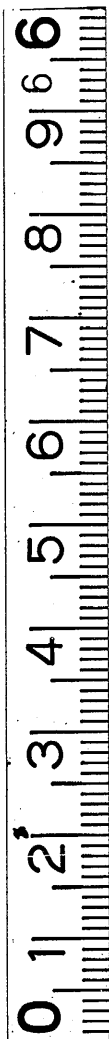


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PROPOSALS

FOR A

REGULATION,

Or an Entire

SUPPRESSION,

OF

**Pawn-brokers.**

With a Detection of their Fraudulent Practices, and a Recommendation of the Methods used by the *States of Holland*, for the Relief of the Necessitous, by lending on Pledges.

To which are Added,

Some Considerations on the present Calamities of the Sufferers by *The CHARITABLE CORPORATION.*

Submitted to the Parliament of *Great-Britain*, and Addressed to the Right Honourable Sir *Robert Walpole.*

L O N D O N :

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# PROPOSALS

Addressed to the

RIGHT HONOURABLE

*Sir* ROBERT WALPOLE.

S I R,



THE following Grievances, under which many of the Subjects of *Great-Britain* now labour, especially the inferior and middling sort of People in this Metropolis, can be set forth to no particular Person, more properly than to

to yourself: Your Conduct, thro' several Years passed, in the most important Scenes of Life, has convinced every reasonable and impartial *Briton*, that you deservedly fill the high Station in which you now move: And I will venture to affirm, against the loudest Voice of Malice, that to you we chiefly owe our Happiness in avoiding a dreadful War; the Consequences of which must have been oppressive to us, even in the most favourable Circumstances which possibly could have attended it; and to the same prudent Counsel we are likewise indebted for an Alliance with such Powers as, for our Interest, we should ally with: We, therefore, need not doubt your Readiness to lend Attention to the Complaints of your Fellow-Subjects, nor your Willingness to silence them, to the Satisfaction of your Country.

These Proposals to the Parliament of *Great-Britain* are addressed to you as to the properest Advocate that I could think of; nor shall I longer detain you from them.

When a Proposal is made evidently to the Advantage of the Subject, and which requires

requires the Authority of Parliament to put it in Execution, our Legislature are bound, by the Duty of Humanity, to forward the Success of it as much as possibly they can; and the Members of the House of Commons, especially, are answerable to those whom they represent for their Neglect.

I am certain, if they who compose the Legislative Power were apprised, in every Circumstance, of the ill Consequences which attend the unlawful, and highly unreasonable, manner of Dealing betwixt Pawn-brokers and their Customers, they would think a Regulation, at least, of that sort of Trading, very necessary. I shall enumerate Part of the various ill Effects of it; and first I will consider some of those which arise from Pawn-brokers, of any Kind, being permitted to take, as Pledges, *Laces, Silks, Velvets, Stuffs, any of the Woollen or Linnen Manufacture, and other sorts of Commodities of which Apparel is made, in Pieces, not made into Clothes or Furniture.* By prohibiting their receiving such Pledges as are here specify'd, a severe Penalty being inflicted on the Transgressor, many Apprentices and other Servants would want the Power of defrauding

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frauding their Masters in the Manner in which some of them do; and though several Servants have an Opportunity to defraud their Masters of other Commodities, yet they that have duly considered the Nature of Trade will find these more necessary to be particularized than any other; because the Inconveniencies to the fair Trader, in such Commodities, do not arise only from the Danger of his Servants embezzling Part of his Stock, but from another dreadful Source, which will soon appear. Several young Fellows, engaged in extravagant Amours, or other expensive Pleasures, when destitute of Money, pawn the Goods with which they are intrusted to procure the Means of indulging their Inclinations: Some, who are guilty of this Crime, propose redeeming the Goods, which they clandestinely take from their Masters, as soon as they can, and before their Masters miss them; but, by some Accident, they are render'd incapable of getting them again in the Time in which they expected; and, when a Master discovers the Loss of his Things, the first Crime is attended by many other Crimes, which follow the Apprentices denying the Fact, while the Pawn-broker enriches himself at the  
Expence

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Expence of the fair Trader: And this, sometimes, is the first Step of an Apprentices or other Servant to the Gallows. I have heard Complaints made by some of my Acquaintance, who have been wronged in this Manner, and whose Clemency has hindered their prosecuting the Offender. The other dreadful, and too frequent Source of Injuries to the fair Trader, in these Commodities particularly, will appear from what follows. Many necessitous inferior Tradesmen, and other Persons, sometimes, have been known to take up Quantities of such Goods, on Credit, merely to answer their present Wants, by pawning them: The Inconveniencies of which Practices, both to the fair Trader and unhappy Offender, are too visible to need any Enlargement on them here; and which would, in a great Measure, be prevented by prohibiting Pawn-brokers taking in such Goods not made into Apparel or Furniture.

