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## CHAPTER ONE

# The Origins of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland

### THE DUBLIN STATISTICAL SOCIETY

The Dublin Statistical Society, the ancestor of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, was founded in 1847, a year which most Irish people associate with the Great Famine. By 23 November 1847, the date on which the Statistical Society was founded, Ireland had endured two successive years of potato blight, which had resulted in the probable doubling of the death rate, and an unprecedentedly high level of emigration. Although the potato crop was generally blight-free in the autumn of 1847, the acreage sown was small, and distress persisted because many families could not afford to buy alternative food. Evictions were mounting and attacks on landlords and their agents appeared to be on the increase. Six landlords and land agents were assassinated during the months of October and November 1847, the most sensational being the murder of Roscommon landlord Major Denis Mahon.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the apparent easing of the blight, the Irish crisis showed no sign of ending. By September 1847, the British government had terminated all special famine-relief measures, such as public works and soup kitchens, leaving the newly established Irish poor law (previously Ireland was regarded as part of the English poor law) as the sole provider of relief; this meant that the full cost of relieving distress fell on owners of Irish property and their larger tenants. Many Irish estates were heavily encumbered even before the Famine, so rising rents arrears and unprecedented

tax demands forced numerous landlords into bankruptcy. During the autumn of 1847, the collapse of speculative investments in railway shares led to a major financial and business crisis in Britain, which forced the British government to suspend the 1844 Bank Charter Act, the act which regulated, and indeed limited, the right of banks to issue notes. The repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 had marked the triumph of free trade throughout the United Kingdom, though the Tory party was split as a consequence. In the light of such economic and social turmoil, it is not surprising that the 1840s were characterised by highly charged debates on economic issues in both Britain and Ireland.

Any scrutiny of Irish newspapers and periodicals for these years confirms that this was also a period of considerable political activity, though, in contrast to the decision to found the Statistical Society, most of what transpired had little long-term impact. In January 1847, the second famine winter, Irish peers, MPs and gentry were invited to attend a meeting in Dublin shortly before parliament resumed, with a view to reaching a consensus on how to resolve the severe problems, that Ireland was facing. Although nothing worthwhile transpired, in the early summer of 1847 — at a time when up to 3 million people were receiving free or subsidised food from soup kitchens — an Irish Council was established with the aim of uniting influential Irishmen from all walks of life. The council held another much-publicised meeting in November 1847, on the eve of the new session of parliament, in order ‘to stress yet again the need for union if the crisis created by the famine were not to be perpetuated in national bankruptcy’.<sup>2</sup> This meeting failed to agree on how to tackle the problems facing Ireland; in fact it attracted a much poorer attendance from peers and landlords than the previous meeting. Tenant-right and land reform proved the most divisive issues. Indeed the uncompromising attitude shown by representatives of the landlord class at this meeting led John Mitchel, a radical member of the Young Ireland movement, to adopt a much more revolutionary stance. Earlier hopes of uniting Irish landlords and people in a common cause, which had been expressed by Young Irelanders such as John Mitchel, Charles Gavan Duffy and James Fintan Lalor, had rested on a common opposition to free trade — which intensified following the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 — and to the Irish

policies of the Liberal government, led by Lord John Russell. However, whatever consensus existed on these issues proved insufficient to overcome fundamental divisions over the respective rights of landlords and tenants. Before the Famine, Irish society was already deeply divided on matters such as Repeal of the Union, the British government's grant to Maynooth College, and the proposed Queen's Colleges. Far from obliterating these disagreements, the Famine years only aggravated them.

The founding of the Dublin Statistical Society must be set against this background of Famine, economic crisis and deep divisions over political and economic questions. The Society aimed at 'promoting the study of Statistics and Economical Science',<sup>3</sup> and it expressed a determination to reject all communications 'involving topics likely to produce discussions connected with religious differences or party politics' (Millin, 867). As in the case of the Gaelic League, another avowedly apolitical organisation, which was founded almost fifty years later, this was undoubtedly an impossible objective. However, rather than belittle the aspiration, we should recognise that it reflected a widely held belief at the time that statistics and statistical inquiry could provide an objective and scientific basis for discovering the truth.

When the term 'statistics' — a translation of the German term 'Statistik' — was first used in the English language in 1770, it apparently meant 'the science which "teaches us what is the political arrangement of all the modern states of the known world"'. The word was derived from the term 'statist', i.e. a politician or statesman.<sup>4</sup> Many so-called 'statistical' works of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century would not be deemed statistical by modern scholars. Examples of early 'statistical' works, which tended to describe socio-economic and often political conditions, include the statistical surveys of Irish counties, which the Royal Dublin Society commissioned at the end of the eighteenth century. These were designed to examine the 'actual state, capabilities and defects of agriculture, manufactures and rural economy' in each county. Between 1801 and 1832 the Royal Dublin Society published twenty-three county surveys.<sup>5</sup>

By the 1820s however, the word statistics had come to be associated with numbers in Britain, France and Belgium,<sup>6</sup> though as late as 1842 the British economist J.R. McCulloch rejected the

idea ‘that everything in statistics may be estimated in figures’.<sup>7</sup> In a similar vein, James Anthony Lawson, a founding member of the Dublin Statistical Society, who held the Whately chair of political economy at Trinity College Dublin during the years 1840 to 1845, defined statistics, in 1848, as ‘the contents of all the blue books which are issued to both houses of Parliament’, or ‘the collecting of facts which relate to man’s social condition’ (Lawson, 680). This definition of statistics was reinforced by the proliferation of quantitative data, mostly in the form of censuses of population, and statistics relating to crime, mortality and public health. In France, the Bureau de Statistique, established under the Consulate, was expanded by Napoleon I. By the 1830s, in addition to carrying out a population census, the Bureau was collecting judicial statistics, together with data on topics such as the health of army recruits. In Britain, the first census of population was taken in 1801, in order to estimate manpower needs during the Napoleonic wars. In 1832, a statistical office was established at the Board of Trade; in 1837 a General Register office was created to collect vital statistics and to take charge of an expanded census of population in 1841.<sup>8</sup> By 1847, although Ireland lacked a General Register office, the process of counting people, animals and crops was underway, following the success of the 1841 population census (which is generally regarded as the first scientific census) and the first official returns of agricultural output, which were collected in that year.

Statistical societies were very much in vogue by the 1840s. In June 1833, the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which had been founded in 1831, established a statistical section. September 1833 saw the foundation of the Manchester Statistical Society, the first such society in Britain or Ireland. In March 1834 the Statistical Society of London, now the Royal Statistical Society, held its first meeting, and by the mid-1840s statistical societies (some short-lived) had emerged in the majority of English and Scottish cities. In 1838, some members of the Belfast Natural History Society who had attended the 1837 meeting of the British Association founded the Statistical Society of Ulster. Within a year, this society could boast over a hundred members, mostly in the Belfast area. Thus the Dublin Statistical Society was a rather late arrival by United Kingdom standards.

