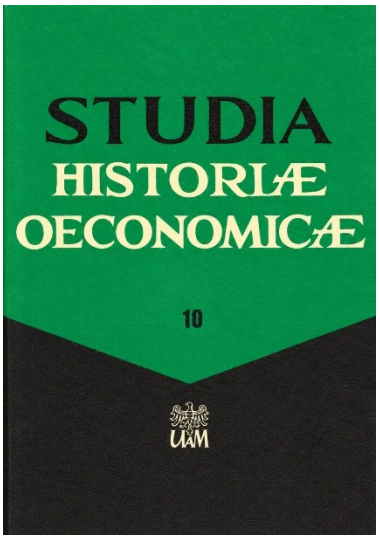


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MODERNIZATION OF IRISH PEASANT AGRICULTURE UNDER THE IMPACT OF LAND REFORM

1850 - 1915

The Irish peasantry yielded considerable of their number for industrial employment in the second half of the Nineteenth Century. The contribution of industrial workers by rural Ireland reflected changes in agricultural production and land tenure patterns which lessened the capacity of the countryside to absorb them in farming. Those who transferred from agricultural to industrial occupations mainly gravitated to Belfast or Dublin or to more distant centers of employment in England or even North America. The Irish countryside remained essentially immune from industrialization through the Nineteenth and into the Twentieth Century. Occasional isolated factories and mills, generally small in scale, intruded into the countryside and important provincial capitals and market centers supported some manufacturing, but the vast majority of those who shifted from farming to factory work went further afield. The expansion of the Irish railway network into remote rural areas in the second half of the Nineteenth Century facilitated the shipment of agricultural output and provided transport for the outflow of laborers to non-rural destinations for industrial employment, but had slight effect in attracting manufacturing to the countryside. Other than peat removal from the bogs, rural areas lacked job opportunities in fuel and ore extraction. Although labor requirements generated elsewhere by industrialization absorbed the outflow of workers, the Industrial Revolution had little direct impact upon rural Ireland[1].

The changes in Irish agriculture which released substantial numbers of farmers for industrial employment elsewhere were the result of shifts in agricultural production patterns from crops to livestock and the introduction of a

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[1] C. Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger, 1845 - 1849* (New York, 1962); T. W. Grimshaw, *A Statistical Survey of Ireland from 1840 to* 1888), 321 - 61. B. O'Neill, *The War for the Land in Ireland* (New York, *Brewery in the Irish Economy, 1750 - 1886* (Cambridge, England, 1960).

series of land reform measures. The emigration of workers from rural Ireland, which had been discernable in the early years of the Nineteenth Century, was accelerated by the Potato Famine of the 1840s and continued fairly steadily through the second half of the Nineteenth Century. The expansion of cereal production in North America, Eastern Europe and Australia acted to reduce grain prices in Britain, which monopolized the Irish food export market. Enjoying locational advantages in meat production because of proximity to the British market, which facilitated the low cost transport of fresh meat, Irish farmers increasingly shifted from crop to animal production[2]. Irish nationalists attempted to secure peasant support by demanding land reform in addition to political independence. The threat of rural unrest to British rule prompted successive legislative enactments granting increasing security of tenure to the peasantry. These efforts to placate rural Ireland culminated in provisions for the conversion of tenants into owner-occupiers. The rising nationalist movement in Ireland, with which the land reform campaign was coupled, was not entirely dissimilar to the growing nationalistic awareness that preceded or accompanied industrialization and modernization in many other places but, essentially its roots were traceable to the deep-seated grievances of the Irish over centuries of English domination[3].

The shift from crop cultivation to husbandry and the progressive reinforcement of farm operator security of tenure were instrumental in determining the capacity of the peasantry to respond to the forces of modernization and industrialization. Efficient husbandry suggested economies of scale through holding consolidation while land reform tended to cement operators to their holdings and obstruct consolidation. Although primogeniture inheritance arrangements of tenure legislation prevented sub-division and displaced many from farming, it is likely that unrestrained consolidation would have accelerated the push from rural Ireland. The remaining small holder farmers had been transformed from an insecure, impoverished tenantry to a rural petite burgeoisie experiencing modest comfort. Rural Ireland entered the Twentieth Century inadequately prepared to accommodate to change. The tenants transformed into owner-occupiers were strongly resistent to social change and ge-

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[2] J. P. Huttman, *Institutional Factors in the Development of Irish Agriculture, 1850 - 1919: A Quantitative Assessment* (Ph. D. dissertation, London School of Economics, 1970), ch. II, tables 39, 45; J. C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland, 1603 - 1923* (London, 1966), 345 - 50; J. E. Pomfret, *The Struggle for Land in Ireland, 1800 - 1923* (Princeton, 1930).

[3] R. D. Crotty, *Irish Agricultural Production, Its Volume and Structure* (Cork, Ireland, 1966), 80 - 82; N. Davitt, *Speech at the Meeting in Favour of Land Nationalization* (London, 30 Oct. 1883), passim; N. Mansergh, *Ireland in the Age of Reform and Revolution* (London, 1940), 196; W. F. Bailey, *The Irish Land Acts* (Dublin, 1917), 15; M. Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (London, 1904), 77.

nerally unenthusiastic towards technological innovation although responsive to market forces. Land reform ensured the perpetuation of small holdings but with slight provision for their improvement. The events which led to this situation are traceable through the examination of the evolution of land reform measures and the modifications in agricultural production methods influenced by these tenure changes.

Rural assistance programs initiated in the famine and immediate post-famine years were primarily intended to benefit landlords and large farm operators with measures for soil improvement and drainage control. Recovery from the famine was slow and tortuous: the real value of agricultural output was still ten percent lower in the early 1860s than in the early 1850s. The reduction of the value of crop output by about one-third was largely compensated by the rise of value of livestock output. It proved to be a hostile environment for those tenant farmers surviving the famine. The tenant farmers-all but three percent of the total number of farm operators - were defeated and submissive. They offered slight resistance to measures introduced for the consolidation of estates and for the transfer of title from indebted to more commercially oriented owners[4].

The Incumbered Estates Acts of 1848 and 1849 were intended to assist indebted landlords to negotiate sale of their estates by simplifying the procedures. Before these enactments, selling an estate was a lengthy and expensive process in the Chancery Courts. The newly created Incumbered Estates Courts awarded incontestable title to purchasers, made settlement with creditors and allocated any residual to the former proprietors. Many landlords had accumulated encumbrances during the famine because of widespread rent delinquency, heavy tax burdens due to relief levies and, sometimes, their own improvidence. Advocates of laissez-faire economic policy approved the legislation as a step toward creation of an unfettered land market[5].

The popular recourse to the Incumbered Estates Court by indebted landlords encouraged the passage of the Landed Estates Act in 1858[6], which

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[4] K. Nowlan, *The Political Background* in R. D. Edwards and T. W. Williams (eds.), *The Great Famine* (Dublin, 1956), 142 - 43, 149; W. E. Montgomery, *The History of Land Tenure in Ireland* (Cambridge, England, 1889), 108; R. B. McDowell, *The Irish Administration, 1801 - 1914* (London, 1964), 204 - 10.

[5] *Encumbered Estates (Ireland) Acts, 1848, 1849* 11 and 12 Vict., c. 48, 12 and 13 Vict., c. 77; D. Field, *Landholding and the Relation of Landlord and Tenant in Various Countries* (Calcutta, 1883), 285; W. E. Montgomery, *The History of Land Tenure...*, 111 - 12; J. E. Pomfret, *The Struggle for Land...*, 42, 45; L. Paul-Dubois, *Contemporary Ireland* (New York, 1908), 233; R. B. O'Brien, *The Parliamentary History of the Irish Land Question, from 1829 - 1869* (London, 1881); "The Working of the Irish Land Acts", *Journal, Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction* (Ireland), (JDATI) 1 (1900 - 1901), 228 - 34.

[6] *Landed Estates (Ireland) Act, 1858*, 21 and 22 Vict. c. 72.

extended the benefits of simplified estate transfer to all landlords. By 1862 over ten and one half thousand estates--over one-half the total and covering one-sixth the land area--had been sold through the courts created for this purpose. About eighty percent of the estates transferred had been encumbered. Over ninety percent of the new owners were middle class Irish in professional and commercial occupations, including 'Gombeen' men. Many were without agricultural experience. The tenants were probably treated with less benevolence by the new owners of the estates than by the landed gentry whom they replaced. The landed gentry were traditionally credited with following a policy of reducing the obligations of tenants when harvests were poor. The new owners intended to maximize the return to their investment. They commonly appointed resident agents to manage their properties[7]. These two acts tended to quicken eviction. Grazing was becoming more profitable relative to tillage. The clearance of small tenants implied consolidation, and hence, facilitated the shift to livestock production. Therefore, estates with fewer tenants were generally more salable.

The Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1860, commonly known as the Deasy Act, treated landlords and tenants as free agents with equal bargaining power. The terms of tenancy, including the length of tenancy and compensation for improvements were to be stated or implied conditions in the contracts between landlords and tenants. The act authorized eviction of tenants when accumulated arrears amounted to one year's rent. The landlord was empowered to eject the tenant upon quit notices, seize possession of the holding, including crops, and confiscate improvements without compensation. The terms of tenancies arranged under Deasy's Act almost always favored the landlords. The parliamentarians responsible for the Deasy Act did not know of the customs in agriculture in Ireland when, unlike England, landlords seldom improved tenant holdings[8]. The reluctance of the tenants to invest was enforced by Deasy's Act, which weakened their security of tenure.

The Irish Church Act, 1869[9], was the first legislation providing for the conversion of tenants to proprietors. The political campaign which brought the Liberals to power, under Gladstone, emphasized disestablishment of the Irish Church and the land question in Ireland. The Liberal Government decided to dissolve the special status of the Church of Ireland and dismantle its ma-

[7] E. R. Hooker, *Readjustments of Agricultural Tenure in Ireland* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1938), 38; W. E. Montgomery, op. cit., 112, 188; Paul Dubois, op. cit., 232; Pomfret, op. cit., 45; G. Sigerson, *Land Tenure and Landed Classes in Ireland* (London, 1871), 188; M. Longfield, "*The Tenure of Land in Ireland*", in J. W. Probyn (ed)., *Systems of Land Tenure in Various Countries* (London, 1881), 6 - 7.

[8] *Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1860*, 23 and 24 Vict., C. 154; R. R. Cherry, *The Irish Land Law and Land Purchase Acts, 1860* - 1901 (Dublin, 1903), 160 - 64; E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 38 - 39; *Landlord and Tenant...*, c. 154, Sec. 3; Longfield, op. cit., 77 - 78.

[9] *Irish Church Act, 1869*, 32 and 33 Vict., c. 42, Secs. 34, 52.

terial structure. As a result, it was required to resolve the status of the eight thousand tenants with leaseholds on church property. Most church tenants occupied their holdings in perpetuity, together with the right to sell their interests, under legislation enacted in the first half of the Nineteenth Century. The 1869 act allowed them a three year period in which to decide whether to buy their holdings. Prices were set by the Church Temporalities Commission, created to administer the act. Purchase required a downpayment of one-fourth the total amount, with the balance to be paid under a thirty-two year mortgage with the government. The Commission assisted prospective tenant purchasers in making application. Three-fourths of those eligible to buy did so. Land the tenants did not buy was disposed of through public sale[10]. While only a small minority of tenants were involved, the success of the measure advanced owner-occupancy as an alternative to tenancy.

The Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870, was primarily intended to strengthen the tenant's position, which had been weakened by the Deasy Act. The act followed the growth of tenant political organization and heightened government concern about growing rural violence. Gladstone's Liberal Government depended upon the support of the recently enfranchised proletariat, which included many Irish. The Fenian uprising had dramatized the discontent of the tenants, and ominous warnings were sounded of greater demonstrations unless reforms were introduced[11]. The Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870, was mainly concerned with the introduction of aspects of the Ulster Custom to the whole of Ireland. Ulster tenancy arrangements varied but often included: the right of the yearly tenant to remain in occupation in perpetuity; rents were to be 'fair', with periodic adjustment; a tenant's interest in his holding, which he could sell if he wished; the landlord's obligation to compensate evicted tenants for interest and improvements. To the Ulster Custom, a mutual recognition of rights and privileges, was largely attributed the relative peace and prosperity of Ulster[12]. The 1870 legislation legalized the Ulster Custom, but did not extend it to areas where it had not already existed. It did, however, give tenants elsewhere the right to compensation for interest and improve-

[10] G. W. S. Eversley, *Gladstone and Ireland* (London, 1912), 79; Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland* (Dublin, 1881); Public Works Commissioners Ireland, *Forty-Second Report*, 1873 - 74, P. P. 1874, XV; Church Temporalities Commission, Ireland, *Report for the Period 1869 - 80*, P. P. 1881, XXVIII; R. B. McDowell, *The Irish Administration...*, 216 - 17; *Irish Church Act, 1869*, op. cit., Secs. 34, 52.

[11] *Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870*, 33 and 34 Vict., c. 46; J. G. MacCarthy, *Irish Land Questions* (London, 1870), 11 - 40; N. Mansergh, *The Irish Question, 1840 - 1921* (London, 1965), 224 - 24; J. S. Mill, *England and Ireland* (London, 1868), 13.

[12] Cherry, op. cit., 161 - 64; Devon Commission, *Digest*, op. cit., 1122; Montomery, op. cit., 117 - 23, 140 - 41; A. G. Richey, *The Irish Land Laws* (London, 1880), 100; E. R. Hookre, op. cit., 32 - 33; Longfield, op. cit., 33 - 37; W. Morris, *Present Irish Questions* (London, 1901) 137.

ment. It also restrained landlords from evicting tenants until six months after they declared their intention to do so[13]. Tenants had the right to appeal through the courts against eviction. The act was of slight benefit to tenants, since it failed to regulate rents, offered inadequate compensation for eviction and involved complicated and expensive procedures for legal redress.

The Act of 1870 provided also for the sale of holdings to tenants. A deposit of one-third the holding price was required for tenant purchase, with the mortgage for the balance funded by the Public Works Commission[14]. Holdings purchased under the act could not be sub-leased, sub-divided or reassigned. Fewer than nine hundred holdings were bought under the 1870 act—a tiny fraction of the number eligible for transfer. Of the holdings purchased, the average value was nearly one thousand pounds, and the average size was about sixty acres, suggesting the purchasers were generally better off than most farmers. Only about one-half of the million pounds allocated for loans had been expended. The Bright Purchase Clauses of the 1870 act were considered a failure by those who favored the conversion of tenants to proprietors. The Landed Estates Court, through which purchase was arranged, favored landlords in the settlement of estates. Its administration of estates pending sale frequently left tenants uncertain of their status and the methods of application for purchase. Nearly all tenants were incapable of paying the one-third downpayment required of purchasers. Purchase loans were repayable over thirty-five years at a rate of five percent the sale price, three and one-half percent of which was diverted to interest with the remainder applied to principle[15]. In some cases, annuities may have exceeded rents.

The Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881, amending the 1870 act, dealt with landlord and tenant relations and tenant purchase. The new legislation was prompted by increased rural unrest and violence. Tenants became more dissatisfied as evictions increased from about one thousand in 1877, to over six thousand in 1879 and more than ten thousand in 1880. The potato yield was below normal and relief measures were inadequate[16]. The Land League utilized the

[13] *Landlord and Tenant..., 1870...* c. 46, Sec. 1; Pomfret, op. cit., 68.

[14] The application procedure was simplified somewhat under an 1872 act. *Landlord and Tanant...*, 1870... Secs. 44, 45; *Landlord and Tenant...*, 1872, 35 and 36 Vict., c. 32, Sec. 1; Montgomery, op. cit., 153.

[15] Estate Commission (Ireland), *Report, 1920*, and *1903 to 1920*, P. P. 1921, XVI, iv - vi; Commission of Inquiry into the Workings of the Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870, *Report*, P. P. 1881, XVIII (Bessborough Commission); Select Committee on the Irish Land Act, 1870, *Report*, P. P. 1878, XV (Shaw-Lefevre-Committee); Longfield, op. cit., 81 - 82; Montgomery, op. cit., 153 - 55; Eversley, op. cit., 179.

[16] *Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881*, 44 and 45 Vict., c. 49, Secs. 1 - 24; Bessborough Commission, *Report*, op. cit., 13 - 41; Montgomery, op. cit., 156 - 57; Royal Commission on Agriculture, *Preliminary Report*, P. P. 1881, XV (Richmond Commission); Select Committee of the House on the Conveyancing and Settled Land Bills, *Report*, P. P. 1882, VIII.

dissatisfaction of the tenants as a vehicle for propelling Ireland toward home rule. The small farmers, experiencing worsening economic circumstances, became increasingly sympathetic to the goal sof home rule and land reform advanced by the nationalists. Successful mass demonstrations for rent reductions in 1879 accelerated the tempo of the land reform movement. The movement gained Parnell's support and in the election of 1880, the Land League candidates gained the ascendency over the landlords in Parliament[17]. The number of "outrages"—rural crimes including homocide and arson—increased from about 2,500 in 1880 to 4,000 in 1884. The Coercion Act of 1881 suspended Habeas Corpus and empowered officials to suspend civil liberties to maintain authority. Official investigations linked rural distress and violence to the system of land tenure, which denied the tenants security or incentive to improve[18].

