“Princesses and Sweated-Wage Slaves Go Well Together”: Images of British Sweated Workers, 1843–1914

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Abstract

Taking a long-term perspective, this article charts how sweating was represented in different ways in different periods. It examines the practical difficulties reformers faced when moving from portraying certain images exposing sweated labor to the advocacy of remedies for it. At the turn of the twentieth century, the explanation of sweating as a wider issue of poverty had changed considerably from the narrow definition of sweated labor dating back to the 1840s. Initially this identified needlewomen and male artisans in declining trades as the primary victims of sweating. Jews later stereotypically featured prominently as both exploiters and exploited. By the 1890s, women homeworkers were simultaneously foregrounded as passive victims as well as perpetuators of a degenerate sweated “underclass.” From 1906, those depicted in sensational exhibitions plying their trade of sweated labor were no longer designated as isolated “white slaves” but as exploited citizens denied a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work. They were also viewed as a danger to national efficiency. Even so, a Liberal government was only prepared to concede one small anti-sweating measure in the form of the 1909 Trade Boards Act. This piece of legislation was gender neutral and covered homeworkers as well as factory hands. But it encompassed only the most notoriously low-paying industries and less then a quarter of a million workers. Successive British parliaments shied away from enacting a national minimum wage until 1999.

“What can we do, what can we do?” was the anguished cry of visitors after attending a sensational sweated industries exhibition staged in the heart of London’s West End in the summer of 1906.[1] Opened by the Princess Henry of Battenburg and lasting six weeks, the show became an event in the London season and was visited by nearly thirty thousand people.[2] To some, this juxtaposing of minor royalty with the most wretched workers in the country was distinctly distasteful. Writing in the *Labour Leader,* the organ of the Independent Labour Party, T. Gavin-Duffy mused, “it is questionable whether a fashionable social function adorned even by royalty will do anything to right the wrongs of these poor people.”[3] *Justice,* the organ of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation, was even more caustic. In an editorial entitled “‘Sweated Industries’ and High Placed Hypocrisy,” it acidly remarked that “Princesses and sweated-wage slaves go well together.”[4]

Despite these misgivings, the exhibition signified a watershed in anti-sweating reform. The *Daily News,* which had arranged the project, was widely praised

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for its ingenuity.[5] For over sixty years, reformers had utilized static images of half-starved, sweated workers to press for social reform for this exceptionally exploited group in Victorian and Edwardian society. The exhibition, complete with actual workers, was a dynamic, visual spectacle. It succeeded where previous methods had failed, and helped to lead directly to Britain's first piece of low pay legislation in over one hundred years: the 1909 Trade Boards Act.

This article argues that despite the importance of such representations for the anti-sweating movement, we still do not know how certain images were used, why they were successful, and whether they changed over time. It charts how limited and shifting definitions of sweating in the nineteenth century failed to lead to reform, and argues that depictions of sweated workers went through three main stages. First, there was the "discovery" of sweating in the 1840s, initially revolving around the overworking of seamstresses, but eventually focussing on the degradation of the male artisan. Interconnected with this was the condemnation of all subcontracted work and the mistaken insistence that the exploiting middleman sweater was frequently Jewish. Second, when sweating was "rediscovered" in the late-nineteenth century, not only were middlemen, especially Jews, still scapegoated as the engines of sweating, but newly arrived immigrants and, later women homeworkers, were portrayed as the chief victims as well as the key perpetrators of sweating. Whilst hostility to the Jews was couched in terms of national identity (in a Protestant, Christian society they were "different"), females were foregrounded in the 1880s and 1890s for other reasons. Previously depicted as weak, passive and prone to prostitution, sweated female homeworkers were now viewed as hapless breeders of a casualized residuum. Third, following the 1906 exhibition, reformers stressed that sweating touched both factory and outdoor workers. The explanation for sweating was not necessarily to be found in personal characteristics, such as "race" or gender, but in a capitalist system which failed to regulate low pay legally. Thus, in 1909, Winston Churchill, the minister in charge of trade boards, acknowledged that, if earnings of less than one pound a week were "sweated," then one-third of the British workforce suffered from the complaint.[6] Sweating had become part of the wider issue of poverty amidst riches. However, before we deal with these aspects, we need to establish why sweated labor was initially "discovered" in the 1840s.

The "Discovery" of Sweating

Although sweating was not unknown in the eighteenth century, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that it became recognized as a serious social issue. The conscience of the nation, as the distinguished medical journal, the *Lancet,* pointed out, was only really awakened by the appearance in 1843 of Thomas Hood's *Song of the Shirt.*[7] After being rejected by several publishers, this poem appeared anonymously in the satirical magazine, *Punch.* Hood's portrayal of a Christian seamstress forced to sew shirts night and day for starvation wages who, to while away the time, sings in a dolorous pitch the *Song of the Shirt,* captured the public's imagination.

As with nearly all Hood's social protest writings, the poem was based on a real incident: the case of a widow who, to feed her two starving children, pawned the garments she had been sewing. She was subsequently prosecuted by her employer. *The Times* commented on this case (and a similar one) that a London needlewoman was from "every moral point of view, as much a slave as any negro who ever toiled under as cruel taskmasters in the West Indies."[8] Hood, not unaccustomed to poverty himself, concurred. The publication of Hood's poem tripled *Punch's* circulation and gave the seamstresses international fame. The poem, highly praised by professional authors like Dickens, was widely reprinted. It appeared on handkerchiefs, was set to music and even dramatized. It was translated into German, Italian, French, and Russian. The seamstresses themselves actually sang it. At Hood's request, his epitaph read: "He Sang the *Song of the Shirt.*" Paintings inspired by the work were also exhibited at the Royal Academy.[9]

Hood's powerful poem ended with the hope that the rich would hear the *Song of the Shirt* and intercede on behalf of sweated women. But it is doubtful whether any significant reforms emanated from it. As the Reverend Davidson remarked at the Dundee sweated industries exhibition in 1914, while Hood's sympathetic account helped to awaken the public's conscience, Hood advocated no direct remedy.[10] The poem could be dismissed merely as an individual case of suffering.

Six years after the publication of the *Song of the Shirt,* the bohemian journalist Henry Mayhew produced a series of letters on sweating in the well-respected *Morning Chronicle.* Excerpts with illustrations were reprinted in other newspapers. Like Hood, Mayhew investigated the plight of London's seamstresses.[11] But, in contrast, Mayhew was willing to delve into the "darker" side of Victorian life. In order to collect data on how many women were forced to supplement their meagre earnings with prostitution, he arranged for a meeting of "fallen" needlewomen. Some appeared in rags, others wore their only set of clothes because the remainder were pawned; "the very idea of a change of garments appeared to excite a smile." The majority had been forced into prostitution as the result of the death of a husband, sickness or unemployment of the breadwinner, or desertion.[12]

