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Phyllis Deane

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THE FIRST INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

PHYLLIS DEANE

PROFESSOR OF ECONOMIC HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
AND FELLOW OF NEWNHAM COLLEGE

SECOND EDITION



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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

In recent years economists and policy makers have become increasingly concerned with questions of economic growth, and in particular with the problem of identifying the route by which today's poor countries might reach the high standards of living presently enjoyed by the industrial societies. Historians too have been impelled by the urgent contemporary problem to analyse their material in a new way, to apply the concepts of the economic-growth theorists and to seek the explanations underlying the relatively few cases of successful industrialization.

This book, which originated in a course of lectures given for undergraduates reading for Part I of the Cambridge Economics Tripos, is a product of the current interest in economic development. It is a study of the development of the British economy over the period 1750–1850 when the first industrial revolution took place and modern economic growth effectively began. The fact that the crucial break-through was achieved spontaneously and without the advantages of either planning or foresight seems to give it a special relevance to the problems of countries which are currently finding it difficult to begin or to sustain a process of industrialization. This is an attempt to apply the concepts and techniques of development economics to a vital section of the historical record.

Except in so far as it embodies some of the results of an inquiry into British economic growth which Dr W. A. Cole and I carried out at the Department of Applied Economics some years ago, it is not the product of original research. It draws heavily on the work of the now numerous economic and social historians who have been looking at the past through development spectacles, as well as on the classic histories of the industrial revolution; so much so indeed that this book is little more than a synthesis of their ideas and researches and the debt which it

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owes to them is inadequately reflected in the many direct quotations and footnote references.

There are four individuals to whom I should like to take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude more specifically, however. They are Professor Simon Kuznets, who first aroused my interest in the historical analysis of economic development; Professor T. S. Ashton, whose insight into this period of British history has coloured my own thinking to an immeasurable extent; Professor David Joslin, who read and commented on a very early draft; and Miss Edith Whetham, who put me right on some matters of agricultural history. It goes without saying that they are all innocent of any errors of fact, interpretation or analysis that I have committed here.

Cambridge, June 1965

P. M. D.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

My aim in revising this book has been to take account of the major new knowledge and ideas on the industrial revolution emerging from the research results which have been published in the (roughly) fifteen years since the first edition went to press. The new knowledge has made it possible to write with more confidence or precision on a number of issues where paucity of evidence had led me to tentative, vague or misconceived conclusions. Lively recent debates in the journals and the criticisms I have got from reviews, colleagues and students (not only my own, but also from students who have been good enough to write to me on points of detail) have stimulated me to alter, or to put a different slant on, judgments which now seem to me to have been ill formulated. Apart from such rewritten passages, the major changes involved in the revision have taken the form of expanding the text in areas where we now know more, or where other questions have become of interest, and of incorporating references to recent publications. Those who are familiar with the first edition will find that the section which has been most extensively altered is the updated guide to future reading. In an effort to keep this deliberately introductory bibliography to a reasonable length, I have made way for new references by omitting some of the seminal items recorded in the first edition, knowing that they are fully referred to in the more recent sources, and I have generally omitted references to articles reprinted in books of readings on controversial topics already included.

Cambridge, July 1978

P. M. D.