

From Sin to Laziness: Early Modern Views of the Poor and Poor Relief

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Views of the poor in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England and France change from that of the poor as sinners to the poor as lazy. Poor relief reflected this change through law and ideology. In the seventeenth-century, the poor were in need of moral reform. They led a life of sin, which caused their state of poverty. Fixing this required charity for all while reforming their morals through spirituality. Once the poor were cleansed of their sins, they could help themselves. The eighteenth century, bringing with it the Enlightenment, changed these beliefs. The crime of the poor became laziness rather than sin. Training and support, it was believed, would make the poor self-supporting. If they could not work and support themselves, then they were lazy and required confinement and forced labor. Charity became reserved for those who could not work. A dramatic shift in the perception of the poor and the function of poor relief occurred during the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. This essay presents the thesis of changing poor relief as argued in the historiography of poor relief in France. This thesis of changing poor relief remains, if applied to actual laws and events in England's history of the same period.

--France—

Histories of poor relief in seventeenth and eighteenth-century France often begin with the *hopitaux generaux*, which started in 1614 under the ancien regime. Secret societies started these hospitals for the confinement of beggars and the poor, as they were unruly and possibly dangerous. Under Louis XIV, the state took an active interest in the hospitals through edicts. In 1724, the state began an intensified role through a royal edict requiring all beggars imprisoned. Beggars had two weeks to find a job before they were thrown in the hospital. Numbers in hospitals rose, and the government provided money for their maintenance. By 1733, the edict had proved a failure and arrests of beggars became less frequent. [\[1\]](#)

By the mid-eighteenth-century, repression of beggars and vagrants once again began. Due to proletarianization, rural impoverishment, and mobility, begging and vagrancy became a severe problem in the eyes of the elites and authorities. The laws of 1764 and 1767 set up aggressive confinement of beggars in *depots de mendicite*, basically workhouses, by policing agents of the state. The *depots* differed from the hospitals in several ways. They were established as a repressive deterrent for the imprisonment of beggars. The state also supervised and financially supported the *depots* considerably more than the hospitals. Over all, the *depots* were unhealthy and not well liked by possible inhabitants or social reformers. [\[2\]](#)

Kathryn Norberg takes a broad look at the treatment of the poor in *Rich and Poor in Grenoble, 1600-1814*. [\[3\]](#) She provides a good overview of one city, much like others, which allows for generalized conclusions about the treatment of the poor. Norberg compares the changing treatment of the poor to changing society. As modernity arises and social relationships change, the treatment of the poor mirrors that change from a personal, paternal relationship to one of distant, bureaucratic poor relief.

Norberg begins by explaining the early poor relief of the seventeenth century by confraternities in Grenoble. Confraternities were small religious associations for lay people, often secretive. Women confraternities worked modestly, often in hospices or hospitals. They started their own systems of confinement solely for women. Often, they helped house destitute women who many times were unwed mothers. They also set up a house for reforming prostitutes. The prostitutes were not always willing inhabitants of this house. Important for the women's confraternities was the spiritual reform of the poor. Their goal was making the poor better people through Christianity. As the records of the confraternities repeatedly state, the ladies acted "like perfect mothers to the poor" by providing the poor with food, clothing, spiritual instruction, and moral support. [\[4\]](#)

Men also formed confraternities and took on much larger tasks, often referred to as "Great Works." These

men were very secretive and discreet while providing what Norberg calls “seventeenth-century charity at its fullest.”^[5] They worked in hospitals, in the streets, and in people’s homes. For example, brothers of the confraternity would visit the homes of the poor, inquire about their circumstances, and report on these weekly so they could decide the best ways to benefit the poor.^[6] Confinement became the centerpiece of their program, as most people believed in the seventeenth-century that confinement in workhouses and hospitals would eliminate begging. In order to make mass confinement a realization, the brothers infiltrated institutions and governing boards, as they could not openly voice their opinions if they remained secretive.^[7] The confraternities believed in confinement and the spiritual and moral reform of their charges.