On the whole, though, Mayhew was not primarily concerned with helpless female workers. The major focus of his study was how sweating impacted on a small group of male artisans, such as the tailors, boot and shoemakers, carpenters, and joiners. He revealed how the skilled, "honourable," West End section was being undermined by East London, unskilled, "dishonourable," nonsociety men and women. This had occurred because a new class of exploitative masters had abandoned union-agreed time rates for piecework paid at starvation levels. Journeymen, previously only employed in their master's workshop, had also been forced into becoming small capitalists working at home on their own account. In order to survive, the latter utilized various means to increase their productivity, including skimping on quality and laboring all hours includ-

ing Sundays. These small masters had often been driven to become middlemen, engaging cheap labor from apprentices, foreigners, women, and even their own family. To Mayhew, these middlemen, caught in a jungle of unregulated competition, were simultaneously both the victims and the villains of sweating. This insight caused Mayhew to reject the conventional political economists' explanation for sweating: that these trades were overstocked with redundant workers. Instead, he maintained that overproduction and driving had created an artificial surplus of hands and reduced wages. From this he evolved his thesis that "overwork leads to low pay" and conversely, that "low pay leads to overwork."[13]

This bias toward a certain category of skilled worker and their downward mobility was not unproblematic. It deluded him (and his readers) into thinking that there was such a thing as a "sweated trade," that sweating was an actual industrial system bound up with small masters, domestic pieceworkers, and subcontract. But the worst cases of sweating had nothing to do with subcontracting. In trouser, shirt, and matchbox making, for example, the work was generally handed-out directly by the wholesaler. Subcontracting and piecework also occurred in industries where sweating rarely occurred, such as engineering and shipbuilding. Middlemen, where they existed, were merely manifestations of the disease, not the source.[14] Other London crafts that did not fit his framework were ignored.[15] The largest occupational group in the working-class, the quarter of a million domestic servants, were similarly overlooked, as were railwaymen and gas stokers who worked for large concerns rather than for small backstreet employers. Yet, if we take Mayhew's own definition of sweating, these activities were good examples of overwork and were often low waged. As Humpherys remarks, Mayhew combined brilliant observation with a shallow analysis of only a few trades.[16]

Mayhew also dealt more sympathetically with the skilled worker. He appreciated the fact that the "society" men kept written records and could speak authoritatively on the labor process.[17] He respected their independence, sobriety, and cultured life-style, whereas the unskilled and sweated, he believed, acquiesced in their exploitation. Those "dishonourable" tailors who lived on the sweater's premises were portrayed as being defrauded at every turn. They paid for bed and board, but were half-starved and reduced to sleeping in overcrowded, consumptive-ridden workrooms. Some had been forced to pawn their clothes; they had become captives of the sweater. Others, especially those from Ireland, had been "kidnapped" and bound in debt to the middleman. Yet, despite such exploitation, they did not rebel. They were as "unpolitical" as footmen. Prone to drunkenness and disease, the "dishonourable" tailors were also seen by Mayhew as a danger to health. The hovels of the slop-workers were lice-infested; they slept with the garments of customers upon their beds even when racked with disease. In winter, when blankets had been pawned, it was common for tailors to sleep with the sleeves of a coat they were making drawn over their arms. He assured his readers that ladies' riding habits were especially prized as covers for the poor and their children on account of the cloth in their skirts.[18]

Punch exclaimed: "What a thought to check the triumph of a canter in Rotten Row, to imagine that the flowing robe has been used as a counterpane for the filthy slop-worker and his squalid little one."[19]

This bias toward the skilled, male artisan also meant that females other than the needlewomen hardly figured in Mayhew's account. When women do appear, they are portrayed as helpless victims, poor Magdalenes telling "stories" of their seduction and "fall." He narrates rather than analyzes his meetings with them, and never questions them, unlike the men, about their political opinions. He empathized, too, with those males who lamented that they were no longer the breadwinner, and that their wives and daughters had to work to maintain a satisfactory standard of life. But on Mayhew's own admission, the majority of the needlewomen were under twenty and widows, orphans, or wives of unemployed or ill husbands. They had no wage-earning male to support them.[20]

It has been suggested that Mayhew formulated a new theory of capitalism and that he provoked a discussion on the ethics of sweated employment drawing on ideals of "fair exchange" and "just prices."[21] Yet Mayhew's sensational revelations amounted to little in terms of solutions. He advocated a muddled range of reforms including protective tariffs, trade union organization, and cooperative workshops, but offered no precise advice on how to attain these. He assisted in the establishment of a Tailor's Guild, a type of friendly society, but this was short-lived. One reform proposal was to dispatch distressed needlewomen with exemplary references to the colonies, but this quickly ran into financial difficulties despite the fact that its subscription list was headed by Prince Albert and Queen Victoria. Moreover, since Mayhew believed that the problem was not one of excess labor, but driving, he demonstrated little enthusiasm for the initiative.[22] As David Englander shrewdly observes: "Viewed in the round his theoretical interventions seemed much like an attempt to modify or moralize political economy than to replace it."[23] Furthermore, his best work was produced in newspaper articles and these rapidly became inaccessible.[24] Mayhew's revelations only amounted to a fleeting interest in the lives of the sweated. It was the Christian Socialists, not Mayhew, who were to be acclaimed by later generations for opening up the anti-sweating debate.

Begun as Chartism was defeated, this small group of Anglican clergy and laymen headed by Frederick Maurice included Charles Kingsley and John Ludlow. Ludlow first drew attention to the sweated when he used Mayhew's material on the needlewomen for an article that appeared in January 1850.[25] According to E. P. Thompson, this essay set the theme for Christian Socialist activity.[26] But it was Mayhew's letters about the tailors (less so those on the needlewomen) that inspired the Christian Socialists to take action. Hence, in February 1850 they helped to form the Working Tailor's Association (WTA) for cooperative production.[27] Charles Kingsley, under the pseudonym "Parson Lot," also produced the tract "Cheap Clothes and Nasty" to solicit support for the WTA.

Kingsley had been deeply agitated by Mayhew's letters on the tailors. In his pamphlet he wrote: "From two articles in the *Morning Chronicle* of Friday, December fourteenth and Tuesday, December eighteenth on the Condition of the

Working Tailors, we learnt too much to leave us altogether masters of ourselves."[28] The tract was an impassioned attack on the slop system, and urged all of those who wanted to curb it to aid the tailors to form associations. It also portrayed middlemen as often being wealthy Jewish entrepreneurs and grinders of the faces of the poor. At the same time, it roundly condemned the government for originating and perpetuating sweating through the subcontracting of its uniforms to sweatshops.[29] At points, "Cheap Clothes and Nasty" is a series of acknowledged passages from the *Morning Chronicle* loosely joined together. But where Mayhew meticulously recorded the genesis of slopwork, Kingsley's tract was superficial. Precision was discarded in order to generate an overwhelming image of oppression. Mayhew's restrained account of the ill tailor using a customer's garment as a cover, for example, is transformed by Kingsley into a grizzly picture of pestilence and death:

> These wretched creatures, when they have pawned their own clothes and bedding, will use as substitutes the very garments they are making. So Lord—'s coat has been seen covering a group of children blotched with small-pox. The Rev. D— finds himself suddenly unpresentable from a cutaneous disease which it is not polite to mention on the south of the Tweed, little dreaming that the shivering dirty being who made his coat has been sitting with his arms in the sleeves for warmth while he stitched at the tails. The charming Miss C— is swept off by typhus or scarlatina, and her parents talk about "God's heavy judgement and visitation." Had they tracked the girl's new riding habit back to the stifling undrained hovel where it served as a blanket to the fever-stricken slop worker, they would have seen *why* God had visited them.[30]

