

PART II

ESSAYS

CHAPTER 8

ECONOMIC THOUGHT AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

Cosma Orsi

ABSTRACT

From 1782 to 1834, the English social legislation shifted from a safety net devised to deal with emergencies to a social security system implemented to cope with the threat of unemployment and poverty. In the attempt to explain this shift, this chapter concentrates on the changed attitudes toward poverty and power relationships in eighteenth-century British society. Especially, it looks at the role played by eighteenth-century British economic thinkers in elaborating arguments in favor of reducing the most evident asymmetries of power characterizing the period of transition from Mercantilism to the Classical era. To what extent did economic thinkers contribute to creating an environment within which a social legislation aimed at improving the living conditions of the poor as the one established in 1795 could be not only envisaged but also implemented? In doing so, this chapter deals with an aspect often undervalued and/or overlooked by historians of economic thought: namely, the relationship between economic theory and social legislation. If the latter is the institutional framework by which both individual and collective well-being can be achieved the former cannot but assume a fundamental role as a useful abstraction which sheds light on the multifaceted reality in which social policies are proposed, forged, and eventually implemented.

Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology: Including a Symposium on
Public Finance in the History of Economic Thought, Volume 38A, 147–172

Copyright © 2020 by Emerald Publishing Limited

All rights of reproduction in any form reserved

ISSN: 0743-4154/doi:10.1108/S0743-4154202000038A012

Keywords: Poor Law; workhouse system; speenhamland system; inequality; social reforms

JEL Code: B12; B19

1. INTRODUCTION

From the end of the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century, especially the latter quarter, English social, political, and economic structures and institutions underwent gradual but profound transformations. They included coping with an accelerating Parliamentary enclosure process, confronting fears caused by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars and handling a series of economic crises that, by the 1790s, were ripping at the very core of the social fabric. In a period marked by growing inequality (Kuznets, 1966, p. 217) the call for public policies on behalf of the poor increased. Starting in 1783 with the *Gilbert Act* and until the establishment of the *New Poor Laws* (1834), the *workhouse system* of poor relief – a system “aimed at nothing less than making the poor a source of profit to the state by forcing them to work for reduced wages” (James, 1930, pp. 344–345) – ceased to be the preferred way to assist the poor. From 1782 to 1834, the English social legislation shifted from a safety net devised to deal with emergencies to a social security system implemented to cope with the threat of unemployment and poverty.

Social and economic historians have provided different explanations for this shift¹. The array of varied, even contrasting, claims expressed on this topic call for further analysis of a period that has been often neglected as a result of the far-reaching shadow cast by the *Poor Law Commissioners Report of 1834*, which constituted the reference framework for the *New Poor Laws* (1834). In this work, we concentrate on the changed attitudes toward poverty and power relationships in eighteenth-century British society: even if inequalities of wealth and status have commonly been taken as the starting point for discussing class relations in pre-industrial Britain, the role played by economic thinkers in reducing the asymmetries of power has often been overlooked. In order to fill this gap, this chapter analyses the role played by a series of distinguished eighteenth-century British economic thinkers (Richard Gouldsmit (no date), Daniel Defoe (1660–1731), Jacob Vanderlint (*d.* 1740), George Berkeley (1685–1753), David Hume (1711–1776), James Steuart (1713–1780), Josiah Tucker (1713–1799), Adam Smith (1723–1790) among others) in the process of achieving a socio-economic environment whereby power relations between the rich and poor would be different from those characterizing the seventeenth century.

To what extent did the new understanding of economic development carved out by these economic writers contribute to fostering the inclusion of the laboring poor in the “social objective function?” Could it be said that it is the result, at least in part, of a changed perception of these pundits concerning major political economy issues like wage rates, labor mobility, and unemployment? To what extent were the contributions of these authors on poverty and inequality used as

a map for the legislator when designing and implementing policies with the objective of tilting the existing social relations based on authority and subjection, to a less unequal and more inclusive ones?

The originality of the present work rests on the effort to put into perspective the array of statements in favor of the laboring classes elaborated by eighteenth-century English economic thinkers and the round of reforms which occurred in the last quarter of that century to identify possible connections between economic theorizing and social legislation. A thorough examination of the most relevant economic issues debated starting from the second quarter of the eighteenth century will offer a broader and insightful perspective of the historical and cultural context in which the round of reforms, epitomized by the *Gilbert Act* (1782), the *Rose Act* (1793), and the *Speenhamland system* (1795), were formulated, approved, and eventually implemented.

This chapter is structured as follows: section two looks at the arguments developed in the second quarter of the eighteenth-century by a minority strand of English economic writers in their attempt to offer an alternative understanding of economic development to the one upheld by the majority of seventeenth century authors on economic issues. Section three carries on looking at how from about 1750 attention shifted to the relationship between economic development and inequality in economic power, and to what extent a high degree of economic inequality was deleterious to the newly established commercial society. Section four evaluates whether the line of defense devised against the plague of poverty during the last quarter of the eighteenth century was consistent with the social and economic reflections that emerged from the field of political economy. The last section pulls together some final considerations.

2. A RENEWED UNDERSTANDING OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: 1725–1750

Established between 1597 and 1601, the Elizabethan *Poor Laws* was a highly organized local system of poor relief designed to help the poor population through a combination of indoor and outdoor relief (Ashby, 1912, p. 155; Boyer, 1990; Hampson, 1934, p. 37; Knot, 1986; Oxley, 1969, pp. 27, 28; Taylor, 1991, pp. 183–208), with the former gradually superseding the latter. From the 1650s onwards, a major issue discussed by the more influential reformers was how to transform the poor from a social liability to an economic asset (Bush, 1649, p. 4; Chamberlen, 1649, p. 12; Goffe, 1650 [1809], pp. 4, 345; Hartlib, 1649, p. 5). This debate prompted the establishment of an embryonic national *workhouses system* aimed at both lowering the burden of assistance and making the poor contribute to the country's prosperity. In the following three decades, the puritan workhouses – based on a genuine humanitarian belief and run as almshouses for the impotent poor – were gradually replaced by a structured *workhouse system* “motivated by purely economic considerations” (Pullan, 1971, p. 401). This shift in attitude was facilitated by economic thinkers, most of them writing on behalf of the emergent – still embryonic – entrepreneurial classes², who “saw a need for

a planned and organized commercial strategy to generate wealth based mainly on manufacturing” (Iverson, 1997, p. 123)³.

The *workhouse system* of poor relief was based upon an *a priori*, if not biased, understanding of the poor’s human nature and their attitude toward working. This mindset was epitomized by the so-called *utility of the poor* doctrine (Furniss, 1920, pp. 117–157)⁴, whose main tenet was the acceptance of (forced) labor by the poor as a necessary condition for national prosperity. Excluding social or economic causes of poverty, its advocates upheld the peculiar view that the poor did not work because they were naturally idle and inclined to licentious, insolent, and impertinent behavior⁵. On these grounds, they maintained that wages above bare subsistence would destroy the poor’s productivity. Fair wages, they believed, would lead the poor to work considerably less and spend their money on alcohol, gambling, prostitution, etc. Accordingly, low wages were seen as a disciplining tool for transforming the poor into subordinate economic agents. Apropos, Thomas Mun (1571 – 1641) argued that, since a negative attitude toward work was an inborn trait of the poor, only “penury and want” could make them “wise and industrious” (Mun, 1664, p. 73).

The number of workhouses increased exponentially from the late seventeenth century to the mid-eighteenth century, reaching their peak in 1723 when Parliament passed the *Workhouse Test Act* (9 George 1, c. 7). From that point onwards, the *workhouse system* became even more closely tied to the commercial needs of the emerging entrepreneurial class – who were always “eager to avail themselves of the supply of cheap labour” (Ashcraft, 1996, p. 48) – rather than to the needs of the masses of unemployed and laboring poor who were locked up in filthy workhouses, and were unable to move around the country in search of gainful employment. Under this new legislation, parishes could deny relief to the poor who did not enter the workhouse; they were even legitimized to apply “commercial methods to the poverty problem” (Fideler, 2006, p. 154). They could extract profit from the poor, through one of the most odious practices put in place, by privately contracting them out (better known as *farming*) with the justification that it was the easiest means of diminishing the financial burden on parishes (Fideler, 2006, p. 154). The legislation enacted in 1723 confirmed the worries expressed by earlier influential writers who underlined that the *workhouse system* of poor relief was saturated with an alleged moral superiority of the wealthy over the poor, thereby legitimizing the former to view the latter as mere instruments for the achievement of their interests – namely, the maintenance of their social and economic privileges and status – no matter the costs for the poor⁶. To what extent the *workhouse system* of poor relief degenerated into an intolerable mechanism of subjection designed for a dominated population of laboring poor was stated by an unknown *Overseer* who reported that “we have many here who would choose to starve, rather than be maintained in [...] the house of correction, as they call it” (Downing, 1732, p. 129).

Even if the idea that England might become rich thanks to the poverty of its subjects had received severe criticism by notable economic thinkers since mid-seventeenth⁷, it was only from the second quarter of the eighteenth century that a minority strand of economic writers began to elaborate a new and dynamic

understanding of economic development at the heart of which was the idea that a prosperous economic system calls for a healthy population that, by obtaining greater reward for their labor, would play a non-secondary role in enlarging domestic markets. With regard to social policies the supporters of such an economic vision recognized that “causation runs from the poor relief and the minimization of risk and uncertainty that it entailed to economic success” and not the other way around (Smith, 1986, p. 206).

Such a stark attack to the prevalent wisdom rested upon an opposing view of human nature to the one upheld by the supporters of make-work schemes. It was purported that the laboring poor were not mere beasts of burden; rather, they were decent, industrious, and trustworthy persons owning and selling a commodity – their labor – in exchange for a wage. The poor were indeed useful, but only if they played a different role in the economic sphere from the one they had played in the past. They were an economic asset as consumers more than as mere producers – who were too often paid below the subsistence level. If the goal was to expand the domestic market, then the laboring classes needed higher wages⁸. It was on these premises that between 1725 and 1737, a minority strand of writers began to develop different views on the work force and appropriate wage levels.