Gladstone, who led a new Liberal Government into office in 1880, had advocated the transformation of tenants into proprietors as a means of improving Irish agriculture and checking the decline of Anglo-Irish relations[19]. Proposed legislation generated considerable controversy. There was a polarization of views between those who visualized ownership as the ultimate goal and those who argued for increased security of tenure as sufficient to stem tenant unrest. The Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881, also known as the "Fair Rent" Act, disappointed some of Gladstone's supporters. This legislation, supported by Gladstone, was concerned mainly with the "three F's"—fixity of tenure, fair rent and freedom of sale of interest by tenants—and only slightly with the transfer of ownership[20]. The "Fair Rent" Act legalized tenant sale of interest for the highest bid. Tenant transfer of interest was limited to one purchaser so that holdings would remain intact. The landlord was to be accorded priority of purchase and empowered to judge the acceptability of other prospective purchasers. Opponents of the measure claimed that it established "dual ownership" of land, since the landlords' nearly absolute powers had been compromised. However, the landlords retained the right to evict[21]. Essentially,

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[17] E. Curtis, op. cit., 376; J. Flatley, *Ireland and the Land League* (Boston, 1881); Mansergh, op. cit., 224 - 25; C. Russell, *New Views on Ireland* (London, 1880), 3 - 10; Pomfret, op. cit., 103; M. Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (London, 1904), 266 - 80; D. Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (London, 1951), Chapts. ii - iv.

[18] E. Curtis, op. cit., 370; L. P. Curtis, *Coercion and Conciliation in Ireland*, 1880 - 92 (Princeton, 1963), 15, 32 - 34.

[19] McDowell, op. cit., 218; J. L. Hammond, *Gladstone and the Irish Nation* (London, 1964), 217 - 27; H. Plunkett, *Ireland in the New Century* (London, 1904), 22 - 25; Eversley, loc. cit.

[20] Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland* (Dublin, 1881), 89 - 103; Mansergh, op. cit., 233; G. W. S. Eversley, *Agrarian Tenures* (London, 1893), 115; Montgomery, op. cit., 157 - 58; *Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881*, 44 and 45 Vict., c. 49; E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 44 - 45; Pomfret, op. cit., 159.

[21] Montgomery, op. cit., 159 - 60; *Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881*, op. cit., Sec. 5.

recognition of the tenants' stake in his holding was an integral part of the Ulster Custom, on which tenancy reforms were patterned.

Statutory tenancies were created under the "Fair Rent" Act. Tenants who aplied for inclusion under this arrangement were secure against eviction unless they sub-leased or divided holdings or were in arrears of rent. Since a rise in rents encouraged landlords to refuse renewal of leases and agreements and, hence, jeopardized the security of tenure, rent regulations was accepted as a necessary adjunct. Rents were set by the Land Commission, established to administer the act[22]. Statutory tenancies were for fifteen years, renewable for a second term. Rents, fixed at the outset, were unchanged for the duration of the arrangement and adjustable for the second term upon petition of landlord or tenant. The procedure involved in rent determination was complicated and subjective. Many tenants were dissatisfied with the rent decisions of the Land Commission[23]. Supplementary legislation offered relief to statutory tenants without previous rent arrears. In 1887, leaseholders, who previously had been excluded from participation in statutory tenancy arrangements, became eligible.

The provisions pertaining to purchase were a minor part of the 1881 act. A downpayment of one-fourth the purchase price was required, with the balance lent through the Land Commission. Annuities were fixed at five percent per annum, one and one-half percent of which applied to reduction of principle and the balance to interest. The period of repayment was thirty-five years[24]. Seven hundred tenants purchased holdings under the "Fair Rent" Act. The average size of holdings was about forty acres with an average of less than five hundred pounds. Many tenants lacked the amount required for deposit. The rate of annuities exceeded rent in many cases, reducing the incentive of tenants to purchase.

The Land League immediately tested the "Fair Rent" provisions which regulated tenancy by sponsoring applications of tenants for adjustment of rents. The Land League leadership expected the courts to reduce rents only slightly and that, as a result, the tenants would quickly become disillusioned with the act. Land League officials were probably fearful that acceptance by tenants of statutory tenancies would restrain their demands for greater social and economic reforms for at least fifteen years. The possible dampening of tenant protest made League officials apprehensive, since their

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[22] Field, op. cit., 333 - 34; *Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881*, op. cit., Secs. 4, 5, 8, 12, and 13.

[23] *Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881*, op. cit., Sec. 12; E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 45; "The Working of the Irish Land Acts", JDATI, I (1900 - 1901), 228 - 29; Flatley, loc. cit.; McDowell, op. cit., 219; E. R. Hooker, loc. cit.; *Arrears Act, 1882*, 45 and 46 Vict., c. 47.

[24] *Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1887*, 50 and 51 Vict., c. 33, Sects. 7, 24 - 30.

plans included a joint drive for land reform and political independence. With the two goals linked, they envisaged diminished demand for changes in tenure as resulting in dissipation of the movement for home rule[25]. The Land League advocated the conversion of tenants to proprietors. Fulfillment of this objective would shift economic power from conservative landlords to small farmers more sympathetic to the independence movement. League officials intended that the agitation of tenants over tenure generate momentum to sustain the drive for home rule[26]. Since achievement of mass ownership did not appear imminent, it could be coupled conveniently with the fairly remote goal of political independence. Reconciliation of tenure issues through statutory tenancies threatened the Land League's program. The courts reduced rents by an average of one-fourth in test cases submitted. Many tenants made independent application for court determination of "fair rent". Desperate and angry, league officials urged tenants to resist the temptation of rent adjustment and, instead, withhold rents until the Crown submitted to the demands—mainly political—of the league. The tenants were unresponsive to Land League pleas, attracted instead by the tangible benefits of the "three F's", legalized through the 1881 act[27].

Rural violence continued through the 1880's. A few seasons of below average harvests and the unrelenting pressures of rents probably contributed to the dissatisfaction of tenants. Generally, the situation of the tenantry had not greatly worsened. However, most tenants were at least alienated from, if not hostile to, the landlords. They passively acquiesced in attacks on landlords by nationalists. Sporadic rent strikes erupted under the encouragement of the Land League. The authorities failed to quell rural distribution[28]. Politicians were impressed with the urgent need for new measures to alleviate the situation of the tenants. It was commonly accepted that earlier legislation had failed to restore tranquility. The newly formed Conservative Government hurriedly passed the Purchase of Land (Treland) Act, 1885, also known as the Ashbourne Act[29]. It was almost entirely devoted to the conversion of tenants into owners, in contrast to earlier legislation primarily concerned with the improvement of relations between landlords and tenants.

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[25] Mansergh, op. cit., 232 - 33; Flatley, loc. cit.

[26] F. Sheehy-Skeffington, *Michael Davitt* (London, 1967), 109 - 32; D. Thornley, *Isaac Butt and Home Rule* (London, 1964), 27 - 71; Estate Commission (Ireland), *Report, 1920*, op. cit., 24 - 26; M. Davitt, op. cit., 374 - 82.

[27] Pomfret, op. cit., 142 - 44; Mansergh, op. cit., 228, P. S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924).

[28] J. C. Beckett, op. cit., 400 - 01; Royal Commission on the Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881, and the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1885, *Report and Minutes of Evidence*, P. P. 1887, XXVI, 9 (Cowper Commission); E. Curtis, op. cit., 126 - 19, 237 - 69 Pomfret, op. cit., 178; Davitt, op. cit., 346 - 62; Sheehy - Skeffington, loc. cit.

[29] *Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1885*, 48 and 49 Vict., c. 73.

No downpayment was required of purchases under the Ashbourne Act. Under earlier land transfer measures, required deposits had excluded many small tenants from purchase of holdings. The repayment of purchase loans was scheduled for forty-nine years. Annual rates of interest and annuity were reduced over previous levels, with .875 percent to principle and 3.125 percent to interest. Arrangements for sale of holdings were made directly by landlords and tenants without the Land Commission as an intermediary. One-fifth the purchase amount was withheld from landlords as a guarantee deposit until that fraction of repayment had been made by purchasers[30].

Five million pounds were appropriated for land purchase loans under the Ashbourne Act of 1885, much more than under the 1881 act. However, the amount was inadequate to meet the demand for loans. In 1888, upon the exhaustion of the original allocation, an additional five million pounds were appropriated under the Second Ashbourne Act. In 1885, the government had not yet committed itself to a universal program of land purchase by tenants. Official policy had shifted by 1888 in support of mass conversion of tenants to owners. The government made clear that the supplementary appropriation was not intended to conclude its efforts of land transfer[31]. Over twenty-five thousand holdings were purchased under the two Ashbourne Acts, many more than under earlier measures. The average size of holdings purchased was forty acres, the average value about four hundred pounds. The average area and value were less than for holdings sold under earlier acts. The Ashbourne Acts were a turning point from tenancy regulation to sale of holdings. The reduction of annuities below rent levels encouraged tenants to purchase their holdings.

Unabated rural violence and increasing dissatisfaction of tenants and landlords with statutory tenancies persuaded government to accelerate the transfer of land. The Land Commission lacked an objective system for calculation of "fair rents" and many statutory tenants disputed its decisions. Some landlords attempted to lessen the dissatisfaction of tenants by reducing rents. However, other landlords tried to evict tenants before they gained the security of statutory tenancies[32]. The Land League embarked on its "Plan of Campaign" in 1886. Rent strikes were organized on estates where landlords refused to negotiate with league leaders for a "fair rent". Uncooperative landlords were boycotted, deprived, thereby, of hired labor and local services. As a placatory gesture, the Land Commission fixed rents on new statutory tenancies in 1885 - 1886 at an average level of about fourteen percent lower

[30] Bailey, op. cit., 23; Montgomery, loc. cit.

