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History of Ideas
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Nassau Senior, the Whig leaders' counsellor in the age
of laissez-faire.
Period considered 1829 – 1836.



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Abstract.

This paper concerns the ideas on society, policies and economic thoughts on Ireland before the cataclysmal famine of the 1840s. Senior, classified as one of the classical economists, elaborated these in the period 1829 – 1836, thus during the period of Parliamentary reform. As a trusted counsellor of the Whig governments, Senior advocated measures opposite to the common notions of *laissez-faire*. His basic ideas are contrasted to those of Malthus concerning economics and, in particular, the population doctrine that Senior never believed in and in its crudest form refuted. Senior regarded Malthus' doctrine as devastating to governmental policies. Senior wanted an efficient and strong government. Moreover, Senior evolved ideas, in fact a strategy, for raising Ireland out of her common destitution instead of institutionalizing poor laws. This strategy embraced Catholic emancipation, education, public investments in infrastructure and emigration. His ideas, and proposals akin to Senior's, are related to the political discourse of the day, which took a more common view of *laissez-faire* during the period considered. Nevertheless, there is consistency in his ideas on government, public investments and *laissez-faire*. Senior cannot be described as anything other than an early liberal and a classical economist and, hence, an advocator of *economic laissez-faire*. This paper underlines the need for a clear distinction between *economic laissez-faire* as a concept and the concept of *political laissez-faire*, whereas the former concerns thoughts on economics and the latter is related to the notion of the impassivity of the period of today's discourse.

Keywords: History of ideas, classical economists, liberalism, Senior, Ireland, Malthus' population doctrine.

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1. Introduction.

The reason I chose this subject at this particular time was not that I had reached a level of knowledge that made it useful to suppose some requirements of an ongoing discourse, pursue facts, try them in this inquiry, and neatly present the outcome. On the contrary, my choice was a result of sheer ignorance, a few, as it seemed to me, contradictory fragments of information and, of course, a good share of personal curiosity. When I read about the Victorian era in a history book a few years ago, [Victorian England, by Seaman London 1973] I came across an excerpt by ‘the economist Nassau Senior’ describing the unsanitary and squalid slums in Manchester in 1837, where miserable and cholera-infested tenements were erected on jobbery.¹ Later I found Senior described as an exponent of *laissez-faire* and one of the classical economists, however, rather obscured. These samples seemed inconsistent. As I pursued more information, I learnt that Senior ‘refuted Malthus population doctrine’ and above all, was one of the foremost, if not the foremost English advocates of measures aimed at raising Ireland out of her utter destitution including proposals of considerable public investments and this around 15 years before the great, cataclysmal famine. Consider the concepts and their apparent inconsistencies – a classical economist and *laissez-faire*, opposing the Malthusian population doctrine; moreover, an Englishman and a governmental advisor during the age of *laissez-faire* as an indefatigable advocator of the oppressed Catholic population of Ireland, proposing public investments. Even at a profound level of ignorance like mine, I believe many of us recall certain sombre facts concerning the British oppression of Ireland and the disastrous famine in the late 1840s. Furthermore, especially we who once attended courses in political economics recall the line of development after Adam Smith: The classical economists Thomas Malthus, David Ricardo and then John Stuart Mill, though not Nassau Senior. Ricardo is firmly recalled as the man who formulated the infamous ‘iron’ law of wages based on Malthus population doctrine – the long run equilibrium of wages at subsistence level. Although details may fade over time the notion of classical economics, based on this law and the idea of non-interference of government, has a firm grasp on our minds. This is certainly a result of the canon, and were there a clear discord we should surely

¹ The excerpt ‘ .. In general the streets of these suburbs are unpaved, with a dung-heap or ditch in the middle; the houses are built back to back, without ventilation or drainage, and whole families are limited to a corner of a cellar or garret’ is taken from a letter dated April 2, 1837, *SWE*, p 25. The letter is a part of his severely criticised opposition of the ten hours bill, but in this particular context, it is a point that his anger concerned quarters in Manchester named Irish Town, Ancoats and Little Ireland, i.e. the wretched hovels of poor Irish labour immigrants, thus those on the lowest rung of the social ladder.

have remembered this. These facts settled the matter, and I embarked for a survey that would be wider than I had anticipated. I found consistency in the underlying thoughts and this consistency is what I want to convey. However, I also gained some other experiences that have influenced this paper.

Oblivion is certainly not the only reason for obscurity. When fateful events take place later, these events and their repercussions tend to overshadow other facts of a certain epoch. Perhaps this propensity is reinforced since events of the past often are described in a fragmented way – in the fields of economic doctrines, the fields of social history, and, in particular, intellectual history. Each branch focuses on its own issues, and, at best, a context on a rather general level is provided. Seldom, though, are these different fields integrated. The political historian often refers to the actions taken by government or other assemblies or bodies of interest. The one interested in economic doctrines naturally links the development between past and actual thinking; the historian specialised in social history naturally pays interest to different social reforms but little to the background of the economic doctrines of the day, as it seems. The intellectual historian perhaps confines himself more to the long discourse of centuries and less to the ‘contingent’ and trivial context of the day. Like other human beings, historians in separate fields seem to follow the herd. As time elapses, information, written and rewritten, grows distorted and focused on the major events. Other voices of the past fall silent or get a casual and easily biased consideration; perhaps a piquant detail is magnified. Maybe these customs would suffice for a theoretical study in the spirit of Foucault.

In the case of Senior, there is an evident difference in books concerning economic doctrines or social history – in the first case he is described as a farsighted economist in some fields, however sometimes mistaken or obscured. In the second case, social history, he is often seen as a crude exponent of the *laissez-faire* creed. These almost opposite opinions are probably reinforced by some later events of the past that block out motives and, at least parts of, the context in Senior’s involvement.² There is another implication too. Senior occurs in three fields of British History – the history of political economics, social history and political history. In the latter, he is rarely mentioned, in passing or in a few notes, when mighty men

² Senior was one of those behind the disputed Poor Law Amendment in 1834. The reformed Poor Laws led to several scandals, among them the Andover scandal in 1846. – see e.g. www.historyhome.co.uk/peel/poorlaw/andover, checked 2006-04-07

came to fateful decisions. The supply of sources is by necessity more limited than if I had chosen a domestic subject. I touch upon this further in the following section.

The main aim of my inquiry concerns Senior's interest in Ireland at the height of one of the transitional periods in British History – the years around Parliamentary Reform and its given clash with the old order in the wake, but there was also a growing sentiment that the state should not interfere. Political economics, thoughts on society, trade and labour and politics are tightly interwoven. In Senior's ideas on Ireland, all these fields are involved. It is not possible to discuss Senior's thinking on Irish poverty and political distress and passing over his thinking on social, political issues or economics in contrast to particularly Malthus'. Moreover, Senior had, or rather developed, close relations to prominent leaders of the Whigs, also members of the Cabinet. This does not mean that Senior's opinions by necessity coincided with theirs or that the Cabinet accepted his ideas, but he became a trusted advisor on special issues – a *counsellor*.

As mentioned, the political climate and the debate changed during the years under consideration, 1829 – 1836. This fact necessitates a broad contextual description, maybe broader than usual, especially since it concerns the political history of another country. After this introduction, I return to some of the problems of limited accessibility and other methodological issues and the research concerning Senior. After a brief presentation of Senior and his career, I continue to a 'macro-perspective' containing a general historical overview: war, population, scarcity, and the historical relations between Great Britain and Ireland and a brief overview of notions on society, population, Malthus and *laissez-faire*. In the following section – the 'micro-perspective' I touch deeper on the notions on religion, poverty, aiming at shedding light on one of the influential strands of thoughts concerning poverty and related main economic views. Moreover, I touch on the tradition and main inputs of the classical economists at the beginning of the 19th century. The micro-perspective contains also an overview of the Irish agricultural system and the shortcomings of the legal system or rather want of legal system that undoubtedly contributed to the great famines – there were more. Finally, there is an overview of the politicians – Whigs and Tories and some major political events of interest for this paper.

Given the context, I describe Senior's thoughts as a timeline: beginning in 1829 with his controversy with Malthus concerning the latter's population doctrine. In this section, my aim is to cast light on Senior's thoughts on population, politics, and the state of society and

prerequisites of economic growth. The core of his ideas becomes visible in contrast to the views of Malthus. Senior's ideas and opinions on population, productivity and society are the foundations of his reasoning on Ireland. In the section "A Strategy for Ireland" the following documents are discussed – *A Letter to Lord Howick*, 1831, mainly based on economic reasons, which is the document of main interest. This is followed by a contextual interlude concerning the position of the Anglican Church and Parliament, the Irish Church (the Episcopal Church or sometimes also denominated the Established Church – all, however, a 'branch' of the Anglican Church) and Catholic Emancipation, which would cause a constitutional crisis. Senior wrote the last document of greater interest for this paper in 1835 as an immediate result of these constitutional events. In *On National Property* he expounds the right and the duty of Government to administer property, belonging to the Episcopal Church and the Universities – the public good versus private interests and a few constitutional matters. The last section before the summary concerns another contextual interlude – the background of the English poor laws and how the ideas on poor laws spilt over to Ireland, followed by a proposal closely akin to those Senior suggested in *A Letter to Lord Howick*. This proposal, prepared by Senior's close comrade in arms in Ireland, Richard Whately, shows the dimensions of some basic remedial suggestions Senior had advocated five years earlier. In *A Letter to Lord John Russell*, Senior gives his opinions on a few particular issues on economics and policy of interest for this paper. Finally, the proposed measures and their treatment by the Cabinet are to be seen as a test of the public of the ideas Senior put forward in a *Letter to Howick*. My intention is also to show the tendencies in the *Zeitgeist* since the parliamentary reform and around ten years before the cataclysmal famine in Ireland.

In the concluding section, my aim is to set Senior in juxtaposition with his context to reach the gist of his thoughts on society and economics. In doing so, I refer to his *Three lectures on the rate of wages...* at the time of the Swing riots at the beginning of the period of my inquiry and at the end, a renewed correspondence with Lord Howick in which Senior opposes the latter's view of political precedence of the landlords at the cost of their tenants. I make also use of an early report from Ireland in 1819, mainly concerning the Church question. Finally, there are a few reflections and an account for a few minor findings.

2. Research on Senior, Methodological issues.

Senior belongs to the history of economic doctrines and the Anglo-Saxon social history. Senior is frequently mentioned in standard works concerning these subjects. It is a somewhat more cumbersome task to survey the recent status of research. The above fields concern separate branches. They tend to pay less attention to the complicated overall picture. As for main works, Marian Bowley published her dissertation on Senior as an economist in 1937. Mandler declared in 1990 that Senior deserves a modern biography, since both Bowley's *Senior and the Classical Economists* and Levy, *Senior* are out of date.³ Besides the domestic systems and libraries Libris and KB, SUB and the Swedish <http://www.diva-portal.org/> I have also searched the websites: <http://www.lib.umi.com/dissertations/> and www.theses.com available at Kungliga Biblioteket (the Royal Library) using Senior combined with search tags such as economy, economist, poor laws, and liberalism without any relevant hit. Moreover, www.econlib.org/library adds no new works on Senior. This outcome does not preclude that there is no ongoing research on Senior in specialised fields, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world, but no recent works seem to have been published.

Limited accessibility to relevant sources of information is a problem. One consequence is for instance the assessment of the use of Senior's language, which cannot be compared with the level of his adversaries. In *A Letter to Lord Howick*, concerning the Irish slough, he suggested a transfer of property from the Anglican Church to the Catholic Church. As a response to this, *the Quarterly Review*, a Tory-influenced magazine, is reported to have directed fierce assaults on Senior and his proposals. Access to this magazine would have shed more light on the level of the debate and some prevalent notions in society. Were the arguments used against Senior's proposal only on the religious level, and if so Protestantism versus inferior Catholicism, or did the arguments also embrace a defence of the ascendancy in general and British supremacy in particular? These questions I have had to leave out. It may be erroneous to assume that today's use of language is valid as a standard.

Now, however, a main aim of my inquiry is to uncover Senior's basic ideas underlying his devotion to the Irish cause. The Malthusian controversy provides a great deal of valuable information since Senior and Malthus exchanged in all six letters on their views on the checks

³ Mandler, p 135 note 35

of population. In this correspondence, a great deal of Senior's basic ideas on government is exposed. The main documents of interest for this inquiry are as mentioned his programme concerning Ireland depicted in *A Letter to Lord Howick*, and also *On National Property*, whereas the former may be classified mainly as seen from an economic standpoint and the latter as a political pamphlet as time has elapsed. The triggering cue was the dismissal of the Whig cabinet in 1834 and the long-lasting deadlock of the Irish Catholic emancipation. The literature on these issues has thoroughly dealt with the referred political events and, therefore, Senior's reasoning and, actually his mood seem perfectly plain in this context.

As touched upon in the preceding section there seems to be an apparent dichotomy between two fields of history - social history in general and the history of economic doctrines. Surely, during the actual decades the course of events, some notions and decisions must ethically upset people of today. However, these events and the narratives elucidate the core difference of dealing with historical subjects – the capacity of suspending our own prejudices and convictions, our own desires in the interest of communication as once expressed by Ricouer. Moreover, I have found the thesis useful Ricouer holds that a narrative conclusion must be *acceptable* rather than *predictable* as, a critical and an inspiring tool in reading historical textbooks books concerning the different branches.⁴

3. Nassau William Senior Briefly (1790 – 1862).

Education and family.

Senior had a somewhat unusual background. His family was probably of Spanish – Jewish descent. A few family details convey the general conditions of the day. His grandfather made a fortune in the West Indian sugar trade. His father, though, was an Anglican clergyman. Nassau Senior grew up as one of eleven siblings of whom eight reached adult age. Unlike his parents, he raised only two children. He received an upper class education at Eton. He left Eton in 1807, after having been granted a *demyship* at Magdalen College where he studied the usual subjects, mainly classics.⁵ There is one incident of interest from this period in this context. Called to the final examination for the BA in spring 1811, he caused a major embarrassment to his father, the clergyman; Senior passed the classics but failed in theology. Because of this, a lifelong friendship arose when the few years elder Richard Whately,

⁴ Ricouer, p 295 and 277

⁵ A demyship was a twofold award – a scholarship and after graduation a fellowship was granted when vacant, Levy II, p 30 note 48.

graduated at Oriel College, coached him for some weeks in theology. Senior graduated in January 1812. Shortly afterwards he was appointed fellow of Magdalen College.

It is not possible to carry through an inquiry concerning Senior without mentioning Richard Whately. They were brother in arms concerning Irish affairs and often collaborated within the Whig sphere. Richard Whately chose to be an Anglican priest but was interested in economics. He held the Oxford chair of political economy for a short period after Senior until the Whigs appointed him archbishop of Dublin in 1831. However, Whately gained also a reputation due to his works *Elements of Logic* and *Elements of Rhetoric* in 1826 and 1828. He supported the ideas of Catholic emancipation. He tried in vain to reconcile people belonging to the two Churches.⁶

Professional and social life, appointments.

Senior chose a secular profession: the barrister's mission. He became a member of Lincoln Inn and a renowned barrister, Sugden, specialised in conveyancing accepted him as pupil. When Sugden took office as master in the Chancery, the court of the Lord Chancellor, Senior acquired the practice. He became barrister in 1819. In appendix one, there is an overview of the English judicial system – the role of the four Inns and the legal system. As is shown in the following sections, there was social unrest in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars and a growing interest in politics and political economics. James Mill recommended Senior for a membership of the Political Economy Club, where he was elected member in 1823. This club also attracted some politicians among them a liberal Whig, Lord Althorp.⁷ In another club mainly attracting artists and intellectuals, he met another of the influential Whigs – Lord Lansdowne.⁸ In 1825, the newly established chair of political economy at Oxford was given to Senior for the tenure of five years.⁹ He was re-elected for a second tenure in 1847. In 1831, he was appointed professor of political economy at King's College, but he had to renounce this appointment after pressure from the Anglican establishment due to his proposals concerning Ireland.

⁶ Britannica Online, Whately, 2004-10-10

⁷ Mandler, p 91

⁸ Levy II, p 50

⁹ Levy II, p 50-51. Among the conditions were - the tenure was for five years but a later re-election was possible. The holder must be graduated at Oxford, the annual fee was £ 100, and a certain number of lectures was to be read and at least one published – see Levy II note 107.

In 1832, the Whig government appointed Senior as a secretary of the Poor Law Inquiry.¹⁰ Finally, Lord Melbourne, now the leader of the Whig Cabinet, appointed him as a Master in Chancery, the special court, a well salaried position – £2.500 a year, in 1836.¹¹ Senior held this position until he retired. Senior received other official assignments, among them the Commission to Inquire into the Conditions of the Handloom Weavers in 1837.¹² In the later part of his career, he was elected member of the Royal Commission on Popular Education in 1857. The year before his demise, he was selected as President of the Education Department of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science.¹³ From 1841, he contributed regularly to the *Edinburgh Review*.¹⁴

Senior's contribution to economics.

Senior belongs to the period of the classical economists. In the early decades of the 19th century, the classical economists developed the first coherent model of political economy on the framework of Adam Smith, the moral philosopher. Still, however, political economy was not a science. It would last to the turn of the century until political economy had detached itself from moral philosophy and the name of this branch changed to political economics, subdivided into different special fields. Albeit Smith laid the cornerstone of political economy, he had studied, and was influenced by, the French physiocrats. In the early 19th century, the British economists were the leading theorists. They had assuredly rich inputs to their considerations: the protracted war with France, fluctuating value of currency and rates, rivalry on resources, colonial trade, mechanization of agriculture, tariff protection, in particular the Corn Laws, overpopulation and poverty. Those who contributed to the development had disparate backgrounds, but what they brought about were theories covering the major field of economics. One only has to regard for instance the content of a textbook – value theory, monetary theory, and theory on international trade – absolute and comparative advantages, theories of growth and so on. Senior contributed to several of these fields. He regarded political economy as a positive science, based on certain postulates on rational human behaviour. Hence, political economy in Senior's version is a deductive science. As a theorist, he is recognised for contributions to the theory of rent, capital and interest - interest

¹⁰ The full name of this inquiry was the *Royal Commission for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*,

¹¹ Levy II, p 101 and note 205.

¹² Levy II, p 118

¹³ Bowley, p 22 - 23

¹⁴ Three of these articles concern Ireland. One of them, titled Ireland in 1843, published in 1844 is a rhetorically scathing criticism of the British policy towards Ireland, thus just before the great famine. The later two articles, concern the Irish distress and its relief.

as a compensation for abstinence of consumption. As mentioned, he is not usually present in people's minds among Malthus, Ricardo and J S Mill. How important Senior is in the history of economics depends, of course, on who is the assessor. Joseph Schumpeter, one of the great and inevitably controversial economists of the 20th century, defines Senior at the same level as Ricardo primarily due to the former's view on the method on empirical postulates and deductions, but also due to his contributions to the theory of money, capital and interest and as theorist in general.¹⁵ Senior was involved in political development and participated to a certain extent in the debate of the day. Some of these issues have contributed to his epithet as a crude exponent of the *laissez-faire* creed. One of these contributions is his opposition on defective data against the ten hours bill – the bill intended to limit the working day to ten hours.¹⁶ Senior as well as other classical economists offered rich spoils for Karl Marx, in Senior's case particularly his opposition of the ten hours bill and his theory of interest.

Sundries.

Senior gained influence in France. Several of his lectures on economy were translated to French by his acquaintance Arrivabene.¹⁷ One of his closer friends was the younger liberal aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville (*'De la démocratie en Amérique'*) with whom he exchanged letters concerning political and other actual issues of the day. Besides his interests in economy, he wrote reviews on literary subjects albeit his academic style made him less successful.¹⁸ In the later part of his life, Senior interviewed many of the influential of his time, among them Thiers and Guizot. He published some of these conversations. He also wrote journals based on his extensive journeys. The reports are deposited in European libraries, i.e. the Swedish Royal Library (Kungliga Biblioteket).¹⁹

4 The Macro perspective

4.1 The epoch in general, Great Britain

It is hardly necessary to remind ourselves about the fateful events that took place in the late 18th century conceptual as well as factual. Maybe never before have notions and factual historical events been so swiftly and closely intertwined: the enlightenment and the

¹⁵ Schumpeter, p 483-485

¹⁶ His opposition was, according to Bowley, based on a sound logical principle on the profitability of the last marginal hours, but the values of the variables were taken from inadequate sources, Bowley, p 256

¹⁷ www.1911encyclopedia.org ,

¹⁸ www.1911encyclopedia.org.,

¹⁹ For example. look up Senior in KB's library system, Regina.

Napoleonic wars that followed in their wake, the colonial wars, the struggle for global hegemony on trade and local independence, and, finally, growing industrialisation – all amplified by an underlying population growth. The latter, reinforced by increasing productivity, caused unemployment and poverty and social unrest among the masses, migration and riots, and for a little minority, the merchants, the factory owners, the landlords, a rapid growth of sometimes fabulous wealth and prosperity. Between these two extremes, a small middle class emerged, a class that would claim political influence.

As the effects of individual behaviour became discernible on the level of society, two contemporary philosophers observed that the selfish, individual behaviour of many tends to neutralise each other for the common good. They drew related and yet different conclusions, the aged Kant in *Zum Ewigen Friede*, 1795, and Adam Smith in his well-known *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1776, which became the groundwork of classical economics.²⁰

In the 18th century, Great Britain had grown to a colonial empire of considerable dimensions. In fact, the British Crown now claimed its hegemony over India, Australia, and North America. World trade meant now more than European.²¹

The Napoleonic wars, from 1793 to the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, demanded vast human and financial resources. The wars impeded economic as well as intellectual development in Great Britain. The wars were partly financed by increased taxation, partly by increased incurring of debts, something that later led to several financial backlashes. In the aftermath of the war and the indebtedness, international bankers such as Baring and Rothschild flourished.²²

Agriculturally, the cultivation improved by introducing better fodder crops and threshing machines that increased productivity considerably.²³ It has been estimated that the agricultural

²⁰ Adam Smith as a moral philosopher wrote also *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1759, where man is described as a social creature, gifted with compassion as well as empathy. This view seems contradictory to the assumed selfish behaviour according to his groundwork of economics, and subsequently this seemingly contradiction has been much disputed – 'Das Adam Smith Problem' in Schumpeter's vocabulary. The latter, however, finds consistency after his inquiry into the development of Scottish Moral Philosophy. See Schumpeter 129 – 130.

²¹ Trevor, p 38

²² Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, p 131-132..

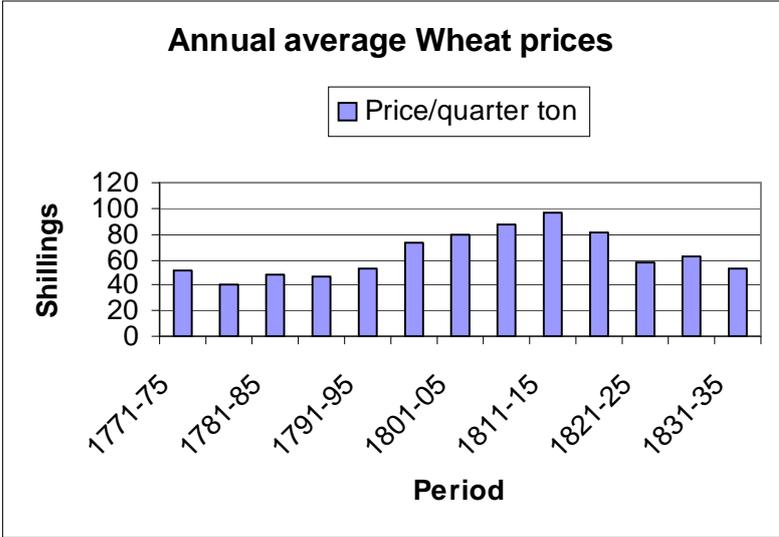
²³ Trevor, p 15

output increased by 40 to 50 % during the 18th century albeit no accurate figures are available. But the population grew faster.

Over 70 years (1761-1831) not a full lifetime today, the population *more than doubled*, in fact 2.1 times, and that in spite of emigration and wars.²⁴ With increasing population and likewise increasing agricultural productivity, the given outcome was an increasing migration of destitute people to suburbs of towns and cities.

Such a rapid growth had to lead to social unrest and depressions reinforced the difficulties. One example was the disputed Corn Laws, an important symbol of the old order. The aim was to maintain the prices of grain and rent of land. A graph may better convey the fragile conditions of the masses. The Corn Laws were in effect double-edged; during 1816-19, the high price level provoked severe riots around towns. When the prices fell in the twenties agricultural distress emerged.

Table 1 Source: Hobsbawm, Captain Swing p 30.



