

Economist: Andrew Ure (1778-1857)

Let me introduce myself. My name is Andrew Ure. My name rhyme's with "pure." Leave the "p" off, say the rest, and you've got it! I grew up in Glasgow, Scotland where I was raised by my mom and dad. They earned their living by making cheese. You might call them cheese mongers! I was fortunate to receive the best education available and so, when I reach adulthood, I decided to become a teacher. I taught chemistry and natural philosophy at Anderson College in Glasgow. My father wanted me to make cheese as he had so he was not happy when I chose a different path. His anger at my decision led him to write me out of his will. Not to be outdone, I stole the will and burned it! In my position as professor, I began giving evening lectures on chemistry and mechanics to artisans from the city. I have always believed that a taste for science elevates the character of men from the drudgery of the lower social classes. Any man whose Saturday night is spent in rioting or drunkenness will make a bad Christian on Sunday, an indifferent workman on Monday, and an unhappy husband and father through the week. Science can bring men out of this decay. I have seen countless artisans make something of themselves. My lectures were well received among these lower classes with sometimes as many as 500 people filling the classroom. They seemed to enjoy the demonstrations I made on electricity, magnetism, heat, light, mechanics hydraulics, pneumatics and astronomy. As my writings and outreach became more and more popular, the government and several private companies hired me periodically to do experiments on their behalf.

- 1. How might his youth impact his view of the artisans?**
- 2. As a professor, what sort of man was Andrew Ure? What motivated him to work with the artisans?**

It was in my role as a government employee that I became acquainted with the new factories and their inner workings. In 1835 I published my first book on the subject entitled *The Philosophy of Manufacturers*. My intention in writing this book was to provide factory owners and managers with directions on how to improve their production. When I visited the factories, I made special note of how well the workers lived. In spite of what others say, I never once saw children being abused. In fact, they seemed cheerful and alert, taking pleasure in using their muscles. It is almost as if these children were playing sport. By the day's end, the children workers continued in their revelry and were not exhausted as so many contend. At Winslow in Cheshire, I saw a two-story, magnificent house built by the factory owner specifically for the female workers. Each woman was well fed, clothed, and educated. They ate milk-porridge for breakfast, potatoes and bacon for dinner, and meat on Sundays. Abundant food and excellent living conditions were common sights. Interestingly, I was shocked to see workers perform their duties with minimal perspiration (you might know that as sweat!).

- 3. How does Andrew Ure characterize the life of workers during the Industrial Revolution? Why do you think Andrew might be interested in portraying the workers' lives in this manner?**

Great Britain, an island nation of such prosperity, is too often taken for granted by people living right here. They say that industrialization has caused evil. How wrong they are! Any evils are the result of man! We should not forget that the industrial growth occurring right here is

allowing us to be independent of foreign products and foreign money. We should not forget the significance of becoming economically self-sufficient.

The factory and its machines have brought great benefits to society and have the potential to eliminate many of mankind's problems. Some say that industrial production has resulted in workers being forced to work at increased rates. The reality is exactly the opposite; the machines have limited the work required of factory workers, thereby allowing them to save their energies for other endeavors. Work little and receive ample wages; what could be better? I suggest to you that if you investigate, you'll find that non-factory workers find their work physically tiresome and that they would give anything for a factory position. Factory work is charitable. It saves the workmen from having to change body positions just to do their jobs. Scientifically managed factories are humane! People exert less energy, get paid a good wage, and gain the means to buy products that were once only available to the rich.

The whole point of the factory system is to replace hand skill with machine production so that no one person has to over exert themselves. When artisans did all the work before, labor was incredibly expensive and prevented our economy from growing as it should. In many ways, the artisans became arrogant. They believed that they were the only ones who had the right to produce quality goods. Their opposition to machine production is understandable – it represents a loss of power to them and no one likes to lose control. They should not fear, however. The advent of machinery is contributing mightily to the growth of our economy and to the creation of multitudes of jobs. Miners, engineers, shipbuilders, and sailors are desperately needed. If the artisans will only lay their pride aside, they, and anyone else seeking employment, can find meaningful work that will bring an excellent wage.

4. Does Andrew believe the Industrial Revolution has improved or diminished British society? List the arguments he uses to support his view.

We must maintain the open economic environment of Great Britain. Everyone must have an opportunity to improve their life but we mustn't force people to do so through government regulation.

Each time the government tries to regulate industry, they wreak havoc. They simply do not understand the inner workings of factories and therefore provide "solutions" to problems that are absurd at best. Social evils are the result of man's perversion and laws can not change that. It is up to the individual to seize the opportunities presently available. If each of us would do so, our nation would grow in wealth and prestige. National progress is the sum of individual industry, energy, and uprightness. National decay results from idleness, selfishness, and vice. Society should help individuals help themselves.

- 5. Throughout, Andrew seems concerned with foreign countries. How does he believe the Industrial Revolution benefits Great Britain internationally?**
- 6. Who or what does Andrew blame for poverty? What, if anything, does Andrew argue should be done to improve British society?**