

THE ENGLISH CLOTH ECONOMY

1550 - 1640

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"Such is the excellency of the Sheep above all the other irrational Creatures, as well in his naturall as in his symbollicall capacities, that not only morality, but piety it selfe may thereby receive instruction, even to the recreating the mind and soule; and because they may prove acceptable to deceive the melancholy of some mens leisurable houres, it is intended shortly to present the courteous Reader with some meditations, wherein shall be shewed, that as every part of the Sheep is usefull in Food, or Clothing, or Physick, or Musique, & c. so also is he divine in his uses, and comparative considerations."

W. S. The Golden Fleece
(postscript) (1656).

PREFACE

Cloth is of cardinal importance in English history. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries cloth was England's most important industry, it paid the overwhelming bulk of her customs revenues, its political and economic influences were profound. This essay does not purport to be a history of that trade and industry, nor does it propose a rigidly defined thesis. It is an attempt to indicate some of the more important economic and political effects the cloth trade and industry had on England's domestic and commercial policies from 1550 to 1640, and insofar as is possible, to draw original conclusions from them. Whatever the insufficiencies or errors, they are in every case my own.

The thesis represents the account of research which began at McGill University in the autumn of 1949. For the leisure that made its completion possible, I wish to thank the authorities of that learned institution for the grant of a University Fellowship.

To my director of studies, Professor E. R. Adair, who gave me constant help and encouragement, I owe a debt of gratitude the reality of which only his students can adequately appreciate.

The staff of the Redpath Library were a constant help, and through their inter-library loan service I was able to examine much valuable material from the collection of Cornell University. To the Librarian of Harvard my special thanks are

due. Through his kind cooperation, I was given the freedom of the Kress Room, a vast treasure-house of pamphlet literature, at the Graduate School of Business Administration.

It is to the devoted inspiration of my wife that any merits this work may have are ultimately due.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"When Hercules did use to spin
And Pallas wrought upon the loom
Our trade to flourish did begin ..."

The Weavers' Song.

The economic revolution which transformed England from a grower and exporter of raw wool, to a producer and purveyor of manufactured cloth, began and was in a large part accomplished during the fourteenth century. The traditional explanation which found in Edward the Third's bringing to England of John Kempe and a host of Flemish weavers, the direct cause of the expansion of the woollen cloth industry, has not survived the rigours of historical research. In fact, the change which within a half century saw the exportation of raw wool reduced by one third and the exportation of broadcloths increased ninefold,¹ admits of no such direct explanation, nor was it effected by quite so conscious a government policy as the traditional theory suggests. That the industrial boom was in the main a chance by-product of the government's fiscal policy now goes largely unquestioned. A government in search of greater and more permanent sources of revenue had in the decade before 1347 increased the customs on wool exports by 33%, while at the same time cloth customs were raised by a mere 2%.

1. H. L. Gray, English Foreign Trade From 1446 to 1482, Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century, ed. by E. Power and M. M. Postan, p. 11.

Henceforth merchants found it more profitable to export cloth than wool, and this, plus the encouragement given to an indigenous textile industry since the days of Edward II, resulted in a period of industrial expansion.¹

The pioneer, and still definitive researches of H. L. Gray into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the investigations of Schanz into the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, have provided the economic historian with an almost unbroken statistical record with which to trace the development of the English textile industry in the two centuries from 1350 to 1550. The development of the cloth industry was by no means steady. Constantly depressed by foreign and civil war, its progress was none the less persistent, and by 1550 England had achieved a truly remarkable degree of industrialization, and had in fact experienced an economic revolution.

In 1347 the wool trade held pride of place, and England's merchants were exporting between 30,000 to 40,000 woolsacks annually to the continent. Her own cloth production was not insignificant and English craftsmen were then manufacturing about 4,500 broadcloths and 7,500 worsteds every year, but the bulk of England's clothing needs were supplied by the textile industry of Flanders, from whose looms upwards of 10,000 cloths a year were carried across the channel to England. By 1356 a sharp change had occurred. The production of woollens and worsteds had trebled, and of the approximate 40,000 cloths of

1. H. L. Gray, The Production and Exportation of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century, The English Historical Review, 1924, p. 14.

both types woven on English looms, at least two-thirds were exported. At the end of the century broadcloth production had jumped to 50,000 cloths a year, perhaps 40,000 of these were exported, while the wool exports of denizen and alien merchants showed a decline of 37% from the volume of woolsacks exported in 1347.¹ Broadcloth production was maintained at about 50,000 cloths annually until 1448 when the industry suffered a period of protracted depression. By 1471, the production of broadcloths had dropped to 27,000 cloths, but with the return of more stable market conditions abroad the recovery of the cloth industry was rapid. From 1479 until the middle of the sixteenth century the English woollen textile industry experienced a period of relatively unimpeded expansion. With broadcloth production at 62,000 cloths in 1482,² the industry was producing about 84,000 cloths annually between 1510 to 1524, more than 120,000 cloths by 1540, and by 1554, production had rocketed to an estimated 160,000 cloths annually, not including cloths of inferior quality such as kerseys, of which 250,000 were woven in that year.³ The annual exports of raw wool which two centuries before had provided the crown with its greatest single source of customs revenue, now languished at a mere 5,000 sacks,⁴ while broadcloth exports alone, now accounted for nearly 50% of the total customs paid, which figure, when the customs from all

1. Ibid., pp. 16-17, 21, 29-32.

2. Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century, ed. by E. Power and M. M. Postan, Appendix A, p. 401.

3. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 1, pp. 458-59; quoting Schanz, Englische Handelspolitik, vol. 2, p. 18.

4. E. Power and M. M. Postan, op. cit., p. 364, note 56.

other types of cloth and woollen commodities are added to it, a recent writer has estimated to have stood as high as 78%.¹ Clearly, England was operating on a cloth economy by the middle of the sixteenth century.

This vital importance of cloth to the national economy was to have important repercussions in almost every branch of English life during the Tudor and Stuart periods, some of which we shall indicate here. Foremost perhaps, was the effect this ever-expanding industry had in striking a shrewd blow at the agricultural foundations of English society. In the minds of contemporaries, "clothing," "enclosure," and "depopulation" were correlative terms, and that the rise in the price of wool attendant upon the increased needs of an expanding woollen textile industry was a prime mover influencing landlords to convert their properties from arable to pasture farming, is a conclusion which has been challenged though never successfully disputed.² As the price of cloth rose, (the decennial averages show that the price of a piece of the first quality increased from 48s. 10d. in 1441 - 1450, to 70s. 6d. in 1491 - 1500) and with it the price of wool and the cost of labor, the price of wheat remained relatively constant.³ The relationship between these facts, alone gives sufficient indication for the genesis of the fifteenth century enclosure movement, and in the latter part of the century the pressure of influences inciting landlords to enclose their holdings for sheep farming were probably

1. Infra., p. 140.

2. R. H. Tawney, The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century, p. 195.

3. E. V. Morgan, The Study of Prices and the Value of Money, p. 19.

increased when after 1491, the export of grain, except by special license, was forbidden altogether.¹ Lands which under tillage demanded the services of a large agricultural population could, when enclosed for sheep farming, be cared for by a few shepherds, and for the enclosing landlord, with his labor costs practically negligible, sheep farming was a business of almost pure profits. But for his erstwhile tenants enclosure was often synonymous with poverty. No doubt many of these managed to find employment in some phase of cloth production, but countless others were of that group "whom no man wyl set a worke though thei never so willyngly profre themselves thereto,"² and who reduced to living by their wits, despised by contemporaries as Egyptians and vagabonds, constituted one of the most menacing social problems of the sixteenth century. It is ironic that an industry which contemporaries praised as a great source of "occupation and living of the poor commons of this land,"³ should as it expanded, have had so much to do with increasing the problems of unemployment and poverty in Tudor England.

By 1500 there was scarcely a county in which cloth production was not carried on, however small the scale, but the principal cloth producing areas were three, and these remained the same from the fourteenth through to the seventeenth centuries. The cloth manufacturing counties, par excellence, were those of western England. In the mid-fourteenth century the area

1. R. H. Tawney, op. cit., p. 197.

2. Quoted by F. Aydelotte, Elizabethan Rogues and Vagabonds, p. 6.

3. Quoted by E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 1, p. 440.

extending from Southampton and Winchester, through Salisbury and across the lower Cotswolds to Bristol and Gloucester, produced 56% of all cloths manufactured in England. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Wiltshire, Somersetshire, and Gloucestershire, alone produced 36% of the total national output, while the yield of the west accounted for 48% of the country's production when cloths manufactured in the adjacent counties of Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Dorsetshire, Devonshire, and Cornwall were included. Producing 24% of the total national output in 1356, the eastern counties, principally Suffolk, Norfolk, and Essex, and to a lesser degree Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hertfordshire, and Middlesex, manufactured 25% of all woollen textiles when the sixteenth century began, and Suffolk was the largest producer in England. The third important cloth producing area was in northern England. In 1356 Yorkshire and Lincolnshire had shared 13% of the total national output, but by 1500 Lincolnshire's yield had become negligible, and 12½% of all cloths manufactured in England were woven on the looms of Yorkshire weavers.¹ It is important to note that it was in the rural areas of the three principal cloth producing districts, rather than in the established corporate manufacturing cities, that the most remarkable growth of the cloth industry took place, and the migration of cloth makers from town to country, especially in the west, had become prevalent by the end of the fourteenth century.² The movement can be attributed mainly to the inability

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1. The foregoing is summarized from H. L. Gray, The Production of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century, The English Historical Review, 1924, pp. 21-22, and from H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, pp. 84-88.
 2. H. L. Gray, op. cit., p. 30.

of inflexible gild-controlled industry to adapt itself to the type of production required to supply an expanding market, one of the most common of economic-historical generalizations. By the sixteenth century the industrial shift from town to country had become chronic, the cloth industry had largely passed beyond government control, and in many parts of England, historic urban centers of cloth production fell rapidly into "decay." The declining power and influence of the corporate towns was another part of the price of England's increasing concentration on the manufacture of woollen cloth.

The type of industrial organization which developed as a consequence of the growth of the cloth industry in rural districts, has been described variously as a "clothier," "commission," or "domestic system." Though each of these terms describes a particular characteristic of that phase of industrial organization which came midway between the gild and factory systems, none seems as descriptive of its workings as does the term "putting-out system." Let us understand by it a system in which clothiers as employers, put out raw material to a widely scattered army of tuckers, combers, spinners, and weavers, who working at home for piece rates, converted wool into the cloths which clothiers ultimately transported either to market towns to be dyed, dressed, and sold to home consumers, or to ports, from whence they were carried overseas through the agency of one of the merchant companies. This in its simplest form was the industrial process from the time the wool came to the clothiers' hands fresh from the sheep's back, until as a

finished cloth, it was placed in the hands of the consumer. But the ties connecting employer, maker, and consumer were not always so direct, and the system had many variations owing either to particular local conditions of manufacture, or to the amount of capital possessed by clothiers. Thus in Yorkshire the clothier was often a producer himself who depended on the agency of a middleman or "brogger," to supply his wool and to find a market for his cloth,¹ while in distant Devonshire all the industrial processes from the shearing of the wool to the weaving of the cloth had been accomplished before the clothier intervened to purchase cloths from the maker, transport them to London, or export them himself.²

Historians have given much attention to the Winchecombes, the Stumpes, the Mosleys, and the Chethams, clothiers par excellence, who became the commercial and industrial successors to the Celys and the Tames, the great wool dealers of the fifteenth century. An early seventeenth century document describes the opulent clothier as a man "that buyeth his woolls of the grower ... and makes his whole years provision beforehand, and layes it up in stowre, and in the winter tyme hath it spunne by his owne spinsters and woven by his owne weavers and fullled by his owne tuckers."³ But the industrial capitalist with every phase of cloth production under his direct control, was the

1. H. Heaton, op. cit., pp. 93-96.

2. T. Westcote, A View of Devonshire in 1630, p. 61.

3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1611-18, p. 271, Jas. I, vol. LXXX, no. 13; A Classification of Woolgrowers and Clothiers, 1615; printed in G. Unwin, Industrial Organization, Appendix A, II, pp. 234-36.

exception in an industry whose entrepreneurs were, as a rule, men of modest means, conducting their business "upon the bare thread," often not far removed in social or economic status from those whom they employed. The typical clothier purchased wool or yarn on credit at the weekly market, contracted with rural producers to convert the raw material into cloths, disposed of them through the agency of a middleman, and returned to the market to pay off his old debts and to borrow once again.¹ From then on, every phase of the cloth trade and industry was linked together by a chain of credit which extended as far as the show benches in the cloth market at Antwerp. The credit he had received from the woolgrower, the clothier gave to the draper - often six to fifteen months - the draper to the merchant, and the merchant to his foreign factor.² The use of credit enabled trade and industry to be conducted on an infinitely larger scale than if every transaction were carried out on a cash basis, but it was a system which was easily abused. It encouraged the merchant to speculate beyond his means, while it permitted the unqualified opportunist to take up temporary occupation as a clothier in times when the market demand for cloth was brisk.³ In either event it was the propertyless rural craftsmen who suffered when merchants failed or when clothiers, having made their fortunes, abandoned trade at the opportune moment. They might, like the erstwhile employees of Thomas Dolman,

1. G. Unwin, *ibid.*, p. 235.

2. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 3, pp. 218-19.

3. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 14.

be left to chant the Litany of the unemployed, "Lord have mercy upon us miserable sinners Thomas Dolman has built a new house and turned away all his spinners,"¹ or like the craftsmen of Suffolk and Essex, be forced to petition the Council for aid following the failure of Gerrard Reade, a London merchant possessing stocks of theirs amounting to £20,000.²

In 1564, Burghley and Gresham contemplated a scheme which would confine the Cloth export trade to "those that be richer, and will deal and trade like merchants with their stocks and not with the exchange as all the young merchants do."³ They hoped thereby to lessen the dangers of economic distress in an industry, the majority of whose craftsmen lived a hand-to-mouth existence. The tenuous financial strength of craftsmen employed in manufacturing cloth was a fact constantly stressed by contemporaries. A member of the parliament of 1614 referred to the 13,000 clothmakers residing within a ten mile radius of his home for whom the uninterrupted weekly sale of their cloths meant the difference between subsistence and poverty. Some of these, he said, had stocks amounting to £20, but the stocks of many more were as low as £5, and though he referred only to conditions in Yorkshire,⁴ his description seems valid for conditions in the other clothing counties as well. The Yorkshire clothmaker could perhaps supplement his earnings with a by-

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1. Quoted by E. Lipson, The History of the Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 48.
 2. Acts of the Privy Council 1619-21, pp. 79-80; complaint of the Suffolk and Essex clothiers, 1 Dec. 1619.
 3. J. W. Burgon, Sir Thomas Gresham, vol. 1, p. 463; Gresham to Northumberland, Antwerp, 16 April 1553.
 4. Commons Journals, vol. 1, p. 491.

occupation in agriculture,¹ but even in the north recourse to such an expedient was becoming less possible as the industry expanded,² and in the eastern and western clothing counties, the divorce of the artisan from the soil appears to have been nearly complete. The poor, it was admitted reluctantly, were often relieved, "onely ... by the clothmen," and that without the agency of the clothier many would be "otherwise unable to live, tillage being so sore decayed that now they have no other living but by spinning, weaving, and making of cloths."³ The almost total dependence of clothmakers upon the earnings gleaned from their labors aroused no philanthropic sensibilities, especially in the minds of the larger clothiers, who were generally intent on having their spinning and weaving done at the lowest possible piece rates.⁴ The government made sincere attempts to prevent wage oppression on the part of employers, the payment of wages in truck was declared illegal,⁵ and ultimately in 1604 an act was passed legislating the payment of a minimum wage for those employed in the cloth industry.⁶ But the results were at best dubious, and it was not as we shall notice,

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1. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 93.
 2. G. H. Tupling, The Economic History of Rossendale, pp. 161-67.
 3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1547-80, p. 550, Eliz., vol. CXIV, no. 32; Opinions of Gloucestershire clothiers on the scarcity and high price of wool, June 1577; printed in R. H. Tawney and E. Power, Tudor Economic Documents, vol. 1, p. 192.
 4. G. Unwin, Industrial Organization, Appendix A, II, p. 235.
 5. 3 Henry VIII, c. 6.
 6. 1 Jas. I, c. 6.

until the period of the personal government that any real success was met with in enforcing such measures. Weavers might mitigate their financial problems by engaging for work with several clothiers at once, but such an expedient must have been extremely difficult in an industry where output appears to have been small in relation to the number of persons engaged, and the time and energy expended. Heaton has shown that it required the combined labors of fifteen persons working for a week to produce a single "dozen," a cloth measuring 12 by 1-3/4 yards, while one weaver, working with yarn carded and spun by five persons might manufacture 1-1/4 "kerseys" during the same period of time.¹ Such an occupation must have been deadening, and though in passages more noted for their poetic enthusiasm than for their economic truth, Thomas Deloney rhapsodized on the "mickle joy" with which Winchcombe's employees approached their tasks,² it is likely that the life of the average weaver was as lusterless as Roger Harvey's of Wiltshire, who in the constant struggle to avoid poverty, described the course of his existence as being "from my bed to my lombs and from my lombs weary to my bed again."³

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the government would learn the dangerous connection between the cloth trade and unemployment, and of unemployment with public order.

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1. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, pp. 108-09.
 2. For the passages noted see, E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 1, pp. 476-77; quoting T. Deloney, The Pleasant History of John Winchcombe.
 3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1639, p. 453, Chas. I, vol. CCCCXXVII, no. 70; Roger Harvey to Richard Harvey, Taunton, 19 Aug. 1639; quoted by D. Mathew, The Social Structure in Caroline England, p. 102, note 3.

The economic well-being of thousands like Roger Harvey might ultimately depend upon the state of relations prevailing between Brussels and Westminster, or on how it fared with Tilly's campaign along the north German coast. It had once been a proud boast, and one which the government had often made good, that the dependence of overseas textile manufacturers upon supplies of English wool was a need which could be politically exploited to keep the foreigner compliant and dependent on England's good-will.¹ Yet as cloth gradually took the place of wool as England's principal commodity for export, England herself became increasingly dependent on the foreign market. That dependence would not have become as precarious as it did had England continued to expand her overseas trading connections in pace with her rapidly developing textile industry. As it happened, a time when the cloth industry was experiencing its most rapid growth, coincided roughly with a period when a series of military and commercial defeats put an abrupt check to English overseas enterprise, and resulted in a sharp contraction of the foreign markets to which English merchants traded directly.

The fourteenth century expansion of the cloth industry had prompted a brisk period of English commercial activity. By the mid-fifteenth century four trade routes linked the woollen industry with continental markets, and 55% of the cloth export trade was controlled by English merchants.² A principal

1. *Infra.*, p. 136.

2. E. Power and M. M. Postan, Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century, Appendix A, p. 401.

line of English commercial penetration ran northward to Scandinavia and central Europe via the Baltic and the North Sea. The trade to Prussia became especially important, and merchants of the northeastern ports shipped the bulk of their cloths to Danzig from whence they were distributed to Poland and western Russia. Merchants of the southwestern ports controlled the trade to Guienne and northern France, while maintaining another direct route southward via Aquitaine and Iberia to the Mediterranean. London meanwhile, concentrated its commercial energies on the trans-channel trade to Flanders and Brabant.¹ By 1448 English merchants were shipping better than 50,000 cloths a year over these routes² when mounting troubles abroad contributed to the decline of the export trade. While the outbreak of the last phase of the Hundred Years' War and the consequent loss of Normandy and Guienne severed the trading connections of the southwestern ports, the long smouldering animosity between English and Hanseatic merchants finally erupted in a trade war from 1468 to 1474, and merchants from the northeastern ports were effectively shut out from the Baltic. Following treaties with France and the Hanseatic League in 1575,³ the cloth trade recovered rapidly, but its direction had radically changed. Cut off from their customary markets, merchants of the northern and southwestern ports had begun to redirect their

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1. M. M. Postan, The Economic and Political Relations of England and the Hanse, 1400-1475, Studies in English Trade in the Fifteenth Century, pp. 92-3, 97-9. See also, E. M. Carus-Wilson, Trends in the Exports of English Woollens in the Fourteenth Century, The Economic History Review, 1950, pp. 174-75.
 2. E. Power and M. M. Postan, op. cit., Appendix A, p. 401.
 3. H. L. Gray, English Foreign Trade From 1446-1482, ibid., pp. 25-9.

cloth exports over the Netherlands' route and by the time peace was restored, the cross-channel trade comprised the majority of English merchants.¹ England's overseas trade which had fanned out to touch wide stretches of the continental seaboard, now turned inwards to concentrate upon this one focal point.

The consequent canalization of the cloth trade along the London to Antwerp axis was a development of infinite significance to the history of our period. Apart from its obvious effect in arresting English commercial development, the connection retarded the progress of the cloth industry. The principal demand of the Netherlands was for unfinished cloth, and in being geared to produce for a concentrated market, the industry remained the slavish manufacturer of a single commodity until a commercial and industrial blunder of James I led indirectly to the development of new types of cloth. More important both in immediate and ultimate consequence was the fact that the London merchants who first set out to exploit the route gained control of the trade. The direction of the cloth trade thus became the function of a single company of Merchant Adventurers, a power they were not to relinquish long after the Antwerp connection had been broken. Their predominance assured the commercial hegemony of London, and contributed to the decline of the once flourishing outports of the north and southwest.

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1. M. M. Postan, *The Economic and Political Relations of England and the Hanse, 1400-1475*, *ibid.*, pp. 151-53.

The substitution of cloth for wool as England's principal commodity for export, the dependence for livelihood of a large propertyless class on its uninterrupted sale in the foreign market, the concentration of the export trade through Antwerp, and the control over it of the Merchant Adventurers, these were important features of the national economy in 1550. They will provide a major theme in the pages to follow.

CHAPTER II

THE TOWN, THE CROWN, AND THE COUNTRY

"Yf our clothiers were commaunded to enhabyte in townes, as they do in Fraunce, Flaundres, Brabant, Holande, and other places, we shuld have as many good towmes in England, as you have in Fraunce, and clothe more fyner and truelyer made, notwithstandinge your bragges."

The Debate of the Heraldys, 1549.

The rapid increase in the European demand for English woollen cloth, the reluctance of the craft guilds to abandon medieval ideals of limited and high quality production, and to adapt themselves to the type of production required to supply the needs of an expanding market, the attempt of the master craftsmen to militate against the forces of change by heightening the exclusive character of their organizations, the consequent migration of disaffected journeymen and apprentices away from the corporate towns to the freer suburbs and country villages - this is the generally accepted sequence of causes and events in the process whereby the center of the English woollen cloth industry was transferred from the corporate towns to the country districts during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. By the time that Leland made his itinerary the migration had been all but completed, and cloth manufacturing was to remain an essentially rural industry until the industrial revolution achieved what the best designs of Tudor legislators could not, and weavers and spinners were once again herded back to serve the machines of the industrial towns of the north.

Wherever Leland went the pattern was the same. In Herefordshire, the town of Leominster had long "usyd great drapinge of clothe," but following a recent dispute with the towns of Hereford and Worcester, Leominster had been deprived of its Saturday market and the town had consequently "decayed."¹ Bridgenorth in Shropshire had prospered while it had been a cloth manufacturing center but its weavers had long since moved into the countryside and "the towne sorely decayeth therewith."² In Yorkshire there had been "good cloth making at Beverle..." but that was "now much decayid" and with it the fortunes of the town.³ At Ripon where "hard on the farther ripe of Skelle, a great numbere of tainters for woollen clothes want to be made ... idlenes is sore encresid in the town, and cloth making almost decayed."⁴ Similarly in Warwickshire, cloth making had been the glory of Coventry but "that glory now decaying the glory of the city decayeth."⁵

We are left in no doubt that it was the attempt of the master craftsmen of Coventry's weavers' gild to increase gild exactions on cloths manufactured in the town, and to retain the select character of their organization by placing financial obstacles in the path of persons seeking entrance to apprenticeship in the gild that had done much to bring about the city's decline as a cloth manufacturing center. Less than a half century before Leland's visit the increasing exclusiveness of the

1. J. Leland, Itinerary, ed. by L. T. Toulmin Smith, vol. 2, pt. 5, p. 74.

2. Ibid., p. 85.

3. Ibid., vol. 5, pt. 9, p. 39.

4. Ibid., vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 82.

5. Ibid., vol. 2, pt. 5, p. 108.

weavers' gild here had been the muse inspiring "some evill disposed person" who pinned his doggerel to the north door of St. Michael's Church seven days after Lammastide, 1495.

Be it known and understand
This city should be free and now is bond,
Dame good Eve made it free,
And now there be customs for wool and drapery,
Also it is made that no prentice shall be
But xiii pennies pay shall he.
That Act did Robert Green,
Wherefore he had many a curse, I ween.¹

As at Coventry, much of the reason for the decline of York as a cloth manufacturing center can be attributed to the restrictive practices of the weavers' gild. Here the weavers' gild had held a monopoly for the manufacture of dyed woollen cloths since the reign of Henry III, in return for which the gild was to pay an annual rent of £10 to the crown. Owing to a policy of restrictiveness and the heavy financial burdens imposed on weavers by the gild, commerce was gradually being driven to the freer towns of Wakefield and Huddersfield and as early as the reign of Edward IV the gild had petitioned for a reduction of its rent to 100s. annually, claiming inability to pay the higher sum. Despite its declining influence the gild refused to compromise its exclusive character and the incursion of foreign weavers, which elsewhere had allowed many towns to regain a footing on a par with rural industry was sedulously resisted by the masters. By 1561 the gild's fortunes had sunk so low that all future payments to the crown were cancelled, and when Elizabeth arrived there on progress in 1575 York's mayor, in a speech undoubtedly calculated to exaggerate the extent of the

1. A. E. Bland, P. A. Brown, R. H. Tawney, English Economic History: Select Documents, p. 282; a protest against a gild's exclusiveness, 1495.

city's decline, informed her that though in the past as many as 380 looms had been busily at work in the city, there were now but 160, and 5,000 people were unemployed.¹

The decline of the corporate towns as cloth manufacturing centers cannot be ascribed solely to the restrictive policies of their craft gilds. Often the loss of some particular privilege, like Leominster's loss of its Saturday market, was the principal cause leading to a town's economic decline. The silting up of the river Ouse at York had much to do with decreasing York's attractiveness as a commercial and industrial center, and Beverley's decline can be traced as much to the fact that her merchants were finding it better business to deal through a port like Hull which was closer to the center of things,² as it can to the attempt of the town's gilds to stifle competition and make entrance to the gilds progressively more difficult. The heavy burden of taxation to which the corporate towns were subjected by the government, and the fact that until late in the sixteenth century no provision was made for the collection of the alnager's fee on cloths manufactured outside town walls,³ no doubt had their part in influencing weavers to seek relief in the unregulated and untaxed countryside. But if any one factor can be singled out as being most commonly responsible for the migration of weavers and clothiers away from the corporate towns during the sixteenth century, it is probably the universal

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1. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 51, M. Sellers, York in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, The English Historical Review, 1897, vol. 12, pp. 437-38, 447.
 2. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 53.
 3. 39 Eliz. c. 20.

tendency of the clothing guilds to shut out the participation of those who sought to cut in on a share of the profits that were being earned as a result of the increase in the demand for English woollen fabrics abroad.

Yet, control of the cloth industry had not everywhere passed from the corporate towns, and in one notable instance the towns were able to recoup their losses and regain the control that had been for a time in the hands of rural manufacturers. In eastern England the decline of such established textile centers as Norwich and Colchester had been particularly marked before the middle of the sixteenth century, but following the influx of Flemish weavers after 1564, the towns in this area experienced a sharp revival. In Essex for example, the cloth industry which had been distributed sporadically over the countryside tended to concentrate once again in the northern part of the county and fall into dependence on the towns of Coggeshall, Colchester, Bocking and Braintree.¹ In Devonshire, though the cloth industry had spread out into the countryside to a certain extent along the line of the rivers Exe and Culm, the hegemony of the towns never seems to have been threatened, and the direction of migration here appears to have been toward rather than away from the established cloth manufacturing centers. Leland had noted the thriving condition of Devonshire's clothing towns during the early sixteenth century, and Westcote writing of conditions in the county in 1630, complained that the expansion of the clothing industry had made the towns so populous that "there

1. Victoria County History of Essex, vol. 2, p. 386.

are left insufficient in the country to supply our corn."¹
His contemporary Risdon boasted that Devonshire was "so full of Great Towns, and these Towns so full of People, and those People so fully employ'd in useful and profitable Trades, that ... if we except London and its Neighbourhood ... it cannot in these respects be any-where equal'd in England."²

Generally however, where the initiative had not passed to country industry entirely, it arose in non-corporate towns and cities where gild organizations were non-existent or as yet not highly developed. A description of one such gild-less market town has survived and provides an excellent comparison between the traditional manufacturer of woollen cloth and a new type of clothier, unhampered by the regulations that burdened gild industry. In describing conditions in the Yorkshire woollen industry to Cecil in 1588, James Ryder extolled the clothiers of Halifax who "excel the rest in policy and industrie, for the use of their trade and groundes, and after the rude and arrogant manner of their wilde country they surpas the rest in wisdom and wealth. They despise old fashions if they can heer of a new more comodyus, rather affectinge novelties than allied to old ceremonyes ... Yt sholde seem that desier of praise and sweetnes of their dew commendacion hath begoon and mayntayned ammonge the people a natural ardency of newe inventions annexid to an unyealdinge industry ... so that yff the rest of the county wolde in this followe them but afar off, the force and

1. T. Westcote, A View of Devonshire in 1630, p. 61.

2. Quoted by W. Chapple, A Review of Risdon's Survey of Devon, p. 33.

welth of Yorkshier wolde be soon dubled."¹ By the middle of the sixteenth century the cloth industry had become firmly established in other unregulated market towns throughout England. In Yorkshire, Leeds and Wakefield along with Halifax, were gradually superceding York and Beverley in importance as cloth manufacturing centers. In Lancashire the corporate towns of Wigan, Preston and Lancaster were giving pride of place to Bolton, Bury, Rochdale and Manchester. In Suffolk towns like Hadleigh and Lavenham were taking on a new industrial importance, and in the west, while clothing centers like Bath were rapidly falling into decline, the industry had spread over the entire face of Gloucestershire and Somersetshire, and ran in a curving line down Wiltshire's Wylve valley to Salisbury.²

At first, the government attempted to deal with the problem of rural industry on a piecemeal basis. Where they were threatened, town industrial interests were shored up by acts of parliament which conferred monopoly rights for the manufacture of certain woollen fabrics to particular towns, investing in town or gild authorities the right to enforce the terms of the acts throughout adjacent country districts. In 1534 an attempt was made to arrest the development of rural industry in Worcestershire by the passage of an act which prohibited cloth to be manufactured anywhere in the county but in the towns of Evesham, Droitwich, Kidderminster, Bromsgrove and Worcester.³ Ten years later the coverlet weavers of York were protected by an act

1. Quoted by H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 77.

2. G. D. Ramsay, The Wiltshire Woollen Industry, p. 22.

3. 25 Henry VIII c. 18.

which granted them a monopoly for the manufacture of coverlets in Yorkshire, and entrusted to the wardens of the gild the responsibility for enforcing the terms of the act throughout the county.¹ In 1552 a similar monopoly for the county of Norfolk was granted to the hat and coverlet makers of Norwich,² and as a parallel illustration, the cloth finishers here had been protected since the early years of Henry VIII by an act which reserved dyeing and dressing to the city of Norwich and its suburbs.³

The insufficiency of this stop-gap type of legislation to arrest the continued drift of the cloth industry away from the corporate towns, led ultimately by the middle of the sixteenth century to parliament's attempt to substitute a national in place of a local system of regulation, under which the responsibility for enforcement was transferred from local and gild authorities to the hands of the justices of the peace. Among the reasons influencing the government to seek to maintain the economic supremacy of the corporate towns, financial ones are of course the most obvious. The government was not only heavily dependent for a large part of its revenue on the yield of the regular taxes imposed on corporate towns, but since the expansion of the woollen industry during the fifteenth century the yield from the subsidy and alnage of $4\frac{1}{2}d$ collected by the alnager at the time cloths were searched and sealed had become an increasingly important source of royal revenue, and as yet there was no

1. 35 Henry VIII c. 10.

2. 5 & 6 Edw. VI c. 24.

3. 14 & 15 Henry VIII c. 3.

machinery for the collection of the alnage on cloths manufactured in rural areas.¹ The importance of maintaining a high standard of quality in cloth production no doubt weighed heavily in influencing the government to place hindrances in the path of rural manufacturers and to promote the development of an urban industry where weavers could be kept under the strict surveillance of experienced searchers. Here the influence of the Merchant Adventurers can be felt. For the better part of a century they supplied the driving force behind a series of efforts to impose a fixed order on the woollen industry, and they were the vigorous opponents of an amorphous and widespread rural industry whose weavers studied "daily more and more ... rather to make many than good cloths."² Most important perhaps was the government's desire to maintain a sharp distinction between the town as the place of industry and the country as the place of agriculture. The concern of Tudor legislators over the extent to which a rural cloth industry was interfering with agricultural development reappears time and again in the preambles of clothing acts. Thus the act of 1557 explains that while its stringent provisions are in part designed to protect urban industry against rural manufacturers who "draw with them out of Cities, Burghes and Townes Corporate all sortes of Artificers," they are equally designed to curb the inveterate tendency of these men to "engrosse divers Fermes and Pastures into their

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1. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, pp. 129-30.
 2. 5 & 6 Edw. VI c. 6: G. Unwin, The Merchant Adventurers in the Reign of Elizabeth, The English Historical Review, 1927-28, vol. 1, pp. 50-51: see also, G. D. Ramsay, The Wiltshire Woollen Industry, pp. 123-24.

handes, displeasing the Husbandmen and decayeng the Ploughes and Tillages."¹ It was the mark that distinguished the English clothier from his town-bound European counterpart that he combined the dual functions of manufacturer and farmer. In the well known dialogue between the English and French heralds, the English clothier is characterized as a person who dwells "in great fermes abroad in the contry, havynge howses with commodities lyke unto gentrymen, where aswell they make cloth and kepe husbandry."² Particularly in western England, landed clothiers seem to have been responsible for a good deal of enclosure for sheep farming, which if it aroused the opposition of the government, rankled no less bitterly in the minds of the landed gentry who found themselves competed with in the market for wool. It was probably the attempt of the western gentry to eliminate this troublesome source of competition that was responsible for the inclusion of a clause in an act of 1575 prohibiting clothiers in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire or Somersetshire from purchasing more than twenty acres of land.³

Yet another reason - and one that is frequently overlooked - must be added to those which influenced the government in favour of re-establishing the corporate town as the center of cloth manufacture during the sixteenth century. While wool had been England's principal export, a decline in the needs of Flemish weavers or a temporary stoppage in the market would hit the purses

1. 4 & 5 P. & M. c. 5.

2. R. H. Tawney and E. Power, Tudor Economic Documents, vol. 3, p. 5; The debate between the English and French Heralds, 1549.

3. 18 Eliz. c. 16.

of the great landed proprietors of the Cotswolds and perhaps of a few smaller sheep masters in remote shires, but with the shift in emphasis from wool to cloth export after the middle of the fifteenth century, a similar stoppage in the market for cloth would have severe repercussions which would be felt by every segment of a large clothing population extending from Yorkshire to Devon. How dangerously public order in England was connected with the fortunes of the market and the vicissitudes of foreign policy had been amply demonstrated during the first half of the sixteenth century. In his attempt to raise war taxes in 1525 Wolsey dunned the opulent clothiers of Suffolk to such an extent that they dismissed their weavers, and in the resultant crisis a revolt against the government was narrowly averted. The interruption of the Netherlands' trade that followed the declaration of war against Charles V in 1528 forcibly demonstrated the fact that England's economic realities could not tolerate a capricious foreign policy. Discontent broke out among the weavers of Suffolk and the intervention of the Duke of Norfolk was required to restore order. In Kent, Sir Henry Guildford secured a promise from clothiers not to dismiss their weavers until after harvest, but like Norfolk, he warned that they could not be expected to hold out after that time.¹ There was fear of insurrection in Wiltshire, the outbreak of revolt in Somersetshire presented the holding of the assizes,² and the contagion was expected to spread to other

1. E. M. Leonard, The Early History of English Poor Relief, p. 48.
2. A. F. Pollard, Wolsey, p. 159.

counties. Order was restored only after London merchants were forced, "on pain of high displeasure,"¹ to continue to purchase cloth shipments coming into Blackwell Hall. The Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 was joined by West Riding clothiers offended by the passage of an act meant to correct the frauds in cloth manufacture to which they were so virulently addicted,² and there is little doubt that weavers appended their own grievances to the predominantly agrarian disturbances of 1549.³ It is a provocative fact that Hales, himself a member of the Enclosure Commission of 1548, though attributing the widespread outbreaks of the next year partly to ecclesiastical and partly to agrarian grievances, emphasized that in his own opinion "all these Insurrections doe stirre by occasion of all these clothiers," who lacking vent for their cloths, "assemble in companies ... and so pike one quarrell or other to stirre the power commons, that be as Idle as they, to a commocion."⁴

The unruliness of the clothing population had long rankled in the minds of contemporaries. Cecil noted that "the people that depend vppon makying of cloth ar of worss condition quyetly to be governed than the husbandmen,"⁵ and the knight in the second dialogue of the Common Weal, expressing what he alleged to be the opinion of a good many Englishmen who hankered after

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1. E. M. Leonard, loc. cit.
 2. 27 Henry VIII c. 12: R. R. Reid, The King's Council in the North, p. 129.
 3. The Common Weal of This Realm of England, ed. by E. Lamond, pp. 88-89.
 4. Ibid., pp. 21, 48, 88-89.
 5. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1547-80, p. 247, Eliz., vol. XXXV, no. 33; Memorandum on the export of wool and cloth, 1564? Printed in Tawney and Power, Tudor Economic Documents, vol. 2, pp. 45-47.

the stability that was England's when "woll weare sold over the sea vnwrought," opined that as for weavers, "it weare better theare weare none of theim in the Realme at all."¹ The fact was that things had got out of hand and the cloth industry was expanding at such a rate that it was creating something of a labor shortage in other fields; thus the Statute of Artificers explains that "by converting of so many people to clothyng, the realm lacketh not only artificers ... but also laborers for all comen workes."² To a government seeking after a stable society, steady agriculture, and conservative corporate towns, the obvious solution to this state of affairs would have been to call a halt to the further expansion of the cloth industry, turn the majority of fly-by-night weavers back to agriculture where they belonged, and replace the emphasis once again on the export of wool. Hales seemed to think that this was the goal at which the government of Edward VI was aiming, arguing rather dubiously that otherwise they would not have "dowblted the custome of cloth, nor charged all cloth made with in the realme with xii d. on every pound ... which was the very highe waie to make clothiers give vp theire occupying."³ In 1564 Cecil actually mulled over the arguments for and against cutting down the size of the cloth industry and went so far as to suggest that one solution to the problem of industrial unrest would be

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1. The Common Weal, p. 88.
 2. 5 Eliz. c. 4.
 3. The Common Weal, p. 91.

"to collect the sturdier and stronger sort of the men, and to send them into Ireland to helpe the peoplyng of the contrees ther."¹ Had such a policy been adopted it would have reversed the whole trend of a consistent policy of preferential treatment that had been extended to the cloth industry since the thirteenth century when the Oxford Parliament attempted to prevent the export of wool and require everyone to wear woollen cloth manufactured in England.² In the end, the pressure of influences weighing against such a solution were too strong. The fact that by the middle of the sixteenth century nearly one half of the total of all English customs accrued from cloth, combined with the success met with in dunning the merchants grown wealthy by its export,³ made it certain that the government would subordinate social to financial considerations.

If limiting the size of the cloth industry was an impractical solution to England's industrial problems, subjecting the future expansion of the industry to an ordered development was not, and this could best be accomplished by driving clothiers back into the corporate towns. There was no reason to think that weavers resident in towns would be any less unruly in times

1. Cal. S.P. Dom. loc. cit.

2. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 1, p. 448.

3. K. E. Barford, The Development of the West of England Woollen Industry 1550-1640, (thesis in typescript) ch. 4, p. 3, quoting Add. MSS. 18612, fol. 196; total customs paid 1567/68, amounted to £74,875-19-10. Of this amount London paid £53,701-15-1½, of which customs on cloth alone amounted to £33,894-10-1½.

of depression, but at least they would be more amenable to the control of the authorities, and in any case, the unrest would be localized. In 1557 parliament attempted at one stroke to proscribe rural industry and to re-establish the corporate towns as cloth manufacturing centers. Henceforth the manufacture of woollen cloth anywhere but in a corporate or market town where the industry had been in existence at least ten years prior to the act was declared illegal.¹

The act of 1557 was the only attempt parliament made to deal conclusively with the problem of country industry. Apart from this one indication of parliament's exasperation over the continuing exodus of the cloth industry from the corporate towns, the temper of anti-rural industrial legislation from the Weavers' Act to the Statute of Artificers was much more moderate, and a good deal more subtle. Reluctantly, parliament seems to have conceded the impossibility of immediately suppressing country cloth manufacture. Instead, an attempt was made to place hindrances in the way of the freedom that had been the compelling feature of the countryside, and by making it less difficult to engage in cloth manufacture in the town, to make it, rather than the country, the more attractive place of manufacture. The first indication of this policy stemmed from the protest of Worcester clothiers against an act of 1551 by which a seven year apprenticeship became a requirement for persons engaged in the weaving of broad woollen cloths.²

1. 4 & 5 P. & M. c. 5.
2. 5 & 6 Edw. VI c. 8.

Worcester's request for exception from the terms of the act was granted three years later, and the resulting amendment was extended to include any corporate or market town where cloth had been made before the act had become operative.¹ The Weavers' Act evidenced the same attempt to grant preferential legislation to corporate or market towns while making it less profitable to manufacture cloth in the country areas. By making it illegal for a rural weaver to derive direct or indirect profit from more than two looms, by limiting him to the employment of two apprentices, and by prohibiting clothiers from putting out work to more than one loom in rural areas, an attempt was made to strike both at the country manufacturer's previously unlimited supply of labor and at the supply of tools essential to the plying of his trade. Though the act stipulated that a clause requiring persons to serve an apprenticeship before taking up trade as a weaver was to be enforced in town and country alike, no restriction was placed upon the number of looms or apprentices clothiers or weavers might keep in corporate or market towns. The provision that those setting up as clothiers in future could do so only in corporate or market towns, reflects the air of optimism that was present in the minds of the authors of the act. Country industry, once the effects of having made it less profitable to operate there had become widely felt, was probably expected to die out and the control of the industry to revert quite naturally to the towns.²

1. 1 Mary c. 7.
2. 2 & 3 P. & M. c. 11.