The edge was sharp; small oscillations in the price of corn caused misery for either the urban or the rural working classes. As the agricultural productivity increased and the rural population continued to grow, the rural market of labour collapsed. Contractual periods of the rural worker shrank from the traditional one-year term to sometimes a month or less. At the turn of the century, the rural worker had become a casual worker who intermittently had to

²⁴ Data compiled from Trevor, p 8

fall back on poor relief. In England and Wales, poor relief was regulated by law, briefly described below. A voluntary system was maintained in Scotland, and in Ireland, the destitute had to hope for the mercy of charity.

Since the English Poor Laws came in for harsh criticism and played an important part in the discourse an overview of the system is necessary. Laws regulated poor relief in England since the turn of 16th century. The parish was responsible for distributing poor relief and financed by the ratepayers of the parish – the vestry. Overseers were responsible for setting indigents at work. Relief was based on the settlement principle, which caused disputes between different parishes on which one was to be charged. A pauper would be returned to his/her home parish. A system unfolded around this principle e.g. the length of an apprenticeship when members of the family of a pauper would be regarded as settled in the parish. How the different ways and their related notions of providing poor relief were shaped, is, however, of greater importance in this context. A parish or a union of parishes could erect a poorhouse for supporting impotent and aged people i.e. indoor relief. For the able-bodied and their families, two separate systems evolved, indoor and outdoor relief. The former is related to the ‘workhouse test’ concept. For those who refused to move into a workhouse, the overseers could deny relief. Different systems with more or less degrees of rigidity and harshness developed – from deterrence, reflecting ideas of the indolent pauper, to ideas of self-supporting. The other system, outdoor relief, meant that the relief was distributed without the involvement of the workhouse. The overseers or appointed guardians had the task of finding work for the paupers in the neighbouring parish/es, supplementing the wages from the rates. A practice, though not a legal part of the system, was a decision by a local magistrate (the Speenhamland decision) to set a fixed amount of wheat or bread depending on family size. If the wage was not sufficient, then the vestry paid the difference according to the ‘bread-scale’. This model and other similar became widespread.²⁵ This system came in for harsh strictures in the debates in the coming decades.

Although the consequences are obvious of the different practices of providing poor relief, it should be emphasised that with comparatively sinking rural employment, the system equalised the worker and the pauper at a time when classes or, using the contemporary vocabulary, the lower orders, were distinctly separated as was the related notion e.g. on

²⁵ Clark, p 26

moral. This levelling effect probably had an influence on the higher ‘orders’ of the society; thus, those who contemplated society and its weaknesses.

It is easy to describe the shortcomings of the system, although it had perhaps once been well meant. It counteracted migration and thus the productivity. Moreover, the Speenhamland model removed the incentives of market related wages. Instead, the cost of labour was partly transferred from the employer to the vestry, thus the community, the ratepayers. The system was an inheritance of the old order.

Another consequence of the system was that there was a minimum period of a year that a labourer should be employed in a certain parish to be regarded as belonging to that parish, and this did not contribute to yearlong contracts either. As matter of fact, Hobsbawm has described the whole system as ‘a millstone around the necks of all rural classes’ in southern England.²⁶ This is how we may describe the system in secular terms. The system as such was dated, but hardly any contemporary observer would have depicted it as referred above. The whole matter was a matter of the Laws of God. The moral tone is conspicuous in the debate even among the early economists.

When the prices despite tariff protection fell in the 1830s, the increase of productivity and the growth of the rural population aggravated the conditions. It has been estimated that by 1830 the rural worker had to rely on the poor law for at least 15% of his subsistence. The total amount of poor relief per capita was about a quarter below the level of 1815-20.²⁷ By necessity, the accumulated tensions were unleashed at least partly by the Swing riots – revolts are probably a more appropriate description – that were widely spread in England in 1830 and 1831. Agricultural equipment, especially threshing machines were destroyed but stacks (rick-burnings), barns and farms were also attacked in local actions. In addition, the workshops where these machines were produced were occasionally exposed to ‘machine-breaking’.²⁸ These actions were obviously a sign of desperation and a last resort to improve wages.

The question whether population grew faster than the production of the means of subsistence was at the turn of the century, indeed, stuff for Malthus’ considerations of progressive

²⁶ Hobsbawm, *Captain Swing* 47

²⁷ Hobsbawm, *Captain Swing* 76

²⁸ Hobsbawm, *Captain Swing* 198

population growth, but only arithmetical increase of food production. The scarcity of food seemed, in the looming, long run perspective to set the labourers at the subsistence level. Moreover, the fluctuations of wheat prices and their impacts on living conditions gave Ricardo strong motives to develop his marginal analysis.

It was certainly a transition between the old system, *l'ancien regime*, and the painful birth of a modern society. The 19th century in Britain has been described in three intervals of which the two first as 'the period of quiescence', 1800 – 1830, 'the period of Benthamism or Individualism', 1825-1870'.²⁹ These two periods embrace 'the age of laissez-faire', and it is typical that Bentham has been a kind of 'brand' of how British textbooks sometimes today describe this period. Such descriptions are oversimplified, although Bentham's early writings had an influence on different social fields, Trevor for instance states.³⁰ During this transition period, people in Great Britain suffered the worst of the old world as well as the new world. Nevertheless, the great victim was the population of Ireland in the disastrous famines in the 1840s.

The thoughts on poor laws were for a considerable part a moral issue, but also an object of economic thinkers. It must be emphasized, however, that the difference between 'economists' and 'thinkers on economics' were blurred indeed. The notions of mismanagement gave rise to ideas that would support liberalism and create a breeding ground of the early, classical economists, but also induce a moral conflict and a change of paradigms.

4.2 Ireland and her relations to England.

If there had been improvements in agriculture in England, this could hardly be said about Ireland. The major problem though was the political situation. The term 'political situation' is a euphemism of a crude, long-lasting oppression for centuries, frequent uprisings and, likewise, the frequent use of military force to crush the insurrections. From the medieval ages and onwards Ireland as neighbouring isle has been most deplorably treated in the British sphere of interest.

One of the deepest roots to the antagonism between the two groups in Ireland, the Irish-speaking Catholic majority and English-speaking Protestant immigrants or descendants of the

²⁹ Trevor, p 116

³⁰ Trevor, p 116-7, see also Collini, p 8-9 on Bentham's influence.

conquerors is the religious wars in the 17th century. The idea was that the Catholic majority would be compelled to convert to the Episcopal Church by depriving the Catholics mainly of their rights to their own land. The tensions between Northern Ireland and Ireland were a result of this policy. One of the measures of the British Crown was to bring Scottish Presbyterians to settle in Northern Ireland. In certain areas, the Catholic majority had simply to move to designated areas.³¹ Cromwell and the religious and civil wars involved also Ireland. New religion settlement acts were inflicted on the Catholic population. By end of the 17th century, the Catholic population owned only one seventh of the land.³² To this sombre enumeration, it must be added the discriminative laws of succession and education, and trade adopted around the turn of the century – all in order to compel the Catholics to convert. These laws severely restricted a Catholic from inheriting or acquiring land and imbued the relations for about a century.³³

For a long time, however, Catholics as well as Presbyterians had had to pay their tithes to the Established Church and this fact was not changed. The Catholic clergy had to rely on fees for marriages, funerals and voluntary contributions in kind.³⁴ As the vast majority of the Irish people belonged to the Catholic faith and only the few were Anglican, generally belonging to the ruling class, or as it was called the Protestant Ascendancy, the tithe could only be regarded as an extra taxation to the benefit of the ruling minority. This imposition was constantly a ferment in the minds of the Catholic and Presbyterian groups, but it would last until 1831 when serious clashes broke out in the ‘Tithe War’ which ended first in 1834.³⁵

During the late decades in the 18th century, both Catholics and Presbyterians improved their situation, influenced by the Enlightenment as well as the American Revolution. The worst discriminatory laws were repealed or mitigated. Henry Grattan, a moderate politician and Irish national leader, obtained important concessions from the English parliament; among them, he regained a relative, local independence of the Irish parliament in 1782. In 1793 when the war between France and Britain broke out, the political situation altered. The Catholic Church regarded the French Republic with dismay. In the same year, the Irish Parliament passed the Catholic Relief Act. Catholics received limited civil rights: to vote, sit on juries

³¹ Somerset, p 137-40, 145

³² Somerset, p 157, 164

³³ Somerset, p165-167

³⁴ Somerset, p 169 -170

³⁵ McMahan, p 118

and take degrees at Trinity College in Dublin, but they remained barred from holding government and sitting in parliament. In 1791 one association, the 'United Irishmen', dominated by Protestants, was founded in Belfast by a group of middleclass intellectuals striving for reforms influenced by the French Revolution. The association spread like wildfire.³⁶ The situation became aggravated. Serious clashes occurred between groups of the radical United Irishmen and a reactive, mainly Anglican militia of the yeomanry. French interests intervened as well.

There were also other uprisings. In the countryside, there was unrest among the population caused by agricultural discontent and the absence of justice. Secret societies, chiefly among the Catholics, but also among Presbyterians, were organised in the later part of the century. The Catholic societies, such as the 'Defenders' and the 'White Boys', fought against increased rents, rates and enclosures. The methods used were those of rural guerrillas – mutilations of animals, arson and assassinations and there were the inevitable responses by Protestants supporting the yeomanry. In these years the final ingredients created, as it seems, the never-ending witch's dance of social-religious conflicts in Ireland. Unemployment, manslaughter and direct clashes triggered series of bloodshed in 1798. This year the Orange order was instituted.³⁷

In spite of reluctance among the Orangemen, the Ascendancy and political leaders as Grattan, the British prime minister, William Pitt, succeeded in carrying through a union bill in the Irish parliament. The parliament was dissolved in 1801. Instead, the Protestants were assured 100 places in the English parliament.³⁸ Grattan pleaded for Catholic Emancipation in the united parliament in 1805.³⁹

The population in Ireland grew, in fact faster than in England, from the 18th century to the great famine in the 1840s. Typically, figures are neither as easily available nor as precise as for England. In 1785, the Irish population had grown to 4 millions, but it would grow more swiftly. In 1841, the population, mainly rural, was estimated at 8.2 million.⁴⁰ Such a rapid increase could hardly be borne by any mainly agricultural country, but in Ireland, the

³⁶ McMahan, p 101

³⁷ McMahan, p 101-107

³⁸ Somerset, p 212-213

³⁹ Somerset, p 216

⁴⁰ Nationalencyklopedien – the figures before the great famine actually exceed the total population of 1997 – in total 5.3 including 1.7 Northern Ireland.

historical segregation of the Catholic population most likely made the impact worse. According to the census in 1841, 70 per cent of the rural population as a whole consisted of labourers, less prosperous artisans and small holders with less than 5 acres, but, typically, the westernmost counties, Galway, Mayo and Donegal still had a higher proportion of smallholders. These areas were predominantly Catholic, whereas in the east the proportion of larger farms was higher. A rural worker could be paid £1 a quarter or less according to a somewhat earlier inquiry.⁴¹

The prevalent destitution in west and south-west has been described as:

Visitors were appalled by the pauperism finding almost naked denizens of the windowless, chimneyless, furnitureless cabins 'on the extreme edge of human misery'. Sir Walter Scott in 1825 noted the incredible rural poverty in west and south-west. These lower depths represented the base level of the Irish society, people earning nothing by their casual and itinerant work except doubtful tenure of a plot of worthless ground on which to grow potatoes and build a hut of sods. These plots, many of less than an acre, were the final terms in geometrical progression of subdivision of land that literally could not be subdivided further. ...⁴²

In the end, it is also a matter of sentiment. Senior's friend a distinguished liberal, Tocqueville, has given an emotionally charged depiction from his visit to Ireland in 1835.⁴³ His account for the situation completes all the factors of the Irish trauma – pauperism beyond hope, religious-national segregation and another part of the problem, the absentees and their lack of national responsibility.

5 The Micro-perspective in the first decades of the nineteenth century

5.1 Opinions on society and the Poor laws – inputs to political economy. The drive towards 'Christian Political Economy' and the philosopher's contribution.

As was briefly described in the macro-perspective, the social unrest, the strains of the war, of which scarcity was one, propelled the sojourn from the notions of *l'ancien regime* into the painful transition to a newer world. It would be neglectful, however, to jump directly to the rapid development of economics in the hands of the classical economists and, in particular, Senior's interpretation of some problems of interest to this paper. Economics was certainly

⁴¹ Cullen, p 110-111

⁴² McMahon, p114-115

⁴³ See Appendix 2

not a clear-cut issue. It was a thin border, if any, between the laws of Nature and the laws of God. In fact, what people could observe as a consequence of aggregated human behaviour was, indeed, a result of actions made by the decisions of individuals. As mentioned in the macro-perspective, it is conspicuous that the arguments by people chiefly interested in economics were moral, although the one or the other conclusion or recommendation was obviously based on other motives.

There was for many reasons an increasing interest in the subject of political economics – the scarcity can serve as a generic term. The scarcity was an obvious reason shown by a growing population, but which were the underlying causes for people multiplying to the limits of starvation? One was, hardly unexpectedly, the notion of the lack of moral in particular, of course, among individuals of the lower classes. However, the observations of social behaviour generated other notions and a new angle of the study of society. One of the ideas, mainly on a philosophical level, was that the severe regimentation of the government was the reason for much misery as expressed by William Godwin.⁴⁴ In his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, first edition published in 1793, he condemns all government interference with individual judgement. When the reasons of individuals were allowed to prevail, the problems of society would vanish and moral grow to the benefit of the whole society eradicating problems caused by ignorance.⁴⁵ Albeit the economists basically held moral assumptions on human behaviour, or at least they said so, they elaborated models further on the assumptions on rational behaviour and observable issues such as supply and demand of commodities. The restraining effects of the Corn Laws on society were analysed by the tools developed by Ricardo, but the Corn Laws were also to a considerable degree the symbol of the old order and in the interest of the landed class.

Although an early disciple of Adam Smith had criticised the Poor Laws before the turn of the century on the grounds that the workhouse system ‘distorted’ the market, the real problem became obvious when Malthus published the first issue of his *Essay on Principles of Population* in the last years of the 18th century and the first of the 19th century. Malthus, 1766 – 1834, published further versions of his essay. Malthus also contributed considerably to political economics in other fields, but his *Essay on Population* is beyond all comparison the

⁴⁴ Due to his ideas, Godwin should deserve more attention than just being Wollstonecraft’s spouse in today’s teaching at Swedish colleges.

⁴⁵ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, section 3, Political philosophy; Goodwin was awarded a sinecure by the Whig Government in 1833. <http://plato.stanford.edu>, date 2005-08-13.

most well known work of Malthus. I will return to his last version of the essay in relation to Senior. The widely known thesis is, however, that population tends to increase in geometrical proportion while food production can increase only arithmetically. Actually, he predicted that population will double every twenty fifth year unless checked. Eventually, food would be a scantier necessity and misery would follow. The intrinsic power of his thesis was immense, since all the requisites were available – scarcity, fast growth of the population, actually the lower orders of society, but the hinted inevitability contributed to impassivity. The essay was *nota bene*, a rejoinder to William Godwin who certainly held the opposite view.⁴⁶ Malthus' *Essay* in different versions literally brought about a clash with the Christian commandment:

Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl in the air.⁴⁷

Hitherto the growth of population had been regarded as a sign of economic growth or, at any rate, not as a disadvantage. The protracted war amplified the scarcity of the means of subsistence; the idea widely influenced the society in general.

Malthus concluded in his first edition of the *Essay* that poor relief might trigger a poor man 'with little or no prospect of being able to support a family in independence' to raise a family.⁴⁸ In his second issue of the *Essay*, in 1803, he reached the conclusion that the established workhouse system and, hence, the poor laws should be abolished as an obstacle to improvement. One of his seemingly bleak proposals was that the parish should not support illegitimate and deserted children. His hope was that when the poor should realise the absence of compulsory relief they should accept the situation as Christians.⁴⁹ He would echo his opinion on the repeal of the poor laws in the following editions of his *Essay*. This raised a moral debate that would have reverberations within the Church and in the society in general in the years to come.

Once the war was over in 1815, the discussion was renewed in the climate of the severe conditions of life and among many discussing Malthus' conclusions, there was one Church leader, John Bird Sumner. He had held different positions and one of them as teacher at Eton

⁴⁶ Poynter, p 110

⁴⁷ Bible, Genesis 1:28 – quoted from Hilton, p 3.

⁴⁸ Poynter, p, 152

⁴⁹ Poynter, p 156-157

where he had tutored Senior.⁵⁰ In 1816, however, Sumner had found reason to reconsider the gospel. He declared in his *Treatise on the Records of Creation* that the divine order and intention of the laws of nature was not to provide indolence, but virtue and exerting one's faculties under adverse circumstances. Actually, the law of increase necessitated a society of unequal treatment in which each man was placed {note the expression: one's 'station in life'} by the divine Providence to refine his virtue and faculties. The scarcity of this vile world ensured that life would not be a dreary void, he professed. Hence, the inevitable poverty can be honourable and comfortable; but *indigence*⁵¹ can only be pitiable and is usually contemptible, he asserted.⁵² With this description he had ranked and motivated each order of society, but those on the lowest rung of the social ladder deserved only disdain due to their lack of providence and ambition – a description corresponding to the *lumpenproletariat* in Marx' terminology.

As for poor laws, Sumner's ideas concurred with Malthus'. Poor laws were counteractive and should be limited, although gradually, and replaced with enlightened charity, education etc. He was certainly not alone. The revaluation spread also to Scotland and the Presbyterian Church and a certain Dr.Chalmers, but it took a somewhat different shape. Chalmers wrote in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1818 on the English Poor Laws in which he claimed that, in fact, these laws had created their own demand. It was a highly moral approach. The Scot Chalmers concluded that the legal system set aside industry and morality, not forgetting charity. The voluntariness of the Scottish, Presbyterian system would encourage the moral of both givers and receivers, he professed. Givers would increase their benevolence and the receivers would improve their industriousness.⁵³ Chalmers, however, went much further than that. He may be the most distinct example of how religion and thoughts on economics unfolded together in the public discourse in the 20s and 30s. In 1821, he published his thoughts in *Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns* and took it upon himself to inquire into the conditions of England in 1822. In 1823, he was appointed the holder of the chair of Moral Philosophy and Theology at the old and traditional University of St Andrews. Later, in 1828 he took the chair of Theology in Edinburgh. Moreover, he began to give lectures in the subject of economics. In 1832, he

⁵⁰ Levy II, p 26- 27.

⁵¹ The difference between poverty and indigence may need further elucidation. According to Merriam – Webster Online: *Indigence* is a level of poverty in which real hardship and deprivation are suffered and comforts of life are wholly lacking. *Poverty* is described as the state of one who lacks the usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. Bentham, however, defined *indigence* not only as destitute but also *unable to or unable for labour in his Essay on the Poor laws*, in 1793, – see Poynter p 119.

⁵² Poynter, p 229 - 230

⁵³ Poynter, p 234-237

had written a treatise, titled *On Political Economy, in connexion with the Moral State and Moral Prospects of Society*.⁵⁴ Chalmers took the gloomy view that economic progress was impossible in opposition to Adam Smith's faith in economic progress. Nobody, neither governments nor individuals, could create employment. Manufacturers could supply only their own products. The equivalent of the produced amount must come from elsewhere. All branches of production except agriculture would inevitably lead to oversupply – a state that was not lamentable since a stationary state of population and wealth is likely to be a happier state than a progressive one as Chalmers asserted in his *On Political Economy* heavily influenced by Malthus.⁵⁵

Not everyone within the Church however shared the idea that the Poor Laws created poverty. Edward Copleston, a liberal Tory and bishop of Llandaff, held that the Poor Laws were the result of poverty. Symptoms were confused with causes. Although the Poor Laws were justified in principle, the practice had been too liberal, a tendency that had become clear already by the Gilbert Acts in the late 18th century.⁵⁶ Consequently, he argued that the difference between mere subsistence and comfort had become vague in a letter to a Committee on Poor Laws of the House of Commons.⁵⁷ Before being appointed bishop of Llandaff, Edward Copleston had held different chairs of Oriel College and from 1814 to 1825 he was the provost of Oriel College when Richard Whately, Senior's brother in arms, was a fellow and later a lecturer.⁵⁸

Some authors, among them Hilton and Waterman and Winch, have included these prelates to a group under the concept of *Christian Political Economics* and their thinking as an Anglican – Presbyterian normative social theory.⁵⁹ The increasing interest of political economy as a result of Malthus' *Essay* was not only confined to Great Britain. The *Dublin Review* published a review of a French Catholic economist in 1837. This French economist's aim was to discover the causes of pauperism in Europe and the means of preventing it – thus, with the pronounced link between religion, pauperism and political economy.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Hilton p 57-64

⁵⁵ Hilton p 67

⁵⁶ The Gilbert Acts were non-compulsory - outdoor relief to able-bodied and the impotent were sent to workhouse, Clark 22-23

⁵⁷ Soloway, p 135, 138, Copleston's background see note page 102.

⁵⁸ www.1911encyclopedia.org, see also Mandler p 133 .

⁵⁹ See reference list on literature.

⁶⁰ Waterman, p 12

In Oxford there had been a growing interest of the subject of political economy, but, inevitably, with links to religion and a result after some discussions involving Copleston, the subject was instituted after an endowment by the eccentric and fervently evangelical banker, Henry Drummond, a former MP for the Tory party. The professorship was established in 1825 with an obvious tone of 'Christian Political Economics'. The second chair, most likely as a counterweight, was established in 1827 at London University College and its first holder was McCulloch who was a regular contributor of articles on political economics in the *Edinburgh Review* (1816-37). London University College was the first secular university college in England.⁶¹ In the more pronouncedly secular part of the society, the poor laws and the relief system came in for another type of discussion. Bicheno, a lawyer, expressed clearly moral opinions, however, in terms of survival. He formulated it as 'the law which declares that an inferior should give way to a superior.'⁶²

Bentham, finally, evolved the secular views on poverty. He showed interest in the system of poor relief. With his peculiar gusto for detailed projections he elaborated a workhouse system which he developed in his pamphlets in the last decade of the 18th century; thus about the same time as Malthus penned the first edition of his *Essay*. Although Jeremy Bentham did not take part in the debate in the late 1820s, he passed away in 1832, some of his ideas as well as a few concepts of his are easily recognisable when poor laws were discussed for England and Ireland. His ideas unveil some parts of contemporary notions concerning poverty and the tension between equality and security on which he founded some of his ideas. Briefly, the more distribution of wealth approached equality, the greater the sum of satisfaction or happiness. Consequently, a transfer of for example a sum of money to a poor man from a rich man gives him more happiness than what the rich man loses. Hence, equality is a desirable state since no further transfers would increase total happiness.⁶³ However, the quality of security was the hallmark of a civilised state – without security there is no industry and consequently no secure subsistence. Bentham's solution of this tension was that those who produced in abundance and thus a surplus of subsistence were in need of security of property. Although relief of the indigent was in the hands of the rich, the eventual source was the independent labourer. Since this surplus, produced by the most able, in Bentham's vocabulary 'extra-ability', was limited, relief to the indigent had to be restricted to necessities. This

⁶¹ Seaman, p 70

⁶² Poynter, p 231

⁶³ This formulation was one of the seeds to one of the perhaps most essential, normative criteria in welfare economics, developed by the Italian economist, Vilfredo Pareto, in the decades around the turn of the century.

contains Bentham's principle of *less eligibility*. This concept was the concept used in the debates. The independent labourer could not be asked to bear a burden of relief than the absolutely necessary.⁶⁴ Bentham's ideas aimed to organise large workhouses organised in Pauper Panopticons. The guardians would manage the workhouses under regimentation and set the inmates to work. There are some streaks similar to the modern ideas of 'hygienic management' in the early twentieth century. Bentham wanted to separate different groups of the inmates: the lunatic from the sound, the innocent from the corrupt, the different sexes from a certain age and so on. Medical care and education would be carried out in different departments.⁶⁵

As has been mentioned above, the direction towards an almost unanimous view on poverty, as a moral problem, grew stronger in the wake of the increasing population in the first decades of the 19th century. There were certainly many seeds to Ricardo's formulation of the iron law of wages – long run equilibrium at the subsistence level.

