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Broken Britain: Past, Present and Future of the British Underclass

Diplomová práce

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla v ní předepsaným způsobem všechnu použitou literaturu

V Olomouci dne

Poděkování

Ráda bych poděkovala Mgr. Emě Jelínkové, Ph.D. za pomoc při vedení mé diplomové práce.

Contents

1 Introduction

In 1990, Charles Murray published his inquiry into the British society. More specifically, he focused on the existence of the "underclass" that could be already found in the United States. Even though he admitted that the composition of the British "underclass" was different than in the United States, he nevertheless confirmed its existence and predicted its growth. Ten years later, Murray returned to this topic and confirmed his former findings and prediction. However, in Britain, he found both supporters and opponents to his work. The definitions and concepts of the "underclass" and the two opposing sides of the argument are the subject of the following chapter ("Defining the Term 'Underclass'"). In brief, the right-wing commentators hold the view that those at the bottom of the social scale are to blame for their situation. On the contrary, the left-wing commentators believe that the members of the "underclass" are the victims of the society. Thus the first aim of this work is to form our own opinion on this question and to determine which of the two resolutions is more probable.

In order to make the decision, it is necessary to explore the history of the working-class, from which the contemporary "underclass" originated. We will begin our inquiry in the second half of the eighteenth century because in this period the agriculture revolution caused major changes in the society, for example enclosures and Highland clearances. The next chapters will lead us through the Industrial Revolution, Victorian and Edwardian Britain, World War One, inter-war period and World War Two. Then, we will continue with the second half of the twentieth century until the present situation. In each period, we will attempt to explore the political, economical and social circumstances of Britain with the focus on the working-classes. By examining the processes the working-class has undergone so far, it will be possible to make a judgement about the causes and characteristics of the "underclass."

The second aim of the thesis is to comment on the status of the British "chavs." Even though the label is still controversial especially among the social commentators, it is a part of common vocabulary and is omnipresent due to the mass media. Our task will be to determine whether "chavs" correspond to their presentation by the media and support evidence if we decide on the contrary. This task is closely related to the third aim of this work, which is partly suggested in its title; namely, whether the British society is truly "broken." Lastly, it is important to note that all the three tasks are

interconnected and the inquiry into the history of the British society and its working-class is crucial for the overall understanding.

2 Defining the Term "Underclass"

The term "underclass" has perhaps as many meanings as there are those defining it. Some even do not acknowledge the term or deny that there is anything like "underclass" in Britain. Thus instead of trying to define the term, a list of possible understandings of the term is given below.

Anthony Giddens defines "underclass" as "[a] class of individuals situated at the bottom of the class system, normally composed of people from ethnic minority backgrounds."[1] In this definition, Giddens mentions that it is above all ethnic minorities that compose the "underclass." However, this situation is more typical of the United States than of Great Britain. For example both Murray[2] and Field[3] claim that the underclass in Britain is mainly white.

Moreover, Murray also specifies the underclass by differentiating between the poor. He states that "the 'underclass' does not refer to degree of poverty, but to a type of poverty."[4] By the type he refers to the behavioural patterns of the poor. He talks about juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, drugs or aversion to work. In other words, it is the label of "undeserving" poor.

Similarly, Allan Buckingham attaches to the "underclass" features such as "the attitude of fatalism and an unwillingness to think ahead."[5] He further states that

> the act of providing guaranteed benefits and housing to lone mothers sends a moral message to the poor, declaring that it is fine to act in an irresponsible manner since the state will pick up the tab. Eventually, as lone-parenthood and welfare dependency becomes the norm in housing estates, the social stigma attaching to such behaviour weakens. And so, the final barrier to a mass underclass vanishes.[6]

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[1] Anthony Giddens et al., *Introduction to Sociology*, 8th ed, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012), A16.

[2] Charles Murray, *The Emerging British Underclass* (London: The IEA Health and Welfare Unit, 1990), 7.

[3] Frank Field, "Britain's Underclass: Countering the Growth," in Charles Murray, *The Emerging British Underclass* (London: The IEA Health and Welfare Unit, 1990), 38.

[4] Murray, *The Emerging British Underclass*, 1.

[5] Alan Buckingham, "A Statistical Update," in Charles Murray, *Charles Murray and the Underclass: The Developing Debate* (London: IEA Health and Welfare Unit in association with *The Sunday Times*, 1996), 171, accessed November 11, 2013, http://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/cw33.pdf.

[6] Buckingham, "A Statistical Update", 172.

Thus, Buckingham shares Murray's view of the underclass regarding the absence of the incentive to change their attitudes. However, he also implies that this could be the result of not only their own values but also of the system that does not force them to any counter-action and erases any negative connotations connected to their status.

On the other hand, Kirk Mann is very sceptical about Murray's view and says that "[i]t is tempting to suggest that he sees the underclass as criminally violent bastards who refuse to work."[7] Therefore, Mann provides a definition of his own (though he disagrees with the increasing numbers of definitions that are already there) by introducing the term "lapilli."

> Lapilli are thrown out by volcanoes and this seemed to be a good metaphor for the experience of all those who are dependent on public welfare. Simultaneously, lapilli are active and potentially dangerous, since they can set the surrounding area ablaze. Thus lapilli are both product of more powerful sources and also active themselves. Until they are expelled, lapilli are indistinguishable from the volcano ... those excluded from the best jobs, housing, etc., are also part of the broader working class.[8]

Mann's definition adds more characteristics to the "underclass." He suggests the dependence on welfare, the invisibility and activity of the members of the underclass and he also implies they are the victims of the system. The welfare dependence is accepted by Murray as well but the invisibility causes a problem since Murray associates the underclass with improper behaviour, which makes them identifiable among the other classes. By activity Kirk means the ability to be heard in the time of need. He even advocates the rioters and demonstrators since they have no other choice, being "not respectable," they are excluded from any discussions and require immediate actions instead of long-lasting process of political debates.[9] This exclusion from any debates can be supported by the process of enclosing, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[7] Kirk Mann, The Making of an English "underclass"?: The Social Divisions of Welfare and Labour (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), 106.

[8] Mann, The Making of an English "underclass"?,160.

[9] Mann, The Making of an English "underclass"?,140.

Frank Field is also the supporter of the victimization of the "underclass." He does not attach any culture of broken morals to this social group like Murray does. He regards the "underclass" as the victims of post-1979 development and thus blames Thatcher's government for ostracising the working class both socially and economically.[10]

Buckingham concludes the two approaches by explaining that "Murray's view is of an underclass made up of individuals with deplorable attitudes who lack foresight. The counter view sees the underclass as unlucky members of the working-class who have been made victims by economic circumstances."[11] Even though there is a disagreement about whom to blame and what terminology to use, all these commentators acknowledge the existence of "underclass" and consider it to be a distinct part of the society.

Also, we have to highlight an important point before exploring the "underclass" and that is the distinction between the "underclass" and working-class. As Smith argues, the members of the "underclass" do not participate in the labour market at all, which brings us to the point made earlier about the welfare dependency.

In conclusion, for the purpose of this work, we will define the underclass as a social class at the bottom of the social scale, distinct from the working-class as regards qualification and potential welfare dependency. Also, we will try to determine whether they are the victims of the system or if their situation is the result of a moral failure, as the Victorians believed. In order to explore the British "underclass" as it is acknowledged today (using various terminology), we have to look back into the history of the working-classes and the poor in Britain in order to explain its formation and characteristics.

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[10] See Frank Field, "Britain's Underclass: Countering the Growth," in Charles Murray, *The Emerging British Underclass* (London: The IEA Health and Welfare Unit, 1990).

[11] Buckingham, "A Statistical Update", 181.

3 The Late Eighteenth Century: Pre-Industrial Time

3.1 Agricultural Revolution: The Enclosures and Highland Clearances

3.1.1 The Enclosures

The agriculture system in England underwent great changes in the second half of the Eighteenth century. Until then, the land surrounding the villages and towns was common to all inhabitants. It was so called "open-field or three-field system."[12] The open-field itself suggests that there were no walls or fences surrounding the strips of land; in other words, the land belonging to a landowner was not enclosed. The three-field system refers to the system of farming.[13] Moreover, there was also the common wood where people could collect firewood, the common pasture and "waste land" that was not cultivated.[14] Everyone who worked on the land had the rights of common; i.e. the right to use the common fields as pasture or gather the wood in the woodland. Later, however, "incorporation" was introduced and this legal document certified the right to use the common lands.[15]

Pauline Gregg identifies five classes of people inhabiting rural England. Firstly, it was the lord of the manor, usually a squire who owned a substantial area of land and worked the land either himself or rented it to a farmer and gained the profit from the rent. Secondly, there were the freeholders or yeomanry, who ranged with respect to the amount of land they owned. Thirdly, there were those who owned tenures or rented the land. This class of farmers was not so secure in their living since they did not own the land. The forth class was composed of squatters and cottagers who did not own any land but were permitted to build a cottage on the waste land and even let their cattle graze on the pasture. Lastly, there were farm servants and labourers, who supplied

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[12] Pauline Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain, 1760–1972,* 7th ed. (London: Harrap, 1973), 19.

[13] The feudal system was based on using two thirds of the land leaving the third one idle and serving as a pastureland.

[14] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain,* 19.

[15] Hammond, *The Village Labourer,* 10.

the landowners with manual work.[16] The advantage of the system, as Hammond and Hammond claim, was that even the poorest inhabitants of the village could rise to become land owners, for example the labourers after saving enough money could build their own cottage and thus acquire the rights of common.[17]

However, this system had many disadvantages in the economic point of view and with the breakdown of the feudal system and the onset of capitalism, feudalism and common ownership had to be eliminated. Nevertheless, enclosures were not a novelty in Britain since they began during the Tudor times. In the eighteenth century, the number of enclosures was rising rapidly and there were no "checks and balances" or any concern for the poorest class anymore. Moreover, the large landowners were not only aristocrats with the sense of responsibility for the life of the community but there were also the emergent merchants and capitalist with only their success and power in view and thus breaking the spirit of the community in the village.

Furthermore, there were other than economic reasons behind the transformation. Among the main ones were rising prices, the growing population that demanded more produce and desire for increasing profit among the landowners. Also, the ownership of land was connected to political and social power. Finally, it was the time of great innovations in farming including improvement of equipment, introduction of manure and new crops for the cattle as well as for the people. The old system of farming was thus considered as a non-effective and obsolete practice.

Moreover, there was much scorn for the small farmers, cottagers and squatters, who were considered as old-fashioned as their farming methods. On the other hand, the innovators or "gentleman farmers"[18] gradually introduced the new techniques and were later followed by the minor landowners. The innovators believed that the land should be under their ownership since they could use it more effectively and this went hand in hand with the need of more produce for the growing population. Thus with all the novel features and ideas intertwined, the time seemed ripe for agricultural revolution.

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[16] See Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain, 21-22* and Hammond, *The Village Labourer,* 4-10.

[17] Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, 10.

[18] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain*, 25.

However, not everyone was to profit from the transformations. In fact, the only groups that could were the large landowners since they had the land as well as political power in their possession. To secure the profit from farming for themselves, they began to build fences around their lands. The approval to enclosure could be granted by Parliamentary "Enclosure Acts."[19] Even though the permission had to be approved of and given royal consent it was not difficult to obtain it. The final decision was based on the power that particular Lord of Manor had in the Parliament. Moreover, they could influence the composition of the committee that considered objections to the Bill. Also, not all objections were taken into account. The objections raised by cottagers, squatters or small landowners were of no importance. Furthermore, the landowners could submit their petition for enclosure without even informing their neighbours so that they learned about the enclosure only when the commissioners supervising the enclosure appeared in the village. In 1774, there were Standing Orders attached to the Enclosure Acts which ordered the petitioner to place the information about the enclosure on the church door in the village. Nevertheless, the notice was still only informative and brought no power to the poorer neighbours. Therefore, if there was any discussion about the Bill at all, it was between the promoter of the Bill and other landowners. Consequently, as the economic and social pressures were growing and there were virtually no obstacles to obtain the necessary permission, the number of the Enclosure Acts rapidly increased after 1750s as we can observe from the chart provided by Hammond and Hammond.

Chart 1 Enclosure Acts, 1700-1844[20]

Years	**Common fields and some waste**		**Waste only**	
	Acts	**Acreage**	**Acts**	**Acreage**
1700-1760	151	237 845	56	74 518
1761-1801	1 479	2 428 721	521	752 150
1802-1844	1 075	1 610 302	808	939 043
Total	**2 706**	**4 276 868**	**1385**	**1 765 711**

[19] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain*, 23 and G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The British Common People, 1746-1946* (London: Methuem, 1961), 121.

[20] Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, 17.

The chart shows the number of Acts and acres of land under enclosure. There are three major periods, the first one (1700-1760) being our starting point. We may observe that there was a great increase in the number of Acts regarding the enclosure of common fields and some waste between the periods of 1700-1760 and 1761-1801 (i.e. first and second period). The number of Acts in the second period was almost ten times higher than in the previous period. Consequently, the expanse of land claimed by landowners grew as well. The same development can be observed in case of waste areas. However, in both cases the rise in Acts between the second and the third period was not so dramatic. There were even less Acts enclosing the common fields and some waste in the last period. However, this trend was not the same in case of waste only. Nevertheless, we may conclude that the greatest changes occurred between the first and the second period; i.e. at the end of the eighteenth century and continued in the following century although the increase was not so significant anymore. Yet the enclosing process was still in progress and the villagers using the common land were under continual attack of the landowners, who claimed the common land their own.

So the effects on the other classes (apart from the wealthier freeholders) were quite different than the profit experienced by the major landowners. Those freeholders who were not able to pay for the expenses associated with enclosure of the land (fences) were forced to either rent the land or sell it and find themselves another home. The remaining three classes were not so fortunate as regards the income from the sale of their property for they owned none. As a result, the tenants, cottagers and squatters became labourers on the farms. Other possibilities left to them were emigration or moving to an industrial town and work in the emergent factories. However, the last possibility resulted in growth of the poor or working-class population in the cities. Furthermore, as the cities had to pay for their poor, they were not allowed to leave their towns until able to provide for themselves financially. The homes of cottagers were destroyed since they had no legal right to inhabit the land and the landowners feared they would return. Thus, as Gregg states "a landless proletariat was created."[21] Also, as the Hammonds note, instead of the labourer who was a part of the community with some hopes for the future and certain rights of his own, there was suddenly a labourer with no hope, no rights, no power and no home, no community to turn to.

[21] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain*, 30.

The Hammonds go on to claim that the place where you could find such a man was a public house.[22] And so this is the beginning of the urban working-class and potentially an underclass as we defined it in the previous chapter.

Richards, on the other hand, argues that it was the population growth in the 1750s that gave rise to the number of work seekers. He states that the new system of agriculture after enclosures demanded more labour force than the old system. Thus the farmers were able to find work even in the transformed system. Nevertheless, the growing numbers of potential labourers was undoubtedly rising and the demand could not be met anymore.[23]

3.1.2 Highland Clearances

Whereas the enclosures were relevant to the rural areas of England, the Scottish experience is associated with clearances or evictions.[24] Even though Richards argues that "[t]he Highland experience was generally common to most other rural zones in the British Isles,"[25] there are some differences that need to be mentioned. Richards, in his characterisation of Highland clearances, provides us with the crucial difference: "Clearing the Highlands required the ejection of the common Highlanders ... and their replacement by cattle, sheep and deer."[26] This description implies that the process was in one way opposite to the enclosures. In case of enclosures, the cattle, in fact, were removed from the land to be replaced by the more advanced agriculture. Even though the removal of the labourers was necessary in both cases, "[t]he actual implementation of enclosure did not diminish the demand for labour, and the new agriculture required ... larger amounts of labour than before."[27] Thus the English and Welsh labourers still had a chance to be given work in the lord's house since the agriculture basically remained the same but became more efficient. On the contrary, the farming in Scottish Highlands was completely eliminated on behalf of sheep or cattle farming. Therefore, there was no

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[22] See Hammond, *The Village Labourer,* 81.

[23] See Eric Richards, *The Highland Clearances: People, Landlords and Rural Turmoil* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2012), Kindle edition.

[24] Since the Welsh lords did not have such power over the farmers as the Scottish lords had, we could place the Welsh experience closer to the English.

[25] Richards, *The Highland Clearances,* Kindle edition.

[26] Richards, *The Highland Clearances,* Kindle edition.

[27] Richards, *The Highland Clearances,* Kindle edition.

place for the former inhabitants anymore and the clearances were more devastating for Scottish labourers.

Also, as another quotation suggests, there were both old and new owners, as there were in the case of enclosures (Lords as well as merchants), who pushed the rural inhabitants from their lands. The evicted tenants settled in towns to work in the factories, as their English and Welsh counterparts or were shipped to the territories owned by the British Crown, such as America. "It was a policy executed over a period of about 100 years by the old and new owners of the great Highland estates ... the Highlands were transformed and ... people reduced to the periphery of the region."[28] Moreover, the phrase "policy executed" suggests that similarly to the enclosure experience, the rural inhabitants had no voice in the process since it was the matter of decision within the ruling class.

Unlike enclosures, however, no Acts of Parliament were needed in the Scottish environment. Also, the shift from feudal to capitalistic system was more dramatic than in the English circumstances. The reasons for both of these differences can be found in history. In the Scottish society, there was a close bond between the clans and the Chief. Although Richards claims that this bond began to loosen even before the Battle of Culloden, as the Jacobite defeat in 1746 accelerated the whole process.[29] The feudal responsibility of the landlords, however, was not dropped so easily in all cases. Some landlords tried to save their peasantry from evictions and destitution and went even bankrupt in the process. Nevertheless, there was no legal right of the tenants to the land and all was in the power of the lords.

The clearances started in 1750s and continued with new vigour in 1780s. The evictions ended officially in 1886 by Crofters' Holdings Act, which granted the crofters the legal right to the land. One of the reasons for clearances was economic since the landlords observed the rising prices of wool. Secondly, the land in Scotland was cheaper than in England. Thirdly, the clearances were only another example of the general agricultural revolution. Since the 1750s, there was a great growth of population in Western Europe and the landlords could not provide for all their peasantry and chose radical depopulation of the areas in order to avoid famine and extreme poverty. Finally, as for their English counterparts, it was easier and safer for

[28] Richards, *The Highland Clearances*, Kindle edition.

[29] Richards, *The Highland Clearances*, Kindle edition.

the landlords to collect rents from one major sheep farmer than from minor and numerous tenants. Therefore it seems that the clearances were an inevitable result of the overall agricultural revolution, which struck also the marginal parts of the Britain and as such cannot be attributed only to greed on the side of the landlords and merchants.

Similarly to enclosures, the class that suffered most during clearances were the cottagers and squatters. Unlike in the English case, however, all tenants suffered the negative consequences as well because they had no right to the land at all. Moreover, as Gregg proclaimed the emergence of the proletariat as the result of enclosures, Richards confirms her observation by stating that clearances led to the "concentration of the rural population into villages with the new status of proletariat."[30] Thus both of these changes resulted in the creation of a new class, members of which became the factory workers in the new industrialized society.

3.1.3 "Large Industrial Villages"[31]

Even the people in small towns or villages who did not earn their living as farmers were not spared from the impact of the overall economic and social changes. These villagers could practice crafts at home and create their own domestic industry. However, similarly to the lands that were centralized under a larger landowner, the wool industries were centralized into factories in town. Thus the domestic trades were destroyed by the more profitable factories and the small traders were forced to enter the factories as well.

Also, the dominant industries in particular shires changed during the onset of industrial revolution. For example, Norwich, the leading town in the wool industry, was overpowered by West Riding since the county was able to adapt itself to factory production.[32] Furthermore, as Cole and Postgate claim, the Southern "merchant-clothier was too much the gentleman, and too inexperienced industrially, to become a factory-entrepreneur, and the 'domestic' weavers ... had no means of applying the new

[30] Richards, *The Highland Clearances*, Kindle edition.

[31] G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common British People, 1746–1946* (London: Methuem, 1961), 63.

[32] For more examples see Cole and Postgate, *The Common British People*, 61-68

technique for themselves."[33] Thus we can draw an analogy between the fate of the sceptical and financially weak farmers and the village workers. The result was that the domestic workers (like the farmers) lost the only source of their income and were forced to find a different employment. Thus the outcome was identical with that of the small farmers, i.e. their movement leading to the factories in order to obtain employment.

3.2 The Poor Law: The Settlement Laws and Speenhamland System

3.2.1 Settlement Laws

Settlement Laws that controlled the movement of labourers limited the hopes and opportunities of migrating labourers. With no work and no place to live, the labourer could find work in another parish. This was, however, not possible because of the Settlement Laws. The labourer must have been invited or given a certificate by his home parish that enabled him to enter a different one. The officials had, once more, power over the lives and movement of the poor. The main force behind the permission granting was the responsibility for the poor in the parish.

Since 1598 and later 1601, the years of Elizabeth I Poor Relief Acts, the state had been providing for those in need in the form of poor relief on the local basis. This was administered either in the form of weekly pension (outdoor relief) or the able-bodied poor were placed in the workhouse, the sick in the poorhouse and the idle in the house of correction (all three being indoor reliefs). The process of granting poor relief became simplified in 1782 by Gilbert's Act that enabled the three forms of indoor provision to merge into one; that of a workhouse. By 1622 the Act of Settlement was added to the existing legislation.[34] As Hammond points out "every person had one parish, and one only, in which he or she had a settlement and a right to parish relief."[35] Therefore, the Settlement Laws were an important addition to the Poor Laws since they regulated the movement of those claiming the relief by establishing their entitlement to

[33] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 65.

[34] For more detail see Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, 121-124 and Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, 38-42.

[35] Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, 88.

it. Since the financial source of the payments was the parish, we can easily understand that the parishes were eager to remove the dependants from their territory, which often resulted in disputes between the parishes. The Settlement Laws were amended in 1795 and since then, the permissions or certificates were not required anymore and the labourers could be expelled from the parish only if they became a burden (even if only temporarily). However, the Poor Laws were not sufficient at the end of the eighteenth century and the government was not able to deal with the still more pressing problem.

3.2.2 Speenhamland System

Nevertheless, not all landlords and Members of Parliament ignored the problems of the poor. There were some attempts to improve their conditions through fixation of wages and setting of minimum wage. One of the early proponents was for example Samuel Whitebread. However, all the suggestions met with criticism and failed. Despite the fact that the Government distanced itself from any policy regulating the wage rates, Justices of the Peace, who met in Speenhamland in the same year Samuel Whitebread presented his wage regulation policy (1795), designed a poor relief system that should help the poor with their ordeal and hunger. The system was readily adopted throughout England until the Poor Law was eventually reformed in 1834.