In 1725, Richard Gouldsmith anticipated the case for a high-wage society. Moving from the premise that the doctrine of low wages was a “barbarous notion” he recognized the relevance of the laborers as consumers.

But if we should so far debase human nature as to put them into the condition of brutes, I can't see they would be of much more service to the nation for in such circumstances they could not do anything to promote either the trading or the landed interest; they could not purchase clothes which promotes trade of food which promotes land. (Gouldsmith, 1725, p. 18, in Furniss, 1920, p. 127)

Another influential author who argued against the idea that a country should become rich by immiserating its people was Daniel Defoe. In 1728 he expressed his idea in the following terms

If you would reduce the price of our manufacture by reducing the wages of the poor, who are the workers of manufactures, it is not possible but that you will reduce the value and the goodness of the manufacture. If you expect the poor should work cheaper and not perform their work slighter and more overly, as we call it, and superficially, you expect what is not in the nature of the thing. [...] If these Gentlemen, who are for forcing the Consumption of our Manufacture in England, [by their mere Cheapeness, are content to reduce the wages of the people that make them, to the rate of those in China or India, there is no doubt they might increase the Consumption and sell off the Quantity, but what would be the Advantage? They would sell their Goods and ruin their People; the benefit of which in the Gross, I confess I do not understand. (Defoe, 1728, pp. 61, 66, 67)

Similar to Gouldsmith, Jacob Vanderlint, an author who argued for a more equitable distribution of wealth, in his 1734 essay recognized the relevance of the laborers as consumers and called for higher wages.

Lowering wages would be injurious since the laboring class being the bulk of mankind would in this case affect consumption of things in general so mightily that there would be a want of trade and business amongst the other part of the people. (Vanderlint, 1734, p. 120)

Adding that

If there were full employment for the working people, their wages would as certainly rise to the just value of labour, as we know everything else doth, for which the demand is equal to the quantity; and therefore I deny that there is work enough to employ the people, or that property is reasonably, or sufficiently diffuse until the necessaries are rendered so plentiful, and thereby so cheap, that the wages of the laboring man will purchase as many of them as decent and comfortable support of a middling family requires in that station of life. (Vanderlint, 1734, p. 100, in Furniss, 1920, p. 27)

Between 1735 and 1737 George Berkeley published the *Querist*, a seminal pamphlet in which he reported the disastrous economic situation in Ireland discussing possible improvements. One of the main factors motivating Berkeley to write the *Querist* was his sympathy for the sick and poor, whose “distresses are endless” (Berkeley to Prior (1751) May 19, in Luce – Jessop (1948–1957): VIII, 251). Along with the writings of Gouldsmith, Defoe, and Vanderlint the *Querist* showed a marked preference for high-wage instead of low-wage economic policies. Berkeley’s starting point was the paradox of having poverty and unemployed resources side by side: “Whether we are not in fact the only people who may be said to starve in the midst of plenty” (Berkeley, 1735–1737, Q. 46, 14). This paradox led him to argue against the practice of holding down wages, a policy many of his contemporaries advocated for coping with the supposed negative attitude to work of the poor.

Berkeley rejected the thesis that need was the only condition which induced the poor to work. Rather, he believed the best way to induce them toward steady labor was to expand the pattern of their wants.

Whether the creating of wants be not the likeliest way to produce industry in people? And, whether, if our peasants were accustomed to eat Beef, and wear Shoese would not be more industrious? (Berkeley, 1735–1737, Q. 20, 9)

He insisted on this idea when considering the development of domestic markets when he asked

Whether it be not the Interest of England, that we should cultivate a domestic Commerce among ourselves? And whether it could give them any possible Jealousy, if our small Sum of Cash was contrived to go a little further, if there was a little more Life in our Markets, a little more buying and selling in our Shops, a little better Provision for the Backs and Bellies of many forlorn Wretches throughout the Towns and Villages of this Island? (Berkeley, 1735–1737, Q. 21, 11)

3. POWER AND POVERTY: HIGHER WAGES AGAINST INEQUALITY

By the mid-eighteenth-century the emergence of new vibrant industrial sectors⁹ created in England an impressive economic expansion accompanied by unprecedented growth of national income (Marshall, 1926 [2007], p. 79). The Industrial Revolution began to alter the traditional restraints on economic growth by creating non-landed wealth in unmatched abundance¹⁰. In fact, within a few decades, the English pre-industrial socio-economic order had almost vanished. However, in the midst of this transformation, an increasing number of people suffered severe poverty due to high food prices, low wages, population growth, and the effects of

enclosures. As the Industrial Revolution gathered momentum, the entrepreneurial class began to realize that the long-standing way of organizing production “was a way of making money, but it offered no blueprint for organizing society nor mechanism for advancing its collective welfare” (Koditschek, 1990, p. 230). Despite its profitability, the conditions it encouraged with regard to the labor force (for instance poor sanitation, air and water pollution, industrial accidents, and low wages) hindered the potentiality for further growth. For this reason, they began to think that the wealth generated by the new methods of production could achieve social authority only when they were “used to underwrite paternalism or purchase leisure and culture” (Koditschek, 1990). The convergence of these factors rendered the *workhouse system* of poor relief totally obsolete.

It was in this context that some of the most refined economic writers of the time – prominent among whom were David Hume, James Steuart, and Adam Smith – carved out seminal reflections in the fields of social philosophy and economics, paving the way for a new social-positioning of the poor within society¹¹. These authors pointed out that a society based on excessive inequality would stunt economic growth. Too much inequality would foster sterile consumption by the rich, depress industry and could even endanger the social order. A flourishing society on the other hand would see consumption, productivity, and wages increase simultaneously. If the laboring poor were allowed to partake in the prosperity generated by economic growth, they would further promote the potential for economic progress. Keeping significant portions of the population in paucity went against the economic interests of the nation.

Hume was conscious that in the real-world power relationships did exist. In 1740, he wrote that

... when a person acquires such an authority over me, that not only there is no external obstacle to his actions; but also that he may punish or reward me as he pleases, without any dread of punishment in his turn, I then attribute a full power to him, and consider myself as a subject or vassal. (Hume, 1739–1740 [1896], p. 312)

About 10 years later, he still believed that

where the riches are in few hands, these must enjoy all the power, and will readily conspire to lay the whole burthen on the poor, and oppress them still farther, to the discouragement of all industry

concluding that a “too great disproportion among the citizens weakens any state” (Hume, 1752 [1955], p. 15). Building upon these premises, he offered a powerful statement anticipating a modern concept of welfare economics:

Every person, if possible, ought to enjoy the fruits of his labour, in a full possession of all necessaries and many of the conveniences of life. No one can doubt, but such equality is most suitable to human nature, and diminishes much less from the happiness of the rich than it adds to the poor. (Hume, 1752 [1955])

Hume’s ethical and political reasoning on the imbalance of power included interesting economic arguments. From a microeconomic perspective, the arguments that the working poor were innately lazy, idle, and lethargic and that their nature could be affected only by providing harsh living and working conditions were

dismissed by Hume. He supported the concept that active working habits could be achieved by offering laborers choices and challenges (Hume, 1739–1740, p. 263). While Hume recognized *necessity* as “the great spur to industry and invention” (Hume, 1752 [1955], pp. 17, 18), he purported that fair wages were the best spur for achieving assiduousness and productiveness (Hume, 1752 [1955], p. 13). From the macro-economic stance, he rejected the argument that higher wages would have a negative impact on national prosperity. While he conceded that high wages could result in some foreign trade disadvantage, he believed that “as foreign trade is not the most material circumstance, it is not to be put in competition with the happiness of so many millions” (Hume, 1752 [1955], 19). He bolstered his position by sustaining that higher wages would increase the market for traded goods without impacting inflation since when an economy expands, the demand for workers increases, who in turn ask for higher wages and have more available income, thus creating a further stimulus for economic expansion (Hume, 1752 [1955], 37).

Roughly at the same time the Scottish philosopher was developing his ideas, statements in favor of an economic order based on higher wages abounded in the writings of an array of economic thinkers. For instance, in 1758 Robert Wallace (1697–1771) a religious man with strong economic interests (mainly in population issues) wrote:

Neither government nor trade ought to be managed with the sole view of procuring vast riches to a few, at the expense of grinding- the faces of the poor, and of rendering the laboring people, who are the great body of a nation, miserable. The systems of too many, both merchants and landed gentlemen, tend to no other purpose. While such Gentlemen swim in luxury, and have more than heart could wish, they grudge a small pittance to the lower classes of mankind. We ought to propose more equitable and more merciful schemes. [...] It is ridiculous to be perpetually extolling trade and manufactures, while we are constantly railing at what is evidently connected with them, or necessary to procure them. This is to act inconsistently, and to aim at impossibilities. (Wallace, 1758, pp. 38, 46)

Malachy Postlethwayt (1707–1767) also expressed feelings in favor of the laboring classes. He argued that the poor were not responsible for being idle because “if they were sufficiently encouraged” they “would work far more than they do” (Postlethwayt, 1759, p. 43). In 1767, Nathaniel Forster (1726–1790), argued against the pursuit of low wages saying that

If a man sees that the harder he labours, the higher he shall be taxed, or if he finds in private life that his wages are lowered in proportion to his industry, is it in nature that either of these circumstances should tend to increase his industry? They must always have a contrary effect and will necessarily crush and extinguish it. (Forster, 1767, p. 58)

If so, he concluded that

it as good a general maxim as ever was advanced, that the sure way of engaging a man to go through a work with vigour and spirit is, to ensure him a taste of the sweets of it. (Forster, 1767, p. 61)

At first glance, Sir James Steuart seemed to accept the Mercantilist wage theory *tout-court* (Steuart, 1767 [1966], pp. 693, 694). In fact, he upheld that the wage rate should not be determined by the cost of living, adhering instead to the idea that low wages were essential in order to advance exports. Nevertheless, he also believed that low wages “must not be brought about by *oppression*, but by

the effects of competition alone” and that the mechanism reducing the laboring poor to their physical-necessary implied preventing “it from ever bringing them lower” (Steuart, 1767 [1966], p. 502). The point of major interest for us is Steuart’s treatment of the social and historical character of the laboring poor’s needs. He identified the notion of physical-necessary in term of “ample subsistence.”