It has been frequently contended that the Weavers' Act was a reflection of the government's opposition to a growing tendency of clothiers to organize cloth production on a factory basis.¹ The validity of contention is doubtful. True, the act eloquently sets forth weavers' grievances against wealthy clothiers who oppress them "by setting up and keeping in their houses divers looms" and by paying out lower wages "for the weaving and workmanship of cloth than in times past." But the preambles of Tudor statutes are often singularly mendacious and it is important to note that the act placed no restrictions on the number of looms clothiers could operate in corporate or market towns, places where factory conditions would be most likely to exist. By the time of the Weavers' Act, the era of factory magnates like Stumpe, Winchcombe, and Jack of Newbury had passed its zenith and attempts of independent capitalists to organize cloth production on a factory basis never seem to have met with more than transient success. That this was true was perhaps less due to government hostility than to the impossible demands made by town authorities on persons seeking to establish such projects. In the city of Oxford where Stumpe made his well-known attempt to industrialize Osney Abbey, he was required to pay an annual rent of £18, forbidden to sublet the Abbey to an undertenant, and obliged to provide constant work for at least two thousand persons, all of whom presumably

1. W. J. Ashley, Introduction to English Economic History and Theory, 3rd. ed. 1898, pp. 233-36: A. Clark, The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century, p. 100: H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 90.

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would be duly apprenticed. The impossibility of fulfilling the requirements of the last clause is sufficient indication of the reason the scheme met with failure.

Actually, none of the methods for relieving the destitute was adopted with great enthusiasm, or continued in favor for so long a period, as was the system of grouping large bodies of workers together to provide them with profitable employment. In a large number of instances towns confronted with the problem of finding work for the unemployed lent money to capitalist clothiers to establish what were factories in all but name.² Wherever patentees could prove that their intentions were philanthropic, grants were issued allowing the establishment of manufactories - often in contravention of the Weavers' Act in cases where the patentee intended to set up outside a corporate or market town. In 1557 a patent was granted to Humfrey Conyngesby of Hope-under-Dynmire, Herefordshire, permitting him to keep as many as forty looms, "whereby great numbers of artificers may be able to maintain themselves and their families in continual work."³ At Lincoln the attempt to establish a manufactory was undertaken with the intent of reviving the prosperity of the town. A covenant was made between

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1. Victoria County History of Oxfordshire, vol. 2, p. 244.
 2. R. H. Tawney, The Assessment of Wages in England by the Justices of the Peace, Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, 1913, p. 544.
 3. Cal. Patent Rolls 1555-57, p. 487; Grant of a patent to Humfrey Conyngesby, 1 June 1587.

the governing body and a group of clothiers, allowing them to utilize the Church of the Holy Rood as a dyeing and fulling mill. Young persons who could be proved to be living idly were to consent to work for the clothiers for a period of eight or nine years or to leave the city within a month. Though the original attempt seems to have met with failure, the plan to establish a cloth manufactory at Lincoln was revived several times in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and comparable schemes were prevalent elsewhere.¹ In 1576 the government evidenced its complete acceptance of the system by incorporating into its code for poor relief a plan whereby public stocks were to be set up for the profitable employment of the poor in cloth manufacture.²

Insofar as it concerned the cloth industry, the Statute of Artificers evidenced the same attempt as the Weavers' Act to limit the supply of labor available to cloth manufacturers in rural districts while encouraging the free extension of the industry in towns corporate. Cloth manufacturing in rural areas had been proscribed in most of the important industrial sections of the country by an act of 1557, but the act had made an important exception in the case of market towns where the industry could be proved to have been carried on for at least ten years previously.³ Now if the motive of the

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1. Hist. MSS. Comm. Report 14, App. 8, Lincoln MSS. p. 44; Covenant with the clothiers for the use of the Church of the Holy Rood, 9 Feb. 1551: *ibid.*, p. 51; failure of the experiment to set the poor on work, 6 May 1559: *ibid.*, pp. 97-8; Agreement with Gregory Lawcock for a scheme to set the poor on work, 16 Nov. 1624.
 2. 18 Eliz. c. 3.
 3. 4 & 5 P. & M. c. 5.

legislators had been to turn rural weavers back to the land and assure agriculture its necessary supply of labor, the exception in favor of the market towns was the obvious loophole whereby this purpose could be frustrated. It was probably with the intent of preventing the cloth industry in market towns from draining the surrounding countryside of its supply of agricultural labor that a clause was included in the Statute of Artificers restricting entrance to the weaver's craft in market towns to the sons of 40 shilling freeholders. No such restriction was placed in the way of persons desiring to enter the craft in towns corporate. Though entrance to the higher calling of clothier was precluded by property qualifications in corporate and market towns alike, residents of corporate towns were again treated preferentially. While clothiers' apprentices in market towns were required to be the sons of £3 freeholders, the sons of 40 shilling freeholders were free to enter the profession in corporate towns.¹ The attempt to limit the number of clothiers reflected as much the profound and widespread dislike of the ease with which opportunists took up trade as clothiers in times of brisk trade, as it did the government's desire to maintain strict distinctions between social classes, keeping persons in the station of life to which they had been born. Apart from this one restriction, nothing in the act suggests that the government sought to limit the future expansion of the cloth industry itself.

1. 5 Eliz. c. 4.

In the final analysis, a national system designed to arrest the exodus of weavers and clothiers from the established manufacturing centers had been developed too late to have any appreciable affect upon the geographical location of the cloth industry. The fate of the act of 1557 shows how quickly legislation gave way before a fait accompli. Even at the time of drafting, the legislators were obliged to concede that special conditions of manufacture in such clothing areas as Cornwall, Suffolk, Kent, parts of Yorkshire, and in Gloucestershire's Stroudwater area, justified their exemption from the terms of an act which would prohibit woollen cloth to be woven anywhere but in corporate or market towns. A provision that cloth making was to be put down even in these exempted areas except where it had been practiced for at least twenty years previously¹ was a hollow threat. In no case could there have been any effective means of enforcing the proscription without an administrative system a good deal more efficient than one which relied on the voluntary service of overworked justices of the peace; often themselves clothiers, and therefore understandably reluctant to enforce legislation inimical to their own interests. Long before it was repealed by James I anti-monopoly parliament,² the act of 1557 had become a dead letter. The first parliament of Elizabeth had been obliged to amend it to permit rural weavers to operate in certain parts of Essex,³ and when in 1575

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1. 4 & 5 P. & M. c. 5.
 2. 21 Jas. I c. 28.
 3. 1 Eliz. c. 14.

"An Acte for the Tolleracion of certeyne Clothyers in the Countyes of Wiltes, Somerset and Gloucester to inhabite out of Townes Corporate,"¹ passed onto the statute books, this relaxation in favor of the three principal cloth manufacturing counties of the kingdom, amounted in fact to the act's abandonment as a factor in government policy.

More clearly than most men, Hales realized that the corporate towns had irretreviably lost the initiative to country industry and he saw the futility of attempting to turn back the clock by the passage of legislation designed to obstruct the development of the cloth industry in rural districts. Yet he was convinced that England's prosperity depended upon the vigor of her corporate towns, and he thought their vitality could best be revived by accommodating their industrial organization to the new circumstances, reconstituting the corporate town as a regulatory center exercising control over the cloth industry in surrounding country districts. His ideas were expressed concisely in the Common Weal: "every artificer dwellinge owte of all townes, such as can not for the commoditie of their occupacions be brought to some towne to inhabite, as fullers, tanners, clothiers, suche should be limited to be vnder the correction of one good towne or other; and they to sell no wares, but suche as are first approved and sealed by the towne that they are limited vnto. And by these ... meanes ... oure townes might be brought sounne to their auncient wealthe againe, or better."²

1. 18 Eliz. c. 16.

2. The Common Weal, pp. 130-31.

There was nothing new in Hales' proposal. In Norfolk for example, country industry had been of long standing and in the fifteenth century agreement of the type suggested by Hales had been reached between town and country weavers employed in manufacturing worsteds. By an act of 1441 control of the industry in both town and country, together with the right of search, was given to four wardens elected by the town weavers who were authorized to appoint two deputies for the supervision of country industry.¹ Three years later the country weavers gained the right to appoint their own wardens and an equitable solution to town and country industrial rivalry was achieved.² Such a solution was of a kind to appeal to the government with its belief in the absolute necessity of maintaining a high standard of quality in cloth production, and attempts to extend the authority of towns to comprise rural producers were frequently made during the sixteenth century, and became especially prevalent under the early Stuarts.

Of the two methods employed in attempting to bring rural industry under town control, each was promoted by a special group and for distinctly different purposes. In the first, the initiative was generally taken by handicraftsmen, or at least by producers in towns, with the object of extending gild control to comprise the unorganized rural weaver, that a serious source of competition might be overcome. Authority to extend gild control beyond town boundaries could be granted only by

1. 20 Henry VI c. 10.
2. 23 Henry VI c. 10.

royal charter, and it should be noticed that town magistrates¹ generally opposed gild attempts to obtain extra-mural powers.

Examples of the first type are particularly numerous. Sometimes as at Reading, the authority of the weavers' gild was extended to include the suburbs only.² More often gild control was imposed in a wide arc several miles beyond town limits. In 1603 the justices in Quarter Sessions gave the weavers' companies of Wiltshire a measure of control over all weavers within three miles of corporate towns.³ Similarly in 1637 the gilds of London were given power to incorporate all artificers inhabiting within three miles of the metropolis,⁴ while earlier at Lincoln, control of rural industry within a radius of twelve miles was invested in the weavers' gild of the town.⁵ In other cases geographical limits were made indefinite, and in the eastern clothing counties Colchester,⁶ Bury St. Edmunds,⁷ and Ipswich,⁸ all exercised supervisory powers over the

1. F. J. Fisher, Some Experiments in Company Organization in the Early Seventeenth Century, The Economic History Review, 1933, p. 181.
2. Cal. Patent Rolls 1558-60, p. 283; Grant for the survey and correction of the cloth makers, 23 Sept. 1560.
3. Hist. MSS. Comm. Various Coll., vol. 1, p. 75; Orders agreed upon for the occupation of weavers, 1603.
4. R. Steele, Bibliography of Tudor and Stuart Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 209, no. 1741; Incorporation of Artificers inhabiting within three miles of London, 24 Feb. 1637, (hereafter referred to as Steele, Proclamations).
5. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 28, n. 2.
6. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1619-23, p. 144, Jas. I, vol. CXV, no. 28; Bailiffs of Colchester to the Council, 13 May 1620.
7. Ibid., p. 126, Jas. I, vol. CXII, no. 105; Sir Henry Hobart, Sir Julius Caesar, Sir Thomas Edmondes to the Council, 26 Feb. 1620.
8. Ibid., p. 120, Jas. I, vol. CXII, nos. 62, 63; Petition of the clothiers and merchants of Ipswich to the Council, 4 Feb. 1620.

textile industry in their adjacent country districts. In at least two instances gild control was extended to comprise entire counties. Thus in 1631, the dornix weavers of Norwich were given control over craftsmen employed in their branch of the industry over the whole of Suffolk and Essex,¹ while in 1637, the worsted combers of Exeter extended their sway over all Devonshire.²

The second method bound rural producers to channel their cloths through corporate towns. By acts of parliament specific towns were given the authority to serve as regulatory, or cloth finishing centers for entire textile districts. An act of 1555 prohibited cloth manufactured anywhere in Somersetshire to be put to sale before it had been searched and sealed in one of the three towns of Taunton, Bridgewater, or Chard.³ After 1524 no worsted cloth of Norfolk manufacture was to be exported before it had been dyed and dressed at Norwich,⁴ and later it was made illegal to export cloths made in Kent and Suffolk before they had been completely dyed and dressed in towns.⁵ From 1553 Devonshire's makers of white or pinned "straights" who plied their crafts in rural districts were enjoined to carry their products to the nearest borough for fulling and dressing before

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1. F. J. Fisher, Some Experiments in Company Organization in the Early Seventeenth Century, The Economic History Review, 1933, p. 183.
 2. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1637, p. 381, Chas. I, vol. CCCXLI, no. 15; Petition of the worsted combers of Devon to the Council, 22 Aug. 1637.
 3. 2 & 3 P. & M. c. 12.
 4. 14 & 15 Henry VIII c. 3.
 5. 8 Eliz. c. 6.

shipping them to a port,¹ and in 1594 the terms of the act were extended to include Devonshire kerseys.²

It was undoubtedly the commercial, or trading elements in corporate towns in whose interests such legislation was gained.³ Profiting from the sale of the products of a low cost rural industry, their interests were quite distinct from those of the gilds. As long as the trading monopoly of the townsmen was unchallenged it was to their interest that the cloth industry should be as widespread as possible. But during the sixteenth century they were faced with the increasing competition of the itinerant trader operating in the countryside, placing himself between the weaver and the town trader, bringing the country maker into direct communication with the larger channels of commerce. Unable to compete with capital operating from a distance, the town trader fell back on local privilege and sought legislation which would reconstitute to town as a regulatory center, that the bulk of the products of country manufacture would again be made to pass through his hands.⁴ The

1. 7 Edw. VI c. 9.

2. 35 Eliz. c. 10.

3. This is particularly evident in the act just cited. The magistrates, who were generally traders, clothiers, or both, were entrusted with enforcing the terms of the act. On the commercial interests of magistrates see Unwin, Industrial Organization, p. 75. For magistrates as clothiers, see W. S. The Golden Fleece, (1656) pp. 41, 91. The cleavage in gilds which left traders in control of town councils is noted by Willcox, Gloucestershire 1590-1640, pp. 144-45.

4. G. Unwin, Industrial Organization in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, pp. 86, 87-88, 90.

struggle between the London and provincial traders is one of the most well-trodden of historical themes, and it was given considerable amplification by Unwin. But research has greatly modified the validity of Unwin's interpretation of one phase of this struggle. Unwin contended that the town draper to gain legislation preferential to his interests, took advantage of the prevailing sentiment against the export of unfinished goods, invested his capital in the finishing industries with the intention of keeping the final stages of manufacture under town control, and thereby sought to eliminate the competition of the itinerant trader.¹ Until the exhaustive investigations of Miss Kramer revealed that commercial capital rarely nourished the finishing industries,² this view went largely undisputed. Working from Kramer's investigations Marshall has advanced the suggestive and probably valid thesis, that where an alliance did exist between the town trader and the cloth finisher, the alliance was a loose one whose obligations, owing to the lack of demand for finished cloth, the trader would avoid whenever possible.³ The trader's prime interest was and remained, the control of the market for cloth.

It is possible that another aspect of Unwin's argument might be challenged.

1. Ibid., p. 90.

2. S. Kramer, The English Craft Gilds, pp. 88, 106.

3. T. H. Marshall, Capitalism and the Decline of the English Gilds, The Cambridge Historical Journal, 1929-31, vol. 3, pp. 29-32.

It was Professor Unwin's view that the struggle between town and country was primarily due, not to the rivalry of craftsmen, but of their employers. As he saw it, the town clothier, unable to compete with the rural employer's vast supply of cheap and unregulated labor, exploited the government's antipathy to country industry and secured legislation prejudicial to the interests of the country clothier.¹

Unwin cited the Weavers' Act as a case in point. It will be recalled that the act prohibited rural clothiers and weavers from owning or operating more than one or two looms respectively, while both were limited to the employment of two apprentices. No such restrictions were made to apply to towns, and if successfully enforced, the act would have had the effect of driving the cloth industry back to town - and to gild control.²

The act would also have been prejudicial to the interests of a good many - probably the majority - of "town" clothiers. The evidence would seem to indicate that the clothier, resident in the towns, putting out work to rural weavers, was a normal feature of industrial organization by the middle of the sixteenth century. Lipson has cited numerous examples where clothiers had been putting out a great part of their work to rural weavers since the early fifteenth century.³ In the east, the clothiers of Ipswich were apparently giving the bulk of their work to rural weavers, for in 1590 the town council, as a poor relief measure, ordered clothiers to put out no more than half of their

1. G. Unwin, Industrial Organization, pp. 91-92.

2. 2 & 3 P. & M. c. 11.

3. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 1, pp. 502-03.

work, if, they could get it as well done in the town.¹ The weavers of Coventry fought a long and futile battle before the Council to prevent the clothiers and drapers of their city from contracting with weavers in distant Gloucestershire,² and in the west, the principal seat of the industry, the majority of opulent clothiers resided in towns and put out their work to a widely scattered industry.³ How many Wiltshire clothiers would have voted for the Weavers' Act is a pregnant question!

Contemporaries are quite clear on the point that in the majority of instances, the magistrates of clothing towns were clothiers.⁴ Now if we are correct in concluding that "town" clothiers were putting out work to country weavers on a wide scale in the sixteenth century, this in part helps to explain why magistrates in the provinces were in almost common opposition to the attempt of the clothing gilds to gain royal charters which extend gild authority several miles beyond town boundaries.

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1. Unwin, op. cit., p. 87.
 2. Victoria County History of Warwickshire, vol. 2, p. 255: Cal. S.P. Dom. 1619-23, p. 413, Jas. I, vol. CXXXI, no. 80; Order in Council regarding the petition of the clothiers of Coventry, 27 June 1622: ibid., 1627-28, p. 203, Chas. I, vol. LXVI, no. 3; Mayor of Coventry to the Council, 1 June 1627: ibid. 1625-49, p. 256, Chas. I, vol. DXXVII, no. 97; Causes in contention between the weavers and drapers of Coventry, 1627?
 3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1633-34, pp. 164-66, Chas. I, vol. CCXLIV, no. 1; Sir Wm. Jones, Sir Thos. Trevor, justices of assize for co. Gloucester to the Council, 1 Aug. 1633.
 4. W. S. The Golden Fleece, (1656) pp. 41, 91.

The officers of the Chester's drapers gild were imprisoned when they spoke of obtaining such a grant, and the charters of the Reading weavers and the Ipswich lothworkers were all cancelled or revised after a struggle before the Council and the courts.¹ In opposing them, town magistrates generally alleged, interference with the workings of local government, as the grounds for their hostility to "under-corporations,"² but it is quite possible that their real reason for complaint, was their desire to avoid any raising of the cost of country labor which would follow as an inevitable consequence once gild authority had been imposed. For the same reason, they would have opposed legislation similar to the Weavers' Act, which would have the effect of driving the cloth industry back into towns where it would be amenable to gild control.

Ramsay perhaps, is much nearer to the truth than Unwin was when he suggests, that the two protagonists of industrial strife were not divided geographically as "town" and "country" clothier, but on the more or less horizontal lines of large versus small employer.³ No doubt the struggle between the smaller gild clothiers in towns and the opulent employers, who as the French herald noted, dwelled "in great fermes abroad in the contry" was an important factor in the rivalry between town and country industry, and this part of the conflict is

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1. F. J. Fisher, Some Experiments in Company Organization in the Early Seventeenth Century, The Economic History Review, 1933, pp. 181-82.
 2. Ibid., p. 182.
 3. G. D. Ramsay, The Wiltshire Woollen Industry, p. 140.

demonstrated quite clearly in Worcestershire. According to its preamble, the act of 1534 which gives a manufacturing monopoly to the clothing towns of Worcester, Evesham, Kidderminster, and Bromsgrove, has been granted in favor of the clothiers who have "sett aworke the pore people of the same citie, borowes and townes," to defend their interests against the clothiers "dwelling in the hamletts, throps and villages adjoyning."¹ But this is the only instance in which an outright manufacturing monopoly covering an entire county was conferred in favor of clothiers proper. Much more important in the rivalry between town and country, was the struggle for the control of the market for rural manufactures, the rivalry between town and country weavers, and finally, the struggle between town magistrates and the gilds within the towns themselves.

The extension of gild authority to comprise rural districts, or attempts the channel the products of rural industry through corporate towns, had little effect in helping to improve the quality of English cloth. It was a common experience, for example, in cases where the rural weaver was brought under gild control, that the gild used its privileges as a means of extorting money and neglected its primary business of searching and sealing cloths.² Contemporaries made no exception in favor of towns when they complained of the widespread neglect of the clothing laws. Yet most men would have agreed with May that

1. 25 Henry VIII c. 18.

2. For complaints of extortion and tyranny on the part of the gilds, see the Victoria County History of Suffolk, vol. 2, p. 264.

"the dispersing of clothiers and makers is a principall cause to breed these defects," and that the only practical solution was to drive the products of rural weavers into towns where they could be subjected to the scrutiny of experienced search-¹ers. The persistence of the idea finally bore fruit in the reign of James I in a grandiose project which would reorganize the system for regulating the cloth industry in thirty-two counties. But that belongs more properly to the history of state regulation, the subject of the next chapter.

1. J. May, A Declaration of the Estate of Clothing, (1613) pp. 41-42.

CHAPTER III

THE STATE AND THE REGULATION OF A STANDARD OF QUALITY
1550-1640.

In a passage at once eloquent and quixotic, Hales instructed the members of the Enclosure Commission of 1548 in the degree of reverence for the laws it was their right, as representatives of the government, to expect of his majesty's subjects.

"For every good man wil direct his study to observe the laws, rather then break them and say to himself thus, I know the makers of these laws meant good to the commonwealth. Men be but men, they cannot se al things; they be no gods, they cannot make things perfect. Therefore I will rather do that they meant, altho' without danger of the law I might do otherwise, and I will withal my heart do good to my country, albeit it be against my private profit, rather than hurt it."¹

Few men would have denied the merits of a concept of society which held it as the reasonable duty of each man to subordinate his personal interests to the common good, but few were optimistic enough to imagine that the ideal could be translated into reality. As indicated by the prevalence with which laws designed to regulate the quality of woollen manufactures were ignored, a high sense of duty toward the state was not among the virtues of the age, "For as there be many good men that take great pains to study to devise good laws for the commonwealth; so be there a great many, that do with as great pains and study, labour to defeat them, and as the common saying is, to find gapps and starting holes."²

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1. R. H. Tawney and E. Power, Tudor Economic Documents, vol. 1, pp. 412: Hales' Instructions to the Enclosure Commission, 1548.
2. Ibid., p. 41.

The insistence of church and state that there was a motive worthier of attainment than one's personal profit failed notably to impress clothiers and weavers who violated statutory requirements whenever business enterprise or the opportunity for private gain was hindered by the laws made for the common weal. Much of the responsibility for the inveterate tendency of weavers and clothiers to violate the law must inevitably rest with parliament itself. Despite the increased liberality of the cloth laws after 1552, as parliament became aware that the cloth industry was much too flexibly organized to be saddled with a law intended to "remayne firme and perfecte foreuer,"¹ parliament seems sometimes to have been unaware that a man could not "cast a cloth in a mould,"² and often enacted statutes with whose requirements it would have been beyond the abilities of weavers of the greatest integrity to comply.

From the time the wool left the sheep's back until it was placed as a finished cloth in the hands of the consumer, the smallest details of manufacture and sale were meticulously provided for. Growers of wool are to sell only to the Merchants of the Staple of Calais or to the clothier for conversion into cloth, and not to the wool brogger³ who does not come to his profession by the customary path of apprenticeship, and "lacking skill to deal honorably ... seeks gain by devious means,"⁴ and drives up the price of wool. The spinner in converting the wool to thread shall employ a standard reel "one yard about" and every knot

1. 5 & 6 Edw. VI c. 6.

2. E. Misselden, Free Trade (1622) p. 43.

3. 5 & 6 Edw. VI c. 7.

4. W. Scott, An Essay on Drapery (1635) pp. 144-5.

shall have exactly eighty threads.¹ When the cloth is taken from the loom the weaver is to see to it that it complies with specific statutory dimensions, being twenty-three yards long, seven quarters in breadth, and sixty pounds in weight,² and he shall not stretch it upon a tenter when it comes shrunken from the fulling mill.³ The nap is to be raised only with teazels and not with wire cards upon a gig-mill which "maketh the cloth to wear ill and quickly wear out."⁴ If the cloth is to be dyed then it shall be "boyled greyned or madered upon the wood and shotte with good and sufficient Corke or Orchall"⁵ and not with logwood whose pigment will not sustain the first shower of rain. When finished, the cloth is to be put to sale only in open fairs and markets,⁶ or if it is to be transported overseas, the cloth is to be handled only by authorized merchants and not by interlopers. For interlopers are not content to trade honorably as mere merchants do, but hawk their wares from house to house and "vile the principalest commodity of the realm."⁷

The provision of a specific scale of dimensions and weights for cloth manufacture was a convenient means of simplifying the task of the Customer who could thereby always exact the same amount of revenue for the same quantity and quality of woollen

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1. Steele, Bibliography of Tudor and Stuart Proclamations, vol. 1, pp. 207-08, no. 1728: Surveying of a Standard Reel to be used by all Clothiers, 9 July 1636.
 2. 5 & 6 Edw. VI c. 6.
 3. 43 Eliz. c. 10.
 4. 5 & 6 Edw. VI c. 22.
 5. 24 Henry VIII c. 2.
 6. 34 & 35 Henry VIII c. 10.
 7. J. Wheeler, A Treatise on Commerce (1601) p. 55.

cloth.¹ Hence in enjoining weavers to produce their cloths according to specific statutory dimensions, the government was naturally influenced by financial considerations. As early as 1303 the government had been exacting a customs duty of 1s. on every undyed cloth exported by aliens. By 1347 the volume of cloth exports had become large enough for the government to require the payment of cloth customs by denizens, and in that year English merchants began to pay 1s. 2d. for every undyed cloth they exported.² Both the customs rates of 1303 and 1347 were piece rates unvarying whether the cloths were short or long, but the diversification of cloth manufacture during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries led to the formation of a scale of equivalents by which cloths became subject to varying customs duties as their dimensions varied from those of the standard cloth of assize.³ By the end of the fifteenth century the customs on cloth had been standardized and English merchants were paying only 14d. customs for every undyed cloth they exported, while at the same time they were no longer subject to the payment of the subsidy on cloth.⁴ The alnager had however, already exacted a subsidy of 4d. from the clothier before the cloth came to the merchant's hands, and as the cloth industry expanded during the fifteenth century the revenue from this source became an important part of the royal income.⁵

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1. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 125.
 2. N.S.B. Gras, The Early English Customs System, pp. 72-3, 85-7.
 3. Ibid, pp. 126-7: Cloth of assize, 27 Edw. III c. 4.
 4. N.S.B. Gras, The Early English Customs System, Appendix B., pp. 690-693. A survey of the Customs at the end of the fifteenth century.
 5. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 129.

Nevertheless, the total charges on cloth were far less than those levied on wool exports by the beginning of the sixteenth century. Since 1275 wool exporters had been paying a permanent customs duty of 6s. 8d., and regularly in addition from 1465, a subsidy of 33s. 8d.¹ on every sack of wool they exported. The customs and subsidy from wool had constituted one of the greatest single sources of revenue available to the crown, but throughout the fifteenth century wool exports had been gradually falling off until by 1500, the Netherlands' wool market had been all but lost.² The Merchant Staplers Company, who controlled wool exports, were not slow to point out the glaring disparity between the amount of customs and subsidy levied on wool as compared to cloth. They estimated that the 100,000 cloths exported annually by the Merchant Adventurers consumed 24,000 sacks of wool, but paid only a meager £5,833 6s. 8d. into the exchequer. Had this wool been exported as raw material by the Staplers, the exchequer would have been refreshed by £48,000.³

The Staplers' information could hardly have been a revelation to the government. But if the logical step was taken, now that cloth had superceded wool as England's principal export, of increasing the customs on cloth to an equality with the customs and subsidy on wool, there was the danger that the increased rates would be more than the market could safely bear. Mary's policy of taxing cloth indirectly by borrowing heavily from the Merchant Adventurers,⁴ and forcing them to take sterling at a

1. N.S.B. Gras, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-66.

2. E. E. Rich, The Ordinance Book of the Merchants of the Staple, p. 19.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

4. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1553-58, p. 30: Names of persons lending money to the Queen, 25 Nov. 1553: *ibid.*, pp. 211-12: Gresham to the Queen, 24 Feb. 1556.

fictitious rate in return for the bills of exchange the company brought from Antwerp in Flemish currency, had resulted in heavy losses to the merchants and there had been attendant unemployment in the clothing counties.¹ Knowing this, the government was inclined to proceed cautiously.

According to statutory requirements a short cloth of assize should weigh 60 pounds, and in manufacturing four such cloths, the weaver used one sack of wool weighing 364 pounds. As long as the customs were fixed at 14d. for the short cloth, and allowing for a 1/3 loss by weight of wool in converting the wool to cloth, the four cloths were subject only to a combined customs of 4s. 8d. If the same amount of wool had been exported by the Staplers, 40s. would have been collected by the Customer.² Had it chosen to break down the disparity entirely, the government was presented with a first-rate excuse for doing so when the fall of Calais deprived England of her established continental outlet for wool. Though Mary contemplated adding the additional 8s. 10d. to the existing customs duties on cloth, her Council advised against it. In the issue of the new Book of Rates of 1558, new official values were placed on all goods subject to an ad valorem duty. Cloth was made subject to a specific piece rate, computed from the comparative weights of the wool-sack and the cloth of assize, and the increase amounted to 5s. 6d. over and above the 14d. previously paid.³

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1. W. R. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, vol. 1, pp. 25-27.
 2. A. Friis, Alderman Cockayne's Project and the Cloth Trade, Appendix A., no. 2, pp. 434-38: Extract from the first patent of the pretermitted customs, 4 Nov. 1618.
 3. Ibid., p. 436.

In 1584 Elizabeth increased the customs on cloth again, adding 13 1/3d. to the 6s. 8d. due from short cloths since 1558, and increasing the customs on long cloths by 2s. 2 2/3d.¹ It is significant that she did so with the apparent approval of the Merchant Adventurers, enticed perhaps by being allowed to export every tenth cloth free as a wrapper,² and there is no recorded parliamentary opposition.³ When the extreme financial difficulties faced by the government during the sixteenth century are taken into account, the customs on cloth are remarkable for their moderation. Customs were apparently rated only as high as the government, in consultation with the merchants, thought that cloth could reasonably bear. Nor were the rates to remain inviolate if good cause could be shown for altering them. When the Newcastle merchants along with those of the western counties, protested that 6s. 8d. was too heavy an impost on low priced fabrics made from coarse wools, their case was referred to the Lord Treasurer upon whose recommendation 2s. was deducted from all coarse northern cloths, every fifth cloth being allowed to pass as a wrapper.⁴

If the moderate charges on cloth were an indication of the government's care for the continued welfare of the trade, then the clothier must evidence the same scrupulous regard for the commonweal and produce cloths whose uniform standard of excellence would assure their ready sale. Most contemporaries had an enduring faith that trading prosperity could be assured if a high

1. Ibid., p. 436.

2. Ibid., p. 50 and note.

3. N.S.B. Gras, The Early English Customs System, pp. 91-3, 129.

4. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, pp. 170-171.

standard of manufacture was maintained. Those who sought causes for English trade depressions during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries generally were in essential agreement that the principal cause stemmed from the frauds in cloth manufacture to which English weavers seemed so hopelessly addicted. Thus, in 1552 at a time when efforts were being made to re-establish government control over the cloth industry, fast migrating away from the urban manufacturing centers, parliament passed a comprehensive clothing bill which was to serve as the industry's code of ethics for the succeeding half century.¹ In drafting the bill the committee acknowledged the excellence of the previous cloth laws but was prepared to concede that a part of the reason they had not been scrupulously observed was that the great number of them probably made it difficult for clothiers to determine what the law was in many points. The legislators were however painfully aware that there were many clothiers who out of "extreame covetousnes ... havinge more respecte to their private comoditie and gayne then the advauncement of truthe and the contynuanee of the comoditie in estymacon ...," wilfully violated the laws. Parliament found that the number of "subtill sleights and untruths" practiced by these men defied belief and proceeded to list the more obnoxious ones.

Often the waste ends of wool and yarn rubbish or other inferior materials were woven into the cloth. Wools of varying standards of quality were often mingled together producing a cloth of uneven weave. Sometimes the cloths were removed from the fulling mill before they had been fully thicked, or they were placed upon tenters and stretched to excessive lengths.² Though such

1. 5 & 6 Edw. VI c. 6.
2. 5 & 6 Edw. VI c. 6.

abuses might escape the overseers of cloth, they would become quite evident to the unlucky purchaser after continued wear.

"If a gentleman make a liverie for his man," wrote one critic, "in the first showre of raine it may fit his Page for Bignesse."¹

In an effort to remedy these violations the bill provided specific lengths and breadths for twenty-two varieties of cloth with the exact amount of wool to be used in each. No cloth was to be tentered more than a yard in length or a quarter in breadth, makers of short cloths were to be fined, and faulty cloths confiscated. Refusing to compromise, parliament stated that the new law was "to remayne fyrme and pfecte notwithstandinge any suggestions hereafter to be made by any Clothier or Clothworker to the contrarie as they have in like cases heretofore done."²

Yet in attempting to enforce the cloth laws the government was forced to compromise. The Privy Council whose influence pervaded all phases of economic life was quite aware that particular circumstances often required that a statute be liberally interpreted or completely disregarded. It was aware that the Yorkshire justices were not enforcing the law prohibiting northern clothiers from tentering their cloths. The Council, ever ready to consider justifiable complaints, enquired of the justices whether they had some particular knowledge why the statute should not be enforced.³ Similarly, the clothiers of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex complained that it was impossible always to produce cloths weighing sixty-four pounds as required by the statute. A proclamation was issued

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1. J. May, The True Estate of Clothing in the Realm, (1613) p. 24.
 2. 5 & 6 Edw. VI c. 6.
 3. Acts of the Privy Council 1600-01, p. 78: Council to Sheriff and Justices of Yorkshire, 22 Jan. 1601.

allowing cloths from these counties to pass the searcher's seal if they weighed at least sixty pounds. The Council, wishing to encourage adherence to the provisions of the statute, was prepared to extend privileges to clothiers who kept them. Hence, clothiers from these counties who continued to produce cloths in accordance with the statutory requirements were to be exempt from the obnoxious trial of their cloths by water at Blackwell Hall.¹ Parliament too, was obliged to concede the impossibility of forcing clothiers to adhere to an unaltering statutory scale in manufacturing their cloths. Though western weavers had "endeavored themselves according to the ... Statutes in everie of their Clothes ..." they were meeting with scant success and requested statutory revisions to bring the laws into closer compliance with industrial realities. Reluctantly, parliament passed amendments to apply in Wiltshire, Somersetshire, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire.²

It is difficult to determine when clothiers had a genuine grievance in complaining that the cloth laws set impossible standards, or when they alleged the impracticability of the cloth laws as a mere pretext for violating them. Parliament sought to regulate wisely, if too well, and the Commons Journals show conclusively that the committees appointed to consider cloth legislation were always formed from the burgesses of the clothing towns and that these generally called clothiers into consultation. As actually applied, the clothing regulations were remarkably flexible, the government constantly showing its willingness to adapt the laws to suit particular local conditions of manufacture. Yet the

1. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 90, no. 824; Mitigation of strictness of certain points in statutes, 13 March 1590.
2. 27 Eliz. c. 17.

clothiers remained refractory. Leake pointed out that though the clothing act of 1552 had been mitigated "in all poyntes that (the clothiers) could reasonabley require..." violations of the cloth laws continued unabated. "I am fullie of opinion," he concluded, "that generallie for all clothes the lawes were never yett observed in any place within the realme."¹

The problem that down to 1640 continually frustrated the best efforts of the government in regulating the cloth industry, was the lack of an effective machinery for coercing manufacturers into compliance with the cloth laws. In the sixteenth century, a mere vestige of the original machinery for cloth regulation remained. The cloth industry had been the first to merit the appointment of a royal official, and from 1323 the alnager had been entrusted with the responsibility for enforcing the cloth laws. Yearly, he was obliged to submit to the exchequer a complete list of the statutory violations he had discovered.² By the sixteenth century he had become primarily an agent of the exchequer whose duty was to collect the 4d. subsidy due from the clothier on every whole white cloth.³ When, after 1537 clothiers were permitted to seal their cloths themselves,⁴ whatever remaining obligations the alnager had in certifying the quality of fabrics were in

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1547-80, p. 539, Eliz., vol. CXI, no. 38: Leake's treatise on the cloth industry, ? Feb. 1577: printed in Tawney and Power, Tudor Economic Documents, vol. 3, pp. 210-25.
 2. 16 Edw. II, 1323.
 3. Acts of the Privy Council 1591, p. 98: Proceedings in Council, 2 May 1591: Cal. S.P. Dom. 1591-94, p. 337, Eliz., vol. CCLIV, no. 106: An act to explain statutes on sealing of cloth, ? March 1593.
 4. 27 Henry VIII, c. 12.

effect removed and the office gave way to increasing speculation. The alnager compounded with clothiers who purchased his seals by the thousands, or he used his office as a vehicle for extortion.¹ Already the office had become the sinecure of patentees it was to remain under the Stuarts.²

Though the alnagers had failed to perform their searching duties, when left to itself the cloth industry was not without a means of maintaining the calibre of its products. It was well known that in foreign markets the cloth mark of a particular town or clothier was accepted as sufficient indication that the cloth would be of high quality.³ Such marks were often passed on through succeeding generations in clothing families,⁴ and how jealously guarded is indicated by the fact that in 1590 Flemish weavers at Halstead left the town rather than submit to an order which would have permitted English weavers there to seal their cloths with the Flemings' marks.⁵ Parliament regarded the cloth mark as a convenient device for encouraging clothiers to improve the quality of their fabrics and enjoined their use by all

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1640-41, p. 369, Chas. I, vol. CCCCLXXV, no. 61; Petition of drapers and clothiers of Lancaster to the Council, 1640?
 2. The patent for the alnage was held after 1605 by the Duke of Lennox, Cal. S.P. Dom. 1603-10, p. 233, Jas. I, vol. XV, no. 60: Letters patent to the Duke of Lennox, 16 Sept. 1605. Later it was held by his wife, Acts of the Privy Council, 1625-26, p. 117: Warrant to the Duchess of Richmond and Lennox, 9 July 1625.
 3. The Common Weal of This Realm of England, ed. by E. Lamond, p. 77.
 4. W. B. Willcox, Gloucestershire 1590-1640, p. 167 and note.
 5. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1547-80, p. 697, Eliz., vol. CXLVI, no. 63: Halstead's request for the return of Dutch Bay makers, 1580: printed in Tawney and Power, Tudor Economic Documents, vol. 1, pp. 319-20.

clothiers in 1536 and repeated the order several times thereafter.¹ In addition to its appeal to the clothiers' sense of personal pride, parliament attempted to incite in clothiers a sense of responsibility to the crown for maintaining the quality of their cloths, and a statute of 1550 required that as a symbol of quality, the sovereign's initial surmounted by a crown be woven into each cloth.² Two years later parliament was obliged to admit that the respect of many clothiers for their sovereign's reputation was about on a par with their respect for his cloth laws, for clothiers had had no qualms in weaving into faulty cloths "the lykenes and simylitude of the Kinge his Highnes most noble and Ympiall Crowne, and also the firste ltre of his name, which shoulde be testimonye of truthe and not a defense of untruthe ..."³

Such measures could at best have had a limited effect, and they could in no case have assured that rigid adherence to the clothing laws which London merchants believed to be essential to the well being of their markets. By the middle of the sixteenth century the organization of the industry was rapidly changing as the center of manufacture shifted from the corporate towns to the rural areas, and the power of the guilds to control the quality of manufactures declined. Since the expanding cloth industry had become more heavily dependent upon the fortunes of the market at Antwerp, and had had recent experience with depressions in the cloth trade which contemporaries always tended to attribute largely to faulty cloth manufacture, it is not surprising that parliament

1. 14 & 15 Henry VIII, c. 3: 26 Henry VIII, c. 16: 27 Henry VIII, c. 12.

2. 3 & 4 Edw. VI, c. 2: 5 & 6 Edw. VI, c. 6: 4 & 5 P&M, c. 5.

3. 5 & 6 Edw. VI, c. 6.

should seek to build up a new machinery for the enforcement of the clothing laws. In 1550 a bill was passed by which overseers of cloth were to be appointed by the justices of the peace in the clothing towns.¹ Two years later the responsibility of appointment was shifted from the justices to the chief officers of every town, the new officials now termed searchers, were given the right to search, measure and seal all cloths to be put to sale and to confiscate those which did not conform to statutory requirements.²

The efficiency of this system of search was weakened from its inception since it did not provide for the search of cloths manufactured outside the corporate towns, and by 1552 the center of the industry had shifted irretrievably to the country. Moreover, much of the force of the new machinery was lost when the appointment of the searchers was placed in the hands of the town magistrates, often clothiers themselves, who would not allow searchers to enforce regulations which were thought to be against the magistrates' industrial interests.³ Contemporaries were as unanimous in condemning the cloth searchers as they had been in condemning the alnagers, and generally the searchers were charged with the wholesale distribution of their seals to clothiers.⁴ Nevertheless the searchers' occupation was by no means an

1. 3 & 4 Edw. VI, c. 2.

2. 5 & 6 Edw. VI, c. 6.

3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1547-80, p. 539, Eliz., vol. CXI, no. 38: Leake's treatise on the cloth industry, ? Feb. 1577.