By adopting this scheme, the parish granted the labourers such wages so that a man would be able to buy three gallon loaves of bread a week and women and children one and a half gallon loaves of bread a week. In some cases the money would be entirely replaced by food allowances (similarly to Poor Laws, the execution of Speenhamland scheme varied from parish to parish since it was in the hands of the local administrators). Thus the wages were based on the price of bread and size of the family. Nevertheless, the system also enabled the employers to provide the labourers with low wages since the parish would pay the difference between the wage given by the employer and the subsistence level. As a result, the poor became fully dependent on the parish relief and had to work for very low wages. Consequently, even though the system was designed to advance the conditions of the poor, it led them into servitude. On the other hand, despite the overall criticism of the scheme, Fraser argues

that by providing for the poor, the ruling class expressed their concern for the poor. It also proved that the poor were not as stigmatized as they would become later on.[36]

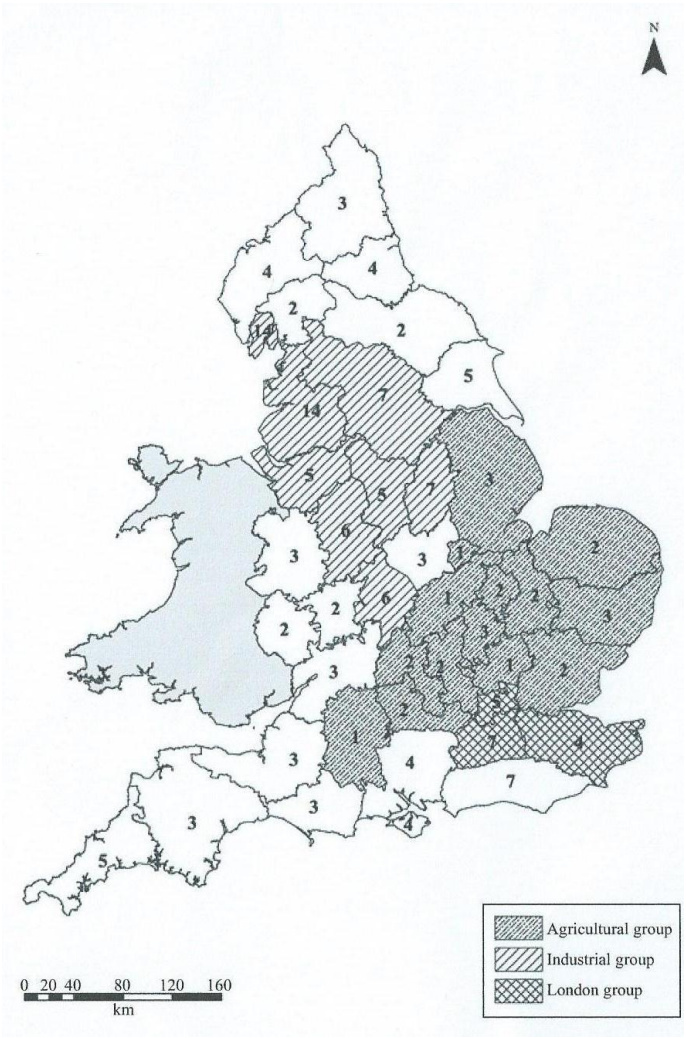
3.3 Changing Demographics in the Eighteenth Century

We have seen that the agricultural revolution that occurred in the eighteenth century was also accompanied by the increase in population. These two changes resulted in the surplus of population in areas that were not capable of sustaining the growing numbers of inhabitants. Thus, together with the landless labourers, the people moved in order to obtain work and that could be found in the industrialized towns. Unfortunately, the first census was conducted in 1801 and thus the population of theprevious period is based on estimates. The major work in this area was prepared by John Rickman, who was in charge of censuses from 1801 to 1841 and whose earlier estimates were later revised in order to eliminate the errors. He provided not only national, but also county estimates. These can show us the changing demographics and population growth at the onset of the Industrial Revolution. The estimates for the pre-census period are based on the registers of burials, marriages and baptisms.[37] The map below is taken from Wrigley, who based his estimates on those of Rickman. Unfortunately, only the data for England are available.

[36] See Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State,* 45-46.

[37] E. A. Wrigley, "English county populations in the later eighteenth century," *Economic History Review* 60, no. 1 (February 2007): 35-69, *Business Source Complete*, EBSCO*host*, accessed February 11, 2014, 36.

Map 1 English County Populations in the Later Eighteenth Century [38]



Wrigley divided the counties of England into three groups: Agriculture, Industrial and London group. The numbers indicate the scale of population growth in the individual counties and the higher the number, the bigger the increase in population (for example number 1 signifies an increase 0-9.9 per cent). Thus, for example the English counties of Wiltshire, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire and Rutland experienced the smallest growth in the period from 1761 to 1801. Moreover, all of these counties belong to the agriculture group. On the other hand, Lancashire from the industrial group underwent the highest increase in population in this period, namely the population in 1761 is estimated at 301 407 and in 1801 at 703 555.[39]

[38] E. A. Wrigley, "English county populations in the later eighteenth century," 57.

[39] E. A. Wrigley, "English county populations in the later eighteenth century," 54.

Map 1 also implies that there was greater growth in population in the industrial counties in the North of England. In this group, there are the following counties: Lancashire, the West Riding, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire. We have already mentioned West Riding growing in importance in woollen industry and replacing Norwich in this respect. Since there was a substantial growth in these counties, we might expect a surplus of population and also the presence of factories, which would employ the people. Thus these counties would be the target of the new working class that emerged as the result of enclosures and clearances.

Overall, in the 1761 to 1801 the population of England rose from 6.3 million to 8.7 million.[40] The data for Scotland and Wales are problematic to obtain. Nevertheless, Webster estimated the population of Scotland at 1.3 million in 1755[41] and the data from 1801 found 1.6 million people living in Scotland.[42] Welsh data show us the population of 0.6 million in 1801[43] and 0.5 million in 1751.[44] All the three areas experienced the growth of population. The number of inhabitants will still grow in the nineteenth century and more reliable data will be available. In case of Scotland, it is interesting that the population was on rise despite the hungers, clearances and emigration Therefore, there can be no doubt that if it had not been for clearances, the population would have risen more significantly and the welfare of the people would have deteriorated even more.

It is interesting that the population of the agriculture group was also rising despite the migration to towns. As Map 1 shows, there was some increase in the rural areas even though it was not as significant as in the industrial parts of the country.

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[40] E. A. Wrigley, "English county populations in the later eighteenth century," 56.

[41] James Gray Kyd, ed., introduction to *Scottish Population Statistics: Including Webster's Analysis of Population 1755* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1952), accessed February 10, 2014, http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files2/the-census/Webster_final.pdf, xxvi.

[42] Julie Jefferies, *Focus on People and Migration: Chapter One: The UK Population: Past, Present and Future, a*ccessed February 10, 2014, http://tna.europarchive.org/20100413151426/http://statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/fom2005/01_FOPM_Population.pdf, 3.

[43] Julie Jefferies, *Focus on People and Migration*, 3.

[44] University of Portsmouth, "Estimated Population of England and Wales, 1570-1750," accessed February 11, 2014, http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/SRC_P/6/GB1841ABS_1.

Therefore, the devastation and depopulation of countryside was not so dramatic. This fact can be once more attributed to the general growth of population.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored the agricultural revolution in Great Britain that occurred in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The revolution which was caused by advancement in technology is associated mainly with enclosures and clearances. As we have seen, both of these processes lasted many years, enclosures dating back to the Tudors and clearances to 1750s. Moreover, the result of both was the creation of the landless and often, especially in Scotland, workless poor. At the same time, it would be wrong to blame the landlords and the ruling class for the evils since they were not strictly speaking the initiators of the changes. Even the rich were forced to adapt to the new circumstances and we could see their struggle mainly in Highlands where the old community feeling had to be broken by the new system. As the growth of population suggested, the lessening of number of inhabitants was necessary for welfare of the people.

In both cases, the people who suffered most by the transformation were also those who had no power over the process. Thus we could agree with Kirk Mann, who views the poor as the victims of the system. Moreover, the Acts of Settlement limited the movement of the poor labourers and the Speedhamland system enabled the employers to exploit the workforce. Despite the treatment the poor received, there was surprisingly little rebellion apart from few exceptions such as the Insurrection of 1792 in Highlands[45] and "the revolt of the housewives"[46] in 1795 in England. So we could agree with Mann also in this case since these instances of rebellion could be viewed as the only possible way to attract attention to the problems of the poor for the law offered no protection.

So the later part of the eighteenth century brought the first major changes to the social structure especially in Scotland where the old order was broken down completely. What we are interested in, however, is the emergent working class that moved to the major industrial cities and was to inhabit the lowest positions in the social scale.

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[45] Richards, *The Highland Clearances,* Kindle edition.

[46] See See Hammond, *The Village Labourer,* 96-98.

4 Industrial Revolution

4.1 Political Environment

4.1.1 The Crown and the Parliament

George III was the third Hanoverian King but the first of the Hanoverian dynasty to be born in England. His reign, 1760–1801, covers the early period of the Industrial Revolution. Unlike his Hanoverian predecessors who let the Parliament gain in power, he stirred the peace of the members of Parliament by his attempts to regain his voice in political matters. Nevertheless, he was not very successful. Moreover, John Wilkes, in his *North Briton*, published a controversial article aimed at the King. George III, however, did even better when he ridiculed himself by having Wilkes put on trial because Wilkes, as a Member of Parliament could not be arrested. Fortunately for the King, Wilkes was later wounded in a duel and forced to leave. During his absence he was disposed of his membership in Parliament and his article condemned. After his return in 1768, he won a seat back to the Parliament but was deprived of it once again. Upon being taken to prison, the people demonstrated in front of the cells and the demonstration resulted in severe intervention of the regiment and deaths of six people. However, owing to Wilkes's influential friends, he was elected "an alderman of the City."[47] What followed was not only one but another two expulsions and one replacement from office. The people and even the working-class engaged in the consequent protests and strikes thus declaring that the arbitrary application of power of the ruling class would not be tolerated. In order to gain more power, Wilkes' supporters started a campaign outside London. They organized meetings and collected signatures for Petitions to Parliament. As we will see further on, meetings and Petitions will become means of expressing the people's opinions.

Even though Wilkes did not get into Parliament, he took hold of London. He even became Lord Mayor and tried to improve the conditions of the people while the press was still releasing the articles supporting his cause. In 1774, Wilkes was elected to Parliament again. Then came the war with the colonies and the loyalty to the Crown became uppermost. Nevertheless, Wilkes remained in Parliament and spoke for democracy and appealed to the House of Commons for the basic rights even of

[47] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 101.

the poorest men. The call for "the rights of men" will be heard once more in Britain in less than ten years. Although Wilkes was able to restore his power in 1780, he was defeated virtually by his own supporters whose violent riots in London were aimed at Catholics (Gordon Riots).[48] Wilkes did not desire this kind of campaign and with a few men tried to restore peace but eventually needed the help of the King's men. After this failure and great disappointment, Wilkes retired from politics.

Despite the final defeat of Wilkes, there are five significant observations that need to be highlighted because they bear common features with the later political working-class movements. Firstly, the people were eager to defend their rights and found a representative to speak for them. Secondly, the agitators were well-organized and participated in distribution of pamphlets and toured around Britain to promote their cause. Thirdly, the Wilkes' supporters were from both middle as well as working-class. The two classes were thus able to join forces in common cause and as we will learn later, the partnership will be restored again. Fourthly, unfortunately in case of Gordon Riots, the mob also showed its darker side – that of vandalism and drunkenness. Lastly, the military force showed little regard for the men's lives.

4.1.2 The People and the Government

4.1.2.1 French Revolution

The event that shook the whole Europe at the end of the eighteenth century was the French Revolution (1789–1799). The aristocracies of Europe feared that the rage of the lower classes would spread to their own countries and Great Britain was no exception. In Britain, there were two men among the social and political commentators whose names are still sonorous today – Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine. Burke's publication of *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) provoked others to publically express their own reflections on the Revolution and one of those who responded to Burke's condemnation was Thomas Paine. Paine's *Rights of Men* (1792) was widely read in Britain and found many supporters.

Also, the Revolution motivated other agitators to establish societies and organize meetings to spread the revolutionary or radical thought. However, many of them were short-lived. Since the ruling classes feared the impact of the Revolution, the repression of Radicalism was severe. One of the most famous cases of arrest was that of Thomas

[48] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 77.

Hardy who worked as a secretary of London Corresponding Society. This organization was, together with Friends of the People and Society for Constitutional Information, one of the significant London based radical societies. Other radical societies appeared in Norwich, Sheffield or Manchester and also in Scotland where Thomas Muir organized his "conventions."[49] Thomas Hardy's arrest caused the death of his wife in childbirth and the trial itself lasted nine days and Hardy was eventually proclaimed not guilty.[50] However, not all of the arrested were as fortunate as Thomas Hardy. For example, three Scottish Radicals who were arrested in 1793 were transported and only one of them ever returned to Scotland. As these examples indicate, the punishment for anti-government expressions was severe (as in Wilkes' case) and despite the widespread calls for the reform, the Government was firm and none of the societies and not all of the radical leaders survived.

Against the corresponding societies stood the Church and King Party composed of clergy and landowners. The Radicals were usually associated with dissent, whereas the party loyal to the royalty was composed of the adherents to the Church of England. The party made use of mobs and spies as provocateurs to achieve their victory.

Nevertheless, the support of the French peasantry declined after the mobs in France became more violent and the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette was not approved of even by Paine and Muir, who tried to prevent the event. Moreover, in 1793 Britain declared war on France and any association with France thus became treason. Also, towards the end of the century there were more Acts against any political agitation that would not support the loyalty to the Crown and the repression did not weaken.

4.1.2.2 Combination Acts

Other Acts that were crucial in eliminating of the voice of the people were the Combination Acts of 1799 which prohibited the formation of trade unions. Prior to Industrial Revolution, the landlords and aristocracy were not as interested in commerce as the middle merchant classes. Moreover, they were even antagonistic towards these middlemen. However, as power became more associated with money and capital, the aristocracy changed their attitude and ceased to protect the common men, siding with the wealthy capitalists. Since the aim of both these classes was to maximize their

[49] For more details see Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 153.

[50] See Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 160-161.

profit, any claims for higher wages or lesser number of working hours were a threat to their wealth. Furthermore, as Cole and Postgate mention, since the wages in trades were fixed by Magistrates, any effort to change the conditions could be seen as an interference with the law.[51] Therefore, to eliminate the voice of the workers trade unions were banned so that the workers would not "conspire."

In the eighteenth century, it was above all urban skilled artisans who formed organizations called "trade clubs" (lodges, branches).[52] There was some co-operation in the country as well but that was only in the time of need and these combinations were usually short-lived. The craftsmen met in public or coffee houses not only to socialize but also to decide on the acceptance of apprentices, on "sickness and burial funds ... trade customs"[53] and the places also served as an "office" since the people knew where to find the craftsmen. Therefore, these meetings were important for the organization of the trade.

Firstly, the Combination Acts related only to some trades but in 1799 the ban was made universal. At this point, we can remind ourselves of Kirk Mann's claim that the poor have no other way to protest but the illegal or violent one. Undoubtedly, in the context of not only Combination Acts but also all the Acts that were mentioned in the previous chapter, there was truly no other way. Cole and Postgate claim that "the story of the years from 1800 to 1815 is industrially one of defeat and oppression. The Acts placed the working men at the mercy of two classes, the English gentlemen and the English employers."[54] Hence also according to Cole and Postgate, the working-men had no legal power and could not protect themselves. Thus even though there were strikes against the Acts especially in the North (Lancashire), all were short-lived because the workers would not be heard. Miners and textile workers, for example, formed underground organizations and the skilled artisans found their secret way of communication. All of these efforts were, of course, illegal and eventually futile.

However, the repeal of Combination Acts was passed in the end. Francis Place, a tailor, together with a Member of Parliament Joseph Hume, fought relentlessly for the abolishment of the Combination Acts by writing for trade-union paper *The Gordon*

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[51] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 175.

[52] See Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 169-171.

[53] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 170.

[54] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 177.

and preparing numerous materials for petition. Eventually, Hume attached the Bill of repeal to a different Bill that was generally accepted and Gregg states that the Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor even confessed that they did not notice that the Bill was passed.[55] Nevertheless, a year later, another Act again weakened the workers' position in forming trade unions. Despite this later change, the combination and reform activities of the workers began after 1829. For instance, Robert Owen's Co-operative society drew attention of many social intellectuals.[56] However, none of the attempts to improve the position of the workers survived.

4.2 Changing Social Structure, Wages and Prices

4.2.1 Concentration of Production

The fight for democracy, however, was not the only battle that was fought. Since the country was still prominently agricultural, the well-being of the nation relied heavily on harvests. Moreover, the depression years and rising prices that were not met by equal rise in wages caused much distress to the population. Therefore, the cries for democracy and liberty were initiated not only by a few thinkers but also by the working-class that was suffering in the industrialized Britain. For the working-class Londoners, the London Corresponding Society was the organization available to them due to the low membership fees and their meeting places being public and coffee houses. As in the previous anti-Government movement, the working-class fought for the same cause, i.e. democracy. However, once again they were defeated.

In the previous chapter, we indicated that the conditions of the people were changing greatly. The peasants ceased to be peasants and were no more protected by their lords. Similarly, the domestic workers who were initially the owners of their equipment and were also responsible for selling of their products on the market lost these additional functions necessary for their trade and became mere wage earners. Thus both these groups turned working-class proletariat.

The domestic workers, who earned their living in woollen industry as well as those, who worked with iron, were soon forced to become wage receivers. In case of the

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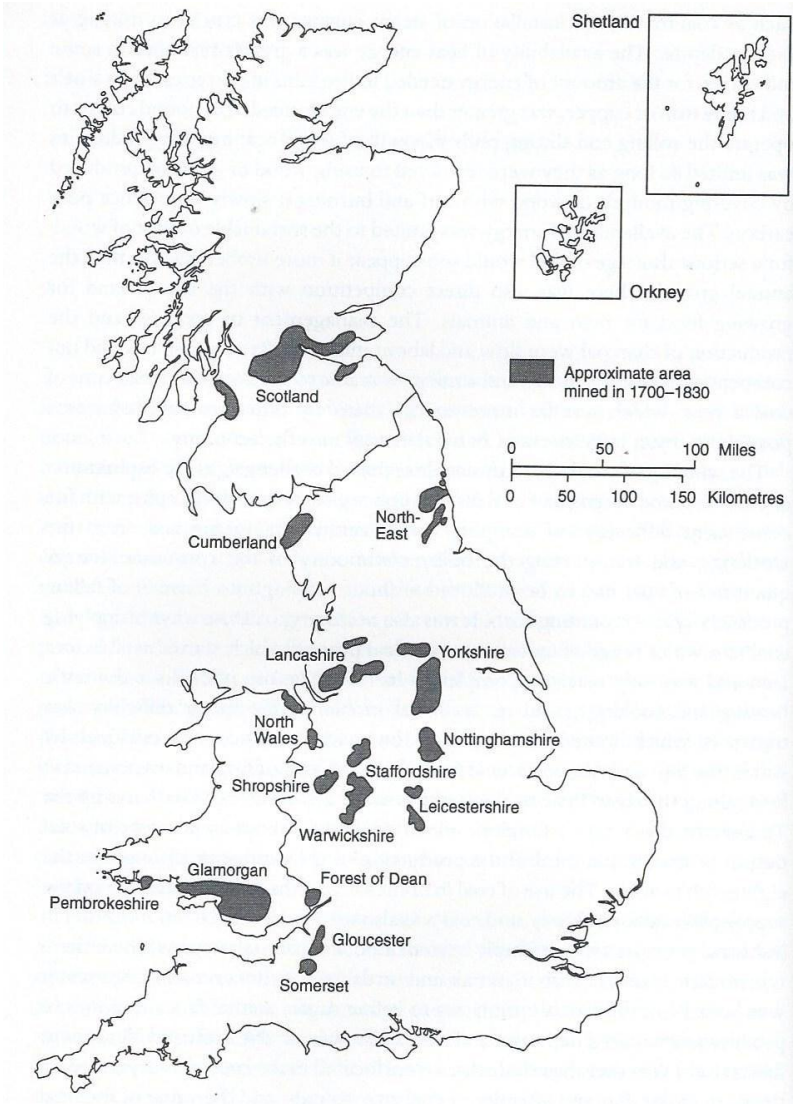
[55] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain,* 73.

[56] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain,* 75. For more details see Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 194-197, 215-219.

woollen industry, the capital needed was not as great as in iron production. Thus the labourers could be scattered around the country and laboured under the supervision of a master, who was in turn responsible to the capitalist. The capitalists provided material, tools and intervened on the market. On the other hand, the iron industry was practiced on much larger scale. This was not only because of the capital needed but also the quantity and energy necessary for the production. Also, with the introduction of coal to the process of iron making, the mines became important and factories were built around coal deposits. So unlike light industry, the heavy industry was soon localized in large centres. The map provided below depicts the centres of mining industry:

Map 2 Centres of Mining Industry [57]



[57] M. J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1700-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 208.

We can observe that the coalfields were situated around Glasgow, in the North-east, Midlands and South Wales. All these centres will be the source of much of the miners' agitations and discontent.

However, also woollen industry moved to factories. Cole and Postgate state that the trend appeared especially between 1770–1790 after the equipment for spinning was perfected and firstly water and later steam power added.[58] The major centre of woollen and cotton industry became Lancashire. Cotton spinners were not skilled but cotton spinning was very time demanding. Therefore, it was usually women and children who were spinning at home. Thus the introduction of machinery and steam power was not met with such resistance as in case of cotton weaving. The hand-loom weavers were skilled workers who, like other domestic workers, did not desire to be replaced by machinery and were much better organized than cotton spinners. They were also able to delay the introduction of machinery into their trade by destroying the second factory of the man who introduced the invention – Charles Cartwright.[59] This struggle of hand-loom weavers is important because they became one of the groups active in Luddism at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

4.2.2 Luddites

The aforementioned hand-loom weavers, who were among the working-class groups associated with Luddism, were active in Lancashire and Cheshire. Another Luddite group was in Yorkshire (croppers). However as Gregg states, the movement initiated in Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire.[60] The initiators were stockingers in Nottinghamshire in 1811; domestic labourers working narrow stocking frames. The few capitalist masters that emerged with the Industrial Revolution lowered their wages and in order to reduce the cost of the products due to the depression of the market, the quality declined as well (wide frames were use instead). The discontented workers began to destroy the frames. Their counterparts in the two counties were destroying machines and burning factories. The movement took its name from the letters the workers signed as "King Lud or Ned Lud"[61] (who was claimed to

[58] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 134.

[59] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 136.

[60] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain,* 50.

[61] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain,* 51.

live in Sherwood Forest). Even though the riots were the result of the workers' desperation and hunger, the punishment for destroying the frames was even death. For example, in Lancashire (West Houghton), the hand-loom weavers burned down a whole factory in 1812. As a result, four men were hanged and seven people transported.[62]

The reasons for the riots were the declining real wages of the weavers. To illustrate the situation, we could use the information from Cole and Postgate who specify situation of hand-loom weavers by providing their wages and quantity of food that could be purchased ("in equal quantities of flour, oatmeal, potatoes and meat").[63]

Chart 2 Hand-loom Weavers Wages [64]

Year	Wages	Quantity of Food Purchased
1797-1804	26s. 8d.	281 lb.
1804-1811	20s.	238 lb.
1811-1818	14s. 7d.	131 lb.