It is ample subsistence where no degree of superfluity is implied, which communicates the idea of physical-necessary ... A man enjoys the physical-necessary as to food, when he is fully fed; if he is likewise sufficiently clothed, and well defended against everything which may hurt him, he enjoys his full physical-necessary. (Steuart, 1767 [1966], p. 311)

Concern for the laboring poor was reiterated few pages below when he stated that

a strong healthy person should be able to gain by the exercise of the lowest denominations of industrious labour and without a possibility of being deprived of it, by the competition of others of the same profession.

He added that

in computing the values of the physical-necessary of the lowest denomination, a just allowance must be made for the interruptions of labour: no person can be supposed to work every free day; and the labour of the year must defray the expense of the year. (Steuart, 1767 [1966], pp. 315, 319)¹²

A few years later, Thomas Mortimer (1730–1810) argued that it was “the combined plagues of dearness of provisions, incessant labour and low wages” (Mortimer, 1772, p. 90) that diminished both the skills and creativity of laborers. Even Josiah Tucker, a critic of the laziness of the lower ranks of society, provided arguments for viewing “an increasing living standard for the working classes as a desirable and productive feature of the process of economic growth” (Marshall, 1998, p. 315). For example, he maintained that competent wages were a symptom of a flourishing economy whilst low-wage countries could not afford “costly Experiments or embark on such expensive and long-winded Undertakings, as the Inhabitants of a rich Country can attempt, and execute with Ease” (Tucker, 1774, pp. 31, 32). Tucker believed that a competent reward for labor would speed up the division of labor and the productivity gained would in turn allow the paying of higher wages.

In such a Case, Is it not much cheaper to give 2s. 6d. a Day in the rich Country to the nimble and adroit Artist, than it is to give only 6d. in the poor one, to the tedious, awkward Bungler? (Tucker, 1774, p. 34)

Adam Smith was the first economic thinker able to envision a ‘civilized society’ based on freedom, justice, and material welfare being. The greatness of this author was his being able to outline the scientific foundations for its creation (Rothschild, 2002, p. 434). In Smith’s analysis, the issue of power was utterly relevant as it “can play a considerable role affecting the economic process in several ways, creating privileges on one side and discrimination on the other” (Rothschild, 2002, p. 436). Starting from this premise Smith’s writings show a true concern both with the plight of severe poverty (Himmelfarb, 1984, pp. 46–62) and the imbalances of economic power among the social classes (Baum, 1992, p. 144). Smith’s persuasion that economic freedom led to economic growth was coupled with his concern for economic inequality.

Wherever there is great property, there is great inequality. For one very rich man, there must be at least five hundred poor, and the affluence of the few suppose the indigence of the many. (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 232)¹³

Smith saw no moral faults in the laboring poor. He believed that cause of the poor's aversion to work was disadvantageous institutional and economic circumstances. Unemployment was not the consequence of their inherent traits (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 19). Put it differently, unemployed due to sickness or disability, were not responsible for their condition. Their plight was neither deserved, nor a fate from which they could escape since they had no resources at their disposal. In fact, the poor were judicious, diligent, and reflective citizens. They were extremely concerned with their social position to the extent that "a creditable day-labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt" (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 399).

This defense of the poor stems from Smith's awareness that wealth entails power (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 35). He was conscious that economic power among different classes tends to establish a social order based on social relations geared around two pillars, authority and subordination. According to his stadial theory, the birth of such relations should be placed in the period of pasturage.

The second period of society, that of shepherds, admits of very great inequalities of fortune, and there is no period in which the superiority of fortune gives so great authority to those who possess it. There is no period, accordingly, in which authority and subordination are more perfectly established. (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 713)

The transition from the pasturage to the agricultural age and then to the age of commerce was described by Smith in terms of an historical trajectory of progressive relaxing of unbalanced power relations, ultimately leading to a significant increase of incentives to labor. These incentives led to a greater utility of the land. The subordinated social relations, prevalent in the commercial society, were a heritage that had withstood since the agricultural age. The most common expression of unbalanced relation in a capitalist society was that the "common wages of [a] labour is established by contract, usually between [...] two parties whose interests are by no means the same." In fact, the workmen desire to get as much" as possible while "the masters to give as little as possible. The former are disposed to combine in order to raise, the latter in order to lower the wages of labour (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 83).

Smith concluded that the economic power of the rich allowed them to better organize their interests against those of the poor (Smith, 1776 [1976], pp. 83, 84).

It was on these grounds that he championed fair wages for the laboring poor. Smith considered high wages an indicator of a flourishing and healthy economy as well as an essential feature of a fair society. As the liberal reward of labor would lead to "the greatest publick prosperity" without decreasing the labor supply Smith believed that it ought to become the goal of policy (Cannan, 1926, p. 127). "When wages are high [...] we shall always find the working man more active, diligent and expeditious, then when they are low" (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 85). It is improbable, he added,

that men in general should work better when they are ill fed than when they are well fed, when they are disheartened than when they are in good spirits, when they are frequently sick than when they are generally in good health. (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 92)

“The wages of labour are the encouragement of industry, which, like every other human quality, improves in proportion to the encouragement it receives” (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 91).

Smith believed that in addition to fair wages, addressing poverty also meant implementing policies that fostered a certain degree of redistribution of income. The lopsided power relations between the social classes were one of the main reasons for poverty. Thus, it was necessary for the State to correct such inequality by mobilizing resources to also profit the poor. While he expressed himself with caution on this matter¹⁴, he believed that “some attention of government is necessary in order to prevent the almost entire corruption and degeneracy of the great body of the people” (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 734). Smith’s reasoning rested on the idea that there were shortcomings in economic progress. If, on the one side, the division of labor improved the worker’s dexterity, on the other, it corrupted his “intellectual, social, and marital virtues” (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 327). It was for this reason that Smith’s idea of social welfare called for government concerned with the health of both the mind and the body of its subjects.

Even though the martial spirit of the people were of no use towards the defence of society, yet to prevent that sort of mental mutilation, deformity, and wretchedness, which cowardice necessarily involves in it, from spreading themselves through the great body of the people, would still deserve the most serious attention of government. (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 739)

As they are “just and equitable,” he publicly praised funded schools for the working class (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 306), public works – roads and channels – (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 165), modestly progressive taxation (Smith, 1776 [1976], pp. 368–369) and State regulation on behalf of the workers; for example, establishing that workers’ wages be paid in cash rather than in kind (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 159).

Smith’s ideas were not confined to intellectual debates but spread out to the political debates of his and later times. Both social reformers and political leaders during the 1780s and 1790s would take most of Smith’s reflections very seriously. *The Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* “became a textbook for statesmen seeking to avoid the twin specters of famine and destitution” (Cowherd, 1977, p. xiii). What is of interest is that Smith’s work prospered and grew in influence “not in years of easy affluence but in times of prolonged war, unprecedented industrial change, and repeated economic crisis” (Willis, 1979, p. 737). As Henry Thomas Buckle pointed out, *The Wealth of Nations* was

probably the most important book that has ever been written and is certainly the most valuable contribution ever made by a single man towards establishing the principles on which government should be based. (Buckle, 1872, pp. I, 214)

4. POLITICAL ECONOMY AND SOCIAL LEGISLATION

Starting from the mid-eighteenth century, the *workhouse system* of poor relief went into a profound crisis. From an economic stance, Defoe’s warnings that the conditions of an unstable labor market would impede the *workhouse system* from becoming what it was intended to be, namely a profitable enterprise, were correct¹⁵. From an operational point of view, its inability to cope with the sudden rise

in both the overall population and the concentration of poor people in cities and countryside alike became openly manifest. Not least in importance in the demise of the *workhouse system* of poor relief were the reflections of well-known authors who made apparent to what extent the combination of indoor relief and the *Act of Settlement and Removal*¹⁶ completed the connection between assistance and control/subjection of the poor¹⁷. They viewed the *workhouse system* of poor relief as a mechanism for separating the poor from the rest of society. The major concern of the system was managing and controlling the poor not tackling poverty. Workhouses were not conceived to better the social conditions of the poor. The poor were assisted only in cases of extreme hardship (to avoid them starving to death), but no one expected their condition of poverty to cease. Even if in theory, the *workhouse system* of poor relief should have provided the poor the opportunity to improve their living conditions and access to labor, it in fact enforced the need to “resist any [...] forces which promised to break up class status and facilitate the social advance of the lower orders” (Furniss, 1920, p. 145).

As soon as the Industrial Revolution gained momentum, the wealthy entrepreneurs controlled rural industry more and more actively, paving the way to the incipient capitalist mode of production. The ongoing commercialization of the economy meant that the middle and upper classes grew in size and wealth. Business magnates and bankers not only rivaled aristocracy in term of wealth and prestige, but also in the number of employed people working for them¹⁸. On the institutional side, the paternalistic element strictly linked to an economic vision dear to supporters of the *utility of the poor* and the entrepreneurial-bourgeois approach were destined to collide. To maintain a commercially feasible society, required social relations which were no longer based merely on discipline and dependence, but included impartiality and flexibility. Thus, the endeavor to control the State-machinery (including poor relief) became of strategic importance¹⁹.

