

Ouachita Baptist University

Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

Honors Theses

Carl Goodson Honors Program

1-1967

English Social Development: A Movement Preluded by English Education, 1800-1850

Peggy Woodruff

Ouachita Baptist University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Woodruff, Peggy, "English Social Development: A Movement Preluded by English Education, 1800-1850" (1967). *Honors Theses*. 701.

https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses/701

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Carl Goodson Honors Program at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

H 942a
WOO

ENGLISH SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT:
A MOVEMENT PRELUDED BY ENGLISH EDUCATION
1800-1850

Ouachita Baptist University

Honors Special Studies

January 1967

By Peggy Woodruff

Honors Paper # 36

During the period from the latter part of the eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, life in England changed perhaps more drastically than at any other time in history. In the late 1800's, the majority of the citizenry lived in rural villages; therefore, English society and laws were geared to a rural culture. However, with the coming of the Industrial Revolution the emphasis shifted from rural to urban.

The Industrial Revolution also created many problems never before faced by the country: misapportioned House of Commons seats, atrocious working circumstances, and miserable living conditions. For many years these situations were ignored as much as possible; however, towards the middle of the nineteenth century Parliament began to make efforts to improve some of these conditions. The reasons for these attempts at improvements were, of course, multifarious. This paper, however, will be limited to showing that the education of the people assisted them in obtaining improved social conditions.

The rural village was the center of life in the late 1700's. The majority of the villagers were farmers who lived on what historians now term a subsistence agriculture. That is, they raised cattle, pigs, and poultry and did a much more efficient job in this field than the large farmer.

Those who were not farmers in the village were usually craftsmen. These artisans began their work as apprentices, and those skilled in their trades could rise from the position of employee to the status of employer.

Into this period were injected the Enclosure laws and the Industrial Revolution; with these two events came a tremendous change in the way of life of the English peasant. The Enclosure Act opened the gate for the large farmer and closed the door on the peasant. He was no longer able to raise his own food and was thus compelled to move into town where the introduction of factories provided opportunities for work to all members of the family. The peasant and his family were forced to move into filthy, crowded quarters and give up their independent status in society. They not only had to depend on others to produce their food and clothing, but also they had to rely on their employer to decide when and how they would work. These factors combined with the deplorable conditions of the factories to produce a revolutionary feeling among the workers which was quelled only by evangelical religion or radical political movements.¹

The coming of the Industrial Revolution not only changed the way of life in English society, but also it created a strong class division between employee and employer. With the necessity of complex machinery in industry, it was no longer possible for the employee to rise above his status and become a member of the ruling class. The laborers, therefore, formed trade

combinations which were looked upon with much disfavor by the government and employers.

From 1800 through the mid-teens Parliament passed a series of acts which outlawed trade unions and at the same time repealed all government control over industry. This complete lack of regulation of industry quite naturally produced strong resentment among the working classes. Compounding the problem of resentment was the discharge of 200,000 soldiers from the army when the war in France ended. The conclusion of the war brought a decrease in the demand for British products. Coupled with the related depression of 1816, this created the desire in many peasants to destroy the machines which were, in their minds, at the root of the problem.

The popular leaders, realizing the futility of such action, urged political reform through cheap newspapers. They reasoned that oligarchic rule, not machines, was the cause of the unbearable conditions of the working classes. The bellwethers included in their writings these arguments: (1) The sinecures were held by the upper classes. (2) The Combinations Acts forbidding trade unions were from Parliament. (3) The Corn Laws of 1815 were in the interest of many members of Parliament.

