CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL CONDITIONS IN ENGLAND (1750 - 1844):

A BACKGROUND
I.1  **Introduction**

I.1.1  The 'Ricardian Socialists' lived in the turbulent period of Industrial Revolution in Britain when the society was undergoing a process of basic socio-economic transformation. Any understanding of the contributions of the 'Ricardian Socialists' first requires a study of the socio-economic conditions of England during this period. In this chapter we, very briefly, sketch economic and social conditions, developing in the time of the 'Ricardian Socialists', primarily to appreciate the historical context and character of their writings. Our focus is not on economic history. Hence, we sketch, only broadly, some features which appear immediately relevant to our main theme.

I.2  **The Emerging Class Relations**

I.2.1  By 1750s, England mostly attained the main preconditions for capitalist transformation and thus, possessed the seeds of a fundamental change in her socio-economic structure. Industrialization, primarily, needs fulfillment of two fundamental preconditions: the existence of a sufficient size of accumulated capital (for investment)
on the one hand and the formation of an army of free wage labourers on the other hand. Historically, the process of fulfilling this two-fold conditions may be dated back to the time the Enclosure Movement began. Because of a number of Enclosure Acts passed during the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries (upto 1840), the landlords of England not only concentrated the 'common lands' in their own hands, but also seized the lands of the peasants and small farmers. The extent of their 'seizure' was such that by 1750, in large parts of England the peasantry as a class was entirely annihilated. As a result of this 'systematic robbery', (Marx, 1954, p. 678), land gradually concentrated in the hands of the big landlords. By 1765, across more than half of the country, only three families in ten occupied land and the rest were labourers, knitters and small tradesmen. (See, Moore, 1969, p. 26). This helped

1. For example, in the reign of George III alone 3554 Acts of Enclosure were passed due to which 5½ million acres of land were appropriated. (Cf. Eaton, 1949, p. 39). It should be, however, noted that the process of the 'early enclosure movement' was there in England even before the passing of Acts in British Parliament. According to G.M. Trevelyan, Mr Gonner has shown that enclosure was proceeding on a large scale without Act of Parliament throughout the Seventeenth and early Eighteenth centuries. (Trevelyan, 1965, p. 466).

2. Referring to this issue, Hobshawn points out that when early nineteenth century writers talked of the 'peasantry', they tended to mean the 'farm labourers'. (Hobshawn, 1969, p. 38, fn.).
the growth of capitalism in two ways. Firstly, it was instrumental in the commercialization of agriculture\(^3\) by which 'money economy' penetrated feudal agriculture and resulted in capital and land accumulating with the landed families and merchants. Secondly, in the course of the centuries it "set free" the agricultural population as proletarians for manufacturing industry\(^4\). (Marx, 1954, p. 678). Thus, by the middle of the eighteenth century the emergence of two distinct classes in the towns - the industrial capitalists and the industrial labourers was clearly in evidence. Hence new class relations emerged in England, and from this period can be traced the beginning of the eclipse of feudalism as a mode of production and the rise to dominance of capitalist relations.

I.2.2 Although from around 1750, the economy of Britain no longer seemed dominated by agriculture,\(^4\) it did not, however, mean that the 'political power' of the landlords had been eliminated. Rather, England being 'an oligarchy of landed aristocrats, headed by a tight self-perpetuating

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3 That is, production for market which also involves a change in crop composition.

4 It is estimated that by 1800 only a third of the population was working in land, while providing almost the same fraction of national income. (See, Hobshaw, 1969, p. 97).
peerage of some two hundred persons. (Holmwood, 1969, p. 31), the landlords were politically very strong and could retain their strength for a long period and till well after the Reform Bill of 1832. In addition, the landed English aristocrats unlike those in Germany and some other countries were not ardent conservatives. They were on balance, more opportunist than conservative. Barring a small minority, landlords in general could see the yet limited prosperity in land in contrast especially to growing industry. In consequence, they did not fanatically hold on to the narrow interest of the landed gentry, but sought alliance with capitalists. Thus, in Parliament were represented the two parties - The Tories and the Whigs. The former was a party of conservative landlords and the latter of the capitalists - both of town and country, as well as liberal landlords who gradually entered and acquired interest in industry. The Whig landed aristocrats, therefore, tried to keep England safe for property, their only fear being outbreaks of the kind that France witnessed in

