**Early 19th Century British "Environmentalism"**

*By William Walter Kay*

*The interest of the landlord is always opposed to that of the consumer and the manufacturer*.

D. Ricardo 1821 (1)

**Intro**

Environmentalism is the social movement of the “landed interest” – an interest parallel to that of neither business nor labour. “Environmentalism” is readily identifiable in early 19th century Britain. This essay draws from the best-known writings of the era’s three most influential intellectuals for a portrait of an anti-democratic, anti-liberal social movement based in the aristocracy but claiming to represent the masses; a movement permeated with the ideas of over-population theorist T. Malthus; a movement benefitting from restricting land supply and suffering from advancing agricultural technology; that fought a cultural civil war using literary Romanticism and monkish asceticism; that was militantly protectionist regarding agriculture; that constrained industrial progress and spread fear of catastrophe.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[**The Times - Boom!**](http://www.ecofascism.com/article17.html#Boom)
[**Mill on the Aristocracy's Eternal Grasping**](http://www.ecofascism.com/article17.html#millontheAristocracysEternalGraspin)
[**Ricardo on the Landed Interest's Selfish Self-Interest**](http://www.ecofascism.com/article17.html#Ricardo)
[**Marx on Reactionary Socialism**](http://www.ecofascism.com/article17.html#Marx)
[**Conclusion**](http://www.ecofascism.com/article17.html#Conclusion)

**The Times - Boom!**

In the first half of the 19th century Brits time-travelled from mad King George III’s court through the regency and reign of George IV, then, after a brief spell under William IV, to the early Victorian years – a de facto regency of Prince Albert. Almost without interruption a stifling, aristocratic Hanoverian Toryism prevailed over the House of Commons from 1783 to 1830. Earl of Liverpool’s Prime Ministership (1812-1827) concluded a long ordeal of repression, reaction and policies favouring the landed interest. Liverpool’s departure coincided with disintegration of the coalition checking the aspirations of the ascending industrialists. After much shuffling of Commons seats, Prime Minister Peel’s alliance of liberals, radicals and moderate conservatives, with Albert’s cooperation, rolled in the modern world.

Between 1800 and 1850 Britannia’s population grew from 11 to 21 million while Greater London grew from 1.1 million (twice that of Paris – Europe’s next largest city) to 2.7 million. Other industrializing cities, notably Manchester, also boomed.

Britain’s 2nd Industrial Revolution took off during this era. Technological innovations propelling the change were in steam-driven machinery, coke ovens, iron metallurgy and cotton. In 1800 agriculture accounted for 34% of economic activity while manufacturing, mining and construction accounted for 28%. By 1850 it was: agriculture 20%, industry 40%. Coal production expanded from 13 million tons in 1815 to 60 million by mid-century. In 1850 Britain’s 2 million tons of annual pig iron production was half the world’s output. Her machine tool industry held similar market share. Power looms, a novelty in 1800, numbered 100,000 by 1835. In 1850 1,800 cotton mills, mostly in Manchester, spun 1.5 billion yards of fabric – 10 times that of 50 years earlier. Mechanized wool production was also booming, helping make British textiles a globalized concern with businesses buying raw materials from, and selling finished products to, dozens of countries – a stimulus to the shipping and shipbuilding sectors. The caravan moving from Manchester mills to Liverpool ports made profitable the construction of the first steam locomotive railway in 1830. By 1851 Britain had 6,800 miles of track. Railways, which existed nowhere else, were supplemented by newly constructed canals and roads that, like railways, were financed and run by novel ‘trusts’. Trusts were joined by joint stock companies and other organizational novelties required to manage what was the world’s first industrial society.