The founding members of such societies were drawn from various backgrounds. Charles Babbage, the famous scientist, and John Elliott Drinkwater, an assistant commissioner for the 1833 Factory Commission and a municipal corporations commissioner, were responsible for founding the London Society. Most of the founding members of the Manchester Society belonged to the city's industrial and commercial elite. Medical practitioners were prominent in many provincial societies; their involvement was prompted by the environmental health problems associated with urban and industrial growth. Government officials and economists outnumbered mathematicians.<sup>9</sup> Few members of these early statistical societies were interested in statistical technique as an end in itself. They believed that statistics, whether quantitative or non-quantitative, would provide scientific, i.e. objective, answers to the great social questions of the day, and would either provide evidence of the need for reform and the direction that it should take, or alternatively — though this appears to have been a minority position — that statistics would justify the status quo. This belief in objectively determined facts is epitomised in the motto of the Dublin Society: 'Our Pole Star is Truth'. Practitioners contrasted the impartiality of statistics with the divisive speculation and opinions that were characteristic of party politics, and the Dublin Statistical Society was typical of the nineteenth-century statistical movement in excluding such matters from its meetings. Thus the first rule in the prospectus for the London Society was 'to exclude all opinions' — a rather sweeping objective; the Manchester Society banned 'party politics' from its discussions.<sup>10</sup> Abrams notes that the 'implicit purposes of the Society [the London Statistical Society] were at once to bring political economy into policy, in the sense of generating relevant administrative intelligence, and to end politics, in the sense of obliterating conflicts of principle'.

In practice, most men who were active in British statistical societies at this time appear to have been liberals; Abrams claimed that the Council of the London Society in its early years 'often looked like a subcommittee of a Whig Cabinet.'" This was equally true of the statistical movement throughout Europe. In Italy, it has been claimed that statistics and political economy were employed 'as a means to further a discourse of opposition to

the political order established by the Congress of Vienna [1815], to promote and direct the formation of a liberal public opinion, and to lay claim to an increased participation in government'. Porter noted that 'Statistics reflected a liberal temperament and a search for reform that flourished not during the years of repression following the Congress of Vienna, but the late 1820s and especially the 1830s'<sup>12</sup>. British statistical societies concentrated their attention on the adverse consequences of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation and on investigating the inadequacies of public health services, the poor law, education and an apparent crime wave. Although the Dublin Society discussed poor law reform and crime, it was more concerned with problems which seemed to have greater relevance for Ireland, such as the land question.

The founders of the Dublin Statistical Society were drawn from the city's academic, professional and administrative elite. This reflected Dublin's character as a legal and administrative centre, a city with an active university, where commercial and industrial interests generally took second, or even third, place. Richard Whately, the first president of the Society was Archbishop of Dublin, a former Drummond professor of economics at Oxford and the founder of the chair of political economy at Dublin University that still bears his name. Thomas Larcom, Commissioner of Public Works, and a vice-president of the Dublin Society, later served as undersecretary for Ireland (the highest post in the Irish civil service) from 1853 to 1868. As the man responsible for carrying out the 1841 census, and for organising the compilation of agricultural statistics, Larcom can be described as the founder of Irish official statistics. Mountifort Longfield QC, another vice-president, was an established lawyer, a former Whately professor of political economy, who subsequently became a Judge of the Landed Estates Court and a Commissioner of National Education. A third, Sir Robert Kane, was the author of *The Industrial Resources of Ireland* (1844), president of the Museum of Irish Industry and a professor at the Royal Dublin Society. In 1845 he became the first president of Queen's College Cork. The three remaining vice-presidents were Rev R. MacDonnell, DD, a Fellow of Trinity College Dublin, Samuel Kyle, Church of Ireland Bishop of Cork, and the Earl of Rosse, a

distinguished scientist, who is best remembered for erecting what was then the world's largest telescope.

Three future Lord Chancellors of Ireland (Joseph Napier, Thomas O'Hagan and Hugh Law), two future Attorneys General (James Anthony Lawson and George Augustus Chichester May), and one future Lord Chief Justice (the same Chichester May) were among the eighty-one founding members, as were Sir William Wilde, father of Oscar Wilde, a distinguished member of the medical profession and an antiquarian, who compiled the statistics relating to death and disease in both the 1841 and 1851 census — he was one of seven medical members — and William Mulvany of the Board of Works, who was later to make his fortune developing coal mines in Germany.<sup>13</sup> There was a strong Quaker presence, a characteristic which the Dublin Statistical Society shared with several English provincial societies. Like their English counterparts, the Quaker members were drawn from the world of commerce. Three members of the Pim family, Jonathan, Joseph Todhunter and William Harvey, read papers to the Society during the first twenty years. William Haughton, a Quaker grain merchant, was another active member; his daughter married William Neilson Hancock, a stalwart of the Society for over thirty years. Charles Bianconi, who established an inexpensive coaching service throughout Ireland in pre-Famine years, was also a member, though, unlike the Pims and William Haughton, he did not play an active role in the Society.

The men who founded the Dublin Statistical Society undoubtedly assumed that statistics meant social statistics, not a branch of mathematics, and they regarded the subject as a form of applied economics.<sup>14</sup> In 1863, when John Kells Ingram reminisced about the Society's foundation, he noted that 'it was the pressure of social problems then imperatively demanding attention that led its youthful founders to attempt the establishment of such an institution', adding 'it has not occupied itself with dilettante statistics, collected with no special purpose, and tending to no definite conclusion. It has from the first applied itself, in the spirit of earnest inquiry, to the most important questions affecting the condition of the country' (Ingram, 590). This belief that scientific investigation would help to achieve a better society was very much in keeping with the philosophy of Henri Comte, the founder



with Comte's views; in 1845 they were summarised at length in the *Dublin University Magazine*. Several contributors to the magazine were active in founding the Statistical Society; indeed, early papers read to the Society often expressed opinions that are remarkably similar to those found in the pages of the *Dublin University Magazine*.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the obvious similarities between the Dublin Society and its counterparts in the English provinces, the term political economy appears to have featured more prominently within the Dublin Society, and economists were more conspicuous among its early members. The meeting that discussed the proposal to form a Statistical Society took place in the rooms of William Neilson Hancock, the Whately professor of political economy in Dublin University, and the four previous holders of the Whately chair became important office-holders of the Society. R.D.C. Black, author of the Society's centenary history, suggests that its foundation probably resulted from a series of lectures on the condition of Ireland which Hancock gave as Whately professor. This interpretation is supported by Whately's statement in 1851 that the Society 'had its origin in the lectures of the Professors of Political Economy'.<sup>16</sup> Richard Whately, the Society's first president, who held office until 1863, firmly believed that 'next to sound religion, sound political economy was most essential to the well-being of society ... [and] ... to the prosperity of the nation'. According to Whately, economists were destined to become the new governing elite: 'the world must be governed, has been governed and will be governed by Political Economists, though many of them are bad ones' (Whately, 1292).

