancient religious sanction." For him the reasonable condition for the existence of an institution was: how useful is it? Bentham was convinced a thing was useful if it promoted the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. He felt that the laws of society would have to be arranged so that self-interest would be channeled toward the common good. This doctrine of the "artificial identity of interest" would undoubtedly require government intervention, and that was precisely the path on which Administrative Radicalism embarked.<sup>27</sup> Benthamite Radicals were convinced that strict and efficient administration could cure the cause of social problems. Their main concern seemed to be less for suffering humanity than for

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<sup>26</sup>Briggs, Victorian People, p. 289. The leadership of Derby was especially evident in his administration of charitable funds through the Central Executive Committee of Lancashire of which he was chairman. The Annual Register for 1863 lauded his efforts and pointed out that his experience, counsel, and influence added greatly to the success of charitable activities in the cotton districts. Sir Kay-Shuttleworth, a noted humanitarian and reformer who worked to improve government social services, also served on the committee. The Annual Register, 1863 (London: Rivingtons, 1863), Part I, p. 149.

<sup>27</sup>Arnstein, Britain, pp. 48-49.

efficiency and economy in government and society.

As the nineteenth century progressed, Bentham's ideas were gradually accepted by advocates of other philosophies, since Utilitarianism represented a middle ground between paternalism and extreme laissez-faire attitudes. The Earl of Shaftesbury, a Tory humanitarian of long standing; John Stuart Mill, writer, reformer, and public servant; Edwin Chadwick, administrative reformer and first Poor Law Board president; Charles Villiers, President of the Poor Law Board during the cotton famine; and others not as well known worked for legislation to improve the workers' environment. When they could not secure the passage of legislation similar to the Factory Act of 1833, the Mines Act of 1842, or the Ten Hours Act of 1847, they held out for inspectors or investigating commissions or reform of existing institutions. Chadwick, for instance, succeeded in having Parliament reform the Poor Law in 1834.<sup>28</sup>

The effect of humanitarian and reform philosophies is best summed up in the following statement by Young and Handcock:

Factory legislation represented the action of the State, exercised directly, in protection of women and children, indirectly of the whole working class. The achievement of a satisfactory code resulted from the synthesis of patriarchal traditions with a newer science of a social analysis and administration, assisted by devoted Parliamentary leadership.<sup>29</sup>

The motivation for laws and reform, and for a general display of

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<sup>28</sup>Young and Handcock, eds., Historical Documents, XII, 924, 925.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., XII, 925.

concern and softening of social relations, was humanitarianism. A humanitarianism more deeply felt because it was born of religion.

The sentiment and practice of humanitarianism, as typical of Victorians as self-help, was also a product of the devout and fundamental religion of the age. The revolution of reform that began in the 1830's was deeply influenced by Christ's teachings of love and service to others. Although some used religion as a support for laissez-faire attitudes, perhaps the most important Victorians were those who found in religion an acute sympathy for suffering humanity and an earnest sense of social duty.

Limited practical reform of a humanitarian nature was possible in England because of the common religious background of politicians of all persuasions. Such men as Bright, a Quaker; Shaftesbury, a Low Churchman; Gladstone, a High Churchman; and Disraeli, a Jew though also a practicing Christian often sought common goals because of "the general acceptance of common moral ideals which was the basis of the Victorian solution."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>British Broadcasting Corporation, Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, pp. 28-29. Gladstone, who was leader of the Liberal Party from 1865 until 1894, was as much a theologian as a politician. Kitson Clark indicated that although Gladstone was a strict political economist, he felt that strict economy was out of place where social services were concerned, and allowances had to be made to assist the poor. Kitson Clark, An Expanding Society, pp. 50-51. J. L. Hammond and M. R. D. Foot stated that Gladstone had been very impressed by the qualities of the working class as evidenced by the great fortitude they showed and the suffering they endured during the cotton famine. He felt they deserved assistance and were worthy of the franchise when they were willing to suffer for a cause they considered just. J. L. Hammond and M. R. D. Foot, Gladstone and Liberalism (New York: Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 98. Disraeli, Conservative leader in Commons, was a

Evangelical religion supported middle class values and in turn made these values more acceptable to all classes. Social obligation and charitable works derived directly from Christianity and were compelled by evangelical fervor. Education was turned to creating Christian gentlemen, and these gentlemen carried their sense of duty and their tempered attitudes into Parliament and public life. The humanitarian concern shown by all political parties and factions for less fortunate members of society was the natural result of a common bond of Christianity. The total effect is best described in the following statement:

Slowly, and as unwittingly, the moral and social reformation generated a social and political revolution. This was the great accomplishment of the evangelical ethic. The diffusion of what might otherwise have been a purely middle class ethic, even more, it might be argued, than the later extension of the suffrage, initiated the democratic revolution. For it was the acceptance of a single moral code by the entire population that first breached the barriers separating the "two nations."<sup>31</sup>

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strong advocate of duty and was responsible for reform in 1867. Bright was a Radical, a leader of the Manchester School, and was active in Corn Law repeal, franchise reform, and criticism of privilege. He was somewhat less popular in his opposition to the Crimean War and in his support of the North in the American Civil War.

<sup>31</sup>Himmelfarb, Victorian Minds, p. 283.



## CHAPTER III

### COTTON FAMINE AND THE ORDINARY RELIEF

In the midst of growing prosperity and improving social relations, events in America resulted in a cotton famine. The cotton famine was a disaster of major proportions, not only to the unemployed operatives, but to the English economy as a whole. In 1851 the cotton industry produced one-half by value of all English exports. Cobden and Bright insisted that the problems of the Lancashire cotton trade were of national importance since cotton was of so great a value to the economy.<sup>1</sup>

By 1860 there were nearly 2000 cotton factories in the Lancashire-Cheshire manufacturing area of northwest England. A labor force of about 500,000 operatives earned £11 million a year running over 300,000 power looms and 20 million spindles. Britain manufactured nearly half of the world's cotton yarn and piece goods and the cotton industry's annual exports were valued at £46 million.<sup>2</sup> One-fifth of the English population depended on some phase of the cotton trade.<sup>3</sup> In addition, it would be difficult to estimate how many earned a living

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<sup>1</sup>Read, Cobden and Bright, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Henderson, Industrialization, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup>E. L. Woodward, The Age of Reform, 1815-1870, Vol. XIII of The Oxford History of England, ed. by Sir George Clark (14 vols; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 300.

-serving the needs of those involved in cotton manufacture and the cotton trade. When so large a segment of the population depends entirely on one product for their employment, severe distress will occur if the product is no longer available. This was the situation in the English cotton trade at the beginning of the American Civil War. Because of the length and texture of the fiber, American cotton was considered the best raw cotton available, and English manufacturers bought about four-fifths of their raw cotton from the American South.<sup>4</sup>

A few manufacturers and members of Parliament, particularly John Bright who was both, had often suggested finding an alternative source of cotton.<sup>5</sup> Subsidies for inferior Indian cotton were defeated by Parliament in 1850, but eventually, as a result of the cotton famine, Indian cotton was allowed to enter England duty free, too late however, to be of much use.<sup>6</sup>

The shortage of cotton was not felt immediately after the establishment of the Federal blockade in 1861. America's 1860 cotton crop was the largest on record and by April, 1861 most of it was in European warehouses.<sup>7</sup> Through part of 1861 there was actually a surplus

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>R. A. J. Walling, ed., The Diaries of John Bright (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1930), p. 253.

<sup>6</sup>Walling, John Bright, p. 253; Woodward, Age of Reform, p. 301.

<sup>7</sup>Woodward, Age of Reform, p. 301.

of raw cotton and a growing surplus of yarn and finished goods on the world market. The surplus of raw cotton soon began to dwindle, however, when the prospect of a shortage caused by the war drove the price up.<sup>8</sup> Further, the exports of finished products dropped when foreign merchants held back in the uncertainty of the market.<sup>9</sup> The cotton operatives were thus hit hardest from the beginning since factories were closed because of a shortage of raw cotton and because of a surplus of finished goods. Unemployment was never total, however. Throughout the famine there was some raw cotton brought in from other sources, and finished goods, mostly from earlier surplus stock, exported. Some large factories were able to maintain part-time production.<sup>10</sup>

The shortage of cotton gradually ended and a recovery from the severe distress was under way by the summer of 1863.<sup>11</sup> A brief

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<sup>8</sup>The Times (London), October 17, 1861, p. 3 [hereafter cited as Times].

<sup>9</sup>Woodward, Age of Reform, p. 301.

<sup>10</sup>Times, October 17, 1861, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup>Woodward states that the cotton manufacturers' position was improving by the spring of 1863 as fresh supplies of cotton arrived from Egypt and the East. Woodward, The Age of Reform, p. 301. Young and Handcock cite figures for the export of cotton goods that show an increase in the volume of piece goods for 1863 over 1862 and an increase in yarn export beginning in 1864. The value of cotton exports increased quite noticeably for both yarn and piece goods beginning in 1863. See appendix I. Young and Handcock, English Historical Documents, XII, 224-26.

statement of the recovery appeared in the Annual Register for 1863:

The maximum pressure of the distress occasioned by the stoppage, partial or total, of the cotton mills of Lancashire and Cheshire had been attained a short time prior to Christmas, 1862. The average percentage of pauperism on the population of twenty-seven unions in the last week of December, 1863, was 6.8 whereas in the corresponding week of 1862 it had been 13.2. It was further shown by a report of the Special Commissioner of the Poor Law Board on the fourth of January, 1864, that at that date, as compared with the last week in March, 1863, a reduction had taken place of 33,963 in the actual number of operatives in the cotton districts, the surplus having been transferred to other fields of employment.<sup>12</sup>

The cotton famine was a blow to the English economy, and its impact might have been far more serious if the general trend had not been one of prosperity and recovery after the depression that ended in 1858.<sup>13</sup>

The area suffering most from the cotton famine was the industrial portion of northwest England, just above Wales. Blackpool, Preston, Blackburn, Bolton, and Wigan in Lancashire and the Manchester area in Cheshire were the cities most affected. The figure often given for the total population of the area affected was

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<sup>12</sup>Annual Register, 1863, Part I, pp. 140-41. On pages 145 and 146 of the same volume the editors of the Annual Register reported that although the sufferings of the operatives and their families had been severe, their health statistics had shown remarkably little disease and death. There were no epidemics or serious diseases reported above normal and in fact the disease and death rates were actually below those of the surrounding districts. The editors attributed the good fortune to the mild winter of 1862-63, and even more to the benefits derived from public relief measures and charitable contributions.