Throughout this period the British countryside was wracked by orchestrated mob violence targeting technology and development often, as in the Luddite, Captain Swing and Rebecca campaigns, approaching insurgent dimensions. On the other side, decades of agitation from the prospering urban constituency (for whom Mill’s On Government became a manifesto) culminated in the Great Reform Bill of 1832, which extended the franchise to property owning urbanites. (Scotland’s electorate went from 4,500 to 65,000; England and Wales’ from 435,000 to 653,000). The Bill increased representation from manufacturing boom-towns and decreased it from depopulated “rotten” boroughs (the over 100 House of Commons seats previously up for sale). The capitalist invasion of the Commons facilitated the passage of many liberal laws by Peel’s new Conservative Party. The “Corn Laws”, originally passed in 1815 to protect agriculture from foreign competition, became the focus of a mass mobilization by industrialists against the landed interest. This movement, which relied on Ricardo’s doctrines, repealed the Corn Laws in 1846 and the protectionist Navigation Acts in 1849, thus paving the way for the world’s first experiment with free trade. There were additional victories over the slave trade, religious intolerance and restrictions on labour’s right to assembly. Utilitarianism, entwined in Manichean coil with Romanticism, was Britain’s dominant ideology by mid-century.

**Mill on the Aristocracy’s Eternal Graspin**

James Mill was a Scottish shoemaker’s son. He was an itinerant preacher until he lost his religion and a hack journalist until he hooked up with Utilitarianism’s founder, Jeremy Bentham, after which he became a writer, an anti-aristocracy/anti-Romantic agitator, and a long-serving official of the East India Company. As a Utilitarian, Mill wished “*the greatest happiness of the greatest number.*” Toward these ends he used the *“science of human nature”* to design the *“foundation of good government*.” (2) He wanted everyman to have an opportunity to labour and to receive *“the greatest possible quantity of the produce of his labour.*” (3) He championed a free labour market while recognizing the need to prevent robbery and trickery. He quoted Locke: “*The great and chief end of men’s uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property*.” (4) Temptations to take property from others persisted even among persons inside government. In his words: *“principles of human nature which imply that government is at all necessary, imply that these persons will make use of them to defeat the very end for which government exists*.” (5)

Mill listed three political options, “*the Many, the Few, the One*”, or: the Democratical, Aristocratical, Monarchical. Democracy had the virtue of not having rulers with interests diverging from the community but this option was dismissed because: “*a community in mass is ill adapted for the business of government... What they uniformly do is, to choose a certain number of persons to be the actors in their stead. Even in the case of a common benefit club, the members choose a committee of management, and content themselves with a general control*.” (6) He did not dwell on monarchy as this formofgovernment *“agrees with the aristocratical, and is liable to the same objections*.” (7)

Mill used “aristocracy” sometimes as a governmental form and sometimes as a social class. He defined “*Aristocratical*” government as one wherepower is *“held by any number of persons intermediate between a single person and the majority. When the number is small, it is common to call the government an Oligarchy; when it is considerable, to call it an Aristocracy.”* (8) And likewise: “*any small number whatsoever; who by the circumstance of being entrusted with power, are constituted an aristocracy*.” (9) Conventionally, “aristocracy” refers to a socio-economic class of land magnates possessing feudal titles who are not universally or necessarily involved in governance beyond managing their estates. Mill approached this usage when he described the *type* of men in the House of Lords as: “*the proprietors of the greatest landed estates, with certain dignities and privileges annexed*.” (10) Moreover, he made statements like:
“*Intellectual powers are the offspring of labour. But an hereditary aristocracy are deprived of the strongest motives to labour. The greater part of them will, therefore, be defective in those powers.*” (11)

and *“...the class which is universally described, as both the most wise, and the most virtuous part of every community, the middle rank, are wholly included in that part of the community which is not the aristocratical.”* (12)

Here “aristocracy” is a socio-economic constituency not a form of government.
How many does it takes to constitute an aristocracy? “...*a few hundred or a few thousands; or even many thousands. The operation of the sinister interest is the same; and the fate is the same of all that part of the community over whom the power is exercised. A numerous aristocracy has never been found to be less oppressive than an aristocracy confined to a few*.” (13)