Cole and Postgate also mention that the wages of hand-loom weavers was still in decline later in the century, namely they received 3s. 6d. in 1832 for weekly labour.[65] As we can learn from the chart, the drop in both wages and food available for the wages is significant. Since the previous efforts to draw attention to the disastrous living and working conditions of the working-class were fruitless and with Combination Laws in effect, the use of violence as a means of protest might have been the only way left for the workers. What could further support this claim is the long and painful strife of the poor for the repeal of Corn Law and the struggle for the fixation of minimum wages, which will be dealt with in the following chapter. The Luddite movement was, like corresponding societies, eventually crushed in 1814.

4.3 Post-War Situation

The year 1815 was significant in Britain not only because of the Corn Law but also but also for the end of the war with Napoleonic France. Even though there was

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[62] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain*, 49.

[63] See Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 179.

[64] Prices are in pounds, shillings and pence, respectively.

[65] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 205.

military peace, the same could not be said about economy. Since wartime is generally a great time for business in terms of iron or cloth production, the end of the war means decreasing demand for these goods. Also the soldiers return to their country and seek occupation. Thus the results of the end of the Napoleonic war with France were unemployment and depression.

In the aftermath of the war, the working-class raised their voices once again and marched and protested against the Government. Moreover, the situation was worsened by the already passed Corn Law and "[b]efore the year 1816 was over the Government was faced with a formidable coalition of agricultural labourers, factory workers and handworkers, miners, skilled artisans, Radicals, the Spencean Socialists[66], the manufacturers, and the Whigs."[67] This situation was caused by the general discontent among the people. The middlemen desired political representation and the poor (agriculture labourers, factory workers, handworkers and miners) struggled for better living conditions. Therefore, at first, the opposition to the Government spread through the classes. Two years later, however, the situation was different. The middlemen realized that they cannot join the people since they, in fact, side with the rich and the ruling class. If, for example, the Spencean Socialists achieved their goals, it would be also the property of the middle class that would be confiscated. The results of long struggle were three significant Acts – Reform Act (1832), the amendment of Poor Relief Act (1834), the contents of which meant deterioration of the situation for the poor, and later also the repeal of Corn Law (1846)[68].

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[66] The leader and founder was Thomas Spence, a socialist, who urged for the confiscation of land so that the land would become common property. Moreover, he disapproved of any compensation for the once private property.

[67] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain*, 88.

[68] During the Napoleonic Wars, the trade with the Continent was blocked and as a result the supply of corn relied solely on the British producers. Consequently, the price of wheat was rising. However, after the war and with the re-opening of trade with the Continent there was a substantial drop in the prices. Unlike the labourers, the farmers were able to force the Government to action and the result was the Corn Law. The law meant a prohibition to import of corn from the Continent until the price of corn reached a specific level. Even though this precaution helped the producers, it was another blow for the workers since the higher prices of wheat meant more expensive victuals. What worsened the circumstances of the poor as well was the repeal of the income tax after the end of the war. Consequently, the indirect taxation, such as taxation of consumer goods, was raised in order to compensate for the missing income tax and to pay the wartime debt.

Among those who rioted were also hand-loom weavers. Once again they were destroying machinery and burning down factories but this time the reason was that their trade was disappearing. They were being replaced by machines and if they were able to maintain their occupation the wages were decreasing. So after 1815, there were the new Luddites. After a few protests after the war, the final outburst or riots came in 1826. Nonetheless, all the protests were in vain and hand-loom weavers were definitely defeated.

4.3.1 The People's Protests

Lord Sidmouth, the Home Secretary of the post-war era, was very anxious to prevent any rioting and discontent in the streets of London and elsewhere in the country. After minor incidents in London, the Government passed Gagging Acts (1817) according to which "all public meetings were forbidden except under licence from the magistrates."[69] Also, provocateurs and spies were used to gain and twist the information and even initiate rebellions the results of which were hangings, deportations and imprisonments. One of the notorious cases was the "Cato Street Conspiracy" (1820), which was a feeble attempt to murder all members of the Cabinet.[70]

Apart from the working-class disturbances, the middle classes and merchants also had a cause to fight for. They desired the reform of the Parliament, especially the universal male suffrage and gaining seats in the Parliament. These Radicals (for example William Cobbett, Henry Hunt, Major Cartwright) linked their agitation to that of the working-class by persuading them that only through the Reformed Parliament could the situation change.

4.3.1.1 Blanketeers – The First "Hunger March"

The aim the Blanketeers in 1817 was to deliver a petition to the monarch (Prince Regent since George III was declared insane), which pleaded for a reform that would help the starving hand-loom weavers and spinners. As many of the marches and protest, also the Blanketeers centred in Midlands and the North. Gathering and leaving St. Peter's Fields, Manchester, for a six-day march to London, they carried blankets and

[69] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 221.

[70] See Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 230.

the petition fastened to their arm. Although the march was supposed to be peaceful, the troops intervened before the majority left Manchester. The rest were captured on the way to London and only one man managed to march as far as London and present the Petition. Realizing that there was nothing the Blanketeers could be accused of, the authorities released them from the prisons. Even though there were no severe punishments, the Government achieved its goal since the march did not happen, the order was maintained and the workers were silenced. Two years later, the workers were not so fortunate and the consequences of Government intervention were disastrous.

4.3.1.2 "Peterloo"

The same place that was used by Blanketeers as the starting point for their march was used once again two years later. This time it was a gathering place for a demonstration of 80 000 people organized by the Radicals and with Henry Hunt as the speaker. Hunt was already "hunted" by the soldiers but upon his own surrender, he was not taken. The soldiers seized Hunt while speaking to the already gathered crowd. Though the demonstration was peaceful, the soldiers, who were leading Hunt away, used their sabres against the peaceful and unarmed crowd full of children and women. There were eleven people killed including two women and a child. What was most alarming about this event is the fact that as Gregg states "after the event Lord Sidmouth sent a letter of congratulation to the local authorities of Manchester."[71] This event demonstrates how unscrupulous the Government was in dealing with the common people. Cobbett and Hunt were celebrated like heroes and the call for reform was as strong as ever. Despite the horror the massacre caused, however, there was no weakening of repressive activities. In fact, the situation was quite the opposite.

4.3.2 Six Acts

The Government passed the Six Acts in 1819. The first Act banned any meeting that was held for the purpose of military training. The second Act was aimed at possession of arms. No one was permitted to carry arms and if they did, the weapons could be confiscated immediately and the owner arrested. The third Act prohibited any public meeting unless fulfilling certain conditions and approved of by the Magistrates. The rest of the Acts concerned the repression of the press, the fourth extended taxation

[71] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain*, 93.

on the cheapest press the result of which were higher prices so that the working-class readership could not afford them. Therefore, the press arguing for the Reform would not be read so widely. The fifth Act enabled the authorities to seize any pamphlets that promoted the Reformist beliefs. Finally, the sixth Act accelerated and facilitated prosecution of those violating the Acts.

4.4 Conclusion

As we can learn from the experiences of the people who were fighting the Government, the repressive power of the rulers was overwhelming. Any attempt to draw attention to the desperate condition of the poor was futile. Instead of trying to create a sensible legislation that would help the people, there was prosecution and restrictive legislation. Therefore, the poor and the working-class of the period leading to 1820 were truly the victims of the higher classes and the possibilities of escape seemed to be non-existent. However, as we mentioned before, the year 1824 re-opened the way for combinations or trade unions.

5 From 1825 towards Victorian Period

5.1.1 Trade Unions

The year 1824 brought economic prosperity to Britain that lasted until 1829. Therefore the workers used the advantages of the 1824 Act to demand higher wages that their employers could afford during the economic boom. However, observing the atmosphere of strikes in Britain, the Government passed the already mentioned amendment to the repeal of Combinations. After the Act of 1825, the strikes of workers were made unlawful. The workers could form Combinations but only in order to peacefully negotiate better wages and working conditions.

The workers did not hesitate and started to form trade unions all over the country. There was also an attempt to create a union covering all trades. The person behind this plan was John Doherty, who firstly tried to unite the spinners of Ireland, Scotland and England under Grand General Union of All the Spinners of the UK. Although his scheme to form a national union was not successful, the minor unions of trades he helped to establish survived and were to join the Co-operative movement (Cole and Postgate state that by 1830 there were over 300 Co-operative Societies in Britain[72]).

The Co-operative movement had a sole influential leader – Rober Owen. Owen's vision, however, was above all a fantasy. For example, he believed that the trade unions would take over the whole country and replace the Government. He also proclaimed the year 1833, the year in which the Grand National Consolidated Union was established, as the start of a new millennium. Although some of his ventures, such as co-operative shops, thrived for a while the whole scheme and the Grad National ceased to exist by 1834. This was due to financial problems and also the Government's and employers' repressive activities. To prevent strikes, the employers presented "the Document" to their employees. By signing it, the workers expressed their commitment to distance themselves from the Union. Another reason for the collapse was Robert Owen himself, who became more of a dreamer than a realistic leader.

Nevertheless, the other unions remained and their membership did not decline. Cole and Postgate mention that the membership was estimated at 800 000 workers.[73]

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[72] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 243.

[73] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 262.

Furthermore, the workers got another chance of uprising in the Chartist movement that began in 1838.

5.1.2 Agricultural Labourers – "Swing Riots"

So far, we have explored the situation of the workers in the industrialized towns. In order to complete the picture of the poor, however, we have to mention the village labourers. The situation of the labourers was as desperate as of the workers. There was less work available in the villages and the Poor Relief based on Speenhamland system was not sufficient for respectable living. Thus the labourers started to tour the country in 1830 to present their destitution. Unlike their urban counterparts, however, they were not organized into unions and the marches were only the result of common desperation.

Despite minor incidents, the marches were peaceful. Nevertheless, the Government did not have understanding for these men and the punishments were severe. Nine men were hanged and over 450 transported. Though their hopes were revived with the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers, the society was crushed by the Government again and leaders transported.

5.2 The Reform Act and Poor Relief Amendment Act

5.2.1 The Reform Act

The reason why the Reform Act was eventually passed in 1832 was economic. Until 1829, the overall economy of the country did very well. In 1830, however, the slump returned to Britain. Yet the rising wealth of the merchants and employers led to their rising ambitions regardless the current economic conditions. They were antagonistic to the Government's economic policy, such as the heavy taxation that had negative influence on their business but at the same time evaded the landowners. To achieve the change of policy, they demanded representation in the Parliament. Making use of the unfavourable economic situation, they took advantage of their wealth and threatened the Government with the refusal to pay taxes and organizing a run on the Bank of England. Also, the political situation changed in their favour. The Tory Government was replaced by Whigs (1830), who were ready to accept an electoral reform in the form of Reform Act.

The Act concerned the election system, which was corrupted and some boroughs were even publically open to auction. Moreover, the system ignored the changes in

population that happened during the Industrial Revolution. Thus small towns had more representatives in Parliament than cities like Manchester, Birmingham or Sheffield that had no representation at all. Therefore, it is not surprising that once rich, the merchants and employers resident in towns desired a reform.

The middle-classes established Political Unions around the country that united into the National Political Union. The initiator of these unions was Thomas Attwood, who formed the Birmingham Political Union. Moreover, by persuading the working-classes that there would be no relief for them unless the Parliament undergoes a reform, the workers cooperated on the enforcement of the Reform Act. Also the Radicals, who longed for the reform as well, joined the merchants. The goal of the Radicals and the working-class was universal male suffrage.

Nevertheless, despite the general support for the Act its enforcement was not easy. Three Bills proposing the reform were rejected by the Parliament. Each rejection stirred the people and more protests, riots and demonstrations threatened the order. Since the overwhelming majority of the people supported the Bill, riots spread though the country with greater force than ever before so that the Government feared a revolution. Therefore both the public pressure and wealth of the merchants forced the Upper House to pass the Bill in 1832.

The 1832 Act was a great victory for the middle-classes who could finally find their way to the Parliament even though there was still the aristocratic majority. On the other hand, there was no such victory for the working-class, who considered the result of the agitation as "Great Betrayal" and were to join forces with the middle-class no more. The universal man suffrage was not included in the Act and thus the workers and country labourers would not be able to vote.

5.2.2 Poor Relief Amendment

Also the second Act passed in 1830s is important for the development of the working-class position in the society. We have already learned that the working-class was left behind in the policy making and the Poor Relief Amendment was no exception.

In the chapter concerning Speenhamland system, we mentioned some basic information about Poor Relief. In brief, the system was not centralized and each county provided the relief on different basis. For example in the South of England, the relief for the poor was based on Speenhamland system. Nevertheless, there were differences even

within the one scheme. The relief was both indoor and outdoor. Indoor relief usually meant residence in a workhouse. Outdoor relief was based on money or food given to the poor who lived in their own homes. This system became very expensive in the nineteenth century and also did not correspond to the prevailing ideas of that time.

The ideals of the society were derived from the works of Thomas Robert Malthus, David Ricardo and Adam Smith. What these three men argued for was individual's responsibility for their own life. Furthermore, Malthus, for example claimed that "even the most optimistic growth in output of food could not keep pace with the potential natural population increase."[74] Therefore, the provision of food based on the size of the family seemed completely wrong since the more children the family had, the more food they would receive. So in Malthus' point of view, the poor needed more of a moral restrain to lessen the number of children and postpone marriages. Ricardo, on the other hand, appealed to the rich since the financial source of Poor Relief was the Poor Relief Tax. Hence the more poor people there are the higher the tax and the lower the wages. Finally, Adam Smith's "invisible hand" is still a well-known concept. The state should intervene into economy as little as possible (laissez-faire) since the market with its "invisible hand" will do the work itself. Thus we can deduce that these ideas were not particularly sympathetic with the poor. Unfortunately, this is the context in which the Poor Relief Amendment originated and its nature was in the spirit of the time.

There was also financial reason for the amendment because the expenditure on Poor Relief was too great and rising. Fraser mentions that the expenditure on Poor Relief in 1817-1819 was eight million pounds a year.[75] The herald of the nature of the amendment was the system that was introduced by George Nicholls in Nottinghamshire. He believed that in order to lessen the expenditure, in other words, to discourage the poor from claiming poor relief was workhouse test. The test should guarantee that no able-bodied man would be a resident in the workhouse. To further secure the test, the workhouses, Nicholls believed, should be a horrific place that everyone would avoid. Nicholls later became one of the commissioners who examined the situation of poor and prepared the report upon which the Act was based.

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[74] Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State,* 47.

[75] Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State,* 49.

Among the other men who prepared the report were Edwin Chadwick and Nassau Senior. Fraser argues that even though the Report is still controversial because it portrayed the paupers as idle men refusing to work and making use of the relief, its importance is immense.[76] The reason is that no matter where the truth lies, the men who prepared the Amendment based the legislation on this Report. Both Chadwick and Senior

> were convinced that the key problem was the allowance system and its effects upon the adult able-bodied rural labourer. The allowance system demoralised and pauperised the countryside and ... depressed wages. Instead of wage levels being determined by the value of labour they were being decided by Poor Law authorities. What had been originally intended as a floor below which people could not fall had become a ceiling above which they could not rise.[77]

Thus both men considered the poor labourers as the main source of expenditure. In fact, the workhouses served as residence mainly for women, children and the sick. In the spirit of Malthus et al. they believed that the system was too soft and the labourers relied on the relief not as on safety net but as a way of easy living. The problem with the level of wages was already discussed in the Speenhamland chapter. However in this case, it was not the labourers' fault that the system was exploited. The employers were those who decreased the labourers' wages and relied on the financial contribution of the authorities. Nevertheless, the stance the commissioner took can be compared to that of Murray. In other words, to live on Poor Relief was not the last resort but a deliberate option.

One of the remedies was obvious, to ensure that the life on the Poor Relief was worse than on the low wages. This point was called the principle of less eligibility. The second assumption was Nicholls' workhouse test. Another objective was centralisation of the whole system so that there would be no differences between the parishes. The last point was not reality in the beginning. The appointed Poor Law Commission did not have much power and no representation in the Parliament. Therefore in many instances, the Amendment did not change anything. Only in 1847 was the Commission replaced by a Poor Law Board that could exercise more power and also four inspectors were appointed to examine the situation of workhouses that already acquired the nickname "Bastilles." Cole and Postgate further mention such precaution

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[76]See Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State,* 50-51.

[77] Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State,* 51.

as "[s]eparation of man and wife to prevent child-bearing."[78] This practice could remind us of the years of slavery in the American South. However, to remain in the British context, we could remember Malthus' belief in the lack of food for the increasing population.

Even though the people in the workhouses should have been separated with respect to sex, age or mental or bodily condition, this did not happen. Thus the sick were placed next to children or pregnant women. Also the assumption that it was mainly the idle labourers who sought the security of the workhouse was not true anymore. We can remember the unfortunate hand-loom weavers and many other traders who lost their work as a result of the Industrial Revolution. On the other hand, we are in no position to claim that there were no such exploiters as Chadwick and Senior believed. In this respect, the two men were undoubtedly successful. People certainly did avoid the workhouses but if there was nothing to be done because they were victims of the outer forces, the workhouse was their "Bastille" and they were punished even though no crime was committed. Moreover, placement in a poor house meant a public disgrace, a decline even under the status of a working-class. Thus we could suggest the Poor Relief Act of 1834 created a class that we could label as "underclass" as they were seen by the rest of the society.

In the North, unlike in the South, the workers protested against the new Poor Law since it was not adequate for the workers who were the victims of market forces and often requiring only temporal relief. Even some of the employers took the workers' side and refused to apply the new law. Among these men were Richard Oaster, Reverend J. R. Stephens and John Fielden. These men were also part of a larger movement know as Chartism.

5.3 Chartism

Chartism originated in London from William Lovett's London Working Men's Association. The first official meeting, however, was in Birmingham in 1838. As Gregg states, the Chartists' demands varied with each group but generally some of the goals could remind us of the demands of the Reform Act agitators; i.e. universal male suffrage. Other objectives were annual Parliamentary elections, vote by ballot, equal electoral districts, no property requirement for Members of Parliament and payment of

[78] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 276.

members.[79] The Charter or Petition with the Chartists' demands was to be presented to the Parliament. However, as the other working-class efforts to change legislation, even this one was fruitless.

There were two distinct and contrastive branches of the movement; the London Chartists emphasizing education, morality and peaceful agitation and Feargus O'Connor's branch that promoted the idea of more violent agitation. The different means of achieving their goals also imply the class affiliation of the two groups. As we could infer from the historical account so far, the agitation through meetings and petitions had no effect in case of the working-class and force was the only way of assert their discontent. Therefore, the London and also Birmingham group was mainly middle-class or composed of skilled artisans whereas the O'Connor's followers were working-class of the North and Wales. Soon, O'Connor became the more influential leader stirring the masses.

The aim was to present the Charter to the Government and in case it failed, a reserve plan was created; a monthly strike. Charter was, of course, decisively defeated in 1839 but the strike did not happen. Nevertheless, there were demonstrations and insurrections in the country. These were, however, severely repressed.

Even the second presentation of the Charter in 1848 failed even though there allegedly were over four million signatures. However, Gregg states that many of them proved fraud.[80] The ensuing strikes that that swept through Britain as far as Aberdeen were a chance for the leaders to raise their voices and unite the workers but that did not happen. Moreover, there were spies among the Chartists and what followed were another transportations and imprisonments.

On the other hand, the leaders of the Anti-Corn Law League that was active at that time as well were much better organized. The League was, in fact, a middle-class struggle for the repeal of Corn Law and O'Connor with other Chartists discouraged any association with this movement remembering the "Great Betrayal." We already know that the Chartists were not victorious in the end but the Anti-Corn Law League was. The repeal of the Corn Law was passed in 1846 and another liberating Act coming in 1849. However, despite O'Connor's aversion to Anti-Corn Law League, the repeal of

[79] See Gregg, *A Social and Economic History*, 206.

[80] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain*, 222.

the Law especially in 1849 caused decrease in the price of wheat. This development benefited the working-class as well since their real wages increased.

5.4 Population and Conditions of the Working-class

As was stated in the section concerned about the eighteenth century, the first census was conducted in 1801. Therefore, the population data for the nineteenth century are available and more accurate. The population was still growing in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the cities were crowded and tax on windows forced families to lessen the number of windows. Consequently, there was no fresh air, the drainage system was non-existence and the ever-present filth of the factories and over-crowded towns did not contribute to the health of the nation.

Firstly, the census data from 1801 to 1861 are presented below:

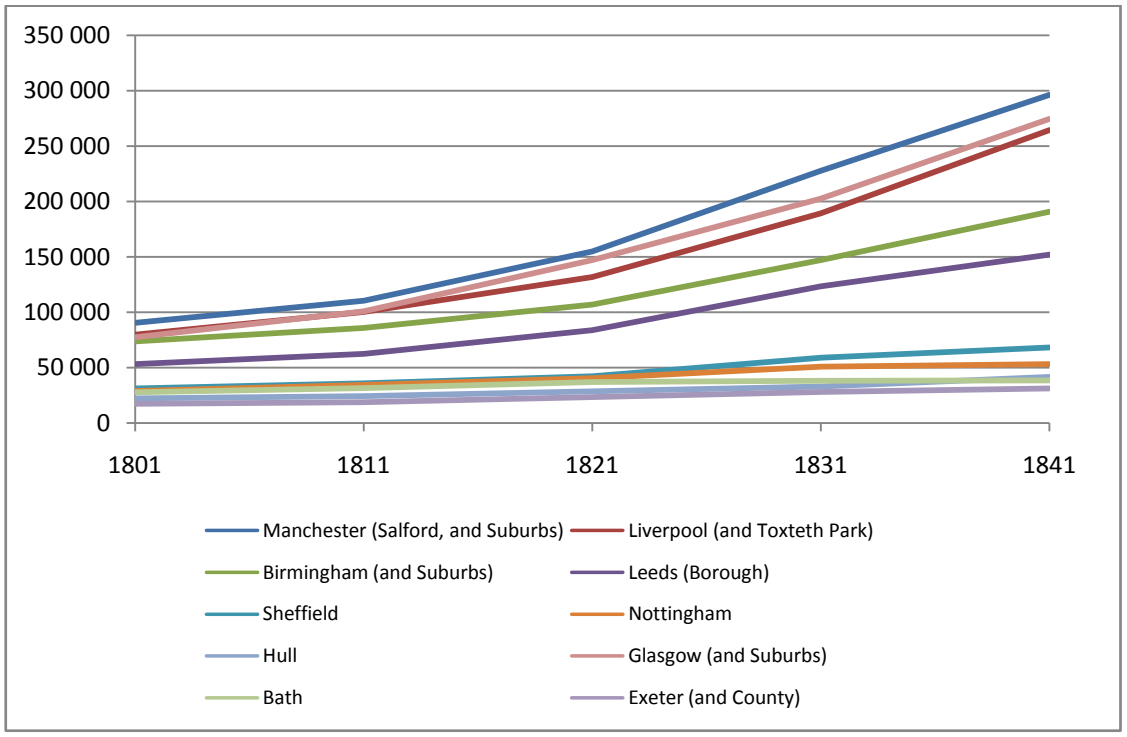
Chart 3 Census, 1801-1851[81]

	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851
England	8 331 434	9 538 827	11 261 427	13 091 005	14 995 138	16 738 495
Wales	541 546	611 788	717 438	806 182	911 603	1 188 890
Scotland	1 599 068	1 805 688	2 093 456	2 365 114	2 620 184	3 176 687
Total	**10 472 048**	**11 956 303**	**14 072 321**	**16 262 301**	**18 526 925**	**21 104 072**

As we can learn from the chart, the total population of the Kingdom and of its three parts nearly doubled between 1801 and 1851. What is also important to notice is the rising population of Scotland despite clearances that were still depriving the Highland of its population. We could assume that the need for limiting the growth of population was truly necessary. Learning the numbers, we can also understand why the middle-classes fought for the Reform Act. For only between 1801 and 1831 the population increased by almost 6 million. It will be even clearer when we explore the population growth in the industrial towns.