5 In 1832, the English landed aristocracy agreed to a suffrage reform act under which the capitalists were admitted to the Parliament.
1831.6 Thus "though the capitalist elements in town 'rose', the landed classes did not 'fall' for a very long time". (Moore, 1969, p. 32).

I.3 Capital - Labour Relations

I.3.1 Roughly, since the middle of the 16th to the last quarter of the 18th century, the landless peasants and independent artificers provided the labour force for the two earlier phases of the development of capitalism in England - termed by Marx as 'capitalistic cooperation', (or the putting out system), and 'manufacture'. (See, Marx, 1954, pp. 305-347). The invention and development of machinery and its introduction to industry through a whole series of innovations from 1733 onwards,7 transformed big merchant manufacturers and some British overseas traders who had already acquired the capital in trade

6. In November 1831, thousands of workers of Lyons (the second biggest industrial city in France) revolted against their capitalist employers. It is recognized as the first armed confrontation between the workers and the capitalists in history. (For details see, Ponomarev, et. al., 1980, pp. 293 - 296).

7. For example, the flying shuttle in 1733, the spinning jenny in 1765, the spinning frame worked by water power in 1769, the spinning mule combining the jenny and the water frame in 1779, the steam engine in 1782, the power loom in 1785, and finally the automatic mule in 1825.
(Cf. Dobb, 1963, p. 88), and who had already enlarged it by monopolizing the internal market, into industrial capitalists. The invention of machinery and the existence of both accumulated capital of sufficient size, and free wage labourers brought England by 1750 to the dawn of her Industrial Revolution - the first in the world.

I.3.2 The period of the Industrial Revolution characterized as it was by inventions coming in quick succession, rendered the conflict between 'capital' and 'labour' sharper than ever. By subjecting the labourer to the pace of machinery, 'modern industry' enabled the capitalists to intensify the exploitation of the labourer. In the first place, the new inventions increased the productivity of labour. But for capitalists it meant lowering the value of labour - power and increasing the size of 'relative surplus-value'. Further it called for both 'unskilled labour' and 'slight muscular strength' and thus brought the women and children to the labour-market, consequently further reducing the already low wages. Also, it increased the 'intensity of labour' - the basis for production of 'absolute surplus value'. (See, Marx, 1954, pp. 351-393).

I.3.3 The condition of the working class during these years of the Industrial Revolution is extensively documen-
ted by several contemporaries\textsuperscript{8} testifying to the brutal intensity of early capitalist exploitation. The real wages were at the minimum subsistence level, if not below it as during 1790-1840 when "about 40 per cent of the industrial working class lived at or below the poverty line, i.e. at or below subsistence level on the prevailing definition of the concept." (Ho\textsubscript{b-sbwm}, 1972, p. 70). It was so, not only due to the shift of the surplus agricultural labour from land to the factory and the employment of women and children in the industries, but also the migration of thousands of Irish workers to the industrial districts of England. As a result, the wages were pushed to the subsistence level by two factors: on the one hand by increasing labour supply in the competitive labour market and on the other hand by further reducing the quality of life and hence the customary notion of 'subsistence' of the English workers. The influx of Irish labourers firstly reduced wages directly. Secondly, the Irish worker was content "with half pay and the hope of better times rather than be driven into the street to perish" and preferred "a pig-pen to no roof", wore "rags in preference to going naked" and confined himself "to a potato diet in