<sup>13</sup>Appleman, Madden and Wolff, eds., Age of Crisis, pp. 131-41.

2,000,000. Of that number there were 530,000 operatives of all ages whose employment depended upon cotton.<sup>14</sup> Maximum distress occurred in December 1862; in that month 500,000 persons were receiving some kind of relief. The number fell gradually to 168,170 in October 1863, rose slightly during the winter months and then continued to fall.<sup>15</sup> According to the Times of January 8, 1863, there were a million people dependent on charity or public support during the winter of 1862-1863. A description of the distress appeared in the Times for September 1, 1862. In Blackburn even those receiving relief had to subsist on a shilling a week. Such a pittance allowed a grown man a pint of soup and a pound of bread or meal per day. Some people were able to supplement their relief allowance with their small savings, or by selling or pawning personal items. In Blackburn the Times correspondent found some £30,000 worth of these items pledged in pawnshops, with one home alone holding 52 pawn tickets.<sup>16</sup> At Preston the correspondent found the homes of "well-to-do saving operatives" well kept, but empty of all items of comfort with the "heavy hand of the distress" manifest in the wives and children of operatives.<sup>17</sup> In some houses people slept four or five to a bed, all

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<sup>14</sup>Annual Register, 1863, Part I, p. 140.

<sup>15</sup>Annual Register, 1863, Part I, p. 140.

<sup>16</sup>Times, September 1, 1862, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

had pawned or sold their belongings, were in debt, and as a final alternative had taken relief. Most of the operatives tried to help one another, and in some cases small shopkeepers had allowed credit to families in the area.<sup>18</sup>

The Leeds Mercury in an editorial on May 9, 1862 also described the struggle of individual families to remain independent of relief. The editorial stressed that austerity hurt not only the operatives and their families but also the small tradesmen who depended on them as well. The paper also reported on a meeting of the chief landowners of the district and their resolve to do all they could to alleviate the suffering.<sup>19</sup>

A considerable portion of the relief came from private sources, that is, charity. Charitable relief committees worked from the very beginning of the distress and continued their effort until most of the operatives were re-employed or had found new employment elsewhere. There were altogether 143 relief committees administering the considerable donations that poured in from all over England as well as from the rest of the world.<sup>20</sup> The largest and most important of these committees were: the Mansion House Relief Fund started by the Lord Mayor of London, the Central Relief Fund at Manchester, the

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Leeds Mercury, May 9, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup>Times, January 8, 1863, p. 9.

Bridgewater House Fund, and the Liverpool Committee Fund. Together these private relief committees distributed over £ 2,055,000 in money, food, and clothing by the end of 1863.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the duration of the cotton famine, that is, from early 1862 to the end of 1864, public relief was administered by local unions according to the provisions of the Poor Law.<sup>22</sup> Although there is no record of the total amount spent by local unions operating under the Poor Law Act of 1834 the sum was estimated at £ 700,000. In addition, under the authority of two emergency relief acts passed by Parliament, local unions borrowed £1,000,000 for relief and £ 2,000,000 for public works.<sup>23</sup>

The editor of the Leeds Mercury also urged relief for the victims of the cotton famine. He felt that the operatives had borne the distress with great patience, and that any measures taken to assist them would meet with general support. The operatives were praised for their fortitude and patient suffering and, the editor added, "we believe that their conduct during the great cotton famine of 1862 will not be

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<sup>21</sup>Annual Register, 1863, Part I, pp. 148-51.

<sup>22</sup>A union was the local administrative unit for public relief under the Poor Law.

<sup>23</sup>Hammond and Hammond, Bleak Age, p. 225; Henderson, Industrialization, p. 136. The Poor Law as well as the emergency acts are discussed in detail below.

one of the least memorable passages in our national history."<sup>24</sup>

The great value of such statements in the Leeds Mercury and the Times was the influence on public opinion. The Leeds Mercury had a decided influence on middle class opinions in the industrial areas, and the much more widely read Times influenced opinion throughout the country.<sup>25</sup>

Times correspondents indicated clearly the qualities of the cotton operatives that made them deserving of vast charitable effort and Parliamentary assistance. Unemployed operatives considered it their proudest moment when they could find work and return their relief ticket. Savings were withdrawn by the workers in the early months of the cotton famine in order to preserve their independence.<sup>26</sup> Money was likewise withdrawn from building societies and co-operative associations before any of the member operatives would consider accepting relief. A quote from the Times best summarized the attitude toward the cotton operatives:

The "sacred patience of the poor" has been often eulogized, but certainly it has never been displayed more clearly and nobly than at the present time. Throughout this nest of towns, clustering together in the cotton district, and all of them easily influenced by any idea which takes hold of one of them, there has been from the beginning of these trials not the slightest tendency to outrage

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<sup>24</sup>Leeds Mercury, May 3, 1862, p. 4; May 12, 1862, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup>Donald Read, Press and People 1790-1850: Opinion in Three English Cities (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Limited, 1961), pp. 203-207.

<sup>26</sup>Times, September 1, 1862, p. 5.



or even complaint. The subscriptions made in every household in the kingdom have not been spent on a single undeserving or ungrateful town.<sup>27</sup>

Obviously in the eyes of the middle and upper classes of English society, the cotton operatives had earned respect and the right to receive relief, even in the form of special legislative measures, to meet the emergency. In the opinion of individuals concerned about the distress, the most appropriate legislation would be a relaxation or extension of the existing Poor Law.<sup>28</sup>

The general instrument of relief throughout England and Wales from the time of Elizabeth I was the Poor Law. According to the Poor Law of 1601, the unit of administration was the parish. Local overseers of the Poor Law Board were selected by the parish and then appointed by the local justice of the peace. The overseers, together with the churchwardens, were to assess on all householders

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<sup>27</sup>Times, January 8, 1863, p. 9. The Annual Register reported a single outbreak of rioting in March, 1863, near Staleybridge. The editors, however, blamed the Irishmen of the district for the riot which occurred when exchange tickets were passed out for relief instead of money. Of eighty-two rioters arrested all but eight were Irish operatives. The editors went on to excuse the single outbreak and in general spoke as highly of the cotton operatives' patient suffering as had the Times correspondent. Annual Register, 1863, Part I, pp. 142-44.

<sup>28</sup>Times, January 23, 1862, p. 6. Possible modifications of the Poor Law that were applicable included: Extending the area of Poor Law rating or taxation to include the entire county, relaxing the workhouse labor test and allowing relief outside the workhouse, or loans to the unions affected on security of future taxability. The last measure would relieve everyone in a union since according to the provisions of the Poor Law, the highest rates were assessed in a union with the largest number of people on relief.

in the parish a poor rate, which was compulsory when ratified by the justice of the peace. There were 16,000 parishes in England and Wales, and the quality of administration in each parish varied, as did the quality and quantity of relief received by the deserving poor. Urban parishes were usually grouped together in unions. In case of emergency, the ultimate unit of administration was the county.<sup>29</sup>

After documenting abuses in poor law administration in his Report of 1834, Edwin Chadwick, together with other reformers of various persuasions, succeeded in securing the passage of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. Unions rather than parishes became the basic unit of administration. Boards of guardians, elected by the rate-payers, became the overseers. Justices of the peace were acting guardians in their jurisdictions, but final authority lay in the local board and ultimately in the government Poor Law Commissioners.<sup>30</sup>

Under the new system the prevailing principle was that relief should be less attractive than the lowest form of employment. On this principle able-bodied persons applying for relief were given relief only within the workhouse. When this workhouse labor test proved inadequate in extreme cases, an outdoor labor test, that is, work outside the workhouse, allowed roads to be built by the union for public benefit.

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<sup>29</sup>Young and Handcock, Historical Documents, XII, 683.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 686.

The cotton famine, because of the magnitude of unemployment, was a special case and as such caused some changes to be made in the Poor Law. These changes, including permission to borrow on future rates, were a necessary step forward. The ordinary work test was also changed to a respectable form of labor when funds for public works were made available. The following statement by Young and Handcock is a fair assessment of the situation:

A different problem was posed by the unemployment in the cotton districts resulting from the American Civil War. Here was a population, diligent and disciplined, thrown out of work not only by no fault of its own, but as a result of events unconnected with the normal working of the economic system, which the thought of the time still looked on as self-adjusting but for incidental rubs with which individuals must make their own reckoning. Thus it fell within none of the Board's normal categories. It called forth an immense charitable effort, both in the suffering county itself and in the country as a whole. Ordinary relief was, of course, available. But it is to the credit of the board that it took special steps with the double object both of seizing some advantage from the catastrophe and of preserving the self-respect of the unemployed by finding relief work for them of a permanently constructive value.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 692.

## CHAPTER IV

### PARLIAMENTARY ACTION

During the first months of the cotton famine ordinary Poor Law relief was available, but because of the large number of operatives unemployed, ordinary relief became increasingly inadequate in dealing with the problem. When even private charity failed to cope with the situation during the winter of 1861-1862, it was apparent to many that some form of special legislation was necessary.

One of the first public calls for more adequate government relief appeared in a letter to the editor of the Times on January 23, 1862. In this appeal a Lancashire manufacturer writing from the Reform Club, a Liberal political club, called for government action. He felt that measures should be taken to enlarge the powers of the Poor Law Guardians to meet the distressed area's needs. He explicitly did not want an Imperial Grant, "merely a temporary measure" modifying the existing Poor Law. The manufacturer pointed out that unless the area of rating were increased, those most affected by the distress would also be the most burdened by a rising poor tax rate.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Times, January 23, 1862, p. 9.

Throughout the early months of 1862, additional letters and articles concerning the cotton famine appeared in the Times. Some were against government action. Others called for grants, but most thought relief should be a combination of extending and relaxing the Poor Law and of private charity. The Times' editors were at first reluctant to endorse government assistance but eventually concurred. In May, 1862 there was mention of a delegation of members of Parliament from the distressed areas visiting Villiers, president of the Poor Law Board, to exact a pledge of government action. The Times said due time and deliberation should be given to studying all aspects of the question before such action was taken. Two months later the Times stated that England would "ring with shame" if Parliament did not pass a measure with sufficient powers for relief.<sup>2</sup>

The first mention in Parliament of government action was on May 9, 1862. Algernon Egerton, member of Commons for South Lancashire, asked Villiers whether some rules of the Poor Law, and the workhouse labor test in particular, were going to be relaxed because of the extraordinary nature of the distress. Villiers answered that the emergency was being met by ordinary means and that the labor test could not be relaxed without changing the law.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Times, May 5 and July 23, 1862. A series of articles appearing in the Times by its own correspondent covering the distress seems to have been responsible for the change of heart.

