



(W) August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1839

(W)

### THE POOR LAW GUARDIANS AND THEIR CONTRACTS.

*To the EDITOR of the CUMBERLAND PACQUET.*

Sir,—You have often thought proper to censure the New Poor Law, and to point out many hardships consequent upon its operation; but you have not yet noticed the conduct of the guardians of the Whitehaven Union, whose treatment of the tradesmen of this town I deem anything but fair and straightforward. It appears that amongst the tradesmen the guardians have their favourites, and in providing for the wants of the poor, their orders are liberally bestowed upon them to the exclusion of those who may not happen to have a friend in Court, or be a favourite with the board.

Now, I think you will agree with me that this is decidedly wrong upon two grounds. First, it is unfair towards those tradesmen who are overlooked by the guardians in the dispensation of their favours; and in the second place, it is not exactly an act of justice to the rate-payer to adopt a close system of dealing. In my opinion the contracts ought to be made public for all kinds of necessaries supplied to the Union; but such is not the case. The butcher's meat, for instance, is all supplied by two or three persons in that line of business, and of this I think that, along with many others, I have a right to complain. The guardians cannot excuse themselves by saying that they are better or cheaper served with meat by those with whom they deal than they would be by others, if they choose to divide their custom.

I hope, Sir, that these remarks on the exclusive dealings of the guardians will be the means of inducing them to extend or divide their orders in future. If they don't, you may depend upon hearing from me again.—I am, Sir, your's to the backbone,  
JOHN GULLY,  
Shambles, Aug. 27, 1839.

### OUT-DOOR RELIEF.

*To the EDITOR of the CUMBERLAND PACQUET.*

Sir,—I am aware that in making the slightest allusion to anything in the shape of abuse, impropriety, or mismanagement, under the New Poor Law, I am setting my foot upon a hornet's nest, and that the sensitive nerves of the advocates of that ill-fated and unpopular measure will be more irritated than would be the busy little insects to which I have alluded.

However, as I am an advocate for improvement, and anxious to remedy abuses wherever I see them exist, I cannot allow the feelings of such sensitive beings as those to whom I have alluded, to stand in my way.

I was one of those who felt pretty sanguine at the commencement of the present mis-spent session that the Poor Law Bill would have undergone considerable modifications. I grounded my opinion upon the promises made by Lord John Russell himself; and when I saw that that testimony was borne out by so many hon. members, who alluded to repeated instances of hardships and oppression which had come under their own individual notice as magistrates, I felt strengthened in the opinion I so earnestly entertained, that the situation of the poor subject to the operations of such a grinding and oppressive measure

power as to its extent; and that that cruel and revolting feature of the bill, the denial of relief to widows left with young families, unless the mother broke up her little establishment; abandoned her home, and accompanied her family to the union work-house, would have been, in some degree ameliorated. I could also have much wished, for the sake of the English character that the senators of Britain in the course of the present mischievous parliament (by far the most mischievous of any upon record) had altered this and other parts of the bill equally objectionable. However, after the shuffling and evasive conduct of Lord John Russell, through which the consideration of the measure was put off till almost the eleventh hour of the session; and the manner in which every attempt to ameliorate the cruel measure was treated by ministers, both collectively and individually, but little hope could be entertained, by even the most sanguine, of the Bill undergoing a consideration favourable to the interests of the poor. The bad feeling and worse taste displayed by ministers themselves, on every attempt at mitigation, come from whatever quarter it might, was not calculated to impress the country with any very exalted view of the humanity of the House of Commons, and the opposition displayed on all occasions by the ministry came with a peculiarly bad grace from men pluming themselves on the popularity of their measures, and professing so high a regard for the interests of the poor.

Now, with regard to the subject of out-door relief, I can state that such is the severe and unworkable nature of the New Poor Law that it is often violated through necessity than any other law upon the Statute Book. I shall relate to you an instance, of very recent occurrence, in a neighbouring parish, which not only shows the necessity of out-door relief being given in money, but also the folly and injustice of giving such relief in kind.

A poor woman, who was allowed a ticket by the Whitehaven Union to procure food for herself and family, to the amount of two shillings weekly, one week got an order for one shilling's worth of groceries, and a shilling in cash. Having during the same week, been employed by a grocer, she was partly compelled to take her wages in kind; and had therefore no use for the shilling's-worth of goods which she had obtained for her ticket, she therefore sold them for eight-pence, and though they were all that the poor woman had got for her shilling ticket, they were considered dear enough at two-thirds of that sum!

This circumstance clearly proves two very material things, namely, that it is both better and cheaper to give relief to a certain extent, than to take a whole family of children, parents and all, into a workhouse; and secondly, that where out-door relief is given, it is better to use discretion and give it in money than in kind, because it will at least make 50 per cent. difference to the poor creatures who have to lay it out, as the case I have mentioned, and others that I could mention, very clearly prove. There can be no question but that any poor person would be able to make a much more economical use of the money than they could of a ticket or an order, binding them to a certain tradesman; and to take out the amount in goods of such a quality as he might think proper to give.

It is creditable to the humanity of those guardians who disregard the griping provisions of the law and give out-door relief, and I trust that what I have here stated will induce those guardians who give out-door relief to give it in the most advantageous way possible to the pauper—in money.—I am, &c.

A FRIEND to the POOR.  
Vicinity of Whitehaven, August, 24, 1839.