Had not the people previously been exposed to education, the use of newspapers would have been ineffectual. England had made attempts to educate her people since the sixteenth century. According to Sargant, when George III ascended the throne in 1760, fifty-six percent of the townspeople and forty

percent of the rural population could write their names.² In response to the need created by the Industrial Revolution, Sunday schools were begun in 1780 by Robert Raikes. These schools were designed to provide the rudiments of education to children who spent six days a week working in a factory. By the end of the eighteenth century approximately two hundred private academies were in operation. These academies were designed for the lower middle class and emphasized math, technology, and vocational subjects.³ With the assistance of voluntary contributions new schools continued to be established during the first third of the nineteenth century. By 1832, twelve thousand national schools were in existence.⁴

All these schools followed the monotorial or Lancasterian method of teaching. This method was used because of the shortage of teachers and because it was cheap. It enabled the teacher to educate between one hundred and two hundred children at the same time. The teacher first taught several of the older, brighter children, who in turn taught a group of five or ten children. The Lancasterian method was strictly mechanical and would have broken down had education been considered anything more than a memorization process. Through it, however, many children who would have otherwise received no training acquired the basic elements of education.⁵

Around 1815, adults began to see the desirability of education, and in spite of poor conditions, many wanted to learn.

To meet part of this need Brougham established mechanics' institutes where small libraries were collected and working men met for discussion and lecture. The availability of cheap literature also helped the working class in their desire to learn. In 1824, sixteen thousand copies of "Mechanics' Magazine" were sold and fifteen hundred workmen subscribed to the "London Institute".⁶

Also coming under the heading of cheap literature were the newspapers. The industry had developed to the extent that it no longer relied on government subsidy. The English press was better informed than that of any other country; the people's demand for accurate news coverage contributed to better coverage. As the literacy rate among the people rose, the newspaper became the media for airing public opinion. The political movements of the day saw the potential of the newspaper and began publishing their own. When the "Edinburg Review and Critical Journal" was first published in 1802, a new era in public criticism was begun. It was conservative but did not fear innovations in politics. In answer to the Edinburg the Tories began the "Quarterly Review". Seeing the effect of these two papers, the radicals began to print their own newspaper, the "Westminster Review," in 1824. These papers brought a variety of public questions before a wide audience and helped develop an interest in political issues.⁷

One of the issues which was most important during the first half of the nineteenth century was the Corn Laws. These laws

were probably the most controversial and their effects the farthest reaching of any in English history. During years of good harvests they had little effect on the price of food; however, when the crops failed, they raised prices considerably.

The Corn Laws caused manufacturers to become interested in Parliamentary reform. They wanted to compete on an equal basis with goods from the Continent. In order to do so, the manufacturers thought that they must decrease wages. However, if they were to pay lower wages, food prices would have to be reduced.

After the crop failures of 1816 and 1819, reformers organized meetings throughout the country. These gatherings frequently ended in violence. One such instance of violence occurred in Manchester's St. Peter's Fields where the speaker was arrested soon after he began. An officer saw a red flag which he thought was a symbol of revolt and ordered that all flags be seized. Violence followed in which eleven people were killed and over four hundred were wounded.⁸ A London "Times" reporter was present, and his account of events convinced many in the middle classes of the necessity of Parliamentary reform. The results of the riot were far-reaching: (1) There was an end of political agitation for some years. (2) The Gag Acts, which prohibited public meetings and demonstrations and tried to stop cheap radical newspapers, were passed. (3) Reform was adopted as a plank in the platform of a political party.

A political party adopted this plank not because of a genuine concern for reform or an enlarged franchise, but because

it saw an opportunity to further self-interests. The Whig party had been out of power with two brief exceptions since 1766. The members of Parliament began to realize that England was faced with a revolution from the disenfranchised classes, which would have meant loss in property to them. The Whigs, therefore, decided to bring the new propertied and commercial and industrial classes away from the discontented elements and into the Whig party. They reasoned that with the enlarged franchise and parliamentary reform, they would be able to control Parliament. Lord Russell introduced a bill for parliamentary reform in Commons in 1819. However, the bill failed.⁹

From the time Lord Russell's bill failed in 1819 until the 1830's, the population distribution of England continued its shift from the rural to the urban. The distribution of seats in Commons remained the same, however, and thus, underpopulated districts were more powerful than the crowded urban districts. In 1830, the Whig party was elected to office on a platform promising reform measures. Lord Russell introduced the first reform bill in March 1831. The bill failed, and the government was dissolved. For a second time the voters elected a Whig majority. The reform bill passed the House of Commons this time, but was stopped by the Lords. A great indignation resulted when it failed to pass the second time. Riots and meetings broke out all across England. While the bill was being discussed the third time, Macaulay made a speech advocating its passage in order that the

aristocracy would be able to maintain much of its position and all of its property. He said in part:

"Save property divided against itself. Save the multitudes endangered by its own ungovernable passions. Save the aristocracy endangered by its own unpopular power. Save the greatest and fairest and most highly civilized community that ever existed, from calamities which may in a few days sweep away all the rich heritage of so many ages of wisdom and glory.¹⁰ The danger is terrible. The time is short. . . ."