The foundation of the Dublin Statistical Society must be seen as part of Whately's wish to teach political economy to all levels of Irish society, 'even to ploughmen and the children' In 1832, he was instrumental in founding the Whately chair of political economy at Trinity College Dublin.<sup>17</sup> Whately also used his position as the 'invisible president' of the Board of National Education<sup>18</sup>, to have political economy included in the curriculum of the national schools, and he wrote the prescribed text, *Easy Lessons on Money Matters: For the Use of Young People*, which was published in 1834.<sup>19</sup> He referred at length to both these

projects in his 1848 presidential address to the Dublin Statistical Society, when he emphasised that 'A science so important as that of

Political Economy was not to be confined to a few' (Whately, 1292). In 1849 the objective of preaching the gospel of Political Economy to the masses gained further impetus, when the Society undertook the task of administering the Barrington bequest. John Barrington, a Dublin businessman and a member of the Society of Friends, had left money in trust for the purpose of hiring 'a fit and proper person or persons, duly qualified to give lectures on Political Economy in its most extended and useful sense ... in the various towns and villages of Ireland' From the 1850s, the Barrington Trust financed lectures in many provincial towns. At the beginning most sessions were organised by local mechanics institutes or by literary and scientific societies. Although interest appears to have peaked during the 1860s, the practice continued until the 1980s and a roll call of Barrington lecturers includes many well-known Irish economists.<sup>20</sup> A similar concern with educating the masses is indicated by the fact that, in 1854, the Society had 28 corresponding societies (mainly mechanics institutes) throughout Ireland, and it assisted these organisations having the Public Libraries Act extended to Ireland.<sup>21</sup>

When the Dublin Statistical Society was founded in 1847, the relationship between statistics and political economy remained uncertain. Whereas economics was primarily based on induction, statistics relied on empirical evidence, from which arguments as to causation could be deduced. Most of the early classical economists made little, if any, use of statistics; as Cullen shows, Nassau Senior, the first Drummond professor of economics at Oxford, appears to have found statistics rather confusing.<sup>22</sup> Archbishop Whately may have been more conscious of the value of statistics than many of his fellow economists. Whereas the 1834 English Poor Law Report made no attempt to count the numbers in the various categories who were in need of poor relief,<sup>23</sup> its Irish equivalent, which was chaired by Whately, estimated that the number of people and their dependants who out of work and in need of assistance for thirty weeks of each year numbered 2.38m, roughly 30 per cent of the population.<sup>24</sup>

One man who addressed a meeting of the short-lived Statistical Society of Ulster predicted 'that the study of Statistics, will, ere

long, rescue Political Economy from all the uncertainty in which it is now enveloped'<sup>25</sup>. In December 1847, at the second meeting of the

Dublin Statistical Society, James Anthony Lawson argued that one of the functions of statistics was to supply facts, that could be used to test economic theories, and to correct the errors that might result from hasty generalisations. As an example, Lawson argued that the theory that population tended to outstrip subsistence (the so-called Malthusian trap) had been shown to be 'contrary to experience', a comment that is of particular significance because it was made at the height of the Irish Famine. Lawson regarded the relation between both disciplines as a two-way process. While statistics could indicate the existence or coexistence of certain factors, 'it required a philosophical mind to determine whether [or not] there be the link of causation'. Economics constituted only a part of the Society's interests. Lawson, for example, was at pains to emphasise that 'statistics suggests matter for the investigation of the statesmen, politicians and philanthropists, with which the economist has nothing to do' (Lawson, 680). In 1852, Denis Caulfield Heron, professor of jurisprudence and political economy at Queen's College Galway, referred to the study of sociology, rather than political economy, in the opening section of a paper dealing with landlord-tenant relations (Heron, 549).

In 1850, the Dublin Statistical Society decided to organise an associated 'Society for Promoting Scientific Inquiries into Social Reform' — a decision that eventually led to the words 'and Social Inquiry' being included in the title of the present Society. Whereas meetings of the Dublin Statistical Society consisted of members reading papers, which they had volunteered, the Social Inquiry Society collected subscriptions, which they used to commission paid research into topics that were regarded as too 'complicated and difficult' for individual members to investigate on a voluntary basis.<sup>26</sup> During the 1830s, the Manchester Statistical Society had financed an ambitious series of surveys into the living conditions and educational standards of the working-classes in their area; similar surveys, with a particular emphasis on education for the working class were commissioned by statistical societies in Bristol, Birmingham and Leeds, though enthusiasm for such expensive activities soon waned.<sup>27</sup> By contrast, the eight reports commissioned by the Social Inquiry Society between 1850 and

1855 dealt with legal matters, such as limited liability, wills, contracts pertaining to land, and the law relating to debtors and creditors (Millin, 867). Enthusiasm and financial support for this undertaking did not last, so in 1855 the Social Inquiry Society and the Dublin Statistical Society merged by mutual agreement. It was determined that the remaining funds of the Social Inquiry Society would be allocated for

further 'scientific inquiries into social questions of public and general interest'<sup>28</sup>. The objects of the amalgamated Society were extended to include 'the promotion of the study of Statistics, Political Economy and Jurisprudence'<sup>29</sup>. The Society did not entirely abandon its commitment to collaborative research projects; in the late 1850s it established several committees to investigate topics such as the civil registration of births, marriages and deaths, the operations of the jury system, and the question of legislation by Provisional Order in England, Scotland and Wales. In 1871, it commissioned four further (paid) reports on aspects of Irish jurisprudence (Millin, 867).

During the early years, the affairs of the Dublin Statistical Society were closely intertwined with those of the Royal Dublin society. In 1848, the annual meeting of the RDS rejected a proposal for a merger between the two societies, because it refused to reduce its subscription for associate members in order to bring into line with the Dublin Statistical Society. In 1858, the RDS made an attempt to bring all scientific societies in the Dublin area under its umbrella: RDS members would be permitted to join the associated societies at a reduced fee, while members of associated societies would receive some of the privileges open to members of the RDS. Although the Dublin Statistical Society and the RDS came to an agreement in 1858, which initially appears to have worked well, it survived only until 1862. In that year the Dublin Statistical Society became the Statistical and Social Inquiry of Ireland; ladies were permitted to join as associates, and the objects of the Society were extended to include 'all questions of Social Science'. Business was to be divided into three departments:

Jurisprudence and the Amendment of the Law including the subject of Punishment and the Reformation of Criminals.  
Social Science, including Education; Political Economy,

including the principles of Trade and Commerce.  
Public Health and Sanitary Reform.<sup>30</sup>

The venue for meetings of the Society was changed from Leinster House, the home of the RDS, to the Friends Institute in Molesworth

Street where the Society's expanding library was also accommodated (Millin, 867).

Although the accounts given, both by Shannon Millin and by R.D.C. Black, suggest that disagreements between the Dublin Statistical Society and the Royal Dublin Society related mainly to the provision of refreshments after meetings of the Statistical Society,<sup>31</sup> it seems probable that other factors also came into play. In many respects the objectives of the founding members of the Royal Dublin Society in 1731 anticipate those of the founders of the Dublin Statistical Society more than a century later. Both societies wished to use science to improve the condition of Ireland, and both expressed a determination to disseminate scientific knowledge among the Irish people, though the remit of the RDS was much wider, and it was in receipt of government grants. The series of Irish county surveys commissioned by the RDS were forerunners of the concept of statistical inquiry. By the 1830s, according to Meenan and Clarke, the RDS seemed to have temporarily lost its sense of purpose. However the lecture series on the industrial resources of Ireland given in 1844 by Robert Kane, Professor of Natural Philosophy at the RDS and a founding-member of the Dublin Statistical Society, indicates that RDS had an interest in economic development.<sup>32</sup>

In 1835, and in 1857, the RDS hosted the Dublin meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.<sup>33</sup> The 1857 meeting appears to have given a boost to the activities of the Dublin Statistical Society. However, when the Statistical Society proposed to invite the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science to hold its annual meeting in Dublin in 1862, it discovered that the RDS had already issued an invitation for 1861. Although Black comments that both bodies co-operated in ensuring that the meeting was a success,<sup>34</sup> there is little doubt that the Social Science Association had much more in common with the Statistical Society than with the RDS.

