



21 January 2014

Patrick Leary  
President, RSVP  
1322 Greenleaf St., Apt. 1  
Evanston, IL 60202

Dear Patrick,

I write to provide you with a report on the research I was able to undertake as a result of the generous support of one of the 2013 Curran Fellowships of the RSVP.

The project which the Fellowship Committee funded was a monograph-length study of the later campaigns against the 'taxes on knowledge' and the implications of the taxes' repeal for the evolution of the newspaper press in Britain in the 1850s and 1860s. At the time I received the funding I had already undertaken extensive research via the various digital collections of nineteenth century newspapers, and also some significant research in the archives: including the papers of the Association for Promoting the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge, and also the personal papers of a number of leading figures in the campaigns, especially Richard Cobden, John Bright, G.J. Holyoake, W.E. Gladstone, and Thomas Milner Gibson. The bulk of this research had been undertaken in London (British Library, National Library and Bishopsgate Institute), Manchester, Chichester and York.

The Curran Fellowship funding enabled me to significantly extend my archival research, by funding further trips to London (additional work in the British Library, Institute of Historical Research, National Archives, University College London), Oxford (Bodleian Library, Balliol College), Hawarden (St Deiniol's Library /Fintshire Record Office), Chester (Chester Record Office) Edinburgh (National Library of Scotland), Newcastle (Newcastle Record Office), Durham (Durham University Library), Manchester (John Rylands Library, Greater Manchester Record Office), and Hull (Hull Archives Centre). I also used a small amount to order photocopies of archival material from these and other archives. As a result I was able to significantly enrich my research with work in the papers of a number of leading cabinet members of the 1850s and 1860s (including Lord John Russell, Sir Charles Wood, W.E. Gladstone, George Grey, Lord Clarendon), other supporters of the campaigns, including Joseph Cowen, William and Robert Chambers, George Wilson, F.H. Chesson, and additional correspondence of John Bright, and Justin McCarthy.

A number of these additional archival visits were extremely significant in shaping the outcomes of my research; one or two were revelatory. In particular, my visit to St Deiniol's Library enabled me to consult the extensive material of 'private' correspondence of W.E. Gladstone, which was separated from the much more well-known and widely used materials deposited in the British Library, and therein to discover substantial elements of Gladstone's correspondence with newspaper editors and proprietors during his periods as Chancellor in the 1850s. Studies such as Stephen Koss's *Rise of the Political Press in Britain* had noted that elements of this correspondence had taken place, but neither Koss nor to my knowledge any other historian of the press has ever located or used this material. This new material included a significant cache of letter from John Hamilton,

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editor/proprietor of the *Empire* newspaper (1854-55), and thereafter on the editorial staff of the *Morning Star* newspaper, and also a number of letters from Sir Arthur Elton, who Koss had noted had corresponded with Gladstone in the mid-1850s about various possibilities for Gladstone to take an interest in one or other of the London dailies, including in particular the *Daily Telegraph* during the struggles of its early years, as well as various miscellaneous communications from the newspaper interest in response to proposal for reform of the newspaper taxes in the 1850s. The supplementary research at Rylands, UCL, and Hull in particular was very helpful in enabling me to flesh out the history of the *Morning Star* newspaper, which was established by Cobden, Bright and their Manchester School colleagues in 1856, and whose history until its cessation in 1869 is a record of the compromised successes of the 'taxes on knowledge' agitations. This research helped form the basis of a self-contained study of the paper which forms a separate chapter in the monograph. From early summer 2014 this chapter will be available via the University of Huddersfield Research Repository, and so freely available to the RSVP community.

For the rest, I am delighted to be able to report that the support of the Fellowship enabled me to complete the manuscript of my monograph in the summer of 2013, and the book was published by Bloomsbury Academic at the end of 2013 as *The Dawn of the Cheap Press in Victorian Britain: the end of the taxes on knowledge, 1849-1869*. ISBN 9781472511546. It would have been much more difficult to complete the project within this timescale without the support of the Fellowship committee, and the finished manuscript is likely to have been weaker. For this, my thanks once again to the committee and the RSVP for its support. I hope it is a study which will commend itself to historians of the newspaper press, and help inform ongoing work in the field.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely



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