[31] *Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1888*, 51 and 52 Vict., c. 49; Estate Commission (Ireland), *Report, 1920*, loc. cit.,; E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 58 - 60.

[32] Field, op. cit., 333; Montgomery, op. cit., 162 - 63; E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 64; Cowper Commission, *Report*, loc. cit.

than that of the previous year. Fresh agitation arose from statutory tenants whose terms had been arranged in 1881 to 1885, since their rents appeared inflated by comparison to the new level[33].

Litigation over statutory tenancies cost landlords and tenants much time and money. The statutory tenancy system was opposed by landlords because it infringed upon property rights and reduced rent revenues. From 1881to 1916, statutory tenancy rents had been reduced by an average of twenty percent. By the 1890's, the opposition of landlords to statutory tenancies paralleled that of tenants. To both groups, conversion of tenants to owners was preferable to continued rent regulation. However, statutory tenancies had benefited tenants through greater security of tenure and landlords through lessened dissatisfaction of tenants[34]. From 1881 to 1915, statutory tenancies numbered almost four hundred thousand, including nearly ninety percent of eligible tenants. Nearly one hundred fifty thousand second and six thousand third term tenancies had been arranged. Holdings under statutory tenancies covered about eleven million acres.

The Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1891, also known as the Balfour Act, was intended to facilitate purchase of holdings by tenants. The 1891 act required for purchase a deposit of one-fifth the price. Annual payments were to include compulsory mortgage insurance premiums and annuities of four percent of the purchase price. Increased downpayment and annual outlays diminished the enthusiasm of tenants for ownership. From 1891 to 1896, under the Balfour Act, the number of loans were two-fifths and the amounts loaned one-third those of the Ashbourne Act of 1885[35]. The Balfour Act safeguarded the Treasury from incurring large burdens. Landlords were paid for land in interest bearing bonds, financed by the annuity payments of tenants. Deficits due to rent delinquencies of tenants were debited to the Guarantee Fund allocated by Great Britain for the operating expenditures of Irish schools and hospitals. Counties having tenants in rent arrears were

[33] E. Curtis, op. cit., 237 - 69; F. S. L. Lyons, *John Dillon and the Plan of Campaign, 1886 - 90*, Irish Historical Studies, LVI, No. 14 (1965), 313 - 47; Pomfret, op. cit., 247, 249 and 256; E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 47.

[34] Field, op. cit., 333; Montgomery, op. cit., 162 - 63; Speech by Wyndham, *Parliamentary Debates*, 1903, CXX, col. 203; Estate Commission (Ireland), *Report, 1920*, op. cit., 24 - 26; "The Working of the Irish Land Acts", op. cit., 228 - 29; M. Martens, *Die Agrarreformen in Irland* (München, Germany, 1915), 107; F. S. L. Lyons, *The Fall of Parnell* (London, 1960), 282 - 304, 317 - 19; W. J. C. Morris, *Land System of Ireland: Part II*, Law Quarterly Review, IV, No. 13 (Jan. 1888) 1 - 23.

[35] *Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1891*, 54 and 55 Vict., c. 48. The act was named after its sponsor, Arthur Balfour, Chief Secretary for Ireland. Pomfret, op. cit., 263; G. Balfour, in *Parliamentary Debates*, 1890, CCCXLIX, col. 142; Earl of Salisbury, *Parliamentary Debates*, 1891, CCCLIV, col. 15; „Working of the Irish Land Acts", op. cit., 230; E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 68; Estate Commission (Ireland), *Report*, 1920, op. cit., 24 - 26.

obliged to levy taxes to compensate the Guarantee Fund[36]. The Balfour Act displeased tenants. The reimposition of deposit requirements denied many the opportunity to buy. The calculation of annuities and premiums was a complicated process, making it difficult for tenants to compare the costs of purchase and continued renting. Landlords were dissatisfied with the 1891 act because it provided for payment in bonds instead of cash. Marked value of land bonds declined below face value, so that conversion to sash meant financial loss[37].

The Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1896, known as the Second Balfour Act, was a simplified version of the 1891 act. Tenant purchase terms were made more favorable. At the discretion of the Land Commission, required deposits could be partly or wholly waived. Mortgages were extended from forty-nine to seventy-three years by reduction of annuities to four percent of remaining balance instead of four percent of principle. Mortgage insurance was eliminated. Counties were absolved of financial responsibility for defaulting tenants[38]. Payment to landlords continued to be made in bonds. However, confidence was restored in the government's land transfer program because of improvements introduced in the Second Balfour Act. The marked value of bonds rose to exceed face value and the landlord demands for cash payments subsided[39]. Almost fifty thousand holdings were purchased under the Balfour Acts as compared to only half that number under the Ashbourne Acts. The average holding purchased under the Balfour Acts was thirty-two acres and valued at less than three hundred pounds as compared to thirty-seven acres with a value of almost four hundred pounds under the Ashbourne Acts. Increasing numbers of smaller tenants purchased their holdings with each successive program. However, only a small fraction of purchases involved holdings of fewer than fifteen acrea[40].

The formation of the United Irish League in 1898 partly reflected the dissatisfaction of small farmers with conditions of living and tenure. Probably even those farmers not greatly concerned with the goal of home rule identified some of their economic and social grievances with Ireland's political submergence in the United Kingdom. Eviction of tenants from the large

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[36] Bailey, op. cit., 23, 31 - 31; Pomfret, op. cit., 303; E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 69, 80.

[37] "The Working of the Irish Land Acts", op. cit., 230; E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 69 - 70; Pomfret, op. cit., 271, 274.

[38] *Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1896*, 59 and 60 Vict., c. 47. The 1896 act was sponsored by Gerald Balfour, who succeeded his brother Arthur as Chief Secondary for Ireland. E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 70; Bailey, op. cit., 31 - 33; "The Working of the Irish Land Acts", loc. cit.; Pomfret, op. cit., 272.

[39] Pomfret, op. cit., 295.

[40] Estate Commission (Ireland), *Report*, loc. cit.; "The Working of the Irish Land Acts", op. cit., 230 - 31.

De Freyne estate in 1898 in retaliation for an attempted rent strike served as a focal point on growing discontent. The United Land League parliamentary election victory of 1900 accelerated the momentum of demands for the expropriation of estates with resale to tenants on lenient terms. The government rejected these demands as irresponsible[41].

The value of bonds issued to landlords in payment for sale of holdings declined as rural unrest increased. Many landlords refused to negotiate transfer of land. There was a decline in the rate of tenant purchase from 1898 to 1900. Rent strikes and boycotts resulted in diminished revenue for landlords. Their anxiety to sell increased, but they sought to avoid financial loss in doing so[42]. Landlords and tenants were mutually dissatisfied with "dual ownership"—rent regulation—and agreed upon the need for accelerated land purchase. The Irish Land Conference, attended by representatives of tenants and landlords, was convened in 1902. It was agreed that "dual ownership" should be replaced by small farmer proprietorship, with satisfactory settlements for landlords. Both sides preferred direct landlord-tenant negotiation to transaction of sale through an intermediary[43].

The provisions of the Irish Land Act, 1903—also known as the Wyndham Act—losely paralleled the recommendations of the Irish Land Conference. One method of sale was for direct negotiation between seller and buyer, with application made through the Land Commission. The Land Commission searched title, inspected the agreement between landlord and tenant purchaser, drew up the contract and extended a mortgage to the purchaser under the government loan program. This was similar to procedures under past programs. Considerable delay was usually involved from application to transfer of title. The Wyndham Act simplified the sale of whole estates to tenants and non-tenants through the Estates Commissioners[44]. No deposit was required of purchases under the Wyndham Act. Annuities were 3.25 percent of purchase price, with 50 percent toward principle, extending over sixty-eight and one-half years. Purchasers were precluded from taking out second mortgages before their original mortgages had been substantially repaid. Under earlier purchase programs tenants were free to take out second

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[41] Mansergh, op. cit., 225 - 29; J. C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland* (London, 1966), 414; J. O'Conner, *History of Ireland* (London, 1925), II, 216 - 17; Davitt, op. cit., 682 - 702.

[42] *Parliamentary Debates*, 1902, CV col. 1035; Lyons, loc. cit.

[43] Irish Land Conference, *Report, January 3, 1903*, P. P. 1903, LVII; Mansergh, loc. cit.; E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 77.

[44] *Irish Land Act, 1903*, 3 Ed. VII, c. 37, named after George Wyndham, Chief Secretary for Ireland; W. F. Bailey, *Inquiry into the Present Condition of Tenant Purchases under the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Acts*. P. P. 1903 LVII; T. H. Maxwell, *The Irish Land Acts*, 1903 - 09 (Dublin, 1910), 1247 - 50.

mortgages while first mortgages were still essentially intact. Sellers were paid in cash under the Wyndham Act. The land transfer program was financed through the marketing of bonds. The low interest-bearing bonds were sold below face value to raise the real rate of interest, to make them competitive. The costs involved were deduction from the British educational grant to Ireland[45]. By 1908 this source was insufficient for the continued financing of the bond issue. Also, a found for the payment of bonuses to sellers upon mortgage repayment was nearing exhaustion.