POVERTY, FAMINE AND POPULATION:  
THE CONDITION OF IRELAND QUESTION  
AS SEEN IN THE PAPERS READ TO THE  
DUBLIN STATISTICAL SOCIETY

The proposal to found a Dublin Statistical Society appears to have

been prompted by W.N. Hancock's series of lectures on the condition of Ireland. They were published in 1847 under the title, *Three Lectures on the Question: Should the Principles of Political Economy be Disregarded at the Present Crisis?*<sup>35</sup> The crisis was of course the Famine, and in Ireland it had led to serious questions being raised about the dominant tenets of political economy, in particular the assumption that market forces would automatically bring about economic prosperity. The aspect of the British government's policy which came under the most sustained attack during the Famine years was the failure to prevent food being exported from Ireland;<sup>36</sup> such criticism was often linked with a condemnation of absentee landlords (it was generally assumed the grain was exported to remit rents due to the latter). Proponents of these views, such as the Young Irelander John Mitchel, argued that even at the height of the famine Ireland was producing sufficient food to meet the needs of more than double the population. From reading Sir Robert Kane, the Young Irelanders also tended to derive an unduly optimistic picture of the extent of Ireland's natural resources.<sup>37</sup> In 1847 Mitchel published a series of extracts from the writings of Jonathan Swift and George Berkeley in favour of government intervention in the economy. The book was entitled *Irish Political Economy*.<sup>38</sup>

At the Dublin Statistical Society's second meeting in December 1847, W.N. Hancock read a paper on the *Use of the Doctrine of Laissez Faire in investigating the Economic Resources of Ireland*. He began by describing the extent of Ireland's natural resources as 'a favourite topic for the indulgence of national vanity', adding that the 'unsound arrangements' which might hamper their development should be blamed on 'a want of reliance on private enterprise'. Most of Hancock's paper was devoted to presenting the case for free trade in food, in the light of the 'calamities of the past year [1846]'. Hancock asserted that there was 'no foundation in fact' for the argument that *laissez-faire* had resulted in increased

deaths during 1846. Indeed he argued that the policy had not been tried in the west of Ireland, because the government had operated food depots, a policy that was 'at variance with Political Economy'. Anticipating the 'entitlements' argument presented by the present-day economist Amartya Sen,<sup>39</sup> Hancock claimed that 'the people of Ireland died from want of *money* not from want of *food*.' According to Hancock, Ireland experienced high mortality during 1846, because the Irish people were poorer than the English; poverty also explained why food was exported. Interfering with the food trade would not have

helped, because the people had no money.

Hancock appears to have regarded the interests of provision dealers as being identical with the interests of the community, a somewhat naive argument — even within his terms of reference — if we accept the existence of local monopolies and barriers to trade in the form of high transport costs, lack of information on the part of consumers, and indebtedness to a particular trader. He also refuted most of the prevailing explanations for Irish poverty and distress, such as the subdivision and subletting of land, the proliferation of middlemen, combinations, over-population, absentee landlords, the racial inferiority of the Celtic race, and over-dependence on the potato. According to Hancock, the Irish people lived on a diet of potatoes because they were poor; they were not poor because they lived on potatoes.

Conacre, subdivision and other shortcomings of the rural economy were indicative of weaknesses in the Irish land market which could be removed by ensuring that market forces operated effectively. His recommendations for improving economic conditions concentrated exclusively on what we now term the supply side: introducing a free market in land at all levels of society, including removing the privileges which Irish farmers possessed over their cottiers; removing aspects of the landlord-tenant code which interfered with private enterprise, and giving tenants full security for improvements (Hancock, 488).

Hancock expanded on these ideas in a succession of papers to the Society. In February 1848, a paper on the *Condition of the Irish Labourer* developed the argument that the interests of Irish labourers were best served under a system of free trade and an unrestricted market. Irish labourers were poor because Irish

agriculture was backward, and their condition would worsen rather than improve, if Irish manufactures were protected. Hancock assumed that the Irish labour force was perfectly mobile, both between the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, and between Britain and Ireland. Demand for labour depended on the ‘wellbeing of the population’; increased wealth would result in a greater demand for labour. Anticipating the convergence theory,<sup>40</sup> he argued that ‘every improvement in the condition of the labouring class in England would provide a permanent effect in Ireland’, because it would result in increased emigration to England and consequently in higher wages for

those remaining in Ireland. Agricultural prosperity in Ireland would raise the general wage level, whereas protecting Irish manufactures ultimately would reduce wages in both Ireland and in England (Hancock, 418).

Part of this paper was devoted to refuting the argument that Ireland suffered from overpopulation. Hancock also dismissed the suggestion that Irish distress was the outcome of divine providence — an argument that was influential among the British political elite at that time, and has come to be regarded as exerting vital (or perhaps a fatal) influence over British policies towards Ireland during the Famine years.<sup>41</sup> According to Hancock, the problem was a deficient demand for labour, (owing to market imperfections), not excessive population. Turning the ‘providentialist argument on its head, he condemned statements which asserted that unemployment was proof that a country was overpopulated, as ‘a sinful expression of discontent with the dealings of the Almighty’ A country might be described as overpopulated, ‘if the supply of food was deficient and every instrument of wealth was employed to the utmost of existing knowledge’. Asking whether this situation applied to Ireland, he continued, ‘If not, then vainly shall we endeavour to conceal from ourselves the consequences of human folly, by representing the misery and distress produced by man’s neglect as inevitable dispensations of the beneficent Authority’.

Hancock claimed that the growth of emigration ‘affords the strongest proof of the energy, industry and foresight of the Irish labourers’. This was an implicit refutation of the cultural stereotype of Irish indolence much favoured by Sir Charles Trevelyan, the

undersecretary to the Treasury. Trevelyan firmly believed that the Irish peasantry did very little work: ‘a fortnight planting, a week or ten days digging and fourteen days turf cutting suffice for his subsistence. During the rest of the year he is at leisure to follow his own inclinations’.<sup>42</sup> Trevelyan blamed the potato economy for Irish indolence. In *Notice of the Theory ‘That there is no hope for a Nation that lives on Potatoes’*, which he read to the Society in April 1848, Hancock refuted, by name, Trevelyan’s argument that the Irish population’s reliance on the potato reflected its debased tastes, and



suggested that higher wages would automatically result in a more varied diet (Hancock, 461).

In a book which draws heavily on the economic theories of Archbishop Whately and on the opinions expressed by early holders of the Whately chair, Tom Boylan and Tadhg Foley argue

... that political economy was partisan, prescriptive, tendentious. Claiming to be non-sectarian and non-political, it performed a vitally important ideological function for the political and religious establishment in defending existing socio-economic relations, including landlordism, property rights, and in attacking trade unions.

They also suggest that the Dublin Statistical Society was founded 'not so much as a humanitarian response to the Great Famine, though it would be unfair to deny the presence of such an impulse, but in order to defend the laws of political economy then seen as under unprecedented attack'.<sup>43</sup> Much of what they say is undoubtedly true. Whately's presidential address at the conclusion of the first session of the Dublin Statistical Society, in June 1848, referred to the value of political economy as a bulwark against revolution:

It was a mistake to suppose that religion or morals alone would be sufficient to save a people from revolution. ... A man, even of the purest mind and most exalted feelings, without a knowledge of Political Economy could not be secured from being instrumental in forwarding most destructive and disastrous revolution (Whately, 1292).