Confraternities generally thought of the poor as sinful. The confraternities “saw in the poor not Christ but the Devil himself.”^[8] The outlook of the common person of Grenoble differed. The poor were not completely bad. Many adhered to a set of values and morals just like their more wealthy counterparts. While the confraternity laid the blame on men and women alike for crimes like prostitution and illegitimacy, the general public tended to blame solely women. This treatment of the poor as a whole was harsh, but when it came to individuals there was a sense of paternalism and caring.^[9] General attitudes toward the poor revolved around sin and crime, yet were contradicted by the treatment of individual people.

The close contact with the poor mirrors society at this time when all relationships, especially those of work, were personal ties. The employer often knew his workers as people with lives and families and treated them as such. Relationships in society at this time reflected these personal ties.

Norberg suggests contemporary views about the poor started changing between 1680 and 1729. The rich still maintained personal ties with the poor, who were increasingly confined, but they began to search for a more systematic approach to poor relief. The rich learned that the poor were not all criminal and sinful, and indeed crime overall decreased. The rich began to forgive rather than reform. Basically, a more humane attitude towards the poor began, while charitable giving and services increased.^[10] Attitudes towards beggars changed in part due to an ordinance in 1724, which required the arrest and confinement of beggars. Records were kept and thus, the beggars became recorded people. A human face was given to them, and people, especially the directors of the hospital, began to see this. Records of paupers receiving bread provide proof of the change to a systematic approach to poor relief.^[11] As the eighteenth-century began, the poor took on a new image. They began the journey to becoming the misfortunate who must be dealt with in a systematic and soon bureaucratic way. Training the poor to help themselves became the goal.

By the 1720s, the French government realized that the local enforcement was not working. The state passed more laws and used state resources for poor relief and repression. A royal declaration of July 1724 aimed at helping the labor force by forcing beggars to work in hospitals, on public works projects, or as laborers. Local hospitals were relied upon for confining beggars and paupers. This enlarged the hospitals repressive duties. This did not completely work as hospitals had trouble coping with the numbers. Of the hospitals chosen, the program worked well at times, depending on the money received from the state. The demographics of the hospitals changed from infirm, aged, and children to men and women who were capable of work.^[12] The time from 1724-1733, referred to as the “Great Confinement,” saw unprecedented numbers of people confined by the royal police. All in all, some relief was provided for cities in need due to mendicity.^[13] The state began taking more control of its citizens. This time, it came in the form of regulating and policing the poor with the use of state funds. Later, in the 1760s, more people came under the veil of vagrant and the enforcement became greater.

As urbanization increased along with impoverishment, the need to control vagrants and beggars grew as well. By 1769, all vagrants and beggars were subject to arrest as the program initially used for arresting vagrants enlarged itself. This was in response to the increasing working class, the growth in the numbers of poor, and increased vagrancy in the countryside. The government was alarmed by the assaults on property and people in the countryside, thus creating depots, or workhouses, in which all forms of repression were carried out by the government.^[14] As the government saw a need for increased security, it provided it through more arrests and the use of state funded institutions, rather than using institutions already in place.

Thomas McStay Adams describes the depots in great detail, ranging from their institution in the 1760s up to the French Revolution. For the most part, the focus remains on government bureaucratic endeavors in the construction and implementation of the new far-reaching social policy of confining all beggars in a systematic form.

Adams uses a great deal of writing in explaining the intricate workings of the processes by which laws and edicts were decided upon.^[15] In 1764, the intendants received jurisdiction over beggars and vagrants, thus relieving the local authorities of the duty. Workhouses were set up to replace hospitals and take in the most unassuming beggars in an attempt to repress all forms of mendicity. There were varying degrees of priority arrests though. Bands of beggars took high priority, while at the other end, resided a regular, hungry, poor beggar. Over time, debates about this prioritization arose as the infirm and repeat offenders never had a full place in the system. Soon, all beggars were arrested.^[16] Masses of reports began streaming from the *depots* in regard to the inhabitants and the institutions themselves. Training and discipline became the main focus. By the early 1770s, people began realizing that there was a difference between those who chose a life of vagrancy and those who landed there out of happenstance or necessity. The depots became corrupt, overcrowded and viewed in a highly negative light.^[17] What started as an enthusiastic social policy relieving the communities of beggars and vagrants became a huge undertaking that took a turn for the worse as public sympathy for the unfortunate poor rose.