This “*sinister interest”* was Mill’s main concern. He believed “*the stronger will take from the weaker, till it engrosses the whole.*” (14) Thus, “*the ruling few, would, if checks did not operate in way of prevention, reduce the great mass of the people subject to their power, at least to the condition of negroes in the West Indies.”* (15) Again the: “*aristocracy have all possible motives for endeavouring to obtain unlimited power over the persons and the property of the community*.” (16)
Mill endorsed Britain’s ad hoc “*doctrine of the union of the three simple forms of government*.” British governance was “*excellent*” because it was a union of these forms *“and not from any other cause*.” (17) He dared not suggest abolishing the Monarchy or the House of Lords, claiming if such institutions did not exist, wise legislators would inven1t them. (18) His mission was to make the House of Commons a bulwark against aristocratic tyranny which meant preventing the Commons itself from becoming a tool of the aristocracy. He believed in checks:

“*The House of Commons...is the checking body...if the King and the House of Lords combined had the power of bearing down its opposition to their joint will, it would cease to have the power of checking them; that it must, therefore, have a power sufficient to overcome the united power of both*.” (19)

But who shall guard the guardians?
*“...if power is granted to a body of men, called representatives, they, like any other men, will use their power, not for the advantage of the community, but for their own advantage if* *they* *can*.” (20)

To prevent abuse, Mill wanted checks such as term limits – a practice the Commons always employed. He believed: “*If the members were hereditary, or if even they were chosen for life, every qualifier would immediately pronounce that they would employ the powers entrusted to them for their own advantage.*” (21) Romans gave their Consuls one year mandates. Regarding who should vote for, and sit in, the Commons, Mill noted: “*mental qualities are not easily ascertained, they must be outward and visible signs which are taken to distinguish, for this purpose, one of these males from another.*” He narrowed these qualities to: age, property, and profession (gender was not debatable). He favoured a minimum age of 40. On property qualifications, he clashed with “*that party of reasoners who support aristocratic power*” who wanted Commons’ membership limited to major property owners. To Mill: *“if the qualification (of property) were raised so high that only a few hundreds possessed it, the case would be exactly the same with that of the consignment of the electoral suffrage to an aristocracy.”* (22) He advocated minimal property qualifications because this: “*embraces* *the* *majority*” and provided the majority “*a* *tolerable* *security*” from the aristocracy. (23)

Mill’s twin aims were: empower the Commons vis a vis King and House of Lords *and* incorporate society’s “middle rank” into the Commons. In Britain, he contended, “*the middle rank are numerous, and form a large proportion of the whole body of the people*.” Lower classes were moulded and directed by this “*intelligent and virtuous rank, who come most immediately in contact with them*.” The *“middle rank”* producedthe *“most distinguished ornaments to science, to art, and to legislation itself, to everything which exalts and refines human nature.”* (24)
The aristocracy resisted throwing open representation to the “middle rank.” Instead they proposed a Commons comprised of professional “fraternities.” This was famously expressed in a speech by Liverpool who thought that in the Commons:

*“...the landed interest ought to have the preponderant weight. The landed interest was, in fact, the stamina of the country. In the second place, in a commercial country like this, the manufacturing and commercial interest ought to have a considerable weight, secondary to the landed interest.”*

But, Liverpool continued:
“*Suppose the landed and commercial interest could both find their way into the House. The landed interest would be able, if it had nothing but the commercial interest to combat with, to prevent that interest from having its due weight in the constitution. All descriptions of persons in the country would thus in fact be at the mercy of the landholders.”*

This was undesirable even to the aristocratic Earl because the Commons, unlike the House of Lords, was to reflect the entire nation. What were needed were selected representatives from the Army and Navy and from the literary, merchant and legal communities. Liverpool believed *“professional persons”* were *“what makes this House the representatives of the people.”* (25)