The Irish Land Act, 1909—the Birrell Act—was primarily devoted to financing 170,000 agreements pending under the Wyndham Act, which were incomplete because of the lack of funds. Sellers were given choice of payment in cash or bonds. The cost of marketing the bonds in exceess of the capacity of the education grant was assumed by the Treasury. However, sellers in all new transcations were paid in bonds, with face value equal to the price. The face value of the bonds declined as confidence in the program waned. Few landlords were willing to accept bonds in lieu of cash, and sales dropped[46]. The Wyndham Act of 1903 and its extension, the Birrell Act of 1909, greatly expanded the opportunity for land purchase. In 1870—and probably in 1850—only three percent of farmers owned land. In 1906, 175,000 farmers—twenty-nine percent of the total—owned their holdings. In 1908, 275,000 farmers—forty-six percent of the total—were proprietors. Sixty-four percent—about 365,000—owned their holdings in 1916[47].

Irish farmers, tenants as well as owners, with the exception of those operating the smallest and largest size holdings, responded with alacrity to economic opportunities throughout the tenure transformation period, as they had in the pre-land-reform years. From the early decades of the Nineteenth Century Irish agricultural resources were increasingly shifted from tillage cultivation to animal husbandry, as prices became steadily more favorable for animal commodities as compared with grain and other commercial crops. Unresponsive to shifts in agricultural market prices were farmers cultivating plots of one statute acre or less who mainly produced potatoes for subsistence, practicing traditional "lazy bed" production methods, and holdings over two hundred statute acres whose fields were largely used for grazing and hay production. From the 1860s to 1915, most of the increase in livestock occurred with cattle, the numbers of which expanded from less than three and one-half to more than four and one-half million head. Over

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[45] J. G. Fottrell and F. Fottrell, *The Irish Land Act, 1903, Explained* (Dublin, 1903), 6, 9 - 10; E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 89; *Irish Land Act, 1903*, op. cit., Sec. 46.

[46] *Irish Land Act, 1909*, 9 Ed. VII, c. 42, named after the then Chief Secretary for Ireland, Augustine Birrell; Pomfret, op. cit., 274 - 75.

[47] *Agricultural Holdings (Ireland), 1870*, P. P. 1870, LVI.

the same period the number of sheep and hogs remained fairly stable, at around four million and one and one-half million, respectively[48].

Irish tenant farmers reacted favorably to succeeding land-reform measures when they perceived personal economic benefit. Under the terms of statutory tenancies, "fair rents" were established at levels below previously unregulated rents and were further reduced with renewal of statutory tenancy arrangements. Tenant enthusiasm for purchase of the holdings they leased was directly related to the amounts by which annuity payments were exceeded by the alternative rental charges. When statutory tenancies and owner-occupancy programs became simultaneously available, preference shifted between them on the basis of the competitiveness of the payments involved. An important economic effect of the series of land-reform measures was to reduce the cost of the fixed land input in agricultural production, perhaps by as much as twenty percent, from the third quarter of the Nineteenth Century to the outset of World War I. The reduction of land costs tended to reinforce the profitability of husbandry more than tillage cultivation, since land figured more prominently in the total costs of livestock than crop production[49].

The costs of labor inputs in Irish agriculture rose over the period of land reform, as the farm work force was reduced by about sixty percent from the 1860s to the first world war. Although the total number of tenant and owner occupied holdings remained essentially unchanged over the period of land reform, subtenancies surviving the Potato Famine were swept away by the provisions of land-tenure legislation prohibiting the subletting of holdings.

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[48] Statistical time series have been compiled from data contained in *Agricultural Statistics for Ireland* (London, HMSO), the annual publication of the returns of the yearly Irish Agricultural Census, inclusive of the years 1850 through 1915 (hereafter, with reference to the whole series from 1850 through 1915, cited as ASI). For the tables constructed from the compilations of the ASI data and analysis see J. P. Huttman, *Institutional Factors in the Development of Irish Agriculture, 1850 - 1915* (Ph. D. Diss. London School of Economics, 1969), 213 - 381; R. M. Barrington, *The Prices of Some Agricultural Produce and the Cost of Farm Labour for the Past Fifty Years*, Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland 9 (February 1887), 137 - 53; T. Barrington, *A Review of Irish Agricultural Prices*, ibid. n. s. 15 (October 1927): 249 - 80; N. J. Silberling, *British Prices and Business Cycles, 1779 - 1850*, Review of Economic Statistics 5, supplement 2 (October 1923): 231 - 40; A. Sauerbuck, *Princes of Commodities and the Precious Metals*, in E. M. Carus-Wilson, ed., Essays in Economic History (London, 1962), passim; T. W. Grimshaw, *A Statistical Survey of Ireland from 1840 to 1888*, Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry of Ireland 11, part 1 (December 1888): 321 - 61.

[49] Estates Commission (Ireland), *Report, 1920*, P. P. 1921, XVI, 24 - 26; Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Conveyancing and Settled Land Bills, *Report*, P. P. 1882, VIII, 338; Crotty, op. cit., 84 - 96; Mansergh, op. cit., 228; Bailey, op. cit., 23.

Legislative restrictions against the subdivision of holdings facilitated primogeniture and encouraged the emigration of disenherited offspring of farm families. Prospects of better paying industrial employment in Britain and overseas and diminishing opportunities for employment on Irish farms as holdings were converted from cultivation to grazing areas reduced the size of the hired labor force. While about the same rate of reduction occurred with the area under tillage crops and the size of the total agricultural work force, the immobility of labor inputs imposed by the land-reform measures resulted in the misallocation of labor resources. Smaller farms, and particularly those emphasizing livestock production, frequently experienced labor surplus. Operators of smaller holdings were dissauded from shifting back to greater concentration on tillage cultivation, despite the low labor productivity achieved in animal husbandry, because of the more favorable prices and greater profits to be earned in animal rather than crop commodities. Large farms economized on labor by emphasizing livestock rather than crop production, but they still encountered labor shortages with resultant increases in labor costs[50]. The increases in labor costs and the reductions of land costs acted in the same direction: land-extensive husbandry became increasingly more profitable than labor-intensive tillage cultivation.

The shortage of manpower on Irish farms was partly compensated by the more intensive application of horses to crop cultivation. The number of agricultural horses hovered around 60,000 throughout the period of land reform. From the 1860s through the 1910 decade, the total area planted to crops was reduced about twenty percent. The decline in tillage crop acreage from four million to less than two and one-half million statute acres was partly offset by the increase in hay acreage from around one and one-half to approximately two and one-half million statute acres. The share of agricultural horses employed in hay production increased as the area under hay expanded and greater use was made of horse-drawn hay cultivation machinery. Threshing and winnowing machines made up the largest number by far of horse-drawn agricultural implements in use from 1890 to 1915[51].

Smaller holdings received slight benefit from the increasing concentration of horses on the area remaining under cultivation, since the full utilization

[50] T. P. Gill, *The Farmer and the Labourer*; *A Talk with Labourer*, JDATI, 8 (July, 1908), 635 - 50; A. L. Bowley, *Wages in the United Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1900), 50; R. M. Barrington, *The Prices of Some Agricultural Produce*, op cit , 137 - 53.

[51] ASI; E. E. Evans, *The Survial of Ancient Agricultural Practices in Ireland*, paper presented to the British Agricultural History Society, Dublin, Ireland, 5 April 1967, passim; J. O'Loan, *Farming in Ireland under the Union*, paper presented to the British Agricultural History Society, Dublin, Ireland, 4 April 1967, passim; R. N. Salaman, *The History and Social Influence of the Potato* (Cambridge, 1949), 589; M. Longfield, op. cit., 73.

of a horse required approximately thirty statute acres in crops. In fact, most of the agricultural machinery in use required teams of horses, doubling the minimum size of the holding upon which they could be most effectively employed. Over the five-decade span of the implementation of land-reform legislation, about three-fourths of all holdings—stabilized at about 600,000—were less than thirty statute acres and only one-tenth were over sixty acres in size. The percentage of holdings capable of effectively absorbing the labor of two or more horses was even smaller, since many of the more substantial holdings were primarily devoted to livestock grazing[52]. Agricultural horses were probably fairly efficiently allocated among larger farm holdings throughout the period of land reform, as suggested by the stability of their numbers.

Technological change in crop production on holdings able to support the use of horses was promoted by the introduction of land-tenure legislation which had the effect of immobilizing farm operators and diminishing the size of the hired labor force, pushing up labor costs and encouraging the replacement of manpower by horsepower. The introduction of improved horse-drawn implements and the reduction in animal feed prices strengthened the advantages of horses in agricultural production. Over the land-reform interval, the intensification of horse-power contributed to the productivity gains in crop cultivation. The yield per statute acre of wheat rose from around twelve hundredweight in the 1860s to twenty hundredweight in the 1910 decade and other crops experienced nearly comparable rises in yield. However, the steadily diminishing area planted to crops, and tillage in particular, offset the increasing concentration of horses employed in cultivation upon the aggregate crop output. In physical terms, total crop output remained essentially unchanged from the 1860s through the early 1900s[53].