4. E. Misselden, Free Trade (1622), p. 43: for the Searchers' reputation see J. E. Neale, The Elizabethan House of Commons, p. 387, quoting a member in the parliament of 1585: "He that spake first, his tale deserves the less credit, because I can show it him in writing, for he hath it from the searchers ... I prefer the clothier before the searcher, and the truth before them both."

enviable one. Though the searchers might, like those of Somersetshire be assiduous in bringing presentments to Quarter Sessions against clothiers who had unduly stretched and strained their cloths,¹ they can hardly be blamed for laxity in the performance of their duties if, like the searchers in London, they were often hindered in their tasks by clothiers who kept their doors locked and set their servants and mastiffs upon them when they tried to force entry.² It is unlikely that when search was extended to comprise cloth manufactured in the country districts it was any more effective.³ The responsibility for the appointment of rural searchers was given to the already overworked justices of the peace who, like the town magistrates were often themselves considerable clothiers. In weighing their personal interests against those of the government many justices perhaps decided, as did Nathaniel Stephens of Gloucestershire, that it was more profitable to act in collusion with the clothiers by appointing inefficient searchers who would interpret the clothing statutes as the justices saw fit.⁴

The Merchant Adventurers must have soon dispaired of the efficacy of the system of search, for shortly after the new system was inaugurated they seem to have begun again to search all cloths coming to Blackwell Hall. So much is inferred from a statute of 1557 which exempted all cloth searched in the

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1. Somerset Q.S. Records, vol. XXIV, pp. 143, no. 20, 164, nos. 13, 16, 17: various informations against statutory violations in cloth manufacture, 1630-1631.
 2. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1628-29, p. 238, Chas. I, vol. CXI, no. 33: Petition of London Dyers to the Council, 30 July 1628: Acts of the Privy Council 1596-97, pp. 172-73: The Council to Doctor Caesar, 12 July 1596.
 3. 39 Eliz., c. 20.
 4. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1631-33, p. 312, Chas. I, vol. CCXV, no. 56: Anthony Wither to the Council, Gloucestershire, 18 April 1632.

provinces from further search at Blackwell Hall.¹ Despite this act the Merchant Adventurers cooperating with London aldermen contrived in 1559 to get the authorization of the exchequer for the appointment of special searchers at Blackwell Hall, and the following year all cloths brought there were being re-examined, evidence of previous search notwithstanding.² The effectiveness of this means of search seems to have been ephemeral³ and it would in fact appear that the Blackwell searchers were no less unwilling, than were their provincial counterparts, to avail themselves of the opportunities for gain presented by their office. Western clothiers were objecting before the Council in 1591 that the Londoners were exacting a surcharge of 1/2d. over and above the alnage fee already paid in the counties. Moreover, they complained of the great losses they were obliged to sustain in making up their cloths again after the cloths had been plunged in water by the searchers, and of the searchers' tendency to confiscate cloths subsequently found faulty. Though the Council sided with the clothiers and showed willingness to bring the searchers to account when reports of these practices continued to be heard,⁴ the clothiers' greater objection to the double search itself, did not abate and the continued opposition to this practice finally led to a statute of 1607 which withdrew from the Londoners the right to re-examine cloths already bearing a searcher's seal.⁵

1. 4 & 5 P&M, c. 5.

2. G. D. Ramsay, *The Distribution of the Cloth Industry in 1561-62*, *The English Historical Review*, 1942, pp. 361-69.

3. G. D. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire Woollen Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, p. 56.

4. *Acts of the Privy Council 1591*, pp. 97-100: Proceedings regarding the alnager at Blackwell Hall, 2 May 1591; *ibid.*, p. 128: Council to the Lord Mayor of London, 16 May 1591.

5. 4 Jas. I, c. 2.

It is dangerous to infer from the action taken by the Merchant Adventurers in establishing a second search at Blackwell Hall that the system of search totally failed to accomplish the purpose for which it had been established. Recent research has shown that in the important clothing county of Wiltshire the searchers brought frequent presentments to quarter sessions against clothiers who violated the clothing regulations,¹ and it is not improbable that the clothing laws were being enforced with reasonable efficiency elsewhere. Yet such was not the opinion of contemporaries, and the commissioners who reported on the state of the clothing industry in 1640 came to much the same conclusion as Leake had in 1577: lacking enforcement, the "statutes of this land ... are absolutely frustrate and made voide."

The Tudor administrative system was not particularly well adapted to enforce legislation of the type that governed the cloth industry. The commissioners of 1640 were quite acute in suggesting that the reason for the failure of the government to gain consistent adherence to the cloth laws, was that the Council lacked sufficient control over the justices successfully to overbear determined local opposition to its ordinances.² In two notable instances this defect in the administrative system was shown quite clearly.

Most critics of the "abuses" in woollen manufacture singled

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1. G. D. Ramsay, The Wiltshire Woollen and Worsted Industry in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, pp. 63-4.
 2. The Report of the Royal Commission on the Clothing Industry, 1640: printed in The English Historical Review, 1942, p. 488 et seq.

out excessive tentering as the most pernicious one. Latimer preaching before Edward VI briefly described and thoroughly condemned the practice thus:

"If his cloth be seventeen yards long, he will set him on a rock, and stretch him out with ropes, and rack him till the sinews stretch again while he hath brought him to 18 yards. When they have brought him to that perfection, they had a pretty feat to thicken him, again, He makes a powder for it and plays the poticary; they call it flock powder. These mixtures come from covetousness. They are plain theft."¹

Parliament realized that if the weaver was to produce his cloth to conform to specific statutory dimensions he must have some means of making up for the inevitable shrinkage that occurred during the fulling and cleaning processes or the cloth would come to market all "cockly, bandy and squaly." Thus, the act of 1552 permitted weavers to tenter their cloths one yard in length and a quarter in breadth.² The act had provided penalties for excessive tentering but these had fallen exclusively on the clothiers and weavers had uncompassionately violated the law with impunity.³ When foreign complaints against excessively tented cloth were added to those already heard at home,⁴ and with England's commercial position in the vital north German market threatened,⁵ parliament felt in no position to take half measures and risk the loss of the Netherlands and French markets, the only ones to which England still had relatively unobstructed

1. The Victoria County History of Warwickshire, vol. 2, p. 252.

2. 5 & 6 Edw. VI, c. 6.

3. Acts of the Privy Council 1591-92, p. 89: Council to Sir George Bonde and Mr. Milwarde, 26 Nov. 1591.

4. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1591-94, pp. 242-43, Eliz., vol. CCXLII, no. 75; Articles submitted by M. Carron in the name of the Estates General, 2 July 1592.

5. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 8, pp. 307-08: Proclamation of the Emperor Rudolf II, Prague, 1 Aug. 1597.

access. By an act of 1597 the use of tenters was absolutely forbidden in Yorkshire,¹ and in 1601, the proscription was extended to apply to all unwrought cloths manufactured in England.²

Unfortunately, the French government was prepared to take parliament at its word, published the ban in France, began to seize defective English cloths, and finally prohibited the importation of tentered cloths altogether.³ The glaring insufficiencies of the English administrative system were therefore clearly brought to light. For the next three years a series of bitter despatches passed from the Council to the Yorkshire justices who ranged themselves on the side of the clothiers and refused to enforce the ban.⁴ The Council's admonitions to the justices of Middlesex to enforce the ban met with little more success, and when the Council suspected that its orders were being lost in a maze of local bureaucracy it was quick to make known its displeasure.

"For we doe understande your order ys when you receave any soche commaundementes from us to divert your preceptes unto the High Constables and petty constables to performe the same without taking further accompt of them, in which case yt were a shorter course for us to sende our warrantes immedyatlie unto them, whoe would with more care regard the same."⁵

The lord mayor of London informed the Council that the clothworkers company would be glad to take down their tenters once the clothiers of Suffolk had taken down their own, and this the council regarded as seeking "to strive who shall longest persiste in doinge

1. 39 Eliz., c. 20.

2. 43 Eliz., c. 10.

3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1598-1601, p. 143, Eliz., vol. CCLXIX, no. 45: A remembrance for the cloths, 1598?: ibid., p. 503, vol. CCLXXV, no. 148: Memorial of Orders taken in France, ?Dec. 1600.

4. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industry, pp. 141-144; describes the recalcitrance of Yorkshire justices.

5. Acts of the Privy Council 1601-04, p. 164: Council to the justices of Middlesex. 16 Aug. 1601

evill and maintaine a manifest abuse ..."¹ As for Suffolk, the member for Guildford implied in parliament that the justices had not enforced the law, for indeed, cloth manufacture without the use of the tenter was impossible.² When the Eastland Company concurred, assuring the Council that Suffolk cloth could not be sold unless tented, and alleging that "they of Barbarie" had no objections to cloths that would shrink,³ the Council was forced to give way and a long series of amendments to the ban on tenters were issued.⁴

A similar series of incidents occurred in 1630 when at the request of the Merchant Adventurers the Council appointed a commission to examine the abuses practiced in the western clothing industry.⁵ One of the commissioners, Anthony Wither soon reported to the Council that he was everywhere meeting with either the apathy or the outright resistance of the Gloucestershire justices whom he accused of extreme laxity in enforcing the clothing laws.⁶ Chief among the offenders was a certain Nathaniel Stephens who had discouraged the justices at quarter sessions from appointing new searchers when Wither had testified to the inefficiency of

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1. Ibid., p. 473: Council to the Lord Mayor of London, 29 April 1601.
 2. Heywood Townshend, Journals, pp. 222-23, Sir Geo. Moore, member for Guildford, Returns of the Members of Parliament, p. 446.
 3. H. Heaton, op. cit., p. 143.
 4. These are summarized in 21 Jas. I, c. 18.
 5. The Commission's work is discussed by K. E. Barford, The West of England Cloth Industry, Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine, 1922-24; and by G. D. Ramsay, The Wiltshire Woollen Industry, pp. 85-100.
 6. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1631-33, p. 312, Chas. I, vol. CCXV, no. 56: Anthony Wither to the Council, April 1632: ibid., p. 389, vol. CCXXI, no. 27, Wither to the Council, 23 July 1632.

the existing officials. Moreover, Stephens was administering the searcher's oath to suit himself, and he seems to have made a particular point of appointing inefficient searchers. Stephens was subsequently called to account before the Star Chamber but it is doubtful whether the justices or the searchers in Gloucestershire were incited to increase their diligence as a result of Stephens' experience.¹

Following the resistance that Wither had met with at the hands of the justices it was unlikely the Council would meet with much success in carrying any of his recommendations into effect. Among the abuses Wither had been requested to investigate was the gig-mill, a machine equipped with wire cards for raising the nap in cloth, whose use had long been prohibited by statute.² Wither informed the Council that the forbidden machine was certainly being used though the clothiers had cleverly disguised it under the name of "moxing mill" to avoid incurring the penalties of the statute.³ Had the government's control over the local authorities been strict, little difficulty should have been encountered in attempting to suppress the machine especially since its use was reportedly confined to the county of Gloucestershire where it was widely objected to by local clothiers and clothworkers who had recently protested against it at the assizes.⁴ Though a proclamation was issued ordering the suppression of the mills⁵ the

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1. Ibid., p. 312, Chas. I, vol. CCXV, no. 56: Wither to the Council, 18 April 1632.
 2. 5 & 6 Edw. VI, c. 22.
 3. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. III, p. 51 n.
 4. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1633-34, p. 164, Chas. I, vol. CCXLIII, no. 73: Complaints against gig-mills, ? July 1633.
 5. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 197, no. 1657: Against frauds in drapery manufacture, 16 April 1633.

government met with no more success than had rewarded its efforts to suppress tenters in Yorkshire thirty years earlier. Clothiers threatened to dismiss their weavers rather than comply with the proclamation and the Council was forced, first to extend the time limit for putting the prohibition into effect and finally to confine the ban to new mills.¹ The royal commission of 1640 assured the government that gig-mills were still very much in use in Gloucestershire.²

Both in Yorkshire after 1597, and in the West after 1630, the issues involved were so strong that the independence of the justices of the peace is shown in an exaggerated light. Therefore, these examples do not serve as completely safe bases for making a generalization on the normal relationship between the Council and the provincial authorities. It is of course true that the justices were prone to interpret their orders as the circumstances required and if the government persisted the justices were likely to be afflicted by a sudden inability to carry out orders. Too much was, however, expected of the overworked justices. Even when the cloth industry had been largely confined to the corporate towns the government had shown its inability to enforce the clothing laws.³ It was hardly possible that the justices could enforce upon an amorphous rural industry, the precise requirements of clothing statutes that came from parliament with such bewildering frequency during the sixteenth


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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1633-34, pp. 164-66, Chas. I, vol. CCXLIV, no. 1: Justices of Gloucester to the Council, 1 Aug. 1633: *ibid.*, p. 286, vol. CCL, no. 53: Proceedings in Council, 12 Nov. 1633.
 2. The Report of the Royal Commission on the Clothing Industry, 1640: printed in The English Historical Review, 1942, p. 488.
 3. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industry, p. 130.

century. Though some like Mr. Glascock were prone to place all blame with the justices - "First Mark what a Justice of Peace¹ is, and we shall easily find a Gap in our Law" - it was not overlooked that, owing to the frequency with which members of parliament introduced and passed clothing legislation, a part of the difficulty in administration lay with the legislators. A member of parliament in 1601 called to the attention of the house that there were presently five separate cloth bills under the consideration of a committee. If the "decrepid estate of clothing" was to be revived, he thought that a good deal more care would have to be used in the drafting of cloth bills than was evidenced by those to which he referred. "We are all here like physicians," he warned "who, when they are to minister physick to the sick patient, and have many simples before them, be distracted, and make a mixture of so many that they kill the patient."²

Two unforeseen developments had in fact occurred that would have rendered the task of the most avid cloth legislators impossible. Following the introduction of the new draperies to England, new varieties of cloth had developed at a rate faster than parliament was able to provide for them. Indeed, it was pointed out that "If we should have a new law for everie new name of stuffe now made and named, the king must keep a perpetuall Parliament to ordaine for them."³ In consequence, an increasingly large section of the clothing industry came outside the jurisdiction of the

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1. Heywood Townshend, Journals, pp. 267-8. Simonds D'Ewes, Journals, p. 661.
 2. See also Heywood Townshend, Journals, p. 241. Commons Journals, vol. 1, p. 600. E. Misselden, The Circle of Commerce, p. 136 (1623).
 3. J. May, The True Estate of Clothing in the Realme (1613), p. 22.

government's machinery for cloth regulation.¹ That it would remain outside was to be assured. The failure of the king and parliament to work together brought an end to parliament's prolific output of cloth legislation. The last comprehensive cloth-ing statute was passed in 1607 and was re-issued in an amended form in 1624.²

Never perhaps, was the need for vigorous regulation felt to be greater, for this unwelcome increase in the autonomy of the woollen industry was occurring at a time when English merchants found that nations traditionally absorbing the bulk of their cloths were gradually developing native industries. Merchants plying to St. Malo, Rochelle, and Bordeaux found their trade to these ports impaired by the Edict of 1600 which prohibited the importation to France of colored cloths. And at Rouen, whose finishing industry the Edict was probably meant to protect, they were barred from carrying on their lucrative inland trade in cloths to Paris and Orleans.³ Though an Anglo-French trade agree-ment of 1606 removed the ban on colored cloths,⁴ trading conditions to France remained unsettled down to 1640; "the ffrenche ... prone uppon the least occasion to interrupt the trade of the English and to villifie their manufactures ..." ⁵The Merchant Adventurer's 

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1. See e.g., Cal. S.P. Dom. 1619-23, p. 391, Jas. I, vol. CXXX, no. 65: Justices of Essex to the Council, 13 May 1622: ibid., p. 379, vol. CXXIX, no. 59: Justices of Suffolk to the Council, 25 April 1622: ibid. 1603-10, p. 229, Jas. I, vol. XV, no. 17: Complaint of the Colchester clothiers, ? July 1605.
 2. ⁴ Jas. I, c.2: 21 Jas. I, c. 18.
 3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1598-1601, p. 503, Eliz., vol. CCLXXV, no. 148: Memorial of Orders taken in France, ? Dec. 1600.
 4. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 3, p. 99.
 5. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1635, p. 307, Chas. I, vol. CCXCIV, no. 93: Petition of London merchants trading to France, July 1635; quoted by H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 194.

trade to the Archduke's dominions, which though small was of great importance to the East Anglian industry,¹ was threatened after 1612 by a grandiose scheme which sought at one stroke to revive the clothing industries of Flanders, Artois, Hainault and Limburg, and to re-establish Antwerp as the entrepôt of Europe.² Though Trumbull, the English agent, ridiculed the scheme's chances of success, he was quick to point out the dangers to English trade if by power of suggestion other nations were encouraged to follow suit.³ In Poland, the high price of English cloth had begun to stimulate the Silesian cloth industry which was now supplying a market formerly monopolized by the Eastland Company,⁴ and similar factors were encouraging German cloth manufacture and hindering the Merchant Adventurers' trade.⁵ These threats were totally overshadowed by the rivalry with the Dutch that ensued upon the mishandling of England's cloth industry by James I and his prompter Alderman Cockayne. England's attempt to revolutionize its trade and industry by exporting only dyed and dressed cloths had been countered by a Dutch prohibition of the import of finished cloths to the United Provinces, and taking advantage of the temporary dislocation of the English cloth

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1. Hist. MSS. Comm. Sackville MSS., vol. 1, pp. 276-78: Memorandum submitted by Lionel Cranfield, Aug. 1612.
 2. Hist. MSS. Comm. Downshire MSS., vol. 3, pp. 279-83: William Trumbull to the Secretary of State, Brussels, 22 April 1622.
 3. Ibid., pp. 279-83.
 4. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1637, p. 396, Chas. I, vol. CCLXVI, no. 71: Eastland Merchants to the Council, ? Aug. 1637.
 5. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 3, p. 382.

industry, the Dutch began to develop their own. By 1640 they had successfully invaded the German cloth market¹ and it was reported that their industry was producing 30,000 cloths a year, the full quantity of white cloths exported by the Merchant Adventurers.²

No longer enjoying a virtual monopoly as the purveyor of woollen cloths to the continent, England's role as a competitor was made the more difficult since the heavy foreign and domestic charges on her cloth allowed her rivals consistently to undersell her in the foreign market. Abroad, the Eastland Company trading to the Baltic paid tolls, often as high as £200 a ship, to the Danish government for the right to pass through the Sound, the narrow channel between the Danish Isles and the Scandinavian peninsula which formed the only entrance to the Baltic Sea.³ With their lighter tonnage, the Dutch escaped with lower tolls⁴ and the result was reflected in a declining Eastland trade. By 1620, English cloth sales in the Baltic had declined from £200,000 to £70,000 annually and the control of the trade had passed to the Netherlanders.⁵ In the Spanish Netherlands after 1612, the Merchant Adventurers could import white cloths only through the agency of a foreign factor who exacted a charge of

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1619-23, p. 387, Jas. I, vol. CXXX, no. 39: Reasons for the decay of trade, 7 May 1622.
 2. Ibid. 1639-40, p. 417, Chas. I, vol. CCCCXLIV, no. 6: Edward Misselden to Secretary Windebank, 1 Feb. 1640.
 3. See the article by E. P. Cheyney, England and Denmark in the Later Days of Queen Elizabeth, The Journal of Modern History, 1929, and, Cal. S.P. Foreign 1581-82, p. 648: Thomas North, mariner, to Walsingham, "Hellsanowr," 24 April 1582.
 4. Acts of the Privy Council 1615-16, p. 142: Council to the Eastland Merchants, 6 May 1615.
 5. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1619-23, p. 157, Jas. I, vol. CXV, no. 109: Eastland Merchants to the king, 26 June 1620.

24s. on each cloth.¹ Merchants trading to Spain frequently complained of similar charges² and high taxes on cloth were a standing complaint of merchants trading to Bordeaux.³ Regularly after 1592 the Merchant Adventurers in the United Provinces were charged with tare, which was in effect an abusive fine levied on whatever deficiencies, real or invented, the Dutch chose to discover in English cloths. The tare stood as high as 32s. a cloth⁴ and in consequence of it the Merchant Adventurers claimed to lose as much as £10,000 a year.⁵

At home, financial necessities and efforts to reward favorites increased the burdens on cloth during the reign of James I. In 1618 James issued the first patent of the pretermitted customs, which pound for pound by weight, brought the customs on cloth to an equality with those formerly levied on wool. The new rates amounted to an increase of between 2s. 2d. to 5s. 5d. on every cloth exported.⁶ At the same time the financial burdens on cloth were increased by the grant of a new cloth export patent to the Earl of Cumberland. Elizabeth had made a regular practice of granting cloth export patents to individuals who in turn had transferred them to the Merchant Adventurers. While the market for white cloths was flourishing the merchants had been glad to compound with the patentees since their own export license was

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1. Hist. MSS. Comm. Sackville MSS, vol. 1, p. 279: A discourse on trade with the Archduke's country, 2 Aug. 1612.
 2. Ibid. Salisbury MSS, pt. 18, p. 143: Arthur Gregory to Salisbury, Poole, 24 May 1606.
 3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1598-1601, p. 503, Eliz., vol. CCLXXV, no. 148: Memorial of Orders Taken in France, ? Dec. 1600.
 4. Commons Journals, vol. 1, pp. 689, 773, 780.
 5. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1638-39, p. 240, Chas. I, vol. CCCVII, no. 78: Anthony Wither to the king, 1638?
 6. A. Friis, Alderman Cockayne's Project and the Cloth Trade, Appendix A, no. 2, pp. 437-38.

limited to 30,000 cloths a year. When in 1617 a similar patent was granted to the Earl of Cumberland the merchants objected to joining it to their own, claiming that their patent was sufficient to meet the needs of the market. Under pressure from the Council the merchants were forced to give way and the Earl was granted 16d. on every white cloth the merchants exported under the number of 60,000 a year with the promise of 2s. 8d. a cloth whenever that number should be exceeded.¹ Moreover, as the price of regaining their charter following the dissolution of Cockayne's company, the Merchant Adventurers had had to compound with the king and his courtiers for an amount estimated at £70,000.² To recoup themselves for their combined losses to the king and his earl the company levied an imposition of between 4s. to 6s. on every cloth they exported. Thus, at a time when the English cloth industry was suffering from the dislocation that had followed the failure of the Cockayne experiment, its products were burdened with foreign and domestic charges estimated at £3-10-0 over and above their original cost.³ Consequently foreign manufacturers - especially the Dutch - could produce their cloths much more cheaply than English merchants could export them. According to the clothiers reporting to the Council in 1622, "ye charg of our English clothe from the hands of the maker to ye back of ye wererer exceede ye charg of a duche clothe made and worn in Hollande by iijj.li and xij. s., and in the Archduke

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1. Acts of the Privy Council 1616-17, p. 363: Proceedings in Council, 4 Nov. 1617.
 2. The Letters of John Chamberlain, ed. by N. E. McClure, vol. 2, p. 131: Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, London, 17 Jan. 1618.
 3. The Lawes, Customes and Ordinances of the Fellowshippe of Merchantes Adventurers, ed. by W. E. Lingelbach, pp. 187-88.

country by v. li. xij s."¹

Against the foreign threat to its cardinal industry, the government had recourse to a weapon which had served it well in the past. Firmly convinced that the foreign industry would languish unless supplied with English wool and fuller's earth, the export of these necessities was prohibited by proclamation.² Since the early sixteenth century the government had been urged to erect its wool staple in England and these proposals were now acted upon. The control of the inland trade in wool was entrusted to the Merchant Staplers Company who were authorized to sell their commodity at twenty-two specified staple towns.³ It is doubtful that the embargo on wool ever proved more than a troublesome inconvenience to foreign manufacturers who were apparently supplied with large shipments smuggled from England.⁴ If there was any lack of English wool foreign manufacturers had of course access to Spanish wool which was becoming more easily procurable during the seventeenth century.⁵

An idea once formed is not readily discarded, and the conviction that the sale of goods can be assured if they conform to a high standard of quality still survives, if feebly, in our own age. In seventeenth century England this idea was an almost unquestioned axiom and contemporaries searching for

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1. Quoted by H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 191.
 2. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 141, no. 1197: Against the export of wool, 1617.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Acts of the Privy Council 1616-17, p. 26: Council to the Mayor of Sandwich, 28 April 1616.
 5. The Report of the Royal Commission on the Clothing Industry, 1640: printed in The English Historical Review, 1942, p. 488.

the causes of the distressing cloth depressions of the 'twenties and 'thirties looked back to a happier time when "the true making of cloth endured in reasonable manner," and it was in consequence "most vendible in all parts."¹ Though it was not overlooked that factors such as the high charges on English cloth would have the effect of hindering its sale in a highly competitive market, there was often a tendency to regard such factors as being of secondary importance.² In its statement of causes for the decline of cloth sales the royal commission of 1622 relegates the burdens on cloth to third in order of severity,³ while the commissioners of 1640 state determinedly that "The principall Cause is most undoubtedly the false and deceitfull making of all Kindes of olde and newe draperies."⁴

Hence, schemes for reviving English trade during the early seventeenth century ultimately focused attention on means for more effectively enforcing the clothing code. Generally, the proposals advocated represented nothing essentially new. Failing in its attempt to confine cloth manufacture to the corporate towns, the government had looked favorably on town attempts to bring country manufacturers under their control. In some instances rural weavers had been required to bring their cloths to towns to be searched and sealed or to supply town finishing

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1. J. May, The True Estate of Clothing in the Realm (1613) p. 24.
 2. Malynes, The Center of the Circle, (1623) p. 79: "Other nations buying heretofore our Clothes, when they were sold deerer by the halfe in price then they be now sold, did never complaine that the Clothes were sold too deere, but they did alwayes complaine of the false making of Cloth."
 3. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 3, p. 308.
 4. The Report of the Royal Commission on the Clothing Industry, 1640: printed in The English Historical Review, 1942, p. 487.

industries. Often charters of incorporation had been granted extending the regulatory authority of towns over wide rural districts. Such arrangements were of mutual advantage to both town and crown, for while giving the towns control of the market that had been threatened by the incursion of independent London traders, the crown could at least be more reasonably hopeful that its statutes would be carried into effect. In proposing that in each of the clothing counties a corporation be set up to enforce the clothing regulations, the Commission of 1622 sought a more national and centralized extension of a system of regulation that had been developing regionally since the fifteenth century.¹

An unsuccessful attempt to regulate the manufacture of the new draperies through a centralized county administration had already been made in Hertfordshire. In 1608 the Earl of Salisbury had engaged one Walter Morrell to set up public stocks for the employment of the poor in cloth manufacture in the parish of Hatfield.² By 1615 Morrell had developed and submitted to the Council a plan whereby the manufacture of the new draperies would be extended to the chief towns of the county and the control of manufacture vested in a central body to be made up of the leading county gentry.³ Though the projectors gained a charter of incorporation the following year their failure to

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1. For contemporary opinion see E. Misselden, Free Trade (1622) pp. 127-35; J. May, The True Estate of Clothing in the Realm (1613) pp. 6-7, 41-2.
 2. The Victoria County History of Hertfordshire, vol. 4, p. 250.
 3. Acts of the Privy Council 1615-16, p. 464: Council to Sir Francis Bacon, 27 March 1616.

attract sufficient investors to make the scheme profitable had resulted in its abandonment.¹

It was Morrell who appears to have been the driving force behind the proposal submitted by the commissioners of 1622. For the next three years a committee for trade composed of most of the members of the Privy Council, various burgesses, and the chief clothiers of the kingdom had the proposal under consideration. Morrell was constantly in attendance at its meetings. The plan, as eventually developed by this committee provided for the regulation of the old and new draperies through corporations in each of the clothing counties. These would operate on a joint stock basis and the board of governors of each would be composed of the Justices of the Peace of the counties.² Drafts for putting the plan into effect in seven counties passed the royal signature in 1625, but James' death shortly thereafter brought a temporary halt to the project.³ By April 1625, the plan by now expanded to include thirty-two counties,⁴ was put aside owing to the pressure of foreign affairs⁵ and was not revived.

Meanwhile, in the period of trade dislocation and industrial

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1. See the article by F. J. Fisher, Some Proposals for Company Organization in the Early Seventeenth Century, The Economic History Review, 1932-34: also, Cal. S.P. Dom. 1619-23, p. 143, Jas. I, vol. CXV, no. 13: Deputy Lieutenants of Hertfordshire to the Council, 10 May 1620: ibid. 1611-18, p. 525, Jas. I, vol. XCVI, no. 39: Statement of difficulties for the project, ? Feb. 1618.
 2. Cal. S.P. Dom. Addenda, 1625-49, p. 430, Chas. I, vol. DXXXIII, no. 86: Walter Morrell to the king, 1631?
 3. F. J. Fisher, op. cit., p. 194.
 4. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1625-49, p. 4, Chas. I, vol. DXXI, no. 21: Secretary Conway to Solicitor General Heath, 15 April 1625.
 5. G. Unwin, Industrial Organization, p. 147.

depression that followed the failure of the Cockayne experiment, the Council made renewed efforts to bring the cloth trade and industry under its closer scrutiny. After 1617 a special committee of the Council kept a strict check on the volume of cloth exports and issued a complete report to his majesty every six months.¹ In 1620 the work of the Council in regulating the industry was entrusted to a standing committee which was to attend constantly to all matters concerned with the manufacture of cloth.² Attempting to give new life to the clothing statutes, justices were enjoined to more scrupulous enforcement of the searching regulations, and the Council willingly prosecuted the recalcitrant in the Star Chamber.³ Yet if the opinion of the Merchant Adventurers is to be accepted the Council's efforts met with only transient success. In 1630 they complained to the Council that after an initial burst of activity magistrates and justices were again appointing searchers who were inefficient and whose vigilance would be relaxed for a price.⁴ When in response to the merchants persistent complaints the London searchers were authorized to examine cloths coming to Blackwell Hall, the merchants made their point: of twenty-nine white broadcloths examined at random, six were found to comply with the requirements of the statute.⁵

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1. Acts of the Privy Council 1616-17, p. 123: Appointment of a committee on clothing, 26 Jan. 1617.
 2. Ibid. 1619-21, pp. 197-98: Standing committee for clothing, 18 May 1620.
 3. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 145, no. 1223: For the better making of broadcloths, 7 Nov. 1618; Acts of the Privy Council 1618-19, pp. 112-13: Proceedings in Council, 18 April 1618.
 4. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1629-31, p. 446, Chas. I, vol. CLXXX, no. 74: Remonstrance of the Merchant Adventurers to the Council, 1630?
 5. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1629-31, p. 502, Chas. I, vol. CLXXXIV, no. 45: Lord Mayor of London to the Council, 9 Feb. 1631.

Anthony Wither's experiences in the west after 1630 demonstrated more clearly to the Council the inefficiency of local searchers, and probably had some effect in making the Council more attentive to the proposals for reform that were being put forward by London merchants.¹ Foremost among the solicitors was Hugh Morrell, a relative of the Walter Morrell² who had been prominent in the proposals for reorganizing the system of administering the cloth laws in 1622. Though the Morrells had continued to press together for the adoption of their plan after it had been put aside in 1625³ Hugh eventually became the central figure, and it was he who gained the support of London merchants for the scheme, now substantially revised, which was presented to the Council in December 1637.⁴

The following September a commission of thirty, mostly comprised of London merchants, was authorized by the Council to enquire into laxity in the administration of the clothing laws and to call before them and examine under oath any persons concerned with cloth manufacture.⁵ The commissioners spent the next two years in weekly debates and consultations and claim to have called the principal clothiers of the realm before them.⁶

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1. Ibid. 1637-38, p. 553, Chas. I, vol. CCCXCV, no. 11: Merchants of London to the king, 3 July 1638.
 2. Dictionary of National Biography, vol. XXXIX, pp. 86-87. The biographer has confused Hugh and Walter Morrell.
 3. F. J. Fisher, Some Proposals on Company Organization in the Early Seventeenth Century, The Economic History Review, 1932-34, p. 194.
 4. Hist. MSS. Comm., Report 15, Portland MSS., vol. 1, p. 405: Hugh Morrell to Lenthall, 11 Jan. 1647.
 5. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1638-39, p. 23, Chas. I, vol. CCCXCVIII, no. 118: Commission of enquiry into clothing abuses, 21 Sept. 1638.
 6. Hist. MSS. Comm., Report 15, Portland MSS., vol. 1, p. 405: Hugh Morrell to Lenthall, 11 Jan. 1647.

There is no evidence whether they ever left London to gain a first hand knowledge of the cloth industry in the provinces. On the basis of their proposals, the suggestion is that they did not. The commissioners completed their task by March 1640 and their report was signed and ready for presentation to the Council by early summer.¹

In listing the causes for declining cloth sales the commissioners followed a well worn formula. They condemned the wool smuggler who aided and abetted foreign industry, and the ubiquitous brogger who drove up the price of wool at home. They implored the government to use its good offices to bring about a reduction in the heavy foreign charges on English cloth, and cautiously suggested that his majesty might abate his own. The greatest cause for the shrinking cloth market was of course, the flagrant violations of the clothing statutes, and the onus of guilt they placed squarely with the officers entrusted with their enforcement. By his own admission the searcher of London had informed the commissioners that he was accustomed to receiving a yearly stipend from certain London companies not to execute his office. The intractable alnagers continued to sell their seals to clothiers by the thousands, rarely bothering to view the cloths. "By all which aforementioned practises, deceipts, and abuses, the many good Lawes, and Statutes of this ... land ... (were) absolutely frustrate, and made voide."²

If their diagnosis of the evils from which the cloth in-

1. Infra., Appendix A, pp. 234-39.

2. The Report of the Royal Commission on the Clothing Industry, 1640: printed in The English Historical Review, 1942, pp. 487-88.

dustry suffered was conventional, the commissioners' proposals for redressing them were revolutionary. They saw no other way for effective enforcement of the clothing laws than "for an absolute and generall Reformation" of the entire administrative system. To effect this they proposed the establishment of industrial corporations in all the chief centers of clothing manufacture, and these were to be placed under the control of a permanent commission made up of merchants "of or nere the Citty of London," whose members would be appointed annually by the king. The central authority was to have the power to appoint the officers of the provincial corporations, hear their complaints, punish their offences, and regulate the wages of their craftsmen. The regulatory power of the local corporations was to extend "Sixe, Tenn, or Fourteene miles every waye more or lesse according to their distances from the next Clothing Townes."¹ To enforce the statutory regulations for cloth manufacture the corporation was to have power to appoint searchers who were to receive a competent allowance for their pains. The corporations were to enforce the apprenticeship requirements, to hear craftsmen's complaints, and to punish violations of the clothing laws.

The commissioners' proposals have been regarded as advocating a complete break with the traditional Tudor administrative system,² but apart from their one momentous innovation in proposing to substitute for the voluntary service of the Tudor

1. Infra., Appendix A, pp. 234-39.

2. The English Historical Review, loc. cit.

justices of the peace, a system which would bind officials to their posts by firmer financial ties,¹ the commissioners advocated no fundamental break with the past. What they did propose was a reorganization within the forms of the existing administrative machinery to meet the peculiar needs of a particular industry. The theoretical centralization of the Tudor and Stuart administrative system was to give way to actual centralization with London merchants acceding to the regulatory powers of the Council, and with local officers cast in the roles of the justices of the peace.

In their acute realization that, as it existed, the administrative system was too decentralized to enforce the meticulous regulations of the clothing statutes, lies the only merit of the commissioners' proposals. It would have been perilous to think, that clothiers, for whom the menace of the Star Chamber was no deterrent to violating the clothing code, would have willingly accepted the dictates of London merchants with whom they were never in good relations: the reaction of the outports would have indeed been interesting. Whether the scheme stood any chance of being accepted must remain open to conjecture. Had not weightier matters of state diverted the king's attention in the summer of 1640 Charles like Gresham might have reflected that "as the merchants be one of the best members in our commonweal, so they be the very worst yf their doings be not looked unto in time ...

1. Note the reference to unpaid officials in W.S., The Golden Fleece (1656), p. 109: "whether the neglect for want of a competent salary, hath not been a great cause to let in manifold abuses upon clothing."

for otherwise if they get the bridell, you shall never
rewle them ...¹

1. J. W. Burgon, Sir Thomas Gresham, vol. 1, p. 335: Gresham to Cecil, 14 May 1560.

The findings of historians who have examined the Port Books since Unwin's time would indicate that Unwin was unduly pessimistic, and the export boom during the first decade and a half of the seventeenth century, before the Merchant Adventurer's trade in white cloths was interrupted by the Cockayne project, suggests that a regulated trade was not always inconsistent with commercial expansion.¹

It is a commonplace of historians that events or actions, to be properly understood, must be examined against the background of their own time and place, and if the economic history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is to be examined objectively, it is essential to remember that economic thought was shaped by circumstances widely different from those influencing the economic thought of our own time. A plausible case can be constructed to show that the Tudors and Stuarts understood the value of free trade. Several times in the period from 1586 to 1640 the throwing open of the cloth trade to all comers was a device resorted to overcome a stand in the cloth market that the dangers of depression might be avoided or relieved.² Once resorted to, this expedient was quickly abandoned as soon as the conditions necessitating its use were changed, for though there was ample evidence that freedom of trade generally resulted in an initial increase in the volume of goods ex-

1. Infra., Appendix D, pp. 242-43.

2. Infra., pp. 195-96.

ported, there were few who had the temerity to suggest that the increase was of more than a temporary nature which would result in the impoverishment of the realm if continued.¹

Many of the profound fears of contemporaries of the dangers of unregulated trading are made intelligible by what Hecksher has referred to as "the static conception of economic life." Long before it was given concrete expression by Petty there was a suspicion that "there is but a certain proportion of trade in the world" which could be increased in one country only at the expense of another.² This does much to explain Elizabethan and Stuart concern over the uncontrolled expansion of the English cloth industry, for where such a conception of economic life was maintained, it followed as a natural corollary that industry must not be allowed to produce beyond the capacity of the foreign market to absorb English goods, and this danger could best be avoided by a commercial and industrial code which aimed at controlling the development of the cloth industry in the domestic sphere, and which subjected cloth exports to the rigid regulation of the chartered companies in the foreign.

The Merchant Adventurers were the company which for the better part of two centuries held a virtual monopoly of the vital export trade in white, or shortcloths, and since their charter and ordinances served as a model for those of all other regulated companies, some examination of these provides a convenient introduction to the Tudor and Stuart system of trade

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1. H. Robinson, England's Safety in Trades Encrease, (1641) p. 46.
 2. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 3, p. 4; quoting Petty, Economic Writings, vol. 3, p. 54; E. Hecksher, Mercantilism, vol. 2, pp. 23-24.

regulation. Membership to the society could be gained by apprenticeship, patrimony or redemption, the first two means being in practice limited to those living in or near London. Since entrance by redemption was subject to almost prohibitive fees and regulations, it was to provide one of the greatest bones of contention in the controversies between the London and outport branches of the company. Provided that he was a true subject of the Queen, not an artificer, husbandman or handicraftsman, no bondsman, bastard, or son of parents not both English, a redemptioner could be admitted to the trade on payment of a fee of £200, provided that he pay double impositions to the company for seven years after his entrance.¹ Once admitted to the fellowship the fledgling adventurer was permitted to export during the company's twice, or at the most, thrice yearly sailings, the number of 100 cloths the first year, his allowance being gradually increased until after fifteen years his stint had reached 1,000 cloths annually. This figure, within the limits of the company's license, was to be his maximum export allowance so long as he remained a member.² Strict penalties were provided against combination within the fellowship, and the licenses of those who did so with the intent of forestalling or engrossing merchandise could be suspended until prescribed fines were paid. Cloths were to be laded only in ships designated by the company, which were to sail at the company's pleasure to a designated mart town, and whoever

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1. The Lawes, Customes and Ordinances of the Fellowshippe of Merchantes Adventurers, ed. by W. E. Lingelbach, pp. 35-38.
2. Ibid., pp. 67-69.

attempted to export goods prohibited by statute, or who attempted to evade customs regulations was to be fined £100 sterling by the fellowship, or in certain cases, to be permanently disenfranchised. At the mart town, sales were to be conducted only on three days of the week, and according to strict ethical rules; no member for example, was to stand watching for prospective buyers at street corners, to run after a person to entice him to buy, or to interrupt another in a bargain.¹

This gild-like control of foreign trade was of mutual advantage both to the government and to the trader. Whenever a Tudor or Stuart government granted privileges either to an individual or to a corporation financial motives were usually very close to the surface. Essentially, the grant of a trading monopoly to a chartered company by the government was a form of contract in which both parties had definite obligations. The company took action to maintain the quality of English goods in the foreign market,² protected the interests of English subjects abroad, often providing the government's only consular service,³ while in return for these and for financial services, the company expected the government to protect it against the incursions of interlopers⁴ and to advance its interests against those of foreign traders such as the Hanseatics, who had long maintained a privileged status in England.⁵ Indeed it can be

1. Ibid., pp. 55-57, 61, 88-91, 134.

2. Ibid., p. 129.

3. A. C. Wood, A History of the Levant Company, pp. 12-13.

4. J. W. Burgon, Sir Thomas Gresham, vol. 1, pp. 234, 464.

5. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1553-58, pp. 211-12; Gresham to Queen Mary, 24 Feb. 1556.

said that in a period when the government lacked an effective machinery for exacting taxation, one of the greatest justifications for the grant of commercial or industrial monopolies, was that they provided the government with a means of knowing where to find money and in whose hands.¹ The Merchant Adventurers were dunned handsomely for their privileges, and if as Lingelbach claimed, they "won English trade from the foreigner,"² they did so on the strength of their purse strings. The Calendars of State Papers Foreign and Domestic during the sixteenth century are ledgers of the company's disbursements to the crown, their assistance ranging from guaranteeing the credit of the sovereign and discharging her debts in the bourse at Antwerp,³ to lending sums to the garrison at Flushing,⁴ clothing the army in Picardy,⁵ and diverting huge amounts to the support of the rebels in the Low Countries.⁶ The government however, was not always the best of debtors⁷ and in passing on its losses to the consumer, the Merchant Adventurers added fuel to the arguments of their opponents who charged them with hindering cloth sales by maintaining prohibitive prices, the responsibility for which was

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1580-1625, pp. 664-65, Jas. I, vol. XLIII, no. 54; Reasons for permitting the export of undressed cloths, April ? 1624.
 2. The Lawes, Customes and Ordinances of the Fellowshippe of Merchantes Adventurers, ed. by W. E. Lingelbach, p. xvi.
 3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1547-80, p. 45, Edw. VI, vol. XV, no. 13; Minute for discharging of the King's debts, 3 Oct. 1552.
 4. Acts of the Privy Council 1587-88, pp. 51-52; Council to the Merchant Adventurers, 25 April 1587.
 5. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1595-97, p. 379, Eliz., vol. CCLXII, no. 96; Warrant to John Jowles, merchant, 1 April 1597.
 6. Ibid., p. 374, Eliz., vol. CCLXII, no. 84; Richard Saltonstall to Lord Burghley, 26 March 1597.
 7. Ibid., 1547-80, p. 101, Mary, vol. XII, no. 66; Queen to the Merchant Adventurers, 15 April 1558.

largely none of the company's doing.¹

Abroad then, the chartered companies served as quasi-official organs of the government responsible for the protection of the persons and property of English traders, and often rendering definite diplomatic services to the state. Thus from its inception, the embassy to Constantinople had a dual aspect, the holder being at once a royal representative commissioned by the sovereign and employed in diplomatic duties, and a commercial agent, paid by the Levant Company, and pledged to safeguard and promote the company's business interests.² Such protectionist functions were vital in an age when the machinery of government was ill-equipped to deal with many of the problems assumed as the natural business of the modern state. During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries there was of course, something of an established body of theory regarding international law in the writings of theologians and jurists, but there was little in the way of rules generally received by all nations, and the authority of national or municipal courts had narrow and almost fortuitous geographical limits.³ With this problem the chartered company was particularly well equipped to deal, for in presenting an organized front it could, like the Merchant Adventurers at Hamburg, obtain concessions from local authorities giving the company the right of jurisdiction over its members in civil cases, and guaranteeing that

1. W. R. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, vol. 1, p. 126.

2. A. C. Wood, A History of the Levant Company, pp. 12-13.

3. G. N. Clark, The Seventeenth Century, p. 124.

merchants would receive reparations in the event of injuries done to them.¹ It is in the absence of such protection that the value of a regulated trade is emphasized. The throwing open of the Spanish trade was one of the great victories of Sandys and his "free trade" lobbyists in 1606.² The result to the Spanish trade was chaotic, reports of physical maltreatment and the impressment of English merchants into Spanish service reaching the government almost immediately thereafter. The slightest suspicion that an English vessel carried Dutch goods was the signal for Spanish authorities to seize the entire cargo.³ If either in this, or in the event of real or supposed violations of Spanish customs regulations, a sentence was given in a local court against the merchant, his goods were divided, equal shares going to the judge, king and informer. The litigant could always appeal to the courts at Madrid, and Gardiner has shown that there was scarcely a case in which an Englishman appealed that the sentence was not passed in his favour. But such a course was hardly possible for the smaller merchant, for cases in Madrid had an annoying habit of dragging on for two or three years while the merchant, or his representative, must remain all the while in residence at the capital,⁴ a system with which only the wealthiest could cope. As on land, protection at sea was a vital necessity, and the ravages of pirates infesting the trade routes from the Baltic to the

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1. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 2, p. 201.
 2. 3 Jas. I c. 6.
 3. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 18, p. 143; Arthur Gregory to Salisbury, Poole, 24 May 1606.
 4. S. R. Gardiner, History of England, vol. 2, pp. 149-50.