Whately's remarks should be seen as a reaction to the revolutionary wave, which began in France in the spring of 1848 and swept

through Europe in succeeding months. Although the farcical revolt by the Young Irelanders at Ballinacorney did not take place until the autumn, the authorities in Ireland were extremely nervous during the summer months, because several leaders of the Young Ireland movement were on trial for sedition.<sup>44</sup> Whately's paper referred to the potential revolutionary effect of some current economic ideas, 'that a landlord with a limited number of acres should support and feed an unlimited number of mouths', or the detrimental effect of the ten-hours bill.<sup>45</sup> His description of Ireland as a free country 'where every one might be said to take part in the government of the state', and the laughter in the audience when he noted that 'he had heard so much about the enslavement of Ireland that he was thereby convinced she

was a free country’, appears to confirm the views of Boylan and Foley —that the Dublin Statistical Society was an institution which defended existing political and socio-economic relations.

For Mountiford Longfield, writing in 1856, the survival of the Society was ‘proof of the possibility of uniting Irishmen of all creeds and parties in one common object’ (Longfield, 726). He believed that the objectivity of statistics offered a middle ground between polarised positions. Longfield’s language echoes the united Irishmen of the 1790s and anticipates some of the discourse of so-called constructive unionists of the late nineteenth century, such as Sir Horace Plunkett. Yet Longfield’s hopes of uniting Irishmen of all creeds and parties presupposed that authority would remain with the Anglo-Irish elite. Few Catholics, and even fewer nationalists, were to be found among the Society’s members ring the nineteenth century, and most papers read to the Society before the 1920s assumed the survival of the Union.

Nevertheless, the opinions expressed on the condition of Ireland by the first-generation of members were quite diverse, and they did not invariably provide a justification for maintaining the status quo. After all, during the 1830s Archbishop Whately had chaired the famous Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland. Because it recommended a major programme of public investment to provide employment and develop Irish resources, this report has consistently attracted approval from Irish critics of *laissez-faire* economics. Its conclusions were very much at variance with the

ideology, which Boylan and Foley see as dominating the Society’s agenda. Although Hancock had dismissed the argument that absentee landlords damaged the Irish economy by robbing it of potential opportunities for employment, two other founding members of the Society, and former holders of the Whately chair, Mountiford Longfield and James Anthony Lawson believed otherwise.<sup>46</sup> Even Hancock, ‘the indomitable believer in *laissez-faire*’,<sup>47</sup> went out of his way to refute the racial and cultural stereotypes about the potato-eating Irish (Hancock, 461). Many British classical economists were firmly of the opinion that the Irish people would have to develop ‘a taste for other objects besides mere food’,<sup>48</sup> if economic development was to succeed.

Isaac Butt, another former Whately professor, an early member of the Council (though he does not appear to have been an active

member) and the founder of the Irish Home Rule movement, rejected the dominant belief among political economists in the benefits of free trade. Butt justified the case for protecting native industry with an argument similar to that advanced by economists who criticised absentee landlords: that unemployed labour and other underused natural resources would be put to work in a protected economy.<sup>49</sup> Butt took issue with Mountifort Longfield's claim that a large export trade was evidence of a nation's prosperity; he claimed that the true test of prosperity was the volume of domestic consumption. In 1848, Hancock read a paper which attacked the views of the eighteenth-century philosopher George Berkeley, and of Isaac Butt, on the merits of protecting native industries (Hancock, 488). Butt's lectures on the Protection of Home Industries had already been reviewed at length in the *Dublin University Magazine* of April 1846, where they attracted unfavourable comment. The fact that Butt never actually read a paper to the Society, and that his Council membership was brief, may indicate that he felt out of step with its prevailing views.

Despite such differences of opinions, R.D.C. Black argued that Longfield, Butt, Lawson and Hancock all dissented from the prevailing Ricardian economic orthodoxies: they ranked in Schumpeter's view with 'the Men who wrote above their Time'. All four rejected the Ricardian labour, or production theory of value, in favour of a theory that came closer to the utility theory adopted by Stanley Jevons in the 1870s. The details of this debate

do not directly concern us; our interest lies with their views about the Irish economy. Black's original article was published in 1945; by the time he reconsidered the matter in the early 1980s, Maurice Dobb had dismissed the so-called Irish dissenters as "'harmony theorists" defending the status quo or, in other words, the lackeys of capitalism'. Black concluded that they should be described 'neither as radicals nor as defenders of the status quo but rather as concerned reformers' whose stance on different issues varied from conservative to radical. Both Black and Dobb concur that one of the distinctions between Ricardo and the so-called Irish dissenters was the greater faith which the Irish economists expressed in the possibility of economic progress.<sup>50</sup> Such optimism have derived from Whately, who was much less gloomy than Ricardo about the possibility of achieving higher wages under capitalism. Whately also rejected nineteenth-century evangelical gloom concerning man's fallen nature and the moral benefits of affliction.<sup>51</sup> As we have seen, Hancock rejected providentialist explanations for the Irish Famine.

The twin themes of optimism and reform appear frequently in papers to the Society, though both messages are not necessarily included on every occasion. Hancock dominated the early proceedings, reading one paper in 1847, six in 1848 and again in 1849 and four in 1850. Between the 1847/48 session and that of 1882/83, Hancock contributed a total of 88 papers. The majority would not be described as statistical by a modern reader. In the early years they often consisted of what Hancock described as an exposition of 'natural laws and the application of them to Ireland' In addition to refuting economic heresy, and endeavouring to wean the Irish people from their demands for government intervention in the economy, a belief which, Hancock claimed has perverted the minds of the people on economic questions' (Hancock 488), he presented several papers that recommended ways to extend market forces within the Irish economy. Five papers suggested that in order to improve the condition of Irish agriculture, it would be necessary to remove the legal impediments to the transfer of land and to compensating tenants for carrying out improvements. A paper in 1850 on the causes of famine in Skibbereen and Skull [sic], two areas which had attracted considerable publicity during the Famine years, particularly in

the pages of the *Illustrated London News*,<sup>52</sup> rebutted the suggestion that the failure of the potato crop was the chief cause of distress in these areas. Hancock blamed the disaster on the reckless improvidence of insolvent landlords, the short-sighted attitude of middlemen, and ultimately, on 'legal impediments to the free transfer and sale of land, whether waste or improved; and the legal impediments to the application of capital to agricultural operations' (Hancock, 414).

Although Hancock's views were very much at variance with those of John Mitchel and James Fintan Lalor, he cannot be seen as an uncritical defender of 'existing socio-economic relations, including landlordism'<sup>53</sup>, at least not as experienced in West Cork in the 1840s. Irish landlords had been roundly condemned by many influential voices in Britain during the Famine years; Hancock and many other members of the Society would have concurred with the views of the English Liberal government that the Irish landlord class should be purged, and that tenants should be compensated for improvements, though their legal rights would be narrowly defined.<sup>54</sup> Other papers by

Hancock demanded reforms in the laws relating to limited liability, patent law and the operations of the poor law, especially the less generous treatment of women and children in Ireland relative to Britain.

The theme of optimism crops up repeatedly in the Society's *Journal*, both in the widespread expectations that removing impediments to market forces would automatically result in economic progress, and in the generally upbeat reading of the Irish economy in the immediate post-Famine period. Papers on the condition of Ireland, or on the progress which had been achieved, whether in the past twenty years, or since the Society's foundation, became a staple ingredient. The topic was probably inescapable, given that the Society had been founded at the height of the Famine; it also afforded considerable scope for citing long lists of statistics, almost at random. This theme was first aired in November 1851, when Sir Robert Kane, a vice-president, addressing the opening of the fifth session, claimed that 'we may feel confident that the period of social ignorance and economic error has nearly passed away in Ireland, and that we shall soon participate in the worldly prosperity and moral grandeur secured to the sister kingdom, by conduct based upon economic laws, and

guided by generous liberality'. Kane's optimism rested on his faith in the ability of political economy to provide a blueprint for progress — the motive behind the Society's foundation. Like Sir Charles Trevelyan, author of *The Irish Crisis*, Kane chose to interpret the Famine as a potential force for good. He believed that the decline in population should be viewed with 'mixed feelings' because it offered the prospect both of higher wages for labourers and an improved agricultural sector. Emigration offered 'our wanderers that certainty of reward for honest industry which has been found so doubtful here' (Kane, 632).