[81] All the data taken from University of Portsmouth, "A Vision of Britain through Time," accessed February 28, 2014, http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/.

Chart 4 Population Growth in Cities, 1801-1841[82]



For better comparison, Bath and Exeter, Southern towns were added to the graph. By comparing the two towns to the industrial ones we can observe the difference in urban population growth. For example, the population of Manchester more than tripled between 1801 and 1841 and the same could be said about Liverpool and Glasgow. Moreover, there were 2.5 times more inhabitants in Birmingham and Leeds in 1841 than in 1801. The population of Sheffield doubled in this period, and nearly doubled in Nottingham and Hull. Exeter follows closely the increase of Nottingham and Hull. Therefore, the reform of the electoral system was necessary. Finally, Bath occupies the last place with the increase of 130%. Also the population of London almost doubled in this period, namely from 864 845 to 1 690 084 inhabitants. Consequently, there is hardly any doubt that the living conditions in these industrial towns, especially those that experienced the greatest growth, worsened substantially. We can also deduce that the overall population increase was felt mainly in the towns. This was not only due to the decreasing death rate (especially in case of children under five years of age) but also due to clearances and enclosures since the labourers, having lost everything, sought work in towns.

[82] All data taken from Universit of Portsmouth, "A Vision of Britain through Time," accessed March 2, 2014, http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/SRC_P/3/GB1841ABS_1.

5.4.1 Factories, Mines and Railways

The cruelty surrounding the factories that emerged during the Industrial Revolution is still well-known even today. The most disturbing facts of factory work were the small children, three or four years old, who worked with their parents in factories to help the family survive. However, it was not only children working to help their family but also apprentices, more specifically children of paupers or orphans who were forced into the apprenticeship (that could remind us of little Oliver Twist who was supposed to be apprenticed into chimney sweeping). This practice was stopped before 1820 after Health and Moral Apprentices Act. There were instances of (not only) children dying because they had to clean the machines that were still in operation or of wiping to prevent the children from falling asleep. It is no wonder then that the workers soon started to fight for better treatment. The long struggle started by Factory Act of 1819.

What preceded the Act was the agitation for a Ten-Hour Bill. The Bill was supposed to reduce the working hours to ten a day at first for children, later for women and lastly for men and raise the working age. The agitators prepared a campaign that swept through various groups of the society, including for example Robert Owen (C-operative movement), Lord Ashley (later Lord Shaftesbury, a Tory) or John Fielden (a factory owner). Despite this support, however, the Act was extended to all trades as late as 1861.

The Act of 1819 was the first in the series of other Acts that appeared in the period 1819-1861 when the ten-hour day was applied to all trades. For example, the 1819 Act applied only to cotton mills and it raised the minimum age for work to nine and lessened the working hours for children less than sixteen years old to twelve hours per day. However, there was no control that would enforce the Act. This changed with the 1833 Act by which four inspectors (for the whole country) were appointed to enforce the law and what is also important, the 1819 Act was extended to all textile factories. Also, the Act introduced compulsory two hours a day for education. Later, the 1844 Act labelled women as children and consequently lessened their working hours. Finally, the Ten-Hour Bill became an Act in 1847. Nevertheless, the employers were able to avoid the law by forcing the women and children to work in shifts and thus the men still had to work around fifteen hours a day.

The miners' situation was not much better than that of factory workers. Women and children laboured hard underground damaging their health and accidents were nothing exceptional. Like the factory workers, the miners found a strong supporter in Lord Ashley. He presented his Mines Bill in 1842, which set the minimum age of children allowed to work in the mines at ten. However, there was no limitation of working hours and no power of the inspectors to enforce the law. The reason for this was the amendment to the Bill that was required by the Lords. The powers were given to inspectors as late as 1850. Another important legislation appeared under Coal Mines Regulation Act in 1860, which raised the age limit for boys to twelve.

Also, miners, like the factory workers, were known for heavy drinking. There was another group of workers that was associated with harsh behaviour and appreciation of alcohol, i.e. the navvies. These men were responsible for railway building that began in 1830s. The work was very dangerous and during the construction of the Woodhead Tunnel, for example, "the death rate among the navvies who built the tunnel, between 1839 and 1852, was higher than that of the soldiers who fought at the battle of Waterloo."[83] It was these groups of workers that were considered abominable in this and also in the following Victorian period.

5.5 Conclusion

The period of Industrial Revolution is of great importance with respect to changes in society and above all in the perception and development of the working-class. The result of the Reform Act was that the working-class lost its potential ally, the middle-class which found common interests with the gentlemen due to their rising wealth. Two years later, the working-class suffered even heavier blow. The Amendment to Poor Relief brought lesser responsibility of the state for the poor. Those who occupied the workhouses or accepted outside poor relief were stigmatized and ostracized. Other three groups faced the same fate, i.e. the factory workers, the miners and the navvies to whom we will pay close attention to also in the following chapters.

[83] National Railway Musem, "Navies," accessed March 2, 2014, http://www.nrm.org.uk/RailwayStories/railwayarticles/navvies.aspx.

6 Victorian Period

Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837 and her long reign ended in 1901. We have already mentioned some of the events that happened during her reign, such as the rise of Chartism or workers' and miners' fight for better working and living conditions. The Victorian period is generally known for its strict morality and as an age of affluence. On the other hand, the authors like Charles Dickens or G. B. Shaw remind us that there was also hypocrisy and unfeeling treatment of the poor. It was also the time of British Empire and Imperialism, of Great Exhibition, progress in science, improvement in education, medical and sanitary conditions.

However, one point remained basically unchanged, i.e. the belief in one's own responsibility for life. It took shape in the Victorian idea of self-help and thrift that influenced the attitude towards the poor.

> Whatever is done FOR men or classes, to a certain extent takes away the stimulus and necessity of doing for themselves; and where men are subjected to over-guidance and over- government, the inevitable tendency is to render them comparatively helpless. Even the best institutions can give a man no active help,

claims Samuel Smiles in his *Self-Help* (1859).[84] If we remember the ideas that formed the Poor Law Amendment in 1834, we can observe that the notion that the state-help leads to idleness or helplessness in this case has not changed in the twenty-five years. On the other hand, the shift in terminology; i.e. idleness to helplessness suggests a change from blame to victimization. Still, however, poverty was regarded as an outcome of man's moral failure. Smiles goes on to state that the incentive has to come from within and not in the form of outer motivation or prize.[85] Therefore, towards the end of the century there is still the concept of minimal state intervention, i.e. laissez-faire and elimination of help for the poor.

The Victorian Era was also known for its charitable institutions. There were either visiting societies that organized meetings of the charity representative and the claimant in their house or charities that managed schools, hospitals etc. However meritorious this may seem, Fraser provides four different possible reasons for the Victorian philanthropy: "[A] fear of social revolution, a humanitarian concern for

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[84] Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help: With Illustrations of Conduct and Preservence*, Kindle edition, accessed Mach 1, 2014, http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/935.

[85] Smiles, *Self-Help*.

suffering, a satisfaction of some psychological or social need and desire to improve the moral tone of the recipients."[86] Further on, a fifth reason is implied by stating that charity became "a fashionable social imperative."[87] Therefore, Fraser questions the goodwill of the Victorians and implies that the charity was practiced to fulfil the "philanthropists'" rather than the poor's needs. Especially the last point led to ineffectiveness and confusing organisation of the societies that even quarrelled among themselves (remember trade unions). Fraser claims that those who could prosper from the situation were the poor who drew relief from more sources at once, which leads us back to Simms' woman. [88] Further on, the societies, similarly to old Poor Law, were criticised for supporting rather than diminishing the idleness and morality.

Some improvement was intended by the creation of the Charity Organisation Society in the end of 1860s. It stressed the still prevailing self-help ideas by asserting that the financial support was given only to encourage further independence. Moreover, the Society focused on the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor by making inquiries into their background circumstances. Those proved undeserving were refused any help and left to Poor Law. Therefore, we may note that these undeserving poor are our potential underclass. Though both groups were blamed for their circumstances (and not the system), one was ostracized for their behaviour (alcoholism), work ethic (idleness) or utterly depressed situation. So a certain cultural and moral background was attached to them, which would support Murray's claim of underclass as a distinct kind of poverty.

Whereas the development of an individual was placed within, the British trade expanded without the country's borders. The important impulse for development of the British trade came in 1855 and later in 1862 in the form of Acts that enabled the companies to introduce limited liability, accumulate more capital for investment and consequently expand their trade. Money and men were invested in countries all over the world. Free Trade was in full bloom after the tariffs on imported and exported goods were eliminated. The economic boom that lasted from 1850 to 1874 (with minor interruptions) was followed by severe depression. Thus the Victorian period can be divided into two distinct stages; namely into the boom years and the years of depression

[86] Fraser, *The Evolution,* 150.

[87] Fraser, *The Evolution,* 152.

[88] Fraser, *The Evolution,* 155.

which started after 1873 and ended in 1896. The last period this chapter will include the Edwardian era leading to First World War.

6.1 The Boom Years

The most significant events that took place during the boom years were the rise of mutual self-help societies among the working-class, the extension of suffrage and the great rise of trade unions. The economic development was very favourable and the wages and living conditions were improving. The workers strived for better income and less working-hours and their agitation was usually successful. However, there was also one group of workers that was continually ignored, i.e. agricultural labourers whose agitation was futile.

6.1.1 Friendly Societies and Co-operation

Unlike trade unions, Friendly Societies focused mainly on the assistance to workers in the time of need. By the accumulation of funds through membership they provided financial support for workers who were temporarily unemployed or sick and assisted in case of funeral expenses. Gradually, they were also recognized by the state and offered some protection. Their services soon developed into the provision of insurance and led to the emergence of insurance companies.

Another powerful workmen organization was the already mentioned Co-operative movement, namely the Co-operative shops. The incentive for their rebirth was the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers that opened a Co-operative shop in 1844. Unlike the older Co-operative ventures, the Pioneers financed their business more skilfully and were very successful. Their shops gained support especially in London and Lancashire.[89] In 1846 they were recognized as equal with the Friendly Societies and through further legislation acquired rights necessary for trade and business. However, as Gregg claims, the Co-operative Societies gradually abandoned their initial purpose of social reform and rather adapted to capitalism by focusing on business.[90]

An important point regarding the two societies is that neither of these was suitable for the long-term unemployed or the real destitute. Whereas the Friendly Societies required higher subscription, there were contributions necessary in case of Co-

[89] See Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 379-383.

[90] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain,* 324-5.

operative shops and consequently, they "were confined to the better-paid and more regularly employed workers."[91] Moreover, the Second Reform Act of 1867 that extended the franchise ignored most of the working-class and inevitably the unemployed as well. The Act covered the urban workers who were also rate payers (based on household). The last resort left to workers was the mutual self-help societies and trade unions.

6.1.2 Trade Unions

The trade union movement underwent a time of transformation in this period as new ideas flowed into the movement. Firstly, there were the amalgamated societies. They based their policy on peaceful negotiations with employers on co-operation and were composed mainly of skilled workers. The most prominent among these was the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Since the skilled workers had higher incomes than the unskilled ones, the unions they formed acquired much more capital and were able to support their members. Their headquarters were set in London and because of their common philosophy and centre they were known under the name of "Junta" (or "Clique").[92] Nevertheless, not all of the unions accepted the approach of the Amalgamated Societies. The new unions of the 1870s were, unlike the amalgamated societies, characteristic for unskilled membership and lower fees. There was also a contrast between the two in terms of the means of protest. The new unions were more aggressive and prepared to strike to achieve their aims. Also in 1870s, some of the trade unions were acknowledged by the state after a crisis starting in 1866.[93] However, there were also unions lacking this promotion. Generally, the acknowledgement did not concern the "less respectable" trades such as miners or railwaymen.

The miners took the situation into their hands and struck. The strikes of the 1850s and 1860s were organized by Miners' National Association and under the leadership of Alexander Macdonald (who won a seat in the Parliament in 1874). There was also the Amalgamated Association of Miners that engaged in strikes in South Wales and Lancashire. They achieved an improvement by the Amendment to Master

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[91] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 380.

[92] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 371.

[93] For the 1866 events see Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 376-7 and Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain*, 341-2.

and Servant Act in 1867 and later its repeal with the new Employers and Workmen Act of 1875. The titles of these two Acts themselves imply the difference in the perception of the relationship between the employer and the worker, establishing them as "equal partners to a civil contract."[94] Thus the power of the employer over the worker was diminished and worker's rights acknowledged. However, as we noted in the introduction to the Boom Years, not all workers celebrated victory.

6.1.2.1 Agriculture Labourers

Neither the Second Reform Act nor the activities and victories of trade unions had any positive impact on the agriculture labourers. Even though the country, its farmers and landowners prospered, the labourers did not experience any significant rise in their status or living conditions. However, there was a spark of hope represented by Joseph Arch.

There was hardly any talk about welfare in case of the labourers. Their children had to work hard and live in appalling houses and sometimes they had to walk as many as seven miles to work every day (due to still existing Settlement Laws). They were "flocked" together by rather cruel gang masters, who were in contact with the farmers and arranged work for the labourers. Some of the worst treatment improved after the gangs were finally regulated by Parliamentary Act in 1868, which limited age of children, provided mistresses instead of men leading the gang (in case women labourers were present) and it also enacted that every gang master had to be approved of by a Justice of Peace.[95]

In this context, Joseph Arch came to the labourers and encouraged them to form unions in order to better their circumstances. Gradually, the numbers of men eager to form or join the unions grew and in 1872 National Agricultural Labourers' Union was established. Moreover, the labourers did not remain alone in their struggle and obtained support also from the workmen's unions as well as from the people. However, despite the general support there were very strong opponents, i.e. the farmers, landlords and generally those "whose concern it was to keep agricultural wages low, labourers servile,

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[94] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain,* 348. Another important feature of these Acts was the appointment of checkweigman and later controls over this position. For details see Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain,* 337-9.

[95] See Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain,* 353-357.

and their pennies directed to the beer-house instead of the union."[96] Finally, it was those concerned about the prices, who were victorious.

6.2 The Years of Economic Depression

Britain began to feel the impact of the depression in 1873 and the years of falling prices continued until 1896. However, not all had to despair since although the deflation was unfavourable for the employer, it was appreciated by the workers. An interesting observation is that the wages of skilled and semi-skilled workers were generally rising. As a consequence, the real wages were rising significantly; Cole and Postgate speak about 35-40 per cent.[97] The exports were declining as well also due to the fact that the Industrial Revolution did not take place only in Britain but also on the Continent and the United States. As the economy was undergoing a time of tumult, the social sphere experienced great changes too.

6.2.1 The Bitter Cry of Outcast London, Match Girls and Dockers

The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor is a pamphlet published in 1883 that explored the conditions of the London Poor. It exposed the disastrous circumstances of slums despite the Public and Health Act of 1875 that was generally thought to improve the welfare of all.[98] However, as Fraser claims, by 1880s "the real facts of continuing poverty were obscured from a large part of the Victorian generation."[99] There were more pamphlets and books published about the state of the poor. Among the most influential social thinkers was William Booth, the founder of Salvation Army. Fraser remarks that according to Booth's findings around 30 per cent of the population of London live beneath poverty line.[100] Fraser also mentions similar findings by Rowntree, who explored the city of York and found 28 per cent inhabitants living in extreme poverty.[101] As a result of these revelations,

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[96] Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain,* 365.

[97] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 442.

[98] See Gregg, *A Social and Economic History*, 478-483.

[99] Fraser, *The Evolution,* 160.

[100] See Fraser, *The Evolution*, 163-4.

[101] See Fraser, *The Evolution*, 164. Both Booth and Rowntree devised thein own concepts of poverty lines. Rowntree was more progressive in his ideas than Booth, who belonged to Victorian tradition of individual's failure.

institutions were established in East London, where the situation was worst to enable the contact between the "two nations."

The author of the *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* described the abodes of these people as "pestilential human rookeries."[102] According to his observations, the majority of the destitute were people who were eager to find work. However, he also asserts that these were "herded" with criminals of all kinds and therefore it was no wonder that some of the respectable ones became the "undeserving poor" as well. Living in the "rotten and reeking tenements houses"[103] the poor often sought relief in the "'the Elysian field;'" i.e. public-houses.[104]

Moreover, despite the general appraisal of slum cleaning that was underway at the end of the nineteenth century, the situation of the poor even worsened since they could not afford the high rent required in the new houses. Therefore, the legislation that aimed at improvement of the slum areas and sanitary conditions in fact harmed the poor.

Earning little money, the rent the tenants had to pay did not correspond to the state of the rooms at all. Sims remarks that the owner could have as much as 50-60 per cet of the rent for himself as a profit.[105] So the hard-working poor received very low wages (Sims provides examples of match-box making and sewing) and in addition, more than half of it was taken away from them in rent.[106] As a result, it was easier to earn a living through criminal activity than honest work.

At this point we could mention the old Speenhamland System. Under this scheme, the wages would be increased by parish or metropolitan contributions. However, under the new Poor Law, workhouses were there to solve the situation of the poor. Nevertheless, as we have seen, once one was forced to enter a workhouse, a stigma of shame was attached to them ever since. Consequently, the poor avoided workhouses as long as they could. As G. B. Shaw states in his "Apology" to Mrs. Warren's profession: "[The] alternative [to immoral life] offered by society collectively

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[102] George R. Sims, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor* (London: James Clark & Co., 1883), accessed March 5, 2014, https://ia600306.us.archive.org/24/items/bittercryofoutca00pres/bittercryofoutca00pres.pdf, 6.

[103] George R. Sims, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, 9.

[104] George R. Sims, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, 12.

[105] George R. Sims, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, 31.

[106] See George R. Sims, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, 15-16.

to poor women is a miserable life, starved, overworked, fetid, ailing, ugly."[107] We could add the example of the fictional Moll Flanders, who simply refused to become a destitute working-class woman and rather chose to be "Twelve Year a *Whore*, five times a *Wife* (whereof once to her own Brother) Twelve Year a *Thief*,"[108] as Defoe tells us in the title of his novel. Even though Shaw and Defoe speak specifically about women, the situation of men was not much different according to Sims' description (even though they could obtain a better paid work). Often, women were left at home with children and men sought work or abandoned any hope and left for the "Elysian Fields." Thus one has to ask what choices are left for the people who, despite their efforts, find themselves on the very bottom.

The assumption above would lead us to consider the poor as victims of the changing economic and industrial circumstances. Sims, however, also provides an example of a woman who attended "three different places of worship on the Sunday and some other during the week, because she obtained charitable help from all."[109] Therefore, we may assume that this woman was not a single exception and there were others who abused the charity. In that case, there were three classes of these people – the "undeserving", who sought refuge in public-houses and could not be labelled as respectable citizens; those who tried hard to earn a living through honest work and lastly those who, like Sims' woman, abused the charity or became criminals like Moll Flanders.

The desperate situation of some of the workers is also described by both Cole and Postgate and Gregg. More specifically, Gregg names jiggers, mould-runners, dippers, scourers, chimney-sweeps and Lucifer mach-making as the most dangerous professions.[110] Due to mechanization, the work in many of the unskilled trades required monotonous work throughout the day or direct contact with poisonous substances, as for example in case of match-making. Also, the sweatshops were notorious for inhuman conditions and the owners were skilful in evading the law. Once more, the name of Lord Shaftesbury was blessed among these workers since he supported legislation that would

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[107] G. B. Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession,* accessed March 1, 2014, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1097/1097-h/1097-h.htm.

[108] Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders* (London: Penguin, 1989).

[109] George R. Sims, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, 27.

[110] For more information about these professions see Gregg, *Social and Economic History*, 455-567.

improve their situation. His Acts of the 1860s were enforced as late as 1875 when the police was in charge of the provision of sweatshop licence and control. Gradually, the situation of many trades was improving, for example by continuous extension of Factory Acts.

The workers could be grateful for the improvements to the match-girls and strangely enough, Australians. Though never organized before, these "girls" went on strike in 1888 and marched the streets of London and eventually won their battle with the employers and their wages were raised. Inspired by this victory, dockers followed suit and marched in 1889. Similarly to the match-girls, they were not organized before but managed to co-operate and remained on strike for two weeks until they became desperate for the need of money and food. However, an unexpected help came from as far as Australia and no less than 30 000 pounds was donated to their cause and the dockers were victorious too.[111] The success of the two strikes induced other trades to protest and many unions were formed especially by the unskilled workers.

Moreover, another important step was being made in the political area. Towards the end of the century, the politicians of both Liberal and Conservative party were well-aware of the rising discontent and the threat of socialism. Consequently, they introduced many schemes and Acts that would help the working-class. Furthermore, there was also something else behind these efforts; the creation of the workers' representation in Parliament.

6.2.2 Workers' Representation in Parliament – Labour Party

The trade unions were in crisis during the first years of the depression since the unions representing particular crafts had disputes among themselves instead of collaborating. However, the fight for workers' rights transferred also to the Parliament and in 1883, the third Reform Act secured voting rights also for those who were left aside so far – agriculture labourers and workers. New Acts were passed further on and in 1886 there were 5 million voters as opposed to 2.25 million in 1869, as stated by Cole and Postgate.[112] The great supporter and representative of the working-class was Joseph Chamberlain, who as a Mayor of Birmingham improved the housing and sanitary conditions of the city. Chamberlain's ideas rested in socialism and provision of

[111] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 428-430.

[112] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 412.

services to all inhabitants. The Radicals were present within the Liberal Party in the Parliament but there was no separate party that would represent solely the workers.

The road to the formation of the Labour Party was long and complicated and originated in the context of revival of socialism. The formation of Labour Party was based on an agreement between more groups; among the most important ones were the Fabian Society, Social Democratic Federation (which however soon left the Party) and Independent Labour Party.