Mediterranean made organized trading essential. It was not until 1629 that, after the repeated insistence of the merchant companies, the government took definite steps to protect English commerce by providing regular armed convoys.¹ Previous to this, there was scarcely any other organization but the chartered company, with its regulated sailings, able to provide for armed defence out of its own resources, that could have provided the security required for a "well-ordered" trade.

Order was the particular fetish of the age, and when applied to the commercial sphere it was believed to result in handsome dividends, making it possible to achieve that much sought after advantage whereby English merchants could buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest markets. The petty trader, like Child's "straggling merchant," who in 1565 "went up and down at Narve in Lifland, with English cloth under (his) Arme, and a Measure in (his) Hands..."² was not objected to solely for his lack of ethics, but on the practical grounds that he was not able to demand as high a price for his cloth as could, for example, the Merchant Adventurers who, when under attack from their opponents, advanced as one of the most cogent arguments for the continuance of their monopoly, the fact that they had maintained a high price for English cloth in the foreign market.³

1. Hist. MSS. Comm., Report 12, App. 1, Cowper MSS., vol. 1, p. 379; Proposition for a fleet of five squadrons, 12 Jan. 1629.

2. Sir Josiah Child, An Essay on Wool, (1693) pp. 16-17.

3. J. Wheeler, A Treatise on Commerce, (1601) p. 109.

It was this preoccupation with keeping up the price of English cloth which, along with the preoccupation of maintaining a high standard of quality, had much to do with influencing the government on the side of keeping the cloth trade under the strict control of the merchant companies. Like those who sought a monopoly for the trade to Barbary in 1582, company promoters always argued that " ...experience have taught" that where trade was not regulated, "owr commodities (are) solde ... at much lesse advauntaige ... and that the Commodities of that Countrey are now at much greater price, whiche groweth through the greate disorders of some that are so private to them selves ..." that they neglect the common good.¹ If experience had impressed the government with the wisdom of regulating trade in the interests of high prices and high quality, it had also demonstrated that the conditions of employment in cloth manufacture were much too precarious to entrust the cloth trade to chance. What was sought was not commercial expansion, but stability, and the reasonable certainty that a specific volume of cloth exports would always find sale in a specific foreign market. Hence, as Misselden argues, freedom for all to trade would be against public utility, "For that's not equall, that may secure profitable to one, and bee hurtfull to many." Though he conceded that a regulated trade was an infringement of the liberty of the subject, the end he thought justified

1. R. H. Tawney and E. Power, Tudor Economic Documents, vol. 2, pp. 58-61; Arguments in favor of incorporating the Barbary Merchants, 1582.

the means; for "such a restraint of the Publique Liberty ... is alwayes to be allowed, when the same is recompensed with a Publique Utility."¹

It has been argued with particular reference to the Merchant Adventurers, and to chartered companies generally, that the real safeguard of regulating foreign trade through their agency was, "their ability to divert the whole stream of English traffic from any city which offended them. Their presence or absence could make or mar the fortunes of any town."² There seems very little question that in regard to the Merchant Adventurer's trade to Antwerp, through which the overwhelming majority of English cloth exports were being canalized up to the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, that this generalization applies quite aptly. "No one can deny," foreign merchants enjoyed calling to Philip II's attention, "that the cause of the prosperity of (Antwerp) is the freedom granted to those who trade there."³ When in the case of the Merchant Adventurer's trade Philip, under Granvelle's counsel, made the mistake of doubting the validity of this assumption, and expelled the English company from the port, rents in the city fell by one half,⁴ and Philip watched helplessly while his own merchants followed the English from a city which was never quite to regain

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1. E. Misselden, Free Trade, (1622) pp. 66-67.
 2. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 2, p. 231.
 3. R. H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, p. 84; quoting from Ehrenberg, Das Zeitalter der Fugger, vol. 2, pp. 7-8.
 4. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1575-77, p. 63; Edw. Castlelyn to Lord Burghley, Antwerp, 29 May 1575.

its commercial supremacy.¹ But Antwerp, with little merchant shipping of its own, and with a vital stake in the English cloth trade, was a unique case, and it is questionable whether the Merchant Adventurer's power to divert their trade was as compelling a threat in Germany as it had been in the Low Countries. Certainly the too frequent use of this weapon could be as damaging to the wielder as to the victim, and the somewhat peripatetic fortunes of a company which, under combined Spanish and Hanseatic pressure, was forced within the space of thirty years to locate its mart variously at Hamburg, Emden, Stade and Lubeck, was finally warned, that this "flitting from one place to another,"² was diminishing the value attached to the company's residence and having an adverse effect upon the English cloth industry.

Spanish attempts to interfere with English cloth exports will be examined in greater detail in the pages which follow, but owing to their vital effect upon England's overseas trade during the sixteenth century, it is necessary here to briefly summarize Spanish intentions. The conviction that the sealing off of England's cloth markets would bring Elizabeth to a compliance born of poverty, is one of the most constantly re-occurring themes of the State Papers Spanish during the second half of the sixteenth century. From 1564 to 1597 Spanish agents laboured, often with the zeal of crusaders, to exclude English cloth merchants from every continental mart. Attempts were

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1. Hist. MSS. Comm., Report 17, Pepys MSS., p. 149; Advices from Hamburg, Feb. ? 1569.
 2. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1595-97, p. 333, Eliz., vol. CCLXI, no. 64; Reasons for keeping the Merchant Adventurers staple at Stade, 1596?

made to cut off England's trade to Muscovy;¹ Parma intrigued in Denmark and at Danzig, while his agents "sedulously promoted the cause of the Hanseatics at Hamburg;² plans were mooted to send a Spanish agent to the Levant to influence the Grand Signior against allowing the English to traffic to the Port.³ This impractical attempt to develop a "Continental System," can be credited with but one triumph, when the embargo of 1586 succeeded for a time in closing off the majority of England's cloth markets.⁴ Yet though no more than moderately successful, the policy did much to aggravate industrial unrest in the clothing counties, and as a consequence of the threat it posed to the English economy, may be regarded as one of the major factors prompting the period of nascent commercial expansion during the reign of Elizabeth.

The government's first reaction to Spanish attrition was to strengthen the monopoly of the Merchant Adventurers. Never before had trade been so definitely shown to be a powerful weapon in diplomacy, and it followed that trade must be organized that it might come easily to the diplomatist's hand.⁵

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1. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1580-86, pp. 651-52; Report of a Spanish Spy in London, 10 Nov. 1586.
 2. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1583-84, p. 224; Count of East Friesland to Queen Elizabeth, Emden, 20 Nov. 1583: ibid., 1587, p. 219; Leicester to the Privy Council, Middelburg, August 1587.
 3. Cal. S.P. Spanish loc. cit.
 4. Infra, p. 192-93.
 5. E. F. Rich, The Ordinance Book of the Merchants of the Staple, p. 56.

In 1564 the company was granted a new charter incorporating them as the "Governor, Assistants and Fellowship of Merchant Adventurers of England," which invested them with a monopoly of the English cloth trade from the Somme to the Scaw.¹ The government's second, and its most significant reaction, was to attempt to distribute English cloth exports over a wider geographical area, that England's trade might be rendered less vulnerable to Spanish attack. It seems no accident that the Spanish, Barbary, Levant, French, and Eastland companies all date their charters from the years 1577-1581, years which began with the loss of the Merchant Adventurer's privileges at Hamburg,² and which ended with the first concerted effort, aided and abetted by Spain, to drive the Merchant Adventurers out of the Empire altogether.³

The development of the new trading companies was made possible by the investments of London promoters who in every case provided the backbone of financial support,⁴ and among whom were numbered many who, during the difficult times of the 'sixties and 'seventies, had deserted the Merchant Adventurers and now sought new outlets for their capital.⁵ A letter written

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1. The Lawes, Customes and Ordinances of the Fellowshippe of Merchantes Adventurers, ed. by W. E. Lingelbach, p. xxxi.
 2. Acts of the Privy Council 1577-78, p. 301; Proceedings in Council, 6 August 1578.
 3. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1583 and Addenda, p. 640; Rudolf II to Count Edzart of East Friesland, Vienna, 31 Oct. 1582.
 4. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 2, pp. 316, 337, 352, 363, 364-65: See the charters of the Eastland, Spanish, Barbary and Levant Companies in C.T. Carr, Select Charters of Trading Companies, 1530-1707.
 5. A. Friis, Alderman Cockayne's Project and the Cloth Trade, p. 54.

in 1588 by William Harborne, the representative of the Levant Company and Elizabeth's ambassador at Constantinople, makes it quite apparent that it was the Spanish threat that had given the spur to this flurry of commercial enterprise. "The Spaniard," he wrote, "knowing the welfare of our country to depend very much on the vent of our native commodities, not only forbade the use and bringing into any part of his dominions, but also then practiced with the Emperor and his Hanse towns and no less with the Easterly countries to the like effect." Hence it was necessary to seek out new markets for English cloth or, "this realme wanting former vent for and the same, shoulde necessarilie have fforced the marchaunt to surcease his trade, and the great number of pore people ... vnemployed to hard extremities." Then like the business-man of all ages who has given service to his government, he exaggerates the role of his own company in helping to frustrate the design of the Spaniard, "whoes intente were cleanlie prevented by this turquishe intercourse."¹

Doubts as to the wisdom of concentrating the bulk of the export trade along the London-Antwerp axis antedate the Spanish threat, and before the middle of the sixteenth century when unsettled political conditions in the Low Countries had been shown to be a constant hindrance to the trade of the Merchant Adventurers, there was sentiment in favour of a wider distribution of English commerce.² With the renewal of hostilities

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1. Quoted by H. G. Rawlinson, The Embassy of William Harborne to Constantinople, 1583-88, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 1922, vol. 5, p. 21.
 2. J. Wegg, Antwerp 1477-1559, pp. 280-81.

between France and the Empire in 1551 the English agent at Brussels, Sir Thomas Chamberlain, had written to the Privy Council warning of the threat the war posed to the English cloth trade and advising a search for new markets and a lessening of England's commercial dependence on the Low Countries.¹ But as yet there was a natural reluctance both on the part of the Merchant Adventurers and the government to interfere with the settled and convenient course of England's trade with Antwerp. Not before a combination of religious troubles in the Netherlands and a growing awareness of the reality of the Spanish threat, impressed on the government the dangers of continuing to canalize cloth exports through a single foreign market, was any active official support given to proposals to divert the Merchant Adventurers' trade to a more northerly port.² Henceforth the government was to exercise extreme caution when any attempt was made to force English merchants to confine their exports to specific foreign marts. When the governors of the Merchant Adventurers were negotiating for privileges at Hamburg in 1588, they were advised that, "Her Majesty ... thinks it not convenient that her subjects should be constrained to utter all their commodities there, and not be permitted to repair to other markets in Germany..."³

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1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1547-53, p. 188; Sir Thos. Chamberlain to the Council, Brussels, 1 Nov. 1551.
 2. There is some doubt whether the government gave its full support to the Merchant Adventurers move from Antwerp to Emden in 1564; see J. W. Burgon, Sir Thomas Gresham, vol. 2, p. 317.
 3. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1588, p. 39; Instructions to the Governors of the Merchant Adventurers, London, 12 July 1588.

But what was the extent of the "commercial expansion" Spanish economic attrition had prompted? Was there any immediate appreciable change either in the direction of English cloth exports, or in the volume of cloth exported? Was the principal trade in white cloths any less effectively canalized than it had been before the Merchant Adventurers departure from Antwerp?

A document has survived which is something of a sales manual for the instruction of English merchants trading abroad, and has been dated conjecturally by Professor Read to the years 1575 - 1585. It deals principally with markets other than those controlled by the Merchant Adventurers, and gives an impression of tremendous commercial vitality during these years. English merchants are making their way northward to Narva, Riga, and Revel, with coarse northern cloths. In France, Devonshire, Newberry, and Hampshire, kersies "stanell Redes and lustie gallantes" are sold at Rouen and St. Malo, while "all the yeare in greate shippes for feare of pirattes," Bristol and "tymleye frizes" are traded at Rochelle. In Spain and Portugal English merchants touch at every market from Bilbao, where "in great bowdance be here dispatched ... Somersetshire clothes of a towne called Sheptone Mallet," to Andalusia, where "must no course wares be brought," and fine white Reading and Newberry kersies are in demand. A merchant may find a lucrative market for very fine cloths in Barbary, but here he trades at the risk

of his life, for "yf the Spanyerdes take youe trading with them you dye for it." For the Levant market, Pewkes, Scarlets, Newberry, and Hampshire kersies are most likely to find a ready sale, but the Turk is discriminating, and "in any wyse your clothes must be the fynest you can gette."¹ But with one exception, each of these markets was being served with English cloth at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign,² and it is only in the case of the Levant trade, where as a consequence of the Ottoman threat English trade lapsed after 1550,³ that any new market can be said to have been opened. The Merchant Adventurers were now carrying their cloths directly to the German market instead of transporting them overland through the agency of the Dutch, while the lucrative Baltic trade which in 1559 had been largely under the control of the Hanseatics, had now passed to the Eastland Company. What had been achieved, was less the opening of new markets, than the strengthening of old ones, placing the control of trade in the hands of chartered companies, who in every case drove out interlopers, excluded retailers, and tended to bring the control of trade into the hands of London merchants.

The dangers of attempting any statistical approach to English economic history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are of course, very great, and attention has been called to them by Professor Clark.⁴ On the basis of admittedly incomplete

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1. C. Read, English Foreign Trade Under Elizabeth, The English Historical Review, 1914, vol. 29, pp. 516-24.
 2. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1560-61, p. 524; The sale of English cloth on the continent, 29 Jan. 1561.
 3. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 2, p. 335.
 4. G. N. Clark, Guide to English Commercial Statistics, 1696-1782, pp. ix-xvi.

customs figures for various years during the reign of Elizabeth, it is impossible to say more than that cloth exports were maintained in these years. In 1558/59 aliens and denizens exported 98,819 cloths from the port of London, while in the last years given, exports showed no appreciable increase, reaching only 110,109 cloths in 1593/94. The only striking change in these years was the sharp decline in the value of customs paid by foreign merchants. In 1558/59 aliens paid £40,360-9-11½, greater than the amount paid by denizens, while in 1593/94 the payment of customs by aliens had dwindled to £4,431-12-2½. These figures compare favorably with those recently compiled by Stone,¹ who has brought statistics to show that there was no appreciable increase in cloth exports from the beginning to the end of Elizabeth's reign. The only significant increase he found was in the export of the new draperies, and only to the extent that these cloths were more expensive than whites could English cloth exports be said to have increased in value.²

If Stone's statistics are reliable, it becomes apparent that the overwhelming bulk of England's cloth exports were as effectively canalized as they had been before the Merchant Adventurers departed Antwerp. With the exception of the East India Company, all companies founded after 1550 were cloth companies, specializing in the export of dyed and dressed cloths.³ Compared to the Merchant Adventurers, who are estimated to have

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1. Infra., Appendix.B, p. 240.
 2. L. Stone, Elizabethan Overseas Trade, The Economic History Review, 1949, p. 46.
 3. A. Friis, Alderman Cockayne's Project and the Cloth Trade, pp. 56, 58.

controlled 71% of the total of all cloth exports in the latter part of the sixteenth century, the cloth exports of other companies were insignificant. Even the Eastland Company, second in importance to the Merchant Adventurers, controlled no more than $11\frac{1}{2}\%$ of the cloth exported, while the Muscovy, Barbary and Levant Companies controlled no more than $1\frac{1}{2}\%$, 2%, and 6% of England's cloth exports respectively.¹ The extent to which English cloth exports were canalized after the Merchant Adventurers left Antwerp in 1567 is emphasized when it is taken into account that the company never shipped cloth to more than one mart in the Low Countries, usually Middelburg, and to another mart in Germany, located as Hanseatic and Spanish pressure permitted, at Emden, Stade, Lubeck, or Hamburg. If it had been Elizabeth's object to effect a wider distribution of English cloth exports after 1567, the attempt had been unsuccessful and England's cloth industry was as vulnerable to embargo as before.

One consequence of this system of trading was that the Dutch, unhampered like the Merchant Adventurers, by tradition or the financial exactions of a penurious government, were given a free hand to exploit with cheap goods, markets in places where the English trader would or could not go, and thus gradually to wrest from England the commercial initiative she had gained during the sixteenth century. The demand for English cloth in the restricted markets of Germany and the Netherlands

1. L. Stone, op. cit., p. 51.

would be unlikely to increase greatly over a long period of time, and support for a trading system whereby the bulk of English cloth exports were channeled through no more than two foreign markets, amounted in fact to the government's sanctioning a policy which limited the export of cloth. Groups whose economic interests demanded increased cloth sales, quickened by the example of the Dutch, turned naturally to attack the instruments of this policy and became the advocates of freer trade.

The landholding classes would not as a body have willingly favoured the complete freeing of trade from the control of merchant companies in which many of their members had vested interests, but as a class they stood to gain much by the passage of legislation which would at least force the trading companies to adopt a less conservative export policy. For more than a century a parliament dominated by landlords had been party to the promulgation of eleven acts against enclosures¹ which, if they did not prevent, certainly hindered the extent to which landlords could meet the problem of rising prices by converting arable land to pasture. Frequent wool embargoes, and the permanent prohibition to export this commodity after 1617 had further reacted against the landed interests since the effect of such legislation was to decrease the price of wool in the home market, while exporters were benefited, being able to

1. 4 Henry VII c. 19; 6 Henry VIII c. 5; 7 Henry VIII c. 1;
25 Henry VIII c. 13; 27 Henry VIII c. 22; 5 & 6 Edw. VI c. 5;
2 & 3 P & M c. 2; 5 Eliz. c. 2; 31 Eliz. c. 7; 39 Eliz. c. 1;
39 Eliz. c. 2.

purchase cloth at a premium.¹ Having for so long supported a policy favourable to the commercial classes, landlords would not as compliantly accept the trading policies of merchant companies which seemed to hinder the vigorous export of wool in the form of cloth. Their hand is clearly seen in the passage of the bill of 1606 which revoked the monopoly of the Spanish Company on the grounds that "such a Monopoly tended to abate the Prices of our Wools..."²

Of the groups who combined to attack the Merchant Adventurers at the beginning of the seventeenth century, none were more outspoken in their criticism than the clothworkers. To them, the policy of a company which specialized in exporting unfinished cloths seemed deliberately calculated to advance the interests of foreign cloth dressers against those of English craftsmen, and they recalled caustically, that in seeking to expropriate the privileges enjoyed in England by the Hanseatic merchants, the Adventurers had charged the Germans with committing much the same offense.³ There was probably much truth in the merchants' claim that the high cost, combined with the low quality of cloth dyed and dressed in England made it extremely difficult, except at a loss, to dispose of abroad.⁴ Lest there

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1. J. Smith, Chronicon Rusticum Commerciale, (1747) vol. 1, pp. 127-28; ibid., vol. 2, p. 553; J. R. McCulloch, The Literature of Political Economy, p. 236,
 2. Jas. I c. 6.
 3. "It was also a ground of complaint against the Hansards that they would only buy white cloth wherewith they set their own people to work." Quoted by E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 1, p. 486.
 4. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1591-94, p. 321, Eliz., vol. CCXLIV no. 50; Richard Saltonstall to Lord Burghley, 27 Feb. 1593; ibid. 1598-1601, pp. 207-08, Eliz., vol. CCLXXI, no. 3; Paper against the export of all cloths dyed and dressed as desired by the clothworkers, 6 June 1599.

was any danger that the interests of a group numbering not one-tenth of the total clothing population¹ should be advanced to the detriment of the clothiers', or the company's interests, the Adventurers as yet had little difficulty in playing on the Council's very real fears of the consequences that might befall any interference with the settled course of English trade.²

Yet in tune with the general trend of a policy which aimed at self-sufficiency, the government did much to promote the development of the dyeing and dressing industry. It welcomed the settlement of foreign craftsmen who had fled religious persecution abroad, it granted licenses to men like Pedro de Vaaz, a Portuguese, who claimed to have discovered a new dyeing process, that he might teach his methods to English dyers.³ It encouraged projects to send craftsmen to Muscovy and Persia in search of new pigments that would replace the insufficiencies of woad as a coloring agent,⁴ and the government went so far as to prohibit, and to enforce, the export of cloth manufactured in the counties of Suffolk and Kent before it had been completely dyed and dressed.⁵

Since the reign of Edward IV, there had actually been an act on the statute books prohibiting the export of cloth not

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1. Ibid. 1595-97, p. 330, Eliz., vol. CCLXI, no. 47; Reasons for exporting all cloths dyed and dressed, 1596?
 2. Acts of the Privy Council 1547-50, p. 142; Proceedings in Council 9 Nov. 1547.
 3. Ibid. 1575-77, p. 381; Placard to all Mayours on behalf of Pedro de Vaaz, 11 June 1577.
 4. Ibid. 1578-80, p. 147; Council to the warden of the Dyers Company, 31 May 1579.
 5. 8 Eliz. c. 6.

dyed and dressed,¹ but this act had been gradually watered-down,² until in 1536 Henry VIII placed a ceiling price of £3 on colored cloths, and £4 on whites, making it illegal to export cloths of greater value before they had been dyed and dressed in England.³ The act's only effect seems to have been to prompt the Merchant Adventurers to evade it by purchasing licenses either direct from the crown,⁴ or instigating courtiers to sue for licenses which the company in turn purchased from them,⁵ that they might export cloths in the prohibited categories in contravention of the statute.

The granting of licenses of this sort was of course, the accepted way of rewarding courtiers, or of propping-up an ancient house, and at one time or another, practically every important member of the government was in possession of one or more of these particularly remunerative cloth licenses. It was estimated in 1563 that the annual export of prohibited cloths by license amounted to between 50,000 to 60,000 cloths annually, and at one time, Walsingham alone controlled 50% of the licenses for cloths so exported.⁶ Unfortunately, the licensee generally found it more profitable to use his grant as a means for corruption and extortion, than to rely on the value of the salaries

1. 7 Edw. IV c. 3.

2. 3 Henry VII c. 12; 3 Henry VIII c. 7.

3. 27 Henry VIII c. 13.

4. Cal. Patent Rolls 1555-57, p. 173; License to the Merchant Adventurers for the export of cloths in contravention of the statute, 29 Oct. 1555.

5. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1598-1601, pp. 383-84, Eliz., vol. CCLXXIV no. 19; Petition of Thos. Caesar and Robt. Webbe to export undressed cloths, 17 Jan. 1600.

6. C. Read, Mr. Secretary Walsingham, vol. 3, pp. 381-82.

they carried with them. The Earl of Cumberland, for example, who in 1600 purchased a patent for the export of white cloths that had formerly been held by Sir Edward Stafford and Sir Robert Cecil, discovered the infinite possibilities for profit that would come from having one's own official in the Customs House who would not only exact customs according to the Earl's fancy, but who proved so thorough that he hailed members of the Merchant Adventurers before the Exchequer when they proved refractory.¹

Elizabeth was not one to scruple where questions of profit were involved, and in 1566 she accepted as a fact the impossibility, and the lack of financial sagacity involved, in attempting further to enforce statutes prohibiting the export of unfinished cloths. Henceforth the clothworkers were to be content with dyeing and dressing one of every ten cloths exported by the Merchant Adventurers.² Had the Adventurers complied with the statute the clothworkers would have perhaps been content with this small mercy, but in May 1599 they came up with statistical evidence to show that of the last 56,000 cloths exported by the company, only a scant 300 had passed through cloth finishers' dye vats.³ The timing of their complaint is important for it coincided with a period when the Merchant Adventurers, excluded from the Empire, were having a good deal of trouble protecting their interests from the ravages of interlopers, and it

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1. The Egerton Papers, ed. by J. Payne Collier, pp. 336-339; George Cumberland to Sir Robert Cecil, 5 March 1601; Christopher Hoddesdon to The Council, 6 March 1601.
 2. 8 Eliz. c. 6.
 3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1598-1601, p. 204, Eliz., vol. CCLXX, no. 128; Sir Stephen Soame, Dr. Caesar, and Robt. Beale to the Council, May 1599.

is just possible that the complaint was prompted by persons other than clothworkers, who stood to gain if the power of the company was broken once and for all. The clothworkers pressed their advantage by reviving pressure to require all cloths to be finished before exportation,¹ a plea not likely to be considered at a time when the market for white cloths was uncertain. But in 1606, at the height of parliament's attack on the merchant companies, the clothworkers actually managed to get a bill through the house,² later to be rejected as "utterly unfit" by the Lords,³ by which the prohibition against the export of unfinished cloths would have become law. They were to wait yet another ten years for their moment.

Though the Merchant Adventurers defended their laxness in pressing the sale of finished cloth by appealing the necessity of protecting the interests of a numerically superior body of cloth-makers,⁴ the clothier would not generally have agreed that the interests of his clients were being well served by the company. Clothiers were not themselves guiltless of the charges they directed against the Merchant Adventurers in 1604, when they alleged that the society combined to fix prices, quantities, and times of sale,⁵ yet their grievances were none the less

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1. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 18, p. 167; The case of the Clothworkers against the Merchant Adventurers, May 1599.
 2. Commons Journals, I, p. 293.
 3. Lords' Journals, II, p. 433.
 4. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1595-97, p. 330, Eliz., vol. CCLXI no. 47; Reasons for exporting all cloths dyed and dressed, 1596?
 5. Commons Journals, I, p. 218.

justifiable, and it seems apparent that clothiers often did suffer from unfair business practices at the hands of London merchants. A clothier who had endured a journey from the provinces to Blackwell Hall, reputedly "as chargeable as a Voyage to Spain or Turkey,"¹ had very little left in the way of bargaining power, for he was given the choice of disposing of his cloths at terms convenient to the Londoners or facing financial ruin. Knowing this, London merchants do not seem to have been averse to delaying purchases from clothiers until, unable to maintain themselves longer in London, the countrymen were forced to "seke the marchantes to offer theire clothes with teares in theire eies."²

The fact that west-country clothiers were required to carry their cloths overland to London instead of shipping them to such nearby ports as Bristol and Exeter, is a measure of the decline of the outports, and indicates the extent to which London had captured control of the export trade of the kingdom. Few facts are more important to the economic history of sixteenth and seventeenth century England than the commercial supremacy of London. Though her inhabitants numbered but one-tenth of the total population of England, her merchants controlled eight-tenths of the kingdom's foreign trade,³ and at one time during the sixteenth century, four of them paid more in customs revenue than was paid by the merchants of the entire city of York.⁴

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1. W. Petyt, Brittania Languens, (1680) pp. 344-45.
 2. R. H. Tawney and E. Power, Tudor Economic Documents, vol. 3, pp. 265-76; A Discourse of Corporations.
 3. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 2, pp. 249-50.
 4. M. Sellers, The York Merchant Adventurers, p. 150.

That London had become the collecting and distributing center for English cloth was in a large measure the outcome of the city's geographic location. No other port afforded a more convenient approach to the international market at Antwerp. With the increasing demand for English cloth during the latter fifteenth century, greater and less uncertain profits awaited the merchant who shipped his cloth over the comparatively safe London to Antwerp route and left the business of distribution to entrepreneurs, than to the merchant who risked the dangers of piracy and the expense of a longer voyage, and attempted to deal directly with distant European markets. By the early sixteenth century London was gaining control of more and more of the trade of the realm. At Southampton, for example, merchants controlling the bulk of the city's trade packed up and moved to the metropolis, and Southampton, formerly a center for the Mediterranean trade fell into decline.¹ Elsewhere the pattern was the same. No longer able to command the services of wealthy clothiers and chapmen, every port from Sandwich to Winchelsea was denuded of its commerce and left "in a maner with no mariners in them."² During a period when the outports "manifestly decayed" the population of London was estimated to have quadrupled,³ unimpeded by ordinances prohibiting the erection of new houses.⁴ The lure of the metropolis was irresistible

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1. A. Ruddock, *London Capitalists and the Decline of Southampton in the Early Tudor Period*, The Economic History Review, 1949, p. 148.
 2. R. H. Tawney and E. Power, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 97-103; Thos. Barnabe, *Merchant*, to Cecil, 1582.
 3. E. Hecksher, Mercantilism, vol. 1, p. 418.
 4. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, pp. 106, no. 927; 117, no. 1011; 122-23, no. 1049; 125, no. 1063; Various proclamations against the erection of new houses in London, 1602-1608.

offering the clever chances of a quick rise in the social scale that threatened to counteract the best measures of a government aiming at the preservation of existing class relationships. It was observed with no small concern that "The bredying of so many merchaunts in London, rison owt of pore mens sonnes, hath ben a marvelous distruction to the holl reame ..."¹

At a time when London was in fact gaining control of the export trade, the right of London merchants to control it was implied by act of parliament. Late in the fifteenth century the London chapter of a loosely knit company of Merchants, sharing rights apparently meant to extend to all Englishmen trading abroad,² had begun to feel their importance, and northern merchants complained that though in the past it had been the society's custom to elect one governor from London and another from the northern cities, this custom had not been observed since John Pykryng had been elected governor at London. At the mart towns abroad, the Londoners were allegedly forcing the northerners to sell their cloths "in strates joyning nyghe the marchandise of London ... that the clothe of the north parties sall apere wers." Should this fail to hinder the cloth sales of northern merchants, Pykryng had seen to it that the price of their cloths would, for he had influenced the tellers at Brabant to take double toll on northern cloths.³ Not long afterwards the Londoners added insult to injury, the outport

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1. R. H. Tawney and E. Power, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 106; A Treatise Concerninge the staple and the commodities of this realme, 1519-35?
 2. The Lawes, Customes and Ordinances of the Fellowshippe of Merchantes Adventurers, ed. by W. E. Lingelbach, p. xxii.
 3. R. H. Tawney and E. Power, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 1-5; Grievances of Northern Merchants against the London Merchant Adventurers, 1478.

merchants protesting that, "contrarie to every Englissheman's libertie," the London body had made an ordinance that "noe Englishman resortyng to the seyde Martes shall neither bye nor sell any godes ... except he first componde and make fyne with the seide feliship," at an apparently exorbitant rate. In 1497 parliament intervened, and passed an act which limited to 10 marks the amount of the fine the London body could legally exact.¹ Scarcely any other factor was of greater significance in the process by which the Merchant Adventurers were transformed from a loosely knit organization to a closed monopoly, supported by the state, and controlled by the London body. Acknowledging the right of the Londoners to tax was tantamount to acknowledging their right to govern. The company's new charter of 1505, completed the subordination of the outport members to the authority of the company, London granting to the governor and the Court of Assistants the right to make statutes, levy fines, and compel all who used the trade to enter the freedom of the company.² Though the headquarters of the company were fixed at Antwerp, it was London merchants who either in person, or through factors and apprentices, controlled the court at Antwerp.³

Thus, when the need for additional cloth markets led to the founding of new companies after 1571, the precedent acknowledging the hegemony of the London company was already long

1. 12 Henry VII c. 6.

2. W. E. Lingelbach, *op. cit.*, p. xxvi.

3. G. Unwin, *The Merchant Adventurers in the Reign of Elizabeth*, *The Economic History Review*, 1927-28, vol. 1, p. 37.

established. In charters granted to trading companies during the reign of Elizabeth, the right to control trade was in every case invested in the London company, or to groups in which Londoners exercised a predominant influence. It was not the government's intention to favour London at the expense of the outports, and often the titles of companies emphasized that their character was meant to be national. Exclusive trading privileges to cover a particular area were granted to the "Governor, Assistants and Fellowship of Merchant Adventurers of England," or to the "Governor and Company of Merchants of England Trading in the Levant." But with the possible exception of the Levant Company whose charter explicitly provided safeguards against restricting the control of trade to the merchants of any particular city,¹ the outports would never have agreed that that "of England" was more than a flourish. In assessing the reasons for the declining prosperity and influence of the provincial ports, merchants outside the London ring were in common agreement that the major cause was that "the merchauntes are so tyed vnto Companies, the heades whereof are Citizens of london," and that these were following a policy deliberately designed to draw "all the whole trade of merchandize ... to the Citie of london."²

What the outports saw as a consequence of company policy, was more probably a result of the fact that the greater credit

1. Infra., p. 126.

2. R. H. Tawney and E. Power, Tudor Economic Documents, vol. 2, pp. 49-50; Sertaine Causes of the decay of the traffique in Kyngston vpon hull, 1575.

resources of the capital simply made it more profitable for wealthy clothiers to divert the bulk of their cloth shipments away from the outports to London. By the middle of the sixteenth century the dependence of clothiers on the London market was striking. It has been calculated that by 1560, 93% of the cloth customs for the entire kingdom were paid by the port of London, and exports from provincial ports were down to one half of what they were when Henry VIII died.¹ No appreciable change seems evident over the next century. In 1602, 80% of all English customs were paid by London,² and in 1640, 75% of the customs paid in London - even when customs for white cloths are excluded - were paid in woollen cloths or in woollen commodities alone.³ The share of the outports during this year may be surmised from the fact that by 1640, western clothiers who produced the greater part of the cloth manufactured in England were still shipping the overwhelming bulk of their cloths to the capital.⁴ An examination of export data from the ports of Newcastle, Hull, York, Lynn and Ipswich - all mentioned by Wheeler as having chapters of the Merchant Adventurers Company⁵ - shows, as might be expected that their principal trade was in the export of cheap northern cloths, or in the

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1. L. Stone, Elizabethan Overseas Trade, The Economic History Review, 1949, p. 39; L. Stone, State Control in Sixteenth-century England, ibid., 1947, p. 105.
 2. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1601-03, p. 267, Eliz., vol. CCLXXXV no. 65; Estimate of customs collected during the past ten years, Nov. 1602.
 3. F. J. Fisher, London's Export Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century, The Economic History Review, 1950, p. 159.
 4. G. D. Ramsay, The Wiltshire Woollen Industry, p. 110.
 5. J. Wheeler, A Treatise on Commerce, (1601) p. 22.

case of Ipswich, in short Suffolk cloths. What is striking is the fact that the majority of these cloths were being carried to Elbing, the mart town of the Eastland Company. Similarly at Southampton and Exeter where the company also maintained branches, exports of Hampshire kersies and Devonshire dozens were almost exclusively directed to St. Malo, Bordeaux and Rouen,¹ the preserves of the French Company. The inference is clear. The trade of the Merchant Adventurers was the almost exclusive monopoly of the London Company, the outport chapters being all but totally shut out from a share in the company's staple trade in white cloths. Outport claims that the London Company was following a policy of calculated self interest cannot therefore be entirely attributed to mere provincial jealousy. A company ordinance of 1608 expressly stipulated that "No act or ordinance shalbe made concerninge shippinge without the advyce of the brethern of this ffellowshippe dwellinge in Londone,"² an ordinance which the company defended on the grounds that organized sailings were a safeguard against customs frauds, and provided necessary protection against piratical attacks at sea.³ Yet in 1638 the company at London was employing the ordinance to force merchants from the southwestern ports to direct all future shipments of Spanish

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1. For figures on cloth exports from the outports for various years during the early seventeenth century, see Friis, Alderman Cockayne's Project and the Cloth Trade, pp. 63-69.
 2. The Lawes, Customes and Ordinances of the Fellowshippe of Merchantes Adventurers, ed. by W. E. Lingelbach, pp. 56-57.
 3. H. Parker, Of A Free Trade, (1648) pp. 16-17.

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cloth over the London route. The London merchants who drew up the report of the clothing commission two years later can hardly be absolved from the charge of self interest. Had their recommendations been adopted, the export of woollen cloth would have in fact become the exclusive privilege of London companies.²

There was nothing unusual in London's attempt to set itself up as the marshaling area for English cloth exports. In the industrial sphere, practically every clothing town of any consequence made similar attempts, seeking authority to force country producers to channel their cloths through town markets. Nor were merchant companies in the outports averse to taking upon themselves the same powers that were found so objectionable when exerted by London. The Eastland merchants at York had led the fight of the northern confederacy of Eastland merchants against what were regarded as the monopolistic practices of the London Company. Yet in the seventeenth century, the company at York demanded the right to exact impositions, to maintain its own residence abroad, and to hold a Court of Assistants whose decisions would be binding over the company's branches at Leeds, Newcastle and Hull.³ York's example would indicate that in the dispute between London and the outports which culminated in the Bill For Free Trade of 1604, there was

1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1637-38, p. 218, Chas. I, vol. CCCLXXX nos. 85, 86, 87; Papers concerning the dispute between the Merchant Adventurers of London and the Southwest ports, Jan. 1638.

2. Infra., Appendix.A, pp. 234-39.

3. The Acts and Ordinances of the Eastland Company, ed. by M. Sellers, pp. lxxvi-lxxvii; M. Sellers, York in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, The English Historical Review, 1897, vol. 12, p. 445.

very little objection to the system of monopoly trading, but that it mattered a good deal who the monopolists were.

The right of London to govern the export trade, and the denial of that right by the outports was the fundamental issue in dispute between London and the provincial companies. "We are," insist the Newcastle Merchant Adventurers, "a several and distinct company" with charters dating from the time of king John, "and were not as you have said, called Merchant Adventurers of London but of England." Earlier the Merchant Adventurers at York had made a similar claim, asserting their right to trade independently of the authority of the London company, yet affirming their right to share all the benefits granted to the Londoners in their charter.¹ In companies with less claim to antiquity the same assertions of economic independence constantly marred relations between the local and central chapters. At Chester and Liverpool, the chapters of the Spanish Company rejected as contrary to liberty and usage, the order of the central body at London to exclude retailers from participating in their trade, and appealed to their charters and prescriptive rights in defence of their action.² Merchants at Plymouth, Dartmouth, Totnes and Barnstaple, through protesting their belief in the wisdom of maintaining a regulated trade, refused to comply with the ordinances of the French Company which they claimed to have been formulated with-

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1636, p. 298, Chas. I, vol. CCCXLI no. 98; Merchant Adventurers to the king, 1636?: The York Merchant Adventurers, ed. by M. Sellers, pp. 249, 264; The Newcastle Merchant Adventurers, ed. by J. R. Boyle and F. W. Dendy, vol. 2, pp. 8, 31-32.
 2. Acts of the Privy Council 1575-77, p. 282; Council to Sir James Hawes, Mr. Osburne and Mr. Barnes, 3 Feb. 1576.

out regard to the interests of the western ports.¹ The chapters of the Eastland Company at York, Hull, Newcastle and Ipswich, fought a long and finally successful battle with the London Company for the revision of the Company's charter which conferred on the Londoners the right to appoint local governors, and denied outport branches the right to maintain a Court of Assistants.²

But while affirming independence from London, London's most avid opponents sought as resolutely as the London Company to exclude retailers from their trade and to prevent the incursion of interlopers. The Merchant Adventurers of both Bristol and Exeter fought determinedly to exclude retailers and craftsmen from membership in their organizations. In the case of Bristol, the company became involved in a keen political dispute in which the Member of Parliament who had supported a bill authorizing the company to exclude retailers was defeated. In the next session of parliament his successor, a Mr. Young, successfully carried a debate in which the Bristol Company was censured as bitterly as the London Company was to be later, of restraining the right of the subject to trade. Exeter was more fortunate. Having obtained a charter from Elizabeth which provided for the exclusion of craftsmen they seem to have been able to maintain the exclusive character of their organization. When they complained in 1634 that craftsmen were encroaching on their trade, these were excluded by order

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1. Ibid., 1613-14, pp. 206-07; Suit of the merchants of Totnes, Barnstaple, Dartmouth and Plymouth against the French Company, 26 Sept. 1613; ibid., pp. 247-48, 31 Oct. 1613.
 2. Ibid., 1615-16, pp. 572-77; Outport suit against the Eastland Company, 5 June 1616.

of the Privy Council.¹ Indeed, it was their common opposition to the unauthorized trader which could link even the most discordant elements in the Merchant Adventurers to the support of the London Company. In the seventeenth century when interlopers from Bristol and Exeter sought the support of the Newcastle Company for an attack designed to break the Adventurers' monopoly in the trade to Germany, Newcastle replied that though "the Marchants Adventurers' have dealt very unkindly with us (to give it no worse term) ... yet in this case we do hold it more conducing to the common good of trade and the maintaining of our general privileges to join with the Merchants of London rather than with these interlopers."² Adam Smith's day was not yet, and premise that trade must be regulated or else decay, went largely unquestioned in the writings of the pamphleteers. Kayll for example, after a long discourse in which he refutes every possible argument for maintaining the existing order of things, finally concludes that though he would make trade "everywhere free," he would not free trade to the extent that it would become in "any way so tumultous as that thereby I would exclude all order and forms of government in Trades."³ Most men would have agreed with Misselden that "Those that trade without Order and Government, are like unto men, that make Holes in the bottome of that Ship, wherein themselves are Passengers."⁴

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1. G. Unwin, Industrial Organization, p. 77: Simonds D'Ewes, Journals, pp. 160-61.
 2. The Newcastle Merchant Adventurers, ed. by J. R. Boyle and F. W. Dendy, vol. 2, pp. 136-37.
 3. R. Kayll, The Trades Increase, (1615) p. 55.
 4. E. Misselden, Free Trade, (1622) pp. 84-85.

