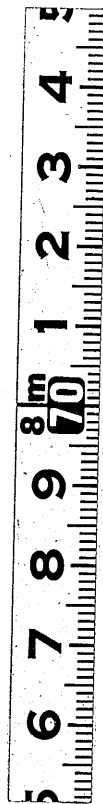


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**PROTEST**

ON THE

SUBJECT OF THE MEASURES NOW IMPENDING  
IN PARLIAMENT

IN RELATION TO THE

**CORN LAWS;**

ENTERED AGAINST THE SECOND READING  
OF A BILL

“ TO EMPOWER HIS MAJESTY TO ADMIT FOREIGN  
CORN FOR HOME CONSUMPTION UNDER  
CERTAIN LIMITATIONS.”

LONDON :

PRINTED BY C. H. REYNELL, BROAD STREET,  
GOLDEN SQUARE.

MDCCCXXVI.

**PROTEST,**

&c. &c.

**FIRST BECAUSE,**—When we recollect the numerous pledges given by various members of his Majesty's Government in the course of the present session, that the Corn Laws should not be interfered with, and the recent resistance made in the other House of Parliament to a proposal intended to affect them, we cannot account for the sudden change that has taken place in the conduct of Government,—without any apparent alteration of circumstances, or any reasonable motive having been assigned,—but by attributing it to a secret and unavowed desire of taking advantage of the present crisis to carry a measure, which must have the effect of creating a prejudice against the agricultural interest when Parliament goes into a full investigation of the important question on the expediency of the present Corn Laws, and the alteration, if any, which the welfare of the country requires.

We are ready to admit, that the extravagant speculations in the years 1824 and 1825, succeeded by the measures of Government, adopted for the purpose of annihilating that circulation of one pound notes in a moment of distress which they had in vain attempted to effect some years ago in times of greater prosperity, has thrown a great body of our manufacturers out of employment and produced the greatest distress amongst that class of labourers.

But we cannot conceive how this distress can be stated to arise from the existing Corn Laws; and we are prepared to assert, that the proposed alterations in these Laws can produce no relief to our suffering manufacturers,—for the price of a commodity matters not to those who, unfortunately, are reduced to a state that they have not, even at the lowest value, the means of acquiring it.

On the contrary, we sincerely believe that, as these measures must impoverish the agriculturist, they cannot fail to increase the sufferings of our manufacturers, by greatly diminishing the demand for manufactures in the home market.

We are, therefore, at a loss to comprehend how a measure, ruinous to the labourers in agriculture, and which must indirectly tend to increase the distress of the manufacturers, by diminishing the demand for the produce of their industry, should be proposed, or even hinted at, as a means of affording them relief.

We are, however, still more at a loss to conceive on what grounds Government have suddenly alarmed the country with the dread of impending scarcity by urging not only the necessity of admitting the bonded

grain into the home market at such an inadequate duty as 12s.—but also the unprecedented measure of giving them a discretionary power to admit foreign grain: for we cannot help recollecting that, in November last, when the country had nine months to rely on the supply which the late harvest afforded, wheat was 10s. a quarter dearer than at present, when they have only to look to the produce of last year for the supply of three summer months, in which experience shows that there hardly exists a greater demand than in two months of the spring.

Yet, at the meeting of Parliament, no dread of impending scarcity was hinted at: besides, it is impossible to forget that last year, when wheat was nearly 8s. a quarter dearer, and when, in every other respect, there were stronger symptoms of impending scarcity, Government only proposed admitting a certain portion of the bonded grain, and never attempted to apply to Parliament to sanction a discretionary power of importing foreign grain.

Under these circumstances, we feel it our duty to protest against the proposed measures; for, in the absence of all reasonable motive for urging the necessity of them, we cannot help thinking that Government, with the recent experience of the aid they derived from distress in carrying their measures with relation to small notes, were actuated by a desire again to take advantage of a crisis of distress as a fortunate opportunity of getting the consent of Parliament to a measure which may, in a future session, influence the decision on this important point of national policy by creating, before enquiry, a prepossession in favour of the importation of foreign grain, and of 12s. a quarter, the duty proposed to be imposed on the

bonded grain, as an adequate compensation for the extra taxation to which the home grower of grain is subjected.

**SECONDLY BECAUSE,**—Regarding this as the real object of the present measures, we cannot, at a time when a design is avowed of altering the system of our Corn Laws, refrain from entering our most solemn Protest against the injustice of giving to the agriculturists of this country such an inadequate protection against the interference of the foreign grower of grain in the home market.