5.2 Main economic views

Before Adam Smith wrote his *Wealth of Nations*, he had painstakingly studied the French physiocrats that developed economic thoughts on agriculture as the principal, but also dominant industry. They, particularly their foremost theorist, Quesney, had formulated many of the contemporary concepts of economics in the middle of the 18th century. The physiocrats were interested in productivity. They advocated a kind of agricultural capitalism and the income from the landed gentry was in the centre of their interest. The landlords were at the top of the ladder. They received the net product – the surplus and that is why the landlords were proposed to be the only tax-payers according to physiocratic theory. Entrepreneurial tenants played an important role in the system that possessed competence and capital to invest. Consequently, there was no room for peasants. To achieve the economic goals the tenants should be provided security by the state – security of tenures and right of possession. Moreover, the physiocrats regarded commerce and manufacturing to be of minor interest. The basic source of wealth was agriculture. Competition and free trade, national and international, on agricultural products would safeguard low costs. In fact, the expression '*laissez-faire, laissez-passer*' was coined in this context.⁶⁶ One of the examples of the physiocratic

⁶⁴ Poynter, p 117-120

⁶⁵ Poynter, p 133-134

⁶⁶ See i.e. Britannica Online and Nationalencyklopedien.

influence was Smith's idea that the most favourable employment of capital was in agriculture. The carrying-trade would withdraw the productive of labour of a particular country to supporting that of foreign countries. Smith found that the colonial trade had less frequent turnovers, was more irregular and uncertain too. It was regrettable that private entrepreneurs found it more for their advantage to employ their capital in distant carrying trades of America and Asia. As mentioned in the macro-perspective, the colonial trade had grown almost incessantly under the protection of monopoly while the European trade had shrunk. Therefore, stated Smith, the trade monopoly had diverted capital and maintained profits to an artificial level. What Smith feared was that the monopoly had broken the natural balance between different branches of economy in Britain, although the other continents had contributed to the prosperity of Europe and, of course, Britain in particular by extending the markets immensely.⁶⁷ Seen in this context the catchword of the physiocrats, '*laissez-fair, laissez-passer*', is perfectly comprehensible as rational behaviour on the level of the state and the outcome of market behaviour would be the desired one. As individuals were consistently assumed rational and calculating, the given outcome was the idea of non-interference by the state. The policy of *laissez-faire* was though, merely appropriate under certain conditions. The government could use tariffs to protect infant industries, but generally, the government's duties were, according to Adam Smith, chiefly defence and justice. Investments and maintenance of necessary infrastructure such as roads and school buildings were governmental responsibilities. Hence, the responsibilities of the government could be summarised to give protection and to 'keep the ring'. There are ambiguities or rather floating boundaries. Services of social importance, but which are too small to create a profit and a sufficient market such as for example education, could be provided or supported by the government, but as Landreth dryly remarks: 'They had little effects on the force of the *laissez-faire* creed'.⁶⁸

Adam Smith introduced another concept that remained an important tool in classical economics: the *wage fund doctrine*. I give account of this concept since it is a recurrent part of Senior's reasoning. The concept seems awkward and could be differently used and sometimes in a confusing way. Perhaps Smith had the seasonal production of an agricultural entity in mind, but it illustrates an important part of the reasoning in classical economics. The time-consuming production process requires previously produced goods, which labourers can use for food, clothing and housing and so on from the start of production until its end. This

⁶⁷ Semmel, p 24-26

⁶⁸ Landreth, p 39-43, the quotation p 42.

capital is the wage fund, and its source is by necessity the saving of the capitalists. Now, given the labour force and the wage fund, the wages are merely the wage fund divided by the number of labourers.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the total amount produced forms the wages, and, therefore, wages are directly dependent on the productivity of labour. Ambiguity arose due to the time factor and way of measure in the short and the long term Ricardo based the long term value of labour in producing subsistence for labourers.⁷⁰

The classical economists lived during the transition from an agricultural state to a commercial trade and industrial nation, challenged by the continental powers. They observed the rapid growth of the rural and urban population, the effects on the old, traditional system of social security and the inevitably recurrent financial crises. The changing social classes and their mutual conflicts mirrored these shifts. Although the main interest of the classical economists was the problem of economic growth, these early economists, particularly in Britain, developed theories of value, money, distribution of wealth and international trade.⁷¹ The notion of agriculture as the principal industry and the base for a possible economic growth was not extinct. Could a nation prosper mainly only on commerce and manufacturing? This was a recurrent question that divided ideas on economics and as for politics, the issue coincided with landed interests and the Corn Laws – between Whigs and Tories.

Classical economics and the concept of laissez-faire are inseparable. However, classical economics is likely still more firmly associated with the notion of the bleak iron law of wages as developed by the first icons of political economy. This is a gravely oversimplified view of the development of political economy in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Most likely Ricardo's groundbreaking work has contributed to convey the stern view of the early economists. When Ricardo, called 'the theorists' theorist', in some textbooks, laid down the cornerstone of marginal analysis, he utilised the theses of his contemporaries among them Smith, Say, a French 'Smithian', and Malthus in a first coherent model of political economics.

It is now necessary to introduce Say in this because the law that he formulated, is essential for the classical economists in general except Malthus and, consequently, Malthus' view on economics, agricultural and industrial conditions in contrast to his fellow economists.

⁶⁹ Landreth, p 61

⁷⁰ Bowley, p 168 - 169

⁷¹ O'Brien, *Classical economists*, p 53.

Somewhat cryptically, Say's law could be formulated as 'supply creates its own demand' or 'products are always exchanged for other products', which may sound commonplace. However, demand and supply of a specific commodity are not supposed to be constantly perfect, and temporary gluts may occur due to shifts of supply and demand in one single or a few markets because of the obvious need for the producers to adjust production to actual demand or leave business. Ricardo accepted this law in his model building. Later even J.S.Mill assented. Temporary gluts, such as unemployment in one or a few markets could occur, but this was all. Hence, no general gluts would occur due to a general downward shift of demand in classical theory, and the economy of a state will in theory remain in balance. Classical theory did not anticipate general recessions.⁷²

Malthus, however, had taken a different view and disapproved of Ricardo's interpretation and in particular Say's law. Malthus, though not a doctrinaire physiocrat himself, held agrarian views and, consequently, was suspicious of the benefits of foreign trade. In the debate, Malthus evolved a theory of general gluts in the public debates.⁷³ He opposed those who wanted to repeal the Corn Laws. If the manufacturing states of Europe would import food on a large scale, then the agricultural nations would not be able sufficiently to provide for their own growing populations. The price of corn would rise and the nations would face misery, he assured. The great flaw of the commercial system was that it would create gluts of goods as well as capital, he argued. Thus, the system would cause stagnation. However, Britain was already an important trading nation and Malthus adjusted his message gradually to this fact. The best line of growth would be the one that was a balanced development of agriculture and commerce, and giving priority to the home market, he claimed.⁷⁴

Ricardo held to Say's law, and Malthus published his *Principles of Political Economy* in 1820 as a response to Ricardo's *Elements of Political Economy*, which was to become the classical orthodox work. Malthus had published many of his articles and contributions to the debate in the highly influential *Edinburgh Review*. However, when Ramsay McCulloch wrote an enthusiastic review of Ricardo's *Principles* in 1818, the decisive moment may have come in favour of Ricardo's standpoint and consequently Say's law. McCulloch, who became an

⁷² See <http://cepa.newschool.edu/het/>, 2005-06-08, and also Britannica Online, Say, June 2005.

⁷³ Maynard Keynes, the founder of modern macroeconomics, took great interest in Malthus' ideas on general gluts. See e.g. the amusing survey on Malthus by Schumpeter p 480-481.

⁷⁴ Semmel. p 64 – 69.

ardent Ricardian, wrote regularly from 1818 onwards for the *Edinburgh Review*.⁷⁵ Malthus found, nevertheless, another *Review*. The editors of *The Quarterly Review*, founded by a group of Tories in 1809, were not very enthusiastic over the dawning science of economics but found Malthus' economic opinions favourable to the interests of the landed class, in particular his standpoint on the Corn Laws. The two main political formations had found their support in the dawning science of political economics.

5.3 Ireland – harvesting the dragon's teeth.

As far as I have managed to find out there are few comprehensive studies on the classical economists and the Irish problem easily available in Sweden. This section relies mainly on Collison Black's study *Economic Thought and the Irish Question 1817-1870*.⁷⁶

In the decades before the great famine in Ireland, there were institutional conditions that fuelled the vicious circle. Although nobody could foresee the potato blight and, hence, the extension of the cataclysmal famine in its wake, there were many that perceived the looming threats of overpopulation: famine, ill-health and other consequences of sheer destitution. One of the sores was the landed system. In England and Scotland, farming had a different structure – to some extent resembling the physiocratic system of large-scale farming and work division. The landlords took a certain part of the necessary investments such as drainage, fencing and erection of buildings. The tenant, the virtual farmer, had to raise sufficient working capital in livestock, sowing, harvesting and paying farm-workers of different categories depending on the size of the individual farm. Efficient farming could demand a substantial working capital and, thus, entrepreneurship. Therefore, the landed system in Scotland and England comprised three distinct classes, landlords, tenants - farmers and labourers. There were long-established rules of the market: supply and demand, bargaining and contracts.

In Ireland and its rural districts, chiefly the southern and southwestern counties, the system was different and decidedly ruder. In the northern counties, today's Northern Ireland, the structure was different, comprising more factories and an agricultural system more resembling the English system.⁷⁷ Thus, the mainly agricultural areas corresponded with the

⁷⁵ Semmel, p71 – 73, See also O'Brien, *McCulloch* p 34 -35

⁷⁶ Bowley, Black and O'Brien seem in fact to have founded a research tradition concerning this particular part of classical economics

⁷⁷ Black, p 5

overwhelmingly Catholic areas.

One of the problems was the landed system. For decades, many landlords were absentees. The absentees were a political sore in Ireland as well as in Britain. In the first decades of the 19th century, the strictures on absentees were augmented due to the opinion that the Act of Union had induced the Irish landed gentry to live in England. As much as a third of the Irish landed gentry were estimated to be absentees.⁷⁸ Considering that Ireland was almost solely agricultural, the fact that about a third of those who could exert local political influence were absent hampered any development of the society.

Another consequence was the different system of leaseholds. The Irish proprietor leased the bare soil. Necessary improvements rested on the tenant, but at the expiry of the tenancy, the tenant had no right to compensation unlike the English tenant. Investments undertaken by a tenant became the property of the landowner. Consequently, few improvements occurred. There were, however, more devastating factors. Many property owners and absentees in particular, leased their land with moderate rents to individual tenants. Commonly, these tenants, called the 'middlemen', did not cultivate the soil but rented for speculation by subletting the land. As the population grew, this system of subletting expanded so that two or three subtenants could be between the landlord and the ultimate user of the soil. Since every middleman demanded his share the price of the rent had risen considerably for the ultimate user. Moreover, the landlord could lawfully distrain upon any of the tenants, and, hence, the subtenant who had paid his agreed rent in proper time to the defaulting middleman could face eviction. During the first decades of the 19th century, even the landlords made attempts to abandon this system and consolidate smaller holdings to greater farms and in 1826 an act against subletting was passed. The aftermath was ill fated. Fewer property owners leased or had their property leased through agents. Many smaller tenants could not afford the legal costs and were kept out. Moreover, as the population grew, productive soil became scantier and leases increased to the level where payments of the tenants often lagged by necessity. Consequently, evictions were abundant. Since the peasants lacked practically all legal protection, the secret societies such as the White Boys, mentioned in the macro-perspective, tried to uphold their use of land by terror such as rick-burnings, maiming cattle, arson and even murders of particularly rude agents or, maybe, even a tenant that had taken over the

⁷⁸ Black, p 72-73

tenancy of a former evicted leaseholder. And, of course, witnesses were seldom found. These sets committed deeds that certainly were crimes, though this was due to the lack of justice. However, as the situation worsened, a kind of a 'dual' system of behavioural rules unfolded – the formal legal system and a system of violent revenge. People had to keep themselves between these two extremes. The situation contributed to narrow the possibilities of political or agricultural improvements.

The Irish conditions created a large group of small tenant farmers and cottier-labourers. Potatoes, as the most productive seed, were the staple diet for the great mass that increased the vulnerability of the Irish tillages. The smallholders could barely pay their leases but had hardly any capital or incentives to invest in improvements. If there was any money surplus, the peasants usually concealed it in fear for increased rents. These smallholders used mostly their own families for labour. If they hired labourers, they paid seldom money wages, but gave them a plot of land to grow potatoes and a cabin in exchange for work – thus a barter system was prevalent. Another, even more insecure, system was the 'eleven-month system'. The landowner had the land manured and prepared for seed and the tenant paid a money rent for preparing a single crop. Such cottier-labourers went often in search of work between sowing and harvesting eastwards to England and Scotland– while sometimes their families had to beg to survive. The increasing population pressure made the difference between the smallholder and the cottier-labourer blurred during the decades before the great famine.⁷⁹ This was the stern background of Scott's observation in 1825 as quoted in the Macro-perspective section.

There was a common understanding that Ireland, particularly in the rural districts, was an utterly poor country. After the famine in 1817, the political opinion brought the situation to the fore again. Ireland was in want of Poor Laws as mentioned previously. Parliament appointed committees in 1817 and 1826 to make inquiries into the 'condition of the Labouring Poor in Ireland', but the public debate on Poor Laws started as late as in 1828 - 1830. However, the question was a extremely complicated.. Firstly, the distinct aim of introducing Poor Laws was not evident. Was the idea mainly to reduce poverty through economic development, or to mitigate distress? Secondly, the English Poor Laws, still unreformed, were called into question as impairing industry and promoting indolence.

⁷⁹ Black, p 5 - 8

Thirdly, there was a financial as well as a political problem. The cost would doubtless be immense and hence, rates that would be borne by landlords and farmers. As mentioned there were already too many cultivating the tillable soil. With increasing seasonal immigration of Irish labourers, they sometimes made English labourers subjects of poor relief, and English landlords and farmers were increasingly reluctant to bear the cost of removing Irish paupers whose former landlords escaped all poor rates. Some writers, among them Ricardo and Malthus, believed that since the system of subletting was fairly easy and provided a subsistence based on potatoes there were no incentives to produce more. Hence, they reached the conclusion that the Irish peasants were in general idle and indolent.⁸⁰

5.4 The Politicians, Whigs and dawning Liberalism and Tories in 'the age of reform'.

Senior became deeply involved in the political events. He tried either to exert influence on the governmental policy or members of the cabinet asked for his advice. Therefore, it is reason to describe the developments of some of the ideologically controversial issues during the period considered. Moreover, the trends of events clearly shed light on the complicated trench warfare between the Anglican Church and the position of Parliament, particularly the position of the House of Lords. The events influenced the policy for Ireland. The political events reflect, moreover, the change of ideological climate during this first period of chiefly Whig rule.

In the beginning of the 19th century the two main formations in the British Parliament, the Whigs and Tories, were not parties in a modern sense. Maybe the word 'direction' may better depict the formations of the parties – there were widely differing opinions within these two formations. The chief difference between Whigs and Tories is found in their view on government. The Tories regarded political power mainly as emanating from and rightly being exerted by the Crown. The Whigs embraced a 'constitutional' view of government, and, consequently, Parliament played an important role.

For decades, the Tories had held the Cabinet and the Whigs had formed the opposition. The Napoleonic wars had impeded internal political development. A growing middle-class demanded influence on trade and administration. Intellectuals fed currents of political change.

⁸⁰ Black, p 86 - 90

Both parties had to adjust their traditional attitudes due to a changing society. Modern views were not self-evident neither for the traditional Whigs nor Tories, but different groupings within both parties took interest in parts of modern views, often urban, on administration, agriculture and production. The range of political opinions within the two parties widened. In 1830, Whigs and particularly moderate Tories around Canning and Huskisson, renowned Tories of a rather liberal hue, agreed upon the obvious necessity of reforming the political representation.⁸¹ Actually, a considerable part of the MPs came from boroughs with less than 5000 inhabitants.⁸² A government, headed by Lord Grey, an aged traditional Whig, was appointed

Apart from a short Tory interlude in power in 1834 – 1835 due to a constitutional crisis and in the period 1842 - 1846, Whigs held the Cabinet till 1852. It is worth noticing that in fact, both the Tories and the Whigs were in charge during the enormously disastrous Irish famine, the former during the opening phase and the latter during the main phase.

The Whigs main Tory challengers were led by Sir Robert Peel who was prime minister during the ‘interlude’ and in 1842-1846 although the once grand old Tory, Duke of Wellington, stood in for Peel partly in 1834. The events that caused the appointment and the fall of this Tory government was one of the milestones in the development of parliamentarism in Britain. Senior touched upon this subject in his pamphlet *On National Property*, mainly applied to the Irish question.

Whigs were chiefly recruited from the landed class and a certain group of aristocratic families who were assiduously intermarried emerged and formed clusters or rather political clans – ‘the Grand Whiggery’.⁸³ This tradition continued during the first half of the century when the party was gradually developing as a liberal party. One of these influential and traditional families was the Holland family whose ‘Holland House’ was a rallying-point for Whigs. One of the protégés of Holland House was Lord John Russell who was to exert a substantial influence upon politics and was also as responsible for the much-maligned government during the Irish famine. Typically, an aristocratic Whig family had to uphold certain traditions. When

⁸¹ George Canning had served as a Tory foreign secretary and prime minister and William Huskisson a former secretary of the Treasury and advocator of free trade, i.e. reforming the Navigation Acts, Britannica Online, 2006-01-17, Canning and Huskisson, , Mandler p 24-25, 29.

⁸² Prest, p 26

⁸³ Mandler, p 45

John Russell became an MP in 1813, still under age, this was a part of the tradition.⁸⁴ The Whiggish view may succinctly be described as regarding Parliament as the lever to keep the Crown at a moderate distance. Today the word ‘Whiggish’ exudes a slightly pejorative nuance. The traditional Whig was an offspring of an ancient family whose members had, according to the family chronicle, contended a constitutional struggle for centuries. The gusto of orations in the Parliament and many Whigs’ social life during the Parliament sessions have probably contributed to the somewhat derogatory picture of the landed Whig gentry. One of the Whiggish traditions was developed by Fox⁸⁵ and the ‘Foxite’ opinion regarded Whigs as being the trustees of sovereignty, and, hence, the interest in Parliament increased whose task it was to ‘legislate for the good of the country’, according to Lord Holland.⁸⁶ The Whigs had not yet transformed to modern liberals. Their view of themselves can easiest be shown in a quotation:

‘The spirit of Whiggism is to require for the people as much liberty as their hands safely can grasp at the time when it is required.’⁸⁷

Thus, the outlook of Whigs was that after careful considerations ripe concessions could be made within certain boundaries. The Benthamists, or philosophical radicals to use another term, among them James Mill advocated democratic reforms such as franchise and secret ballots. From a Whiggish point of view, these proposals were dangerous ‘Jacobinism’. The Whig position was declared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1818 to be the blessing of a ‘mixed’ constitution as shown stable by experience’.⁸⁸

There arose different groupings within and among the Whigs. Senior worked for some of them directly or indirectly. It is more or less inevitable to enumerate a few persons as well as different political opinions and stances. One – and of considerable – influence came from the students of the sceptical Scottish Moral Philosophy, a vivid offshoot of the Scottish Enlightenment. A younger colleague and friend of Adam Smith exerted a considerable ideological influence. The moral philosopher Dugald Stewart had studied Malthus population theory, Smith and the French physiocrats. In the first years of the 19th century, Dugald Stewart

⁸⁴ Mandler, p 58

⁸⁵ Charles James Fox was leader of the Whig opposition during the American Independence War. His opposition against the war with revolutionary France split the Whig party.

⁸⁶ Mandler, p 19-20,

⁸⁷ Mandler, p 22, Lord John Russell in a speech on Parliamentary Reform.

⁸⁸ Collini, p 98-102

held special courses of political economy that profoundly influenced his students.

A set of Dugald Stewart's former students founded the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802.⁸⁹ The *Edinburgh Review* came to be the foremost periodical of Whig ideas and the founders of the *Edinburgh Review* became commonly renowned men. In particular, one of them should be mentioned here, Lord Brougham. Brougham belonged to the left wing of the party and advocated parliamentary reform. He was one of the prompters of the creation of the non-denominational University of London.⁹⁰ Moreover, he was an early and fervent proponent of free trade.⁹¹ Another offspring of the Scottish tradition was McCulloch, a 'Ricardian' colleague of Senior. McCulloch was the first holder of the chair of political economics at London University in 1828 supported by an enthusiastic Brougham.⁹² An influential and regarded as a fairly conservative Whig was Lord Melbourne, prime minister between 1835 – 1841. Experienced in Irish affairs he advocated political rights for Catholics.⁹³ There were, however, other formations of interest for this paper and among them especially 'the Young Whigs' and what was known as 'the Bowood set'. In the salon of Lord Lansdowne's estate, Bowood, the whole inner ring around the *Edinburg Review* are reckoned as visitors: Macvey Napier, the editor of the *Edinburgh Review* for decades, Horner, Lord Brougham, McIntosh, Jeffrey. The influence of Dugald Stewart's students did not stop in Bowood. Invited they spread their message to another and traditional stronghold of the Whig party, Holland House.⁹⁴ It is needless to mention that Senior was a frequent guest at Bowood. Lord Lansdowne is described as a moderate and diplomatic Whig who in a moderate manner could accept a repeal of the Corn Laws if, however, it was done in the long term, presumably the very long term. Lord John Russell, whose father disliked the traditional Oxford and Cambridge education, is a perhaps unexpected link to the Scottish tradition. Lord John attended Dugald Stewart's lectures and spent three years altogether in Edinburgh's educational institutions, although political economics was not among his greater interests.⁹⁵ {It is amusing to read Britannica Online's thumbnail on Lord John Russell (date 11-05-2005):

⁸⁹ Collini, p 25, see also Semmel 54 –55, *The Edinburgh Review*: Date of start, see Britannica Online, Brougham.

⁹⁰ Britannica Online, 2004-9-25, Brougham. Brougham's personality is, indeed, an interesting one. In his early days he had attacked the slave trade of the European Colonial Powers. Moreover, during the 1848 revolution in France he tried in vain to achieve French citizenship and a seat in the National Assembly.

⁹¹ Semmel, p 44

⁹² O'Brien, *McCulloch*, p 61

⁹³ Britannica Online, 2004-10-04, Melbourne.

⁹⁴ Hilton, p 38

⁹⁵ Prest, p 10-12, Russell's lack of interest in political economy, see also Mandler p 173.

'The depth of his liberalism was probably owed to an untypical education/../[his father]sent him to the University of Edinburgh, where he drank deeply of Scottish moral philosophy'.} In fact, John Russell would return often to Edinburgh. He advocated parliamentary reform as early as in 1819 and maintained religious freedom for Catholics and dissenters.⁹⁶ The 'Young Whigs' were a few men around Lord Althorp who gradually took a more progressive position to farming as well as industrial opportunities of the countryside. Lord Althorp, later Lord Spencer, was as previously mentioned, elected member of the Political Economy Club. The members of the group were all free traders and, hence, they shared commercial interests with the growing middle-class and the ideas of liberalism. Lord Lansdowne and Lord Althorp took up the interest of political economy in the party.⁹⁷ Outside Parliament, there were different groups within the growing middle class, who exerted influence. In the end of the 1820s, the question had matured. The political unrest in the country increased. A reform of Parliament was desperately needed.

The first government, headed by Lord Grey, took office in 1830. The over-all issue was the need of Parliament reform .The Cabinet members were selected for this purpose. This Cabinet had to rely on the support in Parliament of moderate Tories. The Cabinet was mainly recruited among Whigs with few exceptions. Both the above-mentioned Lords Althorp and Lansdowne became members of the Cabinet. The former involved a few philosophic radicals in the governmental work.⁹⁸ The radical Brougham took office as Lord Chancellor of the Cabinet and Melbourne home secretary and, thus, radical, moderate and conservative Whigs were appointed, some of the more influential convinced of the necessity of Catholic emancipation in Ireland.

As the different groups chiefly united in the aim of bringing about a reform, the more controversial questions had to be swept under the carpet for a while. Unfortunately, one of these issues was the Irish situation. The tensions would prevail, however, and manifest, and probably reinforce themselves as a result of the appointments of political representatives.

On of the few 'Tory-inclined' members of the Cabinet, Stanley, held office as chief secretary

⁹⁶ Prest, p 27-28

⁹⁷ Mandler, p 86-104

⁹⁸ Mandler, p 125-126

of Ireland.⁹⁹ The Lord Lieutenant appointed by the reform government had also held office under Wellington and, thus, was a symbol of the traditional Tory rule.¹⁰⁰

Of particular interest in this paper due to his close cooperation with Senior, was the appointment of Whatley as archbishop of the Dublin by Lord Grey in 1831. This event was, described ‘as a great surprise to everybody’, however, a decidedly political appointment. Whatley had been elected as Senior’s successor as professor of political economy in 1829 and, hence, he left prematurely. His appointment as archbishop of the Dublin See gave, of course, offence in the more conservative circles of the Anglican Church, particularly to those embracing the ideas of the High Church. In Ireland, he became highly unpopular among the Protestants. His great project to support non-denominational, national education for Protestants and Catholics alike did certainly not abate his unpopularity among Protestants of both confessions.¹⁰¹

The extra-parliamentary political demonstrations in 1832 most likely urged the enactment of the bill, although the House of Lords initially rejected the reform.¹⁰² The general trends in society also bolstered the acceptance on the Poor Laws inquiry. Senior was undoubtedly behind the proposal on the inquiry on Poor Laws, but Villiers, later Monteaule, minister and a friend of Senior made the formal request to set up a Royal Commission in 1832.¹⁰³ The Parliament enacted the English Poor Law Amendment in 1834. The very same year another Poor Commission was set up for Ireland, headed by Whately. I will return to the establishment and the outcome of this commission due to the close correspondence to Senior’s views, among other documents *A Letter to Lord John Russell* and the reaction of the political establishment.