The eloquence with which the "Instructions touching the bill for free trade" champion "the natural right and liberty of the subjects of England" to trade freely, somewhat obscures the fact that the committee in charge of drafting the bill did not interpret freedom as license. When the attorney for the Merchant Adventurers attacked the bill on the grounds that it would destroy "good government" in trade, Sandys made it quite clear that an end to regulation was not contemplated - "Provident men would always cooperate to secure a stable trade." The supporters of the bill of 1604 were not motivated by any abstract notions of the desirability for free trade, but aimed simply at freeing trade from the dominating influence and control of London. Sandys made no secret of the fact that the bill was directed "Against London," and it seems to have had its principal support, not from those who stood outside the fraternity of company members, but from the great body of merchants within the companies who saw themselves as "serving only for a show," while the lion's share of profits were falling into the purses of a small coterie of Londoners who restrained trade "to the great undoing or great hindrance of all the rest."¹

At the time the bill against monopolies was introduced in 1601 it had already been agreed to except chartered companies or other corporations from the terms of the act - an inconsistency which Bacon had noted.² Having escaped in 1601, it seems odd that the Merchant Adventurers were now brought under the

1. Commons Journals, I, pp. 218-21.

2. Heywood Townshend, Journals, p. 238; "But if she grants it to a number of burgesses, or corporation, that must stand, and that forsooth, is no monopoly?"

censure of a parliament which branded the company as "being the spring of all monopolies."¹ It is possible that the attack was prompted by a move on the part of the Emperor and the Hanseatic League to open negotiations that would lead to a suspension of the Imperial Edict in force against the company since 1597.² Since the company's authority over the German market had been in abeyance a good many appetites had been whetted. Interlopers found the long restricted German markets fair game. But within the company itself a good many merchants - not, unhappily, "of the meanest and poorest sort" - had been driving a brisk trade to Hamburg and Lubeck.³ A royal order prohibiting trade to the Ems and the Elbe,⁴ and a company order requiring members to post bonds with the customers to guarantee the shipment of their cloths to Middelburg,⁵ failed to effect their purpose. At one stage, the company was on the verge of dissolution.⁶ Hence by 1604, the outport branches of the company would not have looked with favour upon a return to the status quo ante which would re-invest the London Company with a virtual monopoly of the trade to Germany.

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1. Commons Journals, I, p. 221.
 2. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 16, p. 156; Stephen Lesieur to Lord Cecil, 29 June 1604.
 3. Hist. MSS. Comm., Report 9, Cecil MSS., vol. 12, p. 42; Statement of negotiations with the Emperor concerning the Merchant Adventurers, Jan. 1602?
 4. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1598-1601, p. 204, Eliz., vol. CCLXX no. 128; Reasons for restraint of transport to the rivers Elbe and Ems, 31 May 1599.
 5. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 16, pp. 159-60; Council to the Customers of the port of London, 17 April 1597.
 6. Letters of John Chamberlain, ed. by N. E. McClure, vol. 1, p. 56; Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, 8 Dec. 1598.

The predominantly anti-London nature of the free trade debate seems further evidenced by parliament's action concerning the trade to France. In 1605 after rejecting an attempt by London capitalists to gain a charter of incorporation for the trade to France, parliament passed a bill throwing the trade to France, Spain, and Portugal open to all subjects.¹ But in the following year, parliament confirmed charters Elizabeth had granted to companies in Exeter and Southampton, investing them with an exclusive monopoly in the trade to France.² The government was well aware of the character of the dispute. In the new charter it granted to the Levant Company in 1605, care was taken to avoid outport hostility by the inclusion of provisions stipulating that the right to govern the trade should not be invested in the merchants of any particular city.³

The westerners' monopoly in the trade to France was short lived. Under somewhat shady circumstances, James in 1610 granted a charter conferring a monopoly for the trade to a group of London merchants, taking care to keep the grant secret until parliament had been prorogued.⁴ Only the trade to Spain remained free, the frequent pleas of Londoners for incorporation not made cogent by reports of maltreatment at the hands of the inquisition, and of the inconveniences to trade

1. 3 Jas. I c. 6.

2. Cal. Patent Rolls 1558-60, p. 428; Patent incorporating the Merchants of Exeter trading to France, 17 June 1560: 4 Jas. I c. 9.

3. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 2, p. 341.

4. Commons Journals, I, p. 461.

presented by the oddities of the Spanish legal system.¹ The fate of the trade justified the Merchant Adventurers contempt for unregulated commerce. In 1622, Misselden pointed to the troubles of merchants in Spain as an object lesson. They would, he argues, reoccur wherever trade became "a receptacle and Rendez-vous for every Shopkeeper, Stragler, and Vnskilful person."² Like Wheeler in his celebrated defence of the Merchant Adventurers twenty years before,³ Misselden sought to confound the critics of the company. The Adventurers had nothing to fear from the new bill against monopolies now before Parliament, for it contained a clause specifically exempting corporations and chartered companies from the terms of the act.⁴ But merchants at Dover, reviving charges that the company forced them to ship their commodities over the London route,⁵ had organized the Cinque Ports in a new attack against the company and had

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1. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 18, p. 143; Arthur Gregory to Salisbury, Poole, 24 May 1606: for later attempts at incorporating the Spanish merchants see, Cal. S.P. Dom. 1635-36, p. 529, Chas. I, vol. CCCXXV no. 28; Attorney General to the Council, 2 June 1636: ibid., 1637-38, p. 103, Chas. I, vol. CCCLXXVII no. 35; Petition of merchants of London trading to Spain, 1637? ibid. 1638-39, p. 330, Chas. I, vol. CCCCIX no. 128; Complaints of Spanish merchants to the Council, 18 Jan. 1639.
 2. E. Misselden, Free Trade, (1622) p. 87.
 3. J. Wheeler, A Treatise on Commerce, (1601).
 4. Debates in the House of Lords 1621, ed. by S. R. Gardiner, pp. 151-55.
 5. Acts of the Privy Council 1619-21, p. 55; Proceedings in Council, 6 Nov. 1619: Cal. S.P. Dom. 1619-23, p. 251, Jas. I, vol. CXX no. 126; Petition of the Cinque Ports to the Commons, April ? 1621.

managed to introduce, and were now vigorously pressing, a new bill for free trade before parliament.¹ The country was smarting under the effects of a severe trade depression, and the recent experiments of James and Alderman Cockayne seem to have convinced parliament of the dangers of interfering with the settled course of the cloth trade. Hence, though of great nuisance value, the bill met with very little support. Yet the company did not escape scathless. In an attempt to relieve the severity of the depression parliament petitioned the king to permit the outports to share in the export of the new draperies, a right restricted to the London Company under the charter of 1618. On condition that the outport merchants agree to trade only to the mart towns of the company, the request was granted.² It was the first step toward a serious modification of the monopoly maintained by the London Company.

When parliament met in 1624 it seems to have been determined to saddle the Merchant Adventurers with the responsibility for the lingering depression in the cloth industry. The impositions the company charged on all cloths to pay off the debts incurred when their charter was reissued in 1618, had been a long standing grievance. Their effect in driving up the price of cloth could be traced to the king's own misguided policy and the company's right to exact them until the debt was

1. Commons Journals, I, pp. 595, 620.

2. Acts of the Privy Council 1619-21, pp. 391-92; Summary of negotiations permitting the outports to share in the export of new draperies, 11 June 1621; Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 155 no. 1314; Solution of various publique grievances, 10 July 1621.

paid off was not completely denied. But Sir Edwin Sandys suspected that the company was making a good thing of its privilege. The company professed to have raised only £14,000 of the £50,000 due, but rumour had it that the amount was nearer £80,000.¹ The company cannot be absolved from suspicion. When finally forced to bring their patents, orders, and account books before the house, they refused to produce their accounts until after consulting the king. The worst suspicions of the committee for trade do not seem to have been proved, and parliament contented itself with pronouncing impositions a grievance to the people. But with the company's charters in hand, Sandys laid the monopolistic practices of the company bare to the nation shrewdly making much of the fact that the charter contained a clause denying the right of any Court of Westminster to call it into question. The result was a foregone conclusion. The charter was pronounced a grievance "in creation and execution,"² and the committee for trade recommended to the council that trade in all but white cloths be thrown open to all subjects. The Council acted on this proposal shortly thereafter. Trade in all but white cloths was now free while the company was forced to admit into its ranks all Merchant Staplers and any others who were "mere merchants and not shopkeepers."³

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1623-25, pp. 205-06, Jas. I, vol. CLXII no. 12; Sir Francis Nethersole to Carleton, 3 April 1624.
 2. Commons Journals, I, pp. 689, 695, 752, 754, 780.
 3. Acts of the Privy Council 1623-25, pp. 268-69; Summary of negotiations leading to the opening of the trade in new draperies to all subjects, 10 July 1624.

Though the company was restored to its monopoly in 1634, it was never to regain the exclusive character of its organization. Henceforth membership in the company was no longer a sign of commercial prowess, but of a merchant's ability to pay a £50 entrance fee.¹

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For a decade after 1624 the Merchant Adventurers were left with the export monopoly of ~~an~~ over-produced, high priced commodity, for which two ancient and unsatisfactory markets existed. There had been a considerable fall in the demand for white English broadcloth in the Netherlands' market since the time of the Cockayne experiment when the Dutch had begun to revive their textile industry. In the past England had been able to successfully counter the threat of Dutch competition by cutting off the export of wool, but access to large supplies of improved Spanish wool had largely freed Dutch industry from its dependence on England as a source of raw material. While Dutch competition increased, the price of white cloth was artificially driven up by the new customs rates of 1618 and by the impositions the company had levied on cloth to pay off its debts to the king. Undersold in the Netherlands, the German market could no longer be counted upon to take up the slack. The beginning of the Thirty Years' War impoverished many regular English cloth markets and cut the Adventurers off from communication with others.

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1. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, pp. 201-02, no. 1685; For the better ordering of the transportation of woollen manufactures into Germany and the Low Countries, 7 Dec. 1634.

The deep concern aroused by the failure of the broad-cloth market is reflected in the pessimistic and inaccurate statistics contemporaries compiled to show the "decay of trade." In 1621, Misselden estimated that exports of white cloths had dropped from an average of 80,000 to 40,000 cloths a year and were still declining. A more dismal report estimated that white cloth exports stood at 35,000 cloths a year in 1619 and were down to a scant 30,000 cloths a year by 1638.¹ Recently compiled statistics on cloth exports from London during the period 1598-1640, indicate that while the broadcloth market never fully recovered from the twin shocks of the Cockayne experiment and the Thirty Years' War, the decline was much less spectacular than contemporaries imagined. From an average of 97,000 cloths a year in 1598-1600, broadcloth exports rose steadily, reaching a high of 127,215 cloths in 1614, rallied briefly to reach 102,332 cloths in 1618, the year in which the Merchant Adventurers regained their charter, and then levelled off after 1630 to approximately 85,000 cloths a year - a point below the average number exported when the century began.² But after 1630, those who lamented the "decay of trade" were thinking solely in terms of the broadcloth industry, while the cloth industry as a whole was probably at least as prosperous as at any time during the sixteenth century. While the Privy Council as a relief measure was enjoining West-

1. K. E. Barford, The Development of the West of England Woollen Industry 1550-1640, (thesis in typescript) ch. VI, pp. 9-10.

2. Infra., Appendix D, pp. 242-43.

Country broadcloth clothiers to take unsold stocks off their weavers' hands, Jeremy Potticary, a Wiltshire Spanish cloth clothier continued to maintain his weavers and to pay them at a rate higher than that usually given in the western clothing counties, and was able to invest his own earnings in large amounts of real property.¹

If Potticary's financial success was unusual, his treatment of his employees was not. Spurred on by the malignant depression in the broadcloth industry, a new industry manufacturing cloths wholly or partly made from dyed Spanish wool had become firmly rooted in the heart of the traditional broadcloth manufacturing districts of the west by 1630. Since Spanish cloths were classed as new draperies, they were neither hindered in production by the impractical regulations of the Tudor clothing code, nor burdened in a competitive market by the excessive customs rates that had driven up the price of whites.² Able to produce his cloths more quickly and to dispose of them at a greater margin of profit, the Spanish cloth clothier could afford to maintain greater numbers of weavers at better wages than could the clothier who continued to manufacture a staple commodity for which an exacting and steadily diminishing market existed.³ By the time of Wither's incursion into the western

1. G. D. Ramsay, The Wiltshire Woollen Industry, pp. 103-04.

2. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1640-41, p. Chas. I, vol. CCCCLXXV no. 64; Remonstrance of the white clothiers on the inequality of customs on cloths, 1640?

3. Victoria County History of Suffolk, vol. 2, p. 267.

clothing districts in 1633, the higher wages paid by colored cloth manufacturers had already begun to produce a mild labor shortage in the broadcloth industry; and Spanish cloth was well on the way toward superceding broadcloth as the staple woollen manufacture of the west.¹

While new products were being developed at home, new markets were being sought for them abroad. During the twenty years from 1620 to 1640 English merchants were cutting vast inroads into the Mediterranean and finding a brisk demand for English woollens in markets that had been formerly monopolized by French and Venetian traders. Two factors had contributed greatly toward prompting England's drive to the Mediterranean. In the first place, with the exception of the trade to Spain, the cloth trade to every major European port was under the control of a chartered company. For a decade after 1624 interlopers had been free to export the new draperies to markets in Germany and the Low Countries but the Merchant Adventurers had regained their monopoly rights after 1634 and interlopers were again effectively shut out from trade.² The Mediterranean on the other hand was largely virgin territory. The Levant Company controlled the trade to the Porte, but the entire western coast of Italy and the eastern coast of Spain was free from

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1. K. E. Barford, The West of England Woollen Industry, Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine, 1924, pp. 532-33.
 2. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, pp. 201-02, no. 1685; For the better ordering of the transportation of woollen manufactures into Germany and the Low Countries, 7 Dec. 1634.

company control. By 1630 English interlopers were driving a flourishing trade out of Leghorn, and with their lighter and cheaper new draperies were easily underselling French and Venetian merchants in Mediterranean markets.¹ Secondly, the tremendous demand for new draperies in France and the Netherlands ultimately aroused the alarm of the Dutch and French governments, both of whom were striving to develop native textile industries. By 1635 the Merchant Adventurers were importing Spanish cloths to their mart at Delft in such numbers that local authorities issued an order prohibiting the company to import any but undressed cloths. The company's immediate move to Rotterdam failed to solve the problem for in 1636 the Estates issued a Reglement prohibiting the Adventurers to trade in any but undressed cloths to any market in the Netherlands.² Similarly, merchants trading to France complained to the Privy Council in 1636 that contrary to treaty rights the French were prohibiting the importation of serges, perpetuanoes, Spanish cloth and other new draperies.³ Though

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1. Cal. S. P. Venetian 1626-28, p. 352; Alvise Contarini to the Doge and Senate, London, 3 Sept. 1627: ibid. 1629-32, p. 326; Zorzi Zorzi to the Doge and Senate, Etre, 2 Oct. 1628.
 2. Cal. S. P. Dom. 1635, p. 97, Chas. I, vol. CCLXXXIX no. 91; Merchant Adventurers to the Council, May ? 1635: ibid. 1635-36, p. 35, Chas. I, vol. CCCVII no. 75; Merchant Adventurers at Rotterdam to the London Company, 1635? ibid. p. 36, Chas. I, vol. CCCVII no. 77; Merchant Adventurers to the Council, 1635? Hist. MSS. Comm. Report 12, Appendix 2, Cowper MSS., vol. 2, p. 150; Grievances of the Merchant Adventurers against the Estates of Holland, 1636.
 3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1636, p. 403, Chas. I, vol. CCCXX no. 4; Merchants trading to France to the Council, 1 May 1636.

the Merchant Adventurers had an agreement with the authorities at Hamburg permitting the unlimited import of colored cloths,¹ a Germany ravaged by the Thirty Years' War could no longer provide a satisfactory diversionary market to the Netherlands. The temporary impasse in the central European market undoubtedly had much to do with the rapid increase of new drapery exports to the Mediterranean after 1630. Recent investigation into the Port Books has shown that by 1640 exports of new draperies from London were not only equal in value to the exports of the old, but that the majority of these were being shipped to the Mediterranean, and that by this time the Mediterranean ports were taking as large a share of London's exports as were the markets of central and northern Europe.²

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1. W. E. Lingelbach, The Merchant Adventurers at Hamburg, The American Historical Review, 1903-04, vol. 9, p. 271.
 2. F. J. Fisher, London's Export Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century, The Economic History Review, 1950, pp. 154-55.

CHAPTER V

SPAIN AND INDUSTRIAL UNREST IN ENGLAND IN THE
SIXTEENTH CENTURY

"... thys ffoloweth in certayne Fflaundres of nede
must wyth us have pease, or ellis he is distroyde,
wythowght lees."

The Libel of English Policy.

A major advantage of the system of regulating the export trade through privileged mercantile corporations was that the government retained more effectively the power to direct or divert the whole stream of English traffic to or from particular continental mart towns, a power which carefully exercised experience had proved to be a potent lever for exerting economic pressure to gain political ends. From the year 1313 when the Ordinance of the Staple forbade English merchants to export wool and wool-fells anywhere but to a designated foreign¹ mart English monarchs had extended or withdrawn the privilege of maintaining the wool staple as a regular weapon of foreign policy. With the staple as bait Edward I had gained the alliance first with the court of Flanders and then with the court of Holland; it had influenced the negotiations of Edward II with France, Brabant and Flanders; with it Edward III bought the alliance of the Flemish towns at the beginning of the Hundred Years' War.² No less effective as a diplomatic weapon was England's ability to cut off from the Low Countries the

1. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 1, pp. 552-54.
2. E. Power, The Wool Trade in English Medieval History, p. 87.

supplies of wool of which her merchants were the almost unrivalled purveyors, and since the reign of Richard I the export of wool had from time to time been forbidden as a means of bringing pressure to bear on the princes of the Netherlands.¹ As England changed from a wool to a cloth exporter the diplomatic advantages of the staple policy were not diminished in the transformation. When the house of Burgundy was so indiscreet as to support Perkin Warbeck's pretensions to the English throne Henry VII responded by transferring the cloth staple of the Merchant Adventurers from Antwerp to Calais, expelling all Flemings from England, and forbidding commercial intercourse between his subjects and the Netherlands. Within two years these measures proved effective enough to cause Duke Philip to guarantee that the enemies of England would no longer be entertained in his dominions, and Henry was able to extract the extremely favorable terms of the Magnus Intercursus as the price of returning the staple of the Merchant Adventurers to Antwerp.²

1. E. E. Rich, The Ordinance Book of the Merchants of the Staple, p. 21; The Libel of English Policy, printed in Political Poems and Songs Relating to English History, ed. by T. Wright, Rolls Series, vol. 2, p. 161.

"for the wolle of Englande

Susteyneth the comone Fflemmyngis, I understonde,
Thane yf Englonde wolde hys wolle restreyne
Ffrome Fflaundres, thys ffoloweth in certayne
Fflaundres of nede must wyth us have pease,
or ellis he is distroyde, wythowght lees."

2. The Cambridge Modern History, vol. 1, pp. 451-52.

With such weight of historical evidence in their favor many Englishmen, like the fifteenth century author of The Libel of English Policy, concluded that England had the power to determine whether the Low Countries should prosper or want in accordance with the state of relations prevailing between Brussels and Westminster. Like him they could support their conclusions by contrasting the near economic self sufficiency of England with the utter economic sterility of the Low Countries which, lacking any commodities of their own except a little "greyn and sede," could prosper only by serving as "a staple to other londes."¹ There is no lack of statistical evidence to support their argument. At the great port of Antwerp whose commerce was almost entirely controlled by foreigners, English wool and cloth alone amounted to more than 1/3 of the total value of all goods imported there during the early sixteenth century. Should a breach in relations between England and the Low Countries cause the removal of the English staple to another European port, not only would Antwerp suffer, but the Flemish cloth industry, which by the sixteenth century had given way to English competition, and now concentrated upon dyeing and dressing the cloths imported unfinished by the Merchant Adventurers, would be thrown out of gear as well.²

There were those in the Low Countries who were prepared to contradict the argument of The Libel of English Policy and

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1. T. Wright, op. cit., p. 162: for a similar opinion see, Cal. S.P. Venetian 1558-80, p. 327; Michiel Soriano to the Signory, 1559?
 2. S. T. Bindoff, The Scheldt Question, p. 62: P. Geyl, The Revolt of the Netherlands, pp. 41-3.

to boast that England was so totally dependent on the Antwerp market for the sale of cloth that if she were to be denied access to the port for a single year England would be impoverished.¹ The Low Countries were simply the indispensable "Indes de L'Angleterre" and England could not afford to think of alternative markets, unless as Viglius suggested to the English envoy, she contemplated selling her commodities upon the Alps.² But neither Elizabeth nor her merchants expressed any doubts that if matters were brought to the test the magnetic powers of the English cloth staple would be great enough to prove, to the sorrow of the Antwerpers, that their phenomenal prosperity was largely attributable to her majesty's courtesy in maintaining the staple for her cloth at the port, and that "to whatsoever place the English (kept) their marts, thither (would) all other nations follow to traffic."³ As relations between England and the Low Countries deteriorated after 1560, great pains were taken to impress upon the government at Brussels how illusory was England's alleged dependence on Antwerp, and to assure them that should necessity dictate the removal of the staple from the port, lucrative cloth markets awaited English merchants elsewhere. Thus in February 1564 when John Sheres was sent to Brussels to negotiate trade differences that had arisen between England and the Low Countries, he was instructed that "If they

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom., Addenda, 1566-79, pp. 69-71, Eliz., vol. xiv, no. 57; Advices submitted by George Southaick to the Council, 1568?
 2. E. E. Rich, The Ordinance Book of the Merchants of the Staple, p. 43; quoting Correspondance de Granvelle, vol. 1, pp. 10, 567-68, 569-70.
 3. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1575-77, p. 63; Edward Castelyn to Lord Burghley, Antwerp, 29 May 1575.

demand of him whether (her majesty) means to trade with Emden or Hamburgh with her cloths, he shall say that he knows not, but that her commodities are of that nature that wheresoever they shall be carried they will maintain a mart."¹

Yet it was England's increasing concentration on the manufacture of cloth which, if it did not lessen the efficacy of England's traditional weapon for exerting pressure on the princes of the Netherlands, rendered its use extremely perilous. By the middle of the sixteenth century England had achieved what was for the age a truly gigantic industrialization. White woollen cloths comprised 78 percent of the total value of all English exports, and adding to this figure her exports of wool, wool-fells, and other types of cloth, over 90 percent of Englands exports consisted of wool or woollen commodities alone. Hence, England's entire balance of trade hung precariously upon the ability of English merchants to maintain an uninterrupted sale of cloth which, up to the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, they were distributing to consumers through the single foreign market of Antwerp.² The most distressing consequence of England's emphasis on cloth manufacture, and one which, with the possible exception of the discontent stirred by the enclosure movement aroused the most profound fears of the government, was the widespread and turbulent unrest in the clothing counties which invariably seemed to follow the slightest slackening or interruption of the cloth market. Clearly, a severe breach with the Low

1. Ibid., 1564-65, pp. 52-3; Instructions to Sheres, London, 20 Feb. 1564.

2. L. Stone, Elizabethan Overseas Trade, The Economic History Review 1949, p. 37.

Countries was a contingency, which in the interests of public order alone, the government would go far to avoid. Thus Challoner, the Council's chief informant in the Netherlands, realizing England's intimate dependence on the Antwerp market, advised Cecil that "If very necessitie seme to offer the breache,¹ for Gods love reteyne the amitie of theis menne."

Despite her confident front to the government at Brussels it is doubtful whether Elizabeth was sure of her ground, and to the members of her government claims of the economic subservience of the Low Countries could have had hardly more than an academic interest which none would have willingly risked testing in practice. It is interesting to note that despite the indifferent attitude he was instructed to maintain, that Sheres, in the vein of Guicciardini, was eloquent in emphasizing to the prince of Orange the essential interdependence of England and the Low Countries who "be unto the seas as the hands and the feet of a man be to the belly; and that even as the belly doing her duty maintaineth both well flourishing and lusty; likewise the seas lying between Flanders and England well aplyed by the merchants with the intercourse of merchandise hath maintained both these countries hitherto flourishing and wealthy."²

Though Sheres had expressed what were undoubtedly the real feelings of his government, anxious to avoid any rupture that might interfere with the Antwerp cloth trade, the conflicting policies of England and Spain toward the Low Countries did not

1. E. E. Rich, *op. cit.*, p. 39; quoting *Rélations Politiques des Pays-Bas*, vol. 2, p. 108.

2. *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, Report 17, *Pepys MSS.*, p. 15, John Sheres to Lord Robert Dudley, Brussels, 29 March 1564.

augur well for a continuance of good relations. Owing to the close economic ties binding England to the Low Countries, it had for centuries been an object of England's foreign policy to keep the Netherlands' trade as free from interruption as possible. Similarly, it was an article of political faith to which Philip was forced by inheritance to subscribe, that owing to a community of economic interests the ruler of the Netherlands should attempt to live in close amity with England. Moreover Philip had practical political reasons for keeping on good terms with Elizabeth - even though they might involve marriage - for he could not risk the chance of Elizabeth's deposition in favor of the niece of the Guises which might result in a union of the crowns of England, France, and Scotland. But Philip's decision to absorb the Low Countries completely into the Spanish political system and to establish them as the seat of his power in northern Europe, made amicable relations between England and Spain difficult, if not impossible.¹

Apart from the political issues, the depredations of English pirates and the commercial policies of the English government did much to impair Anglo-Spanish relations.

Piracy was of course, an international problem, and pirates were no respecters of nationality, yet the heavy toll taken on Flemish merchantmen plying between Antwerp and London by pirates allegedly English, gradually aroused suspicions at Brussels that

1. M. A. S. Hume, Spain, Its Greatness and Decay 1479-1788, pp. 124-25; J. B. Black, The Reign of Elizabeth, pp. 87-89; Sir Charles Petrie, Earlier Diplomatic History 1492-1713, pp. 79, 91.

there was more an element of design than of chance in these attacks. Margaret of Parma complained to Elizabeth that even in the Thames her merchants were not free from the plundering English, and she could single out a ship named the Double Rose as being a particular offender.¹ By 1564 the government at Brussels regarded English attacks as bordering on open warfare and Viglius complained to Sheres that though England and Spain were ostensibly at peace, yet "we sustain more damage than we should do if we had open war," and he cast doubt upon the energy with which Elizabeth sought to suppress these abuses.²

Relations were not enhanced when Netherlands' merchants complained that recent English legislation had seriously infringed their commercial privileges in England. Only a half century before the Low Countries had had a taste of English economic nationalism when in the decade between 1496-1506, a series of commercial treaties granted English merchants virtual freedom of trade and exemption from all existing cloth duties in the Netherlands.³ But by the terms of the Magnus Intercursus certain privileges were granted to merchants of the Low Countries trading in England, and most important was their exemption from duties other than those paid fifty years prior to the treaty. This privilege they now claimed to have been violated by an act

1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1560-61, p. 560; Duchess of Parma to the Queen, Brussels, 21 March 1561: ibid., pp. 557-60, Depositions of English pirates taken before Regnier Van Urssele and Johan Van Asseliers, Antwerp, 20 Feb. 1561.

2. Hist. MSS. Comm., Report 17, Pepys MSS., pp. 16-17; John Sheres to Lord Robert Dudley, Brussels, 29 March 1564.

3. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 1, p. 588.

of Elizabeth's first parliament requiring the payment of alien duties on all goods imported or exported unless carried in English ships on which the master and the majority of the crew were English subjects.¹ Though the customs privileges granted to the Netherlands under the Magnus Intercursus remained, they were in fact now rendered illusory since the greater part of the channel trade was carried in foreign bottoms.²

To this grievance was added the fact that the English government was attempting to prevent the export of precious metals, stimulate the development of new industries, and prevent the export of vital raw materials and foodstuffs, and the restrictions involved reacted directly upon the Netherlands. Acting on Cecil's advice, the parliament of 1559 revived two statutes of Henry IV and Henry VII, and henceforth the export of bullion was to be prohibited while foreign merchants were to be required to employ the moneys received from the sale of their wares in England in purchasing English goods.³ But as Philip's complainants informed him, there was nothing left to buy except a little saffron and undressed cloth which was now burdened with a prohibitive tariff of 13s. a cloth. They were prohibited from exporting tin, lead, leather, wool, felt, cheese, beet and butter, either "by laws, privileges and intolerable customs" and they judged that if their grievances were not soon

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1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1560-61, pp. 91-2; Complaints of merchants in the Low Countries to King Philip, June ? 1560; 1 Eliz. c. 13; L. Harper, The English Navigation Laws, pp. 25-6.
 2. L. Stone, Elizabethan Overseas Trade, The Economic History Review, 1949, p. 41.
 3. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 1, p. 163; Considerations delivered to parliament 1559; 3 Henry IV c. 9; 3 Henry VII c. 8.

redressed, they would be constrained to abandon the English trade altogether.¹

When the expedition sent to Havre in 1562 returned with plague, Spain was presented with a first-class opportunity for retaliation. By midsummer 1563 the pestilence which had broken out in London was spreading at an alarming rate, and in November, with fear of infection advanced as the pretext, the import of English cloth to Antwerp was forbidden.² The month following, the full measure of retaliation was taken when the Duchess of Parma issued a proclamation forbidding the export to England of such necessities as steel, latten, copper, iron, and wire, and prohibiting on pain of confiscation and a 100 caroli fine, the lading of any English ship in the Low Countries.³ Finally in March 1564, matters reached a complete impasse when Elizabeth forbade the Merchant Adventurers to trade with the Low Countries and ordered the confiscation of all goods shipped from the Netherlands to England.⁴

Clearly, Elizabeth had done much to promote the turn matters had taken. The previous April when D'Assonleville had come over to attempt some mitigation of the severity of Elizabeth's restrictions in favor of Netherlands' merchants, Elizabeth had

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1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1560-61, pp. 91-2; Complaints of merchants in the Low Countries to Philip II, June ? 1560.
 2. Ibid., 1564-65, p. 36; Duchess of Parma to the burgesses of Antwerp, Brussels, 27 Jan. 1564; W. R. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, vol. 1, p. 32.
 3. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1563, p. 608; Proclamation against English merchants, Brussels, 7 Dec. 1563; ibid., 1564-65, p. 5; Gresham to Cecil; Antwerp, 5 Jan. 1564.
 4. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 63, no. 594; Prohibition to trade with the Low Countries, 23 March 1564.

presented him with a list of reasons justifying her actions and she had evidenced no inclination to negotiate. But retaliation was not a contingency with which Elizabeth was prepared to cope, and as it became evident that Spain was ready to force her hand via a trade embargo, Elizabeth became more tractable. In December 1563, immediately preceding the publication of the regent's proclamation, Dr. Valentine Dale communicated to Margaret her majesty's desire to negotiate the questions in dispute. But by now, the government at Brussels had decided on its course and Dale was rebuffed.¹

Undoubtedly there was a good deal of support in the Low Countries for the breach in commercial relations with England. There was a group of Antwerp merchants who saw the embargo as a means to force the English to admit them to share the export trade on an equal footing with the Merchant Adventurers. Against the pretensions of this group Sheres, in strong mercantilist tones, argued that such an arrangement would hardly be in England's interests, shrugging off the demand as another example of the covetousness of a people who sought "to bring the trade of all the world into their hands."²

There was too a small group of manufacturers who felt that an embargo of English cloth, if it could be prolonged long enough, might lead to a revival of the long decaying Flemish cloth manufactories. Helpless, in the face of English competition, to

1. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1558-67, pp. 355-59; Instructions to Diego Guzman de Silva, 11 June 1564.

2. Hist. MSS. Comm., Report 17, Pepys MSS., p. 56; John Sheres to the Earl of Leicester, Bruges, 15 May 1565.

prevent the rapid eclipse of their industry, this group had been reduced to complaining to the Flemish Council of State of what they regarded as an English conspiracy to destroy their industry altogether. Not only had the indispensable shipments of English wool been steadily declining, but when the wool could be got at all, it was often of such poor quality as to be unfit for manufacture.¹ Immediately following the embargo the Flemish cloth manufactories did in fact experience a sudden boom, and it was reported that there was a growing sentiment in the Low Countries in favor of the permanent exclusion of English cloth if adequate shipments of English wool could be assured. Thus in May 1564, Philip took steps to encourage the industrial revival, ordering the magistrates of Bruges to protect and encourage the settlement of the merchants of the staple there.² But despite the threat, the Merchant Adventurers remained calm, assuring the Privy Council that the Flemings could not hope to produce enough cloth to supply both the foreign and domestic market, and that even if by some chance they should manage to do so, English manufactories could revert to manufacturing the types of cloth exported prior to the time that England began to produce exclusively for the Antwerp market.³

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1. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1547-49, p. 183; Flemish Council of State to Van Der Delft, Brussels, Oct. 1547.
 2. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, pp. 200-01; George Gilpin to Lord Robert Dudley, Antwerp, 6 Sept. 1564.
 3. Ibid., p. 529; Merchant Adventurers to the Privy Council, 29 Nov. 1565; Cecil maintained similar views; Cal. S.P. Dom. 1547-80, p. 247, Eliz., vol. XXXV, no. 33; Memorandum on the export of wool and cloth, 1564? Printed in Tawney and Power, Tudor Economic Documents, vol. 2, pp. 45-47.

But with these two groups neither the magistrates nor the commons of Antwerp were in fullest agreement, for in any breach with England it was they, because of their position as middlemen, who must inevitably bear the greater burden of loss. As early as January 1564 Gresham informed Cecil that "The Lords of this town are sorry that the Court has stayed the English cloths and other goods. This town suffers for it more than they will have known, for the poor people begin to cry out upon them."¹ A certain amount of housebreaking and plundering of grain supplies occurred shortly thereafter² and throughout the spring and summer the council's informants in Antwerp continued to report that Antwerp stood on the threshold of revolt.³ The Merchant Adventurers noted that the magistrates were beginning to treat them with untoward friendliness, urging them to use their influence on Elizabeth to bring an end to the restraint.⁴ By June the magistrates were seeking relief by communicating personally with Cecil, and in September they despatched an ambassador to Philip himself urging him to restore commercial relations with England. In the meantime it was rumored that negotiations were underway between Antwerp and

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1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, p. 18; Gresham to Cecil, Antwerp, Jan. 1564.
 2. J. W. Burgon, Sir Thomas Gresham, vol. 2, pp. 53-4; Richard Clough to Gresham, Antwerp, 31 Jan. 1564.
 3. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, p. 125; John Fitzwilliams to Cecil, Antwerp, 6 May 1564: ibid., p. 141; Same to Same, Antwerp, 27 May 1564: ibid., p. 172; Smith to Cecil, Piemonte, 6 July 1564.
 4. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 1, p. 296; Burgomaster of Antwerp to the Merchant Adventurers, Antwerp, 27 May 1564: ibid., pp. 296-97; Merchant Adventurers of Antwerp to the Merchant Adventurers of London, Antwerp, 27 May 1564.

certain French merchants to open an illicit trade with England by transporting goods through Picardy.¹

To the government at Brussels, the distress and unrest immediately following the interruption of the trade between England and Antwerp had been a calculated risk willingly taken, and it was emphasized that at all costs such distress must not be allowed to lead to any relaxing of the commercial restrictions.² During these years the government of the Low Countries, though ostensibly under the control of Margaret of Parma and the Council of State, was in fact being governed by a three member inner council, or "consulta," and within this council Cardinal Granvelle was absolute master. In 1559, at the time of his departure from the Netherlands Philip requested Granvelle to communicate all matters of state directly with him thus reducing Margaret, without her knowledge, to a secondary role.³ In matters regarding England, Granvelle's influence was especially strong.⁴

As far as Granvelle was concerned, English claims of the economic subservience of the Low Countries were ridiculous: "Les Anglais, voulant faire croire que sans eux les Etats de Sa Majeste ne pourraient pas vivre, et que eux ils n'ont nullement

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1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, p. 169; Magistrates of Antwerp to Cecil, Antwerp, 30 June 1564: ibid., p. 202; The Queen to Smith, 11 Sept. 1564.
 2. Cf. E. E. Rich, The Ordinance Book of the Merchants of the Staple, p. 57.
 3. M. A. S. Hume, Spain, Its Greatness and Decay 1479-1788, pp. 126-27, 143-44; B. H. M. Vlekke, Evolution of the Dutch Nation, pp. 129-30.
 4. P. Geyl, The Revolt of the Netherlands, pp. 70, 75; Cal. S.P. Spanish 1558-67, p. 351; Instructions to Diego Guzman de Silva, Monzon, 15 Jan. 1564.

besoin des Pays-Bas. Pour moi, je pense tout le contraire."¹
Antwerp he regarded as the only practicable mart for the vent
of English cloths, and Spain controlling that market was in a
position to dominate Elizabeth's trade policy. Hence, the
cardinal contrived the embargo convinced that Elizabeth, un-
willing to risk the incalculable consequences of a prolonged
stoppage of the cloth trade, would be forced to amend her navi-
gation laws, her piracy, and re-establish trade on the basis
of treaty obligations.²

A recent investigator working from Granvelle's corres-
pondence, has shown that in bringing about the embargo Granvelle
was largely actuated by religious motives even when apparently
seeking economic ends. He aimed at a restoration of the Flemish
cloth manufactories for that might mean the return of the
Flemish weavers who had fled to "corrupt their religion" in
England; he sought to expell from Antwerp and Bruges the colonies
of English merchants whom he feared were cells for the propaga-
tion of heretical doctrines; especially he contemplated no
restoration of the trade with England, "la Reine étant en
religion telle qu'elle est."³

Certainly public opinion at Antwerp was convinced that re-
ligious rather than economic motives were the compelling force

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1. Quoted by E. E. Rich, The Ordinance Book of the Merchants of the Staple, p. 43; to which this chapter is greatly indebted, especially regarding Granvelle's religio-economic policies. The conclusions drawn are not necessarily the same.
 2. See the summary of Granvelle's letter of instructions to Guzman de Silva; E. E. Rich, ibid., pp. 49-50.
 3. Ibid., pp. 45, 49, 50-1.

behind the embargo, and that "because they withstood having a bishop in Brabant" Antwerp as well as English merchants were Granvelle's intended victims. Fitzwilliams' writing from Antwerp informed Cecil that everywhere it was said that "the first worker for the keeping of the English cloth out of these Low Countries is said to be the Cardinal," and that the nobles, who had refused to attend the Council while Granvelle was in power, and who were consequently unaware of the steps planned against England, were convinced that the embargo was all "for religion's sake."¹

The embargo's effects were felt immediately in England, and at this stage at least it looked as though Granvelle's policy might be successful. It was reported that the losses suffered by the arrest of the goods and ships of English merchants in Spain and Zeeland, alone amounted to more than £38,000.² Unrest in the clothing counties followed quickly and by midsummer the justices were being ordered to exhort the clothiers to continue to manufacture cloth that the distressing consequences of unemployment might be avoided. Elizabeth had despatched an envoy to Brussels at once to try to reopen the cloth market, and though he was instructed to maintain a strong front - "if he finds them tractable, to use words tending to amity," otherwise plainness, "that they may perceive it is not necessity that moves her thus to do," - it was known that she was secretly ready to drop her navigation acts and remove her embargo on Flemish imports.³

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1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, p. 197, John Fitzwilliams to Cecil, Antwerp, 2 Sept. 1564.
 2. Ibid, p. 18; Papers relating to English Commerce with Flanders, 16 January 1564.
 3. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, pp. 52-3; Instructions to Sheres, 20 February 1564.

Since the early sixteenth century the rapid expansion of the cloth industry had been viewed with increasing concern both because of the immediate consequences to agriculture¹ and since during periods of slack trade unemployed weavers without recourse to by-occupations constituted a serious threat to public order. There were many who, fearing that the continued expansion of the cloth industry might eventually prove to "be dangerous to the whole state," advocated a complete return to an agricultural economy in which wool rather than cloth would again become England's principal export.² Though such a radical change would have been impossible, the government had in the 'fifties attempted to regain a semblance of balance between industry and agriculture by restricting cloth manufacture to the corporate towns, thereby hoping to confine the industry's future development within reasonably controllable limits. One effect of the embargo of 1564 was to give greater substance to English fears of the consequences of "inordinate cloth making" since it was shown that England's dependence on the vent of a single commodity could - especially when a determined opponent controlled that commodity's market - be exploited for political ends in much the same way as for centuries England, in withholding wool exports, had exerted political pressure on the princes of the Netherlands.

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1547-80, p. 247; Eliz., vol. XXXV, no. 33; Memorandum on the export of wool and cloth, 1564? Printed in Tawney and Power, Tudor Economic Documents, vol. 2, pp. 45-47.
 2. Hist. MSS. Comm. Report 17, Pepys MSS., pp. 191-92; Discourse on a method of assuring the Queen's customs, undated; for a cogent argument against such proposals see Cal. S.P. Dom., Addenda, 1547-65, p. 497; Eliz., vol. IX, no. 48; Arguments against constituting a staple in England, 1559? The writer argues that the carrying trade would be sacrificed to aliens, and this would make it easier for Spain to cut off England's cloth trade, "thus provoking rebellion at home."

The fears that beset the government are best summarized from a memorandum of Cecil's written at a time when the full effects of the embargo were being felt. Cecil agrees that there is much to be said for proposals to limit future cloth production. As the industry has expanded more and more land has been turned to pasture until arable farming has declined to the point where the realm is obliged to rely heavily on the import of its grain supplies from abroad. Moreover, there has been a sharp decline in the number of artificers employed in other crafts, and so many have turned to cloth manufacturing that the labor supply "for all comen works" has lessened. But a decrease in the size of the clothing population would be especially desirable since experience has proved that "the people that depend uppon makynge of cloth are of worse condition to be governed than the husbandmen." The question is whether it is practicable to attempt to de-emphasize cloth manufacture at this time? Though Cecil advances several arguments to show that it is, or that it might be a good long range policy, the problem for the moment is to dispose of the cloths on hand. To effect this, the Spanish threat must be overcome by seeking out new cloth markets, thereby decreasing England's dependence on Antwerp; for "it is to be confessed of all men that it were better for this realme for many considerations, that the commodities of the same were issued out to sundry places, than to one, and specially to such a one as the lord thereof is of so great power, as he may therewith annoy this realme ..." ¹

1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1547-80, p. 247; Eliz., vol. XXXV, no. 33; Memorandum on the export of wool and cloth, 1564?