The public have heard much of the merit his Majesty's Government assume to themselves in having done away the ancient system of restriction, under which this country had long flourished, for the purpose of introducing the more liberal system of what has been called a perfectly free trade. And the new regulations in the silk trade have been held forth as the case which most forcibly displays this alteration in our commercial legislation. Now, in deciding on the adequacy of the proposed protection, we only wish that the legislature would reflect how far a duty of 12s. a quarter on the importation of wheat gives to the home grower of grain the same protection that, at the moment of establishing what has been ridiculously denominated a free trade, they have thought it just to secure to the silk manufacturer.

From the raw material employed in this manufacture, all duty has been taken off; the manufacturer is subjected to no direct taxation, and yet he is defended by a duty of 30 per cent. on the value of the commodity produced by his labour, avowedly for

the purpose of compensating those taxes on consumption to which the agriculturist is subjected, in common with himself and the rest of the community.

Unfortunately, however, the grower of grain is, in this country, subjected to many direct impositions, which exclusively affect the important class of our fellow subjects to which he belongs.

The land tax, which has been collected, at the rate of 4s. in the pound, is more or less burthensome in various parts of the country; but to us it appears, that it may be moderately estimated as amounting to 10 per cent. on the rent throughout the kingdom.

The Government have themselves furnished data which make it clear, that they have estimated the tythe and the poors' rates, to which the land is also exclusively subjected, as equal to one-third, or 33 per cent. on the rent.

For, when the tenantry of Scotland alleged that, as there existed no tythe or poors' rates in that country, they paid to the landlord the amount of these taxes in rent; and that if they paid 1s. 6d. in the pound to the property tax, they would in fact pay to Government a tax equal to what the tenant in England would have paid, had he been subjected to 1s. 6d. in the pound on what was paid as rent, tythe, and poors' rate;—the plea was admitted to be unanswerable,—and the tax was fixed at 1s. in the pound on the rent in Scotland; that is, a third less than the tax paid by the tenantry in England; by which it is evident that the poors' rate and tithe were defined by the legislature to be equal to one third, or 33 per cent. on the amount of the rent.

Besides this, it appears impossible to estimate the direct taxes imposed on the land in the shape of road and bridge money, the erection of public buildings, the expence of militia, public prosecutions, repairing damage done by rioters, and many other charges, as amounting to less than 14 per cent. on the rent.

In our opinion, therefore, the land is subjected to direct taxation, amounting on the rent at least to—

Land tax	-	-	-	-	10 per cent.
Tythe and poors' rate	-	-	-	-	33 do.
Road, bridge money, &c.	-	-	-	-	14 do.
Total					57 per cent.

We must therefore think it indisputable that, as, according to all the evidence given before the Committee of this House, the rent of land has, in modern times, been considered as equal in value to one-fourth of the produce—one-fourth of 57 per cent.—that is 14½ per cent.—must be considered as the direct tax imposed on the produce of the land.

It follows then, that if our ancient system is to be abandoned, and the grower of grain is in future to be protected by a duty on importation, it will require a duty similar to what the silk manufacturer enjoys, to compensate him for the taxes on consumption, and also an additional duty, to cover the direct taxes to which he is subjected.

That is,—

1st, A duty of	-	-	-	30 per cent.	
2dly, A duty equivalent to the direct taxes imposed on the produce of land	-	-	-	14 per cent.	
In all					44 per cent.

But, in the case of wheat, it is proposed that 12s. a quarter should be paid as a duty on foreign grain, which, taking the value of wheat at 60s. per quarter, is 20 per cent. instead of 44 per cent. on the value of that commodity; the duty the legislature ought to impose, if it dealt with the grower of grain on the principle acted upon in establishing this free trade in our manufacture of silk.

To us it appears, therefore, incontrovertible, that Government have, on the principles they have themselves laid down, committed an act of gross injustice, in limiting the duty on the bonded grain to 12s. a quarter; and in holding this out as a protection to the home grower—for it requires no reasoning to prove, that an uncompensated extra taxation of 24 per cent. *ad valorem*, must have the same effect as a bounty to that extent given to the foreign grower of grain;—and it is impossible that, under such an arrangement, the home grower can, on equal terms, enter into competition with the foreigner, even in our own markets.