The first blow to the *Workhouse Test Act* came from the prominent entrepreneur²⁰ and zealous reformer Thomas Gilbert (1719–1798), whose main goal was to raise the poor’s standard of living whilst reducing the tax burden. Gilbert was involved during his entire life to developing enterprises meant to better the country’s infrastructure (roads and channels). In an obituary published in Peter Lead’s books *Agents of Revolution*, this attitude was described eloquently. By knowing that “the best interests of commerce, manufacturers, and agriculture, are intimately connected with an easy and speedy communication” Gilbert

applied himself to the amendment of the roads, and although he did not succeed in his original plan of procuring a general Act for their improvement yet he carried through the House many provincial bills which tended to make travelling in the countries of Northampton, Warwick, Strafford and Derby, the places to which he particularly directed his attention, infinitely more commodious and agreeable: indeed it is well known, that before his time, the highways were the worst in the Kingdom. (Obituary of Thomas Gilbert, (1799), [1989], in Leade (1989, p. 87))

In 1781, considering the changed economic conditions, he argued that a system based on stern vigilance and refusal for outdoor relief was no longer viable. For Gilbert, workhouses were

generally inhabited by all Sorts of Persons ... Hence arise Confusion, Disorder, and Distresses, not easily to be described. I have long thought it a great Defect in the Management of the common Workhouses, that all Descriptions of poor Persons should be sent thither; where, for the most Part, they are very ill accommodated. (Gilbert, 1781, pp. 6–8)

In support of his preference for allowances rather than indoor relief, Gilbert stressed the inadequacy of wages at a time when the changing economic landscape thrust entrepreneurs to “rely on the free competitive market to determine the price of labour” (Mencher, 1967, p. 110). Furthermore, he viewed the *workhouse system* as considerably more costly than outdoor relief (Slack, 1990, p. 35). According to Gilbert, it was in the best interest of both the poor and the *Rates* to repeal farming-out the poor; extend free movement to the laboring poor; and provide outdoor relief to as many needy persons as possible²¹.

Like Smith, Gilbert was unconvinced by the *Law of Settlement and Removal*. This reform, among other things, was meant to relax the geographical immobility of the laboring poor by prohibiting the removal of sick members and pregnant mothers belonging to the parishes under its provision (Gilbert, 1781, pp. 4–7)²². If enacted, a reform of such proportions would have achieved the twofold goal of increasing industrious behaviors while reducing the *Poor Rates* (Gilbert, 1781, p. 11).

It was only in 1782 that Parliament passed the *Gilbert Act* (22 Geo.3 c.83), a reform meant to substantially amend the *Workhouse Test Act*. Gilbert's *Bills* made provisions for the unemployed, the rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars, and the impotent poor. The first category's needs would be met by allowing the unemployed greater freedom of movement from the rural parishes to industrial towns as well as creating more job opportunities through public works. Parishes would “provide for the Maintenance and Employment of their Poor at a common Expence, without farming them out” (Gilbert, 1781, p. 6). The second group would receive assistance by being lodged in *Houses of Correction* rather than workhouses, since they were less severe in handling the poor (Cowherd, 1960, p. 331). Workhouses were transformed into lodgings for children, the elderly, and the infirm. The rationale behind this solution was two-fold: workhouses had high maintenance costs and inmates were deprived of their liberties.

Within a decade, England was at war with France. Foodstuffs became difficult to import from abroad. The price of bread soared. To make matters worse, the conditions of the poor were made even more dire due to a series of poor harvests. The situation was so bad for the poor that parochial assistance was made both by the “infirm and impotent” and by the “able-bodied and industrious who had, very few of them, ever applied to the parish for relief” (Eden, 1797, pp. 120, 121). Soon, a second major reform would play a fundamental role in the demise of the *workhouse system* of poor relief.

Not yet ready to consider the possibility of increasing wages by law, in 1793 Parliament passed the *Rose Act* (33 Geo. III. c. 54)²³. Its objective was to protect and encourage *Friendly Societies* “in the raising of funds voluntarily for the mutual relief and maintenance of members in sickness, old age, and infirmity” (Cowherd, 1960, p. 333). Rose was quite optimistic about the industriousness of the *Friendly Societies'* members. His *Act* clearly stated they were inevitably industrious, since they had worked hard enough to save the required membership

fee. This demonstrated their willingness to work, which rendered them unlikely to become “chargeable.” When a laborer hit hard times, rather than asking the parish for help, he would go to the *Society* of which he was a member to receive assistance. Rose clearly saw the fast-paced growth of industry and the subsequent increasing demand for labor, especially in wealthy districts and towns (Vernon-Harcourt, 1860, p. 525). In order to help the laboring poor to move where there were greater job opportunities, he established that “No member of a *Friendly Society* was to be removed from any parish until he should become actually chargeable” (33 *Geo.* III. c. 54). The increased mobility of the labor force brought about by the *Rose Act* partially addressed the matter of the increasing costs of poor relief. The *Act* introduced the idea of voluntary

separate funds for the mutual relief and maintenance of the said member in sickness, old age, and infirmity, is likely to be attended with very beneficial effects, by promoting the happiness of individuals, and at the same time diminishing the public burthens. (Vernon-Harcourt, 1860)

In 1795, it became clear that the existing social legislation was insufficient to significantly alter the dreadful conditions of the poor. Additional measures to reduce their hardship were needed²⁴. While assessing how to best compensate rural laborers for the decreased standards of living caused by nearly fifty years of Parliamentary enclosures (Deane, 1965, pp. 52–57; Thompson, 1963, p. 237)²⁵, the authorities considered Samuel Whitbread’s (1720–1796) *Minimum Wage Bill*. On the premise that

in the course of two centuries, the price of labour had not increased more than three or at most four-fold; whereas the price of meat had increased in the proportion of six or seven; and that of clothing, no less than fourteen or fifteen fold in the same time. (Cobbett: 1818, XXXI, p. 703)

Whitbread argued that the Parliament could effectively protect the laboring poor’s living standards by giving them “a right to a part of the produce of [their] labour” and that charity afflicted the laboring poor’s mind as it took away his independence. He believed the introduction of a minimum wage would

rescue the labouring poor from a state of slavish dependence; to enable the husbandman, who dedicated his days to incessant toil, to feed, to clothe, and to lodge his family with some degree of comfort. (*ibid.*)²⁶

Unfortunately, Whitbread was opposed by an admirer of Smith’s (Himmelfarb, 1984, pp. 72, 73), Sir William Pitt – and his *Tory* government – and his *Bill* was defeated.

Almost at the same time, fearing popular upheaval after a poor harvest, the governing elite of Berkshire County decided to hold a meeting to discuss the “miserable state of the labourers” and “the necessity of increasing their wages to subsistence level, instead of leaving them to resort to the parish officer for support for their families” (Hammond and Hammond, 1911 [1929], p. 137). On that occasion, they passed a resolution based on the premise that “the present state of the poor does require further assistance than has been generally given them” (*Berkshire Session Order of Book* 1791–1795, in Aspinall (1959, p. 414)). With the blessing of the entire party, it was decided that

subsidies in aid of wages should be granted in accordance with a scale dependent on the price of bread, so that a minimum income should be assured to the poor irrespective of their earnings. (Polanyi, 1998 [1944], p. 78)²⁷

The *Speenhamland system* was an innovative mechanism as it consisted of graduating the amount of money distributed according to a pre-established ‘scale’ that considered both the size of the family unit and the price of wheat. In deciding that any increase in grain prices had to be accompanied by a corresponding increase in the subsidy, the Berkshire magistrates *de facto* established a minimum income linked to the cost of living. The interesting thing is that the *Speenhamland system* took the form of a guaranteed minimum income distributed in the form of a negative income tax “with a 100 percent marginal rate of tax on earned income below the minimum” (McCloskey, 1973, p. 434). Although the *Speenhamland system* was never transformed into a law adopted nationally, it radically altered the mechanism of the *Poor Laws* for the following forty years²⁸. From that moment on, in fact, the *allowance system* was no longer an aid granted to specific segments of the population; rather, where adopted, it was a right to assistance granted to all those workers remunerated with salaries below subsistence. Even if the *Speenhamland system* was unable to eradicate poverty in rural areas (the 100% marginal taxation prevented it), nonetheless in times of famine it guaranteed the subsistence to the weaker sections of society and a modest additional purchasing power when circumstances improved. Furthermore, it increased the mobility for those workers in search of gainful employment throughout the national territory.

In 1796, after having defeated Whitbread’s *Bill*, Prime Minister Sir William Pitt (1759–1806)²⁹ presented *The Poor Law Reform Bill*. However, he was also reluctant to establish the price of labor through by law preferring instead to limit the scope to increasing the freedom of movement of the laboring poor³⁰. Like Smith, he believed that

The poor laws of this country, [...] had contributed to fetter the circulation of labour. [...] They had prevented the workman from going to that market where he could dispose of his industry to the greatest advantage and the capitalist, from enjoying the person who was qualified to procure him the best returns for his advances. (Pitt, 1796 [1817], p. 132)

Pitt believed that only by breaking this vicious circle “the wealth of the nation would be increased, the poor man rendered not only more comfortable but more virtuous, and the weight of the poor rates [...] greatly diminished” (Pitt, 1796 [1817], p. 133). He also called for the provision of casual outdoor relief to large families and single mothers along with the establishment of *Schools of Industry* aimed to offer some kind of education to poor children in the hopes that they would, one day, improve their position in life. The granting of credit to the poor for the “purchase of a cow or other capital which would help them to help themselves”, or “for setting up the needy in business where there was a prospect of self-support” (Cowherd, 1960, p. 336), were an integral part of his proposed *Bill*.