Mill bemoaned how this rep-by-fraternity theory “*appear(ed) in the same half-formed state in every speech”* on the reform topic. (26) Mill argued: *“each fraternity has its sinister interest, and will be led to seek the benefit of misrule.”* (27) Liverpool’s *“motley aristocracy”* was likely to provide the *“kind of misgovernment which it is the nature of aristocracy to produce.”* (28) Here Mill zeroes in on the perennial anti-democratic infrastructure inherent in the landed aristocracy:

*“Liverpool talks of an esprit de corps belonging to a class of landholders, made up of the different bodies of landholders in every county of the kingdom... What then is meant by an esprit de corps? Nothing else but a union for the pursuit of a common interest...they would pursue their common interest, and inflict all the evils upon the rest of the community to which the pursuit of that interest would lead.”* (29)

He then attacks the main argument of those “*who hold the powers of government, without having an identity of interests with the community”* who unfortunately *“have the power of setting the fashion, and of influencing, to a large extent the public mind.”* They invariably claim the public is incapable of acting in its own best interests. Persons making such arguments should be *“viewed with suspicion”* as they *“have the strongest possible interest to deceive themselves, and to endeavour to deceive others*.” (30)

**Ricardo on the Landed Interest’s Selfish Self-Interest**

London-born David Ricardo was the son of a wealthy Dutch-Jewish banker. David’s abandonment of religion caused a permanent break with his father, which did not prevent David from accumulating his own fortune in the stock market before retiring to a country estate and purchasing a Commons seat. He wrote several economics tracts, notably: The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation, The Influence of a Low Price of Corn on the Profits of Stock and On Protection of Agriculture. This writing, done between 1815 and 1821, made Ricardo the outstanding economist of his day. Principles attained world-wide influence andremains a classic. According to one historian: “*The chief driving force in this case seems to have come from James Mill, who was anxious to see Ricardo state more fully the principles underlying the Essay on the Influence of a Low Price of Corn on the Profits of Stock which he published early in 1815*.” (31) Mill was Ricardo’s editor, and correspondence between the two helped Ricardo articulate his theories. Malthus also motivated Ricardo as it was often in opposition to him that Ricardo wrote. Malthus defended the landed interest. Ricardo was pro-capitalist.

Numerous controversies arose from the commercial-aristocratic divide. The aristocracy, being of the view taxes should not be levied on land, generated economic arguments about the inequities of such taxes. Ricardo argued land taxes spread evenly into the price of agricultural produce, thus the only inequities came from how much produce one consumed. (32) Concerning monetary policy, Ricardo noted “*the* *landed* *interest*” were “*encumbered with fixed charges on their estates”* (mortgages) and paid their taxes in fixed amounts of money, thus they liked inflation and opposed policies making money dearer. (33) Ricardo wrote:

*“It cannot be denied that an alteration in the value of currency must be very burdensome to landlords; but they should remember that they or their fathers benefitted from the depreciation of the value of currency. All their fixed engagements, their taxes included, were for many years paid in the depreciated medium. If they suffer injustice now, they profited by injustice at a former period.”* (34)

Surveying deflation’s impact on “*the industrious classes of society and the landlords,*” he concluded: “*the real diminution, even in money value, of all the commodities in the country, corn included, would be equal only to the loss of the landlords by the reduction of their rents*.” (35) Changing money values were a redistribution of wealth. One sector’s gain was another’s loss: “*If it injures the debtor, it in the same degree benefits the creditor; if its pressure is felt by the tenant, it must be advantageous to the landlord*.” He dismissed the “*extravagant* *proposition*” that deflation consumed all rent. Tax collectors and stockholders had not received “*all* *that* *fund*” formerly going to landlords, hence it was a “*wild* *assertion*” to claim deflation eradicated rent. (36)