THIRDLY BECAUSE,—Though we are decidedly of opinion that, in the event of a well ascertained impending scarcity, it is, at all times, due to the people of this country, to obtain an immediate and adequate supply of foreign grain upon any terms, yet we have no hesitation in asserting our belief, founded on the evidence taken before this House, that, except on very extraordinary occasions, Great Britain and Ireland are capable of rearing an ample quantity of grain for the nourishment of our population.

We do therefore with confidence, state it to be our deliberate conviction that it is to a system of law which encourages the home grower of grain, we can

only look for a constant and gradually increasing supply at a moderate price, and that it is from pursuing such a system we can alone expect to succeed in obtaining the two great objects;—first of rendering the country independent of foreign supply;—secondly, of keeping the price of Corn at nearly an equal rate.

From contemplating the situation of all countries who have trusted to foreigners to furnish a portion of their usual necessary subsistence, it is evident that, as the effects of a good or a bad season are seldom confined to any one particular country, so the fate of a nation which trusts to foreign supply, is to be inundated in a plentiful year to a degree ruinous to its agriculture, whilst, in a year of scarcity, self-preservation dictates the necessity of keeping that portion of the crop at home which was usually exported, and reduces the country that confides in importation from abroad to the certainty of an extravagant price for the necessary supply of food, and even to the peril of approaching famine; when, if a contrary system had been pursued, the population would have only felt the inconvenience arising from a considerable augmentation in the value of what was necessary for their sustenance.

It is the experience that this is the natural consequence of trusting to a foreign supply of grain, which has induced all countries, that have acted upon this system, to form granaries, at a great expence, that in years of plenty they might hoard up a store to come in aid of the necessary consumption in the hour of scarcity; being aware that they may, in vain, look for aid from those on whose produce they had imprudently relied at a time when they themselves are apprehensive of not being able to command a sufficiency.

Of the wisdom of giving that encouragement to the home grower of grain which ensures the produce of the country being equal to its usual consumption, and of the fatal effects of trusting to a foreign supply, the history of our Corn Laws, and the detail of the prices at which grain has been sold to the community, affords a most ample illustration.

In the reign of Charles the Second grain had, on an average, been for a considerable time at what in those days was conceived to be an exorbitant price. To remedy this evil, Parliament, in the year 1673, under the impression that encouraging our internal agriculture was the best means of relief, prohibited all importation of wheat till it attained the price of 53s. per quarter, and even then it was subjected to a duty of 8s.

So that foreigners could not enter into a competition with the home grower in our own markets till the value of wheat was equal to 53s. a quarter, the price at which it might be imported, and 8s. the duty to which it was subjected, making together 3*l.* 1*s.* which in the money of that day was more than equivalent to 8*l.* 4*s.* 1½*d.* of the money of the present time.

Such was the regulation in relation to the importation of grain, which endured till the year 1765, securing to the country not only an abundance of grain at a moderate price, but at a price gradually diminishing, as the average market value of wheat for thirty-six years, from 1700 to 1735 inclusive, amounted only to 1*l.* 19*s.* 2*d.* whilst the average price from 1736 to 1765 inclusive, was reduced to 1*l.* 14*s.* 10½*d.* and during all this period large quantities were annually exported to foreign markets.

In the year 1766, this system was however abandoned, and for nearly eight years annual Acts were passed, which gave to the country not what is now called a free trade, that is, a trade protected against the foreigner by a duty of 30 per cent. but a trade completely free, the foreign grower paying no duty at all for what was imported.

From the moment this change was effected, instead of raising, as we had done for half a century, grain sufficient to supply ourselves and a surplus for exportation, we became an importing country, dependent on foreigners for part of our supply; and the price of grain was on an average of these eight years  $2l. 10s. 10d.$  that is,  $15s. 11\frac{1}{4}d.$  higher than it had been on an average for thirty years before this system of free trade was resorted to.

In the year 1773 the system was again altered, and the importation of wheat, duty free, was fixed at  $2l. 8s.$  a sum equal to  $1l. 6s. 6\frac{1}{4}d.$  in the money of the year 1673.

This regulation endured till the year 1791, and the price of wheat from the year 1766, the time when the salutary provisions of the Act of Charles the Second were repealed, till that period amounted on an average to  $2l. 9s. 2\frac{1}{2}d.$  that is, to  $14s. 4\frac{1}{2}d.$  more than it cost on an average of thirty years before the efficient protection given by the law of Charles the Second was done away.