Despite the careless manner in which he used Mayhew's understated version of sweating, Kingsley's tract sold well. Written like "an excited Carlylean sermon," according to Margaret Thorp, it was even popular at Eton and "lay on the table at the Guard's Club and caused young officers to order coats from the cooperative workrooms."[31]

Kingsley followed this success with the publication of his novel, *Alton Locke* (1850). This depicts the life of a Chartist, Cockney tailor who refuses to become a slop worker. Forced to make a living as a writer, Locke visits starving seamstresses and his help is enlisted to rescue tailors "kidnapped" by a sweater, Jeremy Downes, a former workmate of his who has taken to government contract work with a Jewish partner. Downes's sweating den is an abhorrent lean-to built over an open sewer. Here Locke is forced to look at the naked corpses of Downes's wife and two children lying under a half finished coat. They have died from typhus. When finished, the infected garment is bought by Locke's prosperous cousin, a champion of laissez-faire and a pioneer of the "buy-cheap-and-sell-dear commercialism."[32] It is handled by the purchaser and his valet; both die of typhus. According to Una Pope-Hennessy, *Alton Locke* was "the one novel of the Victorian era that no one interested in social conditions can afford to neglect."[33] To James Schmiechen, *Alton Locke* "is a graphic picture of the fall-

en artisan."[34] Raymond Williams praises it for being "an informed, angry, and sustained account of sweated labour."[35]

In many ways, the novel was a subtler, dramatized version of "Cheap Clothes and Nasty." Yet like the latter, it was also grossly inaccurate. Once again, Kingsley had drawn on Mayhew's material and embellished it. The narrative was based on the life of Thomas Cooper, whom Kingsley knew intimately.[36] In order to heighten the fear of infection, Kingsley transformed Cooper from a Leicester shoemaker into a Cockney tailor. It linked sweating largely to the downward descent of skilled, male artisans. Schmiechen, for instance, states that Kingsley was concerned about women.[37] However, they only appear briefly, as pathetic "fallen" seamstresses, "reclaimed Magdalenes," or as impossibly saintly rescue workers. Another flaw is the undue stress on government subcontracting of military uniforms as the source of sweating, also derived from Mayhew and intensified. But sweating was present in cutlery and nail manufacture where no government department could be blamed for initiating anti-social employment methods.

The most prominent defects, however, are the bigoted judgements on those who do not share Kingsley's Anglican faith. The Catholic Irish with "their slavish and exclusive creed" are characterised as lacking in moral fibre, as undercutters to a man of the "honourable" garment worker.[38] The Jews are indicted for more heinous crimes; they are branded as rapacious middlemen and inveterate liars, smart at turning a bargain to their advantage.[39] Where Mayhew had been prepared to see the middleman as both victim and transgressor, in Kingsley he has no redeeming features.[40] The upshot was that the public associated sweating with a single figure, frequently Jewish, who could be despised and scapegoated. As the distinguished economist J.A. Hobson was later to observe: "*Alton Locke* gave us a powerful picture of the subcontracting tailor, who spider-like, lured into his web the unfortunate victim, and sucked his blood for gain."[41]

While Kingsley, like Mayhew, perpetuated the idea that sweating was a "system," he contributed little by way of a remedy. The alternative he offered to the sweating dens was cooperative workshops. But where these were tried they failed. Only a small number were engaged in these projects; they were based on light rather than heavy industry, and disillusionment set in when leading officials absconded with the funds.[42] According to the Webbs, they were not cooperatives in the true sense. Unlike the earlier Owenites, the Christian Socialists only intended to replace the individual capitalist with self-governing bodies of profit-making workmen.[43] The needlewomen's cooperatives were not even allowed to be self-governing. Here a superintendent organized the work and had the ability to discharge the women subject to the consent of the "ladies' committee or the ladies' visitor of the day."[44]

In the final analysis, the Christian Socialists emphasized the first word of their title, and relied on the power of religion to humanize and harmonize. This was particularly true of Kingsley whose conservatism became more evident in the later part of his life. In 1856 he could counsel the sweated worker: "Emigrate, but

never *strike* . . . I see little before the Englishman but to abide and endure."[45] More generally, Kingsley's revelations were eclipsed by the cult of mid-Victorian progress. By May 1851 Britain was preoccupied with the Great Exhibition. *Punch's* cartoon depicting an alternative spectacle of sweated workers located under specimen jars passed virtually unnoticed.[46] The *Lancet* was later to remark, "as the Chartist movement died out and the depression and distress of the 'forties' were forgotten, so the old grievances disappeared, drowned in a sea of prosperity."[47]

The Renewed Attack on Sweated Labor

Sweating was briefly "rediscovered" in the early years of the "Great Depression" (1873–1896), when the *Lancet* appointed a commission to report on the spread of infectious diseases through garments made in unsanitary London tenements. But it was Kingsley's highly emotive explanation for the evil, not Mayhew's more qualified definition that was remembered. Equating sweating with subcontracting and avaricious middlemen, the commission started from the mistaken premise that: "The fearful realism of 'Alton Locke' first drew attention to the subject, and since then cases have from time to time come to light which afford powerful evidence of its accuracy."[48] The victim referred to was not one of Kingsley's fictitious characters, but the daughter of Sir Robert Peel, whose death was traced to the tailors who had made her riding habit in the same room as a fever patient. The gist of the report was that: "Similar incidents are no doubt of constant occurrence."[49]

Nothing happened as a result of this outcry, but by the 1880s interest in the topic was once more renewed. This time, however, it was overcrowding rather than infection that became the main source of concern. Andrew Mearn's *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (London, 1883) highlighted how the sweated were dragged down by their environment. Defrauded by rack-renting landlords, they were forced to live and mingle with the worst criminal elements. Local authorities had intensified this process through large-scale slum clearances. Vile living conditions, in turn, were exacerbated by the nature of sweated home industries. The air was laden with suffocating dander from fur pulled from the skins of animals in preparation for the furrier. The nauseating smell of paste and drying matchboxes mingled with other offensive odors. This savage environment, Mearns intimated, had also led to "unspeakable immoral practices." The brutalised children of the sweated, themselves the products of drunken and dissolute parents, were not only being lured into prostitution, they were also becoming prey to incestuous relationships.[50] Eager to press home the point that the established church had lost contact with the urban poor, Mearns, a Congregationalist, Protestant, non-conformist, stressed not the poverty of the sweated but their potential for becoming godless and depraved.

