READINGS IN
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By the same author

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SELECTED AND EDITED BY

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PREFACE

FEW students of economic and social history at any level below that of an honours degree, whether in universities, colleges or schools, normally have the time or opportunity to read more than their textbooks and, at best, a handful of monographs and articles. But economic history, like any other branch of history, really begins to come alive only when a study is made of primary sources. The aim of this volume of selections from contemporary sources of modern British social and economic history is to bring to students and teachers some of these sources in convenient and digestible form. Familiar as most of these documents will be to many teachers and specialists in the subject, the originals are not, in most instances, easily accessible either to university or college students, or to the teachers of senior school pupils: inaccessibility is probably the principal reason why more use is not made of original sources for pedagogic purposes. No attempt has been made to seek out recondite or little-known sources: the first criterion of selection has been readability. Nevertheless, some aspects of the subject are not simple, and provision is made for the bolder student who is prepared to venture into the more technical fields of banking history or the evolution of economic policy. Though the principal aim in selecting passages for reproduction has been to illustrate some of the major themes of economic and social history, a few passages have been included for no better reason than that they are intrinsically interesting, or that they illustrate an attitude characteristic of a particular period. Nor has any systematic attempt been made to offer a representative coverage of all the principal topics in social and economic history throughout the modern period. To do so would have meant omitting extracts from many major sources, and replacing them by less satisfying readings. In view of the tendency in many courses of study to concentrate on more recent history, this collection is weighted fairly heavily in that direction.

The introductions which precede each reading are not intended to provide detailed commentaries — this would have demanded a great deal more space than is available. It has been assumed that the student is already equipped with a certain minimum of back-

ground knowledge: readings of this kind can never be intended to do more than supplement other forms of teaching. Thus, all that the introductions attempt to do is, where necessary, to explain the circumstances in which the document came to be written, to indicate bias where there is any of particular significance, and to offer some brief appraisal of the document's historical importance. To encourage further study, a select bibliography of recent books and articles about each of the subjects covered in the extracts has been compiled, and is to be found at the end of the book. Full details of the source of each reading are given at the head of each introduction. Unless otherwise stated, the place of publication of all books referred to is London. In the passages quoted, the original spelling and punctuation have been retained in order to preserve as far as possible the flavour of contemporary styles. The use of capital letters, however, has been modernized.

I am grateful to my colleagues, Dr. A. S. Milward and Dr. T. C. Smout, for undertaking the laborious task of reading this book in typescript. Their suggestions have helped to eliminate errors and to clarify obscurities. For any that remain, I alone am to blame.

CONTENTS

PART I: 1500-1700

General

PAGE

1. English society in the late sixteenth century. Thomas Wilson, *The State of England, Anno Dom. 1600* 1
2. Science and technology in the late seventeenth century. Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society* 5
3. Some English towns in the late seventeenth century. *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* 10
4. The population of England and Wales in the late seventeenth century. Gregory King, *Natural and Political Observations and Conclusions upon the State and Condition of England* 16

Agriculture

5. The Tudor agrarian problem. The inhabitants of Burnam v. Richard Fynes (1543), *Select Cases in the Court of Requests* 19
6. Tudor enclosures. Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry* 22
7. The advantages of enclosure in the seventeenth century. Samuel Fortrey, *England's Interest and Improvement* 25

Industry

8. The Newcastle coal trade. *Extracts from the Records of the Company of Hostmen of Newcastle-upon-Tyne* 28
9. The technique of iron manufacture in the charcoal era. John Ray, *A Collection of English Words not generally used* 32
10. An early example of industrial welfare. *The Law Book of the Crowley Ironworks* 35

Trade

11. An enterprising commercial traveller. *The Voyage of M. Anthony Jenkinson*, from Richard Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* 38
12. The charter of the East India Company. Sir George Birdwood (editor), *The First Letter Book of the East India Company* 42
13. River navigation and economic expansion. Andrew Yarranton, *England's Improvement by Sea and Land* 45

Economic Thought and Policy

PAGE

14. The price rise of the sixteenth century. *A Discourse of the Common Weal of this Realm of England* 49
15. Usury. Thomas Wilson, *A Discourse upon Usury* 53
16. The Balance of Trade. Thomas Mun, *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade* 58

PART II: 1700-1830

General

17. A cutler's apprentice. *The Journal of Arthur Jewitt* 65
18. Sunday Schools. Samuel Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical* 68
19. The Bullion Report. *Report of the Select Committee on the High Price of Gold Bullion* 70
20. Joint-stock versus private banking. Thomas Joplin, *An Essay on the general Principles and present Practice of Banking in England and Scotland* 73