The main question, however, Catholic emancipation was to be the real touchstone of the government. When the reformed Parliament met in 1833, the Whig representation had grown stronger and Ireland and Catholic emancipation could be brought onto the agenda again,

⁹⁹ Stanley as ‘half Tory’, Coalition Government. see Mandler p 128, the co-operation within the Cabinet, see also Prest, p 56.

¹⁰⁰ The title Lord Lieutenant, was the high official representative of the King (or Queen) and, hence, a member of the British Cabinet. In the Nineteenth Century, however, the role became only nominal. The Chief Secretary of Ireland, a member of the Cabinet, exerted the real influence – source <http://en.wikipedia.org>, checked 2006-04-8.

¹⁰¹ www.1911encyclopedia.org

¹⁰² Mandler, p 130, the enactment Britannica Online, Lord Grey

¹⁰³ Mandler, p 135

which happened in 1834. The coalition and, hence, the government burst. Lord Grey resigned, and Lord Melbourne formed the new wholly Whig government. When this cabinet again took up the Irish question and, in particular, the unfair treatment of the Catholic Church and the protracted improvements of Irish political conditions the resignation of one cabinet member gave the king the formal reason to dismiss the whole cabinet. The king called on the Tories to form a government – a government that was toppled in the following year due to lack of support in the Commons. Thus, the dismissal had repercussions, among them giving rise to a constitutional crisis. Senior's pamphlet, *On National Property*, concerns these questions, closer described in a contextual interlude.

6 Fundamental theses – the Malthusian Controversy (1829).

6.1 Senior and posterity.

From time to time particular events and persons may be revaluated in retrospection, and sometimes it is interesting to consider these recurrent pieces of revaluation in relation to the junctures when they occur. In the 1911 edition of Encyclopedia Britannica, there is a brief summary of Senior's political writings as well as his lectures on political economy. About Senior it is written that although an able writer on political issues, his theses were sometimes questionable, still worth reading, but of little permanent interest. As for the history of political economy, he may hold an honourable but secondary place, the reviewer succinctly summed up Senior's antecedents in the article. The review of Malthus' work is decidedly more comprehensive.¹⁰⁴

Since Marian Bowley published her dissertation on Senior in 1937, there has been a notable revaluation of Senior's contribution – hardly a common posthumous career. In Britannica Online today, a reader will find the following rather daring statement: '[Senior] led the revolt among the classical economists against the Malthusian theory of population.'¹⁰⁵ O'Brien uses, incidentally, the same expression in *The Classical Economists*.¹⁰⁶ Senior's refutation must be stated as a severe doubt on one of the cornerstones of the long-run equilibrium of wages and thus overthrowing this infamous doctrine, although it would last until the middle of the century before John Stuart Mill recanted after 'ripe' reconsideration. The iron law of

¹⁰⁴ 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica, Nassau Senior and Malthus.

¹⁰⁵ Britannica Online, in November 2005

¹⁰⁶ O'Brien, *Classical Economists*, p 48, 61

wages has set the tone of classical economics. The union of a gloomy statement and a strictly logical proposition, consequently shown, reinforces the impression of fateful inevitability and the crude indifference of people. Senior embraced a deep conviction of economic growth, given the society provided the prerequisites.

Senior's name is found in textbooks concerning economic history and social history. In social history, he is a given name when the authors describe the inquiry of poor laws and the preparation of the Poor Laws Amendment taken in 1834. Often there is a moral tone in these textbooks, and Senior is sometimes regarded as a crude exponent of either the *laissez-faire* creed or, in a negative sense, as a Benthamite¹⁰⁷ due to his work for the Poor Laws.¹⁰⁸ Already Bowley had noted this fact and wrote more or less in defence of Senior and his analysis of the necessity of transformation of the conditions of a rural society to a modern, free and mainly industrial society. The abolition of Poor laws, she explains, was a part of the ideas of self-determination, which many of the economists of the day shared, among them James Mill and Ricardo.¹⁰⁹

In the period from his first tenure of the Drummond chair and until the late 1830s, Senior elaborated his thoughts on society and politics as well as political economics – these subjects were from natural reasons inseparably interwoven. Senior developed a strategy aiming at raising Ireland out of her utter poverty as well as her political oppression. He was certainly not the only one considering the Irish malaise, but probably one of the most consequent of the English advocates of the Irish cause. These thoughts, seen in their context, were radical and could still be to a certain degree regarded as radical. Moreover, many arguments and counter-arguments used are still easily recognisable in the political discourse on social matters and trade issues of our days. As mentioned, the twenties and thirties were eventful decades – among these: the Swing riots, the Whigs' rise to power, the Reform Act and new ideas taking shape. It was probably the height of the transition period – a transition that was followed by a more pronounced idea of political *laissez-faire*.

¹⁰⁷ Bentham and his followers are denominated as the Philosophical Radicals, but sometimes a derogative expression such as 'feelosofers' can be found in texts.

¹⁰⁸ See e.g Brundage p 62 - 68

¹⁰⁹ Bowley, p 283

6.2. The Malthusian controversy on population.

One of the questions I aim to shed more light upon is whether Senior refuted or, cautiously rephrased, corrected Malthus' population doctrine. Moreover, the Malthusian controversy on overpopulation uncovers the basic approach of Senior, contrasted by Malthus to society in general.

Senior's outlook on the population thesis of Malthus may be an interesting remark in textbooks. His doubts were, though, an inevitable consequence of his four postulates that he laid down during his first tenure of the Drummond chair at Oxford. These basic requirements were, according to Senior, the pillars on which political economics as a deductive¹¹⁰ science is founded and, thus, would cover 'observed phenomena necessary to the theory of distribution and production of wealth'.¹¹¹ Three of the postulates are important, obvious or underlying, in his debate with Malthus:

a The population of the world, or, in other words, the number of people inhabiting it, is limited by moral or physical evil, or by fear of deficiency of those articles of wealth which the habits of the individuals of each class of its habitants lead them to require.

b That the power of Labour, and of other instruments of production which produce wealth, may be indefinitely increased by using their Products as the means of further Production.

And, finally

c That agricultural skill remaining the same, additional Labour employed on the land within a given district produces in general a less proportionate return, or, in other words, that though, with every increase of the Labour bestowed, the aggregate return is increased, the increase of the return is not in proportion to the increase of Labour.

The two latter premises simply describe the productivity power of capital and the diminishing marginal return in agriculture while merely labour is increased. The first requirement on population contains one key word: *fear*. Senior's two lectures on population also show the close connection with politics and the dawning science of political economics. The difference in the attitudes of Malthus and Senior seem to make them inclined to take different political views – preserving or exploring.

Did Senior refute or, actually correct Malthus' doctrine? This question depends partly on how

¹¹⁰ The younger but contemporary John Stuart Mill held political economics as a 'hypothetical' science since economic acts are based, however not unconditionally, on rational considerations. Senior repudiated this.

¹¹¹ Bowley, p 48

the doctrine is to be construed. The opinions concerning the doctrine have been discussed ever since it was published and, in particular, the degree of inevitability as a law of nature.

In the first, anonymous edition of *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (subsequently referred to as '*Essay on Population*') in 1798, Malthus presented the figures on progressive growth of population and the mere arithmetic growth of the means of subsistence. Furthermore, Malthus draws the conclusion that the difficulty of subsistence 'must fall somewhere; and must necessarily be severely felt by a large portion of mankind'. Unless checked the population will double every twenty fifth year and, perhaps, sometimes even more swiftly. The first edition emphasised the positive checks under the heading *Vice and Misery*. The positive checks all lead to increased mortality, infant mortality in particular. *Vice* embraces preventive checks such as promiscuous a life style, adultery etc.¹¹² However, in the 1803 edition, which was the first publicly signed by Malthus, and the following editions he put more emphasis on moral restraint – postponed marriage as the only effective restraint. Malthus undertook extensive journeys to different states where he gathered empirical information. Malthus inserted this information in his *Essay on Population*. Among those he wrote about were the Spanish-American colonies, Portuguese colonies and their 'superstitious' mother countries, many other states in Europe among them: Sweden, Switzerland etc – thus a broad spectrum.

Malthus concludes that in savage states governed by tyranny or having unwholesome climate, the increase of populations seemed to be out of control except for the positive checks mentioned. In Europe, however, the positive checks seemed to prevail less and the preventive more than in the past although 'moral restraint does not prevail much among the male part of society'.¹¹³ It is not hard to see the religious and moral hue, but it would be unfair to avoid mentioning his ideas to raise the poor out of the misery, delivered by harsh criticism of the contemporary order:

It is surely a great national disgrace that the lower classes of people in England should be left merely to a few Sunday schools, supported by a subscription from individuals who can give to the course of instruction in them any kind of bias, which they please.¹¹⁴

¹¹² O'Brien, *Classical Economists* p 58 - 59.

¹¹³ Malthus, p 315

¹¹⁴ Malthus, p 526-7 .The main and feeble reason why education was withheld from the poor were according to Malthus was that education would seduce people to the democratic side and be fatal to government. Malthus

In addition, of course, to the ordinary instruction he swiftly added:

the frequent explanation the real state of the of the lower classes of society, as affected by the principle of the population...¹¹⁵

The general qualities of society such as liberty, security of poverty, diffusion of knowledge would entail ‘a spirit of independence, a taste for cleanliness and comfort’.

Actually it was the duty of a good government to provide education and to raise the level of its subjects.¹¹⁶

Malthus concluded that the more civilized state the less positive checks and the more effective moral restraint and, maybe – a very important ‘maybe’ – lower growth rate. The message was either the growth of population would surpass the production of subsistence and misery prevailed, or due to moral restraint, misery could be kept under control. The basic question, however, whether the asserted growth of population and means of subsistence are relevant as a prediction remains; either population grew faster or moral restraint prevailed.¹¹⁷ Moreover, it is scarcely astonishing that Malthus’ work on population made him hold a fairly agricultural view on economics and a cautious or conservative view on economic growth.

In 1829, Senior published according to the statutes of the Drummond chair two lessons on population but he had also dispatched them to Malthus’, still a professor at East India College, for his comments, and, unavoidably, an exchange of letters followed; in all six letters.

In his first and considerably briefer lecture than the following, Senior repeats basic facts on population checks used by Malthus. Formally, Senior aims at discussing the positive checks, but he also introduces a few statements of his own to underpin his reasoning in the second lecture. In the introduction Senior states that he has been induced by subsequent reflection to replace *apprehension of a deficiency* by *fear* of deficiency as the principal check to population as for ‘articles of wealth’ that is the commodities people require. One means is to define a range of the requirements of the ‘articles of wealth’ – necessities, decencies and luxuries. These are essential for his further reasoning on population and economics. Although they

was convinced, also referring to Adam Smith, that well-informed people would be less likely led astray by ‘inflammatory writings’ such as Paine’s.

¹¹⁵ Malthus, p 525

¹¹⁶ Malthus, p 529

¹¹⁷ O’Brien, *Classical Economists* p 60

seem obvious, I mention them. Necessaries are the articles essential to preserve health and strength depending on an individual's 'habitual' occupations. Decencies, however, are those articles an individual must use in order to preserve his existing rank in society. Fear of deficiency, states Senior, is the principal check to population as far as necessities are concerned and the sole check for the decencies and luxuries.¹¹⁸ A brief discussion on the positive checks on population follows, but the tone is set by the introduction:

It is now generally admitted, indeed it is strange that it should ever have required to be pointed out, that every species of plant, or animal, which is capable of increase /../ must be capable of increasing increase/.../ not in an arithmetical ratio but in a geometrical ratio;¹¹⁹

The rhetorical question follows a few pages later – why has the population obviously neither quadrupled nor doubled during the course of the last centuries?

The positive checks, mainly diseases, famine and war remain the main evils, but Senior relates the physical evils related to the degree of civilization or savageness. The increase of irrational animals sets, only curbed only by starvation and hardship, the lowest point by definition.¹²⁰ As man and society advance, the importance of this check diminishes to almost imperceptible on the other end of the scale, and the link to savage state is:

Where there is a diversity of fortunes, famine generally produces that worst form of civil war, the insurrection of the poor against the rich..¹²¹

The attack on the population thesis as it is known is delivered in the second lecture, which is formally applied to the preventive checks – only postponed marriage and promiscuous intercourse are mentioned – the latter is considered of lesser importance, mainly restricted to ‘..those unhappy individuals whose only trade is prostitution’.¹²² Hence, postponed marriage is the only remaining check that does not involve vice or misery; consequently, prudence is the only preventive check.¹²³ His objections refer chiefly to two grounds – the human desire

¹¹⁸ SWE, *Lecture One*, p 1-6.

¹¹⁹ SWE, *Lecture One*, p 7

¹²⁰ SWE, *Lecture One*, p 11

¹²¹ SWE, *Lecture One*, p 15

¹²² SWE, *Lecture Two*, p 24

¹²³ SWE, *Lecture Two*, p 32-33

After the publication of Ricardo's *Principles*, economists, deeply concerned with the population problem, had suggested some form of contraception. 'These conclusions were always subtly stated because of the strong reaction by the church and the public against contraception. There is ample evidence that the private views of the leading economists of this period, with the exception of McCulloch, had been in favour of some form of contraception, but their public statements were made with caution.' – Landreth 125-126.

for better conditions of life, and that the production of subsistence has a tendency to increase faster than population. He underpins his lines of argument by referring to the difference between more and less civilised states, using the tool ‘articles of wealth’ defined in the previous lecture applied to the degree of civilisation and reaches the following construction. With these articles of wealth, Senior introduces an evolutionary ladder of society. Utilising them, he arrives at the conclusion that more developed and more opulent nation can take some crop failures without other consequences than a temporary sacrifice of its superfluity, and this leads to the following conclusion:

It appears, therefore, that habits of considerable superfluous expenditure afford the only permanent protection against a population so closely pressing on the means of subsistence, as to be continually incurring the misery of the positive checks. And as these habits can only exist in an opulent society, it appears to me equally clear, that as a nation advances in opulence, the positive checks are likely to be superseded by the preventive. If this be true, the evil of a redundant population /../ is likely to diminish in the progress of improvement.¹²⁴

Here, however, Senior inserts a link to his political message that he unfolds in the last part of his lecture. Although overpopulation may, ‘considered abstractly’, occur in relation to the means of subsistence, he states very aware of the prevalent opinion his gist:

What I deny is that, under wise institutions, there is any *tendency* to this state of things. I believe the tendency to be the reverse.¹²⁵

To stress his point further rhetorically Senior now accounts for the views of Malthus and his population doctrine and by quoting passages of McCulloch’s and the elder James Mill’s publications, showing how they use the population doctrine as the Law of Nature. What Senior calls into question is whether Malthus’ thesis is consistent with historical facts. He does so by referring to what is regarded as civilized countries and their previous savage state, or, for that matter, savage countries of the day. He states that the earliest records of the civilized countries all showed scanty populations and still scantier means of subsistence. He also admits that the great body of the people is poor, but then he arrives at his crucial statement:

..yet as poverty and misery were their [now civilized nations] original inheritance, what inference can we draw from the continuance of their misery as to the tendency of their numbers to increase more rapidly than their wealth? But if a single country can be found in which there is less poverty than is

¹²⁴SWE, *Lecture Two*, p 34 –35.

¹²⁵SWE, *Lecture Two*, p 36

universal in a savage state, it must be true, that under the circumstances, the means of subsistence have a greater tendency to increase than the population¹²⁶

He states this fact is the case of *every* civilized nation. Even in Ireland, in a very low state of society, 'poor and populous as she is' suffers less from want, he asserts, than when 'her only inhabitants were a few septs of hunters and fishers' and this in spite of the appalling conditions of eight million inhabitants. The last statement is not very apt, since Senior hardly praised the rule of Ireland as civilized. The conclusion is that there is a clear development from savage to civilized stages due to a 'natural tendency' in the human race and in civilized nations there a likewise 'natural tendency' in subsistence to increase in a greater ration than population. As for Malthus' thesis, he smoothes down his criticism by writing that the practical conclusions of Malthus' findings may place him as 'a benefactor of mankind' on a level with Adam Smith, but maybe, he suggests almost obsequiously, Malthus has fallen into the 'exaggeration which is natural to a discoverer'.

..propositions which Mr. Malthus has established by facts and reasonings, which, opposed as they were to long-rooted prejudice, and assailed by sophistry and clamour, are now so generally admitted, that they have become rather matter of allusion than a formal statement.'

At the end of the lecture, he connects his view of a society under wise conditions in which the population grows slower. Senior expresses the core of his thoughts – a formulation of an entirely liberal credo:

knowledge, security of property, freedom of external and internal exchange, and equal admissibility to rank and power, are the principal causes which at the same time promote the increase of subsistence, and by elevating the character of the people lead them to keep at a slower rate the increase of number.¹²⁷

But the actual, political message is made clearer in opposition to Malthus' position, although the Corn Laws are not directly mentioned, but paraphrased as 'restrictions on exchange and commerce' which are inserted among factors such as ignorance and insecurity of property which all:

diminish the productiveness of labour and tend to produce that brutish state of improvidence in which the power of increase unchecked by providence..

¹²⁶ SWE, *Lecture Two*, p 47-48

¹²⁷ SWE, *Lecture Two*, p 49-51

These are, according to Senior the universal causes, but some nations have particular obstacles of their own – in Ireland the ‘political motives to create freeholders’ and in England ‘certain parts of the poor laws’.

And, consequently, that a population increasing more rapidly than the means of subsistence is, generally speaking, a symptom of misgovernment indicating deeper-seated evils, of which it is only one of the results.¹²⁸

In summary Senior’s message in his two lectures may be condensed into the following groups of objections:

Firstly, human - rational reasons:

The human race has an inherited propensity for improving conditions of life.

Showing this, Senior introduces the concept ‘articles of wealth’ – ‘necessaries, decencies and luxuries’. People aim at least to satisfy their basic needs but evidently, they strive to satisfy their desire of the other, upper rungs on the ladder of prosperity – the decencies and the luxuries.¹²⁹ If people have a free choice, they fear to lose what they have achieved or may achieve. Thus given a choice, forethought would impede the desire to increase.

Secondly, experience, circumstantial facts.

During the course of centuries, states have developed from savage to civilized nations.

Civilised nations are commonly more opulent than savage nations – famines and civil wars are rare.

Thirdly, a logical construction:

The population doctrine cannot have the position of an inevitable law similar to a law of Nature. If so, it must be shown that not even a sole, civilized nation has improved the supply of the means of subsistence.

6.2.1 The exchange of letters between Malthus and Senior

Malthus was still a professor at East India College. He died five years later. By the late 1820s, he had gained a considerable recognition, and he had obviously exerted great influences as shown. He had consequently won several followers about thirty years ever since his first issue of his *Essay on Population*. He had for a long time been elected member of the Political Economy Club and fellow of Royal Society with its fine, old traditions. Malthus could hardly

¹²⁸ SWE, *Lecture two* p 51 -52

¹²⁹ This ‘ladder of desire’ is a frequently used concept in modern economics

perceive Senior's lectures as anything else than a thrown gauntlet.

Senior's close friend Whately realised the problem and tried, according to Bowley, to 'pour oil on troubled water' by suggesting that the difference depended on the interpretation of the word *tendency*.¹³⁰

In his first letter to Malthus, dated 15 March, 1829, Senior writes after some marks of courtesy that he was misled by Malthus' use of tendency. He had assumed, he goes on, that Malthus' held the desire of marriage, which increases population, as a stronger principle than the desire of bettering our conditions, which tends to increase subsistence in an old country. He also offers Malthus a comfortable and classical retreat, writing that he had arrived at this conclusion by the conduct of all his followers. Now, however, he obviously discovers that Malthus in his writings finds that the pressure of population on subsistence is almost the most severe in the rudest states of societies.¹³¹ Accordingly, Malthus could still say that population has a tendency to increase faster than food in the absence of disturbing causes because this complies with our natural wishes. Senior could still maintain his thesis because the desire of bettering our condition is as natural as the desire of marriage, and he adds as a fact that the means of subsistence has generally increased faster than population.¹³² He had assumed, he goes on, that Malthus' held the desire of marriage, which increases population, as a stronger principle than the desire of bettering our conditions, which tends to increase subsistence in an old country.

Had Senior had any expectations that his tactics would settle the question, he would surely have been disappointed. Malthus' reply is dated just one week later, on 23 March, 1829. In Malthus' long letter, he admits that the pressure of population on food is often the most severe in the rudest stages of society where the population is least dense. However, his intention was, he writes, to convey the fact that the population was ready and inclined to increase faster than means of subsistence if checks were removed. Although temporary aberrations may occur, Malthus holds to his thesis – population is inclined to increase faster than subsistence. Actually, he claims it as universally acknowledged fact that whenever improvements in agriculture have mitigated or a plague has loosened the restraints, population has increased at

¹³⁰ Bowley, p 120

¹³¹ SWE, *Lectures, App.* p 56-57

¹³² SWE, *Lectures, App.* p 58

a greater rate. The alleged fact that population has increased in a less ratio than subsistence is stated too generally, Malthus states, twisting this to:

.. desire of bettering our conditions as far as it affects the direct increase of food, is perfectly feeble, compared with the tendency of population to increase.¹³³

Then a discussion is started referring to historical facts, but also interspersed with obviously rhetorical statements such as ‘since the flood’ and the colonization by the old Greeks, but also such examples as the Great Migration and a given rejoinder concerning the Irish situation – the food situation now compared with the 18th century has hardly improved. Malthus is evidently upset. Generally, his basic interpretation of Senior’s thesis is that this would presuppose a general and faster increase during the course of human history. He repeats his conclusion and counter-argument that ‘the continued poverty and misery of the labouring classes of society in all old states’ cannot be attributed to Senior’s thesis in Malthus’ interpretation.¹³⁴

Senior replies only three days later, on March 23, the first part of the letter is applied to discuss the meaning of the statement that subsistence has generally increased in a greater ratio than population. So far, their debate has concerned interpretation of observations or opinions of the past. However, the greater part of the letter is applied to a political as well as a moral message. The English Poor Laws are conducive to increase population he agrees with Malthus, but he turns his criticism to the Corn Laws that normally prohibit import of cheaper subsistence and

a commercial code by which the perverse ingenuity of centuries has laboured to fetter and misdirect our industry’.¹³⁵

Moreover, a majority of Malthus’ readers adopts his thesis without sufficient qualification, particularly the preventive checks, writes Senior, and believes that the increase of population is:

.. a source of evil incapable not only of being subdued but even of being mitigated. They consider man not as he is, but as he would be if he had neither forethought nor ambition; neither the wish to rise nor the fear to sink, in society. They deny the possibility of permanent improvement, and regard every partial amelioration as a mere Sisyphean labour.¹³⁶

¹³³ SWE, *Lectures, App.* p 61-63

¹³⁴ SWE, *Lectures, App.* p 62-67, 72

¹³⁵ SWE *Lectures, App.* p 75

¹³⁶ SWE, *Lectures, App.* p 79

This is nothing more than a fierce assault on the politically expedient use of Malthus' doctrine and its paralysing effect on government for Senior continues:

Unhappily there are many whom indolence and selfishness, or a turn to despondency, make ready recipients of such a doctrine. It furnishes an easy escape from the trouble or expense implied by every project of improvement. "What use would it be," they ask, "to promote an extensive emigration? The whole vacuum would be immediately filled up by the necessary increase of population. Why should we alter the corn laws? If food were for a time more abundant, there would be a proportionate increase of population, and we should be just as ill off as before."

There are many also, among those who reason rather with their hearts than their heads, who are unable to assent these doctrines, and yet believe them to be among the results of political economy.¹³⁷

This is certainly not a furtive criticism any longer of Malthus' standpoint on Corn Laws, but a direct challenge combined with an appeal to Malthus who had censured the prevalent carelessness in the society to comment in public.

In his last letter, on 31 March, 1829, Malthus makes some petty admissions, or, rather, as it seems reluctant concessions. As the *only* effect of doubling the quantity of food would be after a lapse of a few years a multiplication of occupants and a probably increased proportion of crime and misery has evidently gone too far, but as for the intended conclusion Malthus is 'disposed to agree'. However, if corn by free trade as the only change would be much cheaper then the population would inevitably increase. An increase of subsistence does not necessarily improve prudence, he rejoins of course.