With this latter view the Merchant Adventurers professed to be in fullest agreement. Most of the cloth they shipped to Antwerp would eventually be transported to Denmark and Germany, and when queried by the council "howe the commodities of the realme may be uttered out of the Lowe Countries"¹ they advocated a complete abandonment of the Antwerp market proposing to carry their cloth direct to the consumers themselves.² In this the company probably had an eye to public opinion for at a time when the government was attempting to expand English shipping their trade to Antwerp had come under the censure of those who denied that in "these two day voyages twice a year where every pedler may practise ... there is scant either a good mariner made or a good ship maintained ..."³ Cecil hoped that a lengthened voyage might diminish the numbers of petty merchants who flooded the realm with foreign commodities, carrying out treasure to pay for trifles, thus causing the present non-favorable balance of imported over exported commodities.⁴

In the spring of 1564 the first attempt was made to decrease England's dependence on Antwerp. Following the embargo attractive offers had been made to the Merchant Adventurers by the

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1. J. W. Burgon, Sir Thomas Gresham, pp. 94-5; The Council to the Merchant Adventurers, 29 Nov. 1565.
 2. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, p. 529; Merchant Adventurers to the Council, Nov. 1565; but see Burgon, loc. cit.
 3. Hist. MSS. Comm., Report 17, Pepys MSS., p. 39; John Sheres? to Leicester, 2 Dec. 1564.
 4. Cal. S.P. Dom. loc. cit.

magistrates of Emden and Hamburg and commissioners were despatched to investigate the feasibility of settling the cloth market at one of these towns.¹ Early reports from Emden were hardly favorable. Gresham's factor, Richard Clough, discouraged a move to Emden complaining that the Emdeners were "rude both in worde and deede" and "not mete to interteyne merchants." He found them to be "maynteyners of Anabaptists, Libertines and all other Kynde of damnable sects," and as their churches indicated **Withowte** any reverence to God ... for that in one place they preache and in other place of the churche there lyeth feathers, netts, and barrells, with dyvers other unseemly things ..." Hamburg pleased him less. He thought its inhabitants "incivill in manners, and withowte all mercie where they are masters."²

Yet the privileges offered by Emden were tempting. The Merchant Adventurers were promised freedom from arrest, exemption from customs, taxes, and unreasonable tolls, and the burgesses promised to provide two houses for the company's use, while the construction of forty to fifty merchants' residences was to begin at once.³ In May Cecil received a glowing report from the commissioners at Emden: "Here is great wealth and riches, though it appear not by the port and apparel of the people ... here is but one advocate or lawyer in this town, and yet he is but a beggar ... for quietness and honest living here

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1. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 1, p. 314; Merchant Adventurers to the Council, 1564?
 2. J. W. Burgon, Sir Thomas Gresham, pp. 59-60; Richard Clough to Gresham, Emden, 1564.
 3. Hist. MSS. Comm. Report 17, Pepys MSS., pp. 43-4; Instructions for the Commissioners touching Emden, 1564?

is a heaven."¹ Shortly thereafter the Merchant Adventurers, protected against interlopers by a new charter incorporating them as the Merchant Adventurers of England,² sailed with a fleet of forty ships bearing 50,000 cloths and 25,000 kersies to their new mart at Emden.³

But the move to Emden was probably no more than a security measure⁴ and it was assumed that pending a settlement of grievances, trade with Antwerp would be restored; Antwerp was in fact, never to lose its power of attraction for English merchants. Even after 1585 when a political frontier barred Antwerp's access to the sea, the Merchant Adventurers, supported by the government made efforts to maintain their trade to the port.⁵ Granvelle and his confidants in the council of state were perhaps the only ones who thought the rupture with England really supportable, and with his recall to Spain in the spring of 1564⁶ there was hope of an early resumption of commercial

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1. Ibid., pp. 22-3, George Nedham to Cecil; Emden, 28 May 1564.
 2. Lawes, Customes and Ordinances of the Fellowshippe of Merchantes Adventurers, ed. by W. E. Lingelbach, pp. xxxi, 229.
 3. The York Merchant Adventurers, ed. by M. Sellers, p. lx.
 4. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, p. 191; John Fitzwilliams to Cecil, Antwerp, 21 August 1564: a move which may not have received full government support; see J. W. Burgon, Sir Thomas Gresham, pp. 316-19; Sir Francis Knollys to Elizabeth, 17 Jan. 1569.
 5. S. T. Bindoff, The Scheldt Question, p. 84, note.
 6. M. A. S. Hume, Spain, Its Greatness and Decay 1479-1788, p. 145.

relations. The regent could not long ignore the complaints of the disaffected commercial population at Antwerp, and there was growing distress in the industrial areas as well, for the brief revival of the Flemish woollen industry had ended once available supplies of wool had been exhausted. Moreover, Sheres reported from Brussels that the regent did not relish the prospect that the Merchant Adventurers might abandon Antwerp, and she had evidenced serious concern on learning of the company's negotiations with Emden.¹ By November the regent had given way and trade was resumed on a provisional basis pending a colloquy to settle commercial disputes. By January the Merchant Adventurers were once again shipping their cloths to Antwerp.²

With the return to Antwerp the Emden experiment was abandoned. It had become apparent quite early that Emden would not prove satisfactory as an alternative market to Antwerp. Cloth sales, brisk at first, had fallen off alarmingly, and the expected concourse of foreign merchants failed to materialize.³ Philip had at once forbidden Netherlands' merchants to have any dealings with Emden,⁴ and it was known that he was intriguing with the Hanses, offering them an alliance to frustrate England's

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1. Hist. MSS. Comm. Report 17, Pepys MSS., p. 15, John Sheres to Lord Robert Dudley, Brussels, 29 March 1564.
 2. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 64, no. 605; Restoration of trade with the Low Countries, 29 Dec. 1564: Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, p. 251; Accord between England and the Low Countries, 30 Nov. 1564.
 3. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, p. 164; Thomas Aldersey to the Council, Emden, 24 June 1564.
 4. Ibid., p. 138; Philip II to the Council of Brabant, Brussels, 22 May 1564: ibid., p. 141; John Fitzwilliams to Cecil, Antwerp, 27 May 1564: ibid., Burgomasters of Antwerp to Cecil, Antwerp, 27 May 1564: Hist. MSS. Comm., Report 17, Pepys MSS., p. 23; George Nedham to Cecil, Emden, 28 May 1564.

attempted encroachment on their commercial domain.¹ The Adventurers informed Cecil that "the practices (were) marvellous" to keep foreign merchants from them. No Dutch or Italians came to buy and sales were not helped by a Hanse promise to provide cloth £5 to £6 cheaper than the market price if the factors refused to trade with the English.² With Antwerp reopened the Merchant Adventurers made a hasty and somewhat undignified departure from Emden³ stopping long enough only to invite the burgomaster and his council to a farewell feast.⁴

In accordance with terms agreed upon for the resumption of the Antwerp trade a diet was convened at Bruges in the spring of 1565 to attempt a solution of the commercial disputes which had contributed to the breach of the previous year. The English commissioners at Bruges soon made it clear to Cecil that there was little hope of a satisfactory settlement. The commissioners had disagreed on all major points and Spanish demands for English wool at customary prices and the right of Flemings to trade paying the same customs as English merchants would never be agreed to by her majesty.⁵ In an attempt to break the deadlock and in-

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1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, p. 191; John Fitzwilliams to Cecil, Antwerp, 21 August 1564; Hist. MSS. Comm. Report 17, Pepys MSS., p. 22; George Nedham to Cecil, Emden, 28 May 1564; G. Unwin, The Merchant Adventurers in the Reign of Elizabeth, Studies in Economic History, p. 209.
 2. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, p. 164; Thomas Aldersey to the Council, Emden, 24 June 1564.
 3. Ibid. 1579-80, p. 103; Count of East Friesland to the Queen, Aurick, 1 Dec. 1579: unsold cloths were eventually disposed at Frankfort; ibid. 1564-65, p. 215; John Fitzwilliams to Cecil, Antwerp, 30 Sept. 1564.
 4. The York Merchant Adventurers, ed. by M. Sellers, p. lx.
 5. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, p. 303; John Fitzwilliams to Cecil, Antwerp, 23 Feb. 1565; ibid., p. 313; Instructions to commissioners at Bruges, 11 March 1565; ibid., 1566-68, p. 75; Montagu, Wotton and Haddon to the Council, Bruges, 26 May 1566; ibid., p. 93; Wotton to Cecil, Bruges, 24 June 1566.

fluence negotiations in her favor Elizabeth instructed her delegation to "let it appear by indirect speeches" that if the questions in dispute were not soon resolved, her majesty might be constrained to order the Merchant Adventurers to move their mart to a port outside the Low Countries.¹ This obvious ruse was not likely to be effective for the fate of the Emden experiment had done nothing to weaken the Spanish conviction that Antwerp was the indispensable market for English cloth, and that this dependence could be used as a lever to force Elizabeth to agree to a settlement of commercial questions in a manner favorable to Spanish interests. Thus, Guzman de Silva informs Philip that delay is the key to success at Bruges, and with this object the duchess has ordered her commissioners to defer a settlement as long as possible. He thinks the political situation is working in Spain's favor, for while Spain's preoccupation with foreign affairs has up to now prevented close attention to the private interests of his majesty's subjects, conditions are now reversed and Elizabeth's "greater difficulties about these Scotch affairs," makes it "probable that better terms might be got from them."² But Elizabeth was prepared to endure, and she instructed her commissioners to inform the Spaniards that she would not compromise on the questions of her right to poundage, customs, licenses for unwrought cloth, and wool prices, and that Spanish persistence on these points would only make it less likely that agreement would be reached on other questions.³

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1. Ibid., 1564-65, p. 313; Instructions to commissioners at Bruges, 11 March 1565; ibid., 1566-68, p. 93; Wotton to Cecil, 24 June 1566.
 2. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1558-67, p. 469; Guzman de Silva to the King, London, 27 August 1565.
 3. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1566-68, pp. 62-3; Montagu, Wotton and Haddon to the Council, Bruges, 9 May 1566.

While the diplomatic impasse threatened to lead to another trade interruption, the Merchant Adventurers, with no illusions about the uncertainty of their position at Antwerp, kept Cecil informed of the persistent efforts of a small but influential body of merchants who sought to limit the company's privileges in the Low Countries.¹ Moreover, they saw their trade threatened by projects to revive the Flemish textile manufactories. The Prince of Orange, the counts Egmont and Hoorn, were lending their strongest support to such plans,² and there was a scheme afoot for bringing over secretly from England a number of skilled artisans to instruct the Flemings in the manufacture of English cloths and kersies.³ Though the development of Flemish industry might be obstructed by cutting off the indispensable supplies of English wool, the danger that in attempting to further such projects Brussels might again ban English cloth imports, re-emphasized the importance of locating an alternative market to Antwerp.⁴

But a more serious threat to the English cloth trade than either the diplomatic disputes or the threat of industrial competition, was posed by the growing religious troubles in the Low Countries. Immediately following the image breaking of the summer of 1566 Gresham, aware of the intimate connection between

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1. Ibid., 1564-65, p. 379; John Fitzwilliams to Cecil, Bruges, 2 June 1565.
 2. Ibid., p. 390, Same to Same, Antwerp, 9 June 1565; ibid., p. 397, Same to Same, Antwerp, 23 June 1565. (The magistrates of Antwerp were opposed to the scheme).
 3. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., vol. 10, pt. 1, p. 343; Intelligence from the Low Countries, Feb. 1567.
 4. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1564-65, p. 390; John Fitzwilliams to Cecil, 9 June 1565.

uninterrupted cloth sales and public order in England, wrote from Antwerp advising Cecil that it was "time to consider some other realme and place for the utterance of (the) comodities ... made within (the) realme; whereby her Majestie's realme maie remain in peace and quietness, which in this brabling time is one of the chefest things your honnor hath to loke unto: considering in what termes this country doth now stand in, which is readie one to cut another's thrott for matters of religion."¹

Spain had long feared that the colonies of English merchants in the Low Countries doubled as bases for the spread of heretical doctrines,² and with the outbreak of the religious troubles Spanish suspicions were strengthened. At this juncture Elizabeth was not in fact prepared to support the protestant party in the Netherlands without serious misgivings. Owing to the circumstances surrounding her own position she must walk delicately before countenancing the right of a subject to take up arms against his sovereign,³ and the Prince of Orange's strong inclinations toward France served as an effective check to Elizabeth's wholehearted support.⁴ But to Philip, the obstinacy of his protestant subjects in the Netherlands was directly traceable to Elizabeth, and her merchant colonies were rallying points for heresy. These must

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1. J. W. Burgon, Sir Thomas Gresham, p. 161; Gresham to Cecil, Antwerp, 1 Sept. 1566.
 2. For an earlier example see, Acts of the Privy Council 1550-52, p. 88; Religious troubles in Flanders, 20 July 1550: also note, Cal. S.P. Foreign 1562, p. 3; Throckmorton to Cecil, Paris, 2 May 1562.
 3. J. W. Burgon, Sir Thomas Gresham, vol. 2, p. 163.
 4. B. H. M. Vlekke, Evolution of the Dutch Nation, pp. 152-3.

either now embrace Roman Catholicism or be expelled from his dominions. In 1568 a proclamation was published in Antwerp whereby "all English merchants were compelled to live according to the Catholic religion or to abandon commercial pursuits and the country also."¹

The Merchant Adventurers had prepared for such a development and after deciding against a return to Emden on the grounds of its proximity to the Netherlands,² they had signed a ten-year concordat with Hamburg the previous year.³ Though the Hamburg connection was an expedient dictated by necessity, its value as a pawn in the mercantilist struggle with the Low Countries was not overlooked. Trade was clearly a valuable weapon in diplomacy, and the governor of the Merchant Adventurers seeking the council's authorization for the move to Hamburg emphasized that with an alternative cloth market outside the Low Countries England would be finally independent of Antwerp and the Netherlands forced to become "greater lovers of her majesty;" for "by these means Her Majesty will keep the Low Countries beholden to her and not her to them, having other places for vending commodities, and they will find she is better able to live without them seven years than they one without her."⁴ The Adventurers were now provided with the opportunity to test these

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1. Cal. S.P. Venetian 1558-80, p. 423; Sigismondo di Coralli to the Signory, Madrid, 7 May 1568.
 2. Lawes, Customes and Ordinances of the Fellowshippe of Merchantes Adventurers, ed. by W. E. Lingelbach, p. 239.
 3. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 2, p. 201.
 4. Cal. S.P. Dom., Addenda, 1566-79, pp. 69-71 Eliz., vol. xiv, no. 57; Advices submitted by George Southaick to the Council; 1568?

assumptions when, following Elizabeth's seizure of the treasure fleet that was carrying bullion to pay Alva's troops in the Netherlands, Philip retaliated by arresting the goods and persons of English merchants and forbidding all trade with England.¹

This breach with the Antwerp market brought to a definite end England's long commercial dependence on the Low Countries. Henceforth the center of the Merchant Adventurers' activities shifted to Germany, and the company's move to Hamburg marked the beginning of the process whereby England's foreign trade became more widely distributed during the reign of Elizabeth. But the feeling that the almost total dependence of England's economy on the sale of cloth was a weakness which Spain could exploit for political purposes was quite undiminished following the Merchant Adventurers' departure from Antwerp. During these years the dispatches of foreign ambassadors in England are filled with references to the unruliness of the clothing population during periods of slack trade. Thus La Mothe Fénelon reports a rising of the artisan clothiers in Suffolk and Norfolk immediately following the closing of the Antwerp market,² and Guzman de Silva writes in some detail of an uprising of impoverished clothworkers in Essex who, it has been discovered, were attempting to link up with clothworkers in Cambridgeshire and Southamptonshire. Six of the insurgents have been put to death and guards

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1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1569-71, p. 5; Proclamation by the Queen, 6 Jan. 1569; for particulars of the seizure see C. Read, Queen Elizabeth's seizure of the Duke of Alva's Pay-Ships, The Journal of Modern History, 1933, vol. 5, pp. 443-464.
 2. Cal. S.P. Venetian 1558-80, p. 437; Instructions given by La Mothe Fénelon to a secretary sent to France, Tours, 15 Sept. 1569.

are posted on all roads leading to Essex, while horsemen are being stopped and searched for messages or other intelligence.¹ Such reports did much to emphasize England's vulnerability to embargo, and it was thought to be an easy matter to cut off England's cloth markets and prolong industrial unrest until, with her subjects in rebellion against her, a penurious and chastened Elizabeth should willingly come to terms with Philip. Such at least was the argument of Philip's ambassador in London, don Guerau de Spes.

The latest trouble with Spain had come at a time when there was an active move in the council to get rid of Cecil.² In a letter to Pope Pius V, Roberto Ridolfi made it clear that the conspirators led by Norfolk and Pembroke thought a Spanish embargo of England's cloth exports essential to the success of their scheme, and that since the previous summer - prior to Elizabeth's seizure of the treasure fleet - he had been aware that plans for an embargo were underway.³ Though her seizure of the treasure fleet was presented as the reason for the embargo, Elizabeth was not deceived, and she at once made known her suspicions that the seizure was being used as a pretext to mask some wider purpose of Philip's.⁴

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1. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1558-67, pp. 570-71; Guzman de Silva to the King, London, 3 Aug. 1566.
 2. C. Read, Mr. Secretary Walsingham, vol. 1, p. 59.
 3. Cal. S.P. Rome 1558-71, pp. 302-05; Roberto Ridolfi to Pope Pius V, London, 18 April 1569.
 4. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1569-71, p. 5, Proclamation by the Queen, 6 Jan. 1569; ibid., pp. 60-2; Answers to the Duke of Alva's proclamation, 15 April 1569.

The details of the scheme for bringing England to heel which Ridolfi now disclosed to his holiness, were quite similar to those earlier devised by Cardinal Granvelle. England is a mercantile nation and the greater part of its population depends for livelihood upon the manufactures exported by English merchants in return for essential goods and foodstuffs which England cannot herself produce. Should this two way trade be interrupted for a considerable period, Ridolfi thinks that "inability to export the one or manipulate the other will certainly cause an insurrection ..." At this point the catholic party will attempt to organize unrest and turn it to their advantage - a matter of no great complexity since the majority of the population are favorable to Roman Catholicism - Cecil will be driven from power and the government placed in the hands of good catholics. All that needs be done to translate these plans to reality is for the kings of France and Spain "to declare openly by public proclamations, that they prohibit traffic of any sort between the subjects of their states and this realm ..." It would aid the cause if other states who are adherents to the true religion issued similar proclamations. Perhaps the pope can use his influence here, and Ridolfi suggests the king of Portugal as a likely ally, for he too has suffered at England's hands. Yet the scheme must be developed cautiously. The rivalry of France and Spain is well known and if "in the prosecution of this undertaking one of the kings should so far outstrip the other ... as to occasion him jealousy," Ridolfi fears that the result "might

be more untoward to Christendom than the reclamation of
(England) to (his) Holiness' devotion would be beneficial."¹

Guerau de Spes fell completely under Ridolfi's spell. He had arrived in London in July 1568, apparently with his mind a complete tabula rasa insofar as English affairs were concerned, and most of what he subsequently learned came from discontented catholics in London.² It was not until later that Alva concluded that de Spes was being deceived by his Italian and recusant friends. At this stage his judgment was accepted and in seizing English goods in the Low Countries Alva was apparently acting on don Guerau's advice.³ Elizabeth had retaliated at once by seizing the goods of Philip's subjects in England, and de Spes too was confined to his quarters under close arrest.⁴ He utilized his confinement to demonstrate his indiscretion, sending an unsealed letter to Alva that he knew would be opened and read before the privy council, and in which he had made several choice judgments on Cecil's character, assuring the duke that Englishmen great and small awaited the opportunity to rebel against so base a master.⁵ His letter brought an immediate and angry reply from the council, denying the danger of rebellion

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1. Cal. S.P. Rome 1558-71, pp. 302-05; Roberto Ridolfi to Pope Pius V, London, 18 April 1569.
 2. C. Read, Queen Elizabeth's seizure of the Duke of Alva's Pay-Ships, The Journal of Modern History, 1933, vol. 5, p. 449.
 3. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1568-79, pp. 91-3; Guerau de Spes to Alva, London, 27/30 Dec. 1568.
 4. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, pp. 67-8, no. 632; Seizure of Spanish goods, 6 Jan. 1569.
 5. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1568-79, pp. 98-9; Guerau de Spes to Alva, London, 10 Jan. 1569.

expressing deep regret that so great a king as Philip should have appointed so unworthy a person as de Spes to be his ambassador.¹

But don Guerau was impervious to the insults of heretics and he was certain that the council's boastings did not reflect the true feelings of the majority of the English people. The privy council, he mused, looked only after its own interests, Elizabeth was gradually being abandoned by her supporters, and hardly anyone really liked her.² Even those who had been assigned to guard him, hoping he thought to fare better in the day when Spain should ultimately triumph, were approaching him with greater friendliness. Guerau assured Philip that he made short shrift of these patronizers; "I tell them that in your Majesty's dominions a heretic, whoever he may be, will be punished, and they need not think that we change our religion there as they do here."³ He was quite certain that the embargo had taken Elizabeth's measure and his informants assured him that unrest was mounting in England, but he emphasized that it was of the greatest importance that the embargo be extended to include England's trade with France.⁴

Chances for French cooperation seemed good. Anglo-French relations were far from satisfactory for though Elizabeth professed

1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1569-71, pp. 12-13; Privy Council to Guerau de Spes, 14 Jan. 1569.

2. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1568-79, p. 143; Guerau de Spes to Philip II, London, 12 March 1569.

3. Ibid., pp. 139-40; Same to Same, London, 2 April 1569.

4. Ibid., p. 113; Same to Same, London, 27 Feb. 1569.

neutrality, her subjects and her money were aiding Coligny and she had sent munitions to the Huguenot stronghold of La Rochelle.¹ Almost coincident with the seizure of the goods of English merchants in the Low Countries the goods of English merchants had been seized at Rouen, for fear, Cecil was told that the merchants would aid the Prince of Condé with money.² Though this seizure might portend French support, Giovanni Correr, the Venetian ambassador in France informed the signory that when questioned the governor of Rouen claimed to have acted on his own authority and not on orders from Charles IX. Correr was not sure whether Alva's agents had influenced his action.³ De Spes of course, had it on authority from Ridolfi, who had it on authority from the French ambassador, that the king of France would soon issue a placard prohibiting commercial intercourse with England.⁴ How largely a French embargo figured in de Spes' calculations is evident from his letters to Philip. French cooperation would, he thought, cut off England's vital supplies of oil and alum without which "they cannot carry on their cloth manufacture, by which the greater number of the people of the country live. If they cannot work, or (when) there is any obstacle to any disposal of their goods, they usually take up arms," and he supports his contention by pointing out, incorrectly, that in 1564 when the stoppage of trade was only to the Netherlands, Elizabeth was

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1. J. B. Black, The Reign of Elizabeth, p. 99.
 2. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1569-71, p. 13, Sir Henry Norris to Cecil, Paris, 15 Jan. 1569.
 3. Cal. S.P. Venetian 1558-80, p. 428; Giovanni Correr to the Signory, Paris, 20 Jan. 1569.
 4. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1568-79, p. 143; Guerau de Spes to Philip II, London, 23 April 1569.

forced to buy up stocks in the clothing towns to avert a rebellion.¹ Probably the real reason why French aid was not forthcoming was that France feared that the intimate economic ties between England and the Low Countries would force England and Spain to resolve their differences and leave France in the lurch.²

In the spring of 1569 de Spes looked forward confidently to an England restored to Roman Catholicism and to humility, and he assured Philip that it was only a matter of time before "these insolent heretics and barefaced thieves" should be brought to account.³ He was in constant communication with the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Arundel, and they had encouraged him with reports of open murmurings in the clothing counties, and they expected soon to be able to turn this discontent to good advantage.⁴ Numerous secret letters from English catholics increased his optimism for they promised that once Philip's standards were sighted a powerful catholic host would rise to serve him.⁵

The chance to deal the coup de grâce to the English cloth trade was now at hand, for the Merchant Adventurers were preparing a large fleet which was expected to sail momentarily for Hamburg, and it was known that more than 20,000 pieces of cloth were stored in its holds.⁶ Immediately on learning of this fleet,

1. Ibid., p. 113; Same to Same, London, 27 Feb. 1569.

2. J. B. Black, The Reign of Elizabeth, p. 100.

3. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1568-79, p. 139; Guerau de Spes to Philip II, London, 2 April 1569.

4. Ibid., pp. 136-37; Same to Same, London, 12 March 1569.

5. Ibid., p. 139; Same to Same, London, 2 April 1569.

6. Ibid., pp. 136-37; Same to Same, London, 12 March 1569.

don Guerau dispatched a spate of correspondence to Philip urging the utmost efforts to interrupt its voyage. Arundel and Norfolk were prepared to begin their rising within a month of its seizure and de Spes informed Philip that "to take this fleet would be to take all England and even the detention of it would be giving a grand spur to the action that these gentlemen here wish to take in your Majesty's service."¹

Then suddenly, don Guerau's patience, and perhaps his confidence in the conspirators began to wane. Both Arundel and Norfolk had begun to advance excuses for not getting on with the plot, not omitting a plea of a lack of money as a major reason for delay; Alva at once scotched the request for financial aid stating that he preferred to see a little evidence of service first. De Spes learned with some dismay that "these Englishmen want to be very sure of their ground before moving" and he warned Philip not to expect results so long as the plotters adhered to the "English way," wanting "things to be so far advanced, that, with little trouble and danger they may gain your Majesty's rewards and favours."² Therefore, what English caution delayed Spanish impetuosity might achieve, and Philip was told that if it could be arranged with the king of France to launch a joint attack on England, their majesties would find "no resistance, as they have no troops, and are at issue among themselves."³

1. Ibid., pp. 142-43; Same to Same, London, 23 April 1569.

2. Ibid., p. 146; Same to Same, London, 9 May 1569.

3. Ibid., p. 147; Same to Same, London, 9 May 1569.

By May it had become obvious that the plot to depose Cecil had foundered,¹ and even de Spes was prepared to concede that it was impossible to seal off all the leaks in the embargo on England's trade. English merchants were carrying on a considerable illicit trade with Spain and the Low Countries both by shipping goods in Italian bottoms, and by arranging for the transportation of goods through French factors who transferred them to Spanish markets.² Plans to intercept the Hamburg cloth fleet had collapsed. Though don Guerau expected the fleet to be attacked by a squadron lying off the Netherlands,³ the fleets' only mishap was in being forced to seek haven in Harwich owing to contrary winds,⁴ and the venture succeeded so well that the Merchant Adventurers were able to advance £40,000 to Elizabeth out of their profits.⁵ De Spes continued to urge attacks on the Hamburg fleet throughout the spring and summer of 1569 but his pleas went unheeded until at last he admitted bitterly that "seeing the lack of zeal to prevent them, they will doubtless sail this year as they say."⁶

Spanish poverty and Alva's common sense had been the major reason for the failing machinations of don Guerau and his prompters.

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1. Ibid., p. 146; Same to Same, London, 9 May 1569.
 2. Ibid., pp. 186-87; Alva to Philip II, Brussels, 8 Aug. 1569; Ibid., p. 190; Guerau de Spes to Philip II, London, 5 Sept. 1569.
 3. Ibid., p. 142; Same to Same, London, 23 April 1569.
 4. Ibid., p. 145; Same to Same, London, 9 May 1569.
 5. C. Read, Mr. Secretary Walsingham, vol. 1., p. 59.
 6. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1568-79, p. 232; Guerau de Spes to Philip II, London, 30 Jan. 1570.

Elizabeth's seizure of the treasure fleet had been a severe blow to Spain, depriving her of about £85,000 sterling, while the losses of Spanish merchants in London had alone amounted to another £37,486.¹ By April 1569 when the full extent of the losses had been tallied, Philip's council at Madrid informed him that financially his own position and that of his subjects in the Low Countries was desperate, and that if some sort of agreement could not be reached with Elizabeth, Spanish commerce faced ruin.² Alva's reports from Brussels supported the councillors' conclusions. The recent wars and disturbances in the Low Countries had left the States economically exhausted and Elizabeth's seizure of the treasure fleet had intensified the crisis. Alva emphasized that it was essential that Elizabeth be sounded as to the possibility of restoring at least a part of the treasure, and that at all costs Spain must avoid war with England.³

As early as March 1569, Alva was convinced that de Spes was being deceived by his confidants, and his intrigues in London

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1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1569, p. 67; Note of value of goods seized by English and Spanish merchants, April 1569. cf. W. R. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, vol. 1, p. 55: Scott's conclusion that England was the greater loser, and facing poverty, was forced to reopen negotiations with Spain, is not supported by the evidence. See e.g., the extremely pessimistic letters of Alva to Philip; Cal. S.P. Spanish 1568-79, pp. 132-33; Alva to the King, Brussels, 10 March 1569: ibid., pp. 160-63; Same to Same, Brussels, 12 June 1569.
 2. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1568-79, p. 144; Memorial on English affairs, Madrid, 28 April 1569.
 3. Ibid., pp. 160-63; Alva to the King, Brussels, 12 June 1569.

threatened a war which Alva sought desperately to avoid.¹ Thus the duke began to wean Philip away from de Spes' fanciful scheme until by May the plot was officially at an end as far as Philip and Alva were concerned.² But the intrepid de Spes' continued to mix with plots and plotters until by midsummer, a serious liability to his government Alva took steps to silence him:

"I again press upon you that, on no account in the world are you to listen to any proposals about Ireland, or other parts, or I can assure you that such a course might ruin everything, and you also would run a personal risk, for which I should feel truly sorry."³

Alva's repeated warnings to de Spes' were ignored and several times thereafter the duke protested to Philip of the ambassador's insubordination.⁴ But with the failure of the northern rising, don Guerau's effection for intrigue was on the wane.⁵ Early in 1570 he was replaced by a chargé d'affaires, Antonio de Guaras.

Supporters for de Spes' tactics were still to be found. De Spes' successor expressed regret that the plans for the seizure of the Hamburg fleet were not carried out, certain that it would have brought Elizabeth to her knees.⁶ Letters continued to reach

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1. Ibid., pp. 132-33; Same to Same, Brussels, 10 March 1569.
 2. Ibid., p. 149; Same to Same, Brussels, 10 May 1569: ibid., p. 150; The King to Alva, Aranjuez, 15 May 1569.
 3. Ibid., pp. 171-72; Alva to Guerau de Spes, Brussels, 2 July 1569.
 4. Ibid., pp. 160-63, Alva to the King, Brussels, 12 June 1569; ibid., Alva to Guerau de Spes, Brussels, 14 July 1569: ibid., pp. 186-87; Alva to the King, Brussels, 8 Aug. 1569.
 5. For the support given to the northern Earls by unemployed Yorkshire cloth makers see, R. R. Reid, The Rebellion of the Earls, 1569, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 1906, vol. 20, p. 189.
 6. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1568-79, p. 250; Memorandum of contents of letter from Antonio de Guaras, London, 11 June 1570.

Alva - probably Ridolfi's - referring to an England seething¹ with unrest with only a cloth embargo needed to stir rebellion. Alva was however, preoccupied in the Low Countries and by 1572 he regarded a settlement with England as essential. Cecil too, once the massacre of St. Batholomew shook the Anglo-French entente, was increasingly inclined toward amending relations with Spain, and in October 1572 he approached Alva with proposals² for reopening the Anglo-Netherlands trade. By May 1, 1573 the trade to Antwerp had been restored.³ Some of the Merchant Adventurers returned. But since the previous year rebels controlled Flushing, and with it, the mouth of the Scheldt. After a long quarrel with them over the right of free passage, the Merchant Adventurers finally abandoned their trade to Antwerp.⁴

Before the end of the sixteenth century Philip would again attempt to employ an embargo against England as a lever for his

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1. Ibid., pp. 443-44; Letters of intelligence from London, 17 Nov. 1572.
 2. C. Read, Queen Elizabeth's Seizure of the Duke of Alva's Pay-Ships, The Journal of Modern History, 1933, vol. 5, pp. 461-62.
 3. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 73, no. 686, Restoration of trade with Spain; 30 April 1573: see Cal. S.P. Foreign 1572-74, p. 92; Advices to Sir Francis Knollys and Sir Walter Mildmay, April 1572: the writer warned against a return to the former practice of canalizing cloths to Antwerp, alleging that Alva would like to "bring it to pass that English merchants should have no vent ... but to the Netherlands," that he might employ embargoes "to make rebellion or raise tumults in England ..." and force the Queen to yield.
 4. S. T. Bindoff, The Scheldt Question, pp. 82-3: C. Read, loc. cit.

policies, never of course with the same facility as when the Merchant Adventurers were channeling their cloths into Antwerp. Yet even when Antwerp was the entrepôt for English cloth, the success and certainly the wisdom of these tactics was questionable. The embargoes of 1563-1564 and 1569-1573, undoubtedly hastened Antwerp's decline, and this contributed in a very large measure, to the economic decline of Spain. For England, the embargoes were blessings in disguise for they brought into sharp relief the economic dangers of over-concentration on the production of a single commodity and thus increased the government's efforts to stimulate the development of new crafts. Ironically, Spain in attempting to bring England to heel by cutting off her cloth market, forced English merchants to seek out new markets farther afield and therefore, quite unwittingly, contributed to the expansion of English commerce.

CHAPTER VI

THE CLOTH TRADE AND PUBLIC ORDER DURING THE SIXTEENTH
AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

"The clothiers all, not able to maintain
The many to them 'longing, have put off
The spinsters, carders, fullers, weavers, who,
Unfit for other life, compell'd by hunger
And lack of other means, in desparate manner
Daring the event to the teeth, are all in uproar,
And danger serves among them."

Shakespeare, Henry VIII, I, ii, 31-7.

The principal economic disturbances of the sixteenth century were of an agrarian nature. It was an angered peasantry, dispossessed and made dangerous by the enclosure movement, that provided the most constant threat to public order in England from 1549, when their grievances provoked near revolution, until 1607, when their passions found vent in the Midlands rising, the last serious agrarian disturbance which England has seen. The agrarian disturbances had certain features which distinguished them from the Industrial ones of our period. They were generally organized, they had definite leaders - the names of Robert Ket and Jack Cade are written large in English history - the malcontents had a specific program; the restoration of customary conditions of land tenure. For these reasons agrarian unrest was a problem with which theoretically at least, a vigilant government could cope without too great difficulty. Organized force can be met with organized force, leaders can be apprehended, the cause of the grievance itself can be removed, more or less successfully, by forcing landlords to restore their

lands to tillage. Infinitely more difficult of solution was the problem of dealing with industrial unrest in the clothing industry which the slightest slackening of foreign demand for English woollens seemed invariably to provoke. Except in the wishful thinking of a Spanish ambassador, the industrial risings were sporadic and unorganized, likely to break out in many sections of the country at once, and therefore perhaps, were of greater danger to the state. Artificially and temporarily, the government could delay industrial unrest by requiring clothiers and merchants to continue to take up unsold stocks in the provinces or at Blackwell Hall, but it could never remove the basic causes of depression itself; it was impossible to legislate a foreign demand for English cloth.

It was Bacon, the most astute mind of the age, who pointed out that if allowed to go unrelieved, the discontent among the agrarian and industrial classes could in time be turned against the state. He knew that the small faction of the nobility who were dissatisfied with the existing order of things were themselves powerless to act, but in his essay on Seditions and Troubles he warned that if the grievances "in the better sort be joined with a want and necessity in the mean people, the danger is imminent and great: for the rebellions of the belly are the worst." Thus he adduced the absolute necessity for the active intervention of the government to supervise every department of economic life, and to aim specially at removing the material causes which made for unrest.¹

1. Sir F. Bacon, Of Seditions and Troubles, The Works of Sir Francis Bacon, ed. by B. Montagu, vol. 1, pp. 47-50.

The weakness of Spain's own economic position had forced her government to reject de Spes' fanciful plan which had aimed at just such a linking of the forces of political and economic discontent in England. Though eager after the autumn of 1569 to negotiate her differences with England, Spain was reluctant to accede to England's demand to bring all questions in dispute between the two countries within the scope of a settlement, and so the deadlock continued.¹ Alva's letters to Philip stressed the failing commercial fortunes of Antwerp where merchants were daily abandoning trade, some in anticipation of a general amnesty, others owing to the general want of confidence, and he pondered the possible consequences to the Spanish economy should the embargo with England long continue.² Alva's advices from England insisted that the shoe was on the other foot. A letter of November 1572 called his attention to the growing compliance of the English: they yearned for a resumption of the cloth trade to Flanders, they feared the possibility of a combination of France and Spain against them, they were certain that the French king would soon come to Mary Stuart's aid.³ The date of the letter indicates how poorly Spanish agents in London were informed on English affairs. The previous April England had concluded a treaty with France at Blois committing both countries to mutual military and naval assistance if attacked by a third power, providing for France's abandonment of the cause of Mary Stuart, and arranging for the

1. J. B. Black, The Reign of Elizabeth, p. 132.

2. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1568-79, p. 216; Alva to the King, Antwerp, 11 Dec. 1569.

3. Ibid., pp. 443-44; Letter of intelligence from London, 17 Nov. 1572.

establishment of a cloth staple in France to compensate England for the loss of the trade with Antwerp.¹ The Merchant Adventurers objected strenuously to this latter provision. They feared that the settlement of their staple at Rouen would place them in complete geographic isolation from the principal cloth markets in Germany, and lest this did not sway the opinion of the Council they recalled the recent troubles with Antwerp as a warning against acceding to the terms of the treaty itself: "it is dangerous" they argued, "to have the vent of all the commodity of the realm in one country."² In the end, the company had nothing to fear. It is quite probable that the commercial provisions of the Treaty of Blois were never entered into seriously by Elizabeth, and that they were intended only as a spur to speed the settlement of the issues in dispute with Spain on terms favorable to England. In any case the settlement between England and Spain in April 1573 rendered the commercial provisions of the treaty unnecessary.³ The following year the Treaty of Bristol put the seal to the Anglo-Spanish rapprochement,⁴ and English cloth was being carried into Antwerp once again.

No doubt Spain had been the greater sufferer in the long economic struggle with England. Heavily hit by the loss of English trade and now sealed off from the sea as a consequence of civil war, Antwerp's days as the entrepot of Europe were pretty

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1. J. B. Black, op. cit., pp. 123-24.
 2. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1572-74, pp. 162-63; Merchant Adventurers' answer to the French King's offer; July 1572.
 3. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 73, no. 686; Restoration of intercourse with Spain, 30 April 1573.
 4. J. B. Black, op. cit., p. 133.

well over, while the Flemish dyeing and dressing industry, deprived of necessary supplies of English broadcloth, was at a standstill. On the other hand, the events of the previous decade had demonstrated quite conclusively that England was less dependent on Antwerp than Antwerp was on England, and the success that favored English merchants in seeking out new cloth markets in Germany had substantiated Elizabeth's boast that English cloth would find a market wherever it was carried. Yet England had not come out of the struggle unscathed. When Spain retaliated for the seizure of her treasure fleet by confiscating the goods of English merchants, the Merchant Adventurers had been hit heavily. Of the total losses amounting to £190,234, the share of the company had alone amounted to £112,456.¹ Failures among company members became frequent and the pinch was inevitably felt in the clothing counties.² Nor had the company's move to Hamburg entirely compensated for the loss of the Flanders trade. In the first flush of enthusiasm over the sudden success of the Hamburg market the Adventurers had willingly advanced Elizabeth £40,000 from their profits, then cloth sales fell off, and the industry began to feel the effects of the check.³ Aggravated by a sudden rise in the price of corn,⁴ there was acute and widespread economic discontent in England by 1572. Fearing a revival of the unrest which had plagued England in 1569, government propaganda condemned violence as a remedy to the grievances of the poor. After 1572

1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1569-71, p. 67; Memoranda by Cecil, ? April 1569.

2. W. R. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, vol. 1, p. 51.

3. C. Read, Mr. Secretary Walsingham, vol. 1, p. 59.

4. E. M. Leonard, English Poor Relief, p. 84.

the churchwardens of every parish were required to buy the Book of Homilies, and in the new editions from 1571 there was a sermon against wilful rebellion with denunciations of the popular risings of recent years.¹ In the practical attempt to avoid popular disturbances by removing the causes of unrest, parliament passed the poor law act of 1572, authorizing the justices to assess the inhabitants of every parish and to appoint overseers for the collection of a compulsory rate to be applied to the relief of the poor in time of dearth.² In 1576 the system was expanded by an act which authorized the justices to spend public money on the purchase of stocks of raw material "to set the poor on work."³ These two statutes constituted the legal framework for the Elizabethan system of poor relief.

If the machinery of the government was now better geared to deal with the problem of economic unrest when it should arise, the decline of Antwerp from the crucial position it had maintained in the English economy greatly lessened the facility with which Spain could again create unrest in the clothing counties by sealing off the market for English cloth. Their trade made impossible by the progress of the civil war in the Netherlands, the Merchant Adventurers gradually abandoned hope of re-establishing their lucrative trade with the port. In 1582 they abandoned Antwerp altogether. The reasons, wrote the company's governor, "are easily given, for we have neither convenient sale of our goods, nor good wares to make return; so that if we continue

1. G. N. Clark, The Wealth of England From 1496-1760, p. 56.

2. 14 Eliz., c. 5.