Pitt’s proposed reform was so far reaching that it raised general alarm³¹. Realizing that an across the board political obstruction would have made it impossible for the *Bill* to pass in any case, he withdrew it. His supporters, however, were able to pass the *Bill* piecemeal over the following years. What is of

interest for our discussion is the influence that the *Wealth of Nations* had on both Whitbread and Pitt. Whitbread's plea for the establishment of a minimum wages and Pitt's call for the elimination of restrictions on the free circulation of the unemployed workforce were both ideas inspired by Smith (McLean, 2006, pp. 90, 91; Rothschild, 1992, p. 84;). Above all, in his *Bill* Pitt adopted Smith's idea that poverty should not only be relieved, but – possibly more importantly – be prevented. As Pitt put it:

The law which prohibits giving relief where any visible property remains should be withdrawn; no temporary occurrence should force a British subject to part with the last shilling of his little capital, and compel him to descend to a state of wretchedness from which he could never recover, merely that he might be entitled to a casual supply. (Pitt, 1796 [1817], p. 136).

What was the importance of this impressive legislative effort? The *Poor Law Returns* of 1804 analyzed the impact of the round of reforms which occurred during the 1780s and 1790s. By that time, most of the workhouses had become poor-houses and only 83.000 out of more than 1.2 million poor received indoor relief. Also, the expenditure for the materials needed to put the poor to work was less than £50,000. Only 293 parishes were still contracting out labor (*House of Commons* (1804), p. 716). The effectiveness of *Friendly Societies* under the *Rose Act* was assessed by Eden. Membership to a *Friendly Society* protected the laboring class from their main risks: unemployment, industrial accidents, illness, and so forth. The required voluntary contributions made the laboring class less likely to seek help from parishes (Eden, 1801, pp. 10, 11). Even if the *Speenhamland system* never formally became law, it helped the laboring population to cope with the labour market's shortcomings in offering adequate wages (income) and occupations (Smelser, 1959, p. 357). The "victims" of technological change – the laboring poor and the unemployed – were helped (or prevented) from depending on parish relief by being provided with an income subsidy on which to subsist (Snell, 1985, pp. 104, 105). Finally, it represented a partial, yet considerable, shift of the cost of production from the entrepreneurs to the taxpayers. The latter included the non-entrepreneurs and often the inhabitants of parishes who were not involved in the building of the productive plants. The transfer of wealth, based on general taxation, from the rich to the poor was seen as a serious attack to the established social hierarchy because it corroded the landed aristocracy's ability to control rural communities³².

That the round of reforms occurred in the last decade of the eighteenth century was a positive result for the poor has been confirmed by notable twentieth-century scholars. Mark Blaug and Daniel Baugh have highlighted that under the *Speenhamland system*, the laboring poor were better equipped to exploit the economic opportunities available to them. Three of Blaug's arguments are important for our analysis. First, he argued that low wages were not an effect of outdoor relief, but rather the reason for enforcing allowances in aid of wages (Blaug, 1963, pp. 161, 162; 1964, p. 242). Second, in sharp contrast with Donald McCloskey (1973, pp. 424–427), he pointed out that the provision of allowances in aid of wages led to an increase in labour productivity by restoring "nutritional deficiencies" caused by substandard wage rates (Blaug, 1963, p. 155)³³. Last, he showed that the funds provided for outdoor relief were so low that it could not have been "an attractive alternative to gainful employment" (Blaug, 1963, pp. 161, 162).

Baugh supported another of Blaug's findings, namely that the workers' average income did not decline between 1792 and 1814 "for, if [it] had, the real cost of relief should have risen" (Baugh, 1975, p. 61). He also agreed with Blaug that, even in the short run, the allowance system "did not produce a disincentive to labour" but provided an alternative explanation namely, "rural parishes were generally small enough to supply any relief with discretion" (Baugh, 1975, p. 61).

From 1782, the year when Parliament passed the *Gilbert Act*, and the *New Poor Laws* (1834), English social legislation shifted from a safety net devised to deal with emergencies to a social security system implemented to cope with the threat of unemployment and poverty at any point in time over a worker's life cycle. The laboring poor on the move was now understood as a potent source of labor, which, like capital itself, must be free to flow, as well as consume. This new understanding of the poor contributed to the shaping of a social security system according to which the mass of the laboring poor had the right to be assisted during hard times. Overall, the new configuration of the *Old Poor Law*, on the one hand, put a halt to the no longer tolerable oppression of the English work force and, on the other, it eased the barriers faced by the newly established industrial sector eager to find the best workers. In the shift from a static economy, based on farming, trade, and the cottage industry, to a more dynamic one dominated by industrial production of consumer goods, workhouses were no longer the preferred institution for dealing with poverty. It was thanks to this legislative effort that the late eighteenth-century English society ceased to perceive the poor as a collective body of others.

5. CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from the first part of our analysis that the new ideas on economic development proposed by a small group of English economic thinkers, starting from the mid-eighteenth century, led to a new way of considering the role of the poor within society. The fifty-year period of economic reflections, political debates, and legislations allowed English society to move from an idea of economic development that accepted the exploitation of the poor in the name of national prosperity to one entailing a deeper comprehension of their role – along with that of low-wage workers – in society. A class seen as a burden came to represent new potential consumers and an economic asset for the country. The second part of this essay evaluated the extent to which the defense against the plague of poverty during the last quarter of the eighteenth century was coherent with the considerations purported by the field of political economy. While further research is needed, the foregoing analysis shows that a partial assessment is possible of the (unintended) convergence of arguments supported by economists and subsequent proposal of social reform – the combination of which may well have contributed to shaping a social security system providing the laboring poor with certain privileges, dignity, and aid when needed.

The works of the authors here analyzed have pointed out that social policies were indissolubly interconnected to issues of justice, equality, and individual responsibility. This mind-set was part of a more liberal and less paternalistic vision of social and economic relationships, which bore important consequences

in the field of social legislation, ultimately leading to substantial amendments of the *Old Poor Law*. The round of reforms which occurred between the 1780s and 1790s not only brought about the demise of the *workhouse system* of poor relief but also led to its partial replacement with broader redistributive schemes, based on subsidies financed by general taxation and private insurance funds. Adopting such a strategy meant turning upside down the idea that a nation is made rich by the number of its working poor. At the very basis of the new set of social policies rested the idea that a perennial state of necessity was highly incompatible with maintaining peaceful social order, a precondition for steady economic growth.

The reconfiguration of English social legislation was consonant with the interests of the established entrepreneurial class willing to eliminate any constraint to allow for its economic ascent. It is worth mentioning that members of this class came to realize that the fight against poverty could neither be won by allowing market rules to dominate nor by allowing the State to take over the economy. The fight could only be won by adopting a model of economic development where State, market and civil society played complementary roles. However, the time was not yet ripe for establishing adequate wage standards by law. Parliament, to obtain the suggested result, passed a set of reforms based on the notion that adequate income should be provided to the laboring poor through subsidies and the rearrangement of the existing system of organizing labor since allowing the able-bodied unemployed to increase their chance of finding employment far from home was preferable to increase wages by law. This view was vital for the emerging industrial sector for three major reasons. It transferred part of their costs of production to general taxation, namely on the landed aristocracy. It averted social unrest which was good for business. Finally, it kept to a minimum the risk of what France underwent in 1789 and its aftermath.

The economic thinkers here analyzed provided a positive contribution to creating an environment within which social reformers were able to suggest social legislation aimed at improving the living conditions of the poor. Even though the rationale for reforming social policy in the latter quarter of the Eighteenth century essentially rested on a broad scope of political and social concerns, it certainly gained strength from the wide held belief that introducing public standards of fairness and support to the laboring poor was not incongruent to the needs of a growing – and rapidly expanding – economy. In a social reality based on constant capitalist exchanges (both as producers and consumers), wage earners soon became fully integrated economic agents acting within the broader structure of society.

NOTES

1. See Hammond and Hammond (1911, pp. 120, 123, 170) [1929], Webb and Webb (1927–1929, pp. 223, 419), Marshall (1956, p. 153, 154), Blaug (1963, pp. 151–184; 1964, pp. 229–245), Coats (1960, pp. 39–51), Cowherd (1960, pp. 328–334), Poynter (1969, p. 16), Himmelfarb (1984), Mandler (1987, p. 134), Boyer (1990, p. 2).

2. In early modern England, Geoff Kennedy recalled, the class composition was much more nuanced than the scheme landed aristocracy/entrepreneurs: “While there certainly were landed aristocrats who were preoccupied by ostentatious living and the unproductive intrigues of country life; and no doubt there were ‘bourgeois’ elements among tradesmen, artisans and merchants who were increasing the wealth of the nation through their

industriousness, there was also a significant fraction of the aristocracy who were engaged in the ‘productive’ improvement” of their landed estates along with what we would today call “capitalist” lines (Kennedy, 2008, p. 234).

3. As a result, in the following decades, make-work schemes were proposed as a solution to the problem of poverty by authors like Richard Haines (1674, 1678), Thomas Firmin (1678, 1681), Matthew Hale (1683), John Cary (1695), John Locke (1697), John Bellers (1696).

4. One of the first references to this doctrine can be found in *The Dialogue Between Pole and Lupset* (1529–33) by Thomas Starkey (c. 1495–1538). In that work, Starkey connected, on the one hand, the enclosures with the need to provide poor relief; and on the other, he justified an “import substitution strategy” with the need to employ the poor (see Perrotta 2004, pp. 131–132).

5. In 1681, an anonymous writer discussing the “strange idleness and stubbornness of our poor” claimed that “surly most of them will not work at all, unless they might earn as much in two days as will keep them a week. And when they do work, they will often mar what they do” (Anon, 1681, p. 8 in Sobel 1989, p. 25). However, the canonical position on the issue was expressed by John Locke (1632–1704) who, in 1697, argued that poverty “can be nothing else but relaxation of discipline and corruption of manners” (Locke, 1697 [1997], p. 184).