The demographics of the poor served continued to change throughout the eighteenth century. Able-bodied men should have been reformed and thus back out on the streets working. The hospital became a place for the sick, the very young or old, and women. Women were faced with hardships due to illegitimacy. Men could leave the pregnant women behind; women could not do this. Orphaned children faced obvious obstacles, and older people who could not work often had no place else to turn, especially when they were sick. The hospital began resembling a more modern hospital by definition.^[18]

Paupers receiving bread became older and sicker on the whole, with more women receiving than men. This was often due to men being more mobile and able to earn wages. The area in which paupers lived tended more towards one general area in the city as well. Men with large families received aid, but others, according to those distributing bread, should take care of themselves.^[19] There was also a change in the handling of paupers. People needing aid must request it from the proper people. Charitable giving disappeared as a bureaucratic system emerged. Paupers submitted petitions sent to the Bureau of Directors for decisions on aid.^[20] People became a name on a paper with a condition. They no longer were faces, names, and individual people. Charity was reserved for those unable to work and forced labor awaited those who could work, but were simply lazy in the eyes of others. According to Norberg, this mirrored the change in society. As wage-labor increased, personal ties between people decreased. Employers saw employees as workers who received pay. There were no personal ties. This was the same with the poor. They became numbers on paper rather than individual faces and names.

Adams highlights the efforts of Turgot in the mid-1770s to reform the treatment of the poor. The process by which Turgot and his ministry researched and reported findings and solutions is spelled out at length. His ministry believed that many of the people arrested were victims of circumstance reduced to poverty by misfortune and should not be treated as criminals. The key to their plans included prevention rather than repression as arrests were suspended and beggars released.^[21] Poor relief should be the focus according to them, and they tried to shut down some of the *depots*.^[22] Turgot fell from power in 1776 before his reforms were really instituted, and the new ministry quickly reverted back to the old ways of dealing with mendicity.

Turgot's work was not all in vain as enlightened ideas spread and the *depots* were cleaned up a bit. The regulation of 1785 required better maintenance as well as better medical standards and living conditions.^[23] Beggars began the rehabilitation process more often and training for work became more common.^[24] However, by the Revolution, the *depots* were another tick on the list of royal despotic actions. Adams takes the creation of the *depots* and weaves an intricate pattern of bureaucracy in action. By the end of the eighteenth century, enlightenment thought had crept into the policies of poor relief and confinement, but not to the extent that people actually allowed beggars on the street once again. They knew what was not working and that change was needed, but were hesitant to institute that change.

Schwartz argues that this increasing policing of the poor reflects the expansion of the repressiveness of the state. Increasing impoverishment resulted in hardening attitudes toward the poor, especially those who proved even slightly intimidating. The increase in policing led to more officials in the countryside, thus changing the attitudes of the French countryside towards royal officials. These officials became important for protection and took on a positive perspective.^[25] Thus, the state helped the poor and the poor learned to work with public and state officials.

By the mid 1770s, officials became more prudent with their arrests as controlling so many beggars and

vagrants became difficult. The feelings of Turgot also began seeping into the thinking of the central government and royal administration. Fewer arrests were made and those detained were often more serious offenders related to vagrancy linked to intimidation, petty theft, and robbery. Repression became narrowed and more focused.^[26]

Attitudes towards the poor in France during the eighteenth-century take on different meanings according to the authors. The Enlightenment, as influence, can be seen as positive in Norberg and Adams, while Schwartz presents a much more cold bureaucratic system. Norberg composes an almost friendly system seemingly ignoring the effects of the 1760s, while Schwartz and Adams emphasize the harshness of this era and the *depots*. France definitely did not treat the poor with humane kindness in the eighteenth-century. For the most part, the poor were seen as a threat and parasitic on society. Reform and discipline was needed rather than care and help. In the seventeenth-century, the reform sought was moral and spiritual betterment. In the eighteenth-century, they sought to train people through forced labor.