3. 18 Eliz., c. 3.

trafficking as for almost these 12 months we have done in Antwerp, it would not only pinch our merchants shrewdly, but also be greatly hurtful to our common wealth."¹ It was the end of an era. In the troubled times to come the company would reflect wistfully that "the merchants adventurers did never thrive better than being altogether at one place in Antwerp."²

The company's departure from Antwerp coincided with a time when the society was threatened with the loss of its trading privileges in the Empire. In establishing a staple at Hamburg in 1567 the Adventurers had invaded the commercial sanctuary of the Hanseatic League. It was an indication of the extent of the League's decline that Hamburg had counted the chance of wealth to be gained by entertaining the English merchants, above her loyalty to a once proud medieval trading organization of which she was a member. Yet the company's concordat with Hamburg was due to expire in 1577 and the council of the League had determined that the privileges enjoyed by the English merchants should not be renewed unless Hanseatic merchants in England were restored to certain commercial privileges of which they had only recently been deprived. At the basis of the dispute was the question of the payment of customs duties in England. For centuries, Hanseatic merchants in England had been permitted to export goods paying slightly lower customs duties than those exacted from English merchants. As English merchants began to assume an increasingly large share of the export trade

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1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1582, p. 382; Thomas Longston to Walsingham, Antwerp, 13 Oct. 1582.
 2. Hist. MSS. Comm. Report 12, Cowper MSS., vol. 1, p. 38; Discourse upon the present condition of trade, undated.

this was an anomaly which could not be expected to continue. The Hanses had been pruned of their privilege under Edward VI,¹ briefly restored to it under Mary,² and once again denied this advantage by Elizabeth. From 1569 Hanseatic merchants were permitted to trade, paying the same export duties that were exacted from denizens.³ Matters came to a head in 1578 when Hamburg agreed to support the League's attempt to force concessions from Elizabeth by refusing to renew the privileges granted to the Adventurers, and informing the company that once the existing agreement expired, their trade would be subject to the same high tariffs that were exacted from other foreigners.⁴ When corresponding action against Hanseatic merchants in England⁵ failed to effect a reversal of Hamburg's decision, the Merchant Adventurers reluctantly began to look round for another mart town. Once again the company returned to Emden. Edzart, the Count of East Friesland, was well aware that his city was being used as a mere refuge in time of necessity. Bitterly he recalled how in 1564, "in less than a month after their coming," the Merchant Adventurers had left Emden "uttering some flippant scoffs in place of the leave which they did not think fit to take ... to the no small loss of ourselves and our subjects."⁶

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1. Acts of the Privy Council 1550-52, pp. 487-89; Revocation of privileges of Steelyard Merchants, 23 Feb. 1552.
 2. Though this was later denied by Elizabeth; Cal. S.P. Foreign 1586-88, p. 172; Queen Elizabeth to the King of Poland, Richmond, Dec. 1586.
 3. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 1, p. 164; Considerations delivered to parliament, 9 Jan. 1560.
 4. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1578-79, p. 22; Senate of Hamburg to the Merchant Adventurers, 20 June 1578.
 5. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1595-97, p. 123, Eliz. vol. CCLIV, no. 57; Notes on matters concerning the Hanses, 8 Nov. 1595.
 6. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1579-80, p. 103; Count of East Friesland to the Queen, Aurick, 1 Dec. 1579.

The Hanseatic League now determined to expell the Adventurers from the Empire altogether. Its ambassadors argued the League's case before the Diet of Augsburg.¹ Its propogandists waged a vitriolic campaign, emphasizing the monopolistic practices of the English merchants. Thomas Longston, writing from Antwerp, testified to the success of the libels: "A man can now come almost in no company here when any talk is had ... but one piece is of the English merchants monypolion, (sic) and of the hard and strange dealing used in England against strangers. And this talk is most in the mouths of such as never were in England nor had there to do; but grows chiefly from the Hanses, though also from such here in Antwerp ... as would gladly have the Hanses' libels to have credit." He thought that if steps were not soon taken to stop this flood of slander, then "it might seem that we should yield ourselves as guilty, and so become odious to all the world."²

Imperial reaction came slowly. In July 1580 a letter from the Emperor to the Count called attention to the English as monopolists, the unfair treatment of the Hanses in England, and admonished him to expell the Adventurers from Emden.³ Edzart demurred. He pointed out that his geographical proximity to England required that he look to his own interests, and that insofar as the interests of the Hanse were concerned he preferred "not to intermeddle in other men's causes, which do not appertain to myself, but rather desire to show both parties such friendship

1. Ibid., 1581-82, pp. 154-55; Count of East Friesland to the Queen, Emden, 6 May 1581.

2. Ibid., 1582, p. 442; Thomas Longston to Walsingham, Antwerp, 11 Nov. 1582.

3. Ibid., 1579-80, pp. 364-67; Rudolf II to Count of East Friesland, Prague, 3 July 1580.

as a neighbour ought."¹ For the moment the Emperor was prepared to tolerate Edzart's singularity, but two years later when the Diet decided in favor of the Hanseatic cause, he was given a peremptory order to expell the Merchant Adventurers from Emden.² The Count had no intention now of complying with the Imperial decree, but he notified Elizabeth that she might have saved him a good deal of embarrassment had she complied with his repeated requests to dispatch an envoy of some stature to defend her merchants' interests at Augsburg. Elizabeth had remained curiously unresponsive to his pleas,³ and when she finally commissioned a company representative, George Gilpin, to argue the case for the Adventurers, the Count had "marvelled that her Majesty had sent so slight a messenger." He added when the Diet's decision became known to him, "as the messenger was, so were our suits heard and regarded."⁴ Elizabeth's seeming complacency in the face of a threatened commercial crisis probably stemmed from a conviction that the Electors would not press matters to the point where they would run the risk of losing possession of so lucrative an attraction as the staple of the Merchant Adventurers. If so, events justified her confidence. Two years after its enactment the decree was suspended on the grounds that the company had procured "so much friendship with other foreign states," that its strict enforcement

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1. Ibid., p. 367; Count of East Friesland to Rudolf II, Emden, 26 July 1580.
 2. Ibid., 1583 and Addenda, pp. 640-41; Rudolf II to Count of East Friesland, Vienna, 31 Oct. 1582.
 3. Ibid., 1581-82, pp. 490-91; Count of East Friesland to the Queen, Aurick, 15 Feb. 1582.
 4. Ibid., 1583 and Addenda, pp. 645-46; John More to the governor of the Merchant Adventurers, Emden, 20 Dec. 1582.

would have reacted "to the great harm of the Empire."¹

Meanwhile, England's political relations with Spain were deteriorating. Apprehensively the government awaited a time when Spain should lend its active support to a militant Counter-Reformation which already counted an Irish rebellion among its successes, and even now labored diligently to wean Scotland from the English alliance. Spanish arms and Spanish diplomacy were everywhere ascendant. Since the Pacification of Ghent in 1576, Parma had gained an almost unbroken series of victories in the Netherlands, and with the annexation of Portugal in 1580 Spain's resources seemed capable of supporting the most grandiose schemes of conquest, and the acquisition threatened to upset the whole balance of power in Europe. Tardily Elizabeth began to amend her hitherto dilatory policy. The Anjou marriage question was revived, support was lent to the Anjou-Orange alliance, the Queen bestowed her approval, and her authority upon Sir Francis Drake's depredations upon Spanish shipping. Between 1580 to 1582, Elizabeth ranged herself firmly on the side of outright hostility to Spain.²

The political horizon darkened, and Spain was resorting to the use of economic weapons once again the the regenerate struggle with England. Spaniards were likely to attach a fictitious importance to England's trade with the peninsula. It was, Mendoza reasoned, owing to the profit they made from carrying rich cargoes of oils, wines, fruits, and specie from Spanish ports that made the English "masters of commerce in other ports as well."³

1. Ibid., 1583-84, pp. 517-18; Rudolf II to the Electors, 28 May 1584.

2. J. B. Black, The Reign of Elizabeth, 285-90, 300-01, 304, 315-16, 320-21.

3. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1580-86, p. 8; Mendoza to Philip II, London, 20 Feb 1584.

Moreover, it was the wealth they gained from the trade that permitted the construction of those ships that were such a thorn in the side of Spanish captains sailing the Indies' route. He writhed at each new report of Drake's spoillations: "the profit they make by trade, like nutriment to savage beasts, only increases their strength, and enables them to exact their fury and violence with greater effort."¹ Clearly, English piracy justified Spanish reprisals, and in 1579 Spain countered, issuing a navigation edict which prohibited the exportation of goods from Spanish ports in any but Spanish bottoms.² Partly because Spain lacked adequate merchant shipping to deal with the large exports of agricultural produce from Andalusia,³ and more especially since Elizabeth's threat to retaliate in kind would have dealt a shrewd blow to the trade of Flemish merchants,⁴ the edict was never rigorously enforced. Yet Mendoza thought that equally effective results could be gained if the trade of the English in Spain was made capricious and precarious. He counselled Philip to make the right of the English to ship from Spanish ports subject to special licenses, which if carefully extended and withdrawn would keep "the English in suspense" and impress them with a sense of total dependence on his majesty's goodwill. Such uncertainty, he hoped, would interfere with England's ship-building industry and ultimately therefore, the seas would be

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1. Ibid., p. 72; Same to Same, London, 9 Jan. 1581.
 2. Ibid., 1568-79, pp. 698-99; Same to Same, London, 25 Sept. 1579.
 3. Ibid., 1580-86, pp. 29-30; Philip II to Mendoza, Merida, 16 May 1580.
 4. Ibid., 1568-79, pp. 698-99; Mendoza to Philip II, London, 25 Sept. 1579.

rendered safer to the voyages of Spanish treasure fleets.¹

Better chances of success awaited Spain when her agents began to fish in the troubled waters stirred up by the rivalry of English and Hanseatic merchants in the Empire. Reports from Germany informed Elizabeth that the Spanish ambassador and his secretary, with free access to the Emperor, were sedulously promoting the Hanseatic cause. They were being given strong support by the papal legate, Cardinal Madrucci, who in concert with "other Pontificals who had a grudge against prosperous England," had joined in the outcry to expell English merchants from Germany.² Spanish and Hanseatic interests were hardly similar. Unlike Spain the Hanse did not wish to drive the Merchant Adventurers from the Empire, but to use the threat of expulsion as a means of gaining their coveted commercial concessions from Elizabeth. Knowing this, the Queen was unlikely to be intimidated.³ Yet trade could not thrive when carried in an atmosphere of suspicion and uncertainty bred by Spanish intrigue. Reports began to reach England that even the Count of East Friesland "had a secret purpose to run the Spanish course,"⁴ and the company was urged to seek refuge elsewhere. But by 1586 more pressing causes than Edzart's alleged Spanish sympathies weighed against the Merchant Adventurers continuing to hold their

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1. Ibid., 1580-86, p. 72; Mendoza to Philip II, London, 9 Jan. 1581.
 2. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1583-84, p. 224; Count of East Friesland to the Queen, Emden, 20 Nov. 1583.
 3. Ibid., 1585-86, p. 12; Dr. John Schulte to Lord Burghley, London, 7 Sept. 1585.
 4. Ibid., 1585-86, p. 502; Privy Council to Leicester, 30 March 1586. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 3, pp. 132-33; Extracts from letters of Leicester to Lord Burghley, 1-15 Feb. 1586.

staple at Emden. Parma's control of the Scheldt had effectively severed their contacts with German and Italian middlemen, without whose agency the trade in cloths could not continue.¹

Trade conditions at Emden were uncertain, and letters from Germany advised the government that the company's position in the Empire was precarious. Elizabeth was urged to send an envoy at once to counteract the pressure Spain and the Hanse were exerting for a revival of the Imperial edict. Recalling her past indifference, the agent for Emden feared that "if the Queen does not show more concern for her Merchants Adventurers than hitherto, I very much fear a great thunderbolt will be launched against the English, and against Friesland because of the English."² But from Elizabeth's viewpoint further negotiations were useless. The Hanse had been informed that the restoration of the Hamburg staple must precede any consideration of readmitting League merchants to trade on the same basis as denizens, and her majesty was not prepared to alter that decision. The Hanse was equally adamant. It had determined to bar the English from Hamburg until its ancient trading privileges in England had been restored, or until the queen agreed to grant Hanseatic merchants in England the same privileges she demanded for her merchants in Germany.³ Though the diplomatic impasse threatened to disrupt the trade of the Merchant Adventurers, the company had no lack of ports to choose from should it become necessary to abandon Emden.

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1. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1586-87, pp. 118-19; William Milward's arguments against settling the whole of the cloth trade in the United Provinces, The Hague, 9 Aug. 1586.
 2. Ibid., 1584-85, p. 615; Dr. Van Holtz to Walsingham, Hamburg, 29 July 1585.
 3. Ibid., 1585-86, p. 12; Dr. John Schulte to Burghley, London, 7 Sept. 1585, ibid., pp. 16-20, Walsingham to commissioners of the Hanse, Nonsuch, 11 Sept. 1585.

The king of Denmark was angling for the company's settlement at Flensburg,¹ the duke of Brunswick tempted Walsingham with the ideal commercial advantages to be had at Bremen,² while the Estates offered the Adventurers their choice of ports in the United Provinces, along with the promise of freedom from all imposts and the repayment of all imposts previously exacted, if the company would agree to settle its entire trade in the Netherlands.³

The Adventurers were holding out for Hamburg, and in the summer of 1586 Hamburg showed strong signs of being willing to go its own way and invite the company to resettle at the port.⁴ Negotiations had proceeded to the point of Elizabeth's agreeing to restore Hanse merchants their right to trade as denizens pending a final settlement,⁵ when Parma scotched that snake. His agents apparently succeeded in influencing the Senate to hold out for nothing less than those "ancient rights" which permitted them to pay lower customs than denizens, convincing them that England's cloth trade was in such a timorous state that Elizabeth would soon be forced to come to them cap in hand, "or the people would rebel."⁶ For good measure, Parma's

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1. Ibid., 1584-85, p. 481; Extract from a letter from the king of Denmark, 17 May 1585.
 2. Ibid., p. 512; Thomas Bodley to Walsingham, Lubeck, 31 May 1585.
 3. Ibid., 1586-87, pt. 2, p. 290; Decree of the Estates General, 9 Jan. 1586.
 4. Ibid., 1586-88, p. 102; Petition of the Merchant Adventurers to the Privy Council, ? Sept. 1586.
 5. Acts of the Privy Council 1588, p. 86; The Steelyard and the Merchant Adventurers, 20 May 1588.
 6. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1586-88, p. 314; R. Saltonstall and Dr. Giles Fletcher to the Merchant Adventurers, Hamburg, 19 June 1587.

agents afterwards journeyed to Denmark and Danzig to guard against any weakening of the commercial defences there.¹ In the end, the Merchant Adventurers were forced to settle for a new staple at Stade. In 1587 they signed an agreement with the senate and consuls there, binding the city to maintain the company for the next ten years.²

Though the Adventurers had managed to retain a foothold in Germany, Stade was small compensation for the markets that had been lost following the outbreak of the war with Spain. From 1586 England's cloth merchants were effectively shut out from the Spanish, Portuguese, and Flemish markets, they traded only with difficulty to Barbary and the Levant, and Parma's control of the middle Rhine crippled the trade with Germany.³ Some cross channel trade with Middelburg continued, though plagued with uncertainty,⁴ and the company was constantly urged to seek a safer haven at Flushing.⁵ Such trade was likely to be bad trade. At times of sale merchants bought and sold wildly. It was reported that a shipment of 12,000 cloths arriving at Middelburg in October 1588 were snapped up within twelve days, and at £5 higher than customary prices.⁶

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1. Ibid., 1587, p. 219; Leicester to the Council, Middelburg, 1 Aug. 1587.
 2. Ibid., 1586-88, pp. 397-98; Senate of Stade to the Queen, 6 Nov. 1587.
 3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1581-90, p. 402, Eliz., vol. CC, no. 5; Earl of Leicester to Walsingham, Bath, 6 April 1587: C. Read, Mr. Secretary Walsingham, vol. 3, p. 256.
 4. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1586-87, p. 136; Thomas Wilkes to the Council, Utrecht, 20 Aug. 1586.
 5. Ibid., 1587, p. 335; Sir William Russell to Walsingham, Flushing, 26 Sept. 1587, ibid. p. 412; Sir William Russell to Burghley, Flushing, 8 Nov. 1587, ibid., January to June 1588, p. 50; Sir William Russell to Burghley, Flushing, 1 Feb. 1588.
 6. Ibid., July to December 1588, p. 253; Advertisements from Mr. Killigrew, 8 Oct. 1588.

Depression threatened the cloth industry, and on orders from the Council merchants pledged their credit and continued to take stocks off the clothiers' hands as long as possible.¹ Then bankruptcies among merchants became frequent, and the burden of their loss was ultimately borne in the manufacturing districts. The Privy Council feared "dangerous inconvenience" to the state,² there was extreme distress among the weavers of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, and the justices feared the people there were prepared "to mutiny."³ Conditions worsened when the harvest of 1586 gave a poor yield. In London the price of wheat stood at the highest recorded price of the century.⁴ Weavers at Framloyde in Gloucestershire "rifled a bark laden with malt," and at Romsey the justices reported that the people alleged "that the present dearthe of corn and want of work hath mooved them to ..." commit outrages.⁵

Clearly, Philip's cloth embargo had touched Elizabeth on the raw, and agents in London kept the Spaniard informed on the severe distress being felt in England. A writer of 1586 rejoices that "the whole country is without trade and knows not how to recover it; they feel the deprivation all the more now, with the loss of the cloth trade with Germany, which they formerly carried on through Holland and up the Rhine, but have now

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1. Acts of the Privy Council 1586-87, pp. 272-74; Proceedings in Council, 24 Dec. 1586.
 2. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1585-86, p. 502; Council to Leicester, 30 March 1586.
 3. J. Wheeler, A Treatise on Commerce, (1601) pp. 61-2.
 4. J. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, vol. 1, p. 89.
 5. Acts of the Privy Council, p. 91; Riotous assemblies, 6 May 1586.

been deprived by the capture of Nutz on that river. If Berck be taken also, which please God it will be, they will not be able to send any cloth at all, and this is causing much dissatisfaction all over the country. The rest of their trade with the other German ports and Muscovy is a mere trifle; ... All that is left to them is the Levant trade. If these two are taken from them, which can easily be done, they will be driven into a corner without any commerce or navigation at all. The French trade is very insignificant and is carried on by a few small vessels only." He is convinced that, "if this (continues) for a single year, it would bring them perforce to surrender on any terms which his Majesty might please to dictate."¹ He did not exaggerate the seriousness of the situation. In a letter to Sir Christopher Hatton, Burghley expressed profound concern over the possible consequences that would follow a protracted embargo: "this great matter of the lack of vent, not only of clothes, which presently is the greatest, but of all other English commodities which are restrained from Spain, Portugal, Barbary, France, Flanders, Hamburg, and the States, cannot but in process of time work a great change and dangerous issue to the people of the realm, who, heretofore, in time of outward peace, lived thereby, and without it must either perish for want, or fall into violence to feed and fill their lewd appetites with open spoils of others, which is the fruit of rebellion."²

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1. Cal. S.P. Spanish 1580-86, pp. 651-52; Report of a Spanish spy in London, 10 Nov. 1586.
 2. Bland, Brown, and Tawney, Select Documents, pp. 438-40; Lord Burghley to Sir Christopher Hatton, 12 May 1587.

To describe as "paternal,"¹ the measures taken to relieve the depression of 1586 - with the word's implications of benevolent altruism - is to disregard the rising unrest which required their being brought into effect. It was fear of what might follow economic distress if steps were not taken to relieve it, that was the compelling force motivating the authors of the Book of Orders of 1586. The special attention given to the cloth industry - the only industry specifically mentioned in the regulations - indicates from whence the greatest threat to public order was thought to come. Clothiers were enjoined to continue to employ their weavers on a principle thereafter consistently followed in times of depression: "This being the rule by wch the ... cloathier ... must be governed. That whosoever had a part of the gaine in profitable times ... must now in the decay of Trade ... beare a part of the publicke losses."² Having provided for the work of their hands, the regulations sought to supply the needs of weavers' bellies. Justices and Sheriffs in their counties were to summon two, three, or four of the chief men of each district, and together they were to compile inventories of all existing stores of grain. In the event that a shortage existed, then provision was to be made for the transfer of surplus stores from an area of plenty to one of want. Care was to be taken against the diverting of grain into the

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1. N.S.B. Gras, The Evolution of the English Corn Market, pp. 236-40; The Book of Orders is here summarized and regarded as representing, "the apogee of paternalism in the history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."
 2. Acts of the Privy Council 1621-23, pp. 131-32; Council to the justices of the clothing counties, 9 Feb. 1622.

brewing of ale. Hence unnecessary taverns were to be suppressed and loitering about tipling houses was to be prevented. Corn was to be sold only in open markets, and at reasonable prices, the poor to be served first, and exact particulars of each sale kept. Finally, the Council was to be kept in close touch with the situation. Each month sheriffs were to dispatch a certified testimonial to their Lordships, informing them of the manner in which the orders were being enforced.¹

Hoping that these measures would palliate turbulent spirits in the clothing counties, Burghley now set out to strike at the root of the trouble. Mercantile interests were exerting strong pressure on the government to terminate the war with Spain,² and though he agreed that peace would rectify all, Spanish war aims made the hope of peace impossible. Perhaps in time the counter-embargo would starve Spain back to her senses, but in the meantime, if rebellion in England was to be avoided, the stand in the cloth market would have to be broken. Chafing under the attacks of western clothiers, the Merchant Adventurers had agreed to float a loan that would enable the company to continue to take up stocks from the benches at Blackwell Hall,³ but the merchants had given no indication that they intended to stand by their pledge and Burghley thought the time had come to act independently of the company. "To have vent increase," he informed Hatton, "there must be more buyers and shippers than

1. N.S.B. Gras, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-40.

2. C. Read, *Mr. Secretary Walsingham*, vol. 3, p. 256.

3. *Acts of the Privy Council 1586-87*, pp. 272-74; *Proceedings in Council*, 24 Dec. 1586.

there are," and hence he advised that the cloth trade be thrown open to all comers.¹ By mid-summer 1587 his proposals had been acted upon and the Merchant Staplers and interlopers were admitted to the trade; an indignity which the Adventurers met by suspending their operations altogether.² Even the Steelyard merchants were given a license to export cloth to the Netherlands. This rather abrupt retreat from the stern position she had maintained, refusing to readmit Steelyard merchants to the cloth trade until the Hamburg staple was restored, no doubt caused the Queen some embarrassment. She apparently attempted to pass it off as an indication of her continuing goodwill toward the Hanse, and of her desire to speed the settlement of the disputed commercial questions on an equitable basis. The Steelyard merchants were not deceived. They at once informed their colleagues in Germany that their license had been re-issued only, because "upon a complaint made in England by the gentlemen and clothiers for lack of vent of their cloths; and for fear of rebellion, the Queen was forced to do it."³

The extent to which the relief measures provided in the Book of Orders helped to overcome the effects of the depression of 1586 can only be conjectured. Later attempts to enforce the regulations seem to have aggravated rather than to have eased distress, for once the justices' inquiries advertised the fact

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1. Bland, Brown, and Tawney, Select Documents, pp. 438-40; Lord Burghley to Sir Christopher Hatton, 12 May 1587.
 2. Commons Journals, vol. 1, p. 220.
 3. Cal. S.P. Foreign 1586-88, p. 314; R. Saltonstall and Dr. Giles Fletcher to the Merchant Adventurers, Hamburg, 19 June 1587.

that a shortage existed, corn dealers were encouraged to conceal their surplus stocks and hold out for higher prices. The justices on whom the government relied to enforce the provisions stood ultimately for local prejudices and interests which they would be careful to avoid offending. Moreover, justices were often corn dealers, and frequently they seem to have exempted themselves from the working of the restrictive regulations they were required to enforce, and thus became both judge and party.¹ Burghley's decision to deal with the problem of industrial unrest by throwing open the cloth trade was more likely to produce results. The cloth trade was dangerously vulnerable to embargo only so long as it was carried on by merchant companies trading through a limited number of foreign mart towns. Once England's trade became "un-merchantlike," Spain lacked enough fingers to stop all the leaks in the dyke. The efficacy of this method of dealing with the problem is indicated by the fact that there was a noticeable decrease in the number of complaints of unrest in the clothing counties after 1587, and recovery was rapid enough that the government risked reorganizing the administration of the customs' system to give the crown an additional £10,000 annually in the same year that England faced the threat of the Spanish Armada.²

The industrial crisis of 1586/87 marked the high-water mark of Spanish success, and Spanish attempts to hinder English cloth

1. N.S.B. Gras, The Evolution of the English Corn Market, p. 242.

2. W. R. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, vol. 1, p. 97.

exports were never really effective after that. The German trade remained uncertain. The company's foothold at Stade was threatened when the Archbishop of Bremen ordered the magistrates to expell the Adventurers,¹ and their position in the Empire was kept tenuous by constant Hanseatic pressure for a revival of the imperial edict.² Yet if the rush with which landlords were enclosing their holdings for pasture farming after 1593 is any gauge, the cloth trade was booming during these years.³ Nor was the market checked when the seizure of Hanseatic vessels engaged in carrying contraband to Spain, finally provoked the Emperor to reissue the edict against the Merchant Adventurers in 1597.⁴ The only loss suffered as a consequence of the edict, was in the "well-ordered" discipline the company had maintained in the cloth trade. What had been lost ethically found material compensation when English interlopers swarmed into Germany and drove a thriving trade at markets where the Merchant Adventurers, for reasons of commercial etiquette, had been disinclined to go.⁵ If a threat to trade existed at the end of the sixteenth century it came from France where the government, seeking to revive the industrial vigor the Wars of Religion had deadened, was considering a proposal that would prohibit the importation of English

1. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 2, p. 206.

2. Hanse pressure for enforcement of the edict was continuous from 1594; see Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 7, pp. 307-08: Proclamation of Emperor Rudolf II, Prague, 1 Aug. 1597.

3. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 7, pp. 497-98; Notes for the Parliament, ? Nov. 1597: the government however, feared the export trade was in jeopardy, infra., p. 200.

4. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., pt. 7, pp. 307-08; Proclamation of Emperor Rudolf II, Prague, 1 Aug. 1597.

5. Supra., p. 125.

woollen goods. If we are to believe the Venetian ambassador, England's envoy to France resorted to a subtle form of intimidation to allay the threat. He is reported to have informed the French government that if the market to France was closed thousands of English weavers, bereft of other employment, would be driven to take to the sea as pirates, "to the signal damage of France ... and the Queen would not find it in her heart to prevent them."¹ In the end, the French government applied the outright prohibition only to cloths stretched upon tenters, which, considering the almost universal use of the device, hardly amounted to a retreat from the original position!²

The government had come out of the long commercial struggle with Spain convinced that the cloth trade had assumed an importance in economic life far beyond a point that was thought to be consistent with national safety. To the Tudors, the foundation of national wealth was, or should be, firmly rooted in the land. Husbandry and tillage, in the language of the statute book, is the means whereby "the Strengthe and flourishinge Estate of this Kingdome hath bene allwayes ... upheld." It is on the land that men are bred up "both for (ser)vice in the Warres and in tymes of Peace." Here people are withdrawn from "Ydlennesse Drunkenesse unlawfull Games ... lewde Practises and Conditions of Life," and are preserved "from extreme povertie in a competente Estate of maintenance and meanes to live." Where agriculture is the principal industry, "Wealthe ... is

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1. Cal. S.P. Venetian 1592-1603, p. 355; Francesco Contarini to Doge and Senate, Paris, 14 Jan. 1599.
 2. Acts of the Privy Council 1599-1600, pp. 481-82; Abuses in the cloth trade, 8 July 1600.

kept disp(er)sed and distributed in manie handes, where yt is more ready to answere all necessary Chardges for the (ser)vice of the Realme."¹ During the sixteenth century this conception had been seriously challenged and vigorously defended by a maze of legislation designed to protect agriculture against the encroachments of enclosing landlords. Elizabethan policy in regard to enclosure for pasture farming had been governed by provisions set down in the Statute of Artificers, ordering the reconversion of certain lands enclosed prior to 1563, and prohibiting the enclosure of arable lands for pasture after that date.² However, in 1593 parliament decided that there was sufficient land under tillage to make the maintenance of legislation on the subject unnecessary and the land clauses of the statute of 1563 were repealed.³ Immediately, landlords seem to have begun to convert their holdings to pasturage on quite a wide scale. Unfortunately, a time when less land was going under the plow coincided with a period of critical privation caused by five years of continual drought and poor harvests after 1594. There is no need to discuss the resultant crisis in detail, the events of these years have been dealt with exhaustively by Cheyney.⁴ The fear of rebellion and the methods of avoiding it were the principal subjects of correspondence between the Council and the justices during the five years after 1594, and extreme poverty was so prevalent that it became the major concern of the

1. 39 Eliz., c. 2.

2. 5 Eliz., c. 4.

3. 35 Eliz., c. 7.

4. E. P. Cheyney, A History of England From The Defeat of The Armada to the Death of Elizabeth, vol. 2, pp. 20 et. seq.

legislators in the parliament meeting in 1597.

Among the acts passed by the parliament of 1597, were two which aimed at redressing the flood of enclosure which had followed the relaxing of the terms of the act of 1563 four years earlier. The first required that all houses of husbandry decayed within seven years preceding the act, and half of those decayed within seven years before that be restored.¹ The second, applying to twenty-five counties where depopulation had been the greatest, ordered that all lands enclosed for pasture since 1558 were to be restored to arable farming if they had been under tillage for twelve years immediately preceding conversion, and all lands under tillage twelve years preceding the act were to remain in tillage.² Now the second of these two acts, along with a memorandum concerning it calendared in the Cecil manuscripts,³ sheds considerable light upon the government's attitude toward the cloth trade and industry at the end of the sixteenth century. A profound dislike is apparent over the extent to which the entire economic organization of the country seems to have been geared to support the interests of cloth manufacturers and exporters. As the demand for cloth has increased more and more land has been enclosed, and the consequent depopulation is something with which the government has had ample experience in recent years, when "swarms of poor loose and wandering people bred by these decays, miserable to themselves," pillage the

1. 39 Eliz., c. 1.

2. 39 Eliz., c. 2.

3. Hist. MSS. Comm. Cecil MSS., pt. 14, pp. 27-8; Observations on 39 Eliz., c. 1 & 2, Nov. 1597.

countryside and constitute a serious danger to the state. Now an agricultural economy is thought to be largely self-sufficient. It "is a cause that the Realme doth more stande upon it selfe," and all the advantages we have quoted from the statute¹ are expected to exist. On the other hand, as the economy becomes more industrialized, self-sufficiency decreases and the state is forced into greater dependence on the foreigner. This is the uncomfortable position into which the government fears the country might be forced if the emphasis on cloth production is not diminished: "subjecting the realm to the discretion of foreign states either to help us with corn in time of dearth or to hinder us by embargoes on our cloths if we stand too much upon that commodity." Thus the effect of Spain's continuing attempt to provoke unrest in England by hindering the cloth trade, combined with the indelible impression made by the widespread disturbances which had followed the wake of the famine after 1594, had been to revive sentiment in favor of hindering the development of the cloth industry, a proposal which had not been broached officially since Burghley gave it his serious attention more than thirty years before.² In attempting to tilt the economic balance in favor of a greater emphasis of agriculture, the government was motivated essentially by what is best described as "considerations of national defence;" striving for greater self-sufficiency that England's extreme vulnerability to economic attrition might be decreased. It is

1. 39 Eliz., c. 2.

2. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1547-80, p. 247, Eliz., vol. XXXV, no. 33; Memorandum on the export of wool and cloth, 1564?

dangerous to infer too much, but the subsequent action taken by parliament after 1597 looks, in part at least, very much like an attempt to complement this policy; increasing internal security by palliating the classes which would form the backbone of any revolt against the state. Witness the codification¹ of the Poor Laws from 1597 to 1601! Even more suggestive of the government's motives was the preferential treatment extended to the industrial class which stood in greatest dependence on the foreigner. Two years later, parliament passed an act which legislated the payment of a minimum wage for those employed in the manufacture of cloth.²

The pessimism which had dominated parliament's economic thinking in 1597 was probably mitigated when the export trade took on renewed vigor following the peace with Spain. In the decade after 1604 the cloth trade experienced one of the most prosperous periods in its chequered history. It was not by any means a period of untroubled trade. It was ushered in by "the greatest pestilence in London that was ever heard of or known by any man living."³ More than 38,000 persons perished. Merchants fled the city to escape infection,⁴ and the cloth trade, especially with France,⁵ suffered in consequence. Foreign affairs still had a troublesome way of interfering with trade. Hence, James' entry into the Cleves-Julich controversy caused

1. 39 Eliz., c. 3: 43 Eliz., c. 2.

2. 1 Jas. I, c. 6.

3. The Diary of Walter Yonge, ed. by George Roberts, p. 1.

4. W. R. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, vol. 1, p. 102.

5. Cal. S.P. Venetian 1603-07, pp. 104-05; Giovanni Scaramelli to Doge and Senate, Kingston, 22 Oct. 1603.

the Emperor to order the strict enforcement of the decree nominally in effect against English merchants since 1597, and it required some plain speaking on the part of James' ambassador, Stephen Le Sieur, to avert a commercial crisis.¹ Trade suffered slightly in 1612 when the Archduke - prophetic of the fate in store for the Cockayne experiment - forbade English merchants to carry dyed and dressed cloths into Flanders.² Then increasingly after 1608, English merchants were feeling the pressure of rivalry as the Dutch began to establish themselves in the commercial careers which the truce with Spain had released them to pursue.³ Yet apart from such occasional setbacks and portents of decline, trade was flourishing during these years. While the East India Company vigorously sought out new markets for English goods, the Merchant Adventurers were strengthening old ones. Thus in 1611, the company was restored to its privileges at Hamburg and the long rivalry with the Hanse was at an end.⁴ The effect that the return of comparative stability had on the cloth trade was reflected in the increased figures that Customers set down in the Port Books. Where the export of white cloths from London had averaged 97,000 cloths a year in 1600, it had climbed to 126,000 cloths in 1606, and stood at an unprecedented 127,000 cloths in 1614.⁵ It was the last good year the Merchant Adventurers would remember.

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1. Ibid., 1610-13, pp. 10-11; Marc 'Antonio Correr to Doge and Senate, London, 14 July 1610.
 2. Supra., p. 73.
 3. Ibid., pp. 248-49; Antonio Foscarini to Doge and Senate, London, 2 Dec. 1611.
 4. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1634-35, p. 313, Chas. I, vol. CCLXXVII, no. 124; Papers relating to the trade of the Merchant Adventurers, Nov. 1634.
 5. Infra., Appendix D, p. 242-43.

That James refrained from exploiting the cloth trade as a source of additional revenue as long as he did, suggests the extent to which the events of the sixteenth century had impressed the government with the dangers inherent in tampering with England's cardinal industry. Apart from the patent for a new dye,¹ cloth had escaped the king's financial expedients, and up to 1614 it was charged with nothing beyond the usual customs. This was hardly a condition which could be expected to continue, especially when the Addled Parliament met and dissolved, its grievances unredressed and the king's supplies ungranted. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that financial considerations dominated the king's decision to put Alderman Cockayne's proposals into effect. Sound mercantilist arguments could be brought to defend a scheme which would require all cloths to be dyed and dressed in England before they were carried overseas. These had all been heard before, and when the Council had weighed the advantages of adopting such a policy against the affect it might have in disrupting the export trade, and possibly of encouraging the expansion of the Dutch textile industry, the Council had agreed with the Merchant Adventurers that it was safer to carry on in the traditional manner and allow foreigners to continue earning profits that might otherwise be gained by English clothworkers. But when the proposal was raised again in 1614, the Council was obliged to inform the Merchant Adventurers that his majesty regarded the arguments they had listed against the feasibility of Cockayne's project, as "consisting

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1. W. R. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, vol. 1, p. 142.

only in doubts," and that the king had firmly resolved to attempt the scheme.¹ The king had neglected to add that his own suspicions had probably been dispelled when Cockayne baited his proposal with the promise of additional revenue to the crown; 5s. on every cloth exported along with the duties from all dye-stuffs it would be necessary to import to dress cloths properly.²

The brief and unhappy history of the Cockayne experiment has been made the subject of a detailed inquiry,³ and only the barest outline is necessary to our purposes here. The plan was put into operation in November 1614, and when the Merchant Adventurers refused to cooperate their charter was suspended and a new company formed the following month.⁴ The project was practically stillborn when the Estates General issued a proclamation prohibiting the importation of dyed and dressed cloths into the United Provinces,⁵ and this check proved final. After a year conditions had deteriorated to the extent that the Council was obliged to force the company to take unsold stocks off clothiers' hands,⁶ and from that time on it was only the king's

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1. Acts of the Privy Council 1613-14, p. 538; The king to the Privy Council, 12 July 1614.
 2. A. Friis, Alderman Cockayne's Project and the Cloth Trade, pp. 239, 338.
 3. Ibid., a work which suffers from severe deficiencies in English translation.
 4. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 135, no. 1148; The dyeing and dressing project, 23 July 1614: ibid., p. 136, no. 1154; Withdrawal of the Merchant Adventurers' charter, 2 Dec. 1614.
 5. Acts of the Privy Council 1615-16, p. 220; Proceedings in Council, 19 June 1615.
 6. Ibid., 1616-17, pp. 17-18; Answer of the King's Merchant Adventurers to the Council, 16 Sept. 1616.

stubbornness that kept the project on its feet. Then unable longer to ignore the rising complaints of unemployment in the clothing counties, the king was finally forced to admit the unwisdom of "staying longer upon specious and fair shows which produce not the fruit our actions do ever aim at." Cockayne's company was dissolved in January 1617,¹ and the Merchant Adventurers were fully restored to their former privileges by the following August.²

Long after the damage had been repaired, economic writers continued to find the Cockayne experiment a convenient point from which to trace the causes of each new crisis in the cloth trade. Battie finds the cause of the declining trade of the late 'thirties and early 'forties in "that unhappy project of dyeing and dressing of cloth by Sir William Cockayne,"³ and as late as 1675 Roger Coke complained of the difficulties facing English merchants as a consequence of the stimulus the experiment had given to foreign textile industries.⁴ In lamenting England's loss of a virtual manufacturing monopoly, which in no case could have been expected to remain permanent, contemporaries overlooked the benefits which the project had indirectly helped to bring about in freeing the industry from its bondage to the manufacture of white cloth, and promoting the development of new and lighter fabrics for which richer and freer markets were found in the

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1. Acts of the Privy Council 1616-17, p. 115; Surrender of the Cockayne Patent, 9 Jan. 1617.
 2. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 142, no. 1200; Restoration of the Merchant Adventurers' charter, 12 Aug. 1617.
 3. J. Battie, The Merchants' Remonstrance (1644), p. 4.
 4. R. Coke, Treatise, (1675), vol. 3, p. 11.

At no time was it less apparent that the Cockayne blunder might yet yield beneficial results than it was in 1622. The commissioners who in that year attempted to determine the causes of the paralyzing depression that had hung over the cloth trade since 1620, were convinced that the principal reason for the fall in foreign demand for English woollens, was that "The makeing of cloth ... in fforeign partes (was) in more aboundance than in former times."¹ Though they advanced no reason for this sudden rise in foreign competition, their silence did not obscure the fact that they thought it could all be attributed to the folly of the king and his prompter Alderman Cockayne. Two years before in the House of Commons, the more outspoken Sir Edward Coke had laid the blame for the depression squarely on the king's shoulders, and he had pointed out that German as well as Dutch industry had been given a tremendous impetus as a consequence of the dyeing and dressing project.² Foreign governments had been forced to stimulate their textile manufacturing industries when the Cockayne scheme threatened to deprive thousands of clothworkers of their means of livelihood. There is no doubt that they met with considerable success and by 1630 the Dutch were reported to be manufacturing upwards of 30,000 cloths a year.³ Yet the expansion of foreign industry was not perhaps as rapid as the Commission of 1622

1. H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 190; quoting the report of the Royal Commission of 1622.

2. Commons Journals, vol. 1, p. 520.

3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1639-40, p. 417, Chas. I, vol. CCCCXLIV, no. 6; Edward Misselden to Windebank, Hackney, 1 Feb. 1640.

imagined, and it is doubtful if foreign competition was a major cause of the depression. By 1622 Dutch competition might have been cutting into England's markets, yet the principal outlet for the products of the new industry that was springing up around Leiden seems to have been France¹ while the greater part of English cloth exports went to Germany. It would appear that the white cloth trade was well on the way to recovery between 1618 and 1620. The rising unrest which had been apparent in the clothing districts in 1616² had obviously subsided, for there was no indication that the Council contemplated ordering the justices to put relief measures into effect - always a gauge of the condition of the export trade. Figures compiled by Miss Friis make it possible to determine the cause of the crisis of 1621/22 with greater accuracy. She has shown that cloth exports to Middelburg which stood at 34,500 cloths in 1614, amounted to 31,500 cloths in 1618, the year the Cockayne project was abandoned. By 1620, the Netherlands' market was rapidly approaching normal conditions. The Merchant Adventurers disposed of 32,000 white cloths at Middelburg in that year, a fact which speaks volumes for the extent to which Dutch industry had expanded since the Cockayne experiment. On the other hand, exports to Hamburg amounted to 46,000 cloths in 1614, stood at 35,000 cloths in 1618, and had plunged to a mere 21,000 cloths in 1620.³ The exports of the Eastland Company trading to the Baltic followed the

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1. B. H. M. Vlekke, The Evolution of the Dutch Nation, p. 177.
 2. Cal. S.P. Venetian 1615-17, p. 343; Giovanni Lionello to Doge and Senate, London, 4 Nov. 1616.
 3. A. Friis, Alderman Cockayne's Project and the Cloth Trade, p. 383.

same general trend. The company shipped 7,700 cloths to Elbing in 1614, 8,713 cloths in 1616, and 7,843 cloths in 1618. But in 1620, Eastland cloth exports had dropped to 3,040 cloths.¹ The major cause then, of the depression 1621/22, was undoubtedly the outbreak of the Thirty Years' war, while the immediate effect of foreign competition upon the volume of English cloth exports was probably negligible. Lipson's conclusion that these figures indicate that the result of the Cockayne project was to extend the market for Dutch cloth in Germany seems fallacious.² What happened after the outbreak of the war is another matter. Then the Dutch textile industry undoubtedly fell heir to the German market. This again was less a result of the Cockayne experiment, than it was a consequence of the inflexible English system of trading through mart towns, access to which had been hindered by the war, and to the high price to which English cloth had been driven owing to the pretermitted customs and royal exactions on the Merchant Adventurers, both of which had been levied after the project had been abandoned.³

Few contemporaries would have agreed. The commission of 1622 listed "The present state of the times by reason of the warres in Germany," as but a fourth and possible cause "conceived by many to be some present impediment to the vent of our cloth." They were less hesitant in affirming that apart from the effect of foreign competition, the drop in the demand for

1. Ibid., p. 383.

2. E. Lipson, The Economic History of England, vol. 3, p. 382.

3. Supra, p. 75.

English cloth was capable of an ethical explanation. Foreigners constantly complained of the "false and decitfull makinge, dyinge, and dressinge" of English cloth, and they simply refused to buy it now that quantities of better quality cloth could be had from other looms. Having accounted for the lack of demand, the commissioners did not realize that it explained the reason for the great "scarcety of coyne" which they listed as another cause of the trade depression. They were much nearer to the point when they suggested that the monopolistic practices of the Merchant Adventurers had an adverse effect upon trading conditions, and very discerning indeed in noting that the heavy customs and impositions burdening English cloth made it "soe deare to the buyer that those that were wont to furnish themselves therewith in fforraigne parts either by (sic) Cloth in other countries, or cloath themselves in a cheaper manner."¹

The full force of depression had hit the cloth trade early in 1621. The Merchant Adventurers were selling about one-half of the amount they had sold in 1614 and the Eastland merchants little more than a third, and the annual loss in value to the two companies was upwards of half a million pounds.² While trade to the north German and Baltic markets all but ceased, a minor though important secondary market was cut-off the following year when the king of Spain issued an edict forbidding his subjects to wear cloth manufactured in England.³ As ever, the

1. Extracts from the commissioners' report are quoted by H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, pp. 190-191.