To Ricardo “*rent*” meant “*that portion of the produce of the earth which is paid to the landlord for the use of the original and indestructible powers of the soil*.” Rent was confined to a rural setting and was not to be “*confounded with the interest and profit of capital.”* Hecomplained *“in popular language, the term is applied to whatever is annually paid by a farmer to his landlord*.” Even: “*Adam Smith sometimes speaks of rent in the strict sense to which I am desirous of confining it, but more often in the popular sense*.” (37) Ricardo wanted a clear distinction between rent and profit. If a landlord paid for buildings, roads and fences and thus the tenant’s payments were increased, this increase was a *profit* from investment, not a rent. In his words: *“Rent is sum paid to the landlord for the use of the land, and for the use of the land only. The further sum that is paid to him under the name of rent is for the use of the buildings, etc., and is really the profits of the landlord’s stock.”* (38)

Malthus shared this definition of rent. However, Ricardo did not share Malthus’ view that rent was “*a new creation of riches*.” “*Rent*” said Ricardo “*adds nothing to the resources of the country; it does not enable it to maintain its fleets and armies.”* It provided *“no addition to the national wealth”* because itwas *“merely as a transfer of value, advantageous only to the landlords.*” (39)

Ricardo and Malthus agreed rent depended on land scarcity. Ricardo contended: “*in a country in which there is an abundance of rich and fertile land a very small proportion of which is required to be cultivated for the support of the actual population...there will be no rent; for no one would pay for the use of land when there was an abundant quantity not yet appropriated, and, therefore, at the disposal of whosoever might choose to cultivate it*.” (40) Only after all good land was in cultivation and population increase prompted cultivation of land of lesser quality did “*rent*” appear. Rent was a surplus charged on prime land. Both men believed: “*it is this necessity of taking inferior land into cultivation which is the cause of the rise of rent*.” To Ricardo: “*Whatever cause may drive capital to inferior land must elevate rent on the superior land; the cause of rent being...the comparative scarcity of the most fertile land.*” (41) He insisted: “*nothing can raise rent but a demand for new land*.” (42)

Ricardo disagreed with Malthus about the uniqueness of agricultural produce. Ricardo believed prices for agricultural goods: “*adjusted in the same manner as the exchangeable value of all other commodities, by the total quantity of labour necessary in various forms, from first to last, to bring it to market.*” “*The* *cost* *of* *production*” of food, contended Ricardo, “*regulates* *price*.” (43) He accepted Adam Smith’s maxim that the lowest price any commodity can be sold for is the price fetching enough profit to replace the investment needed to bring it to market. (44) He chastised Malthus for suggesting production costs determined the amount produced: “*It is not the price at which corn can be produced that has any influence on the quantity produced, but the price at which it can be sold*.” This was: “*the correct account of all permanent variations in price, whether of corn or of any other commodity*.” (45) (“Corn” was synonymous with “grain” – to economists it meant “food.”)

Ricardo asserted: *“If landlords could be sure of the prices of corn remaining steadily high, which happily they cannot be, they would have an interest opposed to every other class.”* A high price of food was “*the main cause of the rise in rent*” and furthermore this “*rise of rent, the advantage gained by the landlord, is an equivalent for the disadvantage imposed on the other classes.”* Thus, *“to give a moderate advantage to one class, a most oppressive burden must be laid on all other classes.”* (46) Food pricing was not a minor issue for Ricardo: *“It has been one of the objects of this work to show that, with every fall in the real value of necessaries, the wages of labour would fall, and that the profits of stock would rise.”* (47) Malthus said high food prices were in everyone’s interest. To Ricardo a high food price
*“...is not the interest of the consumer; to him it is desirable that corn should be low relatively to money and commodities... Neither is it the interest of the manufacturer that corn should be at a high price, for the high price of corn will occasion high wages, but will not raise the price of his commodity... All classes, therefore, except the landlords, will be injured by the increase in the price of corn.”* (48)

The ‘harm’ from falling food prices was falling rents but this was a transfer, not a reduction, of wealth:
*“If the net income of the society...be as great as before, and the class of landholders lose 1 million from a fall of rent, the other productive classes must have increased money incomes, notwithstanding the fall of prices. The capitalist will then be doubly benefitted; the corn and butcher’s meat consumed by himself and his family will be reduced in price; and the wages of his menial servants, of his gardeners, and labourers of all descriptions, will also be lowered. His horse and cattle will cost less, and be supported at a less expense...his additional consumption of taxed commodities will much more than make up  for the diminished demand of the landlords, consequent on the reduction of their rents. The same observations apply to farmers and traders of every description...millions deducted from the landlord’s rent will be paid in additional wages to the labourers. Be it so!”* (49)