Threatened by the loss of their position and by the king's promise to create new peers if the bill were not passed, the Lords passed the bill in 1832.

The manufacturing and working classes were disappointed in the bill. They had not expected to get the franchise, but they had expected some favorable legislation. However, before the year was over a new Parliament was elected under the reform law. More of the members were from the middle class than ever before, and were soon passing legislation favorable to the disenfranchised group. Among this legislation was the first effective factory act which limited the number of hours children and young people could work. This act also provided for inspectors to enforce the law. Reform penal legislation was approved to prevent an increase in the number of criminals and the spread of disease in common jails. Many of the changes made were due to greater knowledge, not politics. For instance, the health acts made were a result of the connection found between dirt and disease; the transportation laws were passed because the goods which were moved over the old roads were too heavy; and they were thus forced to turn to new methods of road construction.¹¹

Members of Parliament did not at first realize all the implications of the reform act. The right of the Lords to override Commons still remained, but this right was somewhat limited. They had an infinite power of delaying a measure. However, when a major bill was defeated, Commons was dissolved; if the people returned the majority party to power, the Lords always permitted the bill to pass for fear that a revolution would result if they did not.

The reform bill not only brought about a change in the power structure of Parliament, but it also created the need for a more literate citizenry. In 1833, Parliament granted £ 20,000 to elementary education. The money, which was used for construction of new buildings, was available only to schools which were members of the National Society or British and Foreign School Society. These two groups controlled the distribution of money for six years.¹²

A committee of Commons reported in 1838 that school enrollment had doubled between 1820-1834. It recommended an increase in grants to the societies to meet the need created by the increased enrollment. Thus in the following year, the grant was increased to £ 30,000 annually with the stipulation that it be administered without restriction. A committee of Privy Council was appointed to administer the grants.¹³

Despite the legislation favoring the disenfranchised classes, many of the poor were dissatisfied with it. Their conditions remained deplorable; therefore, they began to feel that the

only way to improve their situation was through the acquisition of political power. Thus 1836 saw the beginning of the Chartist movement. The reforms advocated included: manhood suffrage, secret ballot, abolition of property qualifications to Commons, payment of members, equal electoral districts, and annual parliamentary elections.¹⁴

The leaders of the movement were divided concerning the best method to obtain their goals; some of them wanted the action to be limited to peaceful agitation while others advocated violence. Several large meetings in support of the charter were held in 1839, and there seemed to be great danger that violence would flare up. Although these meetings were held without interference, troops were sent to towns where they might be needed. After their first experiences with huge groups, the chartist leaders decided to use non-violent methods.

The first time the charter, containing the six previously mentioned demands, was presented Parliament discussed it seriously and then rejected it. It was presented three years later with more signatures and stronger demands, yet it was again rejected. After the second rejection the leaders of the movement called for a general strike. The people's response was very good; so good, in fact, that the strike collapsed of its own weight. The leaders of the movement were arrested, causing the beginning of the end of the movement.

Although the chartists obtained none of their demands immediately, the movement had its effect on both the working and

upper classes. It gave the former training in cooperative action and left them with the determination to try other methods to improve their condition. To the latter it brought a realization of the need of change.

With the enlarged franchise, the Chartist movement, and the rise in the influence of the press, Parliament became more responsive to the wishes of the people. The period from 1840 until sometime around 1860, is particularly noteworthy for its large number of reform measures. Among the first reform acts passed were those concerning working conditions in the factories. Ashley moved for a commission to study the conditions of children working in the mines in 1840. Two years later the commission returned with its first report. The findings included these facts:

Children opened and closed a door twelve or thirteen hours a day.