<sup>3</sup>Great Britain, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3d ser., 166 (1862), 1490-1506 [cited hereafter as Hansard]. The Leeds

In the House of Lords on May 12 the Earl of Shaftesbury asked the same question regarding powers of the Poor Law Board and the labor test. Lord Granville answered for the government that the guardians could dispense with certain regulations if they reported to London. Repeated inquiries of this sort were made in the Lords and in Commons, together with other questions and suggestions, but the government would not commit itself.<sup>4</sup>

Villiers and Granville both mentioned that the Poor Law Board in London had sent an inspector to the distressed areas to assess the situation. During May, June, and July, 1862, his reports, together with those of Times' correspondents, were printed in the Times. Direct evidence is lacking, but the shift in position by the Times and Villiers' more amenable replies in Parliament seem very likely to have been influenced by these reports.<sup>5</sup>

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Mercury of May 9, 1862 reported that a deputation of workers appeared before the Manchester Board of Guardians to tell of the suffering of operatives' families and to ask for a relaxation of the workhouse labor test. Most of the workers said they would starve rather than submit to workhouse relief, since going to the workhouse meant that their families would be split up and they would lose all dignity.

<sup>4</sup>Hansard, 166 (1862), 1532-39.

<sup>5</sup>The Poor Law Board investigator was a man named Farnall, who together with Villiers worked to relieve the plight of the poor. Both served on the Poor Law Board and did much to soften the harsh effects of the Poor Law. Kitson Clark, Victorian England, p. 140. Read listed Farnall as a member of the Manchester School representing the Philo-sophic Radicals. He was concerned with government economy, but served the cause of the poorer classes in his post on the Poor Law Board. Read, Cobden and Bright, pp. 103-104. The Leeds Mercury reported on the progress of Farnall's investigation of the distress. The editor applauded that in his report Farnall called for a relaxation of the workhouse labor test. Leeds Mercury, May 24, 1862, p. 2.

On July 14, John Hibbert, member for Oldham, questioned Villiers more directly concerning a government relief measure:

I wish to ask the President of the Poor Law Board whether in the present and prospective state of distress in the manufacturing districts, he is prepared to bring in a bill for the purpose of enabling boards of guardians to borrow money with the consent of the Poor Law Board, for the purpose of relief; such loans to be borrowed on the security of the rates, and to be repaid by installments extending over a period of not more than seven years. I also wish to know whether the right hon. Gentleman contemplates any other means of relieving the distress which is gradually extending throughout the manufacturing districts.<sup>6</sup>

Villiers answered this and two similar questions posed by Wilson Patten of Northern Lancashire and Richard Cobden of Rochdale (in Lancashire), by stating that he could not say when the general question would be brought before the House. He thought it would be more proper to discuss the matter when legislation was proposed. Villiers added that such legislation would probably soon be proposed by the government.<sup>7</sup>

The Union Relief Aid Bill, after its passage to be known as the Union-Rate-in-Aid-Act of 1862, was introduced by Villiers on July 22, 1862. He announced its provisions as enabling "the boards of guardians in certain unions in England to obtain temporary aid to meet the extraordinary demands for relief."<sup>8</sup>

It is not clear why the Palmerston government waited almost

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<sup>6</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 285.

<sup>7</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 285-90.

<sup>8</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 682.

until the end of the session before introducing a bill to provide relief for cotton famine victims. From the nature of the bill it seems probable that Palmerston thought he could best serve his cause by providing a very bland measure after it was widely called for and let Parliament add to or detract from the measure's strength according to its own wishes.<sup>9</sup>

That the measure was no departure from existing principle is obvious. Parishes were allowed to divide the burden of unusual distress among other parishes in the union, and if need be in the county, according to the Statute of Elizabeth. After the Reform Act of 1834 this practice had been continued with the stipulation that permission be asked of the central Poor Law Board before the rates were extended. The bill introduced by Villiers simply granted these powers by act of Parliament rather than through the Poor Law Board. The one new feature would set an amount after which the rates would be extended, first to the union, and, if necessary, to the county.

A characteristic objection to the bill was voiced by Edward Bouverie, a member for Kilmarnock, Scotland. He feared the proposed bill approached too nearly a system of national rates which would be viewed with "dread and alarm." Dangerous change in the

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<sup>9</sup>Lord Palmerston, Whig Party Leader, was widely known for his conservatism in domestic matters. William L. Burn indicated that Palmerston felt the working classes would best advance their cause by good conduct and steady exertion. He seemed to be pleased that the cotton operatives accepted their lot in this situation, but was not anxious to take government action. Burn, Age of Equipoise, p. 103.



existing law was a frequent complaint.<sup>10</sup>

Those in favor of a government relief program generally wanted a stronger bill and frequently suggested attaching a clause enabling the guardians to borrow on future rates.<sup>11</sup> On July 30, 1862 the most significant amendment to the bill was proposed and added when Christopher Puller of Hertfordshire moved that the bill be recommitted "for the purpose of considering clauses to enable the guardians of unions to borrow money on the security of rates of parishes within such unions."<sup>12</sup>

Puller's was not a new proposal, but was significant because it became the turning point in the debate. In no way connected with the cotton districts, Puller moved his amendment because the question affected the prosperity of the entire country. He felt every member should work to the best of his ability to find the right solution. His sincere appeal and the concise logic of his argument seemed to rally supporters of a stronger bill.<sup>13</sup>

July 30 and 31 were the final days of debate in Commons on the bill, and debate was long and heated. The government was repeatedly attacked by the amendment's supporters from both parties. Earlier

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<sup>10</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 692, 749.

<sup>11</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 696.

<sup>12</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1006.

<sup>13</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1007-1011; Annual Register: 1862, Part I, p. 67.

critics of the government bill now became its supporters in an effort to avoid more liberal measures being proposed. Finally Palmerston agreed to withdraw the bill and have Villiers resubmit it with the amendments added by the House. On August 1, 1862, the bill was read a third time in Commons and passed as amended.<sup>14</sup> On August 4, the Union Relief Aid Act was read for the third time in the House of Lords and passed. Its provisions were to remain in effect until March 1, 1863.<sup>15</sup>

Briefly, the bill as passed provided that parishes in the distressed area whose rates exceeded 3 shillings in the pound could charge the excess rates on the union. Unions whose rates exceeded 5 shillings could charge the excess on the common fund of the county. Finally, with permission of the Poor Law Board, unions could borrow money for relief when the rates reached 3 shillings. This money had to be repaid out of the union common fund within seven years. The bill was significant because it allowed the burden of relief to be distributed over a wider area and, with the borrowing power, over a number of years. The bill also acknowledged public responsibility in relieving distress of major proportions.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1011-35, 1039-55, 1078-83.

<sup>15</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1174. See Appendix II.

<sup>16</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1159; Young and Handcock, English Historical Documents, XII, 692. If unions desired to use the borrowing power, they had to borrow from banks, and by doing so, in effect mortgaged their future rates. The seven-year limit set by Parliament

The Union Relief Aid Act was brought in for renewal in the form of a continuance act on February 12, 1863. After debate the act was passed on March 3, 1863, to continue in operation only until the end of June. The act was extended for only four months so that new developments could be taken into consideration before it was renewed at the end of the session.<sup>17</sup>

On July 15 it was renewed until February, 1864. The only addition made to the bill extended the period of repayment of the loans to fourteen years.<sup>18</sup> Both the Union Relief Aid Act and the Public Works Act were continued through 1864. Since some distress continued it was left up to the local guardians to make use of the acts' provisions as they thought necessary.

In April of 1863, the villages of Balckburn and Stockport presented memorials to Villiers asking for loans from the government for the public works programs. Villiers seemed impressed with the idea and sent an inspector named Rawlinson to further investigate its feasibility:

Mr. Rawlinson, the gentleman appointed for this purpose, having visited the localities in question, and conferred with the local

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fixed the amount a union could borrow, since a union's rates were based on property value in the union. With a fixed income no union would borrow money that could not safely be repaid out of the common fund in seven years. The unions that actually made use of this power were granted a 4 1/2 % interest rate.

<sup>17</sup>Hansard, 169 (1863), 267, 980.

<sup>18</sup>Hansard, 172 (1863), 775.

authorities, reported that there were many works of a suitable kind which might be beneficially undertaken, and for which the labor of the operatives might be turned to good account. He further expressed his opinion that the men would almost all be willing to accept this kind of labor, and that after a few weeks' practice they would be likely to earn enough to take their families off the relief lists.<sup>19</sup>

William Ferrand, member for Devonport, offered a resolution on April 27 asking the government to consider measures to relieve the unemployment in the cotton districts. In the debate that followed public works were discussed several times as being the most practical relief measure. Villiers and the members representing the cotton districts especially favored this proposal, yet neither the resolution nor an amendment for a commission to investigate possible measures was adopted. The debate, however, prepared Parliament for the eventual introduction of a public works bill.<sup>20</sup>

Villiers asked permission from Commons to bring in a public works bill on June 5, 1863. As was the case with the Union Relief Aid Act, precedents existed for public works. The Poor Law Board could not grant permission for public works, however, nor could each district obtain permission through private acts.<sup>21</sup> In 1837 extreme distress in Nottinghamshire had been relieved with a public works program, as outdoor relief, but in Lancashire and Cheshire,

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<sup>19</sup> Hansard, 170 (1863), 818-21; Annual Register, 1863, Part I, pp. 153-54.

<sup>20</sup> Hansard, 170 (1863), 776-838.

<sup>21</sup> Annual Register, 1863, Part I, pp. 154-55.

Parliament would have to grant permission because of the larger area, including two counties, and because Parliamentary permission would be necessary for the loans that could be borrowed from the Exchequer Loan Commissioners on the security of the rates. The bill would thus, according to Villiers, "meet the financial obstacle and obviate the legal difficulties."<sup>22</sup>

The Public Works (Manufacturing Districts) Bill was brought before Commons for its second reading on June 18. On June 26 and June 29 it was considered in Committee and on June 30 it was read a third time and passed. The House of Lords considered the bill in Committee on July 7 and 9 and passed it after a third reading on July 10, 1863.<sup>23</sup>

On June 29, Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, moved that the Treasury Commissioners make £1,200,000 available from the Consolidated Fund on security of the rates. His information indicated that £2,000,000 might be needed for public works if the distress continued. Since Parliament remained in session until the

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<sup>22</sup>Annual Register, 1863, Part I, pp. 154-55; Young and Handcock, English Historical Documents, XII, 687.