--England--

Can this argument about change overtime be applied to England? An analysis of pamphlets and debates further supports the theory developed by French historians. Pamphlets often provide popular views of the poor as they were often distributed widely. Debates in Parliament and the laws resulting from these debates also often reflect attitudes of the people. Of course English poor relief followed distinct laws. Paul Slack presents a clear, concise view of the English Poor Law from 1531-1782. Population pressures, changes in public attitude towards the poor, and government desire to control its subjects more closely led to a series of changes in the poor law.^[27] Humanism played a central role in English poor relief. Christian charity was an obvious expression of this and goes hand in hand with moral reform. There became a new aversion to dirt and disease that the poor represented and the rich feared. Humanism also gave the government the duty of making social change and this included eliminating poverty.^[28] Lawmakers in England also realized the limitations of centralized government poor relief early in the process. Unlike the generalized hospitals and depots of France, the English sought poor relief applicable to rural areas as well as large cities. Thus, it was also subject to the opinion of local authorities enforcing it and often remained a highly localized form of relief.^[29]

Starting with the early results of the poor laws, Slack describes the local parish, seemingly more local than the French provinces. Each parish had their own poor tax and decided how it was spent. Uses included binding poor children as apprentices, removing pregnant strangers, giving housing to paupers, as well as the usual clothing, food, lodging, and medical care. Cash handouts were by far the most common form of poor relief throughout this time. This could come in the form of a weekly cash allowance or relief for short periods as needed. The regular payments were usually given to the old, disabled, children, or those who could not work for one reason or another. The relief given for short periods usually went towards able-bodied men. The overseers of the dole had discretionary powers and thus could form lines of patronage and social control through the poor law. They were supervised to an extent, usually preventing extreme corruption to the point that they no longer aided the community. This type of poor relief led to a very personalized institution in which neighbor helped neighbor. Expectations of poor relief resulted from this system as well, but also raised objections to it.^[30] This is similar to late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century France where the confraternities went out among the poor to address their needs. Comparison to the poor as sinners can also be made during this time, as related in the laws and several publications from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Most of the ordinances until 1647 treated beggars and vagrants quite harshly. They were physically punished and forbidden to beg. The parishes took care of the poor in the later sixteenth-century, and the poor could be put to work. Pamphlets from the mid- to late-seventeenth century relate the sinfulness of the poor and the need to force them to work.

One pamphlet from 1650 deals with poor children and the result of this being poor adults living in a state of sinfulness. It states, "through the general neglect of most places, poore children maintained by their respective parishes, and others are bred up like Atheists."^[31] The poor engaged in "idleness, thefts, whoredomes, prophane cursing, swearing, and almost all kinds of wickednesse." Obviously the poor were sinners who must be educated and reformed. Children must be educated properly so they do not end up in the above conditions. The author suggests the placing of poor children in workhouses for education and proper training in an industry. Pensioners should be in workhouses or given jobs that can be done within their home. Poor, to supplement their income, might also receive

an allowance.^[32]

A pamphlet from 1659 carries the idea of the poor as criminals a step further. The prisons should become workhouses and prisoners and the poor held together. By combining the financial support for prisons and the poor, workhouses could function quite well for the government. Debtors, which are just the poor put in prison for being poor, will also find relief in this.^[33] This author frankly equates the poor and criminality by putting convicted criminals and the poor in the same institutions.

Sir Josiah Child proposed several ideas for the relief of the poor in 1670. At least two more pamphlets copied his ideas in later years, so the popularity of his ideas continued. Child states that “the Children of our Poor bred up in Beggery and Laziness...are...rendered for ever after indisposed to Labour, and serve only to stock the Kingdom with Thieves and Beggars.”^[34] He hints at later views of the poor as lazy and opposed to actual labor. He advocates employing the poor, which gains more revenue for the state, while also saving it quite a lot in poor relief. Employing the poor is a “Duty to God,” and being poor is one of the “great sins.”^[35] He exhibits the seventeenth-century view of the poor as sinners, who need moral reform.

A popular pamphlet from 1678 (reprinted in 1681) equated begging to sinfulness. The subtitle, “For the prevention of Begging, a practice so dishonourable to the Nation, and to the Christian Religion,” blatantly equates begging and sinfulness.^[36] The title page also prints two verses from the Bible which state that people should work for the necessities of life and not steal or beg for them. This pamphlet exemplifies the transition period towards viewing the poor as people who must be forced to work. The pamphlet focuses on workhouses and poor children. Workhouses should be reserved for those without homes, while those with homes should receive work they can do there. People must work for charitable handouts as well. Poor children need training and must be placed in a workhouse and then apprenticeship for this work-based instruction.^[37] This pamphlet reflects the eighteenth-century belief that workhouses taught people to work and prevented idleness while also reflecting an older view that this laziness was a sin that must be corrected.