A similar interpretation is found in an 1854 paper by J.A. Lawson. While ostensibly dealing with Irish agricultural statistics, he also cited the trends in Irish population from 1821 in support of a benign, anti-Malthusian interpretation. According to Lawson, the decline in the rate of population growth between 1821-31 and 1831-41 gave grounds for placing 'more confidence in the operations of nature and the prompting of self-interest'<sup>55</sup> Lawson regarded the rise in emigration in a positive light, because it removed people from areas of labour-surplus to places where labour was in demand. Like some modern scholars, such as

O'Gráda,<sup>56</sup> Lawson gave a relatively optimistic interpretation of the state of the economy on the eve of the Famine: in 1841, the country was 'in a comparatively prosperous condition and seemed to be improving' By 1854, Irish agriculture was on a 'surer foundation than it has been at any former time', producing more grass and less cereals, a product mix that suited the soil and climate. The prosperous condition of Irish agriculture undermined the fears of those who had opposed the abolition of the corn laws (Lawson, 677). Recent scholarship confirms Lawson's account prosperity of Irish agriculture in 1854: prices rose sharply because of the Crimean War, good weather brought record crop yields. By the late 1850s, however, the value of Irish agricultural output had declined from its 1854 peak.<sup>57</sup>

The most wide-ranging analysis of new-found Irish prosperity can be found in the address given by Mountifort Longfield in November 1855. The paper is liberally laced with data on the number of pigs (then above pre-Famine levels), milch cows and horses; the latter had shown a substantial increase, particularly in the province of Connaught. According to Longfield, the continuing

decline in the numbers claiming poor relief, and the fact that average wages in many areas were now double pre-Famine levels, indicated that there had been a steady improvement in the condition of the poor. Longfield contrasted the co-operation that the Irish constabulary experienced in carrying out the annual agricultural census, with the opposition that the Ordnance Survey team had encountered, and the difficulty in completing an agricultural census in England, to suggest that the Irish people were adopting a more positive attitude towards the government. He regarded the large sums remitted by emigrants, more than the sum provided by taxation for poor relief, as yet another positive trend, and he was less fearful than many contemporaries that higher wages would automatically result in drunkenness and idleness, arguing that 'There is no natural reason why a well-paid workman should be more prone to vicious indulgence than his wealthier and idler neighbour.'

Longfield extended his discussion from economics to morality, suggesting that economists were probably inclined 'to attach too much weight to the desire which exists among mankind for the accumulation of wealth'. Many sections of the population had little hope or desire of accumulating wealth; finding solutions to their problems would require

‘something more than the ordinary principles of political economy’. He was rather vague as to what these solutions might be, though he suggested that it was necessary to consider how far the state could, without coercion, alter the tastes and habits of the labouring classes and assist them ‘in the pursuit of innocent enjoyment’. Longfield believed that if hardworking workmen were given access to ‘comfortable and cheerful lodgings, dry and airy public walks, innocent recreations’, they would be less likely to frequent ‘the dram shop’ and even more unwilling to end up in either the workhouse or in prison (Longfield, 726).

## MORAL STATISTICS

While land reform was the major economic issue that concerned the Society during its early years, the papers relating to social questions concentrated on crime, alcohol and the poor law. Crime

and its causes, whether hereditary or environmental, attracted immense attention among statisticians in England and on the Continent,<sup>58</sup> in part because the subject generated lots of figures, but also because of growing fears at the apparent threat posed by the urban masses. In Ireland, there was considerable concern about agrarian violence, which was fuelled by the regular publication of crime statistics.<sup>59</sup> In England, many social scientists argued that education offered a means of preventing working-crime, though this argument came into question when some researchers produced statistical evidence, which appeared to prove the contrary.<sup>60</sup> These themes were examined by the Dublin Society, most notably in the contributions of James Haughton. Black remarks that Haughton differed from most active members having no academic training or professional concern with statistical or social investigation. A grain merchant and a Quaker, Haughton’s membership was motivated by a concern with moral reform. Shortly after the Society was established, there were moves to establish a Dublin branch of the Howard Society, which would be involved in ‘investigating the nature and effects of legal punishments’. The plan was abandoned at Haughton’s instigation; he claimed that the aims of the Howard Society came within the of the Statistical Society.

Haughton was also active in campaigns against war, capital punishment, the opium trade and slavery. In 1852, he contributed a paper, which examined the question of compensating slave-owners on its abolition (Haughton, 521). He was well known in temperance

circles in both Britain and Ireland. An associate of Father Mathew, he served as president of the Dublin Total Abstinence Society, and as a vice-president of the Irish Temperance League<sup>61</sup>. During the Society's early years he read several papers on the relationship between education and crime, which generally gave the topic an ameliorist spin. He claimed that there was a coincidence between crime and ignorance: 'we might not unreasonably assume, that if care were taken to impart to all our the benefits of a superior education, our criminal calendar would be light indeed' and believed that crime was often caused by lack of employment, which in turn arose from a lack of industrial skills and absence of education. Thus far Haughton's case appears to be not dissimilar to many contemporary liberal

sociological explanations for crime. However he believed that other factors, such as parental neglect and intemperance, contributed to criminality. For education to be effective, it was necessary to 'break down the habits of the people, those habits of self-indulgence which are obstructions in the way of all progress', in particular, 'the growing desire for intoxicating drinks', which weakened the will to acquire knowledge (Haughton, 528).

In 1854, Haughton gave evidence to a Select Committee of the House of Commons on Public Houses, which formed the basis of a paper which he subsequently read to the Society. On this occasion he argued that 'the drinking customs of our country' led to so much property being destroyed, and so much wealth being frittered away, that it was impossible to distribute resources wisely throughout the community, i.e. without temperance there was obviously little point in paying higher wages to workers. However he was optimistic about the possibility of changing the lifestyle of workers; opening Dublin Zoo on Sundays kept many working men out of public houses.<sup>62</sup> (His step-nephew, Samuel Haughton, who wrote a memoir of James Haughton's life, was a life member of the Royal Zoological Society of Ireland; the restaurant complex was named in his memory.)<sup>63</sup> Haughton's papers constitute the most overt instances of statistics being employed to disguise propaganda as fact. It appears that some members of the Society were uneasy about this, because an addendum to Haughton's 1852 paper noted that: 'It has been objected that this paper which



purposes to be Statistics of Crime in connection with Ignorance, enlarges too much on the subject of Intemperance'. In defence, Haughton claimed that 'the drinking customs of society are the true source of the greater part of our social evils' (Haughton, 528).