<sup>23</sup>Hansard, 171 (1863), 1050-87, 1507-23, 1619-32; 172 (1863), 344-47, 411-12. See Appendix III. Queen Victoria took no direct action during the distress, her only official mention of the distress was in her addresses at the opening and closing of Parliament. She lamented the distress and praised charitable efforts in her address at the opening of Parliament in 1863. In her prorogation address at the end of the 1863 session, she gave her "cordial assent" to Parliamentary relief measures.

end of July, any necessary additional funds could be voted then.<sup>24</sup>

The additional £800,000 was not voted until the Public Works Act was renewed in 1864. Under the provisions of the act which passed in 1863, £1,200,000 was made available on request of the boards of guardians in the distressed districts. The money was granted to the guardians according to their need by the Treasury Commissioners. Future rates levied under the Poor Law were to pay back the loans, plus an interest charge of 3 1/2 per cent in fourteen years.<sup>25</sup>

During the course of debate, other measures in the form of suggestions or amendments were introduced. During the debate on February 12, 1863, for continuance of the Union Relief Aid Act, two suggestions were made to improve the bill. John Hibbert of Oldham suggested that the Public Loan Commissioners should lend money to the guardians instead of their borrowing from banks, since the interest rate would be lower. The idea was only offered as a suggestion, however, so no action was taken on it. Christopher Puller of Hertfordshire suggested that the period of repayment of the loans be extended, because this would in effect make more money available. Villiers included the latter suggestion as a provision in

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<sup>24</sup>Hansard, 171 (1863), 1619-32. Gladstone was impressed with the operatives' patient suffering and approved such constructive relief measures.

<sup>25</sup>Hansard, 171 (1863), 1619-32.

the continuance act and it was adopted.<sup>26</sup>

At various times throughout the debates on relief measures in 1863, William Ferrand of Devonport, Henry Baillie of Iverness-Shire, and Hugh Childers of Pontefract attempted to persuade Parliament to adopt an emigration plan. Some members seemed to favor such a plan, but opposition by members from the cotton districts, and by the government, defeated the proposal.<sup>27</sup> Ferrand argued that relief served to keep the laborers in the manufacturing areas. According to the principles of free trade, at least some relief measures should have assisted those who wished to leave. Maintaining a work force where there was no work violated these principles. Villiers and Cobden attacked Ferrand's proposal with an account of the suffering that emigrants from the Irish famine had undergone when they arrived destitute in foreign lands. Villiers also pointed out that some funds were available to assist those who wished to emigrate. Though Ferrand continued to object he was overruled, and no Parliamentary action was taken on emigration.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Hansard, 169 (1863), 283, 291.

<sup>27</sup>Hansard, 170 (1863), 776-807; Hansard, 171 (1863), 1071; Hansard, 166 (1862), 749, 756. Cotton manufacturers such as Cobden and Bright wanted to maintain as large a skilled labor force as possible so the operatives would be readily available when new sources of cotton were obtained. Although Cobden and Bright were recognized humanitarians, they were also cotton manufacturers, and it is reasonable to assume that as manufacturers they would be concerned with the future labor market.

<sup>28</sup>Hansard, 171 (1863), 1063-87; Times, April 28, 1863,

Action Ayrton of Tower Hamlets proposed that the Poor Law guardians be allowed to mortgage half the annual ratable value of a parish to raise money for relief. He did not wish to "bestow the power lightly," but it seemed necessary. Ayrton's motion came on July 28, 1862, six days after the Union Relief Aid Bill had been introduced and during its consideration in committee. On July 30 he attacked Palmerston for wanting to strike out the borrowing power. Ayrton asserted that a rate-in-aid alone would not touch the wealth of the factory owner which remained in factory property. The occupiers and tenant farmers would be hardest hit by the rate-in-aid. A loan would diffuse the cost more equally over a period of time. Ayrton's own words sum up his position:

I support the proposal for a loan, because it is the only mode by which property can be made to pay, and by which the gross injustice which is about to be inflicted on the tenant-farmers can be avoided.<sup>29</sup>

Thomas Bazely of Manchester was primarily interested in a government subsidy to encourage new sources of cotton. He was, however, one of the first members of Parliament to call for relaxation of the labor test. Also, in 1863 during the debate in Committee on

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p. 4. In emergencies poor law guardians were allowed to assist people who wished to leave the area of distress. During the cotton famine the committees that supervised the distribution of funds from private charity devoted part of the money to assisting emigration. Canadians subscribed to funds with the specific purpose of bringing emigrants into the country. Annual Register, 1863, Part I, p. 150.

<sup>29</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 954, 1028.



renewal of the Union Relief Aid Act, Bazely moved to extend the borrowing power to townships, rural units not covered in the earlier bill.<sup>30</sup> It is difficult to know whether or not Bazely assumed a genuinely liberal attitude toward relief and welfare legislation. He was obviously concerned about his constituents, but his concern seems more fiscal than humanitarian. One reason he gave for supporting the relaxation of the work test was that workmen who performed delicate operations in the factories might have their later usefulness impaired by hard labor.

Lord George Cavendish of North Derbyshire proposed government measures on behalf of his constituents. On July 28, 1862, he expressed gratitude to the government for including the distressed unions of Derbyshire in the Union Relief Aid Bill. He also hoped some provision for loans to the unions would be added to the bill. On July 30, Cavendish again spoke of the desirability of loans. He thought the borrowing power should go into effect before the extended rate in aid. The three shilling figure he proposed was eventually adopted. Cavendish showed a sincere interest in providing relief. Allowing the unions to borrow money was generally supported by those most favoring government action. This step was considered the fairest way to distribute the burden of relief.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Hansard, 166 (1862), 1518; Hansard, 169 (1863), 970.

<sup>31</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 940, 1043.

William Coningham of Brighthelmstone was one of many members of Parliament who spoke only once during the debates. He made his position clear, however, in one statement:

I feel, that in the exceptional condition of the Lancashire population, their case is entitled to exceptional consideration. I think that the emergency can be met by no ordinary means, and that it is possible that national aid will have to be extended to the distressed districts.<sup>32</sup>

He not only commented on the cotton famine distress but deplored the general political and social condition of the operative class throughout England.

On July 30 and 31, 1862, when the Union Relief Aid Act was being considered in Committee, Disraeli, leader of the Tories, asked that final consideration of the bill be postponed until the members had time to acquaint themselves with it fully. Disraeli was stalling, possibly to discredit the government and to allow the Tories time to add their proposals to the bill. Disraeli's earlier writings suggest that he took a favorable view of government action. His tactics in this case appeared political since he ultimately supported the bill.<sup>33</sup>

William Garnet of Lancaster was among those who had convinced the government that the borrowing power was a necessary part of the Union Relief Aid Act. From this argument on public works, it is apparent that he considered it a duty for those of higher station to look

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<sup>32</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1023.

<sup>33</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1030, 1044.

after those less fortunate. He did not ordinarily approve of loans, but for this extraordinary emergency the government should do all in its power. Garnett himself had given work to the unemployed operatives whenever he could and thus endorsed public works heartily. He considered such projects the real solution for the cotton famine distress.<sup>34</sup>

Bernal Osborne of Liskegard also desired extraordinary relief measures. He considered the emergency so extreme that an income tax or national rate-in-aid would be needed to relieve the distress. Osborne thought the cotton industry was so important that even loans to relieve the distress were out of order since they would burden the area in the future. He severely criticized the government for introducing so sterile a measure as the Union Relief Aid Bill. Osborne supported relief because of a general concern for England's economy as well as for the welfare of the operatives. Emergencies such as the cotton famine, he believed, should be met with the same effort given to fighting a war because they were just as great a threat to the nation.<sup>35</sup>

John Shelley of Westminster supported government relief but was directly concerned with another matter. The Reform Act of 1832 had extended the franchise, although by no means granting universal

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<sup>34</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1043, 1045; Hansard, 170 (1863), 832.

<sup>35</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 931-33.

suffrage, and under the 1834 Poor Law an individual forfeited his right to vote when he applied for relief. Shelley among others wanted to retain the right for those affected by the distress. On August 1, 1862, he seconded a motion made by George Hadfield of Sheffield for Bernal Osborne, that no one on relief would lose his voting right. Shelley considered the cotton famine distress an insufficient reason for loss of the vote. Their exemplary conduct, if nothing else, earned the operatives the right to retain their vote. Shelley's concern for the vote would classify him as liberal among his contemporaries. His position on government relief may be inferred since he thought the unusual circumstances should allow exceptions to the law.<sup>36</sup>

In the debate on the Union Relief Aid Bill on July 28, 1862, Edward Warner of Norwich asked Villiers whether some provision might be added for adjusting the rents of the occupiers. He said that the extended rates would fall more heavily on occupiers and that it might prove impossible for them to pay both rates and rent. He hoped Villiers could add a clause allowing renters to deduct the amount of an extended rate from the rent they normally paid.<sup>37</sup>

The debates on cotton famine relief were also used as the occasion to air other current grievances. This practice was not

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<sup>36</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1079.

<sup>37</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 937.

unique. Since the government took no significant action on domestic reform, debates on domestic legislation became the occasion for criticism of action or inaction in related areas of concern. In the above debates Radicals complained about the slow response of the need for reform. Privilege was attacked and defended in matters of rate-paying, franchise rights, and changes in the law. And finally, economics came under fire in arguments on free trade versus emigration, and laissez-faire versus public works. In the course of debate such free exchange serves to place an issue in a broader perspective and certainly make a particular legislative act characteristic of a society and age. The Union Relief Aid Bill and the Public Works Bill were undoubtedly strengthened by the exchange.

These were the legislative measures proposed or adopted to relieve the distress of the cotton famine. Of the attitudes discussed in chapter two, those of duty and Administrative Radicalism are most apparent in the measures. The most active debate on these proposals was centered on the amount of relief, not on whether it should be provided. The strongest critics wanted more to be done rather than less or nothing. There were, of course, a number of Parliamentary members opposed to government action of any kind. Those who best exemplified the opposition to the relief measures used somewhat

similar arguments, objecting most often to the "dangerous" change in existing laws.