Children who were naked to the waist were forced to bring masses of coal on their hands and knees by 'girdle and chain'.

Six and seven year olds carried a hundredweight of coal up dangerous steps many times during a day.

Health, morals, and education were completely ignored.¹⁵

As a result of these findings, Ashley introduced a bill excluding women from the mines and prohibiting the employment of children under thirteen. Because of opposition to the bill, Ashley had to compromise and allow boys who were ten or older to work three days a week.

The second report revealed that by the time children were four, five, or six they had begun to work. These children were

apprenticed for food and clothing and received no wages. Graham tried to pass a law concerning hours of work and education of the young in factory districts. However, the bill created so much opposition that he withdrew it.

From 1845 to 1855, several other factory acts were introduced. Among these were (1) In 1845, a bill to regulate labor in calico print works. In its final form it prohibited the employment of children under eight, of all girls, and of boys under thirteen at night; (2) The following year a bill which set the maximum number of hours ~~at ten~~. At first it was defeated; but elections were held, the Whigs came to power, and it was passed; (3) In 1850, the legal work day from 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. with one and one-half hours for meals was established.¹⁶

During this period Parliament also approved several bills dealing with the treatment of the insane. In 1842, it passed a bill extending the metropolitan inspection system to the provinces. Two years later the commissioners published a report, called the "Domesday Book," on the conditions of the insane asylums. The report revealed flagrant abuses in institutions for insane. In the following year Parliament approved a bill establishing a permanent lunacy commission with greater power. A second bill required the erection of county asylums with separate facilities for those who were chronic cases and required medical inspection of those who were under private care.

In the factory and lunatic acts Parliament attempted to improve existing conditions; in the education acts it not only

attempted to improve conditions, but it also sought to improve a system. After the Education Act of 1833, inspectors periodically observed the conditions and methods of every school in the country. They found that the Lancastrian method had definite shortcomings and in 1846, proposed a method to do away with student monitors. The proposal provided for teacher apprenticeships and made provisions for grants to study further in teacher-training colleges. Teachers who had obtained certificates from these training colleges received a government grant in addition to their regular salaries. As the government continued to provide assistance to schools, the people slowly began to accept the idea of state aid and supervision, but they remained opposed to a state educational service.

The need for more state aid caused the Privy Council committee in 1853, to give per capita grants to rural schools which raised a certain amount of money. Three years later these grants were extended to towns. In the same year a department of education was established and thus all education work was put under one authority.¹⁷

During this time both Parliament and the people began to wonder about the value of all the money that was being spent for education; therefore, in 1858, Newcastle was appointed chairman of a parliamentary commission of inquiry which was to investigate the education system of England and then make recommendations concerning how to expand public elementary education to all people.

The commission's report estimated that only $4\frac{1}{2}\%$ of school age children were not attending classes. However, it was not very optimistic about the quality or quantity of education received. The commission found that most children left school at age eleven and that only 5% of the poorer classes received any education after age thirteen. Although it had no way to evaluate the private schools, the commission felt that these schools were less efficient than those which were members of the public school system.¹⁹ Its recommendations were as follows:

~~1. That~~ boards of education in counties and boroughs with population of more than forty thousand be established.

That these boards have the power to levy taxes.

That they examine children in reading, writing, and arithmetic and pay grants according to results.

That their powers not be extended to appointment of teachers or interference with management. The commission thus hoped to avoid a religious controversy.²⁰

~~2. The~~ government turned down all the proposals of the commission, but Robert Lowe, head of the education department, was quite impressed with the idea of payment by results. It was adopted and used by all schools with the result that the standards were raised in schools and the teachers were given a great incentive to work. However, this system was geared to the needs of the average child and caused the slower children to be dragged along while the faster ones were ignored.²¹

After studying the events following the Industrial Revolution, one can infer that the education of the English people assisted them in acquiring improved social conditions. The widespread use of newspapers to mold public opinion indicated the

level of education and the important role which the news median played in the country.