\textsuperscript{8} For a comprehensive bibliography of works and reports, see, Thompson, 1963, pp. 833 - 836
preference to starvation°. (See, Engels, 1973, p. 105). The Irish workers were thus willing to accept lower standards of living and wages quickly tended to reflect this lower subsistence level. The English workers were in consequence introduced to a new minimum wage level; a level at which many of them, not affording footwear would go barefoot to factories - a thing which was unknown previously in England. (See, Engels, 1973, p. 97). Not being able to buy meat for months, potatoes became the main food of the working class. Every industrial town had one or more slums where the workers had to live or were herded together like cattle. Even, J.C. Symons, a Government Commissioner for the investigation of the condition of the hand-weavers, confessed that the dwellings of the workers "are usually so damp, filthy, and ruinous, that no one could wish to keep his horse in one of them". (Cited in Engels, 1973, p. 71). It is recorded by Engels (1973, p. 64), that in most extensive working people's district where the greatest masses of London working people live, it was not unusual to find a family of a man, his wife, their four or five children and sometimes both grand parents living all together in a single room of about ten to twelve square feet. Yet, these families were lucky and fortunate in comparison with the utterly homeless. For it was a period that in London, "fifty-thousand human beings (used to) get up every
morning, not knowing where they (would) lay their heads at night."
(Engels, 1973, p. 66). Under such subhuman conditions, such of the workers as found jobs were required to work 15 hours daily - their working hours invariably stretching between five in the morning and eight in the evening.

I.3.4 Even in normal times, the labour market was over crowded and unemployment and destitution very common.9 The periodic slumps and depressions only worsened the situation.10 One aspect of the crowded labour market was that over half of the factory workers (52 per cent) were women. Only about half the total workforce were above eighteen years in age - the rest being merely children.11

For all these workers young and old, men and women, life

9. "Estimating the working classes as being between four and five million in number, I think we may safely assert ... that ... there is barely sufficient work for the regular employment of half our labourers, so that only 1,500,000 are fully and constantly employed, while, 1,500,000 more are employed only half their time, and the remaining 1,500,000 wholly unemployed, obtaining a day's work 'occasionally' by the displacement of some of the others". (Henry Mayhew, cited in Hosbawm, 1972, p. 82).

10. For example, in the course of slump of 1926, "in the hard hit areas of Lancashire between 30 and 75 per cent of the total population might have been destitute ..., in the woollen areas of Yorkshire, between 25 and 100 per cent; in the textile areas of Scotland, between 25 and 75 per cent", or "in Salford, for instance, half

Footnote No.10 continued...
Kindly see p. 10 for footnote No.11
meant a struggle with death. So much so, the general mortality rate rose alarmingly during 1811-1841 and did not improve significantly until the 1870 or 1880s. (See, Hobsbawm, 1972, p. 72).

I.3.5 The children of the poor either in factories as very cheap workers or in the streets as baggers could hardly have any education. There was no compulsory education in England, and when in the session of the House of Commons in 1843 the government was disposed to make a nominal compulsion effective, the manufacturing bourgeoisie opposed the measure with all its might; the working class, on the contrary, came out in outspoken defense of their right to education. Forced to yield ground in this regard, the bourgeoisie, having little to hope and much to fear from the education of the working class, achieved their aims through other means. Due to their efforts, the main text book turned out to be the 'Bible'. In consequence, as the report of Commissioner Grainger records, the average seventeen year old "did not know that twice two are four,

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the population was wholly or partly out of work, in Bolton about one third, in Burmley at least 40 percent" (Hobsbawm, 1972, p. 74)

11 Data given by Lord Ashly (which was not refuted by the manufacturers) shows that in 1839, out of 419,560 factory operatives, 192,889 or nearly one half were under the age of eighteen, and 24,2296 were women of whom 11,2192 were less than eighteen years old. (See, Engels, 1973, p. 160)
nor how many farthings in two pence even when the money was placed in his hand". (Cited in Engels, 1973, p. 135).