The *Lancet,* while praising Mearn's sensational pamphlet, also published its own exposé. But the *Lancet* was principally concerned, where Mearns was not, with the influx of impoverished foreigners, chiefly Russian and Polish Jews flee-

ing from persecution in their own country.[51] These immigrants increased the demand for both housing and workshop premises. Unfortunately for them, they arrived at precisely the time when accommodation in the East End was diminishing. The *Lancet,* aware of this mitigating factor, chose to ignore it. Its commission observed, "we found all the difficulties attached to the question of the housing of the poor are aggravated by the special habits of this peculiar people."[52] The commission perceived the immigrants as largely destitute, uneducated, and unneighborly. It was even alleged that they possessed their own strange debris.[53]

The alarm generated by the *Lancet* resulted in the Board of Trade dispatching its labour correspondent, John Burnett, to investigate sweating in East End tailoring. Burnett heightened the panic by lambasting the Jews for not only overcrowding dwellings but also the labor market. He drew heavily on Kingsley's interpretation that the decline of the skilled tailor was related to subcontracting and rapacious middlemen. He also insisted that matters had been made considerably worse since Kingsley's day: foreign immigrants now flooded the market to such an extent that "thousands of native workers" had been reduced to "the verge of destitution."[54] The aliens, he declared, lacked self-respect and bowed down to the economic and spiritual slavery of sweating. The Jewish male was deficient in manly virtues. He ate less, accepted a lower standard of comfort than the English artisan, and despite assistance from the native union, the Amalgamated Society of Tailors (AST), was totally bereft of class loyalty and trade union consciousness. To Burnett, the sweated Jew was a pathetic specimen morally and physically and belonged to a "patient, submissive race."[55]

Conversely, Burnett asserted that the Jews were simultaneously Ricardo's Economic Man incarnate. Unskilled when they arrived, they were prepared to work all hours in the hope of one day becoming small capitalists, "princes of the sweating system."[56] Their object, he maintained, was to extract the maximum of work for the minimum of pay. According to Burnett, the Jewish "artful sweater" in the pursuit of gain was very astute and always on the "lookout" to outwit the inspectorate. These middlemen also found it convenient that there were two Sabbaths in the week, Saturday and Sunday, because they observed neither. He concluded that sweating would only be eradicated if foreign immigrants were restricted (an Alien's Act was passed in 1905).[57]

Burnett claimed that he had described the problems of sweating "without exaggeration."[58] But nothing was further from the truth. He was unable to produce conclusive evidence on how many English tailors had been displaced by Jewish competition, confessed that he had never visited the East End before, and only spent one day there conducting his inquiry.[59] There is also scant evidence of high social mobility among Jewish immigrants during the period 1880–1914, despite Burnett's insistence that many had access to modest amounts of capital, such as small loans for a sewing machine from the Jewish Board of Guardians.[60]

The representation of the Jewish workshop as being populated by unskilled labor and only able to compete by driving the workforce needs to be questioned.

It is probable that approximately forty percent of immigrants had worked at a craft in Eastern Europe.[61] Moreover, wages in Jewish workshops were often above subsistence levels and, in the busy season, could be substantial. Nor is there any evidence that Jewish workers labored the excessive hours claimed by Burnett.[62]

The lack of permanent organization among immigrants had little to do, as Burnett insisted, with ethnicity or a deficient sense of morality. Rather, it mirrored the system of workshop production. Trade unionism was most successful in large concerns with impersonal management techniques. Workshop labor, both Jewish and non-Jewish, was severely disadvantaged in this respect.[63] Moreover, trade unionism was only one method among many through which immigrants aspired to combat sweating. They were also prepared to utilize legal remedies involving the courts and the factory inspectorate, but Burnett failed to investigate these alternative strategies.[64]

Burnett's findings did not go unchallenged. Beatrice Potter (later Webb) and David Schloss, two of Charles Booth's social investigators, denied that immigrants replaced native labor.[65] More recently, Bernard Gainer has remarked that Burnett, as a former trade union leader, should have produced a more circumspect report.[66] Yet Burnett's views were shared by a large section of British society including the organized working-class. Indeed, Burnett had been highly influenced by the AST officials who had acted as his guides around the East End.[67] His sentiments were also harboured by a whole spectrum of middle-class opinion. Even those like Potter, who criticized Burnett, still perpetuated the stereotype of the Jews as being allegedly only interested in the pursuit of gain.[68] As David Feldman has noted, the Jews, whether middlemen or sweated, were viewed as aberrations in a Victorian England whose national identity was envisaged as Protestant, Christian, free-born, and imperialist.[69] Not surprisingly, when the Earl of Dunraven called for a select committee on the sweating system (SCSS), he rested virtually his entire case on Burnett's report.[70]

The SCSS began its sittings in 1888 and reported three years later. Originally confined to London's East End, the committee's terms of reference were extended after five months when it was admitted that sweating pervaded the provinces too. In its final form, the inquiry covered twenty-seven trades. When calling for the inquiry, Dunraven (the committee's first chair), insisted that sweated workers were more brutalized than slaves.[71] He was dismayed, therefore, when many of the working-class witnesses seemed neither abject nor forlorn. Desperate to sustain the popular anti-alien chorus, he insisted that the self-esteem of the sweated had led them to borrow clothes so as "to present a favourable appearance."[72] The final report also commended the sweated on their dignity.[73]

It is doubtful, though, whether their lordships had been brought face to face, as they asserted, with the typical sweated worker. The sweated were unwilling to come forward because the committee only paid one day's expenses and offered no indemnity against the possible loss of employment.[74] This problem of obtaining *bona fide* victims of sweating resulted in Lord Aberdeen, a mem-

ber of the committee, enlisting the assistance of the popular journalist, Arnold White, to help provide witnesses. White, however, at considerable personal expense, produced witnesses who were only prepared to testify against the iniquities of alien labor. Some of his witnesses indulged in outright slander when they accused the furniture-store magnate and Conservative Member of Parliament, John Blundell Maple, of exploiting sweated cabinet-makers. Maple was exonerated by the committee when it became apparent that White's chief witness was not a sweated worker at all, but a failed businessman with a grudge against Maple.[75] White and his witnesses were discredited.

The evidence concerning women proved to be even more problematic. In the mid-nineteenth century, Kingsley had associated sweating with the declining "honourable" male tailor. But Jenny Morris insists that the SCSS focussed mainly on *women* in the needle trades. If dock and building workers are excluded, she maintains, the committee reviewed trades employing a total of 646,880 women and 440,900 men.[76] Such a conclusion requires qualification. Much of the evidence concerning females was supplied by male trade unionists, middle-class observers, or witnesses financially supported by White. Few women were invited or were willing to appear before the committee: only thirty-seven out of 291.[77] It is true that the bulk of the witnesses spoke mainly on the garment trades (186). Yet even here only twenty-eight women were interviewed and they were not entirely representative of sweated womanhood. One was a middle woman and two were middle-class social investigators.[78] A tailoring contractor, Moses, supplied three females, but their testimony is suspect in view of Burnett's insistence that Moses supplied false evidence concerning the wages he paid.[79] White produced three tailoresses employed on government contract work. Unfortunately for White, when interviewed, these women exhibited a curious indifference as to their pay and contradicted each other.[80] White had also paid for the services of a female investigator. But she refused to provide written affidavits from tailoresses she had interviewed on the grounds that they feared recrimination.[81] Of the five shirtmakers, White supplied four. Brought forward to verify White's claims that shirtmaking led to the sweating of vulnerable Christian women, they obligingly declared that the life of a shirtmaker was exceedingly hard, that the wages were very low.[82] Yet these women were far from typical; they only worked intermittently and were not solely dependent on their miserable shirtmaking income. Apparently unaware of the part played by White in the selection of the shirtmakers, the eminent economist J.A. Hobson considered them to be the most wretched of all the workers presented before the committee.[83]