In brief, there were some differences between the three groups. The Fabian Society is a well-known group even today with George Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb among its members. It was a middle-class body promoting socialism mainly by producing pamphlets and organizing meetings. Unlike Social Democratic Federation it was not revolutionary and this is also the reason why the Federation seceded. The Independent Labour Party originated in the 1890s by an agreement among the Fabians, trade unionists and the Scottish Labour Party, among other groups. In 1900 a Trades Union Congress was held and the representatives of trade unions and the three aforementioned groups formed the Labour Representative Committee which turned into the Labour Party in 1906.[113] Thus firstly represented by the Radicals, the workers eventually "had" a party of their own.

6.3 Pre-War Britain (1896-1914)

6.3.1 Trade Unions and Strikes

The depression subsided after 1896 but Britain began to feel the pressure of its industrial competitors, especially Germany. As a result, tariffs were imposed on imports in the beginning of the twentieth century. For the workers, an opposite situation occurred in comparison with the depression. Though the economy fared well, the real wages were declining. Moreover, the trade unions were ineffective, disorganized and more concerned about disputes among themselves than with the workers' conditions. Also, in 1901 Taff Vale decision came as a terrible blow to Trade Unions and their funds. As a result of the 1901 decision, the Unions were liable for the damage caused by the strike action. In this particular case it was Amalgamated Society of Railway

[113] For more details see Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 433-440 and Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain*, 388-402.

Servants that had to pay 23 000 Pounds to Taff Vale Railway Company.[114] Consequently, the trade unions were paralyzed since they could not afford to pay such damages. The decision was reversed in 1906 but another obstacle in the fight for workers' rights came in 1911 when the Trade Unions were banned to provide any financial contributions to political groups, the party affected was the Labour Party. Even though this law was repealed in 1913, we could argue that the beginning of the twentieth century was troublesome for the workers' representation.

The lack of Union and political support led to great discontent among the mostly ignored trades of sailors, firemen and dockers, who formed Transport Workers' Federation, railwaymen and also among women. Since 1910, there were many strikes around the country. These were unsuccessful at first but a year later it was the workers who celebrated victories. For miners it was the victory of Minimum Wage Act of 1912 and transport workers' and railwaymen's demands were mostly fulfilled after they paralyzed the transportation of Liverpool in 1911. However, the last neglected group, i.e. women, did not win their vote. The two great women leaders, Mrs. Fawcett and Mrs. Pankhurst did not manage to enforce the enactment of women suffrage. Each of the two women chose a different way of agitation, Pankhurst's followers being violent and militant, but none led to victory.[115]

A fresh impetus to workers' unionism came in the form of Syndicalism (inspired by France) and Industrial Unionism (inspired by the USA). Unlike the existing unions, the promoters of Syndicalism were more active, aggressive in their endeavours, very-well organized and revolutionary. With the help of *Daily Herald*, they even attacked and ridiculed the existing trade unions. Syndicalism was especially attractive for miners, railwaymen and transport workers, who were constantly overlooked by the respectable part of the working-class. Eventually, these three trades formed a Triple Industrial Alliance to gain power. However, all the disturbances and turmoil were ended by the World War I.

6.3.2 Social Reform

There were two significant Acts in the beginning of the twentieth century, namely Old Age Pension Act of 1908 and National Insurance Act of 1911. Both meant

[114] Cole and Postgate, *The Common British People*, 456.

[115] For more details see Cole and Postgate, The Common British People, 475-8.

great changes in the social legislation and virtually marked the beginning of an end of the Poor Law. Apart from the two aforementioned Acts, the social legislation included also Labour Exchanges Act that was designed to eliminate short-term unemployment by introducing state controlled labour exchanges.

The situation of the elderly and the sick was improving gradually. As prevention became more important than cure, the importance of healthcare was stressed and separate sections were created in the workhouses, which later evolved into hospitals. Royal Committees were established to inquire into the situation of the poor and the results were shocking.

Old Age Pension Act was financed from the general taxation and as Cole and Postgate remark; it in fact meant that the money was collected also from the workers' wages.[116] Fraser adds that the Government was surprised by the high number of claimants. He goes on to argue that this was due to the stigma of Poor Law that forced many of the poor to evade it and rather face starvation.[117] Moreover, the provision of pensions outside the Poor Law signalled a changing attitude towards the poor and the removal of social stigma of their situation.

While the Old Age Pension was financed from taxation, the National Insurance had to be based on contributions to avoid an excessive State expenditure. The Act was composed of two parts, one concerned with healthcare and sickness and the second with unemployment benefits. Whereas healthcare was largely a brainchild of Lloyd George, the coverage of the unemployed was the work of Winston Churchill. George had to make concession under the pressure of Friendly Societies and insurance companies, Churchill's law had to make difference between those who were made redundant by their own fault and those who did not. Nevertheless, these two Acts were significant interventions into the existing social legislation that signified the beginning of the welfare state system that was to come.

6.4 Conclusion

The great Victorian and pre-war Edwardian era were a world in which two separate sub-worlds existed. In the former period, there was the Empire, the expanding foreign trade, the respectable and rather stiff middle-class. On the other hand, there

[116] See Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People,* 468.

[117] Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State,* 83.

were the poor. Also, the economy underwent contrary experience. Firstly, the boom years led to expansion of trade and also improvement of working conditions in some areas. By 1870s, however, the British manufacturers lost their competitiveness and depression came.

Although the ideas of 1834 Poor Law and Simms' *Self-help* were in the similar vein, there were also those who did not want to leave the burden on the poor alone. Among them were writers and intellectuals, for example the Fabians, who drew attention to the destitution among the least fortunate. There were also the charitable institutions appearing in large numbers and operating especially in London. However, as we have seen, the reasons for charity were not always truly the results of person's goodwill. Also, the Charity Organisation Society's inquiries into the poor's background brought us the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, the latter being the underclass. Nevertheless, regardless the reason behind charity work, it probably helped some of the poor if even temporarily. There were also victories on the political field including the Second and the Third Reform Acts and ensuing origination of the Labour Party, which already belongs to Edwardian times. During this era, other improvements came in the form of Old Pension and National Insurance Act that helped at least some workers. The First World War, however, meant an utterly new experience for the whole nation and no one could predict what was to follow.

7 The World Wars

7.1 WWI

In general, World War I ended all the agitations of the previous period and the whole nation was united for the wartime. Even though there were some anti-war demonstrations, the police did not have to intervene since the mobs punished the demonstrators themselves. The State was forced to seize the control of industry and the Government and the trade unions signed a treaty for the wartime period in which both sides had to make concessions. There were only a few strikes during WWI since they were made illegal and all parties made efforts to settle the disputes as soon as possible. It was usually the skilled workers who organized these strikes to prevent "dilutions,"[118]conscriptions and to highlight the fact that some of the unskilled workers earned more than the skilled.

Even though the wages rose during this period, at the same time prices and cost of living soared since there was both labour and food shortage. Cole and Postgate claim that by the end of 1918, the prices of food were 133 per cent above the pre-war level and cost of living by 125 per cent.[119] Those who "benefited" from the wartime were undoubtedly women. Throughout the country their working zeal was praised as they took place of the drafted men. As a result, they were granted the voting right in 1918 (women over 30) without any major agitation as we have seen in the pre-war period. As the nation was united during the war, there was an air of anxiety and great expectations towards the end of it.

7.2 Inter-War Period

If there were any hopes among the working-class, however, they were not fulfilled. At first, immediately after the war the economy experienced a boom, especially in 1920. The trade union membership was rising and so were the wages and prices. However, by the end of the year depression crept in and unemployment in 1921 rose to 2.5 million.[120] The government reacted by Unemployment Insurance Act that,

[118] The skilled trades were opened to unskilled workers and women and thus "diluted" the ranks of skilled workers.

[119] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 531.

[120] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 560.

however, favoured the workers insured by their union. These could receive covenanted benefit since they contributed to the union funds whereas others received uncovenanted benefit since they did not contribute financially to any fund. They were said to be on the "dole," which could be extended only by the approval of Ministry of Labour. As a result, starvation and destitution led to hunger marches. The unemployed hoped for better after the election of 1923 that produced the first Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald.

Nevertheless, what followed was the largest strike Britain had experienced so far, i.e. a general strike of May 1926. The initiators were the miners, who turned for support to the emergent General Council of the Trades Union Congress. After the Government would not hear the Council's demands, the strike began. It covered many unions and trades apart from miners. Generally, only the trades essential for people's lives, such as healthcare, were exempt from the strike. Once again, however, the strikers were not heard and were defeated at last (the Council cancelled the strike but miners, with some help, continued until November). Moreover, the situation got even worse for them after the Government cut their benefits under the explanation that the unemployed were "'not genuinely seeking work.'"[121] Moreover, the 1929 stock market crash even stressed the need for expenditure cuts.

In 1929 The Labour Party celebrated electoral victory only to mourn its defeat in 1931. There was much to be done in order to lessen the impact of 1929 crisis but the Party proved incompetent in this respect. The National Government took charge of the country also after MacDonald's desertion. The unemployment soared to unprecedented heights in 1931 to almost 2.9 million.[122] Hunger marches could be seen especially around the British coalfields and the large industrial areas. Before the Second World War set in, the necessary changes in unemployment relief had an indirect but significant impact on Poor Law.

As soon as the National Government took office, it reduced the unemployment benefit, gave limit to the covenanted benefit and transferred the administration of

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[121] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 586. For more details about the strike see Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 576-587 and Gregg, *Social and Economic History*, 442-446. The seeking-work test was introduced in 1921 and abolished in 1930, see Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, 221.

[122] Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 595.

the uncovenanted benefit (now called transitional payment) to local Public Assistance Committees. More changes came with the Unemployment act of 1934. The Act made a distinction between unemployment insurance that concerned the regular contributors to unemployment funds and unemployment assistance, which concerned the transitional payment receivers. Whereas more workers of the former type were covered, the administration of the latter was centralised together with the unemployed receiving poor relief. As a result, the poor relief covered mainly the sick, children and other serious cases and lost its able-bodied "clientele."

The inter-war era is also characteristic for the great differences between areas in terms of unemployment as a result of changes in industries. The period between the wars saw the decline of heavy industries (also as a result of declining export) in favour of the new service industries. Cole and Postgate support this claim by stating that the numbers of miners, textile and metal workers declined during this period, whereas there were more workers in public services and distributive services.[123] The inevitable consequence of such development was a reversal of migration. The growing centres of heavy industry did not lead the charts of population growth anymore. Thus Britain was divided into depressed areas and those in which the new trades sprang up, such as London suburbs. The depressed areas stretched from the industrial parts of Scotland, North East England, Cumberland and South Wales (for better illustration, see the major coal-mining areas, Map 2, p. 30). Although, in his article called "The origins of the depressed areas: unemployment, growth, and regional economic structure in Britain before 1914", Southall disagrees with other commentators that there was a reversal in the areas of highest and lowest unemployment after WWI, the conclusion of both sides is that mass unemployment in the aforementioned areas worsened dramatically.[124] Therefore, we may expect that these will be the places of much distress in the years and decades to come.

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[123] See Cole and Postgate, *The British Common People*, 625-626.

[124] See Humphrey R Southall, "The origins of the depressed areas: unemployment, growth, and regional economic structure in Britain before 1914," *Economic History Review* 41, no. 2 (1988): 236-258, *Business Source Complete*, EBSCO*host*, accessed March 18, 2014.

Before reflecting on the Second World War, we could consider Fraser's summary of the inter-war period:

> The defining characteristic of the years between the wars was neither the distress of some nor the growing affluence of others, but the variability of experience and life chances between regions, classes and age groups. How you fared in this period depended on where you were born, who you were and what you did for living.[125]

We could add that this summary characterises not only this, but also all the preceding history that we have considered so far. Especially in the Victorian period, we argued that the existence of the two worlds was revealed and little possibility of transition was offered.

7.3 WW II

If WWI could unite the nation, WWII did even better. The Communist Party that expressed dome anti-war sentiments in the beginning changed sides immediately when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Moreover, the fear of bombing and potential occupation unified the nation even strongly. Neville Chamberlain's Government was replaced by Churchill's Conservatives. As in the WWI, the Government controlled the factory production and distributed workers. A major problem occurred in case of coal due to both shortage of labour and efficiency.

The crucial events took part towards the end of the war and the person responsible was William Beveridge. Beveridge, in his report called *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, proposed a new system of social insurance. The report of 1942 aroused wild discussions and since the Government had Conservative majority, many of Beveridge's suggestions were omitted or amended. However, in one point did the Government made concession, it accepted the centralisation of health insurance, which was up till then administered by the approved societies (such as Friendly Societies). Furthermore, the Report led to even more crucial change in the British social system, i.e. it led to the establishment of National Health Service.[126]

Before the war was over, plans for reconstruction were already in preparation. For example, the three newly established ministries – of National Insurance, of Town and County Planning and of Education – indicate the route that was to be taken after

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[125] Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, 243.

[126] NHS hereafter.

the war, in other words, the Government planned to take care of the nation. National Insurance was the result not only of Beveridge but also of Government's White Paper called *Social Insurance*. The scheme differed in some respects from that of Beveridge. Since this work is not concerned primarily with welfare system, we will mention only the basic difference between the two reports. The latter Report was the result of concerns about the cost of Insurance, which was based on taxation, whereas Beveridge promoted a system of contributions and flat-rate benefits. For example Churchill, an opponent of the Report, expressed his fear that the working-class part of nation would become too optimistic about the outcome and expect egalitarian society.[127] The guiding principles of the Beveridge Report were his beliefs in the equal right of all to freedom from Want, from Disease, from Ignorance, from Squalor and from Idleness.[128] With the new ministries, the proposals for national insurance scheme and landslide victory of the Labour Party in 1945 election, all and especially the working-classes were anxious about what lay in store for the New Britain.

7.4 Conclusion

The first part of the twentieth century was very different from the history that we had explored. The consequence of the World Wars was the unification of the whole nation. Both the rich and the poor suffered from food and clothes shortage. The Government had to improvise and draft plans for the reconstruction of the nation. After the experience of WWI, the administration of WWII proved much better. The plans for reconstruction were begun in advance and moreover, the Government planned to centralise and administer the welfare of the nation.

Between the wars, there was hardly any talk of a unified nation. On the contrary, the general strike of 1926 and the deterioration of the depressed areas showed the nation composed of two worlds as it was in the Victorian period. Also, the distinction between the "dole" and the contribution-based benefits once more stressed the difference between the deserving and undeserving poor. There was another hope vested in the new National Insurance that was to emerge after the war. However, if we remember our

[127] See Fraser, *The Evolution*, 260-261.

[128] See William Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1942), accessed March 16, 2014, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/19_07_05_beveridge.pdf.

discussion in the first chapter of this work we may expect that the route to equality was not that successful and that Churchill might have been right.

8 From WWII to Present

The last but one chapter of this work is concerned with the period following the Second World War and ending in the context of the twenty-first century. Even though the period is almost seventy-year long, the events that occurred within this span have been numerous. The years following the WWII were mostly uneventful but then come the turbulent 1960s, and crises of 1970s and 1980s. As in the previous sections, also this chapter does not aspire to include all the events of the last seventy years and focuses mainly on the conditions of the working-classes and the circumstances that shaped them.

8.1 The Aftermath of WWII

Arthur Chadwick entitled his chapter covering the years from 1945 to 1957 as both the "Age of Austerity" and "Social Consensus."[129] The former label indicates that WWII did not end with the Yalta Conference because it left deep marks on the British population. Unlike WWI, many cities were bombed during the "blitz." Consequently many people lost their homes, buildings and transport were severely damaged and there was acute shortage of food, clothing and other products. In fact, the rationing of some foods was abolished as late as 1950s. Therefore, it was an "Age of Austerity." Furthermore, the lack of common items did not concern only the working-classes. Moreover, they gained on importance through the necessary after-war production and thus obtained more power. Also due to the leading economist of the time, John Maynard Keynes,[130] both political parties agreed on the importance of welfare and state intervention though, as Fraser notes, it served only as the common means to achieve different aims;[131] thus the concept of "Social Consensus."

However, there was also the problem of unstoppable inflation, which caused both the growth of prices and wages. To pay for the wartime debt, the Government introduced heavy taxation. Nevertheless, these facts did not prevent the then Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to declare that "'[m]ost of our people have never had it so

[129] See Arthur Chadwick, *British Society since 1945*, 4th ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

[130] Keynes' concept was, in fact, opposite to that of Smith. Whereas Smith believed in laissez-faire, Keynes promoted state intervention and full employment (meaning the limit of 3 per cent unemployment).

[131] See Fraser, *The Evolution*, 289.

good.'"[132] A certain improvement could be seen among the working-classes due to the welfare programmes pursued by the politicians on both Right and Left.

There were important improvements in the social sphere as regards healthcare, environmental protection, house-building (though of unappealing high-rise council buildings) and attainability of secondary education for all (and school-leaving age extended to fifteen). All the advancements continued well into the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. On the one hand, in case of education, an eleven plus exam determined whether a child was to attend more prestigious grammar school or a secondary school. The latter was mostly the destination of working-class pupils whereas the former of middle and upper-classes. Thus there was, in fact, a dual system of education and the eleven plus exam could determine child's further education and potentially even career and class affiliation.[133] On the other hand, in 1969 the Open University was established. Moreover, new universities came into existence after the "promotion" of Polytechnics.

The major change, however, came in 1948. Four crucial Acts came in effect, namely "National Insurance, Industrial Injuries, National Assistance and National Health Service Acts."[134] The first of the Acts catered for workers in case of distress (for example in case of unemployment and sickness) and was based on contributions. The second Act ensured that if injured, a worker would receive a benefit. In case the benefits a person was entitled to did not suffice, the third Act assured that further benefit was paid after personal means test was applied. Also, the National Assistance meant the final repeal of the Poor Law. Finally, the National Health Service Act created, for the first time in British history, a national healthcare service with basic treatment available to all, regardless financial circumstances or employment status. Even though the doctors were antagonistic towards any co-operation with the NHS, they consented in the end and since June 1948, NHS has been in operation.[135] However, since the cost of NHS was greater than expected, the Conservative Government, coming into office in 1951, limited the NHS budget, introduced fees for prescription, dental and optical

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[132] Marwick, *British Society*, 86.

[133] Later introduced comprehensive schools were aimed at bridging the gap between the two distinct institutions. It was Margaret Thatcher, who promoted the emergence of comprehensive school when serving as the Minister of Education.

[134] Fraser, *The Evolution*, 283.

[135] For more details about NHS see Fraser, *The Evolution*, 276-283, Marwick, *British Society*, 32-34

services. Consequently, the principle of "all for free and for all" was gradually disappearing especially during the 1970s depression.

8.2 "The Sixties"

If 1940s and 1950s were the decades of austerity, "the Sixties" were the age of affluence. This turbulent decade could be captured by few key words, such as consumerism, mass culture, dissent, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, the Pill and the possibility of abortion. The first five key words are interconnected. Consumerism breeds materialism and mass production ensures that all is available to all. Nevertheless, the uniformity of the masses may lead to dissent. This could be exemplified also by music, provocative texts and mass distribution of records; thus the rebellious and immensely popular Rolling Stones and The Beatles. Again, radio and television, enhancers of mass culture (television, radio) brought not only the two bands, but many other performers and programmes to everyone's home. Lastly, the Pill and abortion signify a sexual revolution never imagined before. We should add another important change, namely the concept of poverty line. Previously based on the subsistence basis, the poverty line was to be judged by participatory level; i.e. the people's ability to fully participate in the consumer culture with all its gloss and luxury.[136]

What also marked this period preceding the Thatcher times was the growing complexity and non-transparency of the welfare provisions. The flat-rate rule had to give way to income-based contributions and benefits. Also, the means test was introduced to many areas of welfare. In order to remove the stigma of National Assistance, as only "a Poor Law renamed," it changed its name to Supplementary Benefits. However, as Fraser highlights, the changes in welfare led to a "poverty trap," re-introduced the division into deserving and undeserving poor and enhanced idleness.[137] In order to receive the benefit, (based on means test) the lower the income, the more different benefits could the family claim. Thus there might have been lack of incentive to work in some cases. Fraser further states that towards the end of 1970s "there were over forty different means-tested benefits in operation."[138] Therefore, we

[136] See Fraser, *The Evolution*, 300.

[137] See Fraser, *The Evolution*, 289.

[138] See Fraser, *The Evolution*, 304.

could observe that the Government was not very efficient in the organisation of the welfare provision.

Moreover, towards the end of the 1950s, the first major racial problems emerged as a consequence of the influx of mostly unskilled workers from the former British colonies (Africa, India, Pakistan and the Caribbean) that started after WWII. With the British National Act of 1948, the inhabitants of the former colonies were permitted to enter Britain. However, the anti-immigration sentiments started to gain ground even among politicians. Consequently, the Government commenced the limitation of immigration. The first Acts were passed in 1960s and gradually the limits were stricter. However, this did not prevent further inflow of migrants into the country. Consequently, as Mann notes, "discrimination was widespread in housing, employment and virtually every other area of social life."[139]

Moreover, during the Notting Hill riots of 1958, there was a group of young men, Teddy Boys, prominent in the disturbances. These boys were working-class members, mainly unskilled or unemployed youth. They were known for their aggression and characteristic for their clothes and hairstyles. However, despite their negative attributions, as Stanley Cohen argues, their formation signalled a change from the "'frustrated social worker' to cultural innovator and critic."[140] Thus we could observe a certain shift within the working-class atmosphere, indicating the acceptance of their circumstances and finding their own way of existence.

However, Teddy Boys were not the only group that appeared among the working-class since, as Mann argues, the racial tension led to "[u]nprovoked attacks by white, mainly working-class youth – initially Teddy Boys and later skinheads."[141] The reasons for the working-class aggression can be deduced from the assumption that the immigrants were a competition to the unskilled working-class. Moreover, they occupied the worst areas of inner-cities that were the homes of the working-classes as well. Also, it could have been the sheer frustration of the worker who did not perceive any meaning in his dead-end job or no rescue from his unemployment. Therefore,

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[139] Mann, *The Making of an English "Underclass?"* 88.

[140] Stanley Cohen, "Symbols of Trouble (1980)," in *The Subculture Reader,* 2nd ed., ed. Ken Gelder (London: Routledge, 2005), 157.

[141] Mann, *The Making of an English "underclass?"* 88. More about Teddy Boys and Skinheads in the later chapter.

violence may be the way to release the omnipresent frustration. Lastly, as some of the confessions of working-class men presented in Marwick revealed, the immigrants were simply not wanted.[142] The trade unions were not very different from the workers themselves and racism appeared also in their realm. We may add also the racism in case of police forces and politicians and conclude that whereas the working-classes opted for the way of protest that has historically been the only one available to them; i.e. demonstrations and violence, the ruling classes engaged in institutional racism. However, the Government improved their reputation by passing the first Race Relations Act that deemed discrimination based on race illegal.