6. If Thomas Firmin (1632–1697) maintained that no more than one in twenty would accept to enter a workhouse (Firmin (1678) [1931], in *Social Service Review* 633), the Quaker John Bellers (1654–1725) stated that workhouses “bespeak too much of servitude” (Bellers, 1696, p. 28).

7. William Petty (1623–1687), an author often ahead of his time, expressed his view as follows: “Beside” he said “it is unjust to let any starve, when we think it just to limit the wages of the poor, so as they can lay up nothing against the time of their impotency and want for work,” adding that “if it were proclaimed, That Labourers Wage, &c. should not rise at all upon this [proposed or hypothetical] raising [of the value] of Money, then would this Act be onely a Tax upon the said Laboures as forcing them to lose half their wages, which would not be onely unjust but impossible, unless they could live with the said half, (which is not to be supposed) for then the Law that appoints such Wages were ill made, which should allow the Laboures but just wherewithal to live; for if you allow double, then he works but half so much as he could have done, and otherwise would; which is a loss to the Publick of the fruit of so much labour” (Petty, 1662 [1899], pp. 20, 87).

8. It should be noted that those who championed the emancipation of the low ranks of society had to face constant and resilient opposition. In the *Fable of the Bees* Bernard Mandeville (1670–1733) argued that the poor “have nothing to stir them up to labour, but their Wants, which it is Wisdom to relieve, but Folly to cure” (Mandeville, 1725 [1795], p. 514). Thirty years later, the clergyman John Clayton (1709–1773) maintained that “It is a melancholy Truth which cannot be concealed [...] that much of the poor’s Mysery is owing to themselves; and may with great Justice be imputed to that Idleness, Extravagance, and Mismanagement, which are as notorious, as the Poverty that proceeds from them” (Clayton, 1755, p. 5). Three years later, the clothier and writer on political economy William Temple (1705–1773) reiterated the idea that “the best spur to industry is necessity. The mass of the labourers work only to relieve their present wants and are such votaries to indolence, ease and voluptuousness, that they sacrifice all in consideration to the pleasures of the present moment, regardless of sickness and old age. [...] If a labourer can produce by his wages or plenty, all the necessaries of life, and afterwards have a residuum, he would expend the same, either on gin, rum, brandy, or strong beer; luxurise on greater heaps of fat beef and bacon, and eat perhaps till he spewed; and having gorged and gotten dead drunk, lie down like a pig, and snore till he was fresh. [...] The common conduct of the laboring populace in times of plenty proves, that the easier the means of acquiring necessities, the less work is generally done, and the dearer the necessaries are, the more they labour” (Temple, 1758, pp. 26, 31, 40). This attitude was constantly re-enforced also in the second half of the century, as shown by the works of other notable writers who upheld the view that the poor should be kept at the bottom of the social ladder (see, for example, Henry Fielding, 1751, p. 5;

Joseph Townsend, 1786, p. 35; Thomas Alcock, 1752, p. 9). The common denominator to all these authors, as Dorothy Marshall cogently underlined, was the belief that an increased standard of living for the poor would push them to work less “so to destroy the trade upon which English prosperity was built” (Marshall, 1926 [2007], p. 34).

9. The accelerated growth of national income was due to the fact that “the center of gravity of the economy shifted from primary to secondary and later to tertiary industries” (Hoselitz, 1955, p. 291).

10. The idea of the Industrial Revolution dividing the pre-modern and modern era has been discussed, among other, by Rostow (1960), Landes (1969), and Hobsbawm (1969). Only when the Industrial Revolution gained steam, did internal accumulation become important for economic growth. It was from then on that it could be coherently argued that higher wages were not a hindrance to economic growth – provided that profits were used productively and were not wasted on unproductive labor.

11. Such a vision owed much to the Enlightenment movement and its revisited version of natural law philosophy. Most of the Enlightenment writers’ thoughts on the natural state of man came from their views on natural law: rules discoverable by the use of logic and reason, like scientific laws and theories. Following Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes and Samuel Pufendorf they focused on what humans really were rather than what they should be. Enlightenment thinkers extended the concept to social interactions and human behavior, thinking that, in a natural state (i.e. the absence of society), people naturally follow a system of ethics that govern how their behavior.

12. As a remedy to the problem of the county of Lanark, Steuart suggested “to raise the wages of the lowest class of the industrious” (Steuart, 1767, p. 299). For the sake of precision, he believed that such a policy, as unsatisfactory as it was, would have improved the situation of the workers at the expense of the industrial class (Augier & Théré, 2003, p. 162). Nonetheless, Steuart’s suggestion was well-intended, as it was dictated by his belief that increased consumption on the part of the low and middle class was the key to economic growth (Steuart, 1767, pp. 704, 710, 711). Concern for the poor was expressed in a later, even if less known, pamphlet where he said “Timely endeavours should be used to prevent people from falling into absolute poverty, when in the decline of life. No duty of a pastor is more to be recommended, than that of informing himself of the methods fallen upon by inventive indigence to support life at the cheapest rate, and to turn the little industry which is compatible with this situation to the best account. When he has acquired a perfect knowledge of the different degrees of indigence in the parish; and when he has communicated his observations, by way of instruction, in the house of every poor person, he may then have an opportunity of judging of their several dispositions by their endeavours to improve their poor situation; and he may greatly improve the poor’s fund by a prudent distribution of it according to circumstances” (Steuart, 1769, p. 304).

13. Smith believed that a “progressive state” of economic growth was the goal to be achieved because in it “the condition of the laboring poor, of the great body of the people, seems to be the happiest and the most comfortable” (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 43). Because Smith believed that bettering the living conditions of the poor was advantageous to all (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 88), he argued that “universal opulence” should “extend itself to the lowest ranks of people” (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 15).

14. For him it was a matter of “the greatest delicacy” (Smith, 1759 [1976], p. 734). This said, nothing in Smith’s works show hostility toward the *Poor Laws* as such, while he was in part, uncomfortable with the *Act of Settlement and Removal* (Smith, 1776 [1976], p. 157) because it limited the free circulation of labor throughout the country, and it interfered with his system of *natural liberty* (Smith, 1776). In this light, Geoffrey Gilbert’s inference that Smith had no objections to the principle of the *Poor Laws*, or he would have expressed them (Gilbert, 1997, p. 287; see also Viner, 1927, p. 241) seems to be accurate. Smith was in good company when he criticized the *Settlement Act*. No other piece of legislation indeed received as much criticism; see Hay (1735, pp. 10, 119), North (1753, p. 36), Bentham (1792, p. 234) [1823], Eden (1797). Smith’s rejection of the *Settlement Act*, according to Poynter “became an orthodox tenet of political economy, and his disciples

from Pitt and Crumps to J. R. McCulloch stressed the evil consequences of restricting the free circulation of labor, some of them even asserting this to be the main cause of indigence (Poynter, 1969, p. 5).

15. Daniel Defoe (1704) [1714] expressed disquiet for the results obtained by the *workhouse system* of poor relief in a pamphlet titled *Giving Alms. Not Charity*. In 1722, skepticism was expressed also by the politician and writer Lawrence Braddon, who recognized that within workhouses “Many thousands of the incapable Poor are almost starved for want; thousands of them not having above nine-pence per head per week, for Lodging, Diet and all Necessaries” (Braddon, 1718, p. 62). However, concerns about the economic and administrative rationale governing the system of indoor relief had already been expressed by few but notable writers of social and economic matters (see John Graunt, 1662, p. 351; Samuel Hartlib, 1649, p. 8; John White, 1630 [1930], p. 20).

16. In 1662, Parliament passed *The Poor Relief Act*, designed to designating persons to specific parishes. It was better known as the *Act of Settlement and Removal* and it stood at the very heart of the *Poor Law* until 1795. It decreed which parish was responsible if a poor person were to become in need. Although it firmly established the right of the poor to a minimum subsistence, it became the cornerstone for the control of the laboring poor’s mobility by the local administrative bodies (Landau, 1988, pp. 391, 407). Even if the law was often emended and poorly enacted (Fideler, 2006, p. 144; Marshall, 1926 [2007], p. 175;), it deprived vast sectors of the work force to its freedom of movement. Furthermore, when enacted, it was often accompanied by manifest acts of brutality (Cobbett 1814: XX, 844).

17. See for instance Joseph Massie (1757), John Scott (1773 p. 36), Henry Zouch (1776, pp. 6, 19–21, 34, 41–3), Edward Jones (1776, pp. 11–15), William Blackstone (1776, p. 439) [1803].

18. In this same period, the members of the entrepreneurial class began questioning the idea that landed aristocrats alone should run the country as they please. The issue of who was ruling the country (especially after the 1688) has always been a captivating problem for historians. Even if the bourgeoisies took the power in 1688, the landed aristocracy continued to control the Parliament until mid-Nineteenth century (Pinkham, 1963, p. 85). To this apparent contradiction, in 1847, Engels attempted one possible explanation: “Ever since 1688, separate sections of the bourgeois class have been ruling in England. But, in order to facilitate their seizure of power, the bourgeoisie has allowed the aristocrats, its dependent debtors, to retain their rule in name” (Engels, 1848 [2010], p. 520).

19. Discussing the period from 1753 to 1797, Eden argued that: “the Poor Laws seems to have attracted very general attention both in and out of Parliament” (Eden, 1797, pp. I, 317, 318). In this same period, it would appear that a conspicuous number of wealthy entrepreneurs made their appearance in the *House of Commons* (Namier & Booker, 1963, p. 103).