Although it could be discussed how far or, rather how little, Malthus changed his position Senior states in his last letter from Lincoln's Inn, dated 9 April, 1829, that they have reached a mutual agreement. He uses many phrases to express almost as it seems a commonplace statement, namely that 'the principal means of improvement are those which promote the production of subsistence and prevent a corresponding multiplication of consumers'. He repeats, however, that Malthus' followers have caricatured his doctrine. If additional numbers may bring poverty, they have supposed that it necessarily will do so. As well as an increase of the means of subsistence may be neutralized by a population increase, it will do so by

¹³⁷ SWE, *Lectures, App.* p 80-81.

necessity.¹³⁸ Senior pays respect to Malthus to his discovery, but he repeats the political damage:

I found that the principle made the stalking-horse of negligence and injustice, the favourite objection to every project for rendering the resources of the country more productive.¹³⁹

6.2.2 A few considerations

It is obvious that as the discussion unfolds in the letters, their controversy is more a battle between different opinions on society rather than an exchange of substantial facts. As far as the first group of objections Senior raised, human – rational reasons, it is obvious that Malthus dismisses them as ‘feeble’ compared with the reproduction power of man. Concerning the second group – experience and circumstantial facts, both the parties seem to pick out only facts that support their own arguments rather than to scrutinize the opposite part’s. Malthus tries to twist Senior’s arguments on civilised states to the indefensible argument that there would have been an unconditionally faster increase of food in general. In his *Essay on Population* Malthus had used the word *tendency*, which by definition means a propensity, a probable, even most likely, but, at any rate, not a wholly certain outcome. Now he qualifies his use of tendency to a theoretical removal of all checks, which really adds no new information in the actual debate. Senior would hardly have disputed this fact, but Malthus avoids commenting on the degree of socially developed states. Malthus underpins, however, the inevitability by stating the desire of bettering conditions of life as feeble. Thus, Malthus argues as if his doctrine has the state of the inevitable law of God in his case. Moreover, according to Senior’s quotations of M’Culloch and James Mill it appears obvious they had used Malthus’ doctrine as it were the Law of Nature. In this situation, Senior’s logical construction seems relevant.

Senior’s argument concerning Ireland is on the other hand doubtful. Obviously the ‘poor and populous’ Ireland produced more means of subsistence now, but this does certainly not mean that the few ‘septs of hunters and fisher’ were worse off. This is only an assumption. Malthus’ rejoinder is given and his statement may also be correct. Hence, the statement about Ireland should have included a qualifier as less civilised particularly since Senior regarded Ireland’s state as miserable. Senior quickly changes from arguments to using moral and, in particular, political aspects to appeal to Malthus to make him alter or, at least, clarify the necessary

¹³⁸ SWE, *Lectures, App.* p 87-89

¹³⁹ SWE, *Lectures, App.* p 89

conditions of his thesis. Such quotations as the two last mentioned can only aim at appealing morally to Malthus to clarify his thesis.

When I as a modern reader quickly studied relevant parts of Malthus' *Essay on Population* (sixth edition), I found his *Essay on Population* considerably less categorical than his replies to Senior. Since Malthus had collected gradually information from many countries, which he inserted in his *Essay on Population*, it seems natural to use the word tendency based on observations, and Malthus does account for differences. Hence, there is a difference between nations in a more and those in a less civilised state. Moreover, moral restraint may curb the growth rate according to the later versions of his *Essay*. There is an ambiguity in this as O'Brien has mentioned. Thus, in the *Essay* the inevitability does not seem evident. There is no doubt as Malthus' describes his doctrine in his letters that he perceives his doctrine as actually an inevitable law.

Malthus published his first version just before the turn of the century. Now more than thirty years later and several editions later, at the age of 63, he had won recognition and respect. The *Essay on Population* had become his lifework. It is deeply human to adopt a rigid attitude towards any opposition or possible threat against one's lifework. Who would question the evident facts he had presented? In fact, England's population had grown more swiftly than its agricultural production during the past century.

As for the question, I raised at the outset whether Senior's objections to Malthus doctrine is a correction or a refutation depends on whether Malthus altered his opinion by growing age and reputation. The fact that the agricultural productivity had increased beyond the perceptible limits in the early 19th century could neither Malthus nor Senior realise. The latter believed that if more factors were involved, the productivity would increase, but he did not prove it. He referred to general observations of history. The other lever of the doctrine – conditional or unconditional growth of population – is more relevant. If, as it seems to me, Malthus slid from stating a *tendency* to a *general rule* of uncontrolled growth of population, thus to the inevitable Law of Nature or God, then Senior's objection is certainly a refutation of the latter. If, however, the doctrine is construed as a tendency as it may seem according to the *Essay*, then Senior's objection obviously is a correction – the degree of civilisation must be considered.

Notwithstanding age, reputation and, naturally, defence of his lifework in his later life, some of his qualities seem to make Malthus more inclined to take a conservative attitude. One of these ideas is the notion that general economic growth must be at least in balance with domestic agriculture. He also held the ideas that general gluts on trade commodities could endanger, nay actually, deplete prosperity. This is undoubtedly a physiocratic inheritance shared by many of his generation, but even so, in England it is safer to rely on the traditional, agricultural industry. Malthus identified some of the basic reasons for the misery of the working classes and advocated strongly in favour of education. However, he does not seem to draw the full conclusion that better-informed people are more inclined to act independently; the mass would be enlightened and yet remain a flock needing leaders of a superior rank. The opportunities of growth are limited in the Malthusian world.

Senior, seen in contrast to Malthus, takes a completely different view in a few but essential central points. Man is rational and strives to better his conditions, but Senior adds two conditions in his second lecture beyond Malthus' to ensure a good society: free internal and external trade and, more importantly, equal admissibility to rank and power – thus the personal incentives. Malthus regards the labouring classes from an elevated perspective – appropriate education may give the people 'a taste of cleanliness', but he does not pursue the necessary consequences. Senior wants to remove all barriers to progress. If they were banished the free and rational man would work for improvements due to self-interest. Senior's second postulate signifies an unconditional belief in progress. If the products of labour and other 'instruments of production' are used to the production as the means of further production then the productivity may be unrestrictedly increased. Moreover, the third quoted postulate predicts diminishing returns when only one resource, manpower, is increased in agriculture. This is nothing other than a credo of industrialism and an unconditional belief in man's progress. The postulates embrace increase of the productivity in farming as well, provided more than on sole factor of labour is increased presupposing large-scale farming. Hence, these postulates reflect the ideas of self-determination.

Seemingly, Senior and Malthus were in agreement, although in the correspondence it is rather apparent that they did not. Later, however, Senior writes explicitly that some parts of Malthus' letters are inconsistent with his *Essay on Population*. Moreover – 'in his later lectures he roundly asserted that Malthus adhered to his fatalist pessimism throughout his life'. Bowley writes among other facts referring to a formulation in Senior's 1847 – 52

lectures that Senior believed that Malthus agreed with him.¹⁴⁰

This is possible but is it likely? I have not had access to these lectures but based on information available there is in order to use the judicial term, assuredly room for reasonable doubt. The question is whether Senior ever believed or even *had expected* to reach an agreement based on mutual understanding beyond giving the idea lip service and a formal agreement.

Evidently, Senior believed neither in Malthus' doctrine and the way Malthus chose to expound it nor still less the crude interpretation his epigones practised with, as it seems, Malthus' implied admittance. By now Senior was an experienced barrister and conveyancer skilled in construing complicated agreements and contracts. Why would he have neglected the reluctant tone and ignored what was behind the diminutive admissions Malthus was more or less bound to concede? Senior's insistent appeal and the moral consequences of neglecting it would otherwise have exposed Malthus in an indefensible position concerning his own works and pamphlets. Following this strand, it seems possible, even likely, that Senior considered when reading Malthus' last letter that he had achieved what he had pursued. Going further would be not only needless but also risky. There is more to say, however.

In his two lectures, the political message is latent, considered the context, but in his letters the situation has been changed to an openly political message in the debate with Malthus – a gauntlet that Malthus obviously shunned. Both Bowley and O'Brien seem to have disregarded the gradually increasing political tone in Senior's letters; maybe they considered it as commonplace, or they merely concentrated on economic doctrines of the time. In Senior's first covering letter enclosing his lectures, in which he tries to reach an agreement, no clearly political statements are visible. When Malthus, obviously upset, does not budge his position in the slightest, Senior replies using more formal marks of courtesy than before ('Pray accept my sincerest thanks') but after pursuing the disputed facts, the political stakes are sharply raised. Malthus would hardly be more inclined to accept Senior's standpoints when Senior mentions the unwillingness to repeal the Corn Laws, which Malthus defended. Senior's increasing emphasis is nothing other than a plain threat and a lever to achieve something. As for his standpoint on the Corn Laws, Malthus was an underdog among the economists of the

¹⁴⁰ Bowley, p 120 -121

day. Senior's next step would probably be a combined attack on Malthus' double moral standards and views on political economy (Why education? Why emigration? Why do anything?), and a ferocious assault on Malthus' opinions on the Corn Laws.

A fierce debate on the Corn Laws, which also was an inflammable issue also among certain politicians, would hardly have been in the interest of Malthus. Hence, Malthus had to make a few concessions that Senior could announce as an agreement. A further exchange of opinions would hardly add more and, hence, Senior could make the desired outcome public. The political content of particularly the letters would undoubtedly support the ideas that the radical groups of the day embraced, among them some Whigs. Seen in the perspective of the exchange of letters, Senior's quick agreement could very well be a chosen strategy. Moreover, Senior's letters unveil strong political ambitions of changing the conditions of the society. Indeed, the government provided political mandate could alter the conditions of its citizens. This is the main message.

6.2.3 *What happened later?*

It is almost inevitable to mention the development of the grim doctrine. Although Senior was the first of the 'mainstream' classical economists to repudiate Malthus' population doctrine in practice and as a corollary the 'iron law of wages', it would not last for long until he was followed by his contemporaries.¹⁴¹ Ramsay McCulloch soon rejected the doctrine. He founded his refutation, though, on the ground that Malthus had neglected some important statistical facts. The youngest of the mainstream classical economists and the most renowned, James Stuart Mill, dismissed it in practice first in 1862 when he recognised the bargaining power of unions.¹⁴² The logic of the doctrine inspired however, Darwin and Wallace, and their thoughts on evolution and both acknowledged Malthus' thoughts.¹⁴³ The political implications Senior had tried to stem kept obviously a firm grasp on people's mind. In 1888, the anarchist and socialist, Prince Kropotkin had recognised the same problem and felt himself induced to write:

..the opinion is so inveterate that even a scientist like Mr. Huxley /../ endorses that opinion without even taking the trouble of verifying it. It is accepted as an axiom.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ The word 'mainstream' is used because there were other writers interested in economics that held other views among them Scrope and Sadler. See e.g. O'Brien p 64,

¹⁴² Landreth, p 148 -149

¹⁴³ Landreth, p 76

¹⁴⁴ *The Nineteenth Century* 1888 V 23, p 820.

Although Huxley was a naturalist with a peculiar personality and views on society and maybe biased by his studies of molluscs, the notion was yet widely spread in British society.¹⁴⁵

Maybe this is the classic example of the watershed on political thoughts on people and their capabilities. Is the human race to be conceived as matter controlling mind or mind controlling matter?

7 A Strategy for Ireland.

7.1 The situation and the program

During the course of the years 1830 – 1831, the situation in Ireland as well as in Britain was being aggravated. In Ireland the riots caused by the ‘Tithe War’ (see Macro-perspective section, Ireland) reached a new height and the collection of tithes almost ceased in 1831.¹⁴⁶ In England, the Swing riots ravaged. The new Whig Government, appointed in November 1830, in Anglo-Saxon textbooks often called the Reform Government, faced serious domestic problems. Two tremendous sores in society demanded attention – the inflamed political and religious situation in Ireland and the situation of growing pauperism in Ireland as well as in England.

Senior had been interested in Ireland for years, but had also been advocating a reform of the Poor Laws, which he had intensified in 1831.¹⁴⁷ This year he became, to use an anachronistic word, a member of the Whig’s ‘think tank’ when Lord Howick¹⁴⁸ suggested that Senior should assess the different reports and pamphlets on the state of the Irish poor.¹⁴⁹ Thus, the idea was to consider the introduction of Poor Laws in Ireland. Senior delivered his report, dated August 11, 1831, named ‘*A Letter to Lord Howick*’. The subheadings describe the content: ‘*On a Legal Provision for the Irish Poor; Commutation of Tithes and A provision for the Irish Roman Clergy*’.

¹⁴⁵ Huxley’s own original research was confined to molluscs, particularly medusas. Kropotkin had observed higher animal life in the Siberian tundra. Both, however, used experiences for political convictions. See e.g. my C-paper on Huxley or Nationalencyklopedien

¹⁴⁶ Levy II, p 75

¹⁴⁷ Levy II, p 80

¹⁴⁸ Lord Howick was one of the undersecretaries of the Cabinet and the son of Lord Grey, the prime minister, Britannica Online, 2004-09-25.

¹⁴⁹ Bowley, p 243.

This voluminous ‘letter’ – it runs to 99 pages, whereof 24 pages comprise three appendices – embraces an economic and political analysis of the Irish malaise. Moreover, in this letter Senior suggests combined political and economic remedies. These can actually be seen as a long – term strategy applied to raise Ireland out of her political and economic slough. The ‘*Letter*’ was issued three times – the last is dated at Lincoln’s Inn in 8 February 1832. Only a week earlier, the Cabinet had announced the appointment of the Royal Commission for inquiring into the Poor Laws to which Senior’s actions evidently contributed.¹⁵⁰ The *Letter* mirrors many of the opinions Senior held when the question of the Poor Laws had reached its high tide.

The preface is a highly political document in which Senior appeals for a solution proposed in the *Letter* referring to actual, grisly events in Ireland. Catholics hide their properties, distrained for paying the tithes. The clergy hire ‘bands of labourers from the North’, i.e. Protestants, to find and carry off distrained property.¹⁵¹ Senior paints the threats of either an incompetent Catholic government of an uneducated populace, or a regress to a ‘semi-servile’ state under the Orangemen when bayonets no longer can uphold order.

The Government had most likely approved the content of the preface and the pamphlet, formally denominated as a letter and addressed to an undersecretary, actually the son of the prime minister. The Government was certainly flying a kite. The obvious aim was to rouse the opinion of the English public.

In the *Letter* Senior deals with the major problems of Ireland – the question of the Poor Laws, the emancipation of the Catholic Church and remedies for a poverty-stricken Ireland in general. In the exchange of letters with Malthus, Senior had appealed to Malthus that a crude interpretation of his doctrine only created impassivity - why do anything to improve conditions of society such as supporting emigration? The labouring classes would nevertheless increase to the limits of the means of subsistence. The doctrine was used as a stalking-horse, he professed, to object to any project designed for improving the resources of the country. The natural question is then what could be done ‘to improve the state of the lower classes’ according to Senior? What makes the *Letter* interesting is that Senior, a ‘mainstream’

¹⁵⁰ Levy II, p 81

¹⁵¹ CW, Ireland, Preface, Letter to Lord Howick, p ii -iii

classical economist, applies it to treat the question from the aspect of government – a government that embraced radical ideas of reform:

it becomes our duty most anxiously to inquire how far the remedy of this evil lies within the province of Government.¹⁵²

Such a wide view comprises factors such as poverty, overpopulation, the possible remedies and thoughts of economic growth – politics and economics are inseparably interwoven. Ireland's problems concerned to overwhelming extent pauperism. It is inevitable to pass over the Poor Laws since they are deeply involved in the thoughts on overpopulation, political ideas and the ideas of growth. In his reply to Lord Howick Senior main opinions on poor laws are clear.

Analysis of Irish Society

Senior begins the long *Letter* by stating that the means of subsistence seems to improve in Ireland – a statement that certainly rings hollow even in the following analysis and his general recommendations. The analysis is similar to the one in his lectures on population. However, there are differences. The human ability of forethought and industry is used to define solidarity within human society, and, hence, the basis of poor relief as well as to explain labour division and use of capital.¹⁵³ These qualities raise the human race above the animal level and, hence, restrain from excessive procreation. However, his analyses of the Irish society lead him to proposals that made the postgraduate student Bowley merrily burst out in the 1930s that 'these would have made any serious believer in *laissez-faire* disown professional acquaintance with him'.¹⁵⁴

7.2. The Poor Laws - Not a remedy.

Since Ireland had no poor laws and naturally the criticised English Poor Laws, still unreformed, served as model. The *Letter* reflects Senior's opinions as well as the opponents just before recommendations of the Royal Commission, in which Senior exerted a considerable influence, and, accordingly, the Poor Law Amendment of 1834. In England, the opinions of posterity have remained deeply divided according to modern textbooks – a necessary social reform or an unethical setback as one more manifestation of crude *laissez-faire*. As far I have found, it seems as if textbooks concerning economic doctrines have a

¹⁵² CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 6 - 7

¹⁵³ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 8

¹⁵⁴ Bowley, p 247

tendency towards the first view, and authors of social history or history in general seem to be more inclined towards the second view.

As Senior chose the opening in the *Letter*, he set two boundaries – above the level of animals (the ‘brutes’) and below the limit where poor relief of the society, according to his conviction, becomes destructive. In doing so, he lays down the duty of the government as distributing ‘adequate’ relief fairly and effectively and making the burden of the ratepayers as small as possible. The upper level is set by the condition that neither industry, forethought nor charity must be distorted. These three moral qualities are the recurrent and fundamental conditions of Senior’s reasoning. Given the model, Senior defines three major groups of distress that may or may not be the object of compulsory relief: bodily infirmity, failure of crops that he assesses by the criteria mentioned. The three groups are subdivided in a meticulous [and to a modern reader fairly boring] way and judged by Senior, assessing a report from the Committee on the State of the Poor in Ireland 1830. The general rule appears obviously to be what can be foreseen and presumably prevented by forethought, and industry should not be the object of legal relief. It is the responsibility of the government, however, to regulate, erect and support ‘fever hospitals, infirmaries and dispensaries’ since these services do not diminish the moral qualities. However, apart of chronic infirmities, accidents that may deprive a man in youth and middle age of his physical ability to work, for example loss of limbs, are also objects of compulsory relief.¹⁵⁵ The border is set between youth and middle age, as weakness in old age is predictable, and, thus, an object of individual forethought and incentive. Beyond the strict criteria, there is a consideration similar to thoughts about social security or, otherwise expressed, a rudimentary safety net. As for children, Senior took the common view of his time. Children were objects of public relief in so far their parents were given relief. A single woman, whether married or not, is an object of relief only in respect of the children. She can earn her own maintenance. The information is accomplished with the following laconic sentences:

The man who abandons his children, not merely expects, but wills their destitution /./ . ‘Is a woman more or less likely to be seduced, if she knows that the child is to be provided for?’¹⁵⁶

As for orphans, his position is hesitant. Public institutions seem to corrupt children, and, with that background, they seldom become ‘useful members of the society’.

¹⁵⁵ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 12-15

¹⁵⁶ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 16-18

Failure of crops contains political heated questions between Ireland and Great Britain. Senior admits that crop failure is a greater distress than an individual man or neighbouring districts may be able to assist. Maybe a county rate, he continues, administered by the Irish Government would be 'the least objectionable method'. Although it would be an politically expedient measure – it would lead to fewer and in many cases 'too well-founded' complaints of the 'hard-heartedness' of Irish landlords, Senior adds – he does not recommend it due to his fear that a legal provision 'would become a resource to be drawn upon' also referring to the violent and corrupt political situation. Maybe tenants in arrears to their landlords would receive an extra allowance?¹⁵⁷

The main destructive evil of all moral qualities though, according to Senior and the line of thoughts of which he was one of the representatives, was compulsory relief to the able-bodied. It is seldom Senior in his pamphlets and other texts expresses his anger and, in fact, despondency as straightforwardly as in the case of able-bodied and compulsory poor relief. It seems really as a genuine sentiment:

Your subsistence shall not depend on your exertions or your contrivance; to the young, Marry as soon as you like, your families shall be provided for; to the well-employed, Spend all your earnings. The parish will support you when they fail; if you do save, the pauper will claim a share of what you lay by; and to the benevolent, What you give is only so much saved to the parish; if you wish to indulge your sympathy, do it cheaply, by assessing your neighbours.

So far this could be construed as an outburst of moral indignation of a conservative hue about 'indolent', unemployed people, but this could hardly be more wrong. This part is linked immediately to a relentless attack on the complete established order:

Such is the plan for enriching a nation by protections to the domestic industry. Such is the attempt to restrain the publication of dangerous opinions, to legislate *pro salute animae*, and for the prohibition of the infidelity, heresy and schism; to convert all men by law to the true faith, ant to prevent their deviating from its doctrines. Such is the still more comprehensive scheme of supplying by Act of Parliament, the absence of charity on the part of the rich, and industry and forethought on the part of the poor of infidelity, heresy and schism; to convert all men by law to the true faith and to prevent their deviating from its doctrines ././ the insensibility of the absentee landlord, wringing his rent from misery, is so revolting; the hardship seems so manifest , of letting the whole burden of relieving distress fall, like a penalty, on the charitable, while selfish avarice affords an exemption, that every man././ feels an almost irresistible to interpose the strong arm of the law...¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 19-23

¹⁵⁸ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 25-27; *pro salute animae* = for the welfare of the soul according to www.etax.byu.edu/New-Fam/chapter_3.htm, (On marriage regulations in general) date 2005-02-26.

The Poor Laws were in Senior's eyes evidently not only a partial obstruction of any development of society, but a symbol of the old authoritarian order of society to which I return. Most economists shared similar views – from moderate to severely exaggerated. These views were, however, not unanimous by representatives of those classified as 'mainstream' classical economists. Since Senior's assignment was to scrutinise pamphlets, evidences etc. and to deliver judgements both main lines of dissenters are represented in this voluminous *Letter*. In fact, the portion quoted above, is linked to an attack on an Irish Catholic compassionate bishop, Dr Doyle, who contributed his views to the 1830 Committee. Dr. Doyle wanted to see a system of legal poor relief introduced in Ireland. John Doyle, known for his *Letters on the State of Ireland*, published anonymously, attracted broad attention when they appeared in 1825 and established him as a leading advocate of poor laws for Ireland. He meant that the theories that poor laws would encourage idleness were useless. Furthermore, statements such as legal provision would weaken charity and 'blunt the natural affections of the poor' were stupid statements of hypocrites. Thus, the very same type of arguments as Senior used against Malthus concerning political *laissez-faire* Doyle rejected the Malthusian doctrine among other things on the ground that early marriages were more common among the middle class than among the poor. Ireland would have no redundant population were the resources properly employed. Consequently, the conditions of the poor could be improved. Poor laws would contrary to Senior's conviction check the growth of population.¹⁵⁹

Senior realised the moral problems of the misery and probably the problem of his own position when he reviewed Doyle's opinions. The situation was commonly regarded as appalling and he would hardly defend the absentees or the political situation in Ireland. Instead he chooses to censure Doyle's call for legislation using his religious – moral standpoints as 'clap-traps' on the 'law of nature and the law of gospel' – an assault that would have been impossible, had Doyle been a clergyman of the Established Church in Ireland. Instead, Doyle's arguments are used for Senior's purpose. In Ireland, the children show great attention to their ageing parents, while in England they do not, Doyle had testified. Senior's rejoinder becomes a question – would this benevolence of children and neighbours prevail unimpaired if public provision were provided? Chalmers' inquires with a Presbyterian hue of what has later been called 'Christian Political Economics' into the conditions in England in the beginning of 1820s had had an interested reader in Senior. In England where the Poor

¹⁵⁹ Black, p 95

Laws are instituted the benevolence has been declining among the ‘lower orders of society’, Senior alleges, and desertions of children are a common reason for pauperism, while they are very rare in Scotland. The Irish Poor Committee had called Chalmers to give his statements concerning administration of particularly the Scottish poor administration, but previous committees had interrogated him on similar subjects.¹⁶⁰ In fact, Senior enclosed an extract in an appendix of Chalmer’s statements presented to the 1830 Committee, obviously to put emphasis on his opinions on Poor Laws.¹⁶¹

It would be needless to continue Senior’s basic positions in this matter although he modified his views slightly on the practices of related matters as he gained experience. My aim is not however, to penetrate further Senior’s view on poor laws. Obviously, the basic ideas on poor laws he shared are perfectly coherent with those moral qualities on which he based his principles on economics as a deductive science. The traditional Poor Laws contributed to a stationary state in Senior’s mind, and the stationary state would merely too well confirm Malthus’ doctrine and preserve misery, servitude and the political quagmire in Ireland. As I have already touched upon the Poor Laws and the process of changing them are great and disputed objects in British textbooks. Although Senior held the general ideas of the classical economists, one of his colleagues, J.R McCulloch, had taken another line, not due to compassion though. His grounds for dissenting were different and related to the opinions on how the necessary reforms should be carried out. His idea was that if somebody, presumably a landlord, allowed any poor person to establish upon his estate for over three years than an obligation would follow to support him for ‘all time to come’.¹⁶²

7.3 Political and economic long term remedies for Ireland.

7.3.1 Catholic emancipation and education.

Many Whigs embraced the idea of Catholic emancipation. As I have previously referred to some Cabinet members had advocated this – among them Lord Melbourne and Lord John Russell, mostly in terms of religious freedom and redirection of tithes. The ‘tithe war’ had reached a new height in the previous year. In the hands of Nassau Senior and his assessment of the pamphlets on Ireland, the idea of Catholic emancipation is a part of raising the Catholic

¹⁶⁰ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 14-16, 28-29

¹⁶¹ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 85 - 104

¹⁶² Black, p 103-104.