The dubious accolade of being the most sweated women in England, though, was awarded by the SCSS, to the female nail and chainmakers of the Black Country (South Staffordshire and east Worcestershire).[84] They were seen as doing men's work and endangering their reproductive capacities. The five women chainmakers and four nailers were portrayed as worn-out, half-starved, old before their time, and "unsexed" by their occupation. One of the women stated that working from seven in the morning until seven in the evening she could make one hundred-weight of chain a week, for which she received the paltry sum

of between four shillings and six shillings and sixpence. “We do not live very well,” she said, “our most living is bacon; we get a bit of butter sometimes.”[85] Caroline Cox, aged only fifteen, stated that she was always hungry; even bread and potatoes were a luxury.[86] One of the women told the committee she carried chain weighing one hundred-weight around her neck for considerable distances in order to return it to the sweater.[87] Burnett, who had been dispatched to investigate the conditions in chainmaking, lamented that the work was too heavy, that the workshop took precedence over mothering, that a tidy home was totally unknown among these “undomesticated” females. He regretted that the women were “extremely flat-chested, and the vast majority of them look pale and thin, although their arms are wiry and muscular.”[88] The *Lancet,* which had also sent its commissioner to give evidence before the SCSS and to the Black Country, agreed. At the same time the *Lancet* emphasized that the occupation of female blacksmith led to serious uterine problems.[89]

It was also alleged that in hot weather, the men and women worked side by side in a state of semi-nudity, that unmarried mothers “spoke about their offspring without the slightest hesitation or reserve.”[90] The *Daily Telegraph,* no doubt in search of a titillating story, chose to describe the chainmaking women as they appeared before the committee as brazen Amazons:

> One sturdy maiden offered to take off her gown to show Lord Dunraven and his colleagues how they worked when the weather was hot; but his lordship waved his hand and would not pursue the subject, a timidity that excited astonishment, and perhaps scorn, on the part of the Black Country damsel.[91]

The committee found that the craft did not lead to impropriety. Indeed, the local factory inspector categorically told the Lords: “You may certainly see far more indecency in the stalls of a London theatre than you may see in the chain and nail shop in the way of clothing.” But it did recommended prohibiting females from making *large* chains; this was “unfit” work.[92] There were also complaints that the wretchedness of the nail and chainmakers had been overstated in other respects. Some middle class witnesses were adamant that the operatives, far from being average, were the worst paid. The committee had been hoodwinked, it was insinuated, into interviewing “the very refuse of the trades” by male trade unionists intent on removing female competitors.[93]

It is generally assumed that the most effective witness before the SCSS was a woman: the young Beatrice Potter. She brushed aside the emotive assumptions that sweating was caused by subcontract, middlemen or immigrants.[94] But her evidence was not above criticism. She was relatively inexperienced as a social investigator and exaggerated the time she had worked in Jewish East London sweatshops. Much to her embarrassment, this was exposed in the *Pall Mall Gazette* by the socialist tailor Lewis Lyons.[95] More importantly, she prided herself on adopting a “male” model of social analysis. This led her to insist that the taproot of sweating were females working at home. Having absolved the Jews for working too hard, she now denounced English women for working for pal-

try amounts.[96] Eager to take work at any price, these women, she later concluded, were the "Chinamen" of their class, part of a mongrel population grasping after the leavings of the Jews.[97]

This situation, she argued, had been assisted by the 1878 Factory and Workshops Act, which had virtually exempted women outworkers from regulation. She thus considered that sweating could be ended swiftly if this loophole in the law were closed. Ultimately, she hoped that this step would make homeworking unprofitable and would drive industry into larger units of production.[98] Potter justified these beliefs on the grounds that large employers were obliged by law to be "responsible" and to meet minimum civilized standards. In the factory trade unionism prospered. Female outworkers, on the other hand, had no such protection and it was among them that sweating flourished.[99] Potter's analysis overlooked the terrible conditions at Bryant and May's match factory, which had occasioned the famous 1888 strike, and the sweating in London's jam, pickle, and confectionery establishments. She also ignored the oversupply of casual males, such as agricultural laborers, who were flooding into London and taking whatever work they could. She assumed all homeworkers were unskilled, defenceless, and sweated when patently this was not always the case.[100] Nevertheless, it was largely due to Potter that the SCSS was reoriented toward homework and women as the prime evils behind sweating.

In 1891, Hobson, like Potter, insisted that women's wages were low because they were willing to take work at any price. He concluded that females had to learn not to undersell each other.[101] Michael Fredeen describes Hobson as a visionary prophet of social welfare thought.[102] Yet at this stage in his career, Hobson was quite content to observe that, although he heard a great deal about male prejudice, it was "women who are the real enemies of women."[103] In 1894 the Royal Commission on Labour (RCL) also blamed homeworkers for sweating. Indeed, in the Minority Report signed by the trade union leaders, James Mawdsley, Michael Austin, Tom Mann, and William Abraham, but actually written by Sidney Webb with Beatrice's assistance, there was a fervent plea for the regulation of homework and a trenchant defence of factory organization.[104] Fabian Socialist pamphlets, too, bolstered this impression.[105] Beatrice Webb produced her first Fabian tract in which she urged the desirability of transferring work from the home to the factory. She observed:

> The real enemies of the working woman are not the men, who always insist on higher wages, but the "amateurs" of her own sex. So long as there are women, married or unmarried, eager and able to take work home, and do it in the intervals of another profession, domestic service, we shall never disentangle ourselves from the vicious circle in which low wages lead to bad work, and bad work compels low wages.[106]

In 1894 a group of middle-class, socialist feminists formed the Women's Industrial Council (WIC), and sought to make sweated female homeworkers an issue central to public interest.[107] The WIC was particularly impressed by the

American licensing system for homework and this led them, from 1899, to sponsor bills to license all those who worked at home. At the same time the Webbs linked sweating to ideologies of national efficiency. Female homeworkers were now labelled "parasitic." Since the income of the latter was often supplemented through poor relief or charity, the Webbs contended, employers were receiving a subsidy which gave them an advantage over those who paid a fair wage. This caused the "sweated trades" to expand to the detriment of self-supporting industries. Additionally, these wretched women were undermining the industrial vigor of Britain; they were instrumental in breeding further generations of unfit workers with no prospects but to augment the growing ranks of the poor. The sweated were thus "subtly draining away the vital energy of the community."[108] The Webbs now announced that what was required was a legal minimum wage to act as a floor to pay. This, they argued, was a logical progression of the factory acts; by making female labor expensive, it would propel industry from the home into the large, well-managed business.[109]

But Victorians were extremely reluctant to intervene in the wages contract. Orthodox economists argued that those who received low pay either performed work of little economic value or manufactured goods commanding a poor market price; if wages were artificially raised above their natural economic level, unemployment would result.[110] Some, like Sir Charles Dilke, thought that the wages boards of Victoria, Australia, with their industry-based minimum for a few trades, might offer a compromise.[111] However, reformers disagreed on the best way to proceed. Even Rowntree's revelations concerning abject poverty in the midst of plenty, or Robert Sherard's sensational accounts of the sweated in *The White Slaves of England* (London, 1897), although they caused unease, failed to stimulate interest in sweating reform.[112] This combined with a further decline in public concern with social issues as a consequence of the distraction of the Boer war meant that sweating continued.