In the year 1791 a new regulation was adopted by an Act which endured till the year 1804, fixing the price at which wheat could be imported, combined with the duty, at  $2l. 12s. 6d.$  which in the money of the year 1673 was only equal to  $1l. 2s. 2d.$

During this period our reliance on the foreign grower increased, and the average price of wheat will be found to have been no less than  $3l. 14s. 5\frac{1}{2}d.$

In the year 1804, the Legislature enacted a new regulation; the importation of wheat was prohibited till the price amounted to  $63s.$  when it was subjected to a duty of  $2s. 6d.$  so that the import price and the duty combined, amounted to  $3l. 5s. 6d.$  of value in the money of 1673, equal to  $1l. 5s. 4\frac{1}{2}d.$  a sum far less than one half of what had been fixed as an adequate protection in the reign of Charles the Second.

Under this diminished encouragement to the home grower, the price of wheat amounted on an average, from 1804 to 1813 inclusive, to  $5l. 0s. 3d.$  a price greatly exceeding what has lately been discovered to be a sure indication of famine, though we have heard the prosperity of the country boasted of, when on an average of two years, it exceeded  $6l.$

Neither is this all; from the time of abandoning the efficacious protection which the Act of Charles the Second afforded to the internal corn grower, the value of wheat became fluctuating to a degree that, instead of never varying more than one-third, which had been the case for a length of time, it was, in some years, more than three times the price that it was in others, whilst the average annual value not only increased, but we ceased to be an exporting country, and betwixt the year 1765 and the year 1812, we actually imported, exclusive of what was brought from Ireland, 20,757,622 quarters of grain; and of meal and flour, 4,598,522 cwt.; in value  $57,584,310l.$

Upon the return of peace, in the year 1815, from a feeling of the ruin in which the farmers and agriculturists were likely to be involved, a new law after minute investigation was adopted in relation to the import price of grain, which undoubtedly gave to the home grower a more formidable protection against foreign importation than any regulation since the time of Charles the Second: and if allowance is made for the alterations which unfortunately took place in our currency, grain has, from that time, been furnished to the consumer at a more equal, and certainly at a more moderate, price, than it had borne for many years, notwithstanding the great importation that had taken place between 1765 and 1812.

Such are the facts from which we are disposed to infer, that it is highly inexpedient to depend on foreigners for any part of our supply of grain; and which lead us—not only to lament, that, when wheat is at a moderate price, his Majesty's Government should indicate a disposition again to rely for foreign supply for this article of first necessity,—but to feel it a duty to object to these incipient symptoms of such a design,—not as affecting the landholders, whose interest we must consider as subordinate—but as affecting the labourers in agriculture, —the manufacturer,—and generally the consumers of grain, who, if they are not led astray by ignorant and designing men, desirous of momentary popularity, must from past experience be convinced that, though they may for a short time obtain sustenance at a lower price, yet it is impossible that they should not ultimately suffer severely for the temporary advantage they acquire.

For the labourers in agriculture must, on a mo-

ment's consideration, be aware that the immediate loss to the farmer will inevitably throw many of them out of employment: and the small shopkeepers throughout the country districts of the kingdom, the best and surest customers of our manufacturers, cannot fail to perceive, that, if the labourers in agriculture are thrown out of work, the demand for their commodities must fearfully diminish; whilst the manufacturer, who well knows the importance of the home market, both in extent and in certainty of payment, cannot but anticipate the misery in which they will ultimately be involved, by listening to those who in truth only wish to obtain momentary popularity by persuading them to sacrifice their permanent welfare to receive a little temporary enjoyment.

With these views of the fatal consequences of the measures now proposed, we conceive it to be our duty most seriously to deprecate these the first efforts towards introducing a system of dependence on foreigners for our supply of grain, which, if there is any confidence to be reposed in the experience of past times, must lead to national calamity.

It is therefore in the name of all the great interests of the nation, from the highest to the lowest, that we feel it a duty to enter this our most solemn Protest against renewing a system from which the country suffered from 1765 to 1812; and, above all, against abandoning a system which, after enduring for more than nine years, produced effects so beneficial, that his Majesty, in his speech from the throne on the 3d day of February 1825, was advised to declare, that "There never was a period in the history of this country when all the great interests of the



“nation were, at the same time, in so thriving a condition, or when a feeling of content and satisfaction was more widely diffused through all classes of the British people.”

LAUDERDALE,  
NEWCASTLE,  
MONTFORT,  
ROSSLYN.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY C. H. REYNELL, BROAD STREET, GOLDEN SQUARE.