20. For Gilbert’s successful entrepreneurial career see Lead (1989).

21. Gilbert believed that, in most cases, it was preferable for the impotent poor “to remain in their own Habitations (if they have any) or to be placed with any Friend or Relation, at weekly Allowances, adapted to their Circumstances and Situation; it being understood, in all these Cases, that the Persons who keep them shall have the benefit of such Labour as they are able to perform; and weekly Pay to be fixed accordingly” (Gilbert, 1781, p. 8).

22. The *Gilbert Act* paved the way to the approval by Parliament of both the *Rose Act* and the *Poor Removal Act*.

23. By the end of the century, *Friendly Societies* began to be increasingly perceived as the solution “for the dependence of the labouring population on the Poor Law” (Ruggles, 1793, pp. II, 5).

24. A first measure was the extension to all the laboring poor of the provisions made by the *Rose Act*. In addition, Parliament passed the *Poor Removal Act* (35 Geo. III, c. 101), meant to take the preventive (and executive) power of removing a poor person from a parish away from local authorities. Next, Parliament passed *The Relief of the Poor Act*, which commanded the *Justices of the Peace* to grant casual relief: “to any industrious poor person” who finds himself in “temporary distress”. Adding that: “he shall be entitled to

ask and receive such a relief at his home or house" (36 *Geo.* III. C. 23). The severity of the situation, however, called for measures that were even more drastic

25. The main outcome of this practice was a redistribution of income from small farmers to landowners see Yelling (1977, p. 209), Allen (1982, pp. 937–953).

26. Whitbread's sentence went back to the long-standing tradition initiated by Berkeley and reiterated by Smith. Whitbread believed that by introducing such legislation it was possible to guarantee what Smith found to be a desirable level of wages. However, Smith did not endorse any legislation to ensure minimum wages. Thus, Whitbread's proposal can be seen as an interpretation of what was 'in the spirit' of Smith, rather than what Smith actually said.

27. The *Speenhamland system* allowed for the possibility of being able to count on a guaranteed income not subject to residential constraints and independent of the beneficiary's ability to obtain a sufficient income.

28. In 1797 Pitt attempted – and failed – to press Parliament into turning the *Speenhamland system* into law.

29. Pitt was a well-known admirer of Smith. He saw the Scottish philosopher as a mentor who inspired his economic policy. A year and a half after Smith's death in 1790, while presenting his budget, Pitt said that Smith's "extensive knowledge of details and depth of philosophical research will provide, [...] the best solution of every problem connected with the history of commerce and the system of political economy" (Pitt, 1796: in Rae (1965, pp. 290, 291). Following Smith's teachings, McLean observed, Pitt "promoted commercial treaties in order to bring about free trade, and, [...] tried to bring bot civil rights and economic union to Ireland along the lines that Smith advocated in WN. His budgets were models of Smithian political economy" (McLean, 2006, p. 23). Smith did not fail to appreciate Pitt's friendship. In a letter to Henry Beaufoy written in 1786 he said "I think Myself much honoured by the slightest mark of Mr. Pitts approbation. You may be assured that the long and strict friendship in which I have lived with some of his opponents, does not hinder me from discerning courage, activity, probity, and public spirit in the great outlines of his administration" (Piero Sraffa Collection B5/3, Trinity College, Cambridge).

30. Pitt feared "that if once wages were raised to meet the rise in prices it would not be easy to reduce them when the famine was over" (Hammond & Hammond, 1911 [1929], p.144).

31. Concern for Pitt's proposal also derived from the fact that it was based on the *Speenhamland System* (Deane (1965)).

32. This was the point Malthus made in 1807 when, in *A Letter to Samuel Whitbread*, he defended the interests of the landed aristocracy: "I am fully aware that the poor's rates, as they are at present distributed, press most unequally on a particular class of the community; and I should think it a point of no considerable importance, in the actual state of the country, to relieve the land from bearing almost exclusively the burden of a tax, which, as it falls not only on the net rents of the landlord but in part on the capital employed in agriculture, must necessarily impede the progress of cultivation. But till some effectual and satisfactory provision can be made against the danger that I have pointed out, I should greatly fear, that in endeavouring to avoid one evil, we might fall into another far more fatal and extensive in its consequences" (Malthus, 1807, pp. 27, 28).

33. Regarding low-wage agricultural workers, Blaug argued that a supplement to wages increased consumption and hence the energy and productivity of the workforce (Blaug, 1964, p. 242). Contrary to Blaug, Karl Polanyi considered the long-run results of the *Speenhamland* experiment 'rather ghastly' underlining, as one effect, that "Within a few years the productivity of labour began to sink to that of pauper labour ... the intensity of labour, the care and efficiency with which it was performed, [...] became indistinguishable from 'boondoggling'" (Polanyi, 1998 [1944], pp. 79–80).

REFERENCES

- Alcock, T. (1752). *Observations on the poor laws*. London: R. Baldwin.
 Allen, R. C. (1982). The efficiency and distributional consequences of eighteenth-century enclosures. *The Economic Journal*, 92(368), 937–953.

- Anon. (1681). In Sobel, M. (1989). *The world they made together: Black and white values in eighteenth-century Virginia*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Ashby, W. A. (1912). One hundred years of poor law administration in a Warwickshire village. In P. Vinogradoff (Ed.), *Oxford studies in social history* (Vol. III., pp. 2–190). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ashcraft, R. (1996). Lockean ideas, poverty, and the development of liberal political theory. In J. Brewer & S. Staves (Eds.), *Early modern conceptions of property* (pp. 43–61). London: Routledge.
- Aspinall, A. (Ed.). (1959). *Berkshire session order book 1791–1795, English historical documents*. London: Routledge.
- Augier L., & Th  r  , C. (2003). James Stuart’s approach to stability of price and economic policy, the example of grain prices. In R. Tortajada (Ed.), *The economics of James Stuart* (pp. 151–168). London: Routledge.
- Baugh, D. (1975). The costs of poor relief in South-East England, 1790–1834. *Economic History Review*, 28, 50–68.
- Baum, S. (1992). Poverty, inequality and the role of government: What would Adam Smith say? *Eastern Economic Journal*, 18(2), 143–156.
- Bellers, J. (1696). *Proposals for raising a colledge of industry*. London: T. Sowle.
- Bentham, J. (1792). [1823]. Truth versus Ashhurst; or, law as it is, contrasted with what it is said to be. In J. Bowring (Ed.), *The works of Jeremy Bentham* (Vol. V., pp. 231–237). Edinburgh, Scotland: Tait.
- Berkeley, G. (1735–1737). *The querist*. Dublin, Ireland: R. Reilly.
- Berkeley, G. (1951). In A. A. Luce & T. E. Jessop (Eds.), *The works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne* (1948–1957). London: Thomas Nelson.
- Blackstone, W. (1803). [1776]. *Commentaries on the laws of England*. Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincot.
- Blaug, M. (1963). The myth of the old poor law and the making of the new. *The Journal of Economic History*, 23(2), 151–184.
- Blaug, M. (1964). The poor law report reexamined. *The Journal of Economic History*, 24(2), 229–245.
- Boyer, R. (1990). *An economic history of the English poor law 1750–1850*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Braddon, L. (1718). *The miseries of the poor are a national sin, shame, and charge but by making them happy, we shall remove that guilt*. London: T. Warner.
- Buckle, H. T. (1872). *History of civilization in England* (Vol. I). London: D. Appleton & Company.
- Bush, R. (1649). *The poor man’s friend*. London: Th. Underhill.
- Cannan, E. (1926). Adam Smith as an economist. *Economica*, 6, 123–134.
- Cary, J. (1695). *An essay on the state of England in relation to its trade*. Bristol, England: W. Bonny.
- Chamberlen, P. (1649). *The poor man’s advocate, or England’s Samaritan, pouring cyle and wyne into the wounds of the nation*. London: G. Calvert.
- Clayton J. (1755). *Friendly Advice to the Poor*, London, J. Harrop.
- Coats, A. W. (1960). Economic thought and poor law policy in the eighteenth century. *Economic History Review*, 13(1), 39–51.
- Cobbett, W. (1814). *Parliamentary history of England from the earliest period to the year 1803, XX*. London: Hansard.
- Cobbett, W. (1818). *Parliamentary history of England from the earliest period to the year 1803, XXXI*. London: Hansard.
- Cowherd, R. (1960). The humanitarian reform of the English poor laws from 1782 to 1815. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 104(3), 328–342.
- Cowherd, R. (1977). *Political economists and the English poor laws: A historical study of the influence of classical economics on the formation of social welfare policy*. Athen, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Deane, P. (1965). *The constitution of poverty: Toward a genealogy of liberal governance*. London: Routledge.
- Defoe, D. (1704). [1714]. *Giving alms no charity and employing the poor a grievance to the nation*. London: Booksellers of London and Westminster,
- Defoe, D. (1728). *A plan of the English commerce*. London: C. Rivington.
- Downing, J. (1732). *An Account of Several Work-houses for Employing and Maintaining the Poor: Setting Forth the Rules by which They are Governed, ... As Also of Several Charity Schools for Promoting Work, and Labour*, London: Downing
- Eden, F. M. (1797). *The state of the poor, or an history of the labouring classes in England*. London: B. & J. White.