The Turning-Point of 1906

This indifference was dramatically changed in 1906. That year saw the election to office of a Liberal government and the arrival in Parliament of several key figures, such as Percy Alden and Leo Chiozza Money, who were sympathetic to the plight of the sweated. The year 1906 also saw the establishment of an earnings and hours inquiry to gather authoritative information on wages. Most important of all, the *Daily News* agreed to finance a sweated industries exhibition.[113] The exhibition brought the public, especially the very wealthy, into personal contact with the sweated for the first time. Even the Home Secretary, Herbert Gladstone, attended the "bazaar belonging to Dante's inferno." As the *Daily News* remarked: "Society came, saw, and shuddered." The exhibition "was not a show, or a Royal Academy display of portraits and landscapes; it was rather an unveiling of the hidden things of misery." It was a living tableau of wretchedness.[114] Forty-five anonymous homeworkers, mainly women, volunteered to appear at the exhibition on the understanding that the owner of the *Daily News,* George

Cadbury, would compensate them for their loss of earnings.[115] Cadbury also guaranteed to support any victimized workers. They answered questions put to them and their family budgets were displayed, as were the goods made and the weekly amounts earned. When averaged, their wages were found not to exceed one penny per hour. At intervals, lectures on the problems of sweating were delivered by prominent authorities.[116] The sweated themselves spoke side by side with celebrities of the day. The proceedings of the exhibition, accompanied by disturbing photographs, were widely circulated in the national press.[117]

Prior to the exhibition, it had been assumed that sweating was restricted to the "cheap and nasty" sectors of manufacturing. Visitors were filled with consternation when they discovered that many expensively priced goods had, at some point, been handled by sweated labor. A dress could have been made by well-paid seamstresses in a light and airy workroom, yet the buttons and trimmings were highly likely to have been carded in the hovel of a sweated labourer; wedding cakes manufactured under hygienic conditions were packed in boxes glued together in a disease-ridden tenement. Nor were sweated workers, as commonly assumed, necessarily unskilled. It was demonstrated that racquet and tennis-ball covering and exquisite artificial flowers used by milliners, all demanded considerable skill. The gravity of the situation was also exposed, for the exhibition revealed that sweating was not confined to a small number of "sweated trades." Low rates and bad conditions were to be found at the bottom end of virtually every occupation. Hardly any purchase was free from the taint of sweating. British society could no longer console itself that sweating was purely a phenomenon centred on women's paid work in the home.[118]

The most disquieting aspect of the show for contemporaries was the implication of sweating for national efficiency. The organizers of the exhibition emphasized not simply the social injustice of sweating, nor the ease with which infectious diseases could be transmitted, but also the dangers for racial degeneration. Dwelling on the doubts and fears raised by the poor performance of Britain's recruits in the Boer War, they stressed how sweating added daily to a new generation of unfit and sickly citizens.[119] Even the conservative *Morning Post* was now willing to embrace the Webbs' treatise, if not their politics, on the importance of regulating wages.[120] The overall impact of the exhibition was not dissimilar to that surrounding the street processions of the stunted mill children of the North which had helped the passage of the factory acts almost sixty years earlier.[121]

The results of the exhibition were profound, and the impact was sustained when it was mounted in the provinces. The introduction to the Ilford sweated industries exhibition handbook illustrated the visual impact:

> The facts of sweating are well known. Yet still, the facts and figures that are given to us do not deeply impress us. They are not visual; they are easily forgotten. When we read that a woman shirt worker earns one penny an hour we have to be assisted to understand a thing so monstrous. We have to see before us a veritable woman . . . hear from her own lips that thus she works each day and each week of her life,

learn that she is sober and industrious, perceive for ourselves the pallor of her face and the weariness of her body.[122]

The awareness aroused by the exhibition led to the establishment of the powerful pressure group, the National Anti-Sweating League (NASL), dedicated to securing a legal minimum wage, and to the appointment in 1907 of a Select Committee on Homework (SCH).[123] The SCH reported that sweating prevailed extensively, not only among homeworkers, but factory workers too. As a result, it rejected the licensing of homeworkers and proposed the legal regulation of low wages.[124] This recommendation was welcomed by the NASL leadership who, following the exhibition, argued that sweating oppressed a whole range of female workers unassociated with paid work in the home: waitresses, shop assistants, and clerical workers, in addition to factory-based jute and laundry workers. The evil also pervaded many virtually all-male occupations such as agriculture, fishing, dock work, and transport. In particular, it afflicted those with certain "vulnerabilities" in the labor market. Gender was only one such "handicap." The young, the old, the infirm, ethnic minorities, and males in the unorganized sectors of the economy were all likely to be susceptible to sweating. Low waged, female homeworkers, the NASL remarked, were simply the most visible victims of sweating; they were the "super-sweated."[125] When legislation to curb sweating in the form of the 1909 Trade Boards Act was passed, it went beyond women homeworkers to include factory hands, and encompassed both males and females. In 1913, the Act was extended to cover five more trades. Three of these—hollowware, tin-box-making, and sugar confectionery and food preserving—were almost completely factory-based.

Conclusion

At the mid-century, Hood had associated sweating with a lone, pathetic, but deserving female shirtmaker. Mayhew and Kingsley, on the other hand, although they paid homage to the distressed seamstress and regretted her "fall" into immorality, chose to concentrate on the potential consequences of slopwork for the respectable, male artisan. In the years immediately prior to the SCSS, degraded labor conditions were blamed on dissolute slum-dwellers and "anti-social" foreigners and, in particular, on the "unmanly" Jewish immigrant. The image of the woman homeworker as the archetypal sweated laborer was very much a construct of the late 1880s, and only remained dominant until 1906. During these years, female homeworkers were initially viewed as unskilled and defenceless, later (since sweating impaired their "natural" function for motherhood) as a menace to the communal good. As during the passage of the factory acts, these women were depicted not as enlightened agents but as passive candidates for regulation. At the same time, reformers sought refuge in the erroneous idea that sweating would disappear if homework were highly regulated or banned. After the 1906 exhibition, however, it was generally acknowledged that sweating was not necessarily a gender issue, that it prevailed extensively throughout the low-

er echelons of the British workforce, and that only state action on low pay could eradicate sweating. The problem of sweating had been assimilated into that of poverty.