All the events leading to some particular reform were closely related, but in every case education played, directly or indirectly, a role in the events. For instance, the Corn Laws were a major issue in the early nineteenth century. The newspapers frequently discussed them; therefore, because the people were able to read, they developed an interest in the laws. After the crop failure of 1819, the people rioted. The newspaper account of the violence in St. Peter's Fields convinced many middle-class citizens of the need for political reform.

Soon after the riot, a political party, since it was politically expedient, included reform as a part of its platform. In 1830, the party, the Whigs, was elected on a reform platform. When a reform bill failed the second time, riots broke out because the people were aware of the deliberations in Parliament. When the bill was presented the third time, it passed.

The reform bill enlarged the franchise and made more people eligible to serve in Commons. Thus when a new Parliament was elected, more middle-class members were elected than ever before, and they were soon passing legislation which was favorable to the disenfranchised classes.

NOTES

- ¹ George Macaulay Trevelyan, English Social History (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1942), p. 477.
- ² C. Arnold Anderson, and Mary Jean Bowman, eds., Education and Economic Development (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965) p. 348.
- ³ Ibid., p. 162.
- ⁴ George Macaulay Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1927), p. 163.
- ⁵ E.L. Woodward, The Age of Reform: 1815-1870 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949) p. 456.
- ⁶ Trevelyan, Social History, op. cit., p. 480.
- ⁷ Woodward, op. cit., p. 28.
- ⁸ Frederick Dietz, A Political and Social History of England (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947) p. 502.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 504.
- ¹⁰ Harry J. Carroll and others, The Development of Civilization (Chicago: Scott Foresman and Company, 1962), p. 70.
- ¹¹ Woodward, op. cit., p. 429-430.
- ¹² Paul Monroe, ed., Cyclopedia of Education (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925) I, p. 461.
- ¹³ Woodward, op. cit., p. 459.
- ¹⁴ Alfred Leroy Burt, The British Empire and Commonwealth from the American Revolution (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1956) p. 353.
- ¹⁵ Dietz, op. cit., p. 34.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., p. 36.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

18 Woodward, op. cit., p. 460.

19 Ibid., p. 462.

20 Ibid., p. 462.

21 Ibid., p. 463.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, C. Arnold and Mary Jean Bowman. Education and Economic Development. Chicago: Aldene Publishing Company, 1965.
- Balfour, Graham. The Education Systems of Great Britain and Ireland. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903.
- Burt, Alfred Leroy. The British Empire and Commonwealth from the American Revolution. Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1965.
- Carroll, Harry J. The Development of Civilization. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 2 vols., 1962.
- Darotich, D. "Some Effects of Stalinist Industrilization of the Soviet School," The New Review
- Dietz, Frederick. A Political and Social History of England. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947.
- Frankel, M.L. "Education for Economic Challenges of Today and Tomorrow," Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 49:52, November, 1965.
- Good, H.G. A History of Western Education. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960.
- Hearnshaw, F.H.C. and others. Dictionary of English History. London: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1928.
- Hunt, William and Reginald Land Poole, eds. The Political History of England. London: Longmans, Green and Company Ltd., 12 vols., 1926.
- Lodge, Henry Cabot, ed. The History of Nations. New York: P.F. Collier and Son, Company, 25 vols., 1932.
- Monroe, Paul, ed. A Cyclopedia of Education. New York: The Macmillan Company, 5 vols., 1925.
- Pipkin, Charles W. Social Politics and Modern Democracies. New York: The Macmillan Company, 2 vols., 1931.
- Stephin, Leslie and Sidney Lee, eds. Dictionary of National Biography. London: Oxford University Press, 21 vols., 1950.

Traill, H.D. and J.S. Mann, eds., Social England. London: Cassell and Company, Limited, 6 vols., 1904.

Trevelyan, George Macaulay. British History in the Nineteenth Century (1782-1901). New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1927.

_____. English Social History. London: Longmans Green and Company., 1942.

Woodward, E.L. The Age of Reform, 1815-1870. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949.

Young, G.M., ed. Early Victorian England, 1830-1865. London: Oxford University Press, 2 vols., 1951.