A pamphlet from 1700 exhibits seventeenth century thought by promoting charity, and the author suggests specific groups which should receive charity: widows, the sick, orphans, and those having too many children to support. These groups need a weekly distribution of aid collected from taxes. Other groups need the constant care of a hospital or poorhouse. Most of these people could not work for one reason or another.^[38] Charity was for those who truly need it, but the author still promotes charity and allowances for those who can work, but need help.

Reforms combating rising costs of poor relief in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries began appearing in the mid-eighteenth century. To cut expenditures, determining legitimate need in the parish, deterring the undeserving, and supervising overseers (reducing the number of those who were overgenerous) became the goals.^[39] Part of the arguments rested on the idea of settlement and determining a person’s home parish and sending them there to prevent another parish from paying for the relief of that person. This began the paper work maze of the English system. Parishes now had to record people moving in and out and determine people’s rights in a parish depending on the number of years spent there.^[40]

The Act of Settlement actually passed in 1662 with three parts forcing responsibility for the poor onto parishes. The main part of the act was, “Newcomers to a parish may be removed by 2 JPs if complaint made within 40 days and they have rented houses worth less than 10 pound p.a. Certificates from the home parish allow residence in some circumstances.”^[41] The following years brought more provisions. In 1692, two provisions resulted in rate-paying, apprenticeship and a one year service earning a person a settlement and names could only be added to the list of pensioners with the authority of the justice of the peace. Two more changes to the Act of Settlement were brought in 1714. Constables could remove idle and disorderly beggars and the expense of passing vagrants could be met with levied county rates.^[42] The basic principles of the Act of Settlement remained over many years, with the result that the poor were often forcibly removed from parishes.

Views of the settlement acts began changing, but on April 28, 1773, the House of Commons debated settlement. Mr. Graves introduced a bill preventing the unnecessary removal of the poor from parishes other than those of their homes. He believed that removal prevented them from moving to parishes where they could make the most money for their skill. Thus, removal could throw them into an even more perilous situation elsewhere and make them even more of a burden to another parish. For the most part, members agreed with him, although one thought a bill against removal would still overburden some parishes with poor not from their parish.^[43] It is interesting that

the reason given for the change was allowing men to make more money and support themselves at a better level. This relates to the thought that men able to work should support themselves and their families and not rely on charity.

Reforming poor relief overseers became the focal point of reform. As Lord Lyttelton stated in parliamentary debates as late as 1775, parish officers were corrupt, cruel, and wasted money for their own enjoyment.^[44] But, local regulation of overseers remained more popular than overarching state regulations. Mayors, aldermen, and ministers all took on roles as supervisors. Monetarily compensating overseers was also thought a deterrent to their corruptness.^[45] Various reforms led to overseers gaining less patronage who focused on the proper spending of poor relief and administration of workhouses.

Combating deterrence to work came in the form of workhouses. The Workhouse Test Act of 1723 called for the establishment of workhouses containing all the poor with no outside relief given. Corporations for the management of workhouses were set up to manage their finances and operations. Workhouses, which functioned less as a deterrent and more of a moral and work ethic reform school, provided only temporary relief and outside aid remained a large proportion of relief. It was believed that only the old, young, and infirm would require housing. In 1782, Gilbert's Act required the able-bodied poor to find outside work and become self-sufficient while being housed and those infirm or old could find support in the institutions from the parish. Changes in workhouse laws related the growing skepticism of the day regarding the actual abilities of a workhouse to reform the poor, just as the French had become skeptical in the use of confinement.^[46]

Historian Dorothy Marshall suggests two views of workhouses existed simultaneously. "It is not uncommon to find attempts to combine the profitable employment of the poor with the use of the workhouse both as an asylum and a deterrent."^[47] Many areas formed local bodies in charge of establishing and running local workhouses rather than leaving it to small communities and overseers. Depending on the area, workhouses were set up for employing or deterring the poor, or more than likely, a combination of both. Some workhouses were large, well-run, and semi-supported themselves, while others relied on parish funds for maintenance and merely provided a home for the infirm, old, and young. Inmates, wards, or paupers (as those living in workhouses were variously called) received likewise varying treatment.^[48] Each workhouse was really an individual case.