As all fair Traders are cautious how they buy small Quantities of Goods which are offered to them in the Manner in which they are carried to Pawn-brokers, who receive all Things which are vendible, and which are brought to  
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them, a Restraint laid on Pawn-brokers would prevent many Thefts and indirect Dealings. I doubt not but many honest Persons, when plunged in Distress, and unable otherwise to extricate themselves, have pawned the Property of another, to answer a present pressing Occasion, and afterwards been just to the Owner; but as we cannot possibly foresee certainly what the Morrow will produce to our Advantage, human Nature being liable to so many Disappointments as it is, the honest Man, who is drove to these ingrateful Shifts, may be baulked in his Expectation, his Neighbour, or Friend, injured by his Indiscretion and Impatience in the Hour of Want, and himself, likewise, much hurt, by staining his Character: If, therefore, the Parliament, and I am sure the Affair is worthy their Consideration, would lay the Business of Pawn-brokers under the Restriction of Law, after proper Articles shall be deliberately drawn up, the Advantages would be many to the Nation.

Some may object to what I have here offered, by saying, that many honest Tradesmen, who are pressed, sometimes, for Money, to keep exact  
to

to their appointed Time of Payment, are glad to subject themselves to the Inconveniency of Pledging Part of their Stock, rather than fail in their Payments; and they had rather go to Pawn-brokers, whose Business depends much on their Secrecy, than expose themselves to Friends or Neighbours. This Objection may not be without Foundation; therefore, if Pawn-brokers should not be entirely prohibited taking in such Goods as are here specified, they ought, at least, to be under such a Restriction as shall make them fearful of receiving any Goods from Persons whose Characters they are not well acquainted with; I would have them therefore liable to be prosecuted, for receiving stolen Goods, with as much Severity as the Thief is; and if one or two of them should be hanged, sometimes, I can perceive no great Loss that the Society, in which they are, would sustain: However, that they might have no Reason to complain of Injustice towards them, I would not have them liable to a Prosecution, if they can give Proofs of the Person, from whom they received a stolen Pledge, being of an undoubted good Character in his or her Neighbourhood,  
before

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before this Discovery of such a Person's Dishonesty; but those Proofs should be such as the Law should judge sufficient. If Pawn-brokers were laid under some such Restrictions, Tradesmen, and some other People, would have fewer Losses than they now have: And tho' such Commodities as are made into Apparel are more particularly necessary to be specified than any other, yet by these Restraints, the Pawn-broker would be deterred from receiving any other Sort of Pledges, without using great Caution.

Some may say, in Answer to the Provision which I here propose against Felony, that the Person who robs another of his Property, to sell or pawn for his own Use, is punishable, by Law; and therefore the Fear of incurring the Punishment is a sufficient Expedient; but the more Channels of Sin we cut away, the less criminal will Men be in Practice, though they are Delinquents in their Inclinations. Supposing any one should think the Penalties too severe which I would lay Pawn-brokers under for receiving stolen Goods, yet, I am very certain, no reasonable Person can object to the

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the *following* Regulations which I propose.

From these Considerations I am led to speak of the exorbitant Interest which Pawn-brokers have for their Principal; which is a great Grievance, that the poor Subject labours under, and which calls aloud for Redress. Common Pawn-brokers let out their Money at the Rate of Thirty Pounds for an Hundred for a Year, supposing the Pledge lies a Year in their Hands; but if any one puts a Pledge into their Hands in the latter End of one Month, and takes it out in the Beginning of the next, he pays Interest for two Months; by which Means, and by other Advantages, they sometimes double, and sometimes more than double, their Interest of *Thirty per Cent per Annum*. Thus these Vermin, taking an Advantage over the Necessities and Weakness of the poor Subject, stop the Hand of Industry, and encrease the Number of Thieves. They say, in their own Defence, that the Persons who pledge their Things know the Terms, and therefore are not imposed upon. But this ought not to be an Argument in their Behalf to the legislative Power; for when People

run

run willingly, or rather without Consideration, on their own Ruin, the Wisdom and Vertue are great in those who remove the Means of their Destruction: And, if the Traffick of Pawn-broking is to be suffered, I think, if Pawn-brokers are confined, by a Penalty on every Transgression, to take no more than double the lawful Interest of Money, whatever that shall be at any Time, they will not want the Means of enriching themselves; and, if they do not think that Interest enough for the Use of their Money, let them employ it in some other Manner; and then they may stand the Chance of becoming honest Men.