8.2.1 Trade Unions and Strikes

After the war, the unions as well as the workers maintained their wartime tranquillity. However, starting in 1953, the strikes began to occur again and with more intensity. Wrigley mentions that among those, who opted for strike actions were, above all, engineers, railway workers, dockers, busmen and printers.[143] The major cause of the strikes was the wage disputes (we could mention that historically, the reasons were mostly working conditions in factories, such as number of working-hours or child and woman labour). Thus the number of days lost in strikes was rising slowly to an average of almost 4 million in the latter part of 1960s (which was still negligible in comparison with 13.5 million days lost in 1971).[144] The strikes were usually not under the official approval of the trade unions, only towards the end of the 1960s did the situation change and trade unions became the strike organizers. In the 1960s and 1970s, the widespread strikes were regarded as "the British disease." However, as Wrigley remarks, the international comparisons demonstrated that Britain was not the leader in the number of strikes.[145] There were also fluctuations of days lost, for example in 1962 there were almost 6 million days lost in strike, whereas a year later the number was nearly 2 million. From 1964 to 1967 the days lost kept between 2 and 3 million until

[142] See Marwick, *British Society*, 179-181.

[143] See Chris Wrigley, *British Trade Unions since 1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Kindle edition.

[144] See Marwick, *British Society*, 130-131.

[145] See Wrigley, *British Trade Unions*, Kindle edition.

sudden increase to almost 5 million in 1968 and 6.8 million in 1968.[146] As was indicated above, the 1970s brought an unprecedented rise in the strike action.

8.3 1970s

God save the Queen
the fascist regime,
they made you a moron
a potential H-bomb.

God save the Queen
she ain't no human being.
There is no future
in England's dreaming

...

God save the Queen
'cos tourists are money

...

When there's no future
how can there be sin
we're the flowers
in the dustbin
we're the poison
in your human machine
we're the future
you're future

...

no future
no future
no future for you.

The song "God Save the Queen" (1977) by the Sex Pistols can summarize the 1970s for us. There is the frustration of the working-classes ("no future in England's dreaming... they made you a moron"), the menacing new technology ("H-bomb"), materialism ("tourists are money"), the dehumanizing aspect of mass production with human robots ("human machine") and also and above all the class (or potentially "underclass") hatred ("we're the flowers in the dustbin, we're the poison in your human machine"). Finally, there is the self-confidence of the "underclass" or unskilled working-class and prediction of doom for the rich (we're the future, you're the future ... no future for you"). So, thus spoke the dissent of the 1970s.

[146] See Wrigley, "Table 4.1.: Industrial disputes in the UK, 1945-2001," *British Trade Unions*, Kindle edition.

The 1970s were undoubtedly a troublesome decade for Britain. The economy was experiencing high unemployment and at the same time high inflation (as high as 27 per cent in 1975).[147] As a result, the demands for still higher wages led to aforementioned increase in strike action. Moreover, the 1973 oil crisis led to intensification of the depression that set on Britain. Other negative features appearing in the society were the increasing number of crime (especially among the young), violence and over-crowded prisons, the IRA bomb attacks, drug abuse and also teenage pregnancy. Furthermore, the traditional heavy industries were still in decline, which led to deterioration in the already depressed areas mainly in the North and the South Wales. Whereas the male unemployment in the South-East in 1978 was 5.8 per cent, it was 10.4 per cent in the North and 10.6 per cent in Scotland.[148]

For the working-classes, the powerful unions were the means of protest. None of the Prime Ministers (Heath, Wilson, Callaghan) of the 1970s was able to bring the trade unions firmly under control. There was unprecedented number of strikes, including the 23.9 million lost days with almost 2500 incidents in 1972 and 29.4 million lost days and 2125 incidents in 1979 (highest number of strike actions was in 1970 with 3906, followed by 1974 with 2922 incidents).[149] The main reason behind strikes was the demand for higher wages but since the Government's goal was to decelerate inflation, they aimed at the contrary; i.e. to keep the wages as closer to their level as possible in order to prevent rise in prices. The major strikes were that of 1979, during the "winter of discontent," in which the public sector (including nurses, dustmen, bus drivers) engaged in strikes as well. The "discontent" was caused by the Prime Minister James Callaghan, who demanded trade union co-operation in stopping the inflation by limiting the wage increase to the maximum of 5 per cent.[150] Consequently, as both Black and Marwick mention, such scenes as heaps of rubbish on the streets and unburied dead could be seen in the winter of 1979.[151] Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the trade unions did not evoke public sympathy and the electorate chose

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[147] See Marwick, *British Society*, 152.

[148] See Marwick, *British Society*, 164.

[149] See Wrigley, "Table 4.1.: Industrial disputes in the UK, 1945-2001," *British Trade Unions*, Kindle edition.

[150] See Jeremy Black, *Britain since the Seventies: Politics and Society in the Consumer Age* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 122.

[151] See Marwick, *British Society*, 228 and Black, *Britain since the Seventies*, 123.

Conservatives with Margaret Thatcher in the lead to tackle the too powerful trade unions.

Another issue seemed to become more pressing, i.e. the problem of race. It was especially in the poorer areas were the anti-immigrant sentiments appeared. Together with the unskilled workers, the immigrants were being removed from the inner-city slums into the suburban areas and their council housing. Since they were also mostly unskilled workers, the distinction between the skilled and unskilled was not only race but mainly the place of residence and house ownership. Occupying the same space, the race tensions were increasing. In this atmosphere, the Teddy Boys of 1950s experienced a rebirth in the 1970s. However, the presence of immigrants did not have only negative impact. On the contrary, it also influenced the white youths of the working-class, who shared the ghettos with the immigrants.

We began this chapter with a song by Sex Pistols. The punkers were one of the rebellious working-class groups of the 1970s that found their won way of social protest. Punkers were anything but fashionable, anything but mainstream and anything but supporters of the regime. Also, as Hebdige remarks, punk "issued out of nameless housing estates, anonymous dole queues, slums-in-the-abstract."[152] Therefore, they were also the representatives of the Victorian "undeserving" poor, occupying slums and (since they were mostly young) their parents living on the dole. Moreover, the immigrant influence was present in their case as well, i.e. it was only their inclination to reggae but also some features of their "anti-fashion." Also, they were not the only group of "undeserving" youth that found their distinctive style.

There were also the skinheads. These emerged from the mods, a 1960s youth movement that, as the name suggests, emphasised the importance of fashion by pushing it to its extreme. However, they were also known for drug abuse and appeal for "black" rhythms, such as jazz or ska. In the 1970s, the movement experienced a revival and the "'hard mods'" turned into skinheads.[153] Thus they were at once combining their "undeserving" working-class origin and adopting the West Indian immigrants' culture. Paradoxically, though acquiring immigrant influences, they were violent to the different

[152] Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 65.

[153] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979), 55.

ethnics. For example as Hebdige highlights, they provoked an attack on immigrants in Liverpool in 1972.[154]

Unlike Teddy Boys, however, punks and skinheads were influenced by the black culture and thus we could assume that the immigrants, in fact, helped the working-class youth find their distinct self and expression; i.e. serve as an inspiration for them. On the other hand, there was the National Front, a very nationalistic movement aimed at immigrants, which had a strong influence on the working-classes as well. Therefore, we can see that the question of race was very complex. For our purposes, it is important to remember that in the 1950s (Teddy Boys, Mods, Rockers) and later in 1970s, the working-class urban youth created a culture of their own.

A different situation arises in case of football hooliganism that became a serious problem. The clashes between some of the spectators of the opposing teams as well as attacks on the referees, managers and even players began towards the end of the nineteenth century with the professionalization of football. Moreover, it was not only the fans but also the players, who gradually abandoned the rules of fair play. The violence among the football fans peaked from the 1960s until 1980s. As Gibbons et al. point out, there are many sociological theories dealing with the reason for such hooliganism.[155] However, what concerns us more is the fact that the hooligans were mostly of working-class origin. Among them, skinheads were prominent as well, as exemplified by the confession of "John," also provided by Gibbons et al.[156] In spite of the violence, there was also the sense of comradeship experienced by the members of the hooligan groups and thus we can regard them together with the other young working-class movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Another aspect of "John's" life that could interest us are firstly his sense of regionalism that was seen also in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. "John" from Gibbon's study is from Middlesbrough, Yorkshire; i.e. the North. He mentions that the sense of place and defending one's place was important for them, especially when it came to those clubs closer to "England."[157] Therefore, the regionalism is also connected to

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[154] See Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style,* 59.

155 Gibbons, et al., "'The way it was': an account of soccer violence in the 1980s," Soccer & Society 9, no. 1 (March 2008): 28-41, SPORTDiscus with Full Text, EBSCOhost, accessed March 28, 2014, 29-30.

[156] Gibbons, et a., "'The way it was,'" 32-36.

[157] Gibbons, et al., "'The way it was,'" 36.

the already mentioned deterioration of the northern counties and prosperity of the South. Another important aspect of "John's" life that is of concern to us is the fact that he grew up in a broken family, living with his grandparents; grandmother being drunk most of the time and grandfather working the whole day.[158] Thus we arrive at another feature of the post-war development; i.e. the breakdown of family values. Therefore, the children from such family background, as "John" was, required the sense of belonging, no matter whether this includes criminal activity. The fact that there were many youngsters in the hooligan groups is also supported by Marsh et al. who explored the "Life on Terraces" (terraces on football stadiums during the matches of Oxford United) and discovered that the average age of these "noisy" groups ranged from 15 to 18.[159]

8.4 Conclusion

Before we move on to the Thatcher times, it would be useful to summarize the post 1945 development. The latter part of the twentieth century began with optimism with respect to relationship between classes and consensus of both parties and employers to build a welfare state. Overall, the situation seemed positive even for the unskilled working-classes. However, the economic circumstances were gradually deteriorating and the welfare provisions needed to be cut.

In the context of worsening economic conditions also came the growth of unemployment, especially in the depressed areas, and of strike activity. The 1960s also witnessed revolutions in perhaps all aspects of life. On the one hand, there was the new technology that made many things easier but on the other hand, posed threats and commenced the dehumanizing process of the masses.

The 1970s brought intensification of the problems of the 1960s. Trade unions were ignorant of the Government's concern for the rising inflation and the strike during the winter of discontent crossed all possible lines.

At the same time, we saw the emergence of specific culture among the mostly unskilled working-class that organized itself into their own distinct groups. Judging by the characteristic of the three groups mentioned, we could remember our discussion from the first chapter, in which Murray associated the "underclass" with the problems of juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, drug abuse and aversion to work. Though we do

[158] Gibbons, et al., "'The way it was,'" 33.

[159] See Peter Marsh, et al., "Life on Terraces (1978)," 236-239.

not have any evidence of the last feature, we can certainly found the first three characteristics of the "underclass" in the Teddy Boys, skinhead and hooligan culture.

8.5 Conservative Government: Margaret Thatcher and John Major (1979-1997)

8.5.1 Get on Your Bike!

After the failure of the Labour Party to put the society into order, the people desired a different approach to the social problems. Consequently, the 1979 election brought victory to the Conservative Party under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher. Mrs Thatcher's nickname "Iron Lady" indicates what a leader she was. Regardless of her strength, there are ambivalent feelings about the merits and harms of her politics as she was both celebrated and condemned.

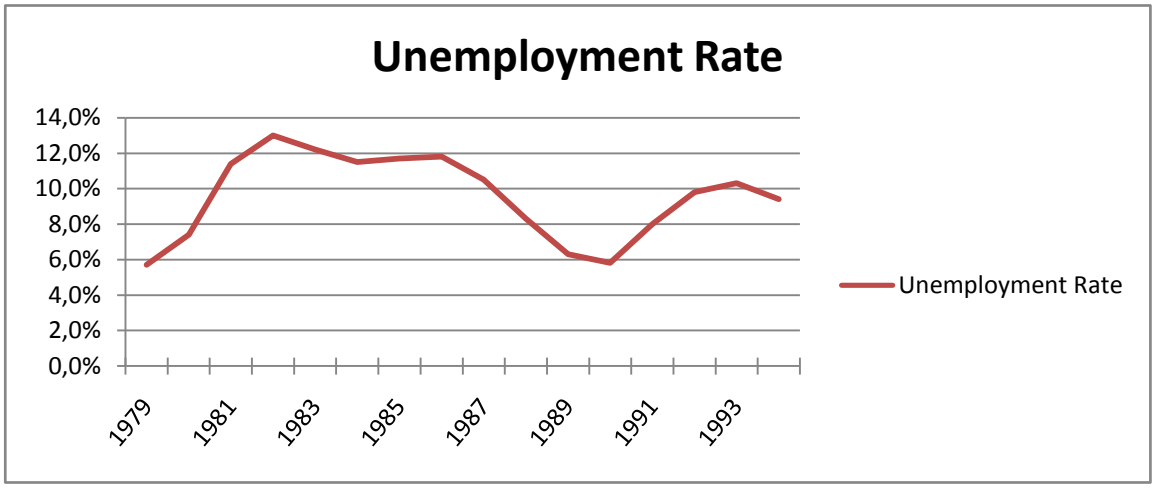
Soon after Margaret Thatcher took her office, the Government lessened the power of trade unions. Jones summarizes that "[the n]we laws allowed employers to sack strikers, reduced dismissal compensation, forbade workers to strike in support of others, repealed protections preventing courts seizing union funds, and made unions liable for huge financial penalties."[160] Firstly, the threat of losing work undoubtedly had a powerful impact on the workers since the situation of the 1980s was unfavourable enough for traditional heavy industries and a job once lost could result in unemployment. Secondly, if we remember the general strike of 1926, the support the miners received from other industries was crucial, even though they lost. Thirdly, the threat to funds was deadly for the unions. We could remember the impact of Taff Vale decision in the 1900s that paralyzed the unions.

The social commentators generally agree that the years of the Thatcher Government (and also Major Government since he continued in a similar vein as Thatcher) were marked by the growth of differences between the rich and the poor. The findings of researches from Joseph Rowntree Foundation support this view and to stress their validity, they add that "[i]nternationally, there has not been a universal trend towards greater inequality in recent years, although this has been the case in the majority of industrialised countries. The pace at which inequality increased in

[160] Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London: Verso, 2012), 50.

the UK was faster than in any other, except New Zealand."[161] Also Jones states that whereas in 1979 there were 5 million people living in poverty, the number soared to 14 million in 1992.[162] The widening gap and welfare expenditure cuts were the result of Thatcher's approach to poverty that could remind us of the Victorian attitude. In other words, if one "did not make it," it was attributed to his moral or personal failure. The motto "get on your bike" became the key phrase of this era. It implied that if one tries hard, they will always be able to find work.[163] The unemployment rate during the Conservatives' years, however, shows that the advice was either wrong or people were truly too idle to try.

Chart 5 Unemployment Rate, 1979-1993[164]



The disastrous years for the workers were from 1982 to 1986 when the unemployment rate fluctuated around 12 per cent. We can observe that the situation worsened rapidly after Thatcher took office and apart from the period 1988 to 1992, the rate did not fall under 10 per cent. However, we can also expect great regional differences especially if we consider the closures of mines and the miners' strike in 1984 and the overall situation of the North as opposed to the South.

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[161] "Income and Wealth: Report of the JRF Inquiry Group," Joseph Rowntree Foundation, February 1, 1995, accesses March 20, 2014, http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/income-and-wealth-report-jrf-inquiry-group.

[162] See Jones, *Chavs*, 63-64.

[163] For more details see Jones, *Chavs*, 55.

[164] "Unemployment statistics from 1881 to the present day," Office for National Statistics, January 8, 1996, accessed March 20, 2014, http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?newquery=unemployment+statistics+from+1881.

8.5.2 Miners

The period of the Conservatives was especially disastrous for miners. The Thatcher Government was planning to abandon the support of mines and close many of them due to the shift to the service and financial sector. The miners were left with no other choice than strikes and picketing since Thatcher would not negotiate with trade unions. The result was extensive miners' picketing especially at the coke-works in Orgreave near Sheffield, Yorkshire. The miners, led by Arthur Scargill, the president of National Union of Mineworkers, remained on strikes for a full year, from March 1984 to March 1985. There were violent confrontations between the pickets and police, both parties causing injuries and deaths. Though the miners protested against the alleged police brutality, the pickets themselves were armed with steel bars, bricks etc. Throughout the strike, the families of the miners suffered greatly, almost starving to death. Nevertheless, the men were mostly supported by their womenfolk. Despite the community feeling, however, the miners had to face a heavy and humiliating defeat in the end.

After the strike, namely from 1984 to 1997, 127 pits were closed (there were no closures in 1997). The 127 closures included 36 in Yorkshire, 20 in South Wales, 19 in Nottinghamshire and 11 in Durham County.[165] However, the closure of mines did not lead only to loss of many jobs but also to breakdown of whole communities. Moreover, it was not only the mining industry, but also the other traditional heavy industries that suffered during the Thatcher Government. The problem was too rapid deindustrialization with no time for new jobs to be created. As a result, the characteristics of the working-class that was generally associated with the former industries disappeared and there was no work for the new unemployed. We should remember that the tradition of these industries dates back to the Industrial Revolution (mid-eighteenth century) and whole communities were built around it. Another outcome was the outflow of the population from these areas, in fact, the migration was reversed to that during the Industrial Revolution.

[165] See "Pit closures, year by year," *BBC News,* last modified March 5, 2004, accessed April 1, 2014, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3500979.stm.

Chart 6 Balance between Inflow and Outflow of Population [166]

Balance between Inflow and Outflow of Population (in thousands)						
	North West	**Yorkshire and the Humber**	**West Midlands**	**East Midlands**	**South East**	**South West**
1976	-9,8	-0,3	-13,8	6,8	33,7	29,1
1981	-19,3	-5	-11,6	4,9	35,8	20,3
1986	-25,8	-11,9	-7,8	17,1	39,2	4,4
1991	-8,8	-0,4	-5,2	8,1	13	21,8
1994	-10,1	-4,4	-10,3	10,2	25,1	23,8
1995	-12,1	-6,8	-8,1	9,4	22,7	23,6
1996	-9	-7,4	-10,4	7,8	29,1	28,7
1997	-11	-7,3	-11,1	10,3	23,8	31,6

As the chart indicates, the North West (includes two counties that we already mentioned, i.e. Lancashire and Cheshire and cities such as Manchester and Liverpool), Yorkshire and the Humber (area where Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford or York could be found) and West Midlands (the city of Birmingham or Coventry are situated in this region) all recorded a continuous outflow of population. For North West and Yorkshire the crucial year was 1986. From 1985 to 1986 alone, 11 pits were closed in Yorkshire.

North West with its two major ports Liverpool and Manchester was, in the past, a prosperous centre of shipping and cloth industry. However, with the export, mechanization and departure from heavy industries, the region suffered greatly. The impact can be demonstrated even by data from 2008. The data showed that the North West region has three representatives (so-called Lower layer Super Output Areas, i.e. LSOAs) in the top five areas of overall deprivation, namely Liverpool (first place), Manchester (third place) and Knowsley (fourth place).[167]

Contrary to the North, East Midlands and the South both experienced positive balance, i.e. inflow of migrating population. As was suggested earlier in the discussion about "John," the South was generally more affluent than the North, being the true "England." The East Midlands seems as a transition between the North and the South.

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[166] "Population Trends – No. 134, Winter 2008," Office for National Statistics, December 12, 2008, accessed April 2, 2014. http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/population-trends-rd/population-trends/index.html.

[167] See Department for Communities and Local Government, "The English Indices of Deprivation 2010," March 2011, accessed April 3, 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6871/1871208.pdf.

Despite the fact that Nottinghamshire is situated in this region, the numbers are positive due to its closeness to London (for example Rutland and Lincolnshire were among the "happiest" areas within the UK in 2012/2013).[168] So, the regional within Britain proved significant.

8.5.3 Hooligans and the Police

Hooligans did not cease their activity in the 1980s. On the contrary, there was one disaster that shocked the world and highlighted the problem of British football hooliganism. At the end of May, 1985, the terraces in a football stadium in Brussels collapsed after aggressive Liverpool fans threatened the supporters of Italy's Juventus. The result was more than thirty deaths. Moreover, the teams of Liverpool, Chelsea, Birmingham and others had "hooligan" supporters among their fans who were continuously provoking fights. In Scotland, both Glasgow teams were causing troubles. Similarly to the weekend fights of Mods and Rockers in the 1960s, the mostly working-class hooligans used weekends to "let off steam."

On the other hand, Jones also provides an example of the misinterpreted 1989 Hillsborough disaster, during which ninety-six people died. In Hillsborough, it was not the hooligans to blame but the police and safety precautions at the stadium. Nonetheless, the media created a different picture of the event, blaming the fans.[169] Therefore, this event was a demonstration of both police injustice and prejudice against the working-class fans, who were allegedly all hooligans. Once labelled as such, they formed a community of their own. There is no wonder then that, as Marwick states, "[t]here were no longer national communal values ... Loyalty was now to the individual peer group."[170] Thus the British society was breaking up and the united nation of the post-war years was inevitably gone.

Police brutality, injustice and even racial prejudice within the police force were seen also in the suppression of racial rioters. As we noted earlier, the unskilled working-class found themselves in ghettos with the immigrants. During 1980s, the major events

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[168] See Office for National Statistics, "Personal Well-Being across the UK: 2011/2012 and 2013/2013," 2013, accessed April 3, 2014, http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dvc124/wrapper.html.

[169] See Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London: Verso, 2012), 68-69.

[170] Marwick, *British Society*, 297.

took place in London's parts of Brixton and Tottenham, Liverpool's Toxteth and Birmingham's Handsworth. The reason behind these riots was not only racism but also unprovoked police brutality and racial prejudice.

8.5.4 The Welfare State

The philosophy behind the politics of Thatcher and Major was the long forgotten individualism and self-help. We could remember Samuel Smiles' belief in individual's strength in the nineteenth century. As a result, the welfare state suffered major cuts. This regards not only social security but also the NHS. Some benefits were abolished or lessened in order to reduce the Government's expenditure and also to prevent idleness. As both Marwick and Fraser note, there was much talk about "underclass;" i.e. those who abused the welfare provision and became dependent on welfare benefits.[171] We should also mention Charles Murray at this point since his work on British "underclass" dates back to 1990s. We can also discern his beliefs in the "undeserving poor" in the attitudes of the Conservative Government.

However, the "underclass" had also other problems to face. Firstly, there was the unemployment that concerned mainly the Afro-American youths. Secondly, the housing was inadequate (remember the 1883 London pamphlet) and there were ghettos of immigrants and poor whites. Thirdly, the traditional family values were still in decline. The percentage of one-parent, and especially single-mother families, was rising. Fourthly, drug abuse and crime leading to over-crowded prisons was another problem to solve. Lastly, as Marwick notes, there was a general feeling among the public that the standards of many services were deteriorating and the providers and authorities showed "disregard for ordinary human rights," by placing the concern of businesses before public safety and justice.[172]

In terms of housing, Thatcher introduced the so-called "right-to-buy" programme. It was designed to encourage the council-house tenants to become house-owners. The means of achieving this was through discounted house prices. [173] However, even though this step seems favourable to working-classes tenants, the reverse is true (though not for all). The result was that the working-classes divided into those who

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[171] See Fraser, *The Evolution*, 305 and Marwick, *British Society*, 368.