William Barrow of South Nottinghamshire spoke against the borrowing power in the Union Relief Aid Bill on July 31, 1862. He objected that it would introduce an exceptional principle into the law of the land. In his own part of the country, a rate of 5 shillings or even 10 shillings in the pound had been sustained for a year or two by the ordinary operation of the Poor Law.<sup>38</sup> With Barrow, as with most of the opponents of relief legislation, the objection was to a change or alteration of the existing means of relief. The provisions of the Poor Law of 1834 were considered adequate to meet this or any emergency or distress. Barrow's argument is sufficient to state his position.

Edward Bouverie of Kilmarnock (Scotland) was a consistent contributor to the opposition arguments. When the Union Relief Aid Bill was introduced on July 22, 1862, he spoke against it. He felt a "portentous" change was sought in poor law administration through the bill. He warned that the changes would bring a system of national rates, and on July 24 he said that "the exceptional circumstances alluded to by those supporting the borrowing power, were always the excuse of a spendthrift who wanted to raise money."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1041-42.

<sup>39</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 692, 763, 962.

Algernon Egerton of South Lancashire asked for a relaxation of the work test on May 9, 1862. He also supported the extension of the Poor Law under the Relief Aid Act, but he thought any attempt to find work for the operatives would amount to national workshops. Egerton's position was not exactly clear. He was not entirely opposed to relief, but desired to limit government involvement. Concern for his constituents seemed to relax his opposition to government action, yet, his statements ranked him among the opposition.<sup>40</sup>

Earl Fortescue spoke only once and then briefly on the Union Relief Aid Bill. On August 4, 1862 he expressed his regret that the Poor Law was considered inadequate and that so many unnecessary measures had been "tied together" to relieve the distress.<sup>41</sup> Lord Overstone felt that the Relief Aid Bill was founded on very questionable principles. It was a dangerous precedent to alter the existing poor law regulations. Not only the loans but also the rate-in-aid introduced in the bill were unnecessary and would only lead to further distortion of the existing laws.<sup>42</sup>

Sir Baldwin Leighton of South Salop (or Shropshire) disapproved of public works because the government had no place in the money or labor market. The government loans should not underbid private loan

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<sup>40</sup>Hansard, 166 (1862), 1492; Hansard, 168 (1862), 697; Hansard, 170 (1863), 830.

<sup>41</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1156.

<sup>42</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1171.

concerns. If public works were adopted, the wages should be kept low so they would not affect wages elsewhere.<sup>43</sup> Leighton's argument generally followed laissez-faire principles. It is reasonable to assume that he did not object to the Union Relief Aid Bill since there was no competition between the government and private interest in its provisions.

Arguments offered by the opponents of cotton-famine relief tended to be especially repetitious. The main theme stressed by opponents was conservatism, purely and simply the avoidance of change. Aside from conservatism and an occasional appeal to laissez-faire, there was no coherent reason apparent in the debates for the opposition. Although the House of Lords eventually passed the government measures, their statements and actions could more realistically be described as acquiescence rather than support.<sup>44</sup> As a group the Lords were sympathetic with the sufferings of the operatives, but their conservatism made them oppose changes in the existing laws governing poor relief. Of all the bills' opponents in Commons and Lords, those in the House of Lords were the most strenuously opposed to government action.<sup>45</sup>

Since "repetitious" and "coherent reason" are relative terms

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<sup>43</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1048.

<sup>44</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1164-67.

<sup>45</sup>Hansard, 168 (1862), 1171.



and could perhaps be applied to liberal arguments as well, it becomes apparent that this writer views conservatism for the sake of conservatism as an unreasonable approach to problem solving. Evidence in the debates, however, showed more realistic and imaginative reasoning in the arguments of the proponents. Of more importance to this thesis, the arguments of the proponents clearly indicate a humanitarian concern for the distressed operatives and a changing mentality regarding the government's role in social, economic, and political problems. This humanitarianism had become a characteristic of the mid-Victorian era and was clearly reflected in the willingness of the members of Parliament to enact expanded relief measures.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The cotton famine readily lends itself to study because it was unique and well defined; yet at the same time reaction to the famine was typical and completely characteristic of the period. The cotton famine was in the order of a natural disaster, a bit like a depression that occurs with a crop failure. Certainly men such as Thomas R. Malthus, David Ricardo, and Herbert Spencer would have considered it as following the natural laws of economics, a normal working out of the market. The cotton famine however was unusual in that regard for a number of reasons.

The theories of Malthus and Ricardo had already been somewhat discredited by such observable facts as the absorption by the English economy of an enormous expansion of industrial activity together with a decline in agricultural employment and self-sufficiency. The population had doubled and would double again by the end of the century, yet so far as mid-Victorians were concerned, there was universal prosperity; wages were increasing, and the cost of living was declining. The famine and distress that was to be brought on by an increased population had not occurred. Malthus himself, in the later revisions of his original work, observed that "moral restraint" was a current limiting factor. Of greater importance, he recognized

that scientific discoveries would bring progress in social affairs as well. The iron law of wages was discredited by the prosperity of all classes, together with the higher standards of living of the mid-Victorian period.

Herbert Spencer, the social and economic Darwinist who felt depressions and distress normal, nevertheless believed in self-help and in the working class effort to improve themselves. As such, men who believed as Spencer did could hardly ignore the exemplary behavior of cotton operatives during the famine. Perhaps the overwhelming reason for ignoring the classical economists and the natural order of free trade, however, was the magnitude of this disaster in its effects on the British economy. The cotton industry was vital to England, and any event bearing the impact of the cotton famine would receive special attention. Finally, English society had reached the point where any disaster that caused suffering and distress would be the object of widespread sympathy, and would elicit an attempt to ease the suffering. Whether the cotton famine was an act of God or an adjustment of "natural economic laws," Victorians were predisposed to preventing undue hardship.

The editors of the Annual Register for 1863 indicated that the behavior that had become characteristic of the working classes in the 1850's and 1860's earned respect and assistance for the cotton famine victims. As workers had become more prosperous, they attempted to become more respected. The working classes, like

the rest of the mid-Victorian society, adopted middle class virtues in their quest for respectability. The good feeling among classes that established itself in English society as a result of the conversion to middle class philosophy went a long way toward enlisting the sympathies of more well-to-do Englishmen for those less fortunate. This sympathy was apparent during the cotton famine in statements that appeared not only in the Annual Register, but in the Times, in the Leeds Mercury, and in Hansard.

What they did for themselves, for example, had become positive aspects of working class behavior, and what they did not do was also important. In the mid-Victorian period workers abandoned agitation and riots as a means of improving their situation. The stoicism and patience of cotton operatives was characteristic of the working classes in the period between the Plug Plot Riots and Chartist agitation of the 1840's and the later strikes and industrial strife of the 1870's and 1880's.

The middle and upper classes showed a sympathy and concern that had also become characteristically mid-Victorian. Their attitude had arisen out of easier times, out of a decline in class antagonisms, and more importantly out of humanitarianism born of religion that touched them all. The role of morality and religious humanitarianism in the outpouring of sympathy and material support during the cotton famine cannot be overemphasized. The universal religious ethic and Christian philosophy of mid-Victorian England made most Englishmen

consider relief for the cotton operatives as a moral obligation, and the humanitarian spirit of the age made it a welcome obligation. Not to be overlooked as equally characteristic was the mid-Victorian attitude toward self-help. When the operatives displayed their willingness to support themselves so admirably, even after their means of support was entirely depleted, England would, according to the Times, have rung with shame if some relief measures had not been adopted.

Operatives, the public, and members of Parliament all reacted to the cotton famine in ways that have been shown typical of mid-Victorian English society. Their actions can all be matched logically with the active extensions of attitudes and philosophies shown as characteristic of the period. One can see an age reflected in the events surrounding the cotton famine.

Advocates of free trade and laissez-faire such as Adam Smith and John Locke had reacted against mercantilism and the paternalistic statism of the Tudors and Stuarts. These men had been in the vanguard of liberalism and individual freedom after 1688 and continued to inspire liberalism well into the present century. During the first third of the nineteenth century, however, extreme laissez-faire advocates sparked a reaction against their own philosophy by their excesses. Their economic application of reason seemed to justify the exploitation, within law, of every means to assure success. Their opponents concluded that when a lack of personal or legal restraint led to excessive conditions, then restraints must be imposed. Gradually, by the end

of the nineteenth century, such restraints in the form of state action had resulted in collectivism; as opposed to the earlier individualism.

During the cotton famine, Radical advocates of laissez-faire were relatively silent. Among opponents of Parliamentary relief measures, a few, concerned with free trade, called for emigration to preserve a free labor market. Others characteristically tried to keep the government from becoming involved. Assistance, they felt, violated natural economic law or put the government into competition with other employers, especially assistance in the form of public works.

Some members of the Manchester School of free trade were personally involved in the cotton trade and were faced with a conflict of interest. Thomas Bazely solved his conflict by requesting relief for "his constituents." Certainly the insistence by Cobden and others to maintain a trained labor force on public relief was an artificial interference in terms of free trade. Economic determinism may be implied, but many who otherwise opposed state assistance showed a remarkable concern for preserving skilled workers and ratable property by Parliamentary action during the cotton famine.

Those who unwittingly began the trend toward collectivism were just as concerned with individualism as the liberals; but they were even more concerned with the plight of exploited industrial operatives.

Guy Chapman asserted that no-one in the early and mid-Victorian periods intended collectivism. Liberals, Tories, and

Benthamites were all dedicated individualists. However, the concern for suffering and the penchant for efficiency felt by Tories and Benthamites led to government involvement and control, by fits and starts.<sup>1</sup>

Tories such as Shaftesbury had worked for improved housing and working conditions out of a sense of duty inspired by romantic religion. His actions had done much to improve relations and produce the good feelings of mid-Victorian England. During the cotton famine Shaftesbury, Derby, and other Tories had reacted typically in their paternalistic concern for the distressed operatives. Their statements on duty in the debates were characteristic of their announced social obligation. While many Tories would have desired more charity and less public relief, they obviously wanted something done to relieve the suffering.

Villiers was typical of Benthamite reaction, both in the cotton famine and in earlier social welfare laws. His professional concern for more efficient application of the poor law and his beneficial public works proposals were undoubtedly supported by other Benthamites in Parliament and among the public at large.

Whigs, although usually concerned with laissez-faire principles, also felt government action was necessary to relieve suffering. Their actions during the cotton famine showed that their liberalism was enlightened. Cobden and Bright, both devoted advocates of free trade,

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<sup>1</sup>British Broadcasting Corporation, Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, p. 389.

were also concerned humanitarians. Both desired consideration for the poor and unemployed, and they were sincerely concerned for cotton famine victims. Gladstone, as well as other Whigs, showed a deep humanitarian concern, as evidenced by their statements in the Parliamentary debates and in their insistence on more positive government action.