Irish state out of its misery that in Senior's thinking is related to the degree of savageness. Some of the propositions he gave in his *Letter* were to be fateful to his later career. In the *Letter*, he is indeed stepping on a richly mined field. Maybe it is typical of the prevalent mood of the day that this section of his *Letter* addressed to a largely Whig Cabinet begins as follows:

Though I deny the justice of the complaint of Ireland as to the existence of the provision for the Established Church, I cannot treat in the same manner her complaints as to the non-existence of a provision of the Catholic Church.¹⁶³

The system had for centuries been adding insult to injury, and a solution was urgently needed. In Senior's mind, it was not only a matter of justice but also a matter of progress. The utterly low degree of civilization, according to Senior, could improve only by reforms in several and different steps. The uneducated crowds needed enlightened leaders – leaders that could change the political quagmire of Ireland voicing the Catholic population but if so, certain conditions must be thoroughly changed. These leaders would be the Catholic priests, although the confidence in the clergy is equivocal; the results of the way the Catholic clergy obtain fees are regarded counteractive. The construct of the following long and prolix sentence is certainly interesting in its deliberate equivocalness:

The Catholic priests, deprived their former legal provision, and thrown for subsistence on their congregations derive income from fees/./ - the principal fee that on marriage. I do not accuse them of promoting early marriages under a conscious bias of self-interest; but that they are believed to promote them, and that it is in their interest to do so, is unquestionable; and it certainly is probable that this helps to create surplus population, which is among the principal causes of the poverty of Ireland, and of the immigration into England and Scotland.¹⁶⁴

Thus, this not 'conscious' but 'unquestionable' propensity to promote early marriages is *certainly a probable* reason of the creation of 'surplus population' This way of arguing puts emphasis on the alleged consequences, rather than the injustice. The excessive procreation, impliedly partly caused by an oppressed Catholic clergy, is not only the problem of the Irish poverty, but also the cause for an abundant immigration into England and Scotland. The Catholic priest is alleged to be the ultimate reason for poverty and the consequent undesired immigration to the main Isle of the Union.

¹⁶³ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 66

¹⁶⁴ CW, Ireland, *A letter to Lord Howick*, p 67

What else could this message be, but an appeal to reluctant Anglican or Presbyterian Britons in general to accept Catholic emancipation though according to Senior's proposals?

His idea is not redirecting the tithes, but creating a reform that is consistent with his other suggestions. A far-reaching expounding precedes the idea of how not only the Catholic priests in Ireland, but also the Anglican clergy in England as well ought to be provided for. Tithes should be abolished mainly because they are an exception to the rent of lands which neither the landlords and farmers nor the labourers have any direct control over.¹⁶⁵ This seems to be digression, but in fact in the 1820s the tithes were regarded as matter of social interest – interesting enough to be one of the great issues of political economy, among them the impact of colonies.¹⁶⁶ Senior professes that ecclesiastic property, farms and estates in the tenure of the clergy, 'tenants for life', could yield a higher return if properly managed. Moreover, rent could be considerably higher he endeavours to show. He suggests therefore that ecclesiastic property would be transferred to special corporations. These corporations would hire professional managers and the return after deductions for proper reinvestments and improvements would be increased and used to pay the priests in relation to the size of their parishes or their rank within the Church.¹⁶⁷

Briefly, the idea is that large-scale farming would improve the productivity and, hence, the returns. So far, his idea is perfectly congruent with the main ideas of contemporary economics. There are, however, two consequences implied that he avoids expressing in the *Letter*. Remunerated by these corporations, the clergy would probably be more inclined to be interested in the returns. If the clergy consider the remuneration insufficient, they like everybody else have to improve their services. The other and far more important implication is, however, that if taxes and tithes too were withdrawn from the interest of the political sphere to corporations and a separate, religious community, then the political reason of a representation of the Church in Parliament could certainly diminish.

The Catholic clergy, however, had no property to rely on. In the *Letter* Senior bases his line of argument not as a matter of fairness but in accordance with the idea of corporations. A public

¹⁶⁵ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 58 -63

¹⁶⁶ SWE, *Introductory Lecture on Political Economy*, p 9

¹⁶⁷ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 64-66

provision provided by the revenue of the states, he asserts, is the only resource and ‘burthensome’.

A part of the revenue now destined to the revenue of a church almost without a people is the obvious fund.¹⁶⁸

Of the revenues from the property, in total 18 bishoprics and 4 archbishoprics, belonging to the Established Church in Ireland, he suggests that not less than the income of the 18 bishoprics should be transferred to the remuneration of the Catholic clergy. These 18 bishoprics, belonging to a church with fewer members than in some ‘single dioceses in England’, ‘even in their present state of mismanagement’, would yield a sum that would be treble or fourfold if properly managed. This is emphasised by a quotation from a Parliamentary report – ‘the land of the church everywhere distinguished by their non-improvement’.¹⁶⁹

It is hardly an understatement that the clergy within the Anglican representation in the House of Lords and the Anglican community in general were to take offence. As seen in the light of history, this proposal is an obvious miscalculation at least on the personal level. It is a fact that he had been appointed holder of the chair of political economics at King’s College, an Anglican but fairly moderate institution. After pressure, members of this college asked him to renounce his appointment just before his introductory lecture of a new course since also the *Quarterly Review* had been campaigning against Senior.¹⁷⁰ Whether the proposition was overbearing, reckless or, in fact, a calculated risk to achieve a result is, of course, an object of sheer speculation, but I will try to shed some more light on the problem of the Catholic emancipation further on.

According to Senior’s estimation, the revenues could not only finance the Catholic priesthood but also to the foundation of parochial schools that, of course, now unfettered priests were recommended not only to contribute part of their time but also some of their income.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 69

¹⁶⁹ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 69-71

¹⁷⁰ Levy II, p 78

¹⁷¹ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 71

7.3.2 *Some of Senior's aspects on economic growth and mobility.*

As previously mentioned the Irish immigration to the main Isle was not appreciated. The immigration concerned mainly seasonal harvest workers, but, also, immigration could cause, of course, vagrancy depending on the situation. As the immigration of harvest workers increased due to improved navigation between Ireland and England, they became a political problem. The seasonal Irish labourers could sometimes compete so hard with the English labourers that the latter needed poor relief and increased the charge of poor-rates. Moreover, British landlords had to take the cost of removing Irish paupers whose former landlords escaped poor-rates completely. This increased the call for a compulsory Irish Poor Law.¹⁷² Hence, the unequal prerequisites had commercial as well as social repercussions between the countries in the union.

Senior's opinions, seen in this context, are partly very similar to the modern. The modern concept concerns the advantages of 'mobility of the labour force'. He treats two statements concerning the Irish immigration – it would be 'on the whole, mischievous to England' and that immigration would be checked if Ireland instituted poor relief to the able-bodied. The second statement is treated as already touched upon. Generally, where wages are high, asserts Senior, poor rates are low, and those districts are the most exposed to competition. As for the first statement, Senior uses two types of argument. Since the Irish labourers demand lower wages, they contribute to greater crops than would have been profitable to harvest. Thus, Irish agricultural workers contribute to a surplus. The Irish labourers that settle in cities for example take the most laborious and disagreeable occupations. The other answer is also a classic one. Why should the citizens pay more for a service – in this case as drainage of surplus population in neighbouring areas? Restrictions would only add to more monopolies. In the *Letter* there are not many appeals but this:

Can the union have more effective enemies than those who would consider Great Britain and Ireland as one country when we are to gain by it and two when we fancy that we are to lose?¹⁷³

Senior emphasised thus the benefits of 'mobility of the labour force' on behalf of the Irish immigrants in spite of what most likely was more politically expedient

Senior as well as several other 'mainstream' economists saw the introduction of large-scale

¹⁷² Black, p 90

¹⁷³ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 47-50; the quotation p 51

farming as one solution. The English way served naturally as model. This model was similar to the physiocrats' model – strong capitalistic farmers - tenants that could negotiate with the landlords, a legal environment that facilitated investments and hired labourers, and, last but not least, hired labourers.¹⁷⁴

Besides his plea for the Irish 'mobility of the labour force' there was, however, a considerable difference between Senior and the other economists for the period regarded concerning Ireland. There are two important sections in the *Letter* concerning public involvement. The first encapsulates the Irish plague and a considerable part of his strategy in a nutshell. Contrasted to the evils and dangers of famines related to the one-sided cultivation of potatoes he writes:

The extension of farms, and the consequent conversion of the cottiers into hired labourers; the opening of roads and canals, and in time, it may be hoped, of rail roads, events, /../ are rapidly taking place, and which may be assisted by the Government, if money is advanced for public works, and to facilitate by emigration the consolidation of farms, the evils which arise from a bad agricultural system, and imperfect means of communication.¹⁷⁵

Were only a few obsolete details exchanged, this could have been written as a plan by a governmental advisor in the 21st century advocating of the necessary and essential investments in infrastructure in a poor and underdeveloped society in order to achieve stable growth in the long term. The latter was precisely the way Senior saw the measures.

Senior repeats a very similar passage later after which he has chosen to quote a flaming appeal by Dr. Doyle. In this quotation, Doyle makes an appeal on behalf of the Irish people and the injustices inflicted upon them. Among other things, he refers to the property of the Established Church originally endowed by the Catholic ancestors purported to education and maintenance of the poor:

I am anxious that these provisions should be made as ample as possible; that public money should be advanced to facilitate emigration, and for the formation of road canals, and harbours; that the Irish should be relieved from one of the worst relics of feudal barbarism, the local taxation on fairs and markets ; that they should also be relieved from the absurd duties on timber which are mischievous even in England but in a naked country such as Ireland are powerful impediments to civilization; and above all, I am anxious that they should be relieved from the expense of supporting the Catholic Church. I am anxious in short that, every experiment should be tried for Ireland; except the adoption of that one measure which we now are discussing...¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ O'Brien *The Classical Economists*, p 286

¹⁷⁵ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 20

¹⁷⁶ CW, Ireland, *A Letter to Lord Howick*, p 41-42 the quotation 45

7.3.3 Considerations

Senior combines the arguments of a corrupt political system, which implies a threat to the inflicted Union, the poor laws that in Senior's mind are counteractive, in general and for Ireland in particular with a programme that includes probably massive public investments. His programme seems perfectly coherent with the idea of the wage fund. By publicly financed emigration, the numbers of labourers would be brought down as one arm of the lever. The other arm was the publicly financed, or more adequately, publicly advanced resources to build up the necessary infrastructure. Together they would facilitate capitalistic farmers-tenants increasing the productivity and, hence, fewer labourers (the former smaller tenants and cottiers) would consequently share the increased wage fund. So far, this programme can be expressed in purely economic concepts, but the long-run remedies were surely political. The idea of the free 'mobility of the labour force' and the measures to replace the tithes were equally important. Firstly, the reform would set aside the glaring inequity and secondly, the safely remunerated priests would not be inclined to encourage early marriages. Senior seems to believe or rather hope that they maybe also would be enlightened enough to counteract poverty by teaching forethought among their flocks for example. Senior's proposals are perfectly coherent with his ideas on government. Malthus' doctrine or, at any rate late version of this doctrine, is devastating to a progressive governmental policy. People do not procreate to the limits of starvation under wise institutions given the incentives and a government that can provide it.

Is this proposal to advance public resources enough to classify him as a non-believer in *laissez-faire*, as Bowley actually does for the period considered? It seems relevant to raise at least some questions on the frequently used term '*laissez-faire*' as it is used rightly or wrongly about Senior.

The role of the state was, as is mentioned before, generally regarded among the classical economists as 'keeping the ring', which means to provide the necessary framework, protection and administration. This framework also had to include necessary infrastructure such as roads, canals and bridges and so on, but as Adam Smith formulated it, fares should mostly defray such investments if possible. Moreover, it was preferably the role of the local authorities to manage public works and financed by local taxes. Furthermore, it was a general presumption among the classical economists that the state should not interfere with public

enterprises, in fact more widespread among the British economists than among the continental, such as Say.¹⁷⁷ As a pioneer it is hardly surprising that Adam Smith undertook no serious inquiries of the opportunities into a special branch of the field he had observed as counteractive.

The classical economists founded the basic concepts and tools as the marginal concepts and the first economic models in pursuing an improved understanding of economic growth. Their observations, opinions and presumptions as well as the conclusions of their models made them reject governmental regulations such as the Corn Laws and monopolies in opposition to previous policies and theories – all in line with Adam Smith’s work. This was the significance of Smith’s idea concerning *laissez-faire* as mentioned in the Macro-perspective. The focus of the classical economists was to describe the behaviour of markets under more or less favourable given circumstances, where different barriers were their main target.

In the *Letter*, the obvious aim is that the Government of the Union should advance the financial means to create a future economic growth in Ireland far beyond the possibilities of any local authority. Moreover, it is beyond all doubts that Senior really wanted a strong government. He argued strongly against *political laissez-faire* as synonymous with nonchalance or impassiveness as shown in the debate with Malthus just a few years earlier, but the question remains. It depends on how the idea of economic *laissez-faire* is construed. Like any other of his colleagues, Senior saw no advantages in public enterprises, on the contrary, but evidently, he realised the benefits of establishing the necessary infrastructure to improve economic and political progress that in his case coincided. Actually, a committee of the Commons inquiring into ‘Condition of the Labouring Poor in Ireland’ in 1823 had recommended Government assistance in order to achieve employments for the people. A great part of the report of the committee exuded such notions as ‘to discourage habits of pauperism and indolence.’ The committee had seen it necessary and in the general interest of Britain to suggest governmental support. Ricardo, who was a member of the committee, had not protested.¹⁷⁸ In Senior’s *Letter* there are hardly any moral prejudices present, save those, he uses against the people who hold them, and whom he tries to convince.

Behind the *laissez-faire* concept of the classical economics, the notion was that regulations

¹⁷⁷ Black, p 159 - 160

¹⁷⁸ Black, p 91

and public enterprises should be avoided. Does this content exclude the advancement of public resources to create a better basis of ‘keeping the ring’? Was Senior a *laissez-faire* economist during the considered period or not? I think he was because all other prerequisites are relevant. At any rate, Senior cared about Ireland and her poor Catholic population but his view on economics was certainly the common notions of the *laissez-faire* economists. He played by the book of Smith, but with smaller extensions due to the tremendous problem he faced. Frankly, it seems to me that many modern writers use the concept of *laissez-faire* laxly. They seem in my opinion to confuse the economic concept with that of *political laissez-faire* related to political impassivity, rounding off their conclusions with a moral comment. Senior evidently never evolved any theoretical framework concerning public investments, but he did point explicitly at a possibility that many of his contemporary colleagues shunned.

7.4 Contextual interlude and On National Property

7.4.1 Contextual interlude, Constitutional Crisis in 1835

Senior raised few but radical proposals in his *Letter*, which certainly made the Anglican establishment rage in the Tory journal, the *Quarterly Review*. Since I have no access to relevant information except the *Edinburgh Review*, such as periodicals and among them, the *Quarterly Review* or the Parliamentary papers [‘Hansard’] outside Great Britain, I cannot follow the assumed surge of Senior’s pamphlet, the *Letter*, as close as I had preferred. By indirect means, however, some conjectures seem likely. If the idea of governmental spending on the programme Senior proposed had been seriously questioned by the contemporary economists on a principal basis, modern writers would assuredly have referred to such debates. To the best of my knowledge, they have not. Moreover, they mention the fact incidentally as an interesting detail in connection to the measures discussed in the *Letter* – emigration, large-scale farming and building roads and so on. All these actions were in line of the contemporary ‘mainstream’ economists’ thoughts albeit, as it seems, only Senior worked out a coherent programme, conceived publicly financed. The last fact is mentioned in textbooks of history of economic doctrines as a peculiar or even, as it seems, a piquant detail. Another aspect seems likely as well. There are no references to any estimation of costs as a consequence of the principal proposals he made. The proposals obviously did not reach this threshold of interest. Therefore, it seems likely that his proposal for transferring the property of the Established Church overshadowed the ideas of governmental investments in the *Letter*.

I have searched the 1831 and 1832 volumes of the *Edinburgh Review*, available at the Royal Library in Stockholm in order to check any comments on subjects treated in the *Letter* or articles concerning similar themes.¹⁷⁹ The main part of the political content concerned the great issue, Parliamentary reform, and a real or presumed reluctance in the House of Lords.¹⁸⁰ It seems, in fact, as if the question of Church reform was a matter of political interest second in priority to Parliamentary Reform in an increased interest on emancipation. In the *Edinburgh Review* in October 1832, there is an article, in fact an enthusiastic, anonymous review, on a plan of Church reform suggested by a Lord Henley. Although it concerns England, it describes the Irish slough as follows:

The state of Ireland, where every question almost, in political controversy, bears immediate reference to some ecclesiastical abuse, and all men are agreed, that as they now exist, things cannot possibly go on, renders the discussion, and the speedy settlement of this question, no longer a matter of choice.¹⁸¹

Interestingly, the author claims that ‘the evils in our own Church be suffered to pass uncensored.’ The problem is similar as Senior’s – a necessary redistribution of the income of the church to poor incumbents from better paid and often higher ranked Church officials although Senior’s interest considered the Catholic clergy as a stepping-stone to Catholic emancipation. Still more interesting is the fact that it is discussed whether the Bishops of the Anglican Church should have a bench in the House of Lords. In the content of the article, there is more bearing to Senior’s proposals. The argument is that politics does secularize the Church. Maybe if the bishops were excluded from Parliament, the Church would establish a General Assembly. The anonymous reviewer arrives at the conclusion, including the judicial functions of the House of Lords, that priests should not be eligible to sit in Parliament.¹⁸² According to this, it seems as if problems related to the Church in Ireland as well as in England were one of the greater questions connected to, but in priority after the main political issues in interest – the Reform Act and the representation – and, hence, deeply dividing the opinions in the transition process of Britain. Moreover, in 1834 a MP raised a motion to exclude the bishops from the House of Lords. According to the source, this created a ‘furore’.¹⁸³ Thus, the political charges and

¹⁷⁹ It is worth noticing that over these two years J.R McCulloch, Nassau Senior and Chalmers contributed with an article each: McCulloch on the progress of political economy as a science, Senior with his three lectures on wages and Chalmers on the connexion between political economy and the moral prospects of society. [Levy must have missed this early contribution, according to him the first article published was in 1841, Levy I p 415]

¹⁸⁰ The *Edinburgh Review*, Volume LII, see e.g. *The result of the general election*, in 1830, *Whigs, Wellington and Peel.*, Volume LIII, 1831, *Friendly advice, most respectfully to the House of Lords on the Reform Bill.*

¹⁸¹ The *Edinburgh Review*, Volume LVI, p 203-204.

¹⁸² The *Edinburgh Review*, Volume LVI, p 214-217

¹⁸³ <http://www.historyhome.co.uk/peel/religion/anglican.htm>

stakes were high.

One of the given clashes between '*l'ancien regime*' and the emergence of a new religion, but in this case, it was an extraordinarily complicated situation. It would cause a cabinet crisis and in the end also a weakening of the influence of the House of Lords and a setback of the power of the King, maybe the first of greater significance. Both the documents out of Senior's office in Lincoln's Inn, *A Letter to Lord Howick* and *On National Property* clearly unveil Senior's position during this critical period of transition and, hence, his role in the Whig party as a member of the Whigs' 'think-tank'. When the tithe war had reached a height in 1831, the newly appointed Whig Cabinet's response was the traditional and likewise devastating 'law and order' as was it during British Swing riots. The Cabinet could have acted more wisely, but one of the problems was in this case the fragile coalition of groups in favour of Parliamentary reform. Their appointments of the representatives of Irish affairs were likely a result of political compromises.

Stanley, the chief secretary of Ireland, was to impede important improvements for the Catholic majority. He carried through, however, one improvement of importance – the Irish Education Act, in 1831, aiming at non-denominational schools, teaching basic reading and writing skills, supported by the state, but he undermined an improvement of the enfranchisement of the electorate similar to that recently brought about in England. The critical subject, however, the Catholic emancipation and tithes found no simple solution. A first critical step was a change of tithes in kind to monetary payment in 1831. The state advanced the money – to the Established Church – and recovered the outlays when possible. Hence, this was a further interference in the support of one of the minority Churches of the Ascendancy. The next step aimed at bringing down the sees of the Established Church to twelve from eighteen sees and four archbishoprics and inflicting a tax on higher clerical incomes. Thus, this proposal was a more moderate action than Senior's suggestion. This would remove the tithes and even create a certain surplus. This surplus would accumulate to a fund. However, the main and crucial problem still remained unsolved. How would this fund be used and who were entitled to decide on it? In the bill presented by Stanley in late 1832, the idea was that the resources of this fund would be redistributed within the Established Church and also for the establishment of more priests. Resources must not be 'alienated'. This caused a tension within the Reform Cabinet and Russell considered resigning.¹⁸⁴ In order to

¹⁸⁴ Prest, p 56 – 59.

avoid a cabinet crisis, different representatives of the coalition poured oil on troubled water and unified themselves behind the bill. The Prime Minister used, as it seems, a tactic used since the Ancient Rome, to delay this touchstone by asserting that the two branches of the Anglican Church must be treated together, but this would only impede a solution. The new parliament met with stronger representation of radical and liberal sentiments in 1833. When the bill was to be amended the idea among many MPs was that the resources would be used for other purposes, the Cabinet decided to withdraw the bill. Thus the consequence was a further delay of a necessary reform of the Church, although the subject was now fermenting among members of the more progressive groups. In May 1834, the eventual outburst came. Lord John Russell raised a proposal that included not only a reform of the Irish Church, but also a transfer of revenues to the Catholic Church. The coalition burst, and the Prime Minister, Lord Grey resigned. Melbourne formed a wholly Whig Cabinet also defying the King's suggestions for a coalition with Tories. When Lord Althorp, the diplomatic Whig leader, had to leave the cabinet upon his father's demise and succeeded him as Lord Spencer in the House of Lords, the King found the formal reason he needed to dismiss the Cabinet. He summoned the aged grand old Tory, the Duke of Wellington in the House of Lords, to carry out the King's government until Peel, the actual Tory leader, could return from an overseas mission.¹⁸⁵ The main questions remained the Catholic Church and the use of the fund. The Tory government under Peel was soon defeated in Parliament by a coalition of Whigs, Irish interests and Radicals in Parliament. Peel had to resign and the new Cabinet under Lord Melbourne took office in April 1835.¹⁸⁶

7.4.2 Nassau Senior's pamphlet On National Property.

Senior's *Letter to Lord Howick* was issued at least three times, the third at the beginning of 1832, but it would last until 1834 before a proposal by an influential politician would insist upon improving the conditions of the Irish Catholics. This proposal would cause not one, but actually two Cabinets to fall and a discontented king to dismiss the cabinet on his own initiative for the last time. Yet the state of the Established Church and its property was in glaring contrast to its achievements among the population it was presumed to bless. The Church questions were of a highly symbolic importance in the relationship between Ireland and Britain, but also as a symbolic matter in the wake of the parliamentary reform. If the flagrant injustice between the different faiths or, as Senior sometimes expressed them, sects,

¹⁸⁵ Mandler, p 153 – 156, Prest, p 65 - 69

¹⁸⁶ Prest, p 89-91

prevailed, this stumble-block would preclude all progressive changes to a more civilised state and thus the material and political improvements of the Irish people.

On National Property, first published in January 1835, was according to Levy triggered by the king's dismissal of the Whig government, but Senior had obviously prepared his settlement on the Catholic emancipation long before. It also deals with other, current political matters. Evidently, Senior seized the opportunity to ventilate some of the more anxious, political messages among the current matters of the day. The quality of its content is shifting. Some parts are written in the sentiment of the day whereas other parts are carefully considered. The pamphlet comprises of roughly two parts: the first concerns the civil rights of individuals and corporations (judicial persons), and the second the political representation. In Senior's mind the main question and the most pressing is, of course, the Irish slough in which all most progressive attempts had become bogged down. Moreover, the admission to universities is another subject in the pamphlet. The second part concerns the important political events of the day – the constitutional crisis, as provoked by the king and the Duke of Wellington, was a matter of high political potency. The latter gives Senior a convenient opportunity to raise some radical proposals concerning the constitution, the position of House of Lords and the ecclesiastical representation in particular – a fully matured liberal credo. Finally, he puts some changes of the civil law concerning different issues on a list of desiderata, as it seems, when he had the opportunity. Obviously, Senior has given the first part painstaking attention while the second part may mainly be characterised more as a contribution to the political debate of the day and written under these circumstances. Moreover, he wrote a preface containing his proposal to settle the provision of the Catholic clergy in Ireland. This preface was never published on request of Lord Melbourne after a meeting with some of the Cabinet members at Lord Melbourne's estate by the end of May 1835, to which Senior was invited to present his suggestions. Senior took the minutes. He conveyed the outcome of this meeting to Whatley the same day the meeting was held.¹⁸⁷ The Cabinet members thought it might harm the planned bill. The full content of this preface is lost, but Levy had evidently seen it, whereas Bowley had not, and he has quoted some fragments of it.¹⁸⁸ There is reason to return to this document.