Despite the powerful impact of the sweated industries exhibition, the Trade Boards Act, restricted as it was to only a four industries and to fixing rates which the trade could bear, was a very modest measure.[126] Service workers were not covered by low pay legislation until the closing years of the Second World War, and Britain did not institute a national minimum wage until 1999. The sweated industries exhibition had awakened public opinion but the Liberal Government felt unable to countenance more than one small experiment. Yet R. H. Tawney, a key organizer of the exhibition, could state in 1927 that the rejection "of the doctrine, held for three generations with an almost religious intensity, that wages should be settled by free competition alone, is one of the most remarkable changes in economic opinion which has taken place in the last hundred years."[127] At the very least, the exhibition had demonstrated the impossibility of inquiring into low pay without, at the same time, investigating the world of the wealthy. When the exhibition opened, *Justice* had remarked: "Sweating is due to unrestrained and furious competition among propertyless men and women for starvation wages, accepted only because they can keep body and soul together in no other way. It is the real basis of capitalism and the source of modern riches."[128] Gavin-Duffy in the *Labour Leader* was even more graphic:

> HRH Princess Henry of Battenburg receives the sum of £6,000 per annum, or rather more than £115 per day, and it savours somewhat of mockery for such a painted butterfly to mouth sympathy with a woman fifty-seven years of age who has to work seventeen hours a day making blouses at 2¼d. each, earning in that day of struggle and sorrow the sum of 1s. 11½d., against the Princess's £115 per day for doing nothing.[129]

NOTES

1. Alfred Gardiner, "Introduction" in Clementina Black, *Sweated Industry and the Minimum Wage* (London, 1907), xv.
2. *Daily News,* June 13, 1906.
3. *Labour Leader,* May 11, 1906.
4. *Justice,* May 5, 1906.
5. *Spectator,* May 5, 1906; *Women's Industrial News,* June 1906, 558.
6. Margaret Stewart and Leslie Hunter, *The Needle is Threaded* (Southampton, 1964), 41.
7. *Lancet,* December 19, 1908, 1826.
8. *The Times,* October 27, 1843.
9. John Reid, *Thomas Hood* (London, 1963), 208, 262; John Clubbe, *Victorian Forerunner. The Later Career of Thomas Hood* (Durham, N. C.), 153–4. See also, T. J. Edelstein, "They Sang 'The Song of the Shirt,'" *Victorian Studies* 23 (1980): 183–210.
10. *Dundee Advertiser,* August 28, 1914.
11. He condemned shirtmaking and government contract work as the worst needle trades. *Morning Chronicle,* (*MC*), Letter VII, November 9, 1848 in *The Unknown Mayhew,* eds., Edward Thompson and Eileen Yeo (London, 1971), 127, 141.
12. Ibid., 167–78, Letter XI, November 23, 1849.
13. Ibid., 384–99, Letter LXVI, August 22, 1850 .

14. Beatrice Potter, "The Lords and the Sweating System," *Nineteenth Century* 27 (1890): 888–9.
15. Karel Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981), 247.
16. Anne Humpherys, *Travels Into the Poor Man's Country: The Work of Henry Mayhew* (Athens, Georgia, 1977), 49.
17. David Englander, "Comparisons and Contrasts: Henry Mayhew and Charles Booth as Social Investigators," in *Retrieved Riches: Social Investigation in Britain, 1840–1914,* eds., David Englander and Rosemary O'Day (Aldershot, 1995), 112–3.
18. *MC,* Letters XVI, December 11, 1849; XVIII, December 18, 1849 in *The Unknown Mayhew,* eds., Thompson and Yeo, 193–4, 214, 220–1. Peter Razzell, "Introduction" in "*The Morning Chronicle" Survey of Labour and the Poor: The Metropolitan Districts,* vol. I, ed. Peter Razell (Sussex, 1980), 23.
19. *Punch,* 17 (1849), 238.
20. Humpherys, *Travels,* 49.
21. Helen Rogers, "'The Good Are Not Always Powerful, Nor the Powerful Always Good:' The Politics of Women's Needlework in Mid-Victorian London," *Victorian Studies* 40 (1997): 603.
22. Edward Thompson, "Mayhew and the *Morning Chronicle*" in *The Unknown Mayhew,* eds., Thompson and Yeo, 24–32; Humpherys, *Travels,* 55–6.
23. Englander, "Comparisons and Contrasts," 117.
24. Humpherys, *Travels,* 164.
25. John Ludlow, "Labour and the Poor," *Fraser's Magazine* 41 (1850): 4–7, 11.
26. Thompson, "Mayhew," 30.
27. Humpherys, *Travels,* 168.
28. Charles Kingsley, "Cheap Clothes and Nasty," *Tracts by Christian Socialists* II (1850), in preface to: Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke* (1850; reprint, London, 1882) lxiii–lxiv.
29. Ibid., lxviii.
30. Ibid., lxxix.
31. Margaret Thorp, *Charles Kingsley* (New York, 1969), 67.
32. Kingsley, *Alton Locke,* 416.
33. Una Pope-Hennessy, *Canon Charles Kingsley* (London, 1948), 92
34. James Schmiechen, *Sweated Industries and Sweated Labor* (London, 1984), 1.
35. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (London, 1967), 100.
36. Thorp, *Charles Kingsley,* 73. See also, Edward Norman, *The Victorian Christian Socialists* (Cambridge, 1987), 44.
37. Schmiechen, *Sweated Industries,* 2.
38. Kingsley, *Alton Locke,* 111, 215, 221, 227–9, 432.
39. Ibid., 110–11, 223–5.
40. In his eagerness to unmask the prosperous retailers, Messrs Nicholl and Moses, for farming out work to sweating middlemen, Mayhew's rhetoric was tinged with anti-Semitism. But he did not single-out the Jewish middleman for disapprobation. Kingsley, on the other hand, insisted Jews were "clannish" and "other," despite the fact that there were probably fewer than 35,000 Jews in England and Wales (20,000 in London). Increasingly, too, they were British born, and beginning to emerge from their separate social, cultural and legal existence. It is likely that Kingsley felt that accommodating the Jews might lead to the collapse of the Anglican faith. As a radical Tory, monarchist, and patriot, he considered the Anglican aristocracy to be the natural leaders of society, that only the Church of England could regenerate and harmonize Britain. Kingsley also despised the "Mammonism" of the industrial bourgeoisie. The fact that London Jews were predominately middle-class and engaged in trade might have added to his prejudice. See: David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840–1914* (Yale, 1994), 4, 21; Norman, *Victorian Christian Socialists,* 52.
41. John Atkinson Hobson, *Problems of Poverty* (London, 1891), 76.
42. Norman, *Victorian Christian Socialists,* 54–5.
43. Beatrice and Sidney Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (London, 1894), 225–6.
44. Wanda Neff, *Victorian Working Women* (London, 1929), 142.
45. Frances Kingsley (ed.), *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life,* vol. II (London, 1879), 13.
46. *Punch,* 18 (1850): 145.
47. *Lancet,* March 3, 1888, 430–1.
48. Ibid., January 29, 1876, 175.