The shift of agricultural resources from crops to husbandry which was reinforced by the effects of the land reform, contributed to the efficiency of cultivation through intensified crop rotation patterns. As the demand for livestock feed increased, cash crops were increasingly replaced with fodder crops which raised soil fertility. The sharp decline in crop acreage reflected the abrupt reduction of grain production while green crop output was diminished more gradually. The more gradual decline of green crop acreage compared to tillage area in general meant that the nitrogen-restoring green crops appeared more frequently in rotation patterns. Soil properties were also enriched through expansion of hay production and the fallowing of land

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[52] ASI; E. E. Evans, *Irish Folkways* (London, 1957), 129 - 30; O'Loan, loc. cit.; Pomfret, op. cit., 40 - 43.

[53] ASI. The aggregate physical output was calculated by conversion of weight measures into crop-feed units; for the methodology involved, see E. Jensen, *Danish Agriculture, Its Economic Development* (Copenhagen, 1937).

and its use for grazing purposes. There was an increasing shift from four to five crops in the rotation patterns commonly practiced by farmers with holdings from five to one hundred statute acres, constituting about two-thirds of the cultivated acreage in the land reform period[54].

Improvements to tillage acreage were intensified as more marginal unimproved land was removed from tillage and converted to hay production and livestock use although the alternative uses of land for tillage, hay, and grazing acted as a constraint. The removal of the more marginally productive land from tillage crop cultivation could be more rationally implemented on more substantial holdings while limitations of area made the fractionalization of land for allocation to different uses on the basis of productiveness more difficult on smaller holdings. In general, the removal of less productive land from tillage cultivation probably meant improved drainage qualities for the remaining land. In the third quarter of the Nineteenth Century, as earlier, Irish cultivated acreage was notably deficient in drainage facilities[55]. The reduction of the tillage crop area and the bleak prospects for further investment in tillage land offered slight incentive for the maintenance of drainage systems. However, even allowing for the deteriorating drainage systems, the contraction of area under tillage crops suggests that a larger share of tillage acreage have been effectively drained in the 1900s than in the 1860s.

It seems likely that soil was fertilized with increasing intensity during the course of the land-reform period on the average, but that practices varied greatly between different size holdings. Many large land-owners, particularly in Ulster, displayed innovative attitudes in the application of fertilizers to tillage crop acreage. Peruvian guano, introduced into Britain a few years earlier, was applied fairly regularly by large landowners from the early 1860s[56]. Small Irish farmers had access to only unreliable sources for supplies of artificial fertilizer in the third quarter of the Nineteenth Century and, consequently, their confidence in the efficacy of artificial fertilizer was restrained. Their common reluctance to apply artificial fertilizers was partly traceable to their imperfect knowledge of the variety of products available as well as to the widespread practice among dealers of adulterating fertilizers with useless additives. Improvement in the quality of artificial fertilizers and increased

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[54] D.L.Armstrong, *An Economic History of Agriculture in Northern Ireland* (Ph.D. diss. Queens University, Belfast, 1952), 336 - 38; ASI; Royal Commission on Agriculture, *Preliminary Report*, op. cit., 505.

[55] O. Robinson, *The Economic Significance of the London Companies as Landlords in Ireland During the Period 1800 - 1870* (Ph. D. diss. Queens University, Belfast, 1957), 246 - 50, 302, 306; Rvans, *Irish Folkways*, op. cit., 141 - 45; Select Committee on Land Acts (Ireland), *Report, Proceedings, Minutes of Evidence and Appendix*, P. P. 1894, XIII, 243, 467, 646.

[56] Armstrong, op. cit., 325 - 37.

knowledge of application led to more intensified use by some, although by 1915 only a minority of farmers applied artificial fertilizers[57].

Increasing supplies of manure were produced with expansion of cattle herds over the interval from the 1860s to 1915. However, the sources of natural fertilizers were uncorrelated with the locations where manure was required for effective tillage crop cultivation. The allocation patterns for manure were a function of livestock ownership rather than possession of tillage crop acreage. Small farmers with few livestock were frequently inadequately supplied with manure while larger farmers with substantial livestock holdings but acreage under tillage cultivation generated surplus manure. Many farmers inefficiently stored, prepared, and applied manure so that its contribution to crop production was diminished[58]. Many small farmers, particularly those cultivating plots of a few acres, refused to apply fertilizers to their land. However, since the cultivators of the smallest parcels of land frequently specialized in traditional potato-production methods which involved heavy manuring of the soils, these small plots were generally adequately fertilized[59]. Even with the limitations imposed by maldistribution, it seems likely that tillage crops were manured with increasing intensity on most farms over the land-reform era, as tillage acreage diminished and manure output expanded.

Irish farmers in the 1860s, as in previous decades, were commonly offered commercial seed of uncertain but generally low quality. The seed retailed by merchants was frequently adulterated and normally yielded low output to seed ratios. Small farmers, and particularly the smallest and poorest living near the subsistence level, were usually unable to restrain themselves from consumption of all their crop output, including the part intended for reseeding. Their common predicament of indebtedness to local merchants and lack of available capital and credit elsewhere dictated their source of seed. The inefficiency of the seed market and the ignorance of cultivators as to the origins and quality of seeds usually meant that even more substantial farmers were unsuccessful in securing more productive varieties of seed through commercial channels. Slight improvement occurred in commercially supplied seed through the early Twentieth Century. Individual efforts by farmers with substantial areas under cultivation to achieve more productive seed varieties resulted in modest gains[60]. The Irish Department of Agriculture and Technical In-

[57] "Notes and Memoranda", JDATI 1 (1900 - 1901), 501; Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, *Proceedings under the Fertilizers and Feeding Stuffs Act, 1906*, and under Part II of the *Weeds and Agricultural Seeds (Ireland) Act, 1909*, P. P. 1913, XVI, 65 - 73.

[58] Royal Commission on the Land Law (Ireland) Act, *Report and Minutes on the Land (Ireland) Act, 1881*, and *the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1885*, P. P. 1887, XXVI, O'Loan, loc. cit.; Robinson, op. cit., 161 - 64.

[59] *Farmyard Manure*, JDATI 9 (October 1908), 29 - 36.

[60] Departmental Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Conditions under which

struction, established in 1899, and earlier the Congested Districts Board, established in 1891 to assist poor farmers in economically depressed districts provided demonstration projects, extension assistance, and agricultural education classes to small farmers, including information on seed improvement. Careful selection of seeds from their own and commercial sources, storage, and the planting and care of seeds were emphasized[61]. The inadequacy of seed stock, generally, over the period of land reform was mitigated by the diminishing dependence of farmers on commercial seed supplies and on the lessening importance of crop cultivation and especially of tillage.

Increased labor and reduced land costs resulting from the implementation of land-tenure legislation reinforced the profitability of husbandry and reduced the profitability of tillage cultivation. The steady reduction of the tillage crop acreage contribution substantially to increased productivity, as less fertile, unimproved land was diverted to other use. Motivation to accumulate additional investiment in tillage crop acreage was restrained by the diminishing prospects for profit in production of grain and other commercial crops. However, to the extent that deterioration of drainage systems and other improvements in land occurred more slowly than the diminution of tillage area, capital deepening occurred. The trend of resource redistribution from tillage cultivation to husbandry was of benefit, indirectly, to tillage crop production through the expansion of manure supplies, although these were inefficiently distributed. Technological innovations in Irish crop production over the area of land reform were modest, generally limited to the intensification of application combined with improvement of method of agricultural machinery usage. The limited innovations in the operation of machinery were stimulated by the economies offered by horsepower in substitution for increasingly expensive labor.

From the 1860s through 1915, the Irish agricultural labor force contracted with the emigration of landless hired workers and subtenants and the remaining tenants and owner-occupiers were immobilized under stipulations of their tenure arrangements. Small holdings were perpetuated and as they shifted to less labor-intensive husbandry, labor became increasingly misallocated. In some instances, the strengthening of tenure among the smallest farmers prolonged traditional methods of crop cultivation. Three statute acres under traditional potato crop cultivation fully employed a farmer and his family,

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Agricultural Seeds are at Present Sold, *Report*, P. P. 1901 IX, 1ff.; T. Baldwin, *Introduction to Irish Farming* (London, 1874), 33.

[61] T. Baldwin, *The Prince System as Applied to Small Farmers in Ireland*, Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England 12, part 2 (1877), 394 - 434; J. R. Campbell, *Agricultural Education with Special Reference to Ireland*, JDATI 9 (October 1908), 3 - 18; *Field Experiments*, ibid., 7 (April 1907), 411 - 56; T. Johnson, *The Agricultural Seeds Question*, ibid., 1 (1900 - 1901), 595 - 97.

but the resulting output was modest[62]. Unproductive processes involved in tillage crop cultivation continued through the period of land reform but were of diminishing importance in terms of total agricultural output as tillage production declined.