¹⁸⁷ Letters, Letter to Whately, dated May 30, 1835,.

¹⁸⁸ Bowley, p 249-250, note 1

The pamphlet was issued four times.¹⁸⁹ The full title is boding: *On National Property, and on the Prospects of the Present Administration and of Their Successors. Like A Letter to Lord Howick* written almost four years earlier, this one is bulky too – it runs to 113 pages. *A Letter to Lord Howick* may be described as a programme containing a political and economic strategy of raising Ireland out of her miserable state including the requisite means of governmental involvement. Now, a couple of years later the bleak political reality had caught up with Senior and certainly shown the slow progress of improvement. In *A Letter to Lord Howick* he had made some radical proposals, among them the integration of the Catholic Church. As shown in the contextual parts, the position of the Anglican Church was strong – perhaps amazingly strong, it possessed power and most likely considerable wealth. Obviously, there was a close political interdependence and community of interests between the church and parts of the Tory party, briefly the old order. However, seen from a religious viewpoint part of his reasoning in *A Letter to Lord Howick* was certainly perceived as condescending and exuded a cool aloofness by many embracing the Anglican Church. When Senior unmercifully laid bare embarrassing details of the Established Church, the religious shortcomings as well as the mismanagement of the property in its use, he challenged the established order of centuries. No parts of these were really news, the injustices of the Catholic Church and behind it the Irish population – the tithes and the Church property often shaped by endowments centuries earlier. The mentioning of all those facts together with the proposal of handing over the property to professionally managed corporations would probably have been hard enough as a sole measure and met with severe resistance.

However, the idea that the state simply by a decision could transfer the property of the Church, a sacred part of the British Crown, was certainly more than the last straw. This must have shaken the foundations, as also the political development clearly showed. Furthermore, in the end the Ascendancy's secular interests would also be weakened by the increasing influence of Catholics. Any established politician with normal instincts could not seriously have considered the whole proposal – an evident fact. Now, however, the government had advanced means for unpaid tithes out of public revenues and used the power of the state to collect them where possible. These events had surely not shrunk the antagonism in the 'tithe war'. Moreover, the revenues of suppressed benefices (i.e. redundant and withdrawn) were accumulating in a fund.

¹⁸⁹ Levy II, the triggering facts, p 93, number of editions, p 101

Now, the question was the final settlement of the system. How could this financial resource be made useful? Could the government redirect endowments from time immemorial to other uses? Thus, could the state overrule the disposal of private property in the interest of the public good, and, if so, under which circumstances could that happen? Could the state exert influence over the Church at all? Some adversaries, among them Stanley, had upheld the idea that the property of the Church was untouchable and could not be dispersed or redirected by government.

Senior's approach to this is to state what national property is and, consequently, how the governmental authority should decide on such property. The beginning has a somewhat sarcastic tone:

It is highly honourable to the honesty and sagacity of the people that they have guarded against this evil [when a government by legislation sweeps away property of classes] with almost superstitious care, and have allowed every individual to oppose his interests to the utmost extent, with any resemblance they can be urged. It may be questioned, indeed, whether they have not often gone beyond this point and allowed pleas of well-founded expectations,/.../ to impede the general good to an unnecessary, and, therefore, a mischievous degree.¹⁹⁰

The key in Senior's discussion to private versus public interest is the use of the definition of national property. Considered a political pamphlet, this discussion of the legal grounds and opinions and judgements is in fact comprehensive – slightly more than 20 pages. If there is no lawful individual proprietor, the property belongs to the nation, thus the state. Such is the case with *fee simple* of all property held in *mortmain*, also including *advowsons*.¹⁹¹ All such property has no owners beyond the life interest of the existing. Consequently, the estates of bishops and chapters, and the universities and their colleges belong to the state, concludes Senior. The state has the duty not only to protect such property, but also to employ it in the most conducive way. However, the state must not divert the revenues from which they are intended for example education or ecclesiastical purposes.¹⁹² Advowson has as many other legal institutions in Britain, a history almost since time immemorial. Originally, it was the right of the patron, who bestowed the property to the Church to appoint/propose the priest to a

¹⁹⁰ CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 4 -5

¹⁹¹ According to *Concise Oxford Dictionary*: The terms *free simple* and *mortmain* are judicial - the first means land under permanent and absolute tenure to dispose it at will. The second, *mortmain* – refers to tenement, inalienably possessed by an ecclesiastical or other corporation. *Advowson*, finally, is the right to recommend or appoint a member of the Anglican clergy to a vacant benefice.

¹⁹² CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 7-9

certain benefice. However, as time went by this right became annexed to the manor where the church was erected and passes with the estate by inheritance.¹⁹³ This right obviously excluded the opinions of the parishioners, but in Senior's mind, it was also most likely of greater importance open to political and economic abuses. This declaration of the supremacy of the state is an absolute prerequisite of equalising Catholics; but the consequence means an important withdrawal of the ability to exert power in accordance with the old order.

If a diversion, however, argues Senior, is proven appropriate, and existing life-interests are untouched, and the diversion is expedient; then it would be an injustice to avoid undertaking it. 'In other words, if the expediency is proven, we affirm the right'.¹⁹⁴ Now, having stated the sovereignty of the state, the ownership and, not least, the responsibility of the state to manage its property, two equally important questions remain – the position of the church in relation to the state and, finally, the private right of endowing property, e.g. in a will as mortmain in relation to the public interest.. Senior's answer to the first question is simple. Those who oppose the right of the state 'confound the right which clearly does exist with the income, with the right, which does not exist, to waste the fee simple'. They claim, Senior continues, that the property belongs to the church as distinct from the existing bishops. Hence, the property belongs to the bench of bishops forever. If the state allocates this income to support a hospital, this would be spoliation. Who is despoiled is Senior's rhetorical counter-question. Only those who have the rights to appoint the bishops, but these are the rights of the government.¹⁹⁵

Senior's treatment of endowments in mortmain, i.e. the question of individual rights and the public interest is related to his view on the incentives of the individual man. If in respect to the deceased, 'a sentimental regard to their memory', obedience would last forever, land would belong to the dead. Senior repudiates such a right. 'Our ancestors have had their full swing of posthumous power' Laws are for the living and the coming generations. The reasons to respect testaments are mainly two according to Senior. Partly this right induces industry and frugality, partly property is likely to be more beneficially distributed by the testator, than by the general rules of an act of parliament. There is but one legal reason to concede the right of a person to prescribe a specific use of the revenues of an endowment for a longer period

¹⁹³ 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica.

¹⁹⁴ CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 10

¹⁹⁵ CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 15 -17

than for individuals and that is to promote settlements in mortmain according to Senior's opinion.¹⁹⁶

With these principles maintained, the legal tools of the government are settled – the right and the duty. These are applied, above all, to a vigorous attack of the conditions of the Established Church of Ireland, but are also applied as an overhaul of municipal corporations, mainly intended to local administration and charity. Finally and yet importantly, Senior uses the tools to support the claim of the dissenters' admission to the universities.

Senior's reasoning is greatly based on the same foundations as in *A Letter to Lord Howick*, but the tone is increasingly biting; it is obviously a political language. Now he has put aside the arguments of development, common in *A Letter to Lord Howick*. He chooses a historical approach to the fateful question of Catholic emancipation. Religious instruction should not depend on supply and demand. The ancestors had understood this. As long as this is the case, the clergy could speak with authority and independence and be paid in kind; the tithe was the means. As time elapsed ignorance grew, and the gospel became distorted by superstition, Senior continues. The worst distortion was that only the orthodox believers were to be saved, and consequently it would be the duty of the state to compel all its subject to this orthodox faith.

In Ireland where the majority remained Catholics, this error was dire. Moreover, Senior points out the twofold flagrant injustice - an injury of the numerous and poorest class; from their low earnings, cottiers and labourers must support their religious teachers. Moreover, it is an insult that the endowments originally intended for their church now support the church of their conquerors:

So preposterous an arrangement as a splendid endowment for the smallest of the three sects that divide the country, a very moderate endowment for the next in point of numbers, and none at all for the vast majority, was not contemplated by those who established the present church of Ireland; and indeed never could have been contemplated by any judicious – we might say by any sane – legislator.¹⁹⁷

As in *A Letter to Lord Howick* there is a reference to the abundant number of bishops in Ireland needed compared to the few and scattered members corresponding to two dioceses in England, whose bishops fulfil all their duties without complaint. Now, however, Senior has clearly raised the political stakes. Not only are they men of high civil rank enjoying considerable revenue, exceeding many civil offices, but they must be in excess, or

¹⁹⁶ CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 18 -21

¹⁹⁷ CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 24-27, the quotation p 27

‘they would not be so frequently absent from Ireland, and to have been the opinion of the Tories when in office, or they would not have raised to the political bench so many inefficient persons’¹⁹⁸

Now the tools, painstakingly discussed in the long prelude, are used, beginning with the conclusion of the non- advisable idea of retaining the present or appointing bishops of presumably Whig hue but reducing the number of bishops. The accumulating revenues of the prospective reduction of Episcopal bishops are proposed not to be redirected, however, to the remuneration of the Catholic clergy as proposed in *A Letter to Lord Howick*, but to ‘religious and moral’ education, ‘by the appointment of the Education Board - a blessing for which Ireland is indebted to a Whig ministry’.¹⁹⁹ This project was perhaps one of the very few successful, at least temporarily; it lasted until 1852. In fact, this project was the twofold result of a Whig government. Whigs had appointed Whatley and set up the Education Board in which, of course Whatley, became the most influential member. Whatley had prompted the idea of non-sectarian education from his appointment to archbishop of Dublin. This fact together with enforcing discipline in his diocese hardly made him popular among his subordinate clergy, and made Protestants in Ireland in general chagrined.²⁰⁰

Having advanced so far in his pamphlet, Senior leaves the subject of Catholic emancipation for the other subjects of the pamphlet, but he returns by the end of the document. Now his approach is different. He tries to evoke empathy by inserting a ten -page long quotation from a Catholic priest, showing the eternal and detestable bargaining of the fee before the execution of every religious service: christenings, marriages, funerals and anointing. Could any one of the Christian faith or a Repealer²⁰¹ accept the continuance of such a system? Once again, the purpose is to put forward the question of a provision of the Catholic clergy. Now, however, Senior appeals that this should be done by public revenues and not by directly transferring property from one Church to another, since the enmity and hatred have grown too strong between the sects and, in worst case, maybe putting a price on the head of a Protestant vicar.²⁰²

The other main issues concerning religion and constitution are equal admission to the universities for dissenters and the position of the House of Lords. The principles of national

¹⁹⁸ CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 33-35, the quotation p 35

¹⁹⁹ CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 36-37

²⁰⁰ 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica, Whatley

²⁰¹ Repealer – a person advocating the dissolution of the union act.

²⁰² CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 101-105,

property are applied to open the universities, the Anglican strongholds Oxford and Cambridge, for dissenters. They will not do it themselves. Therefore, the interference of Parliament is necessary, Senior requests.²⁰³ As the political situation unfolded, Senior seizes the opportunity to state the political supremacy of the House of Commons versus the House of Lords in a considerable part of the pamphlet. In this section, the liberal message has reached its public maturity. One idea is the need of a second chamber, a British version, with the function to impede or rather delay too rash decisions of the Commons, ‘influenced as that body must be, by the passions and prejudices of the people’.²⁰⁴ Other concerns the biased appointments of officials only among people wealthy enough to be a MP in the Commons – ‘the worst kind of oligarchy’.²⁰⁵ Of particular interest in this context, however, is how Senior wants to phase out the religious and obviously Tory-inclined influence in the Lords, thus also as a lever to appeal to the Whigs but perhaps more to the public in general:

While the legislature consisted exclusively of Churchmen, it was perhaps proper to legislate for the Church. Now it has ceased to be so, it seems fit it should avowedly abdicate that function and allow the members of the Established Church to enjoy a right which is conceded to every other religious community, whether Jews, Quakers, Anabaptists or Methodists, to manage their own strictly religious affairs.²⁰⁶

7.4.3. *Some considerations.*

There are a few formal differences of importance between *A Letter to Lord Howick* in 1831 and *On National Property*, issued in 1835. The *Letter to Lord Howick* rejected the idea of poor laws, but it contained a declaration of ideas. It was an ideological pamphlet of an academic hue comprising a program of an esteemed political economist and a liberal to raise Ireland out of her destitution whereas *On National Property* a few years later is a political pamphlet thrown out to the public since one of the most important steps to progress of Ireland had not budged at all. Instead the question had triggered a constitutional crisis as even seen in its context was a conspicuous and defiant setback that could endanger the political development. After all just a few years before, riots had ravaged in England, some of them paraphrased as extra-parliamentary activities before Parliamentary reform. Moreover, Ireland suffered a tithe war and a dual system of social behaviour – an unfair legal system and an informal, violent system of deterrence. There are other noticeable differences. *A Letter* is

²⁰³ CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 39-41

²⁰⁴ CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 68

²⁰⁵ CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 77

²⁰⁶ CW Ireland, *On National Property*, p 85-86

preceded by a preface and is written in the 'I-form' whereas the suggested preface to *On National Property* is withdrawn on request of the prime minister due to political reasons, but the pamphlet is written in we-form. It seems most likely that Senior had written a pamphlet only concerning the Catholic issue and the Anglican Church when the king dismissed the Whig cabinet. The now disappeared preface contained Senior's suggestion for a solution; principally the idea is that a congregational system should replace the territorial system of the Irish Church. Hence, a minister would be salaried in proportion to the 'real demand' of his services. Moreover, according to the content of the pamphlet redundant clergymen of the Established Church would be paid an allowance in lieu of tithes. Finally, resources are proposed to be redirected to education in accordance with the pamphlet. The use of the first person plural may allude that the suggestions and ideas in the pamphlet are those of the Whigs in general. This seems coherent with the sections that seem to have been elaborated before the crisis: judicial issues concerning the properties in mortmain, admission of dissenters to Oxford and Cambridge, the statement of the obsolete and biased representation of the Anglican Church. Finally, also the ideas of the function of House of Lords seem thoroughly penetrated. Actually, this is the function, which the House of Lords has exerted in recent history. Now, according to the letter to Whately and Senior's minutes, which largely are concordant, the members are doubtful about the political expediency of the congregational system and abandon it. One member expressed it, as 'it would be putting the Irish Church on the footing of a sect'. The enmity that might arouse with reference to the Anglican Church could be enough to overthrow the cabinet, the members feared. Finally, after a discussion whether the rejected part of the proposals or the entire preface would be omitted, it was decided to omit the preface. If the situation was as delicate as described, the withdrawn publication of the preface was indeed not only a technical matter. At least that fragment quoted by Levy can hardly be regarded as anything but highly sardonic. It begins as:

.most mischievous system under which the cure of souls has been considered in the light of property than of a trust...²⁰⁷

The members of the Cabinet approved the publication of the pamphlet without any known changes according to the sources. Yet, not only contained the pamphlet pungent criticism of the Anglican Church, and inefficient bishops of the Irish Church frequently occupying the Bishop's bench and making it a Tory-infested place. The last could probably fit into a

²⁰⁷ Levy II, p 24

pamphlet of a Whig origin, but that the Church should disavow its representation? There is also, however, a sting directed against the ruling Whigs, all members of the aristocracy and all belonging to the *oligarchy* that could afford to be elected MPs and receive appointments as higher officials. Considering these facts, it seems from the point of government highly plausible that the preface simply could not be published and directly connected to the Whig government. Furthermore, the pamphlet, now in circulation since January, visualized that merely the sitting government could ‘keep the wolf from the door.’ In this situation, the pamphlet could serve as a lever to achieve at least something.

8 Ireland, Poor Laws and political laissez-faire (1836.)

8.1 Introduction – the English Inquiry.

As previously mentioned, the Cabinet decided to set up the Poor Law Inquiry, organised as a Royal Commission in early 1832. Since the notions on poor laws are central in the discourse in the early decades in England and, consequently, would have a considerable impact on the Irish policy, it is necessary briefly to account for the composition of the English inquiry and its outcome. Those influential prelates previously mentioned, John Bird Sumner, Senior’s tutor at Eaton and Copleston were appointed members of the commission, besides two other bishops all members of the Bishop’s bench in the House of Lords.²⁰⁸ Lord Brougham had appointed Senior as secretary. Senior proposed two names as members of the committee, Copleston and a philosophical radical, Coulson, a lawyer and Bentham’s former secretary.²⁰⁹ As shown in the preceding section, they had arrived at somewhat different conclusions for poor laws. Chadwick was later assigned as Senior’s co-secretary. Copleston, proposed by Senior, was a former provost of Oriel College and had influenced Whatley and apparently Senior. Senior had obviously gained influence in the cabinet. Thus the committee was mainly composed by representatives of Christian and secular abolitionists. Centrally decided inquiries were sent out to every district and compiled by a considerable group of assistant commissioners. Senior wrote the first part of the report of the report and Chadwick the second which concerns the remedies. Although Senior in the *Letter* had urged that able-bodied would not be the subject of compulsory relief in Ireland at least this was not the outcome. The content of the report is briefly as follows. Parishes would be grouped into unions. These unions would be responsible of workhouses and authorised to erect them. The workhouse test

²⁰⁸ Mandler, p 133

²⁰⁹ Brundage, p 63, Mandler, p 135

of old would now be compulsory. The able-bodied and his family would be entitled to get relief only by moving to the workhouse. Outdoor relief was gradually supposed to cease. This embodied Bentham's idea of *less eligibility*. In addition, relocation of paupers was facilitated if work was available somewhere else. Moreover, the commission suggested the establishment of a central, supervisory board, probably on proposal put forward by Chadwick.²¹⁰ Mainly, this became the English Poor Law Amendment in 1834. Many of the common prejudices of the 19th century, abundant in this field of thoughts on society, were certainly emphasised, in which modern writers such as Brundage often seem to indulge. I leave these parts out however. The components of the system already existed, but now the main idea was explicitly the Benthamist principle of *less eligibility* and within a compulsory law. Thus, the idea was that compulsory poor relief would be the very last resort. A common notion was probably that poverty was related to indolence, or at least it was a convenient idea and, hence, the deterrence was emphasised as a cure.²¹¹

Much discussion has concerned Senior's influence on the commission. He exerted apparently great influence on the appointments of the members of the commission, worked as secretary and was one of two who presented the report to a Cabinet committee that also drafted the Bill.²¹² Senior wrote in a letter to his younger French friend Alexis de Tocqueville that the major part of the report was 'written or rewritten' by him in a passage.²¹³ At any rate, Senior has become the target of many censors due to this report and a few others, and Chadwick – sometimes described as a zealous administrator, advocating central solutions and bureaucracy – is the other target.²¹⁴

8.2 Poor Laws for Ireland – a touchstone

As shown previously, the surge had grown to something similar to a tidal wave, but hardly in compassion for the paupers. However, the interest in applying the Poor Laws in Ireland grew

²¹⁰ Brundage, p 64-67

²¹¹ In fact, the thoughts on poverty and growing population were observed subjects in Europe. Geijer wrote some essays on this subject, the 4th of them concerning Britain in '*The poor laws and their bearing on society*' in 1840.

²¹² Bowley, p 287, Mandler, p 137

²¹³ A de Toqueville, *Correspondence*, volume 1, p 12

²¹⁴ Chadwick founded his career as a secretary of this Commission. Later he became one of the contributors to the Public Health Act in 1848. He was, however, controversial and difficult to work together with, especially for local representatives and his relations with his superior chiefs became 'much strained' due to his unwillingness to cooperate with locally elected representatives. This was partly conducive to the dissolution of the Poor Law commission in 1848 according to the 1911 Encyclopaedia, www.1911encyclopedia.org. See also e.g. Brundage and Mandler p 140, 175. Britannica Online mercifully skips this information and applies only a few lines about his career, the public health issues in particular.

stronger. Senior had seen no solution in poor laws as remedies in Ireland for a generally widespread grave destitution. Senior and Whatley shared a sincere interest in the political conditions of Ireland, and their correspondence show clearly that they worked together in the Whig sphere particularly on Irish matters, Senior as an advisor and Whately as a representative in the House of Lords.²¹⁵ Senior and Whately opposed the idea of introducing poor laws, but some members of the Commission gained a hearing. Eventually, the Cabinet decided to establish another commission in autumn 1834 to inquire into the conditions of the poor in Ireland. Senior exerted a great deal of his influence and recommended Whatley who also became the chairman for this Commission.²¹⁶

There are good reasons to touch somewhat further on this Commission, its report and the events that followed in its wake. It sheds light on the dimensions of remedies very similar to Senior's proposals and the reasons why Senior objected to certain proposals. Finally, the reception of the report puts emphasis on the *Zeitgeist*.

Compared with the English Commission the work of the Irish Commission was protracted. The Commission delivered its first report in 1835 and the eventual report the following year. The political interest had further increased in both England and Ireland, though the reasons were quite different. In parts of England, the immigration was considered a problem, and in Ireland some people expected that a Poor Law would entail remedial measures of the wretched economy. Among them, the Catholic bishop Doyle had compassionately advocated a legalised system of relief the poor. Consequently, there was a growing impatience and a few Members of Parliament made their own proposals in 1835 and 1836.²¹⁷ The Cabinet had to intervene in favour of the Commission and its work. Probably this protracted progress contributed to make the outcome bleaker. The political climate was hardening.

The report was the most thorough investigation into the Irish poverty so far undertaken. The tremendous figures of unemployment were among the facts the Commission accounted for. The Commission concluded that at least 585,000 labourers with families reaching the number of 1.8 million humans, and in total 2,385 000 were without work during thirty weeks of the

²¹⁵ According to their correspondence, Whately had a chamber at his disposal in Senior's home when he visited London e.g. for Parliamentary sessions. As for Whatley's seat in the Bishop's bench, see Mandler p 133

²¹⁶ Black, p 108

²¹⁷ Black, p 106-107

year. The Commission estimated the cost at more than £5,000,000 a year, greatly exceeding the public revenue. The gross rental of Ireland corresponded to less than £10,000,000 a year and the net rental to less than £6,000,000. The Masters of Chancery, members of the special court, had produced these calculations at the request of the Commission. In Ireland, furthermore, five workers for every two labourers were employed for the same quantity of land as in England and yet the productivity in England was 70 percents higher according to the figures.²¹⁸ Although many financial calculations relied on more or less rough estimations, these figures were probably the best available. As far as I can see, nobody cast serious doubts upon the figures. Thus, as for relief and basic improvements of the infrastructure and the productivity to improve the wretched economy, a net contribution by the UK would require a decision by Parliament.

Introduction of a right to relief would not be a remedy for Ireland and the prevalent utter destitution due to the obvious reason that there was simply no sufficient demand of labour, the report stated. Those among the able-bodied that are unable to find employment in Ireland ensured support only by accepting emigration, or as preliminary to it – those who desire to emigrate should receive the means of doing so. This is exactly what Senior proposed in the *Letter* albeit in less detail. The Commission did not intend to institutionalise the workhouse system as a permanent means. A board would carry into effect a system of national improvement in Ireland. This board should examine all matters of such improvements. Moreover, a local board in every county would ‘make presentments’ of public works. If approved these works such as building bridges, roads, deepening rivers would be the responsibility of the board of public works that would carry out these projects. Moreover, law would enforce the cultivation of land – draining and fencing. The Commission also suggests the establishment of agricultural schools.²¹⁹

This is in line with Senior’s proposal, but there are differences, one of them of a certain importance. Senior did not propose draining of bogs and reclaiming wasteland in his *Letter* although Black and Bowley mention these.²²⁰ Senior has not written these measures on either the referred pages or anywhere else in his *Letter*. It is possible, of course, that Senior had

²¹⁸ Nicholls, p 130 -131, 145-6

²¹⁹ Nicholls, p 135 -137

²²⁰ Black, p 161, Bowley, p 247. They mention the measures in the same sequence and refer the same pages 45-46. Actually, Bowley quotes a passage in which these remedies are not mentioned. The content coincides perfectly with the third edition I have read and quoted.

proposed such measures in another document or another issue of the *Letter* but at least not in the third edition. Whether this is more or, as I think, less likely, some of his objections to certain suggestions can shed further light on.

There were as shown conflicting interests afoot. As mentioned, the cabinet had been obliged to defend the work of the commission and Whatley had been fighting an uphill battle with the cabinet. The sentiments within the cabinet may be concluded in a letter to Senior from Lord Howick, now Secretary of War. In this letter, it is clear that Lord Howick's, and probably the Cabinet's, main consideration is how to handle the imposition of rate paying on the Irish landlords who can derive larger income from their estates than the English but would need something in exchange.²²¹ The cabinet showed consequently little interests in the proposals of the commission.