I.3.6 By its most inhuman and brutal exploitation of the working class, the bourgeoisie almost could demoralize the workers. The number of the prostitutes reached about 40,000 in London city alone while the crime rate in the industrial towns gave the British nation one of the worst criminal records in the world (See, Engels, 1973, pp. 149-150). This was largely owing to the fact that the condition of workers had become worse than that of slaves and serfs. For, while the slaves were after all assured of a bare livelihood by the self-interest of his master, and the serfs had at least a scrap of land in which to live, the workers, had nothing to depend upon except their 'labour power' - a commodity whose possession made them what they were, i.e. the proletariat - and the demand for which was inadequate at the best of times. Reduced to desperation, the plight of the workers was not surprisingly pushed them into crime and prostitution.

I.4 Labour Organization and Factory Reforms

I.4.1 The revolt of the working class demanding a right to human existence during the industrialization period,
first took form of a revolt against the introduction of machinery itself - a Luddite or 'machine breaker' movement. In fact, this movement began before the invention of machines on a significant scale and it can be traced back to the two earlier stages of the development of capitalism marked by the 'domestic' and 'manufacturing' system. (See Hobsbawm, 1972, p. 7). In such riots the workers, demanding higher wages (termed by Hobsbawm a 'collective bargaining by riot') not only destroyed all the available means of production in the workshops, but also raw materials, finished goods and even the private property of employers. With the introduction of 'machines' to industry, the 'machine breaker' movement shifted mainly to the textile industry branches and at its height (1811-1817) was limited territorially mainly to three districts: West Riding (the croppers or shearmen), South Lancashire (the hand-loom weavers), Nottinghamshire, as also some parts of Leicestershire and Derbyshire (the framework knitters). (See, Ponomareve, et. al., 1980, p.193). Where they occurred, however, these riots were extremely violent. It was for this reason that 12000 troops - an army larger than the one Wellington took into the Peninsula in 1808 - was deployed to suppress the movement. (See, Hobsbawm, 1972, p. 3). Besides, in February 1812, a death penalty bill for breaking of machines was passed. (See,
Ponomarev, et. al., 1980, p. 195). The Luddite movement was generally a weak and isolated movement confined to a few areas. Even while this factor contributed to its decline, the repeal of the Combination Law (1824) made the decline virtually complete by 1830. Following the repeal, the workers, hitherto a 'crowd' became an 'army'.

I.4.2 The repeal of the 'Combination Law' in 1824 gave birth to a very strong movement against the industrial capitalists. However, with the working class not being yet 'politically' conscious of its own strength and interests, its economic struggle could not be located in the context of political activity independent of the capitalists and landlords. As such, the whole movement began to be headed either by the radical bourgeoisie or the Tory landlords. The leaders of either of these classes used the working class in their mutual battles seeking to preserve their respective class interests. In fact, one of the reasons that the oligarchic - Tory Parliament in the House of Commons repealed all the laws which forbade the organization of the working class till that time, was to enable the formation of a strong force against the bourgeoisie. Even though some liberal intellectuals had recommended the repeal of the Combination Law and similar 'despotic' legislation, that however was for: their
own sake. (See, for example, Mc Culloch's letter to Ricardo and Ricardo's reply in Ricardo, 1952 B, p. 313, p. 316).