Debates about the administration and purpose of workhouses regularly surfaced in Parliament. Debate in Parliament on May 4, 1733 shows the need for charity due to mismanagement of workhouses. A one million pound lottery was motioned for the relief of those who lost a great deal of financial support from the workhouses whose corrupt management corporations used the funds inappropriately. The final decision was the appropriation of 500,000 pounds until research into how much was actually needed could be done. Then, the number could be adjusted as needed. The interesting debate over the motion reveals a shift towards believing that workhouses could train the poor to work and support themselves, although many continued to argue for charity for all.

Several spoke out against a lottery in general because it would not determine who truly needed aid or how much each person should get, but the burden of actually determining this was just too large to deal with quickly. The poor are continually referred to as "objects of compassion." This shows attitudes of the seventeenth century persisting. The poor were the unfortunate who needed charity. Sir William Wyndham provides an excellent example of combining charity and work. He believes the poor to be in need and charity should be given, but inquiries into the actual need of those persons must be made before money should be given out. He dislikes lotteries for the poor because it gives them false hope of making money through means other "than that of industry and frugality, which is the only way of getting riches that ought to be encouraged by wise people."^[49] Wyndham presents a wonderful example of a transition occurring in the views of poor relief. He shows signs of the seventeenth-century in presenting the poor as those who need charitable help. At the same time, he also presents the poor as those who will get out of work or industrious activity if they can make money an easier way.

A report made to the House of Commons on May 30, 1759 reflects the change towards forcing the able-bodied poor to work while giving charity to those who cannot work. A committee had been formed whose job consisted of reporting on the state of the poor in England. At this time, they had nine resolutions. First, in parishes with no workhouses, the poor were a heavy burden on and useless to the community. The charitable handouts being given to people able to work undermines the intention of poor relief and encourages "idleness and intemperance" in the poor.^[50] Four resolutions involve the creation and management of workhouses directly. Workhouses are advantageous to the public because they will put the idle to work while supporting themselves for the most part. Workhouses serve several functions, including "assisting and relieving such persons as by age, infirmities, or diseases,

are rendered incapable of supporting themselves by their labor, or employing the able and industrious, reforming the idle and profligate, and of educating poor children in religion and industry.”^[51] The poor are utilized to the best of their abilities and hopefully trained in an industry and will learn to provide for themselves. Two resolutions explain the need for workhouses in every parish, so that the settlement laws may be repealed as vagrants can be placed in a workhouse no matter where they go. One resolution makes it clear that parish officers will have an easier time if they do not have to give charity to the poor and simply put them to work.^[52] The report made in May 1759 provides a perfect example of forcing able-bodied poor to work while reserving charity for those who could not work and thus needed it.

Another set of resolutions presented in the House of Commons on January 22, 1765 restates the need for more workhouses. They argued the system of using parish officials to regulate the local poor is a burden on the individual parishes and bad for the public as a whole. Employment of the poor is the most effective method of poor relief. There is a great need for the grouping of parishes and districts and establishing a workhouse, hospital, and house of correction for the large group.^[53] Larger workhouses should provide a more economical means of combating the problems of the poor. Acts passed from 1748 to 1785 reflect the economical need for the combination of parishes. In Norfolk and Suffolk, there were fourteen incorporations from 1756-1785.^[54]

Parliament began looking at the issue of relieving poor laborers in old age in 1772. Mr. Dowdeswell spoke on December 11 on behalf of a group proposing a bill for the relief of poor laborers in old age. The bill proposes a voluntary offering of money by the laborers and manufacturers in parishes for the relief of laboring men after the age of fifty. It supplements their incomes as they earn less with age. Women may receive this as well, even at an earlier age if they are widowed with dependents, but that age determination will come later. Thus, laborers can look forward to old age and will lead healthier lives because they want to live to an old age. Without support, they must live on very little, so as younger men, they tend to spend all of their wages on alcohol and may work as little as possible to enjoy life when they are young as it can only get worse with age. As Dowdeswell states, the poor will benefit because the prospect of future comfort “will render them sober and industrious.”^[55] Here again, the poor were to be made more industrious and this is seen as the only way to combat the problems faced by the aging poor.