The vast amount of food, clothing, and money donated to cotton famine relief funds from Englishmen of all classes was also a characteristically Victorian gesture. Englishmen were willing to give to the deserving poor, and in the cotton famine the operatives had shown themselves worthy of every effort on their behalf.

If one accepts the proposition that humanitarian concern for one's fellow man is good, and that concern should be accompanied by action in an attempt to improve the lot of those less fortunate, one can appreciate that modern man has progressed toward a better life. In the cotton famine such concern and action came from Tory advocates of patriarchal duty, from Benthamite Administrative Radicals, from conscientious Whigs, and from a broad social and economic group inspired by religious humanitarianism.

Considering the Parliamentary relief measures themselves, one discovers that the measures, as introduced by the government, were of a particularly bland and nonpartisan nature. No novel or extraordinary provisions were proposed and the makeup of both bills was such that after great public support for relief any member of Parliament



would be safe in voting for them. Palmerston, in offering such measures, displayed typical restraint. As indicated, Palmerston was most often criticized by the members of Parliament for offering such weak measures. The criticism came from Cobden and Shaftesbury alike.

Nevertheless, Palmerston's caution was supported by the press, at least at the outset, and this skepticism and critical examination of the situation were as characteristic of the mid-Victorian mood as was the magnanimous outpouring of sympathy and benevolence. It was also characteristic of Palmerston's fiscal policy that when the measures were finally passed, the amended borrowing clause in the Rate-in-Aid Bill was soundly financed, and both acts were made in the form of loans that were extremely safe and recoverable.

In considering the attitudes and philosophies that prompted individual members of Parliament to support cotton famine relief legislation, one must proceed carefully in drawing conclusions. Autobiographical accounts by all those involved in the introduction and passage of Parliamentary relief measures would be valuable evidence, but would have to be accepted at face value.

Very few such accounts are available, and those that are, such as the diaries of John Bright, simply expressed a feeling of sympathy for cotton famine victims.

The biographers of such men as Cobden, Bright, Gladstone, Disraeli, and Shaftesbury often read their own motives or those of their subjects into the behavior of the operatives. Thus Gladstone

and Bright, for example, saw the operatives as suffering for a noble cause--the end of slavery. At the same time contemporary accounts in the Times saw in the stoic suffering of the operatives a realization that the British government was not responsible for their problems or for the loss of cotton supplies. Finally, the Leeds Mercury recognized the whole affair as a visitation from God that the operatives accepted with Christian patience and perseverance. All were probably correct to some extent.

Whatever the reason for the resignation of the operatives, the editors of the Annual Register for 1863 concluded that improvements in the laws, institutions, and education of all Englishmen, together with the better understanding among all classes that these improvements effected, had rendered any other course unlikely. A majority of Englishmen could probably have agreed with the Annual Register that the enlightened self-control of the operatives was a product of working class confidence in the justice of English laws, in the government that administered them, and in the rightful expectation of sympathy and assistance from their understanding countrymen.

The romantic sentiment of a Shaftesbury and the moral earnestness of a John Stuart Mill or John Bright were common to the cultural, social, and religious background of these men. Whether in belief or doubt, the broad humanitarian values of Victorians were ingrained. By the mid-Victorian period, no class, or member of a class, could escape exposure to moral sensibility, social duty, or religious

fervor as an influence in his way of life.

Certainly there were many Victorians who were caught up by materialism and were concerned only for themselves. Others obviously ignored or selectively interpreted the moral and religious influence in their lives. Many considered misery as the natural order and progress through self-help as the only solution for individual or class problems. There remains, however, the enormous private and public beneficence of Victorians toward their less fortunate fellows. This beneficence was the outgrowth of religious humanitarianism and was far more characteristic of Victorians than the rationalism of a Spencer.

Herbert Spencer had begun to spell out his philosophy of natural progress and social and economic evolution in the 1850's in his Social Statics. In his writing he criticized the notion that social suffering was removable and that concerned members of society had the duty to remove it.

Christopher Dawson felt that Shaftesbury spoke for the humanitarian conscience of Victorians, however, when he replied to Spencer that the greatest economy lay in justice and mercy to all the interests of all humanity. Shaftesbury's most lucid revelation of Victorian attitudes and beliefs, however, came in the same reply. The statement was understood by all and appreciated by most.

Shaftesbury concluded that as temples of the Holy Ghost, mankind must not be tarnished by sin; and just as men's bodies

should not be contaminated by sin, so should they be free of prevent-  
able disease, avoidable filth, and the disability of unnecessary  
suffering.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 253.

## APPENDIX I

### I. Cotton exports by quantity (1860-1865)

Statistical Abstracts from Young and Handcock, pp. 224, 226.

#### Cotton yarn - lbs.

1860	-	197,343,655
1861	-	177,848,353
1862	-	93,225,890
1863	-	74,398,264
1864	-	75,677,521
1865	-	183,533,609

#### Cotton piece goods - yds.

1860	-	2,776,218,427
1861	-	2,563,459,007
1862	-	1,681,394,600
1863	-	1,710,962,072
1864	-	1,751,989,300
1865	-	2,014,303,716

### II. Cotton exports by value (1860-1865)

#### Cotton yarn - £

1860	-	9,870,875
1861	-	9,292,761
1862	-	6,202,240
1863	-	8,063,128
1864	-	9,083,239
1865	-	10,342,737

#### Cotton piece goods - £

1860	-	42,141,505
1861	-	37,579,728
1862	-	30,548,731
1863	-	39,524,060
1864	-	45,799,090
1865	-	46,923,384

## APPENDIX II

### I. Union Rate in Aid Act

Great Britain, Statutes at Large, 25 and 26 Victoria C. 110.

An Act to enable Boards of Guardians of certain unions to obtain temporary aid to meet the extraordinary demands for relief therein.

Whereas by reason of the closing of mills and factories in certain parts of the country great numbers of the laboring and manufacturing classes have been thrown out of employment, and having become chargeable to the unions and parishes wherein they reside the rate-payers within the same are likely to be subjected to very heavy and extraordinary burdens, and it is expedient that means should be afforded whereby temporary relief may be rendered to such ratepayers: be it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same.

1. If the guardians of any union situate wholly or in part within any of the counties of Lancaster, Chester, or Derby, shall find that the expenditure of any parish comprised within such union in and about the relief of the poor for the quarter ending at Michaelmas or Christmas next, shall have exceeded the rate of three shillings in the pound per annum on the annual ratable value of the property of such parish, the excess shall be charged to the other parishes in the union in proportion to the amount of the annual ratable value of the property comprised in such parishes: Provided that if the expenditure of any parish for the quarter ending at any of the periods aforesaid, including its proportion of any excess charged upon it under this act, shall exceed the said rate of three shillings in the pound per annum on its annual ratable value, all expenditure of such parish in and about the relief of the poor for that quarter in excess of such limit shall be charged in like manner upon the remaining parishes the expenditure of which, including their proportion of any excess charged upon them under this act, shall not have exceeded the limit aforesaid, and so on toties quoties until the sum charged upon each parish shall amount to the limit aforesaid, and then all expenditure over and above that limit shall be charged to the common fund of the union.

2. The Guardians may from time to time make any orders for contributions from the several parishes comprised in such union for the purposes of this act, in addition to their ordinary orders, and shall have the same powers for enforcing such orders as in the case of the

usual and ordinary contributions .

3. If the Guardians of any such union shall find that the aggregate expenditure in and about the relief of the poor of the whole union for the quarter ending at Michaelmas or Christmas next shall have exceeded the rate of three shillings in the pound per annum on the annual ratable value of the property comprised within such union such guardians may, by resolution passed at a meeting held after special notice in writing sent to every elected and ex-officio guardian of the union, apply to the Poor Law Board for authority to borrow a sum they think fit, issue their order accordingly; and thereupon the said guardians may borrow such sum, and shall charge the Common Fund of the union with the repayment of the same, by equal annual installments not exceeding seven, and with the payment of the interest from time to time to accrue thereon.

4. If the Guardians of any such union shall find that the aggregate expenditure in and about the relief of the poor of the whole union for the quarter ending at Michaelmas or Christmas next shall have exceeded the rate of five shillings in the pound per annum on the annual ratable value of the property comprised within such union, such Guardians may apply to the Poor Law Board, and thereupon the Poor Law Board may, if they think proper, upon being satisfied that there has been such excess of expenditure as aforesaid, make a general order upon the several unions and parishes under a separate Board of Guardians or Select Vestry in the county wherein such union shall be situated to contribute a sum of money to meet the excess, in proportion to the annual ratable value of the property comprised within such unions and parishes respectively; and the several sums so apportioned shall be paid by the Guardians and Select Vestries of the said unions and parishes respectively out of the respective common funds of the Guardians and Vestries of the said parishes respectively, to the treasurer of the union on whose behalf the said order shall have been issued.

5. The Poor Law Board shall exclude from the contribution any union or such parish as aforesaid where the expenditure for the corresponding quarter shall have exceeded the rate of three shillings in the pound per annum on the annual ratable value of the property comprised in the said union or parish.

6. Where the union applying for aid shall extend into two or more counties, the contribution in aid shall come from that county in which the greater part of the union shall be situated; and where the union shall be situated in two or more counties, it shall only contribute in

that county in which the greater part of it shall be situated.

7. After the making and issuing of any general order for contribution as aforesaid the Guardians of any union or parish or any select vestry upon whom the order is made, and who have obeyed such order, may elect one of their own body to represent them at the Board of Guardians of the union on whose behalf such general order has been made, and every person so elected shall be entitled to act as a Guardian of such last-mentioned union during the then current quarter, but no such person shall be entitled to vote in the election of any officer for that union.

8. No order of the Poor Law Board shall be issued under the authority of this act after the first day of March next, nor be liable to be removed into the Court of Queen's Bench on Certiorari or otherwise; nor shall any order of the guardians or rate made to carry out the provisions of this act be questioned in any court of law on Certiorari or otherwise.

9. For the purposes of this act the annual ratable value of the property within the several parishes and unions herein-before referred to shall be estimated in the manner in which the same is required to be taken in computing the amount of contributions to the Common Fund by the law in force for the time being.