1.4.3 Very soon in all branches of industry Trade Unions were formed with a clear intention of protecting the right of each and every working man against the tyranny and oppression of the bourgeoisie. The first aim of the Trade Unions was to reduce the working hours - an aim supported by the Tory Party with its anti-bourgeoisie interest. The movement was first headed by Lord Ashly (a Tory politician) and then effectively in 1831 by Michael Sadler (a Tory M.P). Sadler formed a Parliamentary Committee for the investigation of the factory system and his report was ready by 1832. The Report was filled with the passion and fury of the enemies of the factory system which the manufacturers demanded an official investigation. This was accomplished through the Whigs who broadly were the representatives of the capitalists and who, subsequent to the Reforms Act of 1832, were no longer as weak as they had been earlier. So, a counter-report was prepared in which the Sadler report was refuted in great detail. As such, the Tory-Sadler movement for the Ten Hours Bill was defeated by the Whig Manufacturers.
I.4.4 By the autumn of 1833 the total union membership in England was estimated 800,000. Together they founded the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union in October of the same year; every sort of trade, without distinction of craft was swept into this new Union. The formation of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union headed by Robert Owen (a great Utopian socialist) attempted to realize Owen's ideas of exchange bazaars and conversion of trade unions into Producers' Corporations. As such, from the formation of this new Union dates the time when the working class established a different platform and their whole strength shifted to a new sphere of activity - a platform and sphere in which were secured the interests of neither the capitalists nor the landlords. In consequence this Union was attacked from both sides. By October 1834, the landlords forced the exchange out of its buildings, and the employers took a deliberate decision to stamp the Union out of existence by means of what was known as "Document" - a pledge which all employees had to sign. It bound them to renounce the Union and to refrain from supporting other members of the Union. Also, by 1834, internal dissensions had arisen. Apart from official repression, the financial disorder in the Union and the disillusionment arising from several unsuccessful strikes,
the differences among the leaders of the Union helped the early disintegration of the organization. Robert Owen fell out with his two chief assistants, James Morrison (the editor of the *Pion-ner*, the Union Journal) and J.E. Smith (the editor of Owen's own journal, the *Crisis*). His assistants argued for the reform of the Union structure, abstention from trivial conflicts and launching 'a long strike, a strong strike and a strike all together' from positions of clear-cut and direct hostility to the employers. (See, Cole and Postgate, 1938, pp. 262-263). But Owen refused to accept this, arguing 'both men and masters are producers'. (Cited in Cole and Postgate, 1938, p. 263). Owing to such basic differences, Morrison quit in October 1834. He died soon after in 1835. Smith also shifted to a family journal and withdrew from any manner of Union activity. Thus by the summer of 1834 the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union had disappeared.

1.4.5 The industrial bourgeoisie whose political power was rising after the Reform Act of 1832, could pass a new Poor Law to enforce the following main principles in the 'Work Houses' which were in their own favour: (a) No relief except for the disabled; (2) such relief to be 'less eligible' than the most unpleasant means of earning
a living outside and, (3) separation of man and wife to prevent child bearing. This Act did not encounter much resistance from the farm labourers, because, on the one hand they were spiritless and defeated, and, on the other hand, the years from 1834 to 1836 were prosperous and the harvests were good. But, it was severely resisted by the workers in the depressions of 1836-37/1841-42, especially in the industrial areas.

1.4.6 The New Poor Law which was another opportunity for the Tories to oppose Whigs and industrial capitalists, put the anti-Poor Law movement under the leadership of Richard Oastler (a Tory politician and a great opposer of the Free Traders) and J.R. Stephens (a Methodist minister). Both were explicitly advocating resistance by violence.

"If the musket", said Stephens, "and the pistol, the sword and pike are of no avail, let the women take the scissors, the child the pin or the middle. If all fails, the fire brand—ay, the fire brand, the fire brand, I repeat".