Ricardo listed three causes of falling food prices: a fall in wages; the emergence of markets from where cheap food could be imported; and improvements to crops or machinery. (50) New agricultural technology hurt landlords: *“If a million quarters of corn be necessary for the support of a given population, and it be raised on land of the qualities of No. 1, 2, 3; and if an improvement be afterwards discovered by which it can be raised on No. 1 and 2, without employing No. 3, it is evident that the immediate effect must be a fall of rent.”* (51) Ricardo quoted Adam Smith: *“an acre of potatoes will produce six thousand weight of solid nourishment, three times the quantity produced by the acre of wheat.”* Hence, according to Smith, if there was a switch to potatoes *“much land would consequently be abandoned, and rent would fall.”* According to Ricardo, *“If potatoes were to become the common food for the people, there would be a long interval during which the landlords would suffer an enormous deduction of rent.”* (52) Regarding labour-saving agricultural machinery, Ricardo believed:

*“Corn can be permanently at an advanced price only because additional labour is necessary to produce it; because its cost of production is increased. The same cause invariably raises rent, it is therefore for the interest of the landlord that the cost attending the production of corn should be increased.”* (53)

Nevertheless, over the long haul agricultural innovation benefitted landlords: *“I hope I am not understood as undervaluing the importance of all sorts of improvements in agriculture to landlords – ....they give great stimulus to population, and at the same time enable us to cultivate poorer lands with less labour, they are ultimately of immense advantage to landlords. A period, however, must elapse during which they are positively injurious to him.* (54)

The cause celebre was the “*prohibition* *against the importation of foreign corn*” which Ricardo called a “*system of protection for landlords*.” (55) He chastised parliamentarians for supporting protectionism, “*...instead of holding out any hope to the consumer that we shall at any time legislate on a principle which shall enable him to purchase corn at as cheap a price as British industry shall be enabled to obtain it for him, – instead of giving any security to the British capitalist that wages shall not be unnaturally raised in this country, by obliging the labourer to purchase corn at a dear, and not at a cheap rate.*” (56)

Malthus claimed falling food prices lowered all prices hence benefitted no one. Ricardo disagreed: *“A fall in the price of corn...will lower the exchangeable value of corn only – the price of no other commodity will be affected.”* (57) Malthus argued foreign food need be substantially cheaper than home-grown for any benefit to be felt. Ricardo countered imported food was obviously substantially cheaper, “*if it were not, no advantage to anyone could be obtained by importing it.”* (58) Free trade, it was argued, would take inferior land out of cultivation. Ricardo responded it was: *“in the highest degree absurd first to pass a law, under the operation of which the necessity is created of cultivating poor lands, and then, having so cultivated them at a great expense make that additional expense the ground for refusing ever to purchase corn from those who can afford to produce it at a cheaper price.”* (59) Moreover, “*those who had employed capital in the production of corn on those lands which would no longer be cultivated could employ it in the production of manufactured goods*.” (60) Free trade opponents pointed out manufacturers previously benefitted from protectionism. Against this Ricardo quoted Lord Grenville: “*It would be an extraordinary mode of doing justice, thus to declare that, because a large, the largest, part of the community were already oppressed by favours shown to one particular class, they should still be farther oppressed by favours shown to another particular class.*” (61)

**Marx on Reactionary Socialism**

Marx, being a pupil at the Smith/Mill/Ricardo school, was pro-industry and pro-labour theory of value. He was critical of the persistence of the ancient regime and the reactionary socialism it spread. He saw overlapping interests behind this socialism but thought it mainly an expression ofthe aristocratsand petty proprietors being marginalized by modern industry. He recorded:

“*Owing to their historical position, it became the vocation of the aristocracies of France and England to write pamphlets against modern bourgeois society. In the French revolution of July 1830, and in the English reform agitation, those aristocracies again succumbed to the hateful upstart.”* (62)

The aristocrats and petty proprietors were then joined by wealthy urbanites “*desirous of redressing social grievances, in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society.”* In this motley crew were: *“philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organizers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole-and-corner reformers of every imaginable kind.*” (63)

Surgically precise class delineation is impossible. Successful 19th century manufacturers acquired estates, feudal titles and married into aristocratic families. Such class osmosis was symbiotic. As well, despite the aristocracy’s postured opposition to industrial capitalism and “*despite their high-falutin phrases, they stoop(ed) to pick up the golden apples dropped from the tree of industry*.” (64) In Germany: “*the landed aristocracy and squirearchy (*were*) extensive beetroot-sugar manufacturers and distillers of potato spirits*.” While “*the* *wealthier* *British* *aristocracy*” were “*yet rather above that”* they had learned *“to make up for declining rents by lending their names to floaters of more or less shady joint-stock companies.* (65) Other economists were aware of the gains aristocrats derived from industrialization. Coal deposits were often on aristocrat’s estates and many, like the Duke of Newcastle, extracted phenomenal rents from their exploitation. Adam Smith noted coal seams often could be mined only by the aristocrat as the deposit was inadequate or too poorly situated to entice a capitalist. The mines could not generate a decent profit and a decent rent. (66) Other aristocrats benefitted from urbanization of their estates but little is written on this.

In Britain and France, by the 1840s, feudal restoration was inconceivable:
*“Thenceforth a serious political contest was altogether out of the question. A literary battle alone remained possible. But even in the domain of literature the old cries of the restoration period had become* *impossible*... *Thus the aristocracy took their revenge by singing lampoons on their new master, and whispering in his ears sinister prophesies of coming catastrophe.”* (67)

This socialist movement, with Church blessing, sought to make a virtue of poverty:
*“As parson has ever gone hand in hand with the landlord, so has Clerical Socialism with Feudal Socialism. Nothing is easier than to give Christian asceticism a socialist tinge. Has not Christianity declaimed against private property? Has it not preached in the place of these, charity and poverty...”* (68)

Thus reactionary socialism was primarily an artistic / religious culture war: “*half lamentation, half lampoon; half echo of the past, half menace of the future; at times its bitter, witty and incisive criticism, striking the bourgeoisie to the very heart’s core; but always ludicrous in its effect, through total incapacity to comprehend the march of modern history.*” (69)

A crucial feature of this movement was its masquerading as a mobilization of the poor masses. Marx noted: “*The aristocracy were obliged to lose sight, apparently of their own interests, and to formulate their indictment against the bourgeoisie in the interest of the working class alone*... *The aristocracy, in order to rally the people to them, waved the proletarian alms-bag in front for a banner.*” (70) This was a characteristic of the French Legitimists and the Young England movement. Once “*the old feudal coats of arms*” were exposed, the lower classes fled. Despite lip-service to labour, this movement supported “*all coercive measures against the working class*.” (71)

By the mid-1800s in London and Paris (where capitalism was in full sway) a critique of capitalism developed that denounced “bourgeois” liberty and democracy as restrictive, self-serving and hypocritical. Such discourse gained currency in Germany which “*had just begun its contest with feudal absolutism.*” (72) Thus when German capital’s fight “*against the feudal aristocracy and absolute monarchy...became more earnest*” it was confronted by True Socialists – a movement of absolutist aristocrats “*with their following of parsons, professors, country squires and officials*.” True Socialists were: “*against liberalism, against representative government, against bourgeois competition, bourgeois freedom of the press, bourgeois legislation, bourgeois liberty and equality*.” This socialism “*forgot in the nick of time that the French criticism, whose silly echo it was, presupposed the existence of modern bourgeois society*.” (73) This socialism was “*a weapon for fighting the German bourgeoisie, (and) at the same time, directly represented a reactionary interest, the interest of the German Philistines...the petty-bourgeois class, a relic of the sixteenth century.*” True Socialists proclaimed German national superiority and ignored internal class conflicts. (74)