10. The several words herein contained shall be construed in like manner as in the act of the fourth and fifth William the Fourth, chapter seventy-six, and in the subsequent acts extending and explaining the same, and all the provisions contained therein now in force shall be applicable to this act.



### APPENDIX III

- I. Public Works (Manufacturing Districts) Act, 1863  
Great Britain, Statutes at Large, 26 and 27 Victoria C. 70.

An act to facilitate the execution of public works in certain manufacturing districts; to authorize for that purpose advances of public money to a limited amount upon security of local rates; and to shorten the period for the adoption of the local government act, 1858, in certain cases.

Whereas by an act of the last session of Parliament, (which was extended for a further period, by an act of the present session,) reciting that by reason of the closing of mills and factories in certain parts of the country great numbers of the laboring and manufacturing classes had been thrown out of employment, provision was made to enable Boards of Guardians of certain unions to obtain temporary aid to meet the extraordinary demands for relief therein: 'And whereas great numbers of the same classes still remain out of employment in the parts of the country aforesaid, and it is expedient to make provision for better enabling local authorities therein to give employment by the execution of works of public utility and sanitary improvement.'

Be it therefore enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1. For the purposes of loans under this act, the Commissioners of her majesty's treasury may, from time to time, by warrant under the hands of two or more of them, cause to be issued out of the consolidated fund of the United Kingdom, or the growing produce thereof, to the account of the commissioners for the reduction of the national debt, any sum or sums of money not exceeding in the whole one million two hundred thousand pounds, such money to be applied exclusively under this act, and to be at the disposal of the Public Works Loan Commissioners in like manner in all respects as money placed at their disposal under the act of the session of the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth years of Her Majesty (chapter eighty), and the acts therein recited, subject, nevertheless, to the provisions of this act, which provisions shall have full effect, notwithstanding anything in the Public Works Loan Act, 1853, to the contrary contained.

2. All the several clauses, powers, authorities, provisoes, enactments, directions, regulations, restrictions, privileges, priorities, advantages, penalties, and forfeitures contained in and conferred and imposed by the said acts, or any of them, so far as the same can be made applicable and are not varied by this act, shall be taken to extend to this act, and to everything to be done in pursuance of this act, and as if the same were herein repeated and set forth.

3. For the purposes of such works as are hereinafter mentioned, the Public Works Loan Commissioners may, out of the money for the time being at their disposal under this or any other act, from time to time lend to any such local board or local or other authority as hereinafter described, namely,

Any local board acting under the Local Government Act, 1858;

Any local authority invested with powers of Town Government and rating under any local act, by whatever name such local authority may be called;

Any commissioners or body of persons or other authority having power to levy rates for general or special purposes; or

Any guardians of the poor authorized to borrow as hereinafter provided:

and any such local board or local or other authority may from time to time borrow from the Public Works Loan Commissioners accordingly, such sum or sums of money as may be required, subject and according to the following provisions:

- (1) Any such loan may be made for the purposes of any permanent works which the local board obtaining the loan is authorized to execute under the powers of the Local Government Act, 1858, or this act, or (as the case may be) which the local or other authority obtaining the loan is authorized to execute under the powers of any local act or this act or otherwise:
- (2) Any such loan may be made to any such local or other authority, whether such local or other authority has or has not power to borrow under any local act or otherwise, independently of this act:
- (3) Any such loan may be made to any such local board or

local or other authority to the amount authorized by this act, notwithstanding any limitation of the amount to be borrowed by such local board or local or other authority imposed by any local act or otherwise, but so that nothing in this act shall be deemed to give to any loan made under this act equality as to order of charge, or of payment of interest or principal, with any loan made or to be made under any local act, except only as to such portion (if any) of the money raised under this act as might have been raised under the local act, independently of this act:

- (4) The total amount to be lent under this act to any local board or local or other authority shall not exceed such amount as would be equal to one year's ratable value of the property assessable within the district or place in respect of which any such loan under this act may be made:
- (5) The interest payable in respect of every such loan under this act shall be at the rate of three pounds ten shillings per centum per annum:
- (6) The repayment of every such loan shall be made by such number of equal annual installments, not exceeding thirty, as the Poor Law Board specify in their order sanctioning the same; but that board may, if they think fit, authorize the postponement of the payment of any installment becoming due within the first three years for a period not exceeding two years:
- (7) The repayment of any such loan with the interest thereon shall be secured by the local board or local or other authority to whom the loan is made by a mortgage of or charge upon all or any of the rates leviable by such local board or local or other authority either alone or together with such other property or income as may be agreed on between such local board or local or other authority and the Public Works Loan Commissioners; and in the case of guardians, upon the security of the rates for the relief of the poor, or to be raised by the overseers in manner hereinafter provided; and it shall not be incumbent on those commissioners to require any other security:
- (8) Every local board or local or other authority obtaining any such loan shall have power by virtue of this act to give

such security as aforesaid, and to charge such rates, property, or income as aforesaid accordingly; and every such local board or local or other authority shall have power, by virtue of this act, and is hereby required, to levy such rates or to make such orders for contributions respectively as may be requisite for the purposes of any such security, notwithstanding any limitation of the amount of rates to be levied by such local board or local or other authority imposed by any local or other act or otherwise; and in the case of any local authority having rating powers under "The Local Government Act, 1858" or any general or local act, such rates may be included in and levied with the general district rate under that act, or any rate levied under any general or local act:

- (9) The provisions of sections fifty-seven and seventy-eight of the Local Government Act, 1858, and any provisions relative thereto in the same or any other act contained, shall not apply to any loan under this act:
- (10) Every loan under this act shall be made with the authority of an order of the Poor Law Board, which order that board may make if satisfied that the circumstances of the district for which the loan is required in reference to the charge for the relief of the poor are such as to render the loan expedient, and that all the conditions of this act have been complied with on the part of the local board or other authority desiring to obtain the loan; and any such order of the Poor Law Board shall be sufficient to authorize the Public Works Loan Commissioners to make any such loan, and shall not be liable to be questioned in any court of law or equity.

4. Any local board or local or other authority obtaining a loan under this act shall apply the whole of the money borrowed exclusively for the purposes of such permanent works as aforesaid, and shall not apply any part thereof in or towards paying off any debt or charge existing at the time of the making of such loan other than such as may be due in respect of such works.

5. The money borrowed shall be advanced by the Public Works Loan Commissioners in such installments as the Poor Law Board shall from time to time by any order direct; and the payment by the Public Works Loan Commissioners of any such installment may be postponed or withheld on a notice from the Poor Law Board certifying that the works

in respect of which the loan was authorized are not being proceeded with, in conformity with the plan proposed, to the satisfaction of the Poor Law Board.

6. One of Her Majesty's principal Secretaries of State may, upon the application of the Poor Law Board, appoint from time to time an engineer or engineers to report to that board upon any works proposed to be executed, or in the course of being executed, or completed, by means of a loan under this act, and the engineer or engineers so appointed shall have full power and authority, at all reasonable times, to examine the plans, specification, and estimates of such works, to enter upon and survey such works or the site thereof, and to inspect the accounts of any local board or local or other authority in relation thereto.

7. For facilitating the adoption of the Local Government Act, 1858, the following provisions shall, until the first day of July one thousand eight hundred and sixty-four, take effect and be in force:

- (1) Section twelve of that act, and any provision relative thereto, shall be read and construed as if the words "a week's" were substituted in that section for the words "a month's":
- (2) Section seventeen of that act, and any provision relative thereto, shall be read and construed as if the words "Fourteen days" were substituted in that section for the words "Twenty-one days," and as if the words "seven days" were substituted in that section for the words "fourteen days."
- (3) Section twenty of that act, and any provision relative thereto, shall be read and construed as if the words "twenty-one days" were substituted throughout that section for the words "two months:"
- (4) Section three of the Local Government Act Amendment Act, 1863, shall not apply to appeals against resolutions of adoption in cases coming within the operation of this act.

8. Where any local authority acquires under this act any powers by virtue of section fifteen of the Local Government Act, 1858, which are repugnant to or inconsistent with those of the local act, the local authority shall proceed under the powers and provisions of the Local Government Act, 1858; and wherever in any such case the last-mentioned act and the local act contain provisions for effecting the

same or a similar object, but in different modes, the local authority may proceed under the Local Government Act, 1858, or under the local act.

In every such case of acquisition of powers under this act, Section twelve of the Local Government Act, 1858, and any provision relative thereto, shall be read and construed as if the words "a week's" were substituted in that section for the words "a month's."

9. Section four of "The Local Government Act Amendment Act, 1863," shall apply to any place which may adopt "The Local Government Act, 1858," under this act, notwithstanding the population of such place is more than three thousand.

10. With respect to any works to be executed in exercise of the powers contained in section sixty-nine of "The Public Health Act, 1848," and section thirty-eight of "The Local Government Act, 1858," by means of any loan under this act:

- (1) The notice required to be given prior to the execution of such works by the local board or local authority may be in the form prescribed by "The Local Government Amendment Act, 1861," or to the like effect, and may be served by delivering the same to or at the residence or place of business of the person or persons to whom it is addressed, or by delivering the same to some person upon the premises in respect of which the works are required, or, if there be no person upon the premises who can be so served, by fixing such notice upon some conspicuous part of the premises, or advertising the same in one or more of the newspapers circulated in the place:
- (2) Specifications and estimates of the works, certified by the surveyor of the local board or local authority, shall be deposited for inspection, with the plan and sections, in the manner required by "The Local Government Act (1858) Amendment Act, 1861," and when the works affect the property of more than one person, the estimates shall show the proposed apportionment of the expenses of the works in respect of such properties respectively:
- (3) Any person to whom such notice as aforesaid has been given may, before the expiration of the period limited thereby for the execution of the works mentioned therein, object to the execution of such works in the manner specified, and to the proposed apportionment of the expenses of executing the same, and may give notice in

writing within the period aforesaid to the local board or local authority of the matters objected to:

In default of giving the notice lastly required, it shall not be competent for such person to question the validity of any rate or charge made by the local board or local authority for defraying or securing the expenses incurred by them in executing such works, except on the ground that the same have not been executed in conformity with the plan, section, specification, or estimates thereof:

- (4) In case of notice of objection as aforesaid, the local board or local authority may thereupon require that the several matters objected to shall be referred to arbitration in the manner prescribed by "The Public Health Act, 1848," before they proceed to execute the works in question, and the result of such arbitration shall be final:
- (5) The charge upon any property affected by the works executed under this section in respect of the expenses incurred by any local board or local authority in the execution of such works shall have priority over any mortgage or other incumbrance upon such property, and shall be recoverable in the manner provided by "The Public Health Act, 1848," and "The Local Government Act, 1858," for the like purpose.