(Cited in Cole and Postgate, 1938, p. 273). Such advice led to mass meetings all over the North, and had an immediate impact in terms of deterring the work of the Poor Law Commissioners.
1.4.7 However, the disillusionment with the Reform Bill, the setbacks for the trade unions and the failure of the objectives of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union — altogether, the past experiences brought realization to the workers that the fight against specific laws of this or that year would not solve their problems. What was required was an attack on the British Constitution itself. The critical character of the situation was soon grasped by the industrial bourgeoisie (who were not satisfied with their power in Parliament even after the passing of the 1832 Act) and thus they swayed the working class to agitate for a change in the composition of the Parliament. Therefore, by what turned out in retrospect to be a very different strategy, the working class who were, once fighting along with the conservative landlords, were transformed into a movement directed against the character of the British Parliament controlled by the big landlords. Hence, the representatives of the radical bourgeoisie took up the leadership of the movement and early in 1837, in a Committee of the General Working men's Association of London with William Lowett at its head, drew up a 'charter' named the People's Charter with the following six points: "Universal male suffrage, equal electoral districts, annual parliaments, payment to members, secret ballot, and no property qualification for
I.4.8 Thus, for a short period of time, "the Radicalism of the workers went hand in hand with the Radicalism of the bourgeoisie." (Engels, 1973, p. 235). However, the final objective of the radical bourgeoisie and the working class not being identical, the alliance very soon broke up. The first hint came in 1838, with the two sections proposing different policies for the chartist movement. The radical bourgeoisie intended to rely mainly on "moral forces" (i.e. upon petitions, etc.) and was headed by Louett. The workers led by O'Connor sought the use of 'physical force' not excluding insurrection. After a long series of discussions a meeting held on August 6, 1838, in Birmingham finally decided upon the use of 'moral force'. Concretely, the latter meant forwarding a petition with as many signatures as possible to the House of Commons, and meanwhile using also all other possible methods of 'moral force' to persuade its members to accept the petition. In the event of its failing, it was agreed as a next step to organize a month long general strike. The strike month was referred to as the 'sacred month'. The petition with 1,280,000 signatures was debated on July 12 in the Parliament and rejected. On receiving the news of the rejection, the 'sacred month' began;
however, due to the financial problem and lack of a good organization the strike could not last more than ten days and resulted in the arrest and sentence of Louett and other leaders. So, the 'moral force' met with complete failure. It was, therefore, resolved to use 'physical force'. But the plan could not be worked out as the plans of the insurrection formulated by a leader of the workers named Frost, was betrayed and consequently there broke out a heavy clash between the Chartists and the police in Sheffield, Bradford and other towns. This finally led to the arrest of a number of members and leaders including Frost and O'Connor. Both of them (together with William Jones, another leader of the workers) were sentenced to death, but on the plea of their followers their sentences were commuted to 'transportation'. By the end of January 1840 every known chartist leader was in jail and the movement was defeated and left without a leader.

I.4.9 The failures disappointed the radical bourgeoisie; their desire to change the Constitution was far from being fulfilled. Thus, even while not giving up their major objective, the radical bourgeoisie turned to their next objective of seeking the abolition of Corn Laws.

I.4.10 Though the Chartist movement was defeated, it
however did not lose all its strength; thousands of its members were still continuing in their battles and demands. Agitations again started with the 1842 crisis, and these were as vigorous as they were in 1839. The rich manufacturing bourgeoisie who were suffering severely in this particular crisis, chose this time to press their demand for the repeal of the Corn Laws. They had a successful meeting with the Chartists in Manchester (where they had already formed their Anti Corn Law Association in 1838), on February 15, 1842, seeking to add the demand of the repeal of the Corn Laws to the People's Charter (See, Engels, 1973, p. 236). Thus, the Capitalist free traders persistently sought the intervention of the workers for the repeal of the Corn Laws. In the Summer of 1842, the workers rose, however, not for the purposes that the bourgeoisie had hoped, but to demand 'A fair day's wages for a fair day's work'. Still, with some exceptions, the

12 In 1842, a depression aggravated the condition of the working class in England. "Hundreds starved to death on the streets; others ate carrion and boiled nettle. Many working class families abandoned their dwellings, unable to pay their rent, while others left the country for good". (Ponomarev, et. al., 1980, p. 345).

13 The conflict began in Stalaybridge due to a wage-cut in the Bailey and Brothers factory and after the factory owner replying to the objection of the workers asked them to "go and play a bit". (See, Engel, 1973, p. 237).
factory owners offered no resistance as they were expecting to turn the movement into an action against the Corn Laws. For this reason, when on August 9, the workers went on strike at Ashton and headed for Manchester, the bourgeois members of the municipal council did not resist and let them into the city. On August 10, Manchester went on a general strike and then Stockport the next day, and the other industrial towns followed suit. Very soon, the uprising spread throughout the manufacturing districts, and all activities except the production of food came to a halt. Thus, as the strike turned out to be a general strike all over the country and mostly¹⁴ in demand of 'fair wages', the bourgeoisie withdrew its support and in cooperation with the troops suppressed the strikers ruthlessly. In addition, the workers themselves not being sufficiently organized and politically aware, the insurrection fizzled out in short time. By 20th August, the ruling class could regain control of the situation in the largest industrial centres; while they arrested, tried and sentenced to jail (or to exile) the leaders and thousands of workers who participated in the insurrection.