On March 27, 1775, Mr. Gilbert proposed the creation of a Committee on Poor Laws due to the conditions of the poor brought about by the current poor laws. He believed there was some way to better the laws and actually help the poor. On April 11, 1775, the committee reported back with twenty-six resolutions. The first few relate how bad the current poor laws work and how they could be bettered. Settlement laws must be restated because at present, people cannot move to places with better employment and thus better themselves. Consolidation of parishes could benefit smaller parishes. When workhouses are created, more care needs taken with classifying those who can work at what jobs. Regulation of workhouses needs bettering. The resolutions go on with the delegation of wealthy landowners as governors with the power of appointment. They decide who gets appointments as guardians of the poor and supervisors of workhouses. Poor unable to work or who cannot maintain themselves by honest labor will be placed in workhouses where their necessities will be met while working at a task suited to their ability. The poor who have been temporarily hindered in their ability to maintain themselves can receive temporary relief in the form of charity from the guardians when it is necessary. Resolutions fifteen through seventeen deal with the placement of abandoned children. They are taken care of in workhouses, instructed properly, made to work at tasks suited to them, and set out as apprentices at the appropriate age.^[56] This provides a perfect example the intentions of workhouses. People, or children, are brought in, trained at an industry, and then released to support themselves.

The resolutions also set up a system of checks on the workhouses. They required clerks to record expenses and incomes accurately and guardians reviewed this information at monthly meetings. Justices of the Peace reviewed accounts and set up an average sum that parishes should contribute, and no parish’s contribution must exceed that average.^[57] An attempt at strict regulation of the workhouses was needed according to the committee and they laid out definite terms for regulation.

Mr. Gilbert reported additional resolutions on May 11 including limitations on the number of workhouses per county while allowing the governors to borrow on credit from poor rates for the proper establishment of such houses. According to Gilbert, an act passed in 1744 needed amendments because abuses of it are great and these harm the public because it creates more street beggars. Workhouses need set rules and regulations that governors can enforce with effect.^[58] These resolutions add to the regulations of poor houses and governors for the most part, but also call for the amendment of older laws for clarification, which is important for future legislation.

The result of the resolutions and the work of Mr. Gilbert was Gilbert's Act of 1782. It basically instated laws created from the many resolutions proposed by the committee.^[59] Gilbert's Act was a result of several years of research and work by a few members of Parliament. Gilbert tried to further legislation in future years, but did not have much luck. Other members saw it as too expensive and never passed the regulations he wanted.^[60] Gilbert's Act began the major reform of poor laws that would continue into the nineteenth-century.

Regardless of the effects of the poor law, philanthropy played a large part in the aid of the poor. People realized that the poor law could only do so much and thus helped on their own terms. In the eighteenth-century, 'associated philanthropy,' or subscriptions funding charitable activity by several benefactors becomes popular. Charitable schools and hospitals became the best examples of this. Women and children were targeted as concern for the physical and moral state of the nation once again took center stage. Fraternities arose after 1660 and remained popular in the eighteenth-century, which protected their members in case of illness or misfortune. People still wanted more activity in the use of their charity than simply paying the poor tax.^[61] Thus, England provides an example of combining state support with private charity at its best.

--Conclusion--

Poor relief in France and England developed along similar lines in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. Views of the poor changed from that of sin as crime to laziness as crime. Poor laws reflected this change. In the seventeenth-century, charity was encouraged for all poor while reforming their moral and spiritual state. If they became less sinful, they could pull themselves out of poverty. These ideas changed in the eighteenth-century as legislation forced the able-bodied poor to work. The poor were simply lazy and not necessarily sinful. Correcting this laziness became the goal as charity was reserved for those who really could not work and maintain themselves. This change in the attitude towards the poor and poor relief reflects the Enlightenment and the use of reason rather than spirituality. Reason explains the thought that training a person to work should correct their laziness, and they should then be able to support themselves. Views of the poor and poor relief changed in France and England during the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries.