11. No objection shall be allowed at the hearing of any information or other proceeding under this act on the ground of any alleged defect in substance or in form in any notice, summons, complaint, or order made or issued under this act, or on account of any variance between such notice, summons, complaint, or order, and the evidence adduced at the said hearing, unless it shall appear to the justices present and acting at the said hearing that the said alleged defect or variance has misled the person by or on whose behalf the said objection is taken; but if the said justices shall be of opinion that the said alleged defect or variance has misled such person, it shall be lawful for the said justice to amend the same, and to adjourn the hearing of such information or proceeding to such time and on such terms as they shall think fit.

12. Any local board or local or other authority (except Guardians) shall have power to execute, by means of any loan under this act, all or any of the following works, subject to the restrictive and saving clauses and provisions contained in The Local Government Act, 1858,

so far as the same are applicable to the execution of any such works, in addition to the works authorized by The Local Government Act, 1858, or any local act; that is to say, any such local board or local or other authority shall have power--

To acquire, drain, lay out, plant, or otherwise improve any common or other lands used or intended to be used as places of public recreation, to construct, improve, or enlarge any reservoir for water supply, and to lay down or extend the requisite pipes for such reservoir;

To widen, deepen, cleanse, embank, straighten, or otherwise improve any river, stream, or brook; and also to enter into any agreement respecting the execution of any such work, or the apportionment of the cost thereof, with any person or authority interested in any such lands, river, stream, or brook, or in any property adjoining thereto, or likely to be beneficially or otherwise affected by any such work.

13. Any local board or local or other authority may agree, but in the case of guardians not without the approval of the Poor Law Board, with the owner of any lands in or adjoining to or near their district to make any road or to execute any work of drainage or of private improvement through, in, or on such lands, at the expense of the owner, and may allow the owner time for repayment of the amount expended, and receive the same by annual installments, not being less than one thirtieth part of the entire sum, with interest at not less than the rate of three pounds ten shillings per centime per annum upon the sum from time to time remaining unpaid.

Where such owner has a limited estate or interest only in such lands, he may, by an instrument in the form set forth in the schedule to this act, with such variations as circumstances may require, charge the inheritance of such lands with the amount so expended, and with the amount of the costs incurred by the local board or local or other authority, and by such owner, in relation to the security to be given by him, together with interest for the aggregate of those amounts, at the rate aforesaid, and may, by the same instrument, declare the manner and times of the payment of such interest and of the installments aforesaid; and all the provisions of The Local Government Act, 1858, with respect to the recovery and redemption of private improvement rates shall apply, as far as may be, to every such charge.

Provided, that no such instrument shall operate so as to charge the estate or interest of any person taking in succession after such limited estate or interest, until a certificate, signed by an engineer to be appointed as aforesaid, has been endorsed thereon, to the effect



that in the opinion of such engineer the works in respect of which such charge is intended to be created have been duly executed, and will effect such a permanent increase in the yearly value of the lands to be charged as will render the amount expended an outlay beneficial to the inheritance; and every such certificate, so signed, shall be conclusive evidence that the engineer by whom the same is given has been duly appointed for the purpose aforesaid.

In this section the term "owner" means the person who is for the time being in receipt, whether on his own account or as trustee for any other person, of the rackrent of the lands affected by such works; or who, if such lands were let to a tenant at rackrent, would for the time being be entitled to the receipt thereof, whether on his own account or as trustee for any other person: provided that any person holding any lands under a lease shall not be entitled to be deemed the owner thereof within the meaning of this section unless he holds the same for a term whereof thirty years at least are unexpired at the passing of this act, or for lives whereof two at least are subsisting at the passing of this act, and where such years or lives are not unexpired or subsisting the person entitled to the reversion immediately expectant on the determination of such lease shall be deemed the owner within the meaning of this section.

14. If the Guardians of any union, parish, or township should, at a meeting held after special notice in writing sent to every elected and ex-officio Guardian of the union, determine that it would contribute to the health or convenience of the inhabitants of any place for which such guardians are the local authority for executing the powers of the Nuisances Removal Acts that any of the following works should be executed; viz,

That any pond, pool, open ditch, sewer, or drain should be drained, cleansed, covered, or filled up;

That any highway or public road or footpath should be made, levelled, or improved;

That any river, stream, or brook should be widened, deepened, cleansed, embanked, straightened, or otherwise improved;

That a sewer or drain should be made or improve;

That a well should be dug;

That a reservoir for water supply should be constructed, improved, or enlarged, or the requisite pipes connected with any reservoir for water supply be laid down, improved, or

extended;

That any common or other lands used or intended to be used as places of public recreation should be drained, laid out, planted, or otherwise improved; or

That any other work of public utility or sanitary improvement should be executed;

such Guardians may procure a plan of such works, and an estimate of the cost thereof, and lay the same before the Poor Law Board, who upon being satisfied that such works may be properly undertaken and executed, may, by an order, authorize the Guardians to borrow, and thereupon the Public Works Loan Commissioners may lend to the Guardians, subject and according to the provisions herein-before contained, such money as the Poor Law Board may consider necessary for the works so approved, the repayment of such money, with interest at the rate aforesaid, to be secured by the Guardians by a mortgage of or charge upon the rates raised or to be raised in manner herein-after mentioned; the Guardians shall cause such works to be executed, subject to the restrictive and saving clauses and provisions contained in The Local Government Act, 1858, so far as the same are applicable to the execution of any such works, paying the cost thereof out of the money so borrowed, with power nevertheless, if they think fit, from time to time to appoint a committee or committees of their own body, of which committee the elected Guardian or Guardians of any such place and the Justices of the Peace resident therein shall ex-officio be members, if not otherwise elected, to act in and for one or more of the places for which the Guardians are the local authority, and every committee so appointed shall have the full power to direct and superintend the execution of such works within the specified place or places for which the committee is appointed.

15. The installments of principal in repayment of any loan under this act to Guardians shall, with the interest on so much of the loan as from time to time remains unpaid thereon, be contributed and raised in manner herein-after mentioned; (that is to say,)

- (1) Where the works for which the loan has been advanced shall be undertaken for a place maintaining its own poor, the installments and the interest shall be contributed by the overseers upon the order of the Guardians out of the poor's rate, in like manner as the other claims of the Guardians upon them;
- (2) Where the works shall be undertaken for two or more such places the installments and the interest shall be apportioned by the Guardians between such places in pro-

portion to the costs of the works undertaken therein respectively, as set forth in the estimate for the same, approved of by the Poor Law Board, and the installments and interest when so apportioned shall be contributed by the overseers of such places respectively upon the order of the Guardians as aforesaid:

- (3) Where the works shall be undertaken for a place, for part only of which the Guardians are the local authority, the installments and the interest shall be contributed by the overseers upon the order of the Guardians, but the overseers shall raise the amount from time to time as required by a rate upon all the ratable property within that part of such place within which the Guardians are the local authority, as if such part were a separate place maintaining its own poor; and such rate shall be made and enforced in like manner in every respect as a rate for the relief of the poor;
- (4) Where the works shall be undertaken for one or more places maintaining their own poor, and also for one or more such places, for part only of which the Guardians are the local authority, the installments and the interest shall be apportioned by them between such places and parts of places respectively, and shall be contributed and collected by the overseers in manner herein-before provided with respect to contributions from such places and parts of places respectively.

16. The Lands Clauses Consolidation Act, 1845, and any act amending the same, except with respect to the taking of lands otherwise than by agreement, shall be incorporated with this act; and for the purposes of those acts this act shall be deemed the Special Act, and the local board or local or other authority exercising the powers of this act shall be deemed the promoters of the undertaking.

17. The clauses of The Commissioners Clauses Act, 1847, with respect to the mortgages to be executed by the commissioners, except so far as the same may be inconsistent with the provisions of the said act of the session of the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth years of Her Majesty (chapter eighty), or of any of the acts therein recited, shall be incorporated with this act; and in the construction of this act and of the said incorporated clauses this act shall be deemed the Special Act, and the local board or local or other authority to which a loan is made shall be deemed to be the commissioners.

18. Every mortgage for securing money lent under this act pur-

porting to be executed by any such local board or local or other authority as herein-before described, except Guardians, in manner provided by the clauses of The Commissioners Clauses Act, 1847, herein incorporated, and every like mortgage purporting to be executed by the Guardians of any union, parish, or township as aforesaid, shall constitute a complete and valid security on the rates, property, and income thereby expressed to be mortgaged, and shall give to and impose on the local board or local or other authority intrusted with the levying of the rates thereby expressed to be mortgaged, or authorized to make calls for contributions as herein-before mentioned, the power and obligation from time to time to levy such rates, or to make and enforce such calls, as the case may be, to an amount sufficient to maintain any such works and to discharge, in manner provided by such mortgage, the principal and interest expressed to be thereby secured, notwithstanding any defect or irregularity in the election, appointment, constitution, or proceedings of such local board or local or other authority, and notwithstanding and vacancy in the number of persons, or any disqualification of any person or persons being a member of or constituting such local board or local or other authority, and notwithstanding that any person or persons may have assumed to act as member or members of such local board or local or other authority, or as such authority, though not legally elected, appointed, constituted, or qualified as such member, members, or authority.

19. Where the Public Works Loan Commissioners make a loan in pursuance of any such order of the Poor Law Board as herein-before mentioned, and take a mortgage for securing repayment of the same, purporting to be made under the authority of this act, they shall not be bound to require proof that any condition imposed by this act has been duly complied with; and in every such case the local board or local or other authority shall have full power and is hereby required to levy the rates mortgaged, or to make and enforce such calls, for contributions as aforesaid, as the case may be, for repayment of the money borrowed, with interest, notwithstanding that any such condition may not have been complied with; and it shall not be competent to any ratepayer or other person to question the validity of any such mortgage or rate on the ground that any such condition had not been complied with.

20. The Poor Law Board shall not make an order for a loan under this act in any case after the first day of July one thousand eight hundred and sixty-four, unless they think fit to make an order after that day with a view to the completion of works then already begun.

21. This act shall extend and apply only to boroughs, parishes, towns, districts, and places within or comprising the unions situate

wholly or in part in the counties of Chester, Lancaster, and Derby.

22. The word "Overseers" shall include churchwardens in the case of any parish to which this act applies.

23. This act may be cited as The Public Works (Manufacturing Districts) Act, 1863.

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