¹⁴ Some others carried the 'charter' while very few voiced the demand of the repeal of the Corn Laws.
Through a painful process, but rich with the experience of struggles, the role of workers and their agitations serving directly as instruments in the hands of the ruling classes ceases here — a process which was accompanied by and resulted in the purification of the chartism. The defeat of the Chartists in this year unmasked the bourgeoisie, aroused the class consciousness of the proletariat, and brought about a decisive separation of the latter from the former whose main and direct interest had been and continued to be the repeal of the Corn Laws. Thus soon after in 1843, the radicalism of the bourgeoisie headed by Sturge formed the Complete Suffrage Association with the main aim of the repeal of the Corn Laws, while the Chartists added the demands of a Ten Hours' Bill and abolition of the New Poor Law of 1834 to their earlier six points. Now, one can clearly distinguish three politically independent and distinct classes, viz. the decaying landlord class, the rising class of the industrial capitalists and the growing class of industrial workers, the last being no longer a tool directly in the hands of either of these upper classes.

**Social Reforms and Intellectual Reactions**

Ever increasing poverty and misery in England
during the Industrial Revolution drove intellectual attention towards the causes and remedies of the prevalent conditions of life of the working class. From a philosophical point of view, Benthamite utilitarianism was a generally accepted principle as it stood for 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. According to these principles, there was a need for a 'good government' whose test was the 'abundance, security and equality' it provided. By these standards, the British social thinkers of the era of the Industrial Revolution considered their contemporary government as being 'bad' and unable to provide abundance insurance and equality. However, the protest against 'bad government' took two quite different opposite forms. One section defended the bourgeois elements of the government and advocated the doctrine of 'birth control' and 'wages fund theory', while at the same time defending Free Trade in order to erode the material basis of the landlord dominated section of the government. The other section questioned the present 'social system' and sought a radical change in the 'system' itself.

I.5.2 The rapid growth of population roughly over 1790-1835 paved the way for the Malthusian theory of population, locating the cause of poverty and misery

15 "The Malthusian theory of population contends that man's power to propagate exceeds his power to produce subsistence, this is a simple but complete statement of the doctrine". (Blaug, 1958, p. 103).
in a high birth rate. This theory was expressed in Malthus in terms of the geometric and arithmetic ratios; in the hands of his followers James Mill, McCulloch and others it took its simpler form as a syllogism: "If capital had a tendency to increase faster than population, conditions would be prosperous, conditions are not prosperous, therefore, population has a tendency to increase faster than capital". (See, Blaug, 1958, p. 105). The doctrine of 'birth control', thus turned out to be one of the most powerful instruments through which Malthus and his followers sought to solve the problems of a 'miserable' condition of life. The advocacy of birth control as the main cure of poverty and misery went to such great lengths that, insisting on 'moral restraint' the capitalists wanted the workers not to marry until they had enough means to support a family. The opposed 'public relief' in order to discourage marriage and tried to generate a general belief that progress could be impossible without individual produce and self-control. Thus, without 'a virtuous and well educated commonalty', said Chalmers, 'starvation is the ultimate state of every industrious nation; a state from which it can only be saved, not by multiplication of its products, but by a wholesome and restraint on the multiplication of its people'. (Cited in Blaug, 1958, p. 114).
The sway of the Malthusian theory of population found its economic manifestation also in the wages fund theory according to which wages would be determined by a division of the total sum of money put aside for wage payments by the number of labourers. James Mill and McCulloch gave definite expression to this theory (see, Blaug, 1958, p. 125), and John Stuart Mill in his Principle (1848) analytically developed it further. The whole problem of prevalent poverty and misery was, therefore, reduced to a simple question by J.S. Mill: "Is it true, or not, that if their (workers) number were fewer they would obtain higher wages? This is the question, and no other". (Cited in Blaug, 1958, p. 118).