[172] Marwick, *British Society*, 351.

[173] See Jones, *Chavs*, 61-62 Marwick, *British Society*, 368-372.

owned their house and those who could not, despite the Government's subsidies, afford one. Also, the rent soared in the following years. There were two significant consequences. Firstly, the poorest were forced to rent the houses that were in worse conditions. Therefore, the council house ghettos were truly the place where the least fortunate were placed. Secondly, the rising rent led to growing homelessness since families could not afford to pay for permanent accommodation.[174] This situation was further worsened by the fact that the Government ceased to build any more council houses (and the Labour Government continued in this policy) and there was an acute council-house shortage.

The encouragement to house-ownership was the manifestation of Thatcher's belief in individualism and market competition. Another example of market support could be found even in case of NHS with the introduction of inner-market. General Practitioners as well as health authorities were to purchase the services of hospitals for their patients. Thus creating a demand on the "hospital market," the result of which was a competition that would hopefully lead to better services. There was, however, due to expenditure cuts, a lack of hospital beds and long waiting times for treatment. Though this situation gradually improved, the principles of Beveridge were far gone.

The same could be said about the benefit provisions. Following the criticism of welfare dependency, the Government cut also the social security expenditure. There were also some administrative changes. For example, the Unemployment Benefit was changed to Jobseekers Allowance.[175] This could remind us of the 1916 strike of miners, who were refused any unemployment benefits since they were not "genuinely seeking work." Together with the aforementioned self-help principle, we could conclude that in case of welfare state, the Government was returning to pre-1944, even Victorian attitudes and Poor Law stigma. However, the world and Britain were very different from the nineteenth century, especially after the liberating 1960s. Therefore, as Marwick remarks, there was disparity between the conservatism of the extreme-right and the increasingly liberal social values.

Lastly, as Walker claims, "the foundations of Thatcherism are built on the assumption that economic (and, therefore, social) progress will be achieved only if

[174] For details see Marwick, *British Society*, 371.

[175] See Fraser, *The Evolution*, 312.

the gap between the two nations of rich and poor is widened."[176] We could argue, however, that the cause and effect should be the other way round. Since the decades of Conservative policy promoted privatisation, competition and self-help, we could assume that those already with capital and experience had a much better position in these circumstances. On the other hand, the poorest and unemployed (and with unemployment on the rise) saw their only means of subsistence cut and had little of their own and virtually no skills to make use of. Thus the system of tough competition and self-reliance led to the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

We could remember *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London;* namely the description of the "undeserving" living together with the "deserving" in dilapidated housing and with little help from the state. The characteristics of the "undeserving" did not seem to change though it acquired different characteristics, such as teenage pregnancy or juvenile delinquency. Therefore, we finally come to Murray's conclusion of negative characteristics of the "underclass." However, we have to acknowledge Mann's point of view as well. As we assumed above, the situation of the 1970s and 1980s among the poor was similar to that of the Victorian times. Thus we could also argue that as there were the "deserving" and honest in the nineteenth century, the situation may not be so different today and no generalization would bring reliable results.

8.6 New Labour

The 1997 election was a landslide victory for the Labour Party under the leadership of Anthony Blair. Labour's economic position was better than that of the Conservatives since the country was recovering from the recession of the early 1990s. Nevertheless, some of the car factories were forced to close down, among them the Vauxhall factory in Luton that had a long history in the region (since the early 1900s).

The novelty of the New Labour was its acceptance of a mixed economy, as opposed to nationalizations of the previous Labour Governments and consequently in finding the "third way," a compromise between the Left and the Right. As a result, the Governments of Anthony Blair and Gordon Brown did not contradict all the policies of the previous Government. For example, as we will learn in the following discussion,

[176] Alan Walker, "Introduction: A Policy for Two Nations," 2.

the approach towards the problem of inequality and the working-class did not change in its core.

On the other hand, the new Government established a Social Exclusion Unit, which was inter-governmental formation aimed at solving the problems of social exclusion, which was a new term for those, who "suffer[ed] from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, poor health and family breakdown."[177] All the problems mentioned in the quotation have generally been associated with the poor working-class communities occupying council houses. In other words, we arrive at Murray's concept of the "underclass" once more. We could add Jones' argument, who equalled the social exclusion with the "underclass" and questioned the benefits of such approach. For example, he asks what these people are excluded from. According to him, it is certainly not the mainstream society since it is stratified and there is hardly any clear majority. Rather, Jones continues, it is the exclusion based on the individual behaviour and failure to "make it."[178] This is further associated with the division to "aspirational and non-aspirational" working-classes.[179] Aspiration was considered as the desire and ability move up the social scale. Perhaps we could use the words of G. B. Shaw's Mr Doolitlle to question the motivation behind the desirable aspiration:

> I ain't pretending to be deserving. I'm undeserving; and I mean to go on being undeserving. I like it; and that's the truth. … It's making a gentleman of me that I object to. Who asked him to make a gentleman of me? I was happy. I was free. I touched pretty nigh everybody for money when I wanted it ... Now I am worrited; tied neck and heels; and everybody touches me for money.[180]

Even though *Pygmalion* was published in 1912, we could still use it as an argument against the assumption that all members of a society aspire to become middle-class members. Moreover, 1980s compared to 1912 were marked even more for the consumer culture so that apart from the Mr Doolittle's worries about being asked for money all

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[177] Social Exclusion Unit, "The Social Exclusion Unit" (London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004), 2 accessed April 1, 2014 http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http:/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/social_exclusion_task_force/assets/publications_1997_to_2006/seu_leaflet.pdf.

[178] See Jones, *Chavs,* 99-100.

[179] Jones, *Chavs,* 89.

[180] G. B. Shaw, *Pygmalion,* Kindle edition, accessed February 2, 2014, http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3825.

the time, there is the stressed materialism and abandonment of community life and "freedom" in favour of money acquisition.

So, we can observe a continuation of Thatcher/Victorian attitude towards the poor even from the Labour Government. However, as Brian Wheeler argued in his article for the BBC News, the situation of the poor did not improve during Labour's nine years in office.[181] Thus Blair's and Gordon's Governments were not able to help their traditional voters any more than the Conservatives.

What is also important to take into account is that the fact that working-classes lost their representation in Parliament, which they gained in the 1900s. This is based not only on the New Labour's approach to the poor that was very similar to Thatcher's but also on the composition of the Cabinet. Both Jones and Marwick highlight the changing membership of the Government in favour of the middle and upper classes that began with Thatcher and was even more visible in Blair's and Brown's Governments.[182] Thus we may conclude that as with the social welfare, even in case of Parliamentary representation, Britain was returning to the nineteenth century.

However, there is one major breakthrough in terms of social security, namely the introduction of a minimum wage in 1999. Also, the New Labour Government increased child benefits and provided and "income for the elderly" in 1999.[183] Also, Fraser mentions the establishment of National Institution for Clinical Excellence that supervised the inspections of treatments with the aim of improvement of the services for patients.[184]

Another legislation that was designed to assist the poor families concerned tax reliefs. The Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit and Pension Credit were introduced by New Labour and continue under David Cameron's coalition Government. However, even this policy did not evade criticism. As both Fraser and Jones argue, these tax-based benefits were, in fact, a return to Speenhamland system and the 1834 Poor Law.[185] In other words, under the Working Tax Credit, the Government provides certain amount (currently up to 1 940 Pounds) a year for those whose income does not exceed certain

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[181] See Brian Wheeler, "The Politics of Social Exclusion," *BBC News*, last modified February 24, 2006, accessed April 1, 2014, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_politics/4746592.stm.

[182] See Jones, *Chavs*, 29, 76, 105 and Marwick, *British Society*, 387-389.

[183] Fraser, *The Evolution*, 318.

[184] See Fraser, *The Evolution*, 317-318.

[185] See Fraser, *The Evolution*, 318-319 and Jones, *Chavs*, 204-205.

level.[186] Therefore, as was the case of Speenhamland system, the employers can decrease wages since the Government will provide a subsidy, even though a limited one. Also, the work means test is applied, which could remind us of the work test of the New Poor Law. Furthermore, as Jones also pointed out, the means test is rather bureaucratic and the potential claimants avoid it. Moreover, if there are overpayments, the claimants can be asked to return the sum. Thus the even though the system is designed to support the poor, it has many drawbacks. Nevertheless, it is still a part of welfare programme.

The Government had to face also other pressing issues, such as the rising crime, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse (highest in Europe in 1998).[187] Moreover, the racial tensions were still causing violent clashes in the more deprived areas, such as already mentioned Bradford, Oldham or Manchester. The situation did not improve after the terrorist attacks on New York, causing aggression towards the Muslim community. There were also problems that the Government could not tackle, such as aging population.

8.7 2010 to Present: Broken Britain?

However, the greatest and most unexpected blow came in 2011. In that year, disastrous racial riots started first in Tottenham, London and spread other cities, such as Birmingham and Manchester. The scenes of the summer 2011 were hard to believe and also highlighted the fact that Britain is far from being a unified society. It also strengthened the feeling that Britain is a "broken society." Repeatedly used by David Cameron, the label "Broken Britain" was used in the 2010 elections and repeated once more during the 2011 riots.

The riots in 2011 took place after the financial crisis of 2008, which led to further cuts in the welfare programme. As the commentators on the Left claim, the crisis caused by the upper and middle-class financial speculators has to be paid by those on the lower social levels. Jones is among these leftist promoters and claims that "the wealth of the top 1,000 richest people shot up by 30 per cent between 2009 and 2010" and that "while the Conservative-led government is reducing corporation tax to

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[186] See "Working Tax Credit," Gov.UK, last modified April 6, 2014, accessed April 6, 2014, https://www.gov.uk/working-tax-credit/overview.

[187] See Marwick, *British Society*, 455.

24 per cent ... VAT [value added tax], a tax that disproportionately hits the poor, was increased to 20 per cent."[188] Regarding the corporation tax, we could argue that the Government wishes to support business and attract investors, both of which that in turn create jobs. Considering VAT, Jones did not mention that the 20 per cent tax does not include all items. On the contrary, 5 per cent and 0 per cent VAT is applied to "some goods and services, eg children's car seats and some energy-saving materials in the home" and "most food and children's clothes," respectively.[189] Therefore, the situation is not as unfavourable as it would seem at the first glance. Also, it demonstrates that the Government is not as "cruel" towards the poor as some of the commentators present.

8.7.1 Benefit Dependency: Unemployment

Nevertheless, the exaggeration of facts is a strategy of both combatants. Similarly to the previous Government, Cameron's coalition pursues the negative approach towards the working-classes allowing social stigma to be attached to them. Owen Jones, in his *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class,* warns against the portrayal of working-class youths "as criminally violent bastards who refuse to work." In other words, he warns us against adopting Murray's perception of the "underclass."[190] His experience with the workers seems to be the opposite to that of Murray. Whereas majority of Jones' encounters with unemployed or employed with very poor working conditions resulted in his conviction that all were eager to work and would accept any work that would ensure a stable income, Murray is convinced that the new generation does not have any regard for work and even if given a chance, they would not make use of it.[191] What we have to add, however, is that Murray is an American and even though he explored the situation in Britain too, his experience can also be influenced by his home country.

Nevertheless, there is one point of Murray's belief, namely the disregard for work that deserves further discussion. We already learned that Britain experienced first

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[188] Jones, *Chavs,* 265.

[189] "VAT for Consumers," Gov.UK, last modified November 19, 2013, accessed April 4, 2014, https://www.gov.uk/vat.

[190] Mann, *The Making of an English "underclass"?* 106.

[191] See Murray, *The Emerging British Underclass.*

industrialization in the eighteenth century only to undergo the opposite process in the twentieth, both of which brought rapid changes to everyday life of all. However, even though the first change brought many new jobs, regardless of their conditions, the second did not due to mechanization and character of the service sector. The jobs created do not require special skills, lose all prestige, are usually part-time or with irregular hours and poorly paid (for example, Jones mentions supermarket staff, call centres etc.).[192] Moreover, the workers complain about bad treatment not only from employers but also from the customers.[193] Therefore, the result of such employment can be disregard for it since it is not seen as respectful, is hardly fulfilling and less socializing due to the different working hours.

Moreover, apart from the nature of the jobs available, there is high rate of unemployment among the young people. The statistics show that the unemployment rate for the age group 16-24 fluctuated around 20 per cent in the last five years. In 2009, the rate exceeded 20 per cent for the first time. On the other hand, the unemployment rate for the age group 25-64 was 5,5 in 2009 and remained on 5,9 during the next three years.[194] Within the European Union, the average unemployment in youth category in 2013 was 23,5 per cent, whereas in the UK it was 20,7 per cent. Even though this is better than the average, the UK rate is 7 per cent higher than in Denmark and almost 12 per cent higher than in Germany.[195]

Furthermore, the Office for National Statistics provides regional differences in youth unemployment. Their findings in 2013 were the following: "Hartlepool and Wolverhampton had the highest youth unemployment rate excluding full-time students at 28.1 per cent. This was followed by Middlesbrough at 27.7 per cent, Birmingham at 26.0 per cent and Redcar and Cleveland at 25.5 per cent." The important fact is that apart from Birmingham (West Midlands) "these areas are in close proximity in

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[192] See Jones, *Chavs*, 145-149.

[193] See Jones, *Chavs*, 146.

[194] See "Young People in the Labour Market, 2014: Youth Unemployment," Office for National Statistics, accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/young-people-in-the-labour-market/2014/rpt-young-people.html#tab-Youth-Unemployment.

[195] See Young People in the Labour Market, 2014: How Does UK Comapre with Europe?," Office for National Statistics, accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/young-people-in-the-labour-market/2014/rpt-young-people.html#tab-How-does-the-UK-compare-with-Europe-.

the North East of England."[196] Jones adds that, for example in Kingston upon Hull (Yorkshire and the Humber), there were 18 795 people for 318 jobs in 2011.[197] Moreover, the employment rate for not full-time students in the whole South (East, South East and South West) is over 70 per cent. Also Scotland has the rate of 70 per cent. The rest of UK (including London), however, does not reach higher than 67 per cent with the lowest employment in West Midlands, North East and Northern Ireland.[198] Therefore, we can see that there is clear South and North division with the exception of Scotland in terms of youth employment. It may lead to the assumption that it does not have to be only disregard for work that burdens the young but rather its lack. Moreover, as we will learn, the Northern regions also have problems with qualification attainment.

8.7.2 Education

One of the reasons for the higher unemployment rate in the North may also be lack of qualification. We mentioned the emergence of comprehensive schools that were supposed to bridge the gap between grammar schools and modern secondary schools. Even though comprehensive schools are a common sight in Britain today, there are still private schools that provide better education and the route to University is more open. However, even the University education is not for free. Even though there are student loans that can be repaid once the graduate exceeds a certain income and the loan is ended after 30 years, the student protests that began in 2010 and continued in 2012 demonstrate that there is great dissatisfaction with the system of fees.

For example, if one entered University in 2012 and studies for three years, each year costing 9 000 Pounds, they will be able to repay over 1 000 Pounds in five years

[196] See "Young People in the Labour Market, 2014," Office for National Statistics, accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/young-people-in-the-labour-market/2014/rpt-young-people.html#tab-How-do-different-parts-of-the-UK-differ-.

[197] Jones, *Chavs,* xii.

[198] See "Young People in the Labour Market, 2014: Figure 11: Employment rates of 16 to 24 year olds not in full-time education by region, October 2012 to September 2013," accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/young-people-in-the-labour-market/2014/rpt-young-people.html#tab-How-do-different-parts-of-the-UK-differ-.

with the average income and the rest of the loan being erased.[199] Furthermore, the Government provides other sources of help for the students. Nevertheless, as Jones argued that the means tested Tax Credits discouraged potential claimants, the same could probably be said about the students. Also, one of the causes of the indignation during the protests was the broken promise of the Liberal Democrats and its leader Nicholas Clegg to vote against the Bill.[200] So after the failure of the Labour Party to represent the working-classes disillusionment came with the Liberal Democrats as well and the cost of higher education was raised.

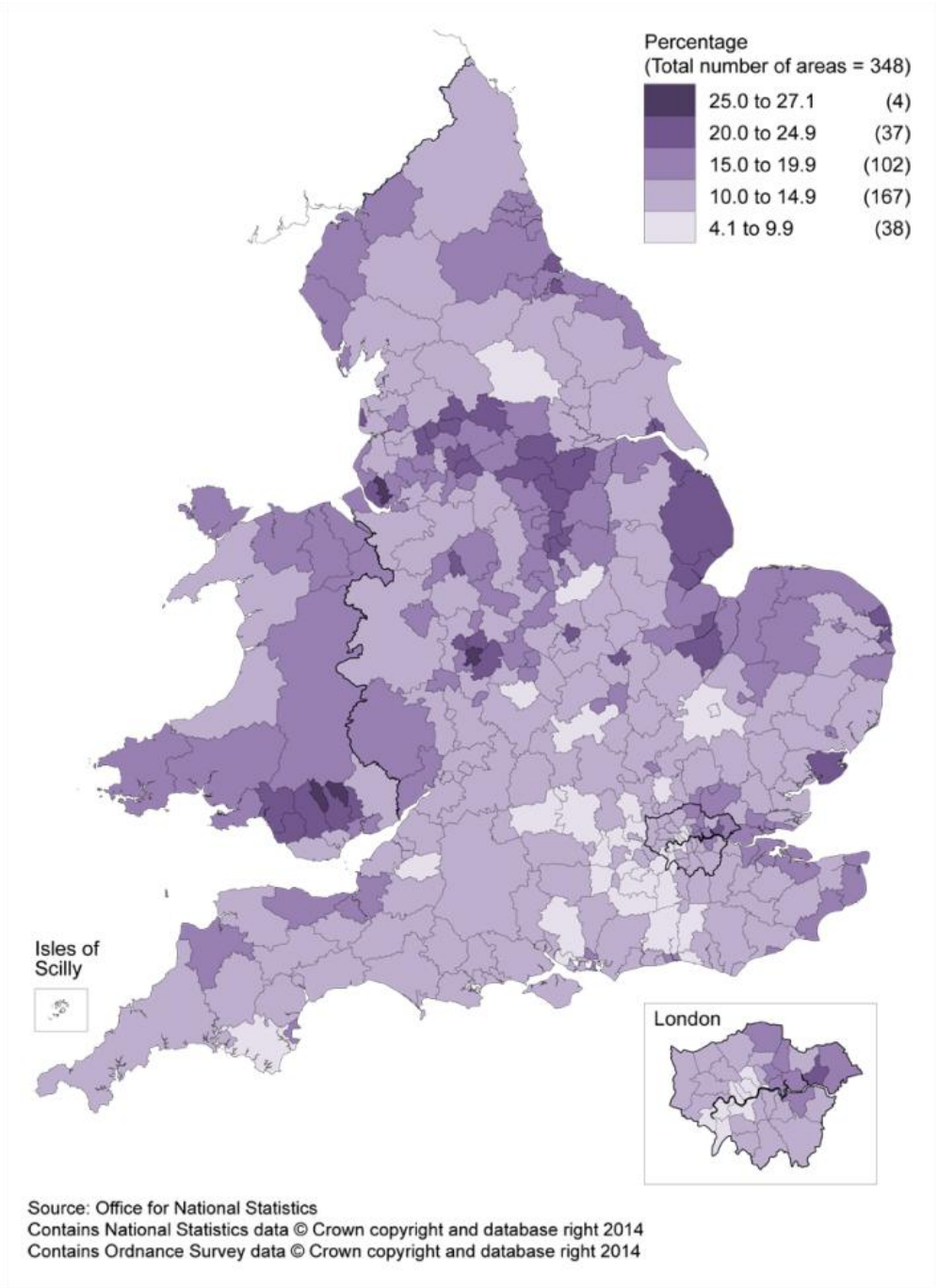
There are also regional differences in the achieved qualification. Bellow are two maps of Britain. Map 3 depicts "[t]he proportion of people aged 16 to 64 with no qualifications, local or unitary authorities in England and Wales, 2011."[201] It has been 50 years since the Margaret Thatcher focused on deindustrialization and closed the traditional industries in these regions. Still, the correlation between qualifications and old industrial centres is visible (for comparison see Map 2 on page 30).

[199] For particular calculations see "Education and Family: Student Finance Calculator," BBC News, last modified September 15, 2011, accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/education-14785676#student_finance_form.

[200] See "Education and Family: Students March in London Protest," BBC News, last modified November 21, 2012, accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/education-20412792.

[201] "Local Area Analysis of Qualifications Across England and Wales," Office for Natioanl Statistics, accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census-analysis/local-area-analysis-of-qualifications-across-england-and-wales/rpt---local-area-analysis-of-qualifications-across-england-and-wales.html#tab-Qualifications-at-Local-Authority-Level.

Map 3 The Proportion of People aged 16 to 64 with no Qualifications, Local or Unitary Authorities in England and Wales, 2011



Jones claims that whereas in the past, even with lacking education one could obtain a good and respectable job because of the industries that provided it.[202] Education was not that important as skills. However, with the service economy, education is very important for future employment. Since there was no tradition of higher education in these areas, the children are less likely to aspire to some. Studies that explored the influence of factors on education discovered that the most important determinants are socio-economic status of the family, education of parents and cultural background. So the level of education of parents is one of the important factors that shapes the child's educational aspirations and in the communities that were centred around manual though skilled jobs in the mines, factories, ship building etc., there were no such aspirations. On the other hand, we discussed the migration to Southern suburbs in pursuit of the new light industries that emerged in the twentieth century. Since the rapid deindustrialization began approximately twenty years later, no such developments happened in the industrialized areas. So, as we can observe from the comparison of the two maps, the impact of policies of 1970s and 1980s is still visible.

8.7.3 "Chavs"

We have already mentioned the term "chav" several times. As Jones argues, today "chavs" are almost synonymous with the working-class, both having negative connotations. Jones based his assumption on the findings of BritainThinks group:

> There was a strong feeling in the focus groups that the noble tradition of a respectable and diligent working class was over. For the first time, I saw the "working class" tag used as a slur, equated with other class-based insults such as "chav". I asked focus group members to make collages using newspaper and magazine clippings to show what the working class was. Many chose deeply unattractive images: flashy excess, cosmetic surgery gone wrong, tacky designer clothes, booze, drugs and overeating.[203]

However, this image of working-class or "chavs" that is rooted deeply in the public does not necessarily stem from their experience but could also be the result of media coverage. One of such examples is probably the most famous "chavette" Vicky

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[202] See Jones, *Chavs*, 174-175.