Other papers expressed a moral agenda, though generally in a more covert manner. In 1856, for example, Richard Hussey Walsh (yet another former Whately professor), read a paper to the British Association meeting at Cheltenham, which challenged the view that crime increased in line with greater prosperity. Walsh distinguished between major and minor crime, i.e. between committals and summary convictions. While there was no apparent relationship between convictions for drunkenness and other minor offences, for more serious offences, i.e. committals, he showed

that there was a positive relationship between an increased incidence of crime and economic distress, both in England and Wales and in Ireland. Although the number of committals in Ireland rose sharply during the years 1847-49, Walsh asked 'why, according to the theory of want being the parent of crime, was there not much more crime in Ireland in 1847 than in 1849'. He suggested that destitution was so great in 1847 'as to actually disarm the law', i.e. that many crimes went under-recorded during the years of the Famine. After 1850 the number of convictions showed a dramatic fall (Walsh, 1279). In 1857, James Moncrieff Wilson, an actuary employed by the National Assurance Company, concluded that criminality was strongly associated with poverty and ignorance. Educating the ignorant would reduce crime, not only among that class but among the better classes. However it should not be limited to teaching the 3 Rs: pupils should be schooled in industrial habits, cleanliness and morality and made fully aware of the dangers of drink (Wilson, 1304).

Walsh's paper was unusual because it did not present a clear case for legislation. Although members regularly expressed a belief that the Barrington lectures would bring about a change in working-class attitudes, on the whole they preferred to employ legislation to accelerate the pace of social and moral reform. This approach held obvious attractions; the Society included among its members many peers, Members of Parliament and senior government officials. The Lord Lieutenant frequently attended the inaugural lecture at the beginning of each session. Many members held a legal qualification and the Society devoted considerable attention to jurisprudence.<sup>64</sup> At the beginning of the 1862/63 session, the subjects proposed to Council for discussion included the propriety of appointing either a Minister for

Justice Board which would be responsible for the revision and consolidation of Irish laws; the growing divergence in statute law between England and Ireland; the need for more comprehensive judicial statistics; the procedures of superior courts; the practice of private bills; circuit arrangements; the constabulary; the Landed Estates Court; bankruptcy and insolvency; the law of lunacy; English divorce law; laws relating to marriage; how far judicial functions should be entrusted to stipendiary magistrates, and the organisation of the legal profession, including the exclusion of

solicitors from many legal appointments.<sup>65</sup>

At a Council meeting on 23 April 1870, W.N. Hancock proposed the establishment of a commission to examine the revision of statute laws affecting Ireland. On 7 June 1870, he reported that he had asked a friendly Irish MP (the name is illegible) to prepare a draft bill to expunge obsolete statutes; he was also taking steps to explore the possibility of assimilating the bankruptcy laws in Ireland to those in Britain.<sup>66</sup> In 1874, the Council appointed a committee to consider whether the Council should take steps to bring to the government's notice the various recommendations for amendments in the law, which had been made in the papers read before the Society.<sup>67</sup>

Council regularly debated the merits of setting up a committee to conduct a detailed examination into the differences in the laws between England and Ireland. In 1874, however, when Henry Jephson, a civil servant who was private secretary to the Irish undersecretary, pressed the Council to do so, members were apparently unwilling to undertake the enormous volume of work. In his 1876 presidential address, Jonathan Pim repeated the proposal, and suggested that the inquiry be extended to include Scotland. He believed that Irish provisions were defective in matters such as local government, poor relief and education (Pim, 1064). In a paper on Irish Statue Law Reform in November 1878, Jephson remarked on the 'defects in the Union' between Britain and Ireland, and his distaste for Ireland's anomalous position, which was 'somewhere between union and colonial independence' This paper included a lengthy list of discrepancies between English and Irish legislation, ranging from the parliamentary and municipal franchise, to local government, the legal status of women and the poor law. Jephson believed that legislation should be enacted simultaneously for England and Ireland, and that as far as possible it should be identical. He remarked that the Society had long

accepted the principle of legislative assimilation (Jephson, 604). In 1881, a memorandum which examined the Society's achievements emphasised that it fulfilled 'an important function in keeping the progress of Ireland up to the rest of the United Kingdom in the important subjects which fall within its discussions'.<sup>68</sup>

Most speakers who advocated economic or social reform

during the mid-nineteenth century appear to have favoured assimilating Irish laws and administrative practices to those in England and Wales. In 1854, William Harvey Pim advocated the establishment of reformatories in Ireland, similar to those which already operating in England (Pim, 1073), while a succession of papers from Dr Edward Dillon Mapother, who had been appointed medical officer of health to Dublin Corporation in 1864,<sup>69</sup> emphasised the need to bring Irish public health legislation into line with the laws in England (Mapother, 835, 838, 839). In 1876, Jonathan Pim argued that Mapother's contributions had been influential in achieving the 1866 Sanitary Act, which brought legislation into line with England (Pim, 1064).

This assimilationist model is clearly spelled out in a series of papers by W.N. Hancock on the Irish poor law. In England, 86 per cent of those who were supported by the poor law received outdoor relief, against 6 per cent of Irish recipients. Seven per cent of the population of Scotland was on outdoor relief, 4 per cent of the population of England, but only 1 per cent in Ireland. Hancock was particularly exercised by the fact that many destitute Irish widows with children were forced to enter the workhouse, because outdoor relief was permitted only when a widow had two or more dependent children, and then only at the discretion of the board of guardians, which was rarely exercised. He argued that, as far as possible, children should be raised within a family; widows should be awarded outdoor relief, and orphans should be boarded out. Hancock contrasted the generous approach adopted in England, where not only widows, but mothers with illegitimate children and wives and children with non-resident husbands, including those whose husbands were in jail, were commonly in receipt of outdoor relief. Outdoor relief was regularly provided when a husband was sick and out of work. According to Hancock, a generous attitude towards outdoor relief not only kept the family intact, and reinforced the natural social order, with mothers caring for their children, it protected widows and grown-up daughters from contact with 'the impenitent and depraved of their sex'. Boarding

out orphans — the practice favoured by many charities - reduced mortality, ensured better moral training, and left children better equipped to cope with adult life (Hancock, 406, 457, 496).

In concluding that the workhouse was not the appropriate place to raise children, Hancock reiterated the findings of a study presented to the London Statistical Society in the late 1830s by James Phillips Kay, an assistant poor law commissioner.<sup>70</sup> Hancock believed that more extensive use of outdoor relief would make it easier to bring the Irish land system into line with England. English rural labourers were content to be landless, because the ‘liberally and charitably administered poor law in England guards them against many of the vicissitudes of their lot’, whereas Irish labourers clung to their plots of land, because these appeared to provide protection against the workhouse. Seasonal migration to Britain meant that Irish labourers were fully conscious of the differences in the operation of the poor law on both-islands. Hancock’s proposals for reforming the poor law were consistent with the Society’s attitude towards economic reform. They were also guaranteed to save money — and for that reason we should not overstate the degree to which they subverted prevailing ideas concerning the role of the state.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Donal Kerr, *‘A Nation of Beggars’? Priests, People and Politics in Famine Ireland 1846-1852* (Oxford, 1995), p. 92.
2. Kevin B. Nowlan, ‘The political background’, in R.D. Edwards and T. D. Williams (eds), *The Great Famine* (Dublin, 1956), pp. 164-74.
3. R.D. Collison Black, *The Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland. Centenary Volume 1847-1947 with a history of the Society*. Hereafter, Black, *Centenary Volume* (Dublin, 1947). p. 1.
4. M.J. Cullen, *The Statistical Movement in Early Victorian Britain. The Foundations of Empirical Social Research* (Brighton, 1975), p.<sup>10</sup>.
5. James Meenan and Desmond Clarke, ‘The RDS 1731-1981’, in Meenan and Clarke (eds), *The Royal Dublin Society 1731-1981* (Dublin, 1981), p. 22. William Tighe, *Statistical Observations Relative to the County of Kilkenny*, (Dublin, 1802); Isaac Weld, *Statistical Survey of County Roscommon*,

