

Why change?

History in Song
The Repeal of the Corn Laws
c1838-46

Compare w/ Repeal of Contagious
Diseases Acts

4. Support of M.P.s

M.P.s in Parliament
Putting the arguments
Strongly that more would adopt them
Yet if Peel was convinced,
Since his party was not, he resigned,
Handing over to Russell...

* Parliamentary support

* Peel resigned believing the Whigs would be better able to get repeal through Parliament

*The Corn Laws protected the farmer
From the impact of cheap, foreign
corn,
For below 80 shillings a quarter
Restrictions would not be withdrawn:*

BUT: Peel could
not hope to gain his
party's majority

*For when Peel inclined to feel
The need for repeal was real,
That the need for repeal was real
Sir Robert inclined to feel:
But the Whigs were so split
That to his consternation
Russell failed to form an administration
So Peel returned to deal
With the mathematics of repeal...*

Failure of Lord
John Russell to
form a Whig
government...

Momentum

Arguments v.
repeal:

1. Farmers were
Tory

The long, long list
Of Protectionists
Led by Bentinck & Disraeli,
Argued not to depend
On foreign corn, thus appending
The view of Malthus's thesis;
But as Irish distress
Led to crime & unrest,
The situation was worsening daily,
Till with Whig & the Duke's
Support, repeal went through,
But with his party in pieces,

* The bill was held up by the heavy support for the Corn Laws in both houses of Parliament ~ Bentinck in the Lords ; Disraeli in the Commons
* Main argument for Corn Laws was: the country should be self-sufficient in food; not depend on foreign supplies in case of war with the supplier.
* Intensification of Irish Crisis

2. Thomas Malthus

3. Irish crisis
catastrophic

4. Support for repeal

*For when Peel began to feel
The need for repeal was real,
That the need for repeal was real
Was how Peel began to feel;
There were those in his party,
Who called him traitor,
But he believed the interests
Of state were greater,
When Peel began to feel
The need for repeal
of the Corn Laws, was real.*

* Peel had Whig support in the Commons and Wellington's persuasion of Tory peers to support or abstain: repeal became law after royal assent.

Motive:

- 1838
- 1. Distress < increase food supply
- 2. Fear of unrest
- 3. Stimulate other industry & trade
- 4. Improve international relations
- 5. to alleviate Irish crisis

The Anti-Corn Law League
Was formed to achieve
Support for its central purpose:
To "cheapen food for God's people"
And thereby diminish the fear
Of widespread agitation;
More money around
Meant trade should be bound
To profit from the surplus,
While markets more free
Would make better the feeling
between
The industrial nations...

...founded in 1838 by Richard Cobden and John Bright

...religion added weight to economic argument ie Adam Smith's writings on laissez-faire

...less money spent on bread would leave more available for other products...

...free trade would stimulate closer and therefor better international relations

*And so Peel began to feel
The need for repeal was real;
That the need for repeal was real
Was how Peel began to feel;
For in November '45
He was forced to examine
Reports of the Irish potato famine;
So Peel began to feel
The need for repeal was real...*

The Irish crisis convinced Peel that he should not wait for an election campaign to bring in corn law repeal

Movement:

- 1. Organisation
- 2. Leadership
- 3. Support

The League was a mean
Propaganda machine
Inspired by Bright and Cobden;
With funds that were raised
To finance a campaign,
which acquired
Real political muscle:

* Had press support, e.g. Manchester Guardian

* Middle Class donations