Measured in terms of deflated money value, beef cattle output in Ireland from the 1860s through 1915 more than doubled, while sheep output rose by one-third and swine output increased by around one-fourth. The deflated value of dairy products remained essentially unchanged while wool declined and recovered over the five decades involved[63]. Dairying was relatively labor-intensive as compared with beef production and, hence, appeared unfavorable, with increasing labor costs accompanied by stable dairy commodity prices, in contrast to steadily rising beef prices. Swine production was little affected by increasing labor and diminishing land costs since, typically, only limited land was involved and farm wives and children cared for the swine and cured the bacon and ham[64]. Over most of the period of land reform while grain prices, in deflated terms, slipped downward, prices moved upward for pork and mutton though more gradually than for beef[65]. The rise in labor and reduction in land costs resulting from land reform, coupled with the increase of beef prices, encouraged cattle production. The relatively unfavorable position of wool prices and the labor intensity involved in shearing and maintenance of sheep reduced the prospects for profit of sheep production, even though mutton prices rose. The responsiveness of Irish farmers to market profit incentives is reflected in the increase in the stock of beef cattle by fifty percent, from around two million head in the 1860s to over three million head by the early 1900s, while the numbers of milk cattle, sheep, and swine remained nearly unchanged[66].

Changes in the ratio of animal stocks to new additions, and the quality and quantity of marketable output per animal reflect technological changes in livestock production. In Ireland from the 1860s through 1915, the ratio

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[62] Calculations based on data from ASI and R. M. Barrington, *The Prices of Some Agricultural Produce*, op. cit., 137 - 53.

[63] ASI; Sauerbeck, *Prices of Commodities*, loc. cit.; R. M. Barrington, *The Prices of Some Agricultural Produce*, op. cit., 137 - 53; T. Barrington, *A Review of Irish Agricultural Prices*, op. cit., 249 - 80; Grimshaw, *A Statistical Survey of Ireland*, op. cit., 321 - 61.

[64] J. R. Campbell, *Store Cattle, or Butter and Eggs?* JDATI, 9 (July 1909), 647 - 53; J. O'Donovan, *The Economic History of Livestock in Ireland* (Cork, 1940), 275; O'Loan, loc. cit.

[65] ASI; Sauerbeck, *Prices of Commodities*, loc. cit.; R. M. Barrington, *The Prices of some Agricultural Produce*, op. cit., 137 - 53; T. Barrington, *A Review of Irish Agricultural Prices*, op. cit., 249 - 90; Grimshaw, *A Statistical Survey of Ireland*, op. cit., 321 - 61.

[66] ASI; O'Donovan, op. cit., 261.

of stocks to increments remained very stable for beef and dairy cattle, sheep and swine alike, which, in the absence of pronounced changes in the average age of animals marketed suggests that fertility ratios remained similarly unchanged. At least in the third quarter of the Nineteenth Century, and probably extending up to 1915, stock to increment ratios for beef cattle did not differ greatly between farms in different size categories ranging from between five to two hundred statute acres[67]. The stability of this ratio for the major livestock types over the five decades of land-tenure modification suggests that the nature and degree of security of tenure had little impact upon the productivity of husbandry as measured in terms of animal fertility.

During the period of land reform few changes occurred in the quality or in the quantity of output per head of beef and dairy cattle. In the first half of the Nineteenth Century, considerable progress had been made in the elimination of the longhorn and its replacement by the shorthorn cow. The shorthorn combined some of the best features of the longhorn, including sturdiness, with an ability to fatten quickly and yield a higher proportion of meat, reducing grazing costs and increasing the turnover rate of capital[68]. A marked disparity existed in the quality of cattle between large and small farmers. The small stockman, although he responded sensitively to marked incentives in the allocation of his agricultural resources, was circumscribed by the scale of operations and, to some extent, by limited accessibility to capital. Out of ignorance of efficient breeding practices and of necessity he usually mated his cows with any convenient bulls. Buildings for housing cattle and storing fodder during the wet and cooler winter months were generally lacking, particularly among the smaller husbandrymen. Many smaller stockmen sold off most of their animals during autumn auctions, diminishing the opportunities for breeding. Deficiencies in the breeding, maintenance and milking of dairy cattle, and in the production and marketing of dairy commodities, operated in the direction of rising labor costs over the land-reform era to make dairying relatively unprofitable as compared with meat production[69].

Beginning with the last decades of the Nineteenth Century various schemes had been introduced for extending assistance to small stockmen in the improvement of their cattle. Under government financial sponsorship, the Royal Dublin Society in 1887 inaugurated a stock improvement program. However, most of the funds allocated to the program were reserved for the

[67] ASI.

[68] O'Donovan, op. cit., 181, 249 - 50, 371.

[69] J. Wilson, *The Elimination of the Unprofitable Cow*, JDATI 13 (July, 1913), 698 - 704; Campbell, *Store Cattle, or Butter, Bacon and Eggs?* loc. cit.; *Memorandum on Milk Production*, op. cit. 11 (July 1911), 612 - 21; J. Wilson, *Winter and Summer Dairying*, op. cit., 7 (July, 1907), 635 - 42; A. P. Wilson, *The Progress of the Irish Dairying Industry*, op. cit., 7 (July 1907), 677 - 97.

breeding of horses for sporting purposes, with only a small fraction spent on cattle, until the pattern of expenditures was reversed in 1902. Under its program, the Royal Dublin Society placed premium bulls with wealthy farmers who were to make them available to small stockmen eligible to participate in the breeding scheme. In practice, few small farmers actively participated and the wealthy farmers with an interest in pedigreed beef cattle were the major beneficiaries[70]. In 1894 the Irish Agricultural Organization Society, which had been formed to promote the cooperative movement, introduced a cattle-breeding program for its members. The program was successful but since it was limited to the few who were members of the Society, it had slight impact upon the majority of Irish farmers[71]. Upon its inception in 1891, the Congested Districts Board initiated a cattle-breeding scheme specifically intended for poor, small-scale stockmen located within the economically depressed districts. Continued until 1903, the Board's program was similar to that introduced earlier by the Irish Agricultural Organization Society, with the placement of premium bulls with large stockmen for servicing the cows held by their smaller neighbors. Only a small minority of the farmers eligible participated in the program and, as with the earlier scheme on which it was patterned, its overall impact was slight[72].

The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction initiated a cattle-breeding program in 1903. By 1909 it had grown to considerable size, with substantial appropriations and over one thousand premium bulls involved. Officially, preferential treatment was to be extended to small-scale stockmen, but in this program as in previous ones, in practice these rules were frequently disregarded. In this case, the government officials were strongly sympathetic to the small-scale husbandryman and recognized his problems, but they had failed to secure the cooperation of the larger farmers who held the premium bulls. The cattle-breeding schemes, in their entirety, contributed little to the quality and marketable output per head of Irish cattle. Contrary to original intentions, few small-scale tenants and owner-occupiers benefited significantly[73]. Ironically, if the cattle-breeding schemes had been more effec-

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[70] H. F. Berry, *History of the Royal Dublin Society* (London, 1915), 315; O'Donovan, op. cit., 369.

[71] Recess Committee, *Report on the Establishment of a Department of Agriculture and Industries for Ireland* (Dublin, 1896), 363; W. Coyne, (ed.), *Ireland, Industrial and Agricultural* (Dublin, 1902), 137, 148.

[72] W. L. Micks, *History of the Congrsted Districts Board* (Dublin, 1925), 30; O'Donovan, op. cit., 365; Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into and Report upon the Operation of the Acts Dealing with Congrestion in Ireland, *First Report, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix*, P. P. 1906, XXXII, 1 ff.; Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, Ireland, *Schemes for the Encouragement of Breeds of Cattle (1901), Section 1* (Dublin ,1901), passim.

[73] R. Bruce, *Shorthorns*, JDATI 3 (March, 1903), 403 - 71; "Scheme for Encou-

tive among larger stockmen, to whom stud services were frequently informally diverted, the impact of the programs could have been substantial. Holdings of less than fifteen statute acres contained less than one-tenth of all cattle, while more than one-half of total cattle were located on farms of from fifteen to one hundred statute acres[74].

Agricultural shows had been sponsored by the Royal Dublin Society and other organizations from the early Nineteenth Century. Agricultural shows were intended to encourage improvement of cattle through the display of outstanding stock and the recognition bestowed on notable breeders. Participants and audiences included few modest-scale stockmen. Recognizing that small-scale stockmen rarely attended the agricultural shows and were therefore unlikely to benefit, the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction reluctantly gave financial support and endorsement to the exhibitions. Many Department officials voiced skepticism over the value of agricultural shows. Opponents of these events contended that breeding cattle for exhibition emphasized fat, as favored by judges, and resulted in decreased fertility and reduced milk yield. Some wealthy cattlemen even ceased to exhibit because of the growing disparity between commercial and show requirements for cattle[75].