If the Parliament should take all the visible Methods which can be thought of to prevent Thieving in those who deal with Pawn-brokers, and should settle the Interest of their Money lent, many other Grievances are still to be redressed. One scandalous and wicked Practice, and which, according to my Way of thinking, is direct Robbing, among Pawn-brokers, is this: Some of them, after they have amassed a large Quantity of valuable Pledges, most of them pawn'd for less than half the real Worth, inform their

their Customers, and such only as read the News-Papers, by Advertisements, that, unless they redeem their Things, by a fixed Time, they will all be sold; they intending, as they say, to leave off their Business. Several have published such Advertisements, and allowed so small a Space of Time, that many have lost their Things, because they could not procure the Money to redeem them, in the limited Time; and the shameless Robbers have removed their Habitations, and opened Shops in other Places, to repeat their Frauds. The Remedy which I would propose for this Evil is, to oblige them to give a Year's Notice, and not to take in another Pledge after the first Notice given; and if they should be under a Necessity to remove, on a short Warning, they should be obliged to mention the Place to which they are to remove, that their Customers may know where to come for their Things.

What a melancholly Reflection it is to a good Mind, that such Wretches (for Wretches they must be, in their Hearts, who are capable of submitting to such an infamous Employment) should enrich themselves by an useless and dishonest Way of Traffick, from the Necessities







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Customers entirely of a valuable Pledge. I know several who have been Sufferers in this Point, and one among them who left a Pledge, worth about Twenty Pounds, in the Custody of a Pawn-broker, on which he had no more than Five Guineas; and, about half a Year after the Time of pledging it, he went to redeem it; and the Pawn-broker impudently assured him, that no such Pledge was ever left in his Care. The Gentleman, after endeavouring, in vain, to persuade the Pawn-broker to Justice, by telling him some particular Circumstances which he thought he could not have the Assurance to deny being true, try'd the Effect of Menaces; but the Pawn-broker, unmoved by gentle or rough Usage, stood to what he had first asserted; and the Gentleman, having no Testimony but his own Honour, was forced to submit to the Imposition of the Thief. After what I have said, supposing few are guilty of these Frauds, supposing none now are, the Power, the Temptation, of one Man to cheat another should be removed, especially when it may with Ease.

The two Grievances which I have last set forth may be redressed by obliging

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ing Pawn-brokers to give a Receipt to every Person who borrows Money of them on Pledges; in which Receipt the Terms on which the Pawn-broker lends his Money shall be specified; and to that Receipt both the Borrower and the Lender shall subscribe their Names; and both the Borrower and the Lender shall have a Copy of the Receipt. Such a Method, or one almost like it, *The CHARITABLE CORPORATION* followed; which is to the mutual Advantage of the Borrower and Lender, if they have no dishonest Views, because it prevents all Disputes which a Mistake, otherwise, might occasion.

From the Inconveniencies which I have here laid down, attending the present scandalous Manner of Trading among Pawn-brokers, I doubt not but every just and reasonable Person, who reads these Proposals, will allow of the Necessity of laying Pawn-brokers under the Restriction of Law; and, indeed, I think, the total Suppression of them would not to be the Disadvantage nor Discredit of the Nation.

I am not for leaving the very necessitous without any Relief in the Time of  
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their greatest Wants of Money, and when they have Goods to pledge; but I am for removing an Oppression, and for substituting a real Relief. For the Benefit of such Persons, I will urge the Force of Example; for which I need not travel far. The *Dutch*, who are a People worthy the Imitation of all trading Nations, will not suffer such Blots, as common Pawn-brokers are, to fair Trade, to be among them. The *States of Holland* are their own Pawn-brokers, and in such a manner as is consistent with Justice and the Policy of Nations. They have their particular Offices for the Reception of Pledges; and they require very little more than the Worth of what they lend to be in their Hands; and they lend from the largest Sum, which can be required by the occasional Necessities of those of superior Rank, to the smallest Sum for the Relief of the Poor.

If a Foreigner lands on any Part of the Coast of *Holland*, without Money, if he has any Goods, and if he can give a fair Account of himself, he is sure of the immediate Assistance of as much Money almost as the Goods are worth, which he thinks fit to pledge, on the  
Terms

Terms which I have mentioned; by which Means numerous Inconveniences and Oppressions are avoided, to which a Stranger might otherwise be subjected: By such Methods the *Dutch* not only consult their national Interest, but render themselves Benefactors to the World.

If our Government would establish such Offices, in proper Places, through the Kingdom, as the *Dutch* have, the Advantages would be many; and the Grievances would be removed which are here set forth, as arising from the present Practices of common Pawn-brokers. Here I must observe, that the Benefits arising from the low Interest of Money in *Holland* are, by the Means of lending on Pledges for lawful Interest, felt by every Degree of People: But what avails the low Interest of Money here in *England* to the far greater Part of the Subjects, if they cannot have the Use of it without paying six times more than the lawful Interest, and even if they deposite double the Value of the Money borrowed in the Hands of the Lender?

