

Researchers and policy makers in health and nutrition will probably find more of direct relevance to their work here than will agricultural economists, except those who are actively engaged in dynamic longitudinal modelling or in development projects. Notwithstanding, I believe this book should be read, and can be read for pleasure, by most applied economists, not least as a reminder that investigative, knowledge-oriented research—which some like to characterise as less ambitious than technique-oriented research motivated by the desire to construct a particular kind of model or illustrate a new methodology—can be rigorous, powerful and enduring. Finally, as a multidisciplinary volume that touches on unsolved issues of major contemporary importance, it should find a place in every university library.

Reference

Bhargava, A. (1997). Editor's introduction: analysis of data on health. *Journal of Econometrics* 77: 1–4.

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Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey

From the Corn Laws to Free Trade. Interests, Ideas, and Institutions in Historical Perspective

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Britain's shift to free trade in the mid-19th century was an important part of the British experience, being the first country to industrialise. A growing part of the population became dependent on imported food, at the same time as Britain's share of the world manufacturing output rose steeply. The workers and also the industrialists developed an interest in cheap imported grain, and this led to a repeal of the protectionist Corn Laws. The focal question for Schonhardt-Bailey is why this happened.

The course of events is well known. In the late 1830s, a movement against the Corn Laws started in England: the Anti-Corn Law Association (later, the Anti-Corn Law League). The League organised a nation-wide and far-reaching propaganda campaign. The Conservatives had won the election in 1841, but in the following years the free trade supporters tried—successfully—to register as many electors as possible, and at the same time to challenge protectionist electors. However, before the next election (to be held in 1848), the Conservatives split, and a large group followed Prime Minister Robert Peel, and voted against the Corn Laws in early 1846. The

'Peelites' were not a majority among the Conservatives, but they changed the balance of power.

The puzzle for the author is why a number of Members of Parliament (MPs) seemed to act against their economic and political interests. To solve the puzzle, she wants to demonstrate the interactive effects of interests, ideas and institutions, and her conclusions are that 'interests were the engine that drove repeal, but ideas helped to shape the final outcome', and that the institutional context also facilitated the transition. She is firmly empirical and uses a number of methods, the most innovative being a statistical analysis of the speeches given by the politicians at the time.

The vote for repeal is conceptualised in a demand–supply model. The demand-side theories emphasise that politicians had a desire to be re-elected, and thus needed to satisfy the electors. Demand thus is roughly similar to interest. The supply-side theories concentrate on policymaking.

An important factor on the 'demand-side' was a growing diversification of interest among some landowners. Although they had invested in industrial activity already since the 16th century, there was a marked increase in the early 19th century, with the railway boom, the sudden export-expansion of coal, steel and iron and also with the formal constitution of the stock market. An investigation of death-duty registers and taxes leads to the general conclusion that MPs representing counties and boroughs with greater diversification also were more likely to vote for free trade. This is valid also if one compares the Peelites and the non-Peelites Conservatives, the former representing more diversified electors. Investigating the voting patterns more closely, she finds that the Peelites left their conservative ideology in order to adjust to their constituents' more free-trade-leaning interests.

The growing importance of the export sector also shaped a financial base for support to the League, which came mainly from industrial areas, such as the Manchester region, but also from a more diversified and developed economy in the country as a whole. Financing and good organisation enabled the League to establish an efficient propaganda machine, and the author identifies the different strategies aimed at stimulating national interest in repeal, based on arguments concerning wages, morality, anti-aristocracy sentiment, and so on.

So far, the results are interesting but perhaps not unexpected. Growing export-oriented interests, the 'demand-side', influenced the Parliament to eventually vote for repeal.

The 'supply-side' in her analysis mainly consists of the Parliament as such, and the author uses computer-assisted content analysis in order to count the occurrence of words and how they are connected in different speeches given by the MPs and peers. The analysis covers 2 million words from the debates on trade policy in 1814–15, 1826–28, 1842–44 and 1846, including the House of Lords in 1846. The words/arguments are sorted in groups, 'classes', about for instance, 'wages and prices', or 'international trade'. The author then examines these clusters in a qualitative discussion.

This combination of quantitative and qualitative methods shows that in 1814–15, self-sufficiency played an important role in the parliamentary

discussions; in 1826–28, the MPs started to take in economic theory; in 1842–44, the League stood in the focus of the debates. A new dimension was introduced in the 1846 debate by the Peelites, who combined the acceptance of repeal with a continued political monopoly of the landowning aristocracy. Robert Peel, and his followers, saw repeal as a means of stopping more sweeping reform of Parliament. Peel warned by referring to the French revolution and later talked about the European revolutions of 1848 as confirming his warnings. The discussion among the peers in the House of Lords is pivotal, as the landed nobility had an interest to vote against the repeal for economic reasons, but they feared democracy more than repeal, and in the end, the majority of the peers supported the government under Peel.

As a last check, the author studies provincial newspapers from 1841 and 1846 to see if the Peelites were especially influenced by a more intensive propaganda by the League in their county or borough. This was not the case, but her conclusion that change of opinion outside the Parliament did not influence the Peelites can only be understood in a very restricted way, as the motivating force behind the changed voting pattern of the Peelites was precisely the pressure for democracy outside the Parliament. Anyhow, her analysis of newspapers casts some light on the most burning issues, and the dominance of the League versus the Anti-League in the newspapers is an interesting proof of how newspapers function.

Of specific interest is the MPs' treatment of the Irish Famine in 1845–46, one of the major catastrophes in 19th century Europe. In 1846, British MPs and peers disbelieved the severity of the famine and even questioned the government's meek description of the disaster.

Schonhardt-Bailey has tried to grasp the importance of ideas and ideologies in an empirical manner, and the counting and analysing of the parliamentary debates is impressive. Certainly, she would agree that the whole process can be seen in a larger historical context, but the puzzle of the book focuses on the British Parliament.

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Economics of Pesticide Reduction and Biological Control in Field Vegetables—A Cross Country Comparison

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