Lord John Russell, now Home Secretary, asked for assessments among them Senior's, which he delivered in a letter to Lord John Russell, dated 14 April 1836. It is an understatement as Black expresses it, Senior's assessment 'could hardly have been unduly critical' although some of his objections were considerable but not essential.²²² Moreover, Senior encloses his *Letter to Lord Howick* from 1831 in his answer to Lord John Russell. However, regarding the content of the *Letter to Lord John*, Senior does object to an uncritical use of draining and fencing as objects of public improvement, though in a moderate way:

As the recommendations stand in the Report they appear to authorize an unlimited expenditure. For what estates in Ireland do not require fencing? And I should protest against any such powers being conceded. I understand, however, that the drainage and fencing alluded to apply only to large district drains and fences adjoining high roads. So limited they may perhaps be useful, but they certainly are liable to abuse.²²³

Although a public board should decide on projects of draining, and they would be financed by loans, Senior finds these projects to be open to ruthless jobbery. It would be too easy to use the power to buy land, perform the required improvements, remove valuable materials, increase prices and mortgages to the level on which the proprietors cannot pay them and get more goods distrained, Senior argues. Of his discussion, there are two other objections of particular interest in this context. One is the suggestion that the Board of Improvement would

²²¹ Levy II, p 263 Letter from Lord Howick to Senior, dated 5 January 1836,

²²² Black, p 108

²²³ *Letter to Lord John Russell*, p 8

have the authority to pull down ‘unwholesome cabins’ paid by local interests - the district and the proprietor. Moreover, the Board would let land in proportion to the allotments of the ‘ejected occupants’. This measure would assuredly need reclaiming waste and draining bogs. The commission had barely concealed the idea in the word ‘unwholesome’. One of the ideas was, to use a technical euphemism, to increase the productivity of the larger estates by removing redundant population. Senior was most likely right that this proposal might be politically dangerous. There is actually a reference to the political unrest in Ireland in his *Letter* where ‘the Whiteboy Code’ is said to restrain the land from necessary investments and being properly cultivated.²²⁴ He rhetorically chooses to object to the use of the word ‘unwholesome’; ‘How many cabins are there which are unwholesome? or rather many which are not?’ He continues by asking if the Board will ‘have land enough for ejected occupiers?’²²⁵ His fear that many new freeholders would just alleviate the pressure of the population temporarily is probably behind his strictures. Soon they would continue subdividing and increasing their number. In a later letter to Lord Howick just before the Bill was to be presented, Senior states that if the wasteland had been productive, it should already have been reclaimed.²²⁶ In fact, Senior advocated large-scale farming with his close friend Alexis de Tocqueville who saw the political, moral and social virtues of a peasant landownership.²²⁷ So also did JS Mill.

These objections are perfectly in line with his opinions on the establishment of agricultural schools and of the political sentiment of the day.²²⁸ They are too many, claims Senior, and therefore they could only use smaller parts of cultivable lands. Instead, he wants to see fewer but larger schools, suitable to educate large-scale farming using ploughs and be models for farming, not gardening.²²⁹ In Senior’s view, there is one aim, large-scale farming, and two risks, further subdivision and swift procreation, if not curbed by emigration and the remaining smallholders and cottiers hired as paid labourers. These opinions are evidently in accordance with the opinions Senior accounted for in his previous *Letter to Lord Howick*. The proposal concerning the unwholesome cabins was probably a compromise within the Commission on one of the most heated political questions. Many cabins, or rather hovels, were certainly ‘unwholesome’, but the proposal of letting new allotments was most likely of Catholic origin. At this time, almost every mainstream economist was in favour of large-scale farming.

²²⁴ *Letter to Lord John Russell*, p 5

²²⁵ *Letter to Lord John Russell*, p 8

²²⁶ Levy II, p 271, Letter to Lord Howick, 30 May 1837

²²⁷ Kahar, p 117

²²⁸ Prest, 113.

²²⁹ *Letter to Lord John Russell*, p 8

Politically it was easier among members of the landed class and their representatives in Parliament to accept reforms concerning large or medium scale farms instead, ‘which would not include tampering with property rights’.²³⁰

Besides the objections mentioned, Senior supported the proposals of the Whately Commission. Anything else would surely have been a surprise. Both Senior and Whately had perceived the political climate. They also mentioned the political wind-shift in their correspondence.²³¹ In the *Letter to Lord Howick* written nearly five years earlier compared to this *Letter to Lord John Russell*, there is a difference in the vocabulary used. There expressions and words such as: ‘I am anxious’, ‘as ample as possible’, ‘public money should be advanced’, ‘for formations of roads, canals and harbours’ – nota bene not to draining bogs and fencing which mainly may be seen as private enterprises and obviously open to jobbery. The whole passage pleads for urgent actions and massive investments in infrastructure. In the *Letter to Lord John Russell*, he expresses himself more cautiously. Now he abstains from inquiring how far the ‘Imperial Revenue’ may be used for Irish objects only, but declares only as his personal opinion:

there is no increase of the public burthens, compatible with the welfare of the empire, to which I as an individual, would not willingly contribute my share.²³²

As for compulsory relief of the able-bodied, he rejects it using the principle of *less eligibility* that the English workhouses aimed to maintain. What could be a more inferior state than the Irish labourer’s? Provision provided by the State must be superior and therefore misdirected.²³³

The proposals of the Whately Commission aimed at raising Ireland out of the worst poverty, but at this point time had run out for thorough measures by the government. Now some words may be said about Nicholls whose book *History of the Irish Poor Law...* from which I have obtained the information about the proposals and estimations of the Whately Commission.²³⁴ Nicholls was, as it seems, a typical representative of those who made a career on popular notions and political actions of the day. Nicholls was a retired sea captain who

²³⁰ Black, p 145.

²³¹ Mandler, p 174-175

²³² *Letter to Lord John Russell*, p 5

²³³ *Letter to Lord John Russell*, p 4

²³⁴ In fact, Nicholls penned three Histories of Poor Laws, The English, The Scot and The Irish, all available at the Royal Library..

was a ‘dyed in the wool’ believer in the deterrence effect of the workhouse system according to Brundage.²³⁵ Maybe he got his inspiration from the discipline in the marine. Nicholls, now a poor law commissioner, had impatiently written to the Cabinet in favour of extending the workhouse system into Ireland and made some suggestions, although he did not pretend to have ‘any personal knowledge of the state of Ireland’, as Black quotes Nicholls.²³⁶ In fact Nicholls had visited Senior as late as 1836 to suggest the introduction of the English Poor Laws or, at any rate, the essential content of them. Senior disagreed in line with his *Letter to Lord John Russell*.²³⁷ It was not only he who Lord John Russell had asked, but also an assistant commissioner Lewis, son of the former chairman of the English Poor Board, about his views of the report, who delivered a scathing review. Black quotes a part of his assessment. It reflects clearly the growing influence of the convenient idea of *political laissez-faire* in its purest form and its view of government:

A Government can only, as it seems to me, attempt to accelerate the improvement of the soil by *indirect* means. In this case, as in most other cases connected the material part of civilisation, its functions are simply negative...²³⁸

Within the government, the composition of ministers had changed. When Senior had lobbied for Whately, the groups around Lansdowne and Althorp under Grey were in majority. Both were interested in political economics and landowners, whereas Lord John Russell was not.²³⁹ Now, however, Melbourne headed the government and the suggestions of the liberal archbishop and his Commission would not fall into good ground. The idea of reclaiming wasteland at public expense seemed particularly repellent. Prest, Russell’s biographer, writes that Whatley had not resisted ‘playing to the gallery’.²⁴⁰ Which galleries one may ask? It was obvious that neither the Cabinet nor a majority of Parliament were prepared to support a more thorough and costlier solution.²⁴¹ Considering the facts, Lord John Russell expediently assigned Nicholls to undertake a hasty inquiry on location. Nicholls delivered his report a few months later. His mission is reprinted in the report.²⁴² Among the tasks were to find out whether poor relief would promote imposture. The principle was:

²³⁵ Brundage, p 53

²³⁶ Black, p 108,

²³⁷ Bowley, p 336

²³⁸ Black, p 109 (including the use of italics)

²³⁹ Mandler, p 173

²⁴⁰ Prest, p 113

²⁴¹ Black, p 110

²⁴² As for Nicholls: In the 1850s Nicholls wrote three books all about history of poor laws – one for Scotland, one for England, and the one I used on Ireland. Seldom have I read a text filled with a more smugly

With a view to this question you will inquire whether any kind of workhouse can be established which shall not, in point of food, clothing and warmth, give its inmates a superior degree of comfort to the common lot of the independent labourer.

Moreover, Russell had given Nicholls following instruction:

Your attention need not be very specially given to the plans for general improvement of Ireland contained in the Report of the Commissioners of the Inquiry; but you will generally remark upon those, or any other plans, which may lead to an increased demand for labour.²⁴³

This was certainly a harsh rebuff of Whately and his Commission, and in the background Senior, but there was more mirroring the political sentiment in 1836. The Commission had estimated the number of people needing assistance to be 2,385,000, but Nicholls estimated the number only at 80,000. According to Black, the difference depends on the different views on poverty. The Commission had calculated the number in order to propose remedial measures of the worst poverty, but Nicholls reckoned on only those who were in acute destitution. On those, he based his plan of poor relief. A sharp border had been drawn between poor relief and the ideas on improving the conditions of society – a government should only stick to ‘indirect means’ was a clearly expressed opinion. A bill was drafted mainly on Nicholls’ proposals in late 1837. When the bill was presented in the House of Lords, the Duke of Wellington, who supported the bill, probably expressed the common sentiment that Nicholls had settled ‘the differences between his grace and the government’.²⁴⁴ Lord John Russell did not show any particular interest in political economics until late and when he, as a politician, did so, it was merely in its political most expedient form – a strict version of only ‘keeping the ring’ and non-governmental inference. From the year of reform to the middle of the 1830s, the sentiment of *political laissez-faire* had markedly grown. The ideas suggested would be costly, but obviously, the idea that England would contribute to the welfare of the ‘mutual’ Union lacked political buoyancy.

8.3 A few considerations.

Although the proposals akin to Senior’s were made public a few years later in a hardening climate, the reception shows clearly the distance between the political opinion and possible measures to alleviate the destitution, but most importantly it shows the lack of interest in improving the basic conditions to improve productivity. Whereas Senior had rejected an

disdainful tone of the subject it treats – Whately’s and his fellow commissioners’ work. Both today’s Britannica Online and the 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica pass him over in silence.

²⁴³ Nicholls, *Three Reports...*, p 4

²⁴⁴ Black, p 111

introduction of poor laws as counteractive, the government proposed them, as it seems, as a makeshift solution. The introduction of poor laws was accounted for as inflamed and the opinions of not least the Irish people were split, ranging from compassion to crude financial interests. It is worth mentioning that the legendary Irish Protestant political leader, O'Connell, was against the introduction of poor laws. Instead, he was prepared to alleviate his demand for the repeal of the union in exchange for Irish reforms.²⁴⁵ It also seems evident that Senior did not propose measures, as Bowley and Black state, to reclaim wasteland; such measures would be counteractive in Senior's mind.

9 Reflections and a few findings.

In the search of information for this paper, I noticed that many writers use the concept of *laissez-faire* as a shibboleth often in combination with moral indignation. In fact, both Bowley and O'Brien remark, the former in 1937 and the later almost 40 years later that the close connection between the crude sentiment of *laissez-faire* and the classical economists are most persistent. O'Brien even suspects that it is in the interest of certain writers for their own purposes to maintain such prejudices. He thinks many writers confuse the classical economists with activities of the Manchester School and the Anti Corn Law League. Bowley refers to the erroneous impression of Bentham (the 'feelosofer') as an economist among the contemporaries, but also the focus on poor laws among economists of the day.²⁴⁶ Since then it seems that not much has changed. Ignorance makes it only too easy to become ensnared by moral judgements.²⁴⁷ At any rate, the reader has to put up with biased information.

I have restricted this inquiry to a rather limited period – from the late 1820s, formally from 1829 to 1836. The obvious reason is that this period is of greater interest, concurring with the Parliamentary Reform and the unleashing of new political forces when Senior evolved his thoughts and ideas on the densely intertwined subjects of economics and politics. In the Malthusian controversy in 1829, Senior as an academic expressed his fundamental theses on economics and politics. When the political wind-shift at last manifested itself in 1830 and, as it likely seemed to him, the dawning of a new political era was imminent, Senior formulated a

²⁴⁵ Black p 101. As for O'Connell, see e.g. McMahon, chapter 10.

²⁴⁶ Bowley p 273-275, O'Brien, *Classical Economists*, p 272

²⁴⁷ One may wonder why some writers righteously tend to point the finger in hindsight with the notions of our time. Perhaps it is easier to moralise than to pursue all facts and notions in a complicated causation of events.

programme in *A Letter to Lord Howick* aimed at influencing the Cabinet to act appropriately, which did not include the imposition of poor laws. In the later part of the selected period, the documents discussed make evident the political struggles of the reality as well as the political tendencies in society. Now political arguments were needed to achieve primary aims. The considered period may be too short in some respects to allow inferences in general on Senior's thoughts in the fields of economics and politics. The general tendency in society was towards a sentiment of *political laissez-faire*. In public opinion, this tendency had been obvious for decades since the turn of the century.²⁴⁸ There is reason to underline the distinction between *political laissez-faire* and *economic laissez-faire*. Senior did certainly not advocate *political laissez-faire*, but as a classical economist, he believed in *economic laissez-faire*. Senior had already realised the devastating political effects of the crude interpretation of Malthus' doctrine in 1829 in opposition to his own postulates of political economics. Their correspondence reveals their basic views on society rather than conveying an exchange of facts. Senior held a different view of economics than those usually described as the traditional Ricardians', Ramsay McCulloch being the archetype, in certain fields of economics, but also, of course, Senior had ambitions. He wanted a change and evidently a powerful government to accomplish necessary reforms in a liberal direction. In this concluding section, there is reason to return to the core of his ideological ground, which obviously is the idea of an early and entirely liberal credo as he expressed them in 1829. The roots are to be found in the context. As shown, there was a strong current of abolishing the poor laws in the wake of Malthus' doctrine, including many influential prelates such as Senior's former tutor at Eton, Sumner, but for the poor law inquiry, Senior suggested the moderate Copleston. The two other parts of his interest, the Irish slough and the religious conflict awoke early. In a report from a journey to Ireland in 1819, he clearly realised the religious oppression of the Catholic population by the Protestants and the politically disastrous consequences of the glaring injustices, although some of his early opinions may seem naive in this letter.²⁴⁹ However, it was most likely the poor laws that made Senior tread on the fields of political economy. He wanted to repeal the poor laws of old in England, but accepted at a later phase Bentham's principle of *less eligibility* as useful for his aims. He opposed the introduction of poor laws in Ireland too. This may seem coherent with a superficial general denial, but he opposed the introduction of poor laws in Ireland and the established English laws for different reasons, something which

²⁴⁸ Black, p 145

²⁴⁹ Levy II, p 218- 219

Bowley has emphasized.²⁵⁰ The rational economic reasons are obvious in both cases – in Ireland the alarming overpopulation and the chronic poverty with looming famines as a corollary and in England a dated parochial system of poor relief, described by Hobsbawm as a millstone around the neck of the rural classes. Typically, on the Irish question Senior’s reply to Lord John Russell was what could be a *less eligible* situation than the Irish cottier’s? Two documents, not often mentioned, may lead to the gist of Senior’s thinking on an individual level during the considered period. During the Swing riots in 1830, Senior held three lectures on wages with ‘references to the present disturbances’ in which Senior regarded the rural labourer in a state of servitude – provided subsistence but deprived of all rights and consequently responsibilities.²⁵¹ The other document is a letter to Lord Howick, in their later correspondence that took place just before Whatley presented the report on Ireland. Not only is Ireland the most barbarous state in Europe according to Senior, but he also describes the abuse of enticing tenants to vote according to the landowner’s preferences as a criminal act – ‘stories that make one’s blood boil’.²⁵² Hence, the poor relief system of old led to a servile or a semi-servile state, but so also did the political oppression of the tenants. If a human being is bereft of the main part of his personal responsibility then Malthus’ bleak population doctrine is applicable. Senior realised, however, that on the individual level education is necessary. In the case of Ireland, Senior saw the Catholic clergy, desirably enlightened, when provided by the state, as the voice of the Catholic population and he supported the denominational education in Ireland.²⁵³ These ideas identify his belief in individual human beings: Given the responsibility and the freedom of choice, human forethought and desires would raise the individual human above the level of animals. A part of this development from a savage state to civilised state was probably the idea of charity towards those who had been unfortunate. The depth of these basic ideas is to be found in his environment. Senior grew up as one of eleven siblings. As a son of a clergyman, he realized how the system of advowsons, properties in mortmain and the trade of benefices worked. Moreover, he experienced for himself the monopoly claims of the Anglican Church, a political system pervaded by the links between this Church and the Tories, such as the influence of the Bishops’ bench in the House of Lords,

²⁵⁰ Bowley, 253

²⁵¹ *Three lectures...*, preface p 6

²⁵² Levy II , Letter to Lord Howick, 8 January 1836, p 268.

²⁵³ Senior supported free education of the handloom weavers in England, Bowley 253. Several of the classical economists realised the need of basic education. Senior as well as the younger JS Mill and Say advocated publicly financed education, O’Brien p 282. Senior probably belonged to the vanguard in this respect. Beyond the period of this inquiry as a member of an Education Commission in 1861, Senior included the children in the duty of the state to give protection and therefore to finance education unless their parents could do this. Robbins, p102.

in short a corrupt machinery of power. Regarding trade and agriculture, he could as his contemporary fellow economists realise the impeding effects of the Corn Laws in the interest of the landed aristocracy and perceive the scarce conditions of life. He and his fellow economists realised the too swift increase of a population bound to rely on vestries, decreasing productivity in agriculture and the abuse of the parochial system by the employers, again the landed aristocracy and probably Tories. Considering these facts, it is not hard to realise his and his colleagues' ideas of self-determination as Bowley mentions. Senior seemed to be unusually consequent in this respect: the individual can only rely on personal incentives and faculties. Senior advocated the rights of the Catholic population politically as well as economically due to this idea. He defended Irish labour immigration, although it was hardly politically expedient to do so. He could not accept monopolies, either state-owned or private. Any monopoly or anything that could resemble an authorised precedence was odious for Senior, whether of trade, religion or of other opinions. For this reason, he would accept neither trade unions nor socialism. They would mean a breach of his basic prerequisite – the personal incentive as a propelling force for responsibility and forethought. In the end, this is a matter of a sentiment not easily described in a few words. There is good reason to believe that Senior as a liberal reformer shared the sentiment Tocqueville expressed on Ireland.²⁵⁴

Senior seemed to believe in an unlimited progress and increase of productivity provided relevant production factors were involved. Again, he and his fellow economists were able to notice the increasing productivity of large-scale farming and the transition from handloom to power loom weaving – a system of capitalism and economies of scale. Senior like some other mainstream economists wanted to introduce large-scale-farming in Ireland according to the English system. For this reason, small freeholders in an overpopulated Ireland offered no solution in Senior's mind. It seems unlikely that he would have advocated the reclaim of wasteland in Ireland as stated by some authors. The idea of large-scale farming presupposed that the Irish tenants would become capitalists and smaller tenants and cottiers hired labourers. Many tenants could hardly have raised the necessary funds. The tenants in general preferred not to be hired labourers.²⁵⁵ Fewer would work in agriculture, and emigration was another part of his solution, but would the peasants have voluntarily accepted it in any extension? Senior was not far from means of compulsion when he expounded his strategy for Ireland in linking relief and emigration.

²⁵⁴ See Appendix 2

²⁵⁵ O'Brien, *Classical Economists*, p 286.

Finally, I should mention a few words about research on Senior. It seems presumptuous to me to do so only with my superficial knowledge of adequate Anglo-Saxon literature, but I will deal with what I have met for this study. In the fields between Senior, Whately and the younger JS Mill there are some potentialities. This unusual cooperation between Senior and his friend Whatley could shed more light on the discourse on Irish matters. Moreover, Whatley as a logician undoubtedly inspired Senior when the latter evolved his view on economics as a deductive science. Later JS Mill elaborated his view on economics as a hypothetical science, of which Senior disapproved. The possible interaction between Senior and Mill may disclose more details on the discourse. It seems possible that Senior and his thoughts influenced JS Mill more than what may be known today.

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Appendix 1. The judicial system, barristers and courts.

Every nation-state has over time developed its system and traditions of the application of law – just consider special gowns, wigs and other visible signs. As the system British system was applied at the beginning of the 19th century, and partly still is, it might be appropriate to mention a few words. Since the system has arisen out of tradition, it is not wholly self-explanatory.

Only barristers may practise in a court of law. To become a barrister, one has to be a member of one of the four Inns of Court, namely the Inner Temple, Middle Temple, Lincoln's Inn and, finally, Gray's Inn. Their governing bodies are called the benches, and those have the exclusive right to appoint barristers or to use an English expression – formally 'to call to the bar'. Their origin can be traced back to the hazy 13th century when the Inns were meant for education of common law rather than Roman law, and a class of literate laymen commenced the legal professions. However, the education of the Inns had ceased many years earlier. In the beginning of the 19th century, they more resembled guilds. Then the formal requirements for appointing a barrister had decreased to be a member a certain number of terms, that is to have paid an entrance fee and an annual sum that was substantial. Practising, preferably well-reputed, barristers taught in the profession in exchange for a substantial fee, £100 a year.

As for canon and civil law, there existed a teaching body, similarly organised as the Inns of Court, named Doctor's Commons, which existed until 1858. Members were those who held degrees as either doctor of civil law at Oxford or doctor of law at Cambridge and subsequently had been admitted as advocates by the presiding officer of the Court of Appeal under the authority of the archbishop of Canterbury.

Beside the cases for the common law, courts complaints evolved concerning 'land and chattels', which were turned to the king and the council, since the common law was regarded as too rigid. These complaints were handled by the Lord Chancellor and later by his Court of Chancery, which by the middle of the 16th century was recognised as a part of the law of the land. The Chancery cases concerned estates, mortgages, contracts, et cetera, thus concepts of within economics.

Finally, it might be added that the Lord Chancellor, thus a member of the cabinet, is the speaker of the House of Lords. Even today, a Roman Catholic cannot be appointed Lord Chancellor. Still up to this day, the House of Lords comprises the 'Law Lords', members of the Supreme Court of Judicature, the 'Spiritual Lords', 21 bishops and many peers. In a strictly formal meaning, the House of Lords is the supreme instance of certain juridical matters. Although the political power of the House is gone, it still has a formal function to scrutinise bills that the House of Commons may not have formulated in sufficient detail, a function that in other states are carried out by councils.

Appendix 2 Tocqueville on Ireland in 1835.

Source: <http://www.historyhome.co.uk/peel/ireland/ire35.htm>

Alexis de Tocqueville visited Ireland in 1835; this is his description of the Poorhouse and the University in Dublin on 9 July 1835.

A vast building maintained from year to year by voluntary gifts. 1,800 to 2,000 paupers are received during the day; they are given food, and, if they are capable of it, work. They go to sleep where they can.

The sight within: the most hideous and disgusting aspect of wretchedness. A very long room full of women and children whose age or infirmity prevents them from working. On the floor the poor are seated pellmell like pigs in the mud of their sty. It is difficult to avoid treading on a half-naked body. In the left wing, a smaller room full of old or disabled men. They sit on wooden benches, crowded close together and all looking in the same direction, as if in the pit of a theatre. They do not talk at all; they do not stir; they look at nothing; they do not appear to be thinking. They neither expect, fear, nor hope anything from life. I am mistaken; they are waiting for supper which is due in three hours. It is the only pleasure that remains to them; apart from that they would have nothing to do but to die.

Further on are those who are able to work. They are seated on the damp earth. They have small mallets in their hands and are breaking stones. They receive a penny at the end of the day. They are the fortunate ones...

From the Poorhouse they took us to the University. An immense, magnificent garden kept up like that of a nobleman. A granite palace; superb church; admirable library. Livened lackeys; twenty-four fellows... Enormous revenues. Men of all religions receive education there. But only members of the [Church of England](#) can administer the establishment and benefit from its revenues.

The University was founded by Elizabeth I on land confiscated from the Catholics, the fathers of those whom we had seen sprawling in the filth of the Poorhouse. The University provides for 1,500 students. Few belong to rich Irish families. Not only does the Irish nobility live away from their homeland; not only do they spend abroad the money their country earns; they have their children educated in England, no doubt for fear that a vague instinct of patriotism and youthful memories might one day attract them to Ireland.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journeys to England and Ireland* (ed. J. P. Mayer, 1958) pp. 121-2.