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Here it will not be amiss to point out one of the Branches of Detriment which springs from the Toleration of Pawn-brokers, to every Trade in the Kingdom, and which would be cut off by an Establishment of such Offices for lending Money as the *Dutch* have. Very often Persons of various Degrees want to buy some particular Commodity, for the Purchase of which they have not Money, yet they have some other Commodity which they could spare a-while, and would, willingly, if they could borrow Money on it for a reasonable Interest; by which Means they would enable themselves to get what they immediately want, and not be hurt at the Time of the Redemption of their Pledge; for want of which Conveniency, most considerate People chuse to be without the Commodity, which they would be glad to buy, rather than pay so dear for it, as they must by borrowing Money of Pawn-brokers to purchase it. This is the Case of many, and of different sorts of Persons, who would make Purchases from the Value of an Hundred Pounds, or more, down to a Shilling: And, till these Grievances are removed, we may boast in vain  
of

of the Lowness of the Interest of our Money: And every Tradesman in the Kingdom, if he will consider, will find himself interested in the Suppression, or Regulation, at least, of Pawn-brokers; and, indeed, every individual, except the Vermin themselves, would be a Gainer by the Suppression, or Regulation, of them.

Hence I am naturally led to a Consideration of the Calamities of the Sufferers by the *Charitable Corporation*, and of the Nature of the Offences of their Oppressors. I cannot agree with those who are outrageous against all trading Companies; for, I think, if any Body of Men unite their Endeavours to render themselves serviceable to their Country by any Project, they ought to be Partakers of the Benefits which they propose to the Publick, and have a fair Title to the Protection and Encouragement of that Government which they strive to serve: And if any Corruption should creep into that Body of Men, whose Establishment was, to all Appearances, useful to the Kingdom, the Duty of the incorrupt is to purge the Body of the corrupted; and, if the Corruption is spread so far, as to be out of the  
Power

Power of the incorrupt in the same Body of Men, a Parliamentary Assistance is necessary: And if those who appeared in the Mask of Friendship to their Country, should prove the Oppressors of it, our Legislators ought to bring the Offenders, if they can, to Justice, and to suit their Punishment to the Nature of their Crimes.

I cannot say, but a *more Charitable Corporation* might have been instituted than *the late Charitable Corporation* was, and the Members have been Gainers: But when we consider it in a comparative Light with common Pawn-brokers, it was a Blessing to those who are obliged to borrow Money on Pledges sometimes: And those unhappy Persons, who are now the Prey of their villainous Oppressors, were to be esteemed as the Redressers of the heavy Grievances under which they laboured who traded with common Pawnbrokers before: And the Robbers of those unfortunate Persons are to be look'd on as Robbers of the Publick; they have snatched away the Relief which other Persons gave to those who were before the Prey of Pawn-brokers, and have utterly ruined many of the Relievers themselves; and,  
if

if Report does not mislead me, they have been the Murderers of some. Mercy to these Men would be Cruelty to the Publick, by encouraging other rapacious Villains to Acts of as black a Dye, thro' the Hopes of Impunity. Their Lives ought to be a Sacrifice to the Publick, and their Fortunes to those whom they have robbed.

Thus, Sir, I have stated, with Impartiality, the Inconveniencies arising from the Toleration of the Traffick now carried on by Pawn-brokers, and humbly proposed some Remedies to them; and I doubt not your sincere Desires to have those Grievances redressed, nor your Endeavours to promote the Means of Redress, nor your Inclination to bring the Criminals, here pointed out, to Justice. If, by the Methods which I have proposed, I shall prove, in the least, instrumental to the Relief of the Oppressed, I shall think myself amply rewarded; and if I do not, I shall have received some Satisfaction, in having discharged this Part of my Duty to my Country, and in having payed to you this Testimony of the Respect of, SIR,

Your Most Faithful,

February 1732.

D

Humble Servant.

*P. S.* As the Lowness of the Interest of Money is a certain Sign of the Riches of a Country, the Duty of our Legislators is, to take Care that every Member of the Society should reap the Benefits thereof as much as they possibly can, in the Nature of Things: Otherwise the Wealth of a Nation is like a plentiful Crop of Corn, which the negligent Husband-man suffers to be choaked with Weeds; for what the Weeds are to the growing Harvest, Pawn-brokers are to the Good of a wealthy Nation.

—————*inter*—————*nitentia Culta*  
*Infelix Lolium & steriles dominantur Avena.*  
 VIRGIL. Georg. Lib I.

T H E E N D.