- Eden, F. M. (1801). *Observation on friendly society*. London: J. White.
- Engels, F. (1848). [2010]. The movement of 1847. *Marx and Engels complete works* (Vol. 6 (pp. 520–529)). London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Fideler, P. (2006). *Social welfare in pre-industrial England*. Houndmills, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fielding, H. (1751). *An enquiry into the causes of the late increase of robbers*. London: A. Millar.
- Firmin, T. (1678). [1931]. *Some proposals for the employing of the poor, especially in and about London, and for the prevention of begging*. *Social Service Review*, 5(4), 633–641.
- Firmin, T. (1681). *Some proposals for the employment of the poor, and for the prevention of idleness and the consequences thereof*. London: Begging.
- Forster, N. (1767). *An enquiry into the causes of the present high price of provisions*. London: J. Fletcher.
- Furniss, E. (1920). *The position of the laborer in a system of nationalism*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Gilbert, T. (1781). *Plan for the better relief and employment of the poor*. London: Wilkie.
- Gilbert, G. (1997). Adam Smith on the nature and causes of poverty. *Review of Social Economy*, 55(3), 273–292.
- Goffe, W. (1809). *How to advance the trade of the nation and employ the poor*. London: *Harleian Miscellany*.
- Gouldsmith, R. (1725). *Some considerations on trade*. London.
- Graunt, J. (1662). *Natural and political observations made upon the bills of morality*. London: The Royal Society.
- Haines, R. (1674). *The prevention of poverty: Or a discourse of the causes of the decay of trade*. London: Nathaniel Brooke.
- Haines, R. (1678). *Provision for the poor; or reasons for the erecting of a workhouse - hospital in every county*. London.
- Hale, M. (1683). *A discourse touching provision for the poor*. London: William Shrowsbery.
- Hammond, J. L., & Hammond, B. (1911) [1929]. *The village labourer 1760–1832: A study in the government of England before the reform bill*. London: Longmans, Green, and CO.
- Hampson, E. M. (1934). *The treatment of poverty in Cambridgeshire, 1597–1834*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hartlib, S. (1649). *London's charities enlarged stilling the poore orphans cry*. London: Matthew Symmons & Robert Ibbitson.
- Hay, W. (1735). *Remarks on the law relating to the poor, with proposals for their better relief and employment*. London: R. Dodsley.
- Himmelfarb, G. (1984). *The idea of poverty. England in the early industrial age*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (1969). *Industry and empire: From 1750 to the present day*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.
- Hume, D. (1752 [1955]). *Writings in Economics*. London & Toronto, Nelson.
- Hume, D. (1739–1740). [1896]. *A treatise of human nature*. London: John Noon.
- Hoselitz, B. F. (1955). Entrepreneurship and capital formation in France and Britain since 1700. *Capital formation and economic growth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- House of Commons. (1804). Abstract of the answers and returns made pursuant to an act, passed in the 43d year of his majesty King George III. 1803–1804 Entitled. An act for procuring returns relative to the expense and maintenance of the poor in England. London: British Census.
- Iverson, D. (1997). *The self at liberty political argument and the arts of government*. London: Cornell University Press.
- James, M. (1930). *Social policy during the puritan revolution*. London: G. Routledge & Sons, Ltd.
- Jones, E. (1776). *Observations on the scheme before parliament of the maintenance of the poor*. Chester, England: J. Poole.
- Kennedy, G. (2008). *Diggers, levellers, and agrarian capitalism: Radical political thought in seventeenth century England*. London: Lexington Books.
- Koditschek, T. (1990). *Class formation and urban industrial society: Bradford, 1750–1850*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Knott, J. (1986). *Popular opposition to the 1834 poor law*. London: Croom Helm.

- Kuznets, S. (1966). *Modern economic growth: Rate, structure, and spread*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Landau, N. (1988). The Laws of Settlement and the Surveillance of Immigration in Eighteenth Century Kent. *Continuity and Change*, 3, 391–420.
- Landes, D. S. (1969). *The unbound Prometheus: Technological change and industrial development in Western Europe from 1750 to the present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lead, P. (1989). *Agents of revolution*. Staffordshire: Staffordshire University of Keele.
- Locke, J. (1697). [1989]. An essay on the poor law. In M. Goldie (Ed.), *John Locke political essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Massie, J. (1757). *Consideration relating to the poor and the poor law*. London: T. Paine.
- Malthus, T. R. (1807). *A letter to Samuel Whitbread*. London: J. Johnson.
- Mandeville, B. (1725). [1795]. *The fable of the bees. Or, private vices and publick benefits*. London.
- Mandler, P. (1987). The making of the new poor law Redivivus. *Past & Present*, 117, 131–157.
- Marshall, D. (1926) [2007]. *The English poor in the eighteenth century*. New York, NY: Augustus Kelly.
- Marshall, D. (1956). *English people in the eighteenth century*. London: Longmann Green & CO, LTD.
- Marshall, M. (1998). Scottish economic thought and the high wage economy, Hume, Smith and McCulloch on wages and work motivation. *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 45(3), 309–328.
- McCloskey, D. (1973). New perspective on the poor law. *Explorations in Economic History*, 10, 419–436.
- McLean, I. (2006). *Adam Smith radical and egalitarian*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press.
- Mencher, S. (1967). *Poor law to poverty program. Economic security policy in Britain and the United State*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Mortimer, T. (1772). *Elements of commerce. Politics and finance*. London: Self-published.
- Mun, T. (1664). *England's treasure by Forraign trade*. London: Thomas Clark.
- Namier, L., & Brook, J. (1963). *The history of parliament: The house of commons, 1754–1790*. London: Secker & Warburg.
- North, R. (1753). *A discourse of the poor: Shewing the pernicious tendency of the laws now in force for their maintenance and settlement*. London: Montague North.
- Obituary of Thomas Gilbert. (1799). [1989]. Staffordshire advertise. In P. Lead (Ed.), *Agents of revolution*. Staffordshire: University of Keele.
- Oxley, W. (1969). Permanent poor in South-West Lancashire under the old poor law. In J. R. Harris (Ed.), *Liverpool and Merseyside* (pp. 16–49). New York, NY: Augustus M. Kelley.
- Perrotta, C. (2004). *Consumption like an investment. From Hesiod to Adam Smith*. London: Routledge.
- Petty, W. (1662). [1899]. *The economic writings of Sir William Petty* (Vol. I). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pinkham, L. (1963). William of orange: Prime mover of the revolution. In G. M. Straka (Ed.), *The revolution of 1688: Whig triumph or palace revolution* (pp. 77–85). Boston, MA: Hearsh.
- Pitt, W. (1796) [1817]). *The speeches of the right honourable William Pitt in the house of commons* (pp. 129–137). London: Longman.
- Pitt, W. (1796). [1965]. Address to the house of commons. In Rae J. (Ed.). *Life of Adam Smith*. New York, NY: Augustus M. Kelley.
- Polanyi, K. (1998). [1944]. *The great transformation. The political and economic origins of our time*. London: Beacon Press.
- Postlethwayt, M. (1759). *Britain's commercial interest: Explained and improved*. London: D. Browne.
- Poynter, R. J. (1969). *Society and pauperism. English ideas on poor relief, 1795–1834*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Pullan, B. S. (1971). *Rich and poor in renaissance Venice: The social institutions of a catholic state, to 1620*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rostow, W. W. (1960). *The stages of economic growth: A non-communist manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rothschild, E. (1992). Adam Smith and conservative economics. *Economic History Review*, 45(1), 74–96.
- Rothschild, K. W. (2002). The absence of power in contemporary economic theory. *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 31, 433–442.

- Ruggles, T. (1793). *The history of the poor; their rights, duties, and the laws respecting them*. London: J. Deighton.
- Scott, J. (1773). *Observation on the state of the parochial and vagrant poor*. London: Edward & Charles Dilly.
- Slack, P. (1990). *The English Poor Law 1531–1782*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smelser, N. (1959). *Social change in the industrial revolution*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Smith, A. (1759). [1976]. *The theory of moral sentiments*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Fund.
- Smith, A. (1776). [1976]. *An inquiry into the nature and the causes of the wealth of nations*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, R. (1986). Transfer incomes, risk and security: The roles of the family and the collectivity in recent theories of fertility change. In D. Coleman & R. Schofield (Eds.), *The state of population theory: Forward from Malthus* (pp. 96–130). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Snell, K. (1985). *Annals of the labouring poor: Social change and agrarian England, 1660–1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Starkey, T. (1529–1533). [1989]. In T. F. Mayer (Ed.), *A dialogue between pole and Lupset* (pp. xxi + 150). London: Royal Historical Society.
- Steuart J. (1767). *An inquiry into the principles of political economy*. London: Millar and Caddel.
- Steuart, J. (1769). [1805]. Consideration on the interests of Lanark. In J. Steuart (Ed.), *The works, political, metaphysical, and chronological, of the late James Stuart*. London: Caddel and Davies.
- Taylor, J. S. (1991). A different kind of speenhamland: Non-resident relief in the industrial revolution. *Journal of British Studies*, 30(2), 183–208.
- Temple, W. (1758). *A vindication of commerce and the arts*. London: J. Nourse.
- Thompson, E. P. (1963). *The making of the working class*. London: Penguin Books.
- Townsend, J. (1786). *A dissertation on the poor laws, by a well-Whished to mankind*. London: Ridgway.
- Tucker, J. (1774). *Four tracts on political and commercial subjects*. London: T. Cadell.
- Vanderlint, J. (1734). *Money answers all things*. London: J. Wilford.
- Vernon-Harcourt, L. (1860). *The diaries and correspondence of the right hon. George Rose, II*. London: Creative Media Partners, LLC.
- Viner, J. (1927). Adam Smith and Laissez Faire. *Journal of Political Economy*, 35(1), 198–232.
- Yelling, J. A. (1977). *Common field and enclosure in England 1450–1850*. London: Macmillan.
- Wallace, R. (1758). *Characteristics of the present political state of Great Britain*. London: A. Millard.
- Webb, S., & Webb, B. (1927–1929). *English poor law history. Part I: The old poor law*. London: London Green.
- White, J. (1630). [1930]. *Planter's plea*. London: The Sandy Bay.
- Willis, K. (1979). [1984]. The role in parliament of the economic ideas of Adam Smith. In J. C. Wood (Ed.), *Adam Smith. Critical assessments (Vol. IV)* (pp. 505–44). London: Routledge.
- Zouch, H. (1776). *Remarks upon the late resolutions of the house of commons respecting the proposed change of the poor laws*. England: Leeds, G. Wright.