Across Europe this socialism preached doom and called for “*cramping the modern means of production and of exchange.”* This socialism was *“both reactionary and Utopian. Its last words are: corporate guilds for manufacture; patriarchal relations in agriculture.*” Such socialists bemoaned *“the inevitable ruin of the petty bourgeois and peasant...the dissolution of old moral bonds, of the old family relations, of the old nationalities*.” (75) Their “*chief accusation”* was: *“under the bourgeois regime a class is being developed, which is destined to cut up root and branch the old order of society.... What they upbraid the bourgeoisie with is not so much that it creates a proletariat, as that it creates a revolutionary proletariat*.” (76) This is Marxist propaganda squared! Reactionary aristocrats claimed liberal policies conjured monster cities overrun by unshackled wage-slaves. So did Marx. When Mill discussed the unruly urban workers and their incidents of mob violence, he downplayed the problem. Perpetrators were “*boys and idlers”* capable only of *“disturbing for a few hours or a few days, a particular town.*” To Mill this problem resulted from a lack of economic security, education and “middle rank” leadership; but it was manageable. (77) The aristocracy exaggerated this problem as part of its campaign against modernization. Utilitarianism countered aristocratic paranoia of lower class rebellion. Marxism trafficked in it.

**Conclusion**

The land-use revolt which began in the Middle Ages and peaked during 19th century colonial expansions, facilitated industrialization. Maximizing land utility meant enclosures, deforestations, reclamations and drainages. This led to an enormous increase in land supply and a great leap forward for humanity. Environmentalism is the land-use Counter-Revolution. Propaganda about extinction and pollution is the psychological front of a broader territorial war. Everywhere: cities are surrounded with green belts; vast regions declared off limits; swamps and bush-lands restored. Restricting land supply jacks up demand for developed real estate. This translates into higher commercial, industrial and residential rents and rising shares of national income accruing to the landed interest.

In both urban and rural realms, increases in land supply lower land values and rents. Major urban landowners, burdened with high vacancy rates, are appalled by: suburban sprawl, gentrification, encroachments onto parks, re-zonings of farmland, and upgrades of heritage sites. Such things increase supply. The construction industry; commercial, industrial and residential tenants; those wishing to buy real estate; in fact all consumers, are pitted against the landed interest. On the rural front the environmental movement opposes: genetically modified organisms, modern fertilizers and pesticides, factory farming, land clearances, new irrigation projects and free trade. Environmentalists support: organic agriculture, free-range livestock, heritage crops, bio-fuels, reverting farmland to wilderness, and protectionism. They oppose increasing the productivity of land and the consequent lowering of food prices and land values. They support increasing the demand for existing farmland and high food prices – good for the landed interest – bad for consumers’ budgets and technological progress.

We hear of factories relocating to places where workers earn a dollar-a-day but “dollar-a-day” is meaningless absent details on what that dollar buys. When Ricardo began the discussion of international “comparative advantage”, worker’s wages were largely spent on food. Raising food prices raised labour costs, thus the landed interest’s push for high food prices obviously undermined industry’s comparative advantage. Today, housing costs plus food costs consume a major portion of worker’s budgets. The landed interest, by artificially raising housing and food costs, undermines comparative advantage. USA, Canada and Australia would kick the asses off Europe and Asia in terms of providing quality, affordable housing and food if not for the environmental movement’s imposition of restrictive land-use policies.

The environmental movement re-directs national income toward rent and food (through constraining the available amount of land) and it also thwarts and rolls back agricultural technology. As the movement strengthens, greater portions of society will be reduced to working just for food and shelter. Vast numbers might wind up working for no money at all on organic farms, which is EXACTLY what the Nazis were trying to restore... the good ol’ days.

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**Footnotes**

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