[203] Deborah Mattinson, "From cloth caps to cafetières: you are what you buy," *The Independent*, March 20, 2011, accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/deborah-mattinson-from-cloth-caps-to-cafetires-you-are-what-you-buy-2247053.html.

Pollard from the British sitcom *Little Britain*. Other examples are the various reality shows, such as Big Brother and its famous "chavette" Jade Goody. Also the web pages such as iLiveHere.co.uk or chavroptesters.8k.com even provide the list of worst places to live or manual for recognizing a "chav." Even the newspapers inform the public about "chavs;" for example the widely read tabloid *The Sun* informs the public that "BRITAIN is producing a generation of 'super chavs' who are impossible to teach and will never work, a teachers' leader said yesterday."[204] One can find books about "chavs" as well, for example *The Little Book of Chavs* or *Chav! A User's Guide To Britain's New Ruling Class.* Thus the negative campaign streams from the Television, the internet, the newspapers and even books and there is hardly an escape from it.

Another assumption about "chavs" is that they exploit the welfare benefits. However, as we learned, during his research, Jones discovered that the majority of people are eager to find work. We also saw that the problem does not have to be idleness of the unemployed but scarcity of jobs for those who lack higher education. Also, the data gathered by the Office for National Statistics show that one of the reasons why the young "are not in the labour force ... [is that they are] looking after the family or home."[205] This could also be supported by the life of Jade Goody, the famous "chavette," whose parents were both drug addicts and after an accident, she had to look after her mother. As Mangan mentions, Goody "was woefully uneducated, but damning the school system that left her unable to decide whether Rio de Janeiro was a place or a person wouldn't have made such good copy." [206] Moreover, Goody, unlike many other fallen stars was able to maintain her "success" for as long as seven years. This could serve as proof that she was not that "dumb" after all. Therefore, Mangan makes a good point when she mentions the school system that did not provide her with the necessary education. It seems that despite her childhood and lack of education, Goody was able to

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[204] "Dangers of 'super chav' UK," *The Sun*, February 10, 2009, http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/2221956/Britain-producing-generation-of-super-chavs.html.

[205] "Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), February 2014," Office for National Statistics, accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/young-people-not-in-education--employment-or-training--neets-/february-2014/statistical-bulletin.html#tab-Economically-Inactive-Young-People-who-were-NEET.

[206] Lucy Mangan, "Jade Goody: At Peace - and Fnally out of the Limelight," *The Guardian*, March 23, 2009, accessed April 6, 20014, http://www.theguardian.com/media/2009/mar/22/lucy-mangan-on-jade-goody.

manage the pressure that many others would not. Therefore, we may ask whether she would be a successful graduate if given the chance. Also, the more disturbing fact about the lack of knowledge of Goody is that the education system allowed it. Yet, instead of doubting the fairness and effectiveness of the education system and society in general, she was ridiculed. What Mangan also implies is that the negative news sells. Therefore, we hear above all about the shocking instead of the positive news and as a result, the state of British society and the idleness and immorality of the "underclass"/working-class can be easily exaggerated.

8.7.4 "Broken Britain"

This is also supported by an article in *The Economist,* in which the author claims that by the time Cameron referred to British society as broken, "the total number of homicides recorded by the police was at its lowest in 19 years."[207] Furthermore, the author adds that also other types of crimes decreased since the 1970s (some substantially, for example burglaries), even though he admits that the crime statistics are not fully reliable. On the other hand, despite these improvements, the Britons are more anxious about their safety and the explanation could be the negative media reports. Another interesting point is mentioned in the article, namely that the regional newspapers are disappearing in favour of

> national titles or the television, which report the most gruesome stories from across the country, not just the county. In this way local crises, such as an outbreak of teenage stabbings in London in 2007 and 2008, become national panics, causing fear even in regions where the problem does not exist. And bad news travels best: the fact that London's teenage-murder rate quietly halved last year was not widely reported outside the capital.[208]

Thus the author confirms our assumption that the media campaign has a negative impact on the perception of the public. Lastly, he concludes that though the problems are not so pressing as they appear, the fact is that the deprivation is becoming more concentrated, also due to the right-to-buy scheme that created the "underclass" ghettos.

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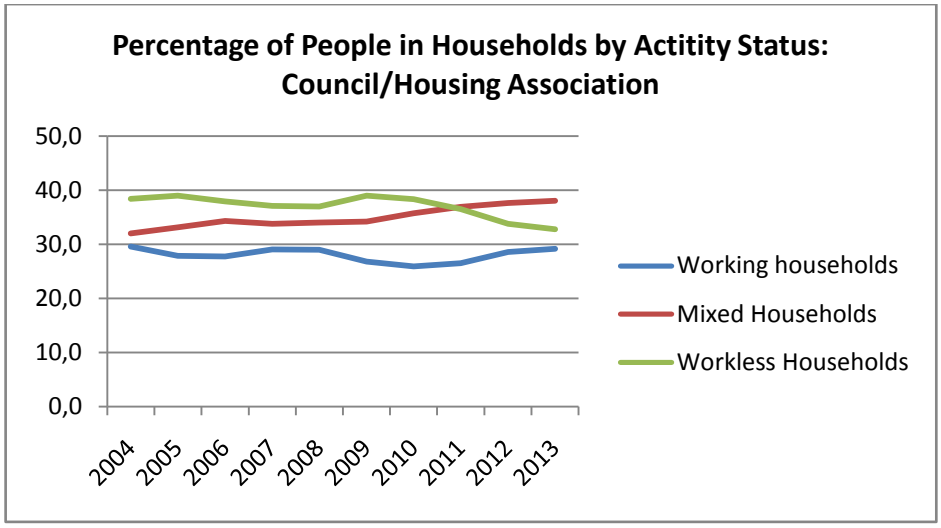
[207] **"**Through a Glass Darkly," *The Economist,* February 4, 2010, accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.economist.com/node/15452867.

[208] "Through a Glass Darkly," *The Economist,* February 4, 2010, accessed April 6, 2014, http://www.economist.com/node/15452867.

We may also comment on the presumption that the council-house occupants are all workless and living on state benefits. As the chart below demonstrates, it is also an exaggeration.

Chart 7 Percentage of People in Households by Activity Status: Council/Housing Association, 2004-2013[209]



As we can observe from the chart, the percentage of workless households decreased. More specifically, it peaked in 2005 and 2009 at 39 per cent and went down to 32.8 per cent in 2013. The reversed trend can be identified in case of mixed households that are on continuous rise since 2004 (apart from a slight drop in 2007). Lastly, the percentage of working households is fluctuating and currently has been rising as well. Overall, we can state that the council-owned households, which are mostly the homes of the "underclass," are not solely composed of the unemployed or inactive occupiers.

Lastly, we are still left with the question of "Broken Britain." Perhaps we could substitute the word "broken" for "divided." It does not seem that the overall situation is that alarming but rather there are significant regional and class differences. The regional ones are caused by the Industrial Revolution and rapid deindustrialization in the 1980s. The class distinction has always been present in Britain. Nevertheless, the stigma of being working-class is more visible today than it was from the 1950s to 1970s. This is also due to the apocalyptic media campaign and rhetoric of the politicians. As a result, the "underclass" does not represent the same as the "undeserving poor" since it widened its scope. Today, the "underclass," working-class and "chavs" are perceived as

[209] "Table I - People in Households by Housing Tenure and Combined Economic Activity Status," Office for National Statistics, accessed April 7, 2014, http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?newquery=council+housing.

synonymous by the public. Encouraged by the mass media, the ancestors of the once proud and skilled craftsmen and workers have all become the "undeserving" for the public. However, the title may not always be deserved and the causes are not thoroughly examined.

Nevertheless, as there were the honest and the decent living in the slums in Victorian Britain, there are certainly the same cases today as well as there are the truly "undeserving" and any generalization would be wrong. So, instead, we could identify the "chav" culture with the youth movements that started in the 1950s; i.e. Teddy Boys, Mods, Rockers, Punks etc. and share the view of Stephen Pound (a Labour Member of Parliament): "'Chav is an utterly misunderstood term. It is used in envy by the lily livered, privileged, pale, besuited bank clerk who sees people dressed up to the nines and going to the West End.'"[210] Thus instead of arguing that the working-class lost its pride, we could assume that it returned to asserting it by creating a culture of their own and as Mr Doolittle remarked, the "underserving" are happy not be deserving and proud of their origin.

It is very hard to predict any future development in today's world. There are incidents that can never be predicted, such as terrorism, economic crises or impact of international disputes. In 1989, Charles Murray predicted that the British "underclass" will be growing and he was right. On the other hand, he also influenced the policies of the 1990s and public opinion about the working-classes which in the end resulted in the stigmatization and restrictive policies. It would be an exaggeration to state that Murray is to blame in the end but he influenced the ideas of that time. We learned that education is one of the keys for improvement. Another point is elimination of negative media campaign and reporting hard facts instead of misinterpreted news. However, the gap between the rich and the poor is still widening in Britain and unless the process is stopped, the "underclass" and social stigma attached to it will still be growing not only in tabloid news but also in reality.

[210] "Why is 'chav' still controversial?" BBC Magazine, last modified June 3, 2011, accessed April 7, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-13626046.

9 Conclusion

In our initial discussion, we encountered two contradictory views on the "underclass" that could be represented by Charles Murray and Frank Field. Briefly, Murray blames "underclass" for their condition whereas the latter blames the system and policies that created it. For both, however, the "underclass" represents a group below the working-class or its lowest-situated group. Nevertheless, the chapter dedicated to the present situation suggested that the label is now understood as a derogatory term denoting the working-class as a whole and an alternative term "chav" has emerged substituting the "underclass."

Firstly, however, it is our task to decide whether those constituting "underclass, chavs" or "lapilli" are the sole creators of their fate. In order to decide, it was necessary to explore not only the recent history but look further to understand where and when the "modern" working-class originated. In brief, we can identify a few forces behind the creation and perception of the working-classes.

The first factor are the unavoidable changes, such as Agriculture Revolution that forced the English, Welsh and Irish labourers to abandon their homes and make place for more effective means of production. The reversed example is deindustrialization that the country underwent in the 1980s. That it was unavoidable can be supported by the fact that the same happened in all developed countries. The question is, however, if the change was not too rapid since as we observed, the consequences are still tangible.

The second factor are the policies that resulted from the prominent ideas and theories of particular period. We could remember, for example the trio Malthus, Ricardo and Smith in the nineteenth century, William Beveridge, John Maynard Keynes or even Charles Murray in the twentieth century. The first wave contributed to the contents of the 1834 Poor Law that refused the idea of the welfare state. However, during the Victorian times various societies designed to aid the poor originated and during the WWII the ideas of mutual help resulted in the 1944 Act and the beginning of the welfare state. Nevertheless, gradually, the noble ideas of Beveridge were being removed as the expenditure was growing. The social consensus of the 1950s and 1960s was slowly subsiding in the 1970s and Keynes's theory of state intervention underwent a complete transformation under the long rule of the Conservatives starting in 1979. The 1980s meant a return to the Victorian times and the working-classes were seen as "undeserving" and refused any substantial state help, based on Murray's suggestion.

This situation continues until today. Moreover, these ideas are reinforced by the media and politicians, who warn the public of the dangers of the "chavs."

The third factor is the political power of the working-classes. In the pre-Victorian Britain, there was much of unprovoked violence by the soldiers resulting in many lost lives (remember, for example the "Peterloo"). Also, the Government ensured that the press, public meetings and overall public opinion is censured and suppressed (the Six Acts, for example). The situation started to improve in the first half of the nineteenth century with the emergence of trade unions and the 1832 Reform Act. The beginning of the twentieth century eventually brought political representation to the working-classes in the form of the Labour Party. However, times were not favourable towards the Labour Party. There were the two great wars, the general strike of 1926, the 1929 stock market crash, the loss of empire and the socially and economically turbulent 1960s and 1970s. The final defeat was the 1979 election with Margaret Thatcher as the new leader of the nation. Suddenly, the Labour Party was weak and trade unions even weaker. Furthermore, when the Labour Party was back in charge of the nation, it became "New Labour" and generally continued in the policies of the Conservatives. Also, the changes in the composition of the Government signalled another transformation. There were no trade union leaders or working-class members in significant numbers anymore. The situation is unchanged today and we could argue that in terms of political representation the working-classes find themselves back in nineteenth century.

These three factors – Industrialization and deindustrialization, changing social and economic theories and political power – had an effect on all peoples and classes. However, as the impact of enclosures varied from class to class, the same is true with the three forces. The greatest gainers have been the middle-classes that acquired more wealth and political power. Regarding the upper-classes and aristocrats, the changes were not always favourable and even they had to accept originally middle-class members among themselves. The mobility from working-classes upwards has also been possible. Nevertheless, unlike all other classes, those who remain at the bottom of social scale still have to face public scorn.

So the question is whether we would follow the Victorian belief in moral failure or if we are convinced that the "underclass" is present because of external factors. Considering the history of the nation, it is rather the latter. The working-classes were firstly evicted by industrialization, forced to do all kinds of dangerous jobs, later faced

social stigma even though they were still part of the society. The post-war years brought social consensus to Britain and some hope to the working-classes. However, after the time of peace there came another wave of condemnation and political power was taken away once more.

However, if we should consider the youth culture, such as Teddy Boys, Mods and above all "chavs," there also seems to be presence of molar failure but not an inherent one. On the one hand, the failure to accept the middle-class morality can be the result of the family and cultural background, upbringing, frustration caused by monotonous work and education and as such, the state should be blamed. On the other hand, as Mr Doolittle and Stephen Pound remarked, not everyone desires to be a part of the middle-class. Therefore, the "chavs" do not have to be perceived as a vile group or "underclass" but rather as another trend that will fade away over some time, as Teddy Boys did.

Thus we could agree with Mann's term substituting the "underclass;" i.e. "lapilli" as it was presented the Chapter 2:

> Lapilli are thrown out by volcanoes and this seemed to be a good metaphor for the experience of all those who are dependent on public welfare. Simultaneously, lapilli are active and potentially dangerous, since they can set the surrounding area ablaze. Thus lapilli are both product of more powerful sources and also active themselves. Until they are expelled, lapilli are indistinguishable from the volcano ... those excluded from the best jobs, housing, etc., are also part of the broader working class.[211]

So the welfare dependency does not necessarily have to be a deliberate choice but the outcome of the external circumstances. Also, "lapilli" are active and can be dangerous, which also corresponds to the history of the "underclass." The activity does not have to be associated only with the protests and riots but also with the creation of specific culture, such as Teddy Boys or "chavs." Furthermore, the "underclass" may include also the members of the working-class with unstable, part-time jobs or jobs with irregular hours and with virtually no qualification required. Therefore, they are also those "excluded from the best jobs." Lastly, we discussed also the problem of the shortage of council-housing and the poorest being forced to live in the worst housing quarters.

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[211] Mann, *The Making of an English "underclass"?*160.

We could also reflect on the belief of Frank Field, who stressed the negative impact of the Thatcher Government. For example, on the Map 3 and Map 4 the impact of the rapid deindustrialization on the once important centres of heavy industries is still tangible in the twenty-first century.

Lastly, if we are to consider the accusations of welfare dependence, it is difficult if not impossible to decide. As it seems, both parties in the dispute have evidence against each other. We tried to examine the situation of unemployment and council-house ownership and it was suggested that the reason behind joblessness does not necessarily have to be idleness. This assumption was based on the high unemployment of the young, the low value and income of the jobs provided and lack of qualification for any better occupation. Nevertheless, probably the only way to know the truth is to live through the experience of the accused and only then decide.

Thus, by exploring the emergence of the working-class and its transformation through time, it could be stated that the force behind its creation has been mainly external but also inevitable. Secondly, the "underclass" is rather a part of working-class today but the jobs on offer are limited, require only minimal education and are poorly paid. Thirdly, it was proposed that Mann's "lapilli" could substitute the term "underclass." Fourthly, "chavs" could be regarded as another movement within the working-class culture rather than a pejorative term for the "underclass." Lastly, it was suggested that even though Britain may appear broken, it is rather divided or fractured into different classes, groups and regions not all of them being as broken as it is presented by the media and some of the politicians.

10Resumé

Velká Británie byla historicky označována jako země s výraznými třídními rozdíly. V roce 1990 politolog Charles Murray vydal knihu s názvem *Emerging British Underclass*. Toto dílo amerického autora vyvolalo četné diskuze mezi sociology a pozorovateli britské společnosti. Murray v něm upozorňuje na narůstající počet těch, kteří se záměrně stávají závislými na státní podpoře, vyhýbají se zaměstnání a jsou rovněž charakterističtí antisociálním chováním. Tuto skupinu lidí pak označuje jako „underclass," tedy „podtřídu"[212]. Jako nápravu navrhuje odepření státní podpory. Jeho názory si v Británii našly mnoho odpůrců. Obecně lze říci, že se jedná o levicové pozorovatele, mezi něž patří například Frank Field nebo Kirk Mann. Ti naopak tvrdí, že důvody vzniku této „underclass" (název považují za pejorativní a urážející) je zapotřebí hledat jinde. Za hlavní faktor vzniku této sociální skupiny považují vládu konservativců v 80. a 90. letech minulého století, tedy vládu Margaret Thatcherové a Johna Majora.

Cílem této práce je tedy zamyslet se nad tím, zda je existence „podtřídy" výsledkem externích faktorů nebo zda se jedná o morální nedostatek, jak tomu věřili například obyvatelé viktoriánské Británie nebo právě Margaret Thatcherová. Za tímto účelem bylo zapotřebí nahlédnout do historie britské společnosti, zejména pak nejnižší třídy. Tento náhled do historie jsme započali v polovině osmnáctého století. Zjistili jsme, že v zásadě lze vyčlenit tři oblasti, které významnou měrou přispěly k formování této nejnižší třídy.

Zaprvé se jedná globální ekonomické a společenské změny, jakými byla revoluce v zemědělství (Agriculture Revolution) či v průmyslu a následné zaměření na sektor služeb.

Druhou skupinu tvoří politické ideje, které vycházely z širších názorů ve společnosti. Mezi myslitele, kteří ovlivnili například vznik Poor Law v roce 1834 i následné generace ve viktoriánské Británii, patřili Malthus, Ricardo a Smith, kteří zdůrazňovali minimalizaci státních zásahů a naopak podporovali individuální aktivitu člověka. Tyto názory v zásadě přetrvávaly až do konce druhé světové války, kdy se o změnu názorů zasadil William Beveridge, který výrazně podpořil vznik sociálního státu (welfare state). Nicméně postupná potřeba snižování státního rozpočtu vedla k eliminaci

[212] Dále jako „nejnižší třída" nebo „underclass".

státních zásahů. Zvolení Margaret Thatcherové do funkce premiérky v roce 1979 znamenalo definitivní odklon od koncepce Williama Beveridge.

Třetí skupinou je politická moc nejnižší třídy. V osmnáctém století neměla tato část obyvatelstva prakticky žádné pravomoci. Výjimkou nebylo ani násilí ze strany vojáků vůči poklidným demonstrantům (například „Peterloo“). Situace se začala zlepšovat v první polovině devatenáctého století, kdy první reformní zákon zajistil změnu volebního systému. Právo hlasovat však zatím připadlo pouze střední třídě. Významnou změnou byl vznik prvních odborů na konci devatenáctého století a následně vytvoření Labour Party na začátku dvacátého století. Její moc však byla, stejně tak jako moc odborů, výrazně eliminována s nástupem konzervativní vlády v roce 1979. Ani „New Labour“ Anthonyho Blaira v roce 1997 neznamenala návrat k původní Labour Party. Strana naopak pokračovala v programu konzervativců.

S ohledem na tyto faktory lze říci, že vznik a vývoj nejnižší třídy byl z velké části ovlivněn externími faktory. Proto se v tomto směru přikláníme ke skupině reprezentované Frankem Fieldem. Nicméně diskuze ohledně britských „chavs“ naznačila, že zde mohou být i jiné důvody vzniku nejnižší třídy. Jak však poznamenal Stephen Pound i století před ním G. B. Shaw prostřednictvím postavy pana Doolittla, ne každý má za cíl stát se členem střední třídy, jak to prosazovala například Margaret Thatcherová nebo Anthony Blair. Naopak, je možné chápat „chavs“, kteří v terminologii téměř nahradili „underclass“, jako snahu nejnižší třídy o vytvoření vlastní identity. Proto není nutné chápat ani „chavs“, ani „underclass“ jako negativní společenský jev.

Pokud se týká záměrné závislosti na státní podpoře, zjistili jsme, že situace není tak jednoznačná. Na jednu stranu je zde vysoká nezaměstnanost zejména v oblastech na severu Anglie, které prošly nejprve výraznou industrializací a následně utrpěly rychlým přechodem Británie na sektor služeb. Na druhou stranu jsou zde také výpovědi Charlese Murrayho, který hovoří o neochotě nejnižší třídy pracovat. Nicméně jsme také zjistili, že v již zmíněných oblastech je nižší úroveň vzdělanosti a práce, která je k dispozici, nemá prestiž a je velmi špatně placená. Důvodem této neochoty může tudíž být také charakter nabízené práce.

Po zhodnocení zmíněných skutečností, jsme se přiklonili k levicově orientovaným komentátorům, konkrétně k Mannovi a jeho termínu „lapilli“. Ten zaprvé zdůrazňuje vliv externích faktorů, zadruhé aktivitu členů nejnižší třídy a zatřetí jejich

aktivitu na trhu práce, oproti Murrayho chápaní „underclass“ jako skupiny dlouhodobě nezaměstnaných.

Našim posledním cílem bylo se zamyslet nad tím, zda je Británie skutečně „nalomená“, jak hlásají některé britské plátky a někteří politici (například David Cameron). Došli jsme k závěru, že spíše než „nalomená“, je Británie jak třídně, tak regionálně rozdělená, což je důsledkem zmíněných společenských a ekonomických změn v námi sledovaném období.

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12 List of Charts and Maps

12.1 List of Charts

12.2 List of Maps

13Annotation

This thesis explores the issue of the British "underclass." Firstly, definitions of the "underclass" by various commentators are provided. Secondly, the thesis revises the history of the British society from the mid-eighteenth century to the present with special attention to working-classes. Also, the information from secondary sources are compared with statistical data. Lastly, the findings are summarized and one of the definitions of the "underclass" chosen.
Key words: "underclass", British society, history of Britain, "chavs"

Tato práce se zabývá problémem britské nejnižší třídy („underclass"). V prvé řadě práce uvádí možné definice této třídy, jak je uvádějí pozorovatelé britské společnosti. Zadruhé se práce zabývá historií britské společnosti, konkrétně od poloviny osmnáctého století do současnosti a zvláštní pozornost je věnována především nejnižší třídě. Dále jsou některé poznatky ze sekundárních zdrojů porovnávány se statistickými údaji. V poslední řadě jsou zjištěné poznatky shrnuty v závěru a následně je také vybrána jedna z definic nejnižší třídy.
Klíčová slova: nejnižší třída („underclass"), britská společnost, historie britské společnosti, „chavs"