Agriculture

21. 'The New Husbandry'. Jethro Tull, *Horse Hoeing Husbandry* 77
22. The advantages of the enclosure of commons. John Middleton, *View of the Agriculture of Middlesex* 81
23. The effects of enclosure. Arthur Young, *Annals of Agriculture* 84
24. The post-war agricultural depression. *Agricultural State of the Kingdom in February, March and April, 1816* 86

Industry

25. Domestic manufacture of woollen cloth in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the early eighteenth century. D. Defoe, *A Tour through England and Wales* 89
26. The Darbys of Coalbrookdale. Letter of Abiah Darby, 1775 92
27. The foundation of a cotton manufacturing business in the Industrial Revolution. *Journal of David Whitehead of Rawtenstall* 96
28. Ordering a Watt reciprocating engine. *The Walker Family: Ironfounders and Lead Manufacturers 1741-1893* (ed. A. H. John) 99

Transport

29. River navigation. T. S. Willan, *The Navigation of the River Weaver in the Eighteenth Century* 104
30. Turnpike roads. Arthur Young, *A Six Weeks' Tour through the Southern Counties of England and Wales* 107

31. A coach journey from Norfolk to Somerset. James Woodforde, *The Diary of a Country Parson* 110
32. Canal engineering. *Life of Thomas Telford, Civil Engineer, written by Himself* 113

Trade

33. The economic effects of the Union of Scotland and England, 1707. (a) Charles Davenant, *A Memorial relating to an Union between England and Scotland*. (b) Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, *Observations on the Condition of Scotland since the year 1707* 117
34. The economic advantages of colonial trade. D. Defoe, *A Plan of the English Commerce* 124
35. The African trade. *Letters of a West African Trader* (ed. T. S. Ashton) 127
36. The Slave trade. (a) John Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra-Leone on the Coast of Africa, containing an Account of the Trade and Production of the Country*. (b) Prince Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp* 133

The Working Class Movement

37. Trade Unions under the Anti-Combination Laws. Letter from A. Colquhoun to Lord Sidmouth, 1812, in A. Aspinall, *The Early English Trade Unions* 138
38. Frame-breaking by Luddites, 1811. Letter from William Milnes to Sir Joseph Banks, 1811, in A. Aspinall, *The Early English Trade Unions* 140
39. Early Radical agitation. Samuel Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical* 141
40. Owen's Villages of Co-operation. Robert Owen, *Report to the County of Lanark* 148

The Poor Law

41. The rural poor. Sir Frederick M. Eden, *The State of the Poor* 153
42. The work of the Overseers. Richard Burn, *The History of the Poor Laws: with Observations* 160
43. The Allowance System at work. *Extracts from the information received by His Majesty's Commissioners as to the administration of the Poor Laws, 1833* 162
44. Friendly Societies. Sir Frederick M. Eden, *The State of the Poor* 166

Economic Thought and Policy

45. The 'Bubble' Act. *Statutes at Large*, 6 Geo. I, c. 18 169
46. Adam Smith and Laissez-faire. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* 174

	PAGE
47. Malthus on Population. Thomas R. Malthus, <i>An Essay on Population</i>	179
48. Laissez-faire. Speeches by Lord Liverpool, 1815-19. <i>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates</i>	186

PART III: 1830-1960

General

49. The Victorian philosophy of success. Samuel Smiles, <i>Self-Help</i>	189
50. Emigrant shipping in the mid-nineteenth century. Letter from Stephen de Vere to T. F. Elliott, 1847. <i>Papers relative to Emigration</i>	192
51. Victorian domestic servants in the middle-class home. Isabella Beeton, <i>Book of Household Management</i>	197
52. The extent of poverty. B. Seebohm Rowntree, <i>Poverty: A Study of Town Life</i>	200

Agriculture

53. The condition of English agriculture in the mid-nineteenth century. James Caird, <i>English Agriculture in 1850-51</i>	203
54. The 'Great Depression' in agriculture. <i>Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture</i> , 1882	208
55. The crofting problem in the Scottish highlands and islands. <i>Report of the Royal Commission on the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland</i> , 1884	212
56. Profitable farming in the early twentieth century. H. Rider Haggard, <i>Rural England</i>	218

Industry

57. Price and output control by manufacturers' associations. <i>Iron in the Making. Dowlais Iron Company Letters 1782-1860</i> (ed. M. Elsas)	222
58. The Bessemer process. Sir Henry Bessemer, <i>An Autobiography</i>	224
59. The location of industry. <i>Report of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population</i> , 1940	227
60. The plight of the cotton industry. <i>Working Party Reports: Cotton</i> , 1946	231