Throughout the land-reform era, Irish swine production was highly commercially oriented. Through the second half of the Nineteenth Century the awareness of even the smallest farmers of the market demand for pork is reflected in the contemporary phrase, "the family pig paid the rent". It is also reflected in the fact that substantial quantities of inexpensive low-quality North American bacon were imported into Ireland for domestic consumption while Irish pork products were largely exported to Britain. However, the capacity of small farmers to accomodate changes in market demand was limited. Britain, the almost exclusive destination of all Irish agricultural exports during the land-reform era, as for prior centuries, had shifted its preference in the 1870s to bacon derived from leaner stock than the prevalent rotund Irish Berkshire hog. Larger Irish swine producers had switched to the leaner Yorkshire, but few smaller farmers had done so before 1900[76]. The Congested Districts Board introduced a program for the improvement of swine held by the poor farmers in the depressed districts of Ireland. The premium boars were maintained under

raging Improvement in the Breeds of Cattle, 1902", ibid. 2 (1901 - 1902), 322 - 38; O'Donovan, op. cit., 182 - 90, 249, 365 - 70.

[74] ASI.

[75] Evans, op. cit., 160 - 61, 256 - 57; *Subsidies to Agricultural and Industrial Shows and Skilled Labour Competitions*, 1908, JDATI 8 (October 1907), 91 - 93; *Imported and Home Grown Feedstuffs*, ibid. 12 (October 1911), 52 - 58; O'Donovan, op. cit., 374 - 76.

[76] R. H. Hooker, *The Meat Supply of the United Kingdom*, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society 72 (Jume 1909), 304 - 76; Armstrong, *An Economic History of Agriculture*, op. cit., 281.

contract by wealthy farmers who were to have them available for servicing the sows owned by eligible participants. From 1901, the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction operated a similar scheme, superceding that of the Board and extending assistance to small farmers throughout Ireland. Conceptually, the swine-siring program was similar to that for cattle, but it appeared to reach a far greater number of participants. Probably one-fourth of the total swine stock was favorably affected by the Board and Department programs[77]. The success of the program, although limited, was probably largely attributable to the relative concentration of swine on small holdings.

The wool-producing qualities of Irish sheep were highly esteemed at the middle of the Nineteenth Century. As prices for mutton became increasingly favorable as compared with wool over the last half of the century, large stockmen responded by breeding superior meat-producing varieties of English sheep with the leaner, slower maturing but hardier Irish sheep[78]. The Congested Districts Board introduced a sheep-breeding scheme in 1892, similar to that for cattle, with premium rams located with large farmers for servicing the ewes of eligible small farmer participants. The program evoked slight response and was discontinued in 1896. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction established a similar program, extended to all Ireland, in 1901. However, the Department's program was terminated only one year later because of unresolved difficulties in the allocation of the premium rams for servicing the sheep of the small farmer participants[79]. The official efforts to improve the quality of sheep failed, but had they enjoyed success they would still have had slight impact upon the overall quality of Irish sheep since only five percent were located on farms of fifteen statute acres or less[80].

From the 1860s to 1915, as security of tenure was buttressed by statutory tenancy and owner-occupancy, capital became increasingly available for investment in the agricultural production process. Accessibility to capital is reflected in the increase in the stock of cattle, as the profitability of beef output rose. In the pre-land-reform period, the high level of rents deprived tenants of the opportunity to accumulate capital for investment in their holdings and insecurity of tenure discouraged them from doing so. Traditionally, Irish landlords did not contribute to investment for improvement of tenant holdings.

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[77] *The Work of the Congested Districts Board*, JDATI 1 (1900 - 1901), 263 - 68; *The Revival of Tillage in Ireland*, ibid. 4 (December 1903), 197 - 205.

[78] ASI; T. Barrington *A Review of Irish Agricultural Prices*, op. cit., 249 - 80; R. M. Barrington, *The Prices of Some Agricultural Produce*, op. cit., 137 - 53; Sauerbeck, *Princes of Commodities*, loc. cit.; O'Donovan, op. cit., 261, 286.

[79] Congested Districts Board for Ireland, *Sixth Annual Report, 1896 - 1897*, P. P. 1897, LXXII, 30; A. Murray, *A History of the Commercial and Financial Relations Between England and Ireland* (London, 1903), 428; O'Donovan, op. cit., 262.

[80] ASI.

In the years before the Potato Famine landlords had little incentive for investment in improvements to holdings since they could extract maximum rents from land-hungry tenants without such expenditures. With strengthened security of tenure, tenants and former tenants transformed into owner-occupiers felt encouraged to make investments in agriculture. With the reductions of rent and annuity payments over pre-land-reform levels, modest levels of capital became available to small farmers through their savings. The fact that small and large farmers had similar rates of increase in holdings of livestock suggests that sufficient capital may have been available to small farmers, within the constraints imposed by the limited size of their holdings[81].

Unimpeded landlord jurisdiction over holdings was the alternative to small-scale owner-occupancy and regulated, protected tenancy. It is clear that uncompromised landlord authority would have operated in the same direction as the land-reform measures in the allocation of agricultural resources in Ireland from the 1860s through 1915. In the first half of the Nineteenth Century landlords as well as tenants shifted resources from crop to livestock production[82]. The substantial depopulation of Ireland due to the Potato Famine—from more than eight million people in 1841 to about six and one-half million in 1851, with an even greater percentage decline in the agricultural share of the population—provided landlords with an opportunity to consolidate holdings. They were motivated to consolidate small holdings into larger units to achieve apparent economies of scale in livestock production. In the immediate post-Famine years landlords attempted to continue consolidation through eviction of tenants. The violent reaction by tenants to threats of eviction served as a major source of rural unrest in Ireland around the middle of the Nineteenth Century[83].

A comprehensive program of consolidation by landlords, had this occurred instead of the land-reform measures, would have resulted in the removal of most of the population from rural Ireland, through eviction and the elimination of opportunities for work. Efficiently arranged large-scale livestock production would have required a far smaller work force than that engaged in small-scale husbandry combined with tillage crop cultivation for subsistence.

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[81] Departmental Committee on Agricultural Credit in Ireland, *Report, 1914*, P. P. 1914, XIII, 278 - 90; ASI.

[82] *Ledgers of Imports and Exports: Ireland, 1698 - 1829* (London: Public Records Office) for the years 1800 - 1829; *Customs, Annual Volume of Imports into England, 1831 - 1855* (London: Public Records Office), for the years 1831 - 1855; W. E. Montgomery, op. cit., 125 - 27; E. R. Hooker, op. cit., 46 - 50; L. M. Cullen, *Problems in the Interpretation and Revision of Eighteenth Century Irish Economic History*, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th ser. 17 (1967), 20.

[83] ASI; The Census of Ireland for the Year 1851 (London, 1851), part 2, pp. x, xiii; B. O'Neill, *The War for the Land in Ireland* (New York, 1933), 19 - 24.

It is likely that a situation of large-scale livestock production would have reflected greater productivity of inputs, including labor, through more efficient resource allocation. However, the inevitability of the accompaniment of unchallengeable landlord authority with exhaustively implemented consolidation measures is questionable. In the first half of the Nineteenth Century landlords retained tenants because the high rents extorted were in competition with the rates of return to large-scale husbandry[84]. With increased profitability in livestock production, with rising meat prices, landlords would probably have tolerated continuing tenancies only with increasing rents. Rising rents, with increasing scarcity of land and intensifying density of population, punctuated by famine when crop failures plunged levels of consumption below the normal subsistence level—that is to say, the situation of pre-Famine Ireland—could conceivably have been the case in post-Famine Ireland. The desperate predicament of tenants in the post-Famine period, in this projected version of events, would have been increasingly exacerbated by the steadily improving prospects for the livestock production alternative. Eventually, livestock production would probably have claimed a substantial share of agricultural land, in the absence of land reform, although it seems clear that this would have occurred in an atmosphere of violent protest. Irish landlords, traditionally reluctant to invest substantially in their land, were unlikely to be motivated to do so under conditions of uncertainty involving considerable risk. Under capitalization of livestock production by landlords would have reduced the levels of economic efficiency. The tenuous nature of tenancy arrangements which would have resulted from landlord efforts to consolidate holdings in the absence of land reform would have discouraged further tenant investment. The major obstacle to economic efficiency in Irish agricultural production introduced by regulated tenancy and owner-occupancy measures was the perpetuation of holdings too small to realize the potential economies of scale of livestock production[85]. The preservation of small-holding patterns represented a misallocation of labor resources as land was shifted to husbandry. Even so, the performance of Irish agriculture under the impact of land reform does not appear markedly deficient as compared with a realistic, rather than theoretical, simulation of likely conditions under perpetuated landlord jurisdiction.

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[84] Royal Commission on the State of the Law and Practice in Respect to the Occupation of Land in Ireland, 1845, *Report, Minutes of Evidence, and Digest*, (Dublin, 1847), passim.

[85] J. P. Huttman, *The English Market for Imported Meats, 1850 - 1915: An Analysis of Supplier Responsiveness*, Paper, Western Economic Association, Davis, California, August 1970, passim; Huttman, *Institutional Factors in Irish Agricultural Production*, 166 - 87; 279 - 80, 289 - 92, 331; Huttman, *Theoretical Considerations of Economic Growth and Development: Applications to Irish Agriculture, 1850 - 1915*, Paper, Western Economic Association, Long Beach, California, August 1969, passim.