^[1] Dirk Van Damme, "The Confinement of Beggars in Eighteenth-Century France: The Population of Some 'Hopitaux Generaux' and 'Depots De Mendicite,'" *Paedagogica Historica* 26 (1990): 102-3.

^[2] *Ibid.*, 103-4.

^[3] Kathryn Norberg, *Rich and Poor in Grenoble, 1600-1814* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

^[4] *Ibid.*, 20-6.

^[5] *Ibid.*, 27.

^[6] *Ibid.*, 31.

^[7] *Ibid.*, 32-4.

^[8] *Ibid.*, 34.

^[9] *Ibid.*, 40-62.

^[10] *Ibid.*, 81-2.

^[11] *Ibid.*, 102-4.

^[12] Robert M. Schwartz, *Policing the Poor in Eighteenth-Century France* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 34-47.

^[13] *Ibid.*, 50-1, 248-9.

^[14] *Ibid.*, 249.

^[15] Thomas McStay Adams, *Bureaucrats and Beggars: French Social Policy in the Age of Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 28-68.

^[16] *Ibid.*, 75-9.

^[17] *Ibid.*, 118-22.

^[18] Norberg, *Rich and Poor*, 177-81.

- [19] Ibid., 182-92
- [20] Ibid., 192-3.
- [21] Adams, *Beggars and Bureaucrats*, 130-58.
- [22] Schwartz, *Policing the Poor*, 249-50.
- [23] Adams, *Beggars and Bureaucrats*, 168-75.
- [24] Ibid., 240-45.
- [25] Schwartz, *Policing the Poor*, 250-51.
- [26] Ibid., 250.
- [27] Paul Slack, *The English Poor Law, 1531-1782* (London: MacMillan Education, 1990), 11.
- [28] Ibid., 15.
- [29] Ibid., 18-21.
- [30] Ibid., 26-9.
- [31] *Several Propositions tendered by the Corporations for the Employing the Poor of the City of London, and Liberties* (London 1650).
- [32] Cotes, *Several Propositions*.
- [33] William Pryor and Thomas Turner, *The Out-Cries of the Poor, Oppressed, & Imprisoned or A safe Way to free the Poor of this City and the whole Nation of England, from Begging and Starving, Presented to the Council of Officers* (London, 1659), 3-4.
- [34] Sir Josiah Child, *Sir Josiah Child's Proposals For the Relief and Employment of the Poor* (London, 1670), 1.
- [35] Ibid.
- [36] Thomas Firmin, *Some Proposals for the employing of the Poor, Especially in and about the City of London. And for the prevention of Begging, a practice so dishonourable to the Nation, and to the Christian Religion* (London, 1678).
- [37] Ibid., 4-5.
- [38] *Some Thoughts Concerning the Maintenance of the Poor* (London 1700), 4-5.
- [39] Slack, *English Poor Law*, 35.
- [40] Ibid., 35-9.
- [41] Ibid., 62.
- [42] Ibid.
- [43] T.C. Hansard and William Cobbet, ed., *The Parliamentary History of England, From the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, vol. 17 (London: Johnson Reprint Company, LTD, 1966) 843-846.
- [44] Ibid., vol. 18, 627.
- [45] Slack, *English Poor Law*, 45-8.
- [46] Ibid., 39-45.
- [47] Dorothy Marshall, "The Old Poor Law, 1662-1795," in *Essays in Economic History*, ed. E.M. Carus-Wilson. (London: Edward Arnold, 1963), 300.
- [48] Marshall, "Old Poor Law," 301-3.
- [49] Hansard, *Parliamentary History*, vol. 19, 71-3.
- [50] Ibid., vol. 15, 941.
- [51] Ibid., 942.
- [52] Ibid.
- [53] Ibid., vol. 16, 6.
- [54] Slack, *English Poor Law*, 63.
- [55] Hansard, *Parliamentary History*, vol. 17, 640-2.
- [56] Ibid., vol 18, 546-9.
- [57] Ibid., 550-1.
- [58] Ibid., 551-2.
- [59] Slack, *English Poor Law*, 63-64.
- [60] Hansard, *Parliamentary History*, vol. 27, 265-269.
- [61] Slack, *English Poor Law*, 48-52.