Beside the Malthusian theory of population, another view developed, as an alleged remedy of poverty and misery at about the same time. This was the doctrine of Free Trade. It was, in fact, a 'sensitive political issue' - a means of breaking open the 'closed economy' of the Tory landlords in favour of capitalism through the repeal of the Corn Laws. Yet the latter was introduced as the solution to the persisting miserable condition of English life. This idea is, vividly, available in Harriet Martineau who like Cobden and other leaders of the Anti-Corn Law League believed that "very little can be done to improve
the condition of the people till the Corn Laws are repealed. All practicable retrenchments, all ordinary reductions of taxation, all reforms in the organization of church and state, improved as they are, are trifles compared with this. The only measure of equal correspondence is the reduction of the debt, and this ought to accompany or immediately precede the establishment of a free trade in corn". (Cited in Blaug, 1958, p. 135). The doctrine of Free Trade, though it was progressive in as much as it went against the interest of the Tory landlords, served essentially the interests of the capitalists and was not a solution to the problems of the workers as it was made out - a fact that Engels clearly recognized. (See, Engels, 1973, pp. 239-240).

I.5.5 These bourgeois ideas and remedies so far discussed are one aspect of the intellectual response. On the other side are a group of radical reformists - the most important amongst whom were those who were later called "the Ricardian Socialists", viz. Thompson, Hodgskin, Gray and Bray. However, the idea of a radical reform was, practically, set forth by Owen with whom Thompson and Hodgskin had a close association and shared some ideas. Owen believed that "man's character is made for, and not by him" (cited in Morton, 1969, pp. 23-24), tried to put his belief into
practice through making Lanark a model town. He paid higher wages, provided free and good education to the children of the workers, arranged medical care for the workers and so on. He had plans to turn the whole country into a 'model town' along the lines of Lanark, but his utopian ideas did not materialize; after 1834 his plan failed totally as both the capitalists and the landlords opposed him. However, the common element between him and the 'Ricardian Socialists' lay in the fact that he did not believe in the existence of objective class antagonisms that were irremovable within the capitalism and, in fact, he tried to prove that the contradiction between the capitalists and the workers could be removed smoothly and peacefully. Beyond this, however, there are differences between the two: the 'Ricardian Socialists' believed in the welfare of the workers on the basis of the removal of 'classes' and 'private property', which Owen being a capitalist himself had little to do with such ideas.

I.5.6 The 'Ricardian Socialists' not only dismissed all the 'remedies' given by the bourgeois economists, but also severely attacked any social order based on exploitation and especially, capitalism. They tried to prove that the origin of all poverty lies in 'private property'.
leading to exploitation of man by man. They also repudiated the common belief that education was 'unfit to be taught to the working classes' (see, Blaug, 1958, p. 145, fn), as it tended to create disturbance, by stimulating the passions of the poor and ignorant, and persuading them their poverty is caused by oppression or misrule'. (Longfield, cited in Blaug, 1958, p. 146).

As such, the 'Ricardian Socialists' not only advocated educating the workers, but also recommended familiarising them with scientific subjects so that the workers could learn to run their factories as well as learn to govern themselves.

1.5.7 However, because of their limited understanding of the labour theory of value (whose development up to Ricardo we discuss in the next chapter) they failed to provide a scientific analysis of the mechanism of capitalism. This gave further room for analytical opposition to their theories and to the labour theory of value generally. Thus, the two decades between the death of Ricardo and the arrival of Marx constitutes a virtual interregnum in the labour theory of value. In this study, we shall be dealing with the works of the 'Ricardian Socialists' individually, their similarities and differences, and their connection with Ricardo and Smith on the one hand, and with Marx and Engels on the other.