

The GrEco Project

Grenville's Economics

Lord William Wyndham Grenville

Correspondence with David Ricardo

[1810-1822]

Transcription: Ghislain Deleplace ; Christophe Depoortère ;

Arnold Heertje ; Piero Sraffa

Ricardo to Lord Grenville¹

[f. 1r]

My Lord

I venture, with much diffidence, to offer for your Lordship's consideration the pamphlet which is inclosed with this. Thinking that your Lordship will have the goodness to excuse the liberty which I am talking

I have the honor to be

My Lord

Your Lordship's obedient & very humble
Servant

David Ricardo

New Grove

Mile end

10th. Feb^{ry}. 1810

The Right Honb^{le} Lord Grenville

Ricardo to Lord Grenville²

[f. 5r]

London 10 Jan^y 1820

My Lord,

I beg to return your Lordship my thanks for the copy of your speech on Lord Landsdowne's motion, which your Lordship has done me the honour to send me.

I hope your Lordship will not think I take too great a liberty, in expressing my satisfaction at finding that my opinions on the causes of the present distresses, concur with those which your lordship has so ably stated, in the pamphlet before me. The distress which proceeds from the misapplication of capital, and the miscalculation of demand, by our manufacturers, may, it is to be hoped, be slowly removed, but that which arises from the disproportion between capital & population, will necessarily be of a more [f. 5v] permanent description. The only proposition on this part of the subject, from which I venture to dissent, is that in which your Lordship observes, that, "In peace, and under the

¹ MS in British Library Add59402 f. 20.

² MS in British Library Add59405 ff. 5-6. Published in A. Heertje. "Three Unpublished Letters by David Ricardo", *History of Political Economy*, Vol. 23:3, 1991, pp. 523-4.

happy influence of domestic tranquillity, the capital of every civilized³ community, especially if permitted to find for itself its most profitable employment tends naturally to increase in a more rapid proportion than the population.” If this be true, it can only be so in consequence of the foresight & prudence of the people, for it cannot be doubted, that, in old countries, the power of increase in the population is much greater than that of the capital, however prudently managed. It becomes then a question of fact, whether the checks which the people voluntarily establish on the increase of their number, are sufficiently strong to give capital a preponderance in the race. I confess that my opinion is that in the actual state of mankind those checks are not sufficiently strong.

I hope your Lordship will forgive me for [f. 6r] making these few observations.

I have the honor to be with the greatest esteem & respect
Your Lordship's obed.' & hum.' serv

David Ricardo

Lord Grenville to Ricardo⁴

Dropmore Jan^y 11 1820

My Dear Sir

I am unaffectedly gratified by knowing that the general view which I take of the causes of the present distress is sanctioned by your high authority.

The proposition to which you refer is certainly stated more broadly than the argument required. But I still cannot help thinking that it is true, limited as it is to the *natural tendency* of relative increase, and excluding therefore the operation of *extraneous* causes.

The greater productive *power* of population, in the case you mention, I should not dispute. But you must consider that this power has its *natural* check in the difficulties of increased subsistence.

As far as I can judge, my notion seems confirmed by all modern history. Of antient history, with respect to these points, we know too little to reason with much confidence, and besides, all our inferences are disturbed by the existence and extent of domestic slavery among them. Yet I think the state of the European provinces of the Roman Empire, before and after the irruption of the barbarous nations, might afford no

³ “country” is deleted.

⁴ *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, vol. VIII, pp. 150-1.

unapt illustration of both parts of my proposition—Of the effect of peace on the one hand, and of war on the other.

Excuse my defending myself against my master in this science, and believe me Ever My Dear Sir

Most Truly And Faithfully Yrs
Grenville

Lord Grenville to Ricardo⁵

[f. 1r]

Ham.Place Aug. 23.1820

Dear Sir

I do not at all wonder at the impatience of a young man for the commencement of his academical life, nor am I surprised that his wishes should have produced a change in your arrangements. And I have only more to assure you that it was a sincere gratification to me to be able in any manner to promote your desire on that subject.

I should have much to say on many parts of Mr Malthus's book in which I differ widely from him, and on some in which I am nearer to an agreement with him, but alas! after having flattered myself, that near forty years of public carrier had finally earned for me a complete retreat from it, for the few years that remain to live, I find myself engaged by absolute compulsion in the most fatiguing and most irksome business in which I have ever yet borne any share.

Ever [?]
Grenville

D. Ricardo Esq.

Ricardo to Lord Grenville⁶

[f. 64r]

Upper Brook Street
1 May 1822

My dear Lord,

⁵ MS in Wren Library, Trinity Colledge, Cambridge, Saffa collection. Collected Correspondence. Addenda. B63/1.

⁶ MS in British Library Add59405 ff. 64-5. Published in A. Heertje. "Three Unpublished Letters by David Ricardo", *History of Political Economy*, Vol. 23:3, 1991, p. 525.

I requested Mr. Murray to send your Lordship one of the first printed copies of my pamphlet, and I was sorry to hear that by some mistake in sending it to your house in London, your Lordship did not receive it till after you had received a copy through another channel.

The approbation which your Lordship expresses of the practical measure which I have ventured to recommend is most gratifying to me, and it could not be announced in a manner more flattering to me than by informing me that your speculations had led you to the same conclusion.

I very much regret that the public has lost the [f. 64v] benefit of hearing your Lordship's opinions from the place, whence they always came with a powerful effect. On the present occasion your declaration in favour of a more free trade in corn would have been of great advantage.

Perhaps I am wrong in my idea of a drawback or bounty on the exportation of corn. It would very seldom come into operation, because being more wealthy, and in proportion to the extent of our country, more populous than other countries, we should almost always import corn, & seldom export it. On those occasions however when, from a succession of good crops, we did export, the bounty would be a great relief to the farmer and would I think be defensible on general principles if it did not exceed the duty actually paid by the grower of corn: the farmer should on no account have any part of what may be fairly ⁷ called the cost of production [f. 65r] returned to him.

With the greatest respect I have the honor to be

Your Lordship's obedient Serv^t

David Ricardo

Lord Grenville

⁷ “con” is deleted.