- (Dublin, 1832). Other works published during these years used the term statistical in a similar fashion, such as Edward Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political* 2 vols. (London 1812).
6. Theodore M. Porter, *The Rise of Statistical Thinking 1820-1900* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1986), pp. 24-25.
  7. Cullen, *Statistical Movement*, p. 11.
  8. Porter, *Rise of Statistical Thinking*, pp. 27-31.
  9. Cullen, *Statistical Movement*, pp. 77-85, 119-124; Philip Abrams, *The*

- Origins of British Sociology 1834-1912* (Chicago, 1968), p. 14.
10. Cullen, *Statistical Movement*, pp. 77-85, 119-124.
  11. Abrams, *Origins of British Sociology*, p. 13.
  12. Silvana Patriarca, *Numbers and Nationhood. Writing Statistics in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 54; Porter, *Rise of Statistical Thinking*, p. 27.
  13. Black, *Centenary Volume*, pp. 1-2; 48-70. Black's book provides detailed biographical notes on Whately, Larcom, Longfield, Lawson and O'Hagan.
  14. Abrams, *The Origins of British Sociology*, p. 14.
  15. *Dublin University Magazine*, April 1845, pp. 452-56.
  16. Black, *Centenary Volume*, pp. 1-2.
  17. Antoin E. Murphy, 'Mountifort Longfield's appointment to the chair of political economy in Trinity College, Dublin, 1832', in Antoin E. Murphy (ed.), *Economists and the Irish Economy. From the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day* (Dublin, 1984), pp. 13-24.
  18. D.H. Akenson, *The Irish Education-Experiment. The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1970) p. 117.
  19. Thomas A. Boylan and Timothy P. Foley, *Political Economy and Colonial Ireland. The Propagation and Ideological Function of Economic Discourse in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1992).
  20. For details of the Barrington lectures during the early years, see Boylan and Foley, *Political Economy and Colonial Ireland*, pp. 100-115. The minutes of the Council of the Statistical and Society Inquiry Society of Ireland give details of the recruitment of lecturers; Black, *Centenary Volume*, p. 149, lists Barrington lecturers appointed before 1947.
  21. Report of the Council 1854.
  22. Cullen, *Statistical Movement*, p. 84. In the course of some research concerning the poor law, Nassau Senior discovered that on the basis of current life tables, nearly half of those who had reached their twentieth birthday survived until the age of 60. From this Senior concluded that nearly half the adult population was over 60!
  23. Cullen, *Statistical Movement*, p. 84.
  24. Mary, E. Daly, *The Famine in Ireland* (Dublin, 1986), p. 32.
  25. Abrams, *The Origins of British Sociology*, pp. 15-16.
  26. Social Inquiry Society: Report of the Council read at the Annual Meeting, 3 November 1851, pp. 7-8.
  27. Cullen, *Statistical Movement*, pp. 11 1-16, 123-29.
  28. *Journal of the Dublin Statistical Society*, January 1856. Report of the Council, 19 November 1855, pp. 15 1-52.
  29. Black, *Centenary Volume*, p. 13.
  30. Black, *Centenary Volume*, pp. 19-20.
  31. Black, *Centenary Volume*, pp. 6,14-21 5. Shannon Millin, *Historical Memoirs*,

- pp. 55-56.  
 32. Meenan and Clarke, 'The RDS 1731-1981', pp. 31-34.  
 33. Maurice Craig, 'The Society's Buildings', in Meenan and Clarke (eds), *The RDS*, p. 62.  
 34. Black, *Centenary Volume*, p. 17.  
 35. W.H. Hancock, *Three Lectures on the Question: Should the Principles of*

36 *The Spirit of Earnest Inquiry*

- Political Economy be Disregarded at the Present Crisis?*, (Dublin, 1847).  
 36. James S. Donnelly, 'The construction of the memory of the Famine in Ireland and the Irish Diaspora, 1850-1900', *Eire-Ireland*, xxxi, 1 & 2, spring/summer 1997, pp. 27-38.  
 37. Robert Kane, *The Industrial Resources of Ireland* (Dublin, 1844). Thomas Davis, 'Udalism and Feudalism', in *Prose Writings of Thomas Davis*, ed. T.W. Rolleston, (London nd.) p. 60. Mary E. Daly. 'The economic ideals of Irish nationalism: frugal comfort or lavish austerity?', *Eire-Ireland*, winter 1994 p. 83.  
 38. John Mitchel (ed), *Irish Political Economy* (Dublin, 1847).  
 39. Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines, An Essay in Entitlements* (Oxford, 1981).  
 40. Jeffrey C. Williamson, 'Economic convergence: placing post-famine Ireland in comparative perspective', *Irish Economic and Social History*, xxi (1994), pp. 5-27. Williamson noted that his argument concerning Ireland had been anticipated by R.C. Geary (358).  
 41. Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement. The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1785-1865* (Oxford, 1988); Charles Trevelyan, *The Irish Crisis*, (London 1850); Peter Gray, 'Ideology and the Famine', in Cathal Portéir (ed), *The Great Irish Famine* (Cork, 1995), pp. 86-103.  
 42. Trevelyan, *The Irish Crisis*, p. 4.  
 43. Boylan and Foley, *Political Economy and Colonial Ireland*, pp. 2, 9.  
 44. Nowlan, 'The Political Background', in Edwards and Williams (eds), *The Great Famine*, pp. 187-200.  
 45. Legislation setting a maximum working day of ten hours for women and young persons who were employed in factories. The bill eventually became law in 1850. Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850* (London, 1981 edition), p. 190.  
 46. R.D. Collison Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-1870* (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 77-84.  
 47. Black, *Economic Thought*, p. 46.  
 48. Black, *Economic Thought*, p. 137.  
 49. Isaac Butt, *Protection to Home Industry: Some Cases of its Advantages Considered* (Dublin, 1846); Black, *Economic Thought*, p. 141.  
 50. R.D. Collison Black, 'The Irish dissenters and nineteenth-century political economy', in Murphy (ed), *Economists and the Irish Economy*, pp. 120-35.  
 51. Boyd Hilton, *Age of Atonement*, pp. 54-55.  
 52. Peter Gray, *The Irish Famine. New Horizons* (London, 1995), p. 53.  
 53. Boylan and Foley, *Political Economy and Colonial Ireland*, p. 2.  
 54. Black, *Economic Thought*, pp. 35-40.  
 55. This interpretation depends on the accuracy of the 1821 and 1831 Censuses. See Joseph Lee, 'On the accuracy of pre-Famine censuses', in Max Goldstrom and L.A. Clarkson (eds), *Irish Population, Economy and Society: Essays in Memory of K.H. Connell* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 37-56.  
 56. Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History 1780-1939* (Oxford, 1994), part II.

1996), pp. 104-09.

58. Porter, *Rise of Statistical Thinking*, p. 31. For a discussion of the relationship between criminal behaviour and material prosperity in nineteenth century France, see Roger Chartier, 'The Saint-Malo—Geneva Line' in Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory. The Construction of the French Past. Volume I Conflicts and Divisions* (New York, 1996), pp. 467-496.

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60. Cullen, *Statistical Movement*, pp. 138-43.

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66. Council Minutes, 23 April 1870; 7 June 1870.

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70. Abrams, *Origins of British Sociology*, p. 21.