49. Ibid.
50. Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (London, 1883).
51. Between 1888 and 1905, possibly some 100,000 Jewish immigrants settled in Britain (60,000 in London): Vivian Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain Since 1858* (Leicester, 1990), 45.
52. *Lancet,* May 3, 1884, 817.
53. Ibid., 818. The poverty of the new immigrants embarrassed the wealthy, long-settled Anglo-Jewish community whose origins lay in Amsterdam and central rather than Eastern Europe. See Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews,* 291–311.
54. *Report to the Board of Trade on the Sweating System at the East End of London,* 1887, 89 (331), 256.
55. Ibid., 261.
56. Ibid., 259.
57. Ibid., 256, 261, 270. The impact of the Act was counteracted by the large numbers of young workers, (children of earlier migrants), entering the East End labour market. By this time, though, hostility towards Jews had reverted to one of concern with housing rather than sweating. See Lipman, *History of the Jews,* 69.
58. *Report to the Board of Trade on the Sweating System,* 269.
59. Ibid., 256. See also, Select Committeee on the Sweating System (SCSS), *Second Report,* 1888 (448) 21, Q.17285.
60. *Report to the Board of Trade on the Sweating System,* 259. Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews,* 248–50.
61. Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews,* 213.
62. SCSS, *First Report,* 1888 (361) 20, QQ.3261, 3281, 3286, 3292.
63. Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews,* 239–40.
64. Ibid., 231.
65. David Schloss, "The Sweating System-I"; Beatrice Potter, "The Sweating System-II," *Charity Organisation Review* 4 (1888): 11–2, 12–6.
66. Gainer, *Alien Invasion* (London, 1972), 24.
67. *Report to the Board of Trade on the Sweating System,* 263.
68. Beatrice Potter, "East London Labour," *Nineteenth Century* 24 (1888): 167.
69. Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews,* 11.
70. *Hansard* (Lords) 322 (1888), cols. 1599–600.
71. Ibid., col. 1603.
72. Earl of Dunraven, *Past Times and Pastimes,* vol. II, (London, 1922), 106.
73. SCSS, *Final Report,* 1890, (257) 17, 299.
74. Ibid., 259. See also, SCSS, *First Report,* QQ. 2636–8; *Fourth Report,* 1889 (331) 14, Q. 32152.
75. Arnold White, "A Typical Alien Immigrant," *Contemporary Review* 73 (1898): 248; Gainer, *The Alien Invasion,* 82.
76. Jenny Morris, *Women Workers and the Sweated Trades* (Aldershot, 1986), 8.
77. Working-class opinion was essentially that of the male, labor aristocrat. Although poverty and fears of victimization mitigated against the appearance of both unskilled men and women, it was additionally assumed that poor females had no thoughts on the management of the economy, rather, they were passive victims. Even the middlewoman, Dwelly was reproached for not sending her husband to give evidence concerning *her* shirtmaking business. SCSS, *Fourth Report,* Q. 31554.
78. SCSS, *First Report,* Q. 3246; *Second Report,* Q. 15850; *Third Report,* Q. 31548.
79. SCSS, *Second Report,* QQ. 17244, 17255.
80. Ibid., *Final Report,* 294.
81. Ibid., *Second Report,* Q. 15908.
82. Ibid., *Final Report,* 271.
83. Hobson, *Problems of Poverty,* 74.
84. SCSS, *Final Report,* 281.
85. SCSS, *Third Report,* 1889 (165), 13, QQ 18843–4.
86. Ibid., QQ. 20,491, 20497–8.
87. Ibid., QQ. 19264–5.
88. *Report as to the Condition of Nailmakers and Small Chainmakers in South Staffordshire and East Worcestershire,* 1888 (385), 91, 470.

89. Adolphe Smith (*Lancet* commissioner), SCSS, *Third Report,* QQ. 22652, 22670. See also, *Lancet,* March 16, 1889, 541.

90. *Report as to the Condition of Nailmakers and Small Chainmakers,* 12.

91. Cited in *County Express for Worcestershire and Staffordshire,* March 16, 1889.

92. SCSS, *Third Report,* Q. 23010.

93. Ibid. QQ. 2310–8, 23107, 22722, 22836. The men's unions had made what was a wages issue into a gender problem when, in despair following the failure of such remedies as cooperative workshops, they had sought to restrict women's entry into the trade.

94. SCSS, *First Report,* QQ. 3249–50, 3357, 3397–9.

95. Rosemary O'Day, "Women and Social Investigation," in *Retrieved Riches,* eds., Englander and O'Day, 193.

96. SCSS, *First Report,* Q.3415.

97. Beatrice Potter, "East London Labour," 178.

98. SCSS, *First Report,* QQ. 3322, 3361.

99. Ibid., QQ. 3322, 3248, 3310, 3339, 3361.

100. *Select Committee on Homework* (SCH), 1907 (290) 6, QQ. 3042–6.

101. Hobson, *Problems of Poverty,* 161.

102. Michael Freeden, "J.A. Hobson As A New Liberal Theorist," *Journal of History of Ideas* 34 (1973): 421.

103. Hobson, *Problems of Poverty,* p. 161.

104. RCL, *Fifth and Final Report,* Part 1, (1894), 35 (C. 7421), 138.

105. Henry Macrosty, "Sweating: Its Cause and Remedy," *Fabian Tract* 50 (1894): 10.

106. Beatrice Webb, "Women and the Factory Acts," *Fabian Tract* 67 (1896): 14.

107. WIC, *What the Council Is and Does* (London, 1909).

108. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (London, 1897), 749–66.

109. Ibid., 774.

110. Hugh Emy, *Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics, 1892–1914* (Cambridge, 1973), 112–3.

111. Ernest Phelps-Brown, *The Growth of British Industrial Relations* (London, 1959), 206–8.

112. Robert Sherard, *The White Slaves of England* (London, 1897); B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (London, 1901).

113. A. G. Gardiner (editor of the *Daily News*), is credited with conceiving the idea of transposing the exhibitions held in 1904 in Berlin and East London into a fashionable West End spectacle. M. A. Hamilton, *Mary Macarthur* (London, 1925), 65.

114. *Daily News,* May 4–8; May 18, 1906.

115. Margaret MacDonald, as a result of her WIC investigations, provided the majority of the workers: Ramsay MacDonald, *Margaret Ethel MacDonald,* (London, 1912), 157. The exhibition's organisers insisted that "experts" had only selected "average" cases: *London Evening Standard,* June 22, 1908.

116. These included: the playwright and Fabian, George Bernard Shaw; the Labour Party leader, Ramsay MacDonald, and the well-known socialist-feminists: Gertrude Tuckwell, Clementina Black and Margaret MacDonald.

117. *Daily News,* April 2; May 8, 1906.

118. Constance Smith, "The Workings of the Trade Boards Act in Great Britain and Ireland," *Journal of Political Economy* 22 (1914): 608.

119. Gardiner "Introduction," xi–xiv.

120. *Morning Post,* May 4, 1906.

121. Gertrude Tuckwell, "The Story of the Trade Boards Act," *Contemporary Review* 120 (1921): 601.

122. James Mallon, "The Need For Exhibitions of Sweated industries," in *Handbook to the Sweated Industries Exhibition* (Ilford, 1908), 7.

123. The NASL was a non-political body embracing all religious creeds. Its president was George Cadbury, and the vice-presidents included H. G. Wells, G. B. Shaw, the Webbs, the Earl of Dunraven and the Chief Rabbi, M. Asher Feldmann.

124. SCH, *Report,* 1908, 8 (246), xii–xiii.

125. Mary Macarthur, *SCH,* 6 (290), Q. 2693; NASL, *Sweating and Wages Boards* (London, 1908), 4. See also, Black, *Sweated Industry,* 1–143.

126. The industries covered were: domestic chainmaking, ready-made and wholesale be-

spoke tailoring, paper-box making, and the machine-made lace and finishing trade. These were scheduled by the Board of Trade after consultation with unions and employers. Criteria for selection depended on the notoriety of sweating in the occupation, and whether the trade board would be a success: James Mallon, "Trade Boards and Sweating," *Daily News Year Book* (London, 1911), 202.

127. R. H. Tawney, "Historical Aspects of the Subject" in *Towards Industrial Peace,*" ed., League of Nations Union (London, 1927), 18.

128. *Justice,* May 5, 1906.

129. *Labour Leader,* May 11, 1906.