2. W. R. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, vol. 1, p. 169.

3. The Diary of Walter Yonge, ed. by George Roberts, p. 67.

elements seemed party to a conspiracy to make the lives of English weavers doubly miserable in times of failing trade, and where the harvests of 1619 and 1620 had been exceptionally favorable those of 1621 and 1622 proved unusually bad, and the price of corn rocketed in the provinces.¹ Bankruptcies among clothiers were frequent. In twenty out of two-hundred clothing townships in Suffolk there was cloth unsold to the value of £39,282, and in twelve of these alone clothiers were reported to have lost £30,415.² One of them, Samuel Salmon, had been forced to dismiss two-hundred weavers and the justices warned that these were stirring up trouble in their district.³ The justices of Devon informed the Council of a similar danger when a widow named Helen Maning gave up trade and discharged her four-hundred employees.⁴ From Wiltshire the justices reported that forty-four looms at Bromham had stood idle for more than half a year and that eight-hundred weavers there were unemployed.⁵ In Somersetshire, distress among the weavers of Frome was so great that the Quarter Sessions held at Wells ordered the treasurer of the hospitals to pay one pound quarterly to the constable of the hundred to be distributed among the needy as required.⁶

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1. E. M. Leonard, English Poor Relief, p. 145.
 2. Hist. MSS. Comm., Report 13, Wodehouse MSS., App. 4, p. 440; Sir John Heigham to the Council, Bury, 13 March 1621.
 3. Acts of the Privy Council 1621-23, p. 278; Council to the Justices of Suffolk, 30 June 1622.
 4. Ibid., p. 314; Council to the Justices of Devon, 18 Aug. 1622.
 5. Hist. MSS. Comm. Various, vol. 1, p. 94; A petition of western weavers to the justices, 1623.
 6. Somerset Q.S. Records, vol. XXIII, p. 323; Sessions of the Peace held at Wells, 14-17 Jan. 1623.

Conditions in Gloucestershire were no better. The justices reported that there were at least fifteen-hundred looms in the county each employing sixteen hands who earned little more than a shilling a week, and that the clothiers were unable to keep them at work longer than another fortnight.¹ Ominous reports told of troops of unemployed weavers numbering as high as five and six-hundred persons who moved from town to town, rioting, stealing food, and housebreaking. In one area the justices and Lord Lieutenant were pelted with sticks and stones when they attempted to intercept the malcontents, though the weavers insisted that they desired only a livelihood and if given work would return to their homes.²

The Council's first reaction to the frantic reports of mounting unrest in the clothing counties was almost to deny that conditions were as serious as its informants alleged. Perhaps these disturbances were in part caused by unemployment but the Council was sure that the greater part of the trouble could be traced to certain "leude and vagrant persons," who "under coulor of want of work" had seized the opportunity "of raysing tumultes and disorders for theire owne private endes." If unemployment was the major cause, then weavers should be made to understand that "so great a busines as the misterie of cloathing having relation to soe many persons, trades and circumstances, cannot be expected to proceed att all times after one and the same manner with like benefitt to each partie interested (sic) therein." Yet the Council was anxious lest the poor should

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1619-23, p. 358, Jas. I, vol. CXXVIII, no. 49; Statements of Gloucestershire clothiers to the council, 13 March 1622.
 2. Cal. S.P. Venetian 1621-23, pp. 249-50; Girolamo Lando to Doge and Senate, London, 25 Feb. 1622.

"disturbe the quiet and government of these partes wherein they live," and it instructed the justices to order clothiers to continue to employ their workmen, or in areas where conditions were particularly severe, to order the setting up of public stocks. The Council itself would see to it that woolgrowers sold their wool at moderate prices and that cloth merchants continued to take unsold stocks off clothiers' hands.¹ At the same time the Book of Orders was amended and reissued, and a proclamation was drawn up ordering the restraint of maltsters and a reduction in the number of alehouses.² Since the central government seemed unconvinced of the true severity of conditions in the clothing counties, it is possible that the relief measures were not as vigorously enforced as they otherwise would have been. A writer of 1622 noted no improvement in the administration of the Poor Law during the first year of the depression: "though the number of the Poore do dailie increase all things worketh for the worst in their behalfe. For there hath beane no collection for them, no not these seven yeares in many parishes of this land especiallie in countrie townes; but many of those parishes turneth forth their Poore ... to begge, filth, and steale, for their maintenance so that the country is pittifully pestered with them."³

But by the spring of 1622 the depression had not eased, and serious disturbances had broken out in many parts of the country. Outrages were reported to have been committed by weavers in

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1. Acts of the Privy Council 1621-23, pp. 131-32; Council to justices of the clothing counties, 9 Feb. 1622.
 2. E. M. Leonard, English Poor Relief, p. 145.
 3. Ibid., p. 244, Quoting Greevous Grones for the Poore (1622).

Suffolk and Essex, there was sporadic rioting everywhere in the west, and the situation was particularly tense in Devon and Somersetshire.¹ By May the government was aware that unrest had gone beyond the point where it could be stemmed by the customary relief measures alone, and it was prepared to use force to restore public order. It was a rising in Devonshire which seems to have frightened the government most. Immediately thereafter general musters were called throughout the kingdom and the Lords Lieutenants were ordered to keep the militia and trained bands alerted, both for possible service in the Palatinate, and "specially for suppressinge of any such tumultuous assemblies as have late ben made in some of the Westerne parts."² Simultaneously, a special order was dispatched to the Earl of Bath requiring that he ready all trained troops in Devonshire for service at an hour's notice.³ At the year's end the tension had not relaxed, and a proclamation issued in December ordered persons dwelling in rural districts to remain at their places of residence and not to enter cities or towns except on legal business, and then to come unaccompanied by their families.⁴ Meanwhile the Council took steps to ensure the more effective administration of the Poor Laws. From the spring

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1. Cal. S.P. Venetian 1621-23, p. 335; Girolamo Lando to Doge and Senate, London, 3 June 1622.
 2. Acts of the Privy Council 1621-23, p. 225; A Minut of letters to the Lords Lieutenants of England and Wales, 19 May 1622.
 3. The Diary of Walter Yonge, ed. by George Roberts, p. 57.
 4. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 159, no. 1344; Orders to restrain the poor to their place of residence, 22 Dec. 1622.

of 1622 to the early part of 1623 the relief measures were better enforced than at any time during the preceding twenty years. Special plans were adopted for selling corn to the poor under the market price, greater efforts were made to provide work for the unemployed, while letters and orders passing between the Council and the justices were never more numerous. Then with a good spring harvest and a slight improvement in the cloth trade early in the year, the Council's fears were¹ abated and its vigilance consequently relaxed.

There was no full recovery from the severe effects of the depression of 1622. Two years later the parliamentary committee for trade reported that there were still 12,000 unemployed in the industry,² and the overseas market for English cloth had only begun to improve by 1626³ when the revival was checked as the foreign situation worsened. Everywhere by 1626, English merchants traded to the established markets with difficulty, and the general uncertainty bred a want of confidence which was bad for trade. The popularity which had been accorded the outbreak of hostilities with Spain in 1625 soon waned when English commerce became prey to the ravages of Dunkirk privateers.⁴ Worse still, England's assertion of belligerent rights at sea⁵ soon involved her in a crisis with France. The seizure of French

1. E. M. Leonard, English Poor Relief, pp. 149-50.

2. Commons Journals, vol. 1, p. 711.

3. W. R. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, vol. 1, p. 186.

4. M. Oppenheim, History of the Administration of the Royal Navy, pp. 274-75.

5. Steele, Proclamations, vol. 1, p. 172, no. 1463; Belligerent rights at sea, 30 Dec. 1625.

vessels carrying contraband to Spanish ports brought French reprisals, and ultimately led to war in 1627. Merchants from the southwestern ports suffered particularly heavy losses as a consequence of French seizures. In 1628 Exeter merchants reported that cloths of theirs valued at £30,000 had been confiscated, and that if their losses were not compensated by the government they would be forced to dismiss the thousands of craftsmen directly dependent upon them.¹ The Merchant Adventurers continued to complain that Dutch impositions would soon tax English cloth out of the Netherlands' market,² while reports from the Levant told of the increasing insolence of the officers of the Grand Signor and warned that English trade to the Porte was gravely threatened.³ Meanwhile, protestant fortunes in Germany had taken a sharp turn for the worse. The northward advance of Tilly following his victory over Christian IV at Lutter in 1626 caused great alarm in London. Should he plant a firm foot on the shores of the Baltic or the Elbe, the two channels through which the vital north German and Polish markets were supplied with English cloth would be blocked, and the blow it was feared, would prove fatal to English trade.⁴ Thus, when in September 1627 a report arrived in London that Tilly had crossed the Elbe, and with it a rumor that both Hamburg

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1627-28, p. 576, Chas. I, vol. XCIV, no. 5; Petition of Exeter Merchants Trading to France, 21 Feb. 1628; see also Commons Journals, I, pp. 837, 845, 851, 853.
 2. Commons Journals, I, p. 863.
 3. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1625-49, p. 4, Chas. I, vol. DXXI, no. 21; Petition of the Levant Merchants, 15 April 1625.
 4. Cal. S.P. Venetian 1626-28, p. 432; Alvise Contarini to Doge and Senate, London, 25 Oct. 1627.

and Lubeck were prepared to come to terms with the League, many merchants took steps to pull out of the northern trade at once, while those who had the courage to continue did so without the confidence that was necessary if trade was to thrive.¹ The following January, Hamburg's imperialist sympathies was the reason offered by the Council when it ordered English merchants to abstain from shipping woollen cloths to the city. Though no evidence has come forward to show that the order was strictly enforced, a good many merchants abandoned trade in consequence of it, and the breach served to disrupt further the already depressed state of English trade.² Yet trade was not everywhere stagnant. It was during this period that English merchants, blocked in the traditional central European markets, began to penetrate the Mediterranean. As early as 1627 the Venetian secretary at Florence wrote enviously of the wealth that was being gained by Leghorn, to which he had heard "five millions of goods reach that place from England every year."³

Political developments abroad already threatened to produce a crisis in the cloth trade when an internal political event combined to make the threat a reality. Whatever the virtues of the political liberties sought by the parliament of 1629, it played fast and loose with the economic condition of the greater part of the industrial population in the attempt to achieve them. The third of the famous resolutions of March 1629, accounting merchants who paid tonnage and poundage "betrayers of

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1. Ibid., p. 351; Same to Same, London, 3 Sept. 1627.
 2. Hist. MSS. Comm., Report 11, Skrine MSS., pt. 1, p. 139; Salvetti to the Grand Duke of Florence, London, 31 Jan. 1628.
 3. Cal. S.P. Venetian 1626-28, p. 156; Agostino Vianuol to Doge and Senate, Florence, 20 March 1627.

the liberty of England," was a two-edged sword which severed the king's revenues and cut sharply into the incomes of thousands of English weavers. Mercantile interests had been affected in almost every instance by the king's attempts to raise revenue and the trading companies seem to have been prominent in agitating for the course parliament took.¹ The Merchant Adventurers staunchly refused to buy and sell cloth, and by the end of April exports from London had all but ceased.² The king did not become tractable, and trade soon resumed when the threatened loss of their privileges finally proved more compelling than the company's allegiance to abstract principles. But in the meantime, three precious months had been lost,³ the markets were now glutted with cloth, and the first reports of turbulence from the clothing counties had already been heard.⁴

The depression of 1629-1630 was as severe as its predecessor of a decade earlier. Distress in the manufacturing districts was aggravated by a rapid rise in the price of corn⁵ and an unfortunate outbreak of the plague,⁶ while recovery was delayed when a resumption of the tare controversy resulted in the temporary closing of the Netherlands' market in the autumn of 1630.⁷

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1. W. R. Scott, Joint Stock Companies, vol. 1, p. 191.
 2. Cal. S.P. Venetian 1629-32, pp. 7-8; Alvise Contarini to Doge and Senate, London, April 1629.
 3. Trade was resumed in May; Cal. S.P. Dom. 1628-29, p. 550, Chas. I, vol. CXLII, no. 90; Secretary Coke to Dorchester, London, 16 May 1629.
 4. Ibid., p. 524, Chas. I, vol. CXLI, no. 16; William Lake to Sir Henry Vane, 20 April 1629.
 5. E. M. Leonard, English Poor Relief, p. 150.
 6. Ibid., p. 200; and H. Heaton, The Yorkshire Woollen and Worsted Industries, p. 189.
 7. Hist. MSS. Comm. Buccleuch, vol. 1, p. 270; Earl of Manchester to Lord Montagu, 28 Oct. 1630.

Events in the clothing counties followed the same turbulent course as they had in 1622: the cloth makers of Essex rose and were dispersed by the Earl of Warwick,¹ watches and wards were kept in Hampshire,² there was particularly severe rioting in Gloucestershire, and the Council instructed justices in the clothing counties to take more than ordinary precautions to suppress "idle and dangerous people."³ But the depression was particularly significant for two reasons. The first - to which we shall presently return - was that it prompted a reorganization of the system for administering the relief code. Secondly, it was the last industrial depression in our period which affected every segment of the clothing population simultaneously. The explanation for this has been suggested previously. Owing to the development of new types of cloth within the industry, and to the rapid commercial penetration of the Mediterranean after 1620, the prosperity of the clothing industry no longer hinged entirely upon the ability of the great merchant companies to maintain an uninterrupted sale of its products in the central European market.

For the clothier who manufactured new types of cloth for new markets, the 'thirties were a period of rising prosperity, while to his unyielding counterpart who remained wedded to the manufacture of the standard products of an ancient industry, the period was one of almost uninterrupted depression. Old industrial

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1628-29, p. 524, Chas. I, vol. CXLI, no. 16; William Lake to Sir Henry Vane, 20 April 1629.
 2. Ibid., 1631-33, p. 9, Chas. I, vol. CLXXXVIII, no. 55; Justices of Hampshire to Thomas Coteel, Sherrif, Basingstake, 12 April 1631.
 3. W. B. Willcox, Gloucestershire, 1590-1640, pp. 176-77.

centers like Reading, having withstood the industrial migrations¹ of the early sixteenth century, finally fell into decay. In the western broadcloth areas clothiers were daily abandoning trade, while many were able to remain in business only because of the credit given them by wool-growers and local merchants.² For the merchants on whom such clothiers depended, trade ran a troubled course. In the Baltic the Eastland merchants were caught "like a grain of corn between two millstones of the Swedes and Danzigers emulation."³ After 1630 an edict forbade the importation of cloths into Poland not previously sealed at Danzig, while Gustavus Adolphus anxious to secure Danzig as a base of operations against Poland, and to hold on the Baltic trade, hampered the Eastlanders' trade by his repeated attacks on the city, and then by ordering the confiscation of the goods of merchants who attempted the passage to the port.⁴ Elsewhere, protective tariffs and increasing competition from the products of local industry lessened the demand for English cloth. The Dutch textile industry was infused with new life after 1634, when Laud's ecclesiastical policy drove many Puritan clothmakers to seek refuge in Holland. Lured by offers of exemption from excise taxes and free rentals, 140 families crossed the channel from Norfolk and Suffolk, and thereby "cast a damp on the Woollen Trade"⁵ of the eastern counties.

The new trade conditions brought about by the rise of foreign industrial competition had gradually forced the Merchant Adventurers

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1631-33, p. 406, Chas. I, vol. CCXXII, no. 45; Letter of William Kenrick, 20 Aug. 1632.
 2. W. B. Willcox, *op. cit.*, p. 177.
 3. The Acts and Ordinances of the Eastland Company, ed. by M. Sellers, p. xl, quoting Sir Thomas Toe, 16 Aug. 1631.
 4. *Ibid.*, p. xl.
 5. J. Smith, Chronicon Rusticum Commerciale, (1747) pp. 167-68.

to alter their trading regulations. In 1618 the company had permitted its members to deal outside the mart towns in all commodities except white cloth.¹ With their trade now cut in half, the Adventurers modified their regulations again. By 1634 the company had abandoned the traditional practice of organizing the export trade in twice yearly sailings to the continent, and its members were shipping cloth to the mart towns on a twelve month basis.² Though "conditions of the times" might necessitate this irregularity, such practice was incompatible with the principles of a "well-ordered" trade, which once violated, ended any possible justification for the continuance of the Merchant Adventurers' monopoly.

It was indicative of the declining fortunes of the Merchant Adventurers that when economic unrest again became severe in 1638, the pinch was felt mainly in the western cloth manufacturing districts,³ the great source of the white cloths which had long been the company's staple export to the continent. But the weaver who found himself unemployed in 1638, whether he lived in one of the innumerable clothing villages of the Wylde valley or plied his craft in a larger industrial center like Exeter, would probably have found nothing unusual in the interest shown for his welfare by the justices of the peace or his local parish officers - no more unusual, in any case, than he had found the interest they had evidenced over the past eight years. The dangerous menace that he and his fellows had presented to public

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1. The Lawes, Customes and Ordinances of the Fellowshippe of Merchantes Adventurers, ed. by W. E. Lingelbach, pp. 134-35.
 2. Cal. S.P. Dom. 1625-49, p. 488, Chas. I, vol. DXXXV, no. 32; Merchant Adventurers' answers to articles of complaint, 1634?
 3. Ibid., 1639-40, p. 234, Chas. I, vol. CCCCXXXVIII, no. 55; Petition of the Merchant Adventurers to the king, 1639?

order during the 'twenties, was undoubtedly a major reason that the justices' enforcement of the Poor Laws had become regular and not confined, as in the past, to periods of famine or to times of failing trade. From 1630 to 1640 the state, always vigilant in theory, became vigilant in fact. The Council appointed a special commission for the better administration of the Poor Laws. Justices were ordered to divide themselves so that each hundred was brought under their supervision. Each month the justices were required to meet with the overseers, churchwardens, and constables in every parish and to enquire what steps had been taken for relieving the destitute and setting the unemployed to work. Every three months the justices themselves were to compile reports of their activities, and these were to be transmitted to the Council through the judges of assize. The Elizabethan Book of Orders was amended and re-issued, and the justices enjoined to keep the markets constantly well supplied with corn and at reasonable prices.¹ Special action was taken against engrossers of corn, and in one instance a chronic offender was fined 100 marks, required to donate £10 to the poor, and then to stand in pillory alternately at Newgate, Leadenhall and Cheapside with his crime labelled to his hat.² In 1629, 1631, and 1637 steps were taken to effect a raise in the wages paid to textile workers, and one clothier, Thomas Reignolds, convicted of paying his weavers in truck, was committed to the Fleet until he had paid his workmen double the amount owed them, plus the charges they had incurred in raising the complaint.³

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1. E. M. Leonard, English Poor Relief, pp. 150-164.
 2. Bland, Brown, and Tawney, Select Documents, pp. 391-96;
Proceedings against an engrosser of corn, 1631.
 3. E. M. Leonard, op. cit., p. 163.

The discovery that relief measures might be administered to deter, as well as to relieve unrest, had been long in coming!

In the development of the relief code, from the acts of 1572 and 1576 to the period of its continuous enforcement after 1630, the social historian may find the germ of humanitarian sentiment in the government's attitude toward the industrial and laboring classes. Yet the fact that each new step in the development of the system coincided with years of critical privation and serious social disturbance, would suggest that it was to a large extent panic legislation, with the preservation of order as its principal intent. Particularly as it sought to meet the problems of unemployment and economic distress in the cloth industry, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the state's motives were eminently practical. Repeated attention has been called to the government's fears of unrest in the clothing counties in times of trade depression. The ability of a scattered body of textile workers to organize for common action was consistently over-estimated, and what the government feared was an "insurrection" or "rebellion" of clothmakers, usually turned out to be no more than sporadic rioting. Yet the exaggerated light in which such disturbances were often viewed indicates the extent of the government's apprehension. Where such fears were entertained, it is likely that in attempting to mitigate economic distress, practical rather than ethical considerations weighed heaviest with the government. Faced with the danger of the Spanish embargo in the sixteenth century, the

necessity for active intervention to protect the interests of its largest industrial class became a necessity of the state. It was not only his warm heart that caused Burghley to issue the Book of Orders in 1586.

The same practical motives leading to the development of a relief code in the sixteenth century, influenced the government to effect its better administration in the seventeenth. The connection between a decade of severe and intermittent depression in the cloth industry and the improved administration of the poor laws after 1630 would seem no coincidence. Writing to the Earl of Manchester in 1630, Lord Montagu informed him that in seeking the "quicken" the justices in the performance of their duties, the council was "wholly bent how to prevent the mischief that may befall in this dangerous time."¹ A government with enemies enough on its hands already had an obvious interest in averting popular discontent.

1. Hist. MSS. Buccleuch MSS., vol. 1, pp. 271-2; Lord Montagu to the Earl of Manchester, Nov. 1630?

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

One source of trouble unites our whole period. The danger of technological unemployment in the woollen industry was of constant concern to the state. A large industrial population whose prosperity, or lack of it, was determined by factors beyond the control of the government was regarded as a source of political weakness: "for in times of war, or by other occasions, if some foreign princes should prohibit the use (of English cloth) in their dominions, it might suddenly cause much poverty and dangerous uproars, especially among our poor people, when they should be deprived of their ordinary maintenance."¹ The use of economic sanctions as a weapon of foreign policy had disconcerting effects with which the Tudors especially had had ample experience, and the political inexpedience of excessive dependence on the manufacture of cloth was a theme constantly developed by economic pamphleteers.

No less ominous a threat to law and order were the severe agrarian disturbances which this ever-expanding industry was thought to breed. We have noted the relationship between the increasing demand for wool, enclosures and depopulation. One further fact in this connection should be noted. The government feared that increasing industrialization was a source of military weakness. England relied on shire levies recruited from small farmers for the bulk of her troops, and depopulation might hinder the government's ability to raise an effective military force.

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1. T. Mun, England's Treasure by Forraign Trade (1664) pp. 181-2.
 2. R. H. Tawney, The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 343-4.

The economic consequences were equally distressing. Industrial gains were offset by agricultural losses, and the decline in self-sufficiency which had forced England into dependence on the foreigner for her grain supplies was given anxious administrative and legislative expression in 1564, and again in 1597. Then too, as her industry concentrated upon the production of a single commodity England was required to import many products of foreign manufacture, and the much vaunted balance of trade often appeared in danger of tipping against her. The principal objection was to the form foreign imports were taking, and from the time of Clement Armstrong¹ to that of Henry Robinson, the cloth trade was blamed for "bringing in more superfluities then wee could well digest."²

The social consequences should be noticed. The cloth trade and industry made possible those rapid rises in the social scale which offset the best efforts in the opposite direction of a government, which in theory at least, was the resolute opponent of social changes. The ability of clothiers to invest in the land, and of merchants to advance from poverty to opulence within a few short years of their arrival in London, was never quite justified in the eyes of the administration.

One fact stands out clearly. England wore her mantle of cloth uncomfortably. Both in and out of the administration there always seems to have been a large body of conservative opinion that would have agreed with Mun, that though cloth making was

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1. C. Armstrong, The Request and Suite of a True-Hearted English-man.
 2. H. Robinson, England's Safety in Trade's Encrease, (1641) p. 24.

"the greatest wealth and best employment of the poor of this kingdom, yet nevertheless we may peradventure employ ourselves with better safety, plenty and profit in using more tillage and fishing, than to trust so wholly to the making of cloth."¹

We have seen that sentiment of this sort was strongest in the mid-sixteenth century, and many influences, of which the unruliness of cloth makers was one, swayed the government in favor of arresting the development of the cloth industry. But apart from an ephemeral attempt to effect this under the statute of 1553² - though this expedient certainly appealed to Cecil - no serious effort in this direction seems to have been made.³ Instead, an attempt was made at controlling the future development of the textile industry. Gradually, something like a policy toward the cloth industry was developed.

Nothing lends itself less safely to generalization than that complex variety of piecemeal devices which a government is forced to adopt under the pressure of practical problems and which finally come to comprise a "policy." And Unwin has warned that "policy" is more often an illusion of the historian's mind than a fact of history.⁴ Unquestionably the clothing code was of fortuitous development. Yet in its attitude toward the cloth industry the government seems to have been guided by two definite underlying principles. Firstly, it may be said that the adminis-

1. T. Mun., loc. cit.

2. 4 & 5 P & M c. 5.

3. But see the article by F. J. Fisher, Commercial Trends and Policy in Sixteenth-Century England, The Economic History Review, 1940, vol. 10.

4. G. Unwin, The Merchant Adventurers Company in the Reign of Elizabeth, ibid., 1927, vol. 1, p. 48.

tration sought to maintain a balance between industry and agriculture, with the scales heavily weighted in favor of the latter. Secondly, the government sought to render the condition of industry and commerce as stable as possible that the dangers of industrial unrest might be avoided.

The first problem was of relatively simple solution. Industrial encroachments on agriculture were made illegal through enclosure legislation, and lands that had been converted from tillage to pasture could easily enough be reconverted to tillage. To solve the second, a more complex regulatory system was required.

The various regulations which went to make up that system have been examined. A standard of quality was legislated and its better enforcement attempted by extending town authority to include adjacent rural districts. Entrance to the industry was made difficult by requiring that clothiers and weavers serve a seven-year apprenticeship, and that they satisfy property qualifications in certain instances. The export trade was brought under closer scrutiny, and the monopoly over it of the Merchant Adventurers was strengthened by the charter of 1564. Together these constituted an instrument whereby the quality and volume of cloth production could be regulated at its source, its sale controlled abroad, that the twin curses of over-production and glutted markets might be avoided. With very little alteration, these regulations affected the workings of the cloth trade and industry down to 1640.

To the Tudor monarchy, never quite certain of its popularity, and with no standing army or police force to quell disorder, public

disturbances had a factitious importance. The government seems to have lived in constant fear that "for lack of vent tumult will follow in the clothing counties,"¹ and a basic purpose of its policy was undoubtedly to render that danger less probable. This surmise seems strengthened by the government's cautious treatment of the export trade. Thus until 1618, despite the fact that its revenues from wool exports had all but vanished, the crown continued to exact moderate customs on cloth, and for fear that it might disrupt the settled course of trade, mercantilist desires for completing all processes of cloth manufacture in England were long suppressed.

The same concern for the turbulent spirits of cloth makers is evidenced by later legislation. Thus, the preferential minimum wage law of 1604 was more likely an indication of an attempt to remove the material causes of unrest, than it was of the government's humanitarian sympathies.

To pass from the legislative to the administrative aspects of the problem was a difficult transition. The justices on whom the crown relied for the enforcement of the regulations were often clothiers. In such cases they would be unlikely to enforce apprenticeship regulations which would hinder their supply of cheap, unskilled labor, or to enforce quality regulations which might interfere with their profits. For the same reasons, justices were not energetic in enforcing the minimum wage requirement. One may ask whether the tendency of justices to go on reissuing customary wage scales year after year,² and the rel-

1. Hist. MSS. Comm. Salisbury MSS., vol. 2, p. 251; Perrils from abroad that may be dangerous to the Queen's estate, 13 April 1579.

2. R. K. Kelsall, Wage Regulation Under the Statute of Artificers, pp. 80-86.

relative lack of protest on the part of the textile workers except in times of depression, is not an indication that under normal conditions cloth making afforded a fairly tolerable standard of living, and that the tenuous economic condition of weavers has been exaggerated.

As for the quality regulations it would seem that they were never adequately enforced from the time of Hales down to 1640. That this was so was as much owing to the complexity of the regulations as to the alleged neglect of the justices. The administrative burdens of the unpaid justices were too heavy to expect them to keep a close check on the activities of cloth searchers. The report of the Commission of 1640 is an interesting indication that this fact had gradually come to be realized by contemporaries.

It was upon the export trade that the whole attempt at stability depended, and here, quite naturally, that it ultimately broke down. The government certainly, and the Merchant Adventurers professedly, had learned the dangers of restricted markets during the struggle with Spain. But though there was a modest attempt at commercial penetration to other areas in the latter sixteenth century, the overwhelming bulk of cloth exports were directed through no more than two foreign markets. That a restricted market was an extremely sensitive barometer to the disorders of war and the fluctuations of trade was a truth vividly demonstrated during the sixteen-twenties. Moreover, England's failure to exploit new markets vigorously, left her ill-prepared

to meet foreign competition, and she came out of the sixteenth century faced by a virulent Dutch and a nascent French rival. From 1620 on, the well-ordered trade of the Merchant Adventurers had become a cause of the industrial unrest it was its purpose to prevent.

Like all attempts at state control, this one had bred its enemies. Merchants and clothiers who had accepted state interference with their activities during the period of the Spanish war, were no longer compliant as conditions for trade expansion came once more into being. Indeed it has been suggested that continued government interference with commerce and industry added a major economic grievance to the political and religious causes leading to the downfall of the Stuart monarchy.¹

Traditionally, the attention of historians has been centered on the constitutional developments of the early seventeenth century, and the economic history of the Early Stuart period has been sometimes regarded as an uneventful prolongation of the Elizabethan era. Thus, a distinguished historian of the period could write that "no industrial ... change of importance took place in England during the forty years when the Parliamentary and Puritan Revolution was germinating beneath the soil of an apparently stable and settled society."² Yet it was during this period that the first significant change occurred in the production and exportation of English woollen goods since the fifteenth century. The new draperies were quickly replacing the old, and

1. J. U. Nef, Industry and Government in France and England 1540-1640, pp. 151-52.

2. G. M. Trevelyan, Illustrated English Social History, vol. 2, p. 65.

their sale was being pressed in the Mediterranean. The dependence on the central European market had been broken. The long period of arrested development and concentration in industry and trade had ended.

THE END

APPENDIX A

Extract from the Report of the Royal Commission on the
Clothing Industry 1640.¹

As touching the Corporacons before mencioned, (whereon a great part of the Worke will princiapply depend) Wee humbly conceive it necessary to be settled upon the cheife Townes which at this present doe use the Trade of Clothinge, and makinge of Stuffs, Which (beinge for the great Advancement of draperye) wee beleewe wilbe most willingly embraced, by all the Clothiers of this Kingdome, diverse of them havinge already declared their approbacion thereof, But by reason wee were uncertaine howe this Waye would bee accepted of, wee thought it not expedient to spend much time in entringe too farr in the perticulers, untill wee should receive your Majesties further Commands and direcons.

The names of the Clothinge Townes to which Wee have given intimation of our opinions herein, and which wee conceive to bee considerable for this Worke are these followinge (Vizt) In comitatu Berks, Reading and Newbury, in comitatu devon, Exeter, Totnes, Tiverton, Kirton, Barnestaple, and Tavistocke, in dorset, Dorchester, and Lyme Regis, in Eboraco Hallifaxe, Leedes, Wakefeild, Keightly, Bradford, and Kendall, in Essex, Colchester, Coggeshall, and Dedham, in Gloucester, Gloucester and Strowdwater, in Kent, Canterbury, Sandwich and Tenterden, in Lancashire Manchester, Rochdale, Colne, Boulton, Blackbourne, and Berry, in Norfolk, Norwich, in Oxford, Burford, and Witney, in Salop, Shrewsbury, and

1. Printed in the English Historical Review, 1942, pp. 490-493.

APPENDIX A (CONT.)

Oswestry, in Somerset, Taunton, Shepton Mallet, Winecanton, Chard, Beckington, and Wellington, in Suffolk Ipswich, Hadley, St. Edmonds Bury, Sudbury and Barford, in Stafford, Tamworth, Burton upon Trent, Groton and Nayland, in Surrey, Gilford, in Southampton, Southampton, Andover, and Basingstoke, in Warwick, Coventry, in Wignornense Worcester, and Kidderminster. and in Wilts, Salisbury, Warminster, Devizes, Chippenham and Calne, These we conceive necessary to have Corporacions, if any bee granted, and such others as shalbe hereafter found convenient and necessary. For the Rules and government (sic) of these Corporacions, wee houlde it not fitt to trouble your Majestie with many perticulers, there being already a very good Modell for this Worke, Namely Colchester for the making of Bayes there, diverse of which Ordinance (although only for the making of Bayes) wilbe very pertinent, and agreeable to other places where Clothes and Stuffs are made, For by the Constant Rule of their true makinge they have longe continued, and still are in good Repute and Esteeme in all places beyond the Seas, And as for the said Towne of Colchester that hath Letters Patents of Incorporacion, graunted for the makinge of Bayes, Wee conceive it Requisite the same should be enlarged, to all the Clothiers thereabouts for the makinge of all sorts of drapery, as your Majestie shalbe pleased to graunt unto the Townes; And for other Corporacions, wee houlde it Expedient that the Lymitts and boundes of each of them, should

APPENDIX A (CONT.)

extend to Sixe, Tenn, or Fourteene miles every waye more or lesse according to their distances from the next Clothing Townes; and that the Members of every Corporacion should be Clothiers, Weavers, Fullers, Clothworkers and dyers, and that all such as doe use any of the said Trades, may bee reduced into some one of the said Corporacions, and to bee a brother or member of some or one of them, and that none may bee exempt or freed from the Rules and Government thereof, and alsoe for the future that none may bee admitted into any of the said Corporacions, but such as shall have served their 7: yeares apprentishipe to one of the said Trades, and that all Cardsters, Combers, Spinners and such others, as haue any kind of dependance upon the said Manufactures, may alsoe be regulated by the said Corporacions, Alsoe that every Corporacion that shall use the making of Newe Draperies, shall agree of the lenghes, breadthes, and weights of each kinde of Stuffe which they shall make, Which they shall for ever hereafter bee obliged to observe without alteration, unlesse the same bee allowed by the Commissioners aforesaid, And alsoe that a certaine number of Threads for the Warpe of every sort of Stuffe bee prescribed, and agreed upon at the setting of this business, that the officers for the searching and sealing, bee well skild in the Manufactures, and to bee made choise of by the Master, Wardends, and assistants of each Corporacion, and that these officers before they are admitted, may give good securitye, and be sworne for the due performance of their office, And that they may be duly, and seuerely punished

APPENDIX A (CONT.)

for any faulty Cloth or Stuffle, they shall seale or lett passe contrary to their Orders, And for their paines and care herein they may bee allowed a sufficient Competency by each Corporacion and not suffered to keepe deputies, but in cases of necessitie of sicknes or otherwise, And for the Master, Wardens, and other the Governors of each Corporacion, that they may have power to levye meanes, for the Maintenance of necessary officers, and to heare Complaints and ympose penalties for punishing offenders, as in other Corporacions of lesse ymportance is usuall, and that there bee a severall seale allowed to each Corporacion, for the expressing of the true making or defects of the said Manufacture, and when any peece of Cloth or Stuffle shalbe measured, and approved of, the said double peece of lead havinge thereon the Crowne Seale before mencioned, shalbe fixed unto it, and the said Corporacion Seale shalbe stamped on the other part thereof, And if any faulty Cloth shall happen to passe that Seale (not havinge the defecte expressed) The Corporacion whose Seale it beares, to bee Lyable to make good the penaltie in the highest degree, And whereas wee have found very great abuses to have bin practized in and about dyinge, and in perticuler by the dyers of London, which cannot bee discovered here at home untill the goods are exported, and set to sale beyond Sea, Wee conceive it necessary that whatsoever fraudes shalbe there found, to have bin comitted in the dying of the said Manufactures, uppon credible and authenticke Certificate, sent over into England, of the said

APPENDIX A (CONT.)

Fraudes, and what the dammages thereof amount unto, The Corporacion aswell of the said dyers of London, as of all other places, shalbe responsible for the said damages, to the party greived, and the said Corporacion to right it selfe uppon the party that committed the fault Alsoe that all men bee enioyned to sell their Commodity in open Marketts, or Halls, and other places allowed, for that purpose, and not privately in ..., nor in private howses, By which meanes, all faulty and deceitful Clothes and Stuffs may the sooner be discovered, and the offenders punished, that likewise noe streyned Clothes, bee suffered to bee made, or sould in any part of this Kingdome, but all to bee made at first perfect and good, and to conteine their full weight, length, and breadth, and if any shall desire and procure a tolleracion for streyned Clothes, then they to streyne noe other but true and well wrought Clothes, which are soe sealed, and then to haue them streined here in London and noe where else, And that another seale may be fixed thereon, expressing how much they haue bin streyned, and a due account to bee kept thereof accordingly, And that an other duty may bee paied for the streyning of every such Cloth. And whereas wee haue before humbly exprest our opinions that every Corporacion should be lyable to make good the losses, dammages, and penalties of all faulty Clothes or Stuffs, that are suffered to passe their Seale. Wee conceive it very expedient that there bee sufficient power, and authority graunted unto them, to Enable them for the performance thereof, and that the Crowne or aulnage Seale may bee lett unto each

APPENDIX A (CONT.)

Corporacon by farme, yearely Rent, or other wise as your
Majestie in your great wisdoms shall thinke most Convenient.

Lastly wee humbly crave leave to represent to your Majestie
our opinions of the necessitie of a Court of Marchaunts for the
speedy determininge of all suites and differences that happen
betweene Marchaunts Factours Clothiers, Tradesmen and Shopkeepers
concerninge Accompt bills of Exchange bargaines and other differ-
ences proceeding or depending, for Wares and all sortes of Mar-
chaundizes or debts arising thereupon, which are seldome or never
determined by any of your Majesties Courts of Justice without
the Report and Opinion of Marchaunts which wilbe agreeable to
that breife and summary waye nowe used by the Comissioners for
the pollicyes of assurance, And this wee humbly conceive would
bee a comfort and incouragement to the Marchaunts, and an in-
crease of Trade, and generall wealth of the Realme.

9th of June, 1640

All which wee most humbly
submitt to your Majesties
great Wisdoms.

(There follow fifteen signatures)

Thomas Jeninges George Langham
Ant. Wither Richard: Bogan
John Howe Mathew Cradock
Nathan Wright
George Clerke John Kendricke

Law. Squibb Hugh Morrell
Roger Kilvert Richard Middleton
John Barker

Reporte from the Commissioners
For Trade, 9^o March 1640

Mr. Cradock

APPENDIX B

The Customs on Cloth exported from the Port of London by Merchants both English and Alien for various years during the reign of Elizabeth.¹

<u>Year</u>	<u>English Merchants</u>			<u>Alien Merchants</u>			<u>Total Customs</u>			<u>No. of Cloths</u>
	<u>£</u>	<u>s.</u>	<u>d.</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>s.</u>	<u>d.</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>s.</u>	<u>d.</u>	
1558-9	30,759	13	2-1/4	4,360	9	11-1/2	35,120	3	1-3/4	98,819
1559-60	36,870	14	1-3/4	4,416	13	1-3/4	40,967	7	3-1/2	117,237
1560-1	27,453	13	8-3/4	2,122	15	8-1/8	29,576	9	4-7/8	85,545
1561-2	25,114	16	0-3/4	3,153	15	3-1/2	28,273	11	4-1/4	80,083
1562-3	17,973	10	4-3/4	2,554	1	11-3/4	20,527	12	4-5/6	57,745
1563-4	18,996	9	3-1/2	2,233	9	3-1/2	21,219	18	7	60,339
1564-5	45,205	5	1-3/8	6,461	5	11	51,606	11	0-7/8	145,307
1565-6	27,692	13	4	3,715	5	6-5/8	31,407	18	10-5/8	88,650
1566-7	23,178	16	1-1/2	1,601	7	9-1/3	24,780	3	11	71,938
1567-8	31,401	17	11-1/3	2,498	12	2	33,894	10	1-1/8	97,944
1568-9	32,159	0	0	4,235	2	11-1/2	36,394	2	11-1/2	102,829
1593-4	32,344	15	11	4,341	12	2-1/2	36,686	8	1-1/2	110,109

Number of cloths calculated on the basis that English merchants paid 6s. 8d. customs for a cloth of assize, and Alien merchants paid double.

1. Reproduced from K. E. Barford, The Development of the West of the West of England Woollen Industry from 1550 to 1640, Thesis in typescript, University of London 1923.

APPENDIX C

Cloth Exports from the Port of London from Michaelmas
1597 to Michaelmas 1598.¹

<u>Merchants</u>	<u>Cloths</u>	<u>Kerseys</u>	<u>Devonshire Dozens</u>	<u>Total</u>
The Merchant Adventurers	58,053	13,305	1,970	62,980 1/2
Interlopers to the Netherlands and Germany	4,951	6,895	4,390	8,346 5/6
Aliens to the Netherlands and Germany	2,552	451	1,563	3,115 7/12
The Turkey Co. and Levant Traders	750	18,031	95	6,784 1/12
Aliens trading overland to Venice	161	5,663	0	2,048 2/3
The Eastland Co.	11,601	873	126	11,931 1/2
Merchants trading to France	1,590	9,233	5,514 (and 823 playnes)	6,046 1/6
The Barbary Co.	2,394	0	0	2,394
The Muscovy Co.	1,769	280	0	1,862 1/2
Totals	83,821	54,731	13,748	
Totals in terms of cloths				105,509 5/6

1. Reproduced from L. Stone, Elizabethan Overseas Trade, The Economic History Review, 1949, p. 58.

APPENDIX D

Cloth Exports from the Port of London for various years during the early Seventeenth Century.¹

The distribution of shortcloths exported by English merchants from London.

<u>Year</u>	<u>1614</u>	<u>1616</u>	<u>1620</u>	<u>1622</u>	<u>1632</u>	<u>1640</u>
Percentages shipped to the Baltic, North Sea, and Russia	76%	76%	78%	80%	77%	73%
Percentages shipped to Spain, Africa, and to the Mediterranean	16%	18%	17%	16%	18%	25%

Shortcloths exported 1598-1640.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Natives</u>	<u>Aliens</u>
1598-1600 (Av.)	97,737	5,295
1601	100,380	3,643
1602	113,512	5,072
1603	89,619	2,366
1604	112,785	5
1606	126,022	.....
1609	.....	.....
1612	.....	5,199
1614	127,215	.....
1616	88,172	.....
1617	.....	.....
1618	102,332	.....
1619	.....	.....
1620	85,517	.....
1622	75,631	.....

(Con't next page)

1. Reproduced from F. J. Fisher, London's Export Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century, The Economic History Review, 1950, p. 153.

APPENDIX D (CON'T)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Natives</u>	<u>Aliens</u>
1626	91,000	.....
1627	88,000	.....
1628	108,000
1631	84,334
1632	99,020
1633	80,844
1634
1636	1,256
1640	86,924	503

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