Working Conditions

61. Child labour in factories. (a) Andrew Ure, <i>The Philosophy of Manufactures</i> . (b) P. Gaskell, <i>The Manufacturing Population of England</i>	236
---	-----

CONTENTS

xi

PAGE

62. The Ten-hours Movement. Letter of Richard Oastler to the Editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, 1830 241
63. The grounds for opposition to the Factory Acts. Nassau W. Senior, *Letters on the Factory Act* 244
64. The domestic system of industry. *Report of the Select Committee on Home Work*, 1907 248

Trade

65. The Corn Laws. Ebenezer Elliott, *The Ranter* 253
66. The Free Trade Movement. *Report of the Select Committee on Import Duties*, 1840 255
67. German industrial competition. E. E. Williams, 'Made in Germany' 260
68. The Import Duties Advisory Committee and the steel industry. *Recommendations of the Import Duties Advisory Committee*, 1932; and *Report of the Import Duties Advisory Committee on the present position and future development of the iron and steel industry*, 1937 262

Transport

69. Turnpikes, stage-coaches, and the coming of the railways. *Report of the Select Committee on Turnpike Trusts*, 1839 267
70. The methods of railway construction in the boom of the 1840s. *Report of the Select Committee on railway labourers*, 1846 271
71. The social and economic effects of railway construction. William McGonagall, *The Newport Railway* 276
72. The development of modern motor roads. *Final Report of the Royal Commission on Transport*, 1930 277

Banking and Monetary Policy

73. The Bank Charter Act, 1844. (a) Peel's Memorandum to the Cabinet, 1844; (b) Letter of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the Governor of the Bank of England, 1844 282
74. The Gold Standard after the first World War. *Report of the Committee on Currency and Foreign Exchanges after the War*, 1918 289
75. Monetary policy in the depression of the inter-war years. *Report of the Committee on Finance and Industry*, 1931 293
76. Post-war monetary policy. *Report of the Committee on the Working of the Monetary System*, 1959 298

Urban Living Conditions

	PAGE
77. The campaign for Public Health legislation. Edwin Chadwick, <i>The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population</i>	304
78. London in 1847. <i>Journal of the Statistical Society of London</i> , XI (1848)	309
79. Urban burials. (a) <i>Report from the Select Committee on Improvement of the Health of Towns on the Effect of Interment of Bodies in Towns</i> , 1842; (b) Lady Bell, <i>At the Works</i>	313
80. Urban living conditions in the late nineteenth century. Andrew Mearns, <i>The Bitter Cry of Outcast London</i>	318

The Working Class Movement

81. The Chartist National Convention. <i>The Life and Struggles of William Lovett</i>	323
82. The origins of the parliamentary Labour party. The Fabian Society, <i>To your Tents, O Israel!</i>	326
83. Industrial malaise before the first World War. Lord Askwith, <i>Industrial Problems and Disputes</i>	330
84. The General Strike, 1926. (a) and (d) <i>Statement of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain</i> , 1927; (b) <i>Report of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry</i> , 1926; (c) Lord Samuel, <i>Memoirs</i>	334

Education

85. A worker's education. Thomas Wood, <i>Autobiography</i>	343
86. Education and society in the 1860s. <i>Report of the Royal Commission on the State of Popular Education in England</i> , 1861; and <i>Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission</i> , 1867	345
87. The sectarian problem in nineteenth-century education. <i>Report of the Royal Commission on the State of Popular Education in England</i> ; and <i>Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission</i>	353
88. Secondary education for all. <i>Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent</i> , 1926	358

The Poor Law and the Relief of Unemployment

89. The New Poor Law. <i>Report of the Poor Law Commissioners</i> , 1834	363
90. The relief of the unemployed in the early twentieth century. <i>Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws</i> , 1909	369
91. Unemployment between the Wars. (a) and (b) <i>Reports of Investigations into the Industrial Conditions in certain depressed Areas</i> , 1934; (c) George Orwell, <i>The Road to Wigan Pier</i>	376

CONTENTS

xiii

PAGE

92. Social security. Sir William Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, 1943 384

Economic Thought and Policy

93. Laissez-faire and state intervention. (a) J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*; (b) and (c) J. S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*; (d) T. H. Green, *Lecture on Liberal legislation and freedom of contract* 388

94. The nationalization of industries. R. H. Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society* 400

95. The theory of economic policy in the 1930s. J. M. Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* 404

96. Employment policy after World War II. White Paper on *Employment Policy*, 1944 408

Further Reading 414

Index 423

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