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978-0-521-43744-8 - The Industrial Revolution and British Society

Edited by Patrick K. O'Brien and Roland Quinault

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The Industrial Revolution and British society is a wideranging survey of the principal economic and social aspects of the Industrial Revolution in Britain in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The distinguished international contributors focus on topics currently at the centre of scholarly interest, and draw together the latest research in an accessible and stimulating manner. The intention throughout is to introduce a broad student readership to important aspects and consequences of the first Industrial Revolution. The contributors are acknowledged specialists in their respective fields of economic, social and political history, and employ a variety of different disciplinary skills. Particular attention is paid to the concept and historiography of the Industrial Revolution. Each chapter draws attention to the other literature on the subject, pointing the way to further reading. *The Industrial Revolution and British society* offers the most up-to-date overview of recent scholarship on this subject. It will be widely used as a textbook on advanced courses on British economic and social history.

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Preface

Thirty years ago, Max Hartwell gave new life to the historical study of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. This was rather surprising, because he had grown up a world away from industrial Britain. However his homeland, the New South Wales tableland, had been opened up, a century earlier, in order to supply wool, food and minerals to industrializing Britain. Max Hartwell's interest in the Industrial Revolution stemmed from his initial research on the early economic development of Australia. This led him to study the woollen industry in the West Riding of Yorkshire when he was a graduate student at Oxford. Since then, he has concentrated his historical attention on the Industrial Revolution in Britain, although he has recently published a biographical study of Australian businessmen.

Max Hartwell studied economics in his youth and has a greater understanding of economic theory than most historians. His knowledge of economics stood him in good stead in the 1960s, when he wrote his seminal studies of the Industrial Revolution and was engaged in the Standard of Living debate with Eric Hobsbawm. His command of economics also facilitated his editorship of the *Economic History Review* and his subsequent teaching at the Universities of Virginia and Chicago. But Max Hartwell is not 'a new economic historian' who believes that statistics and cliometrics are a substitute for more traditional historical skills.

Max Hartwell is a social, as well as an economic, historian. As Reader in Recent Economic and Social History at Oxford University, from 1955 to 1974, he gave strong support to the emerging discipline of social history. He has always tried to integrate social, as well as economic, analysis in his study of the Industrial Revolution. He criticised economists for failing to incorporate social forces in their theories of development and stressed the importance of changing social values in promoting economic growth and entrepreneurship. He also explored the legal foundations of Britain's developing market economy.

Max Hartwell is not just a lucid writer and a perceptive scholar, but

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also a great teacher. He has stimulated and scared, complimented and criticized innumerable students in both hemispheres and in the New and the Old Worlds. Thus it is fitting that ten of Max's former students – from Britain, America and the Antipodes – have collaborated in writing a book which mirrors his multifaceted interest in the Industrial Revolution. They share his belief that a proper assessment of the Industrial Revolution must encompass its diverse economic, social and political aspects. They have sometimes come to conclusions which may not find favour with their mentor, but he is unlikely to be offended; for Max Hartwell passionately believes that argument and debate are essential attributes of a free, vital and plural society.

The year 1992 is an appropriate one in which to publish a tribute to a scholar who strongly believes in free trade and the market economy. It is also over a decade since most of the modern textbooks on the Industrial Revolution were published. In that time, many monographs and articles have appeared with new ideas and information about Britain's economic and social development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The contributors to this book have tried to link their specialist knowledge with the recent findings of other scholars. They have produced, not a traditional *Festschrift*, but a 'Textschrift': wideranging surveys which are primarily intended for a student readership. This is an appropriate way of honouring a man who, by both the force of his personality and intellectual conviction, has always been a popularizer – in the best sense of the term.

The speed, scope and even the concept of the Industrial Revolution have recently been questioned by historians. But the editors of this volume make no apology for retaining a term which is still widely used by both academics and the general public. 'The Industrial Revolution' will certainly remain a term in current usage if Max Hartwell has any say in the matter. We dedicate this volume to him in recognition of how much he has done to stimulate interest in and knowledge of the Industrial Revolution.