

Using your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the Whig governments in the period from 1833 to 1837. [30]

General context of the period

- In 1829–30, Wellington's Tory government collapsed under the strains created by the controversy over Catholic emancipation and Wellington's inability to see that parliamentary reform was once again a powerful and developing issue. The death of George IV in June 1830 removed the veto on the appointment of Earl Grey as PM. Wellington's defeat in the House of Commons in late 1830 resulted in his resignation and Grey's appointment at the head of a government, which was, in effect, a coalition of Whigs and disaffected Tories.
- The Whigs were determined to pass a reform of Parliament. In fact, it was a condition of Grey's appointment as PM. The country was gripped by a crisis over reform from 1831–32, characterised by impassioned parliamentary debate, public protest, a general election, a failed attempt at a minority government by Wellington and the eventual passage of the Reform Act in the summer of 1832.
- The Reform Act 1832 was a modest measure in many respects (as the Whigs had intended) but it did enfranchise a significant proportion of the middle classes, swept away many of the more obscure voting qualifications and replaced them with property qualifications for voting, as well as a cautiously redistributing seats from the rotten boroughs to the urban and industrial areas. Working class frustration with the lack of representation and worsening economic conditions led to the important, but ultimately unsuccessful, Chartist movement.
- Another general election in December 1832 devastated the Tories and returned the Whigs to power, in effect for most of the rest of the 1830s. The decade saw a large and impressive legislative programme and a more professional approach to government than had been witnessed before. The government also engaged with social welfare questions more extensively than any previous administration. This was evidenced by the grant to education (1833), systematic regulation of working hours in factories (1833) and the New Poor Law (1834). The legislative process was also significant; a pattern of investigation by committee and/or Royal Commission informed legislation increasingly supported by monitoring, inspection and supervision. The trend towards greater government regulation was also exemplified by the Railway Act (1840). The debate on all this activity illustrated the range of views including Benthamite utilitarians, centralisers, believers in *laissez faire*, humanitarians, radicals and diehard Tories.
- The Whig decade was also marked by alternate policies of coercion and conciliation in Ireland, a substantial reform of municipal government, church reform and the extension of professional policing to the county areas.
- The Whig coalition, for all its emphasis on reform, reacted with brutal energy in suppressing the Swing agricultural riots in 1830–1 and prosecuting early trade unionists in 1834; the Tolpuddle Martyrs were transported to Australia. The latter were eventually pardoned by Lord John Russell, the Home Secretary, in 1837.
- Although the Whig coalition fell apart briefly in 1834–5 over disputes about the revenues of the Church of Ireland and coercion, the resulting Tory minority government could not last. A renewed coalition of Whigs, Radicals and Irish MPs was agreed in the Lichfield House compact in 1835 and the coalition ruled until 1841. Nevertheless, the revived Tory Party under Peel's leadership (a revival signalled by the Tamworth Manifesto, 1834) made ground in the 1837 general election and swept the Whigs from power in a landslide victory in 1841.

Key:

Values

Limitations

Other points of note

Summary of points, including:

- notes on the sources and their attributions/provenances
- notes on the specific context of the sources

Source A

John Roebuck, a radical Whig MP, in a speech to the House of Commons in support of the first government grant to education (July 1833)

I propose a Resolution, by which this House will acknowledge as a key principle of government, that the education of the people is a matter of national concern; that, as such, it ought to be the object of the most immediate and continued attention on the part of the Legislature. One of the first, and one of the most important, results from a proper education of the people would be a thorough understanding on their part of the

- From a speech to the House of Commons by John Roebuck, a radical MP, in support of the first government grant to education. This is early evidence of a developing interest by governments in social welfare questions.
- The date is 1833, so this is one of the first measures of the newly elected and reformed parliament.
- The education of the poor had been seen as a concern by earlier reformers, but Roebuck sees it as a "national concern". He sees it as an issue of social and moral regeneration - "we will have a people industrious, honest, tolerant and happy".
- Immediate context is provided by Roebuck who refers to "a stack burning peasantry", an indication of the alarm caused by the Swing riots 1830-1. His comment on "wild and futile schemes of Reform" is an interesting observation from a radical MP who had supported the cautious and moderate Reform Act of the previous year.

circumstances on which their happiness depended, and of the powers by which those circumstances were controlled. They would learn what a government could and could not do to relieve their distresses – they would learn what depended on themselves, what on others – what evils resulted from evil authority, what from popular ignorance and popular vice. We will have no more ignorant discontents – no wild and futile schemes of Reform; we will not have a stack-burning peasantry nor a sturdy pauper population nor a monopoly-seeking manufacturing class. Neither will there be immoral landlords wishing to maintain a dangerous corn monopoly. We will have a people industrious, honest, tolerant and happy. Of all the knowledge that can be conferred on a people, this is the most essential.

Source B:

Leonard Horner, a factory inspector, writing in his report to a Parliamentary select committee investigating the operation of the Factory Laws (1837)

The strong dislike of the 1833 Factory Act, which existed among a large number of the most respectable cotton-mill owners, has greatly subsided. From what I have seen, and from the opinions I have heard expressed both by them and their work-people, there is evidently an increased conviction in the minds of both that an effective interference of the Legislature for the protection of the children employed in factories is necessary, and that it is just in principle; although there is still an impression with many that the restrictions have been carried further than the case required. The hostility to the Act, which I have drawn attention to, and which has in many instances considerably hindered its operation, was evidently created by indignant feelings in the minds of many of the most extensive and respectable cotton-mill owners, arising from the great injustice with which they have been treated in the various discussions and publications to which the factory question has given rise. However that there were some whose conduct had been such as to merit the condemnation was unfortunately too clearly proved by the evidence laid before Parliament. That there are still many who appear to be indifferent to the health or moral state of the children they employ, and to view them in no other light than as tools let out to hire, is clearly proved by the prosecutions that have taken place in my district in the last half-year, and by the little effort taken by some cotton-mill owners to meet the humane objects of the Act by a small sacrifice of trouble and expense.

- Further context is provided by the current debate on the reform of the Poor Law; education will, according to Roebuck, remove the threat of “a sturdy pauper population”.
- The concept of education as a form of social control is reflected in Roebuck’s justification for expenditure on education - “we will have no more ignorant discontents”. The people would learn “what a government could and could not do to relieve their distress”.
- The salience of the controversy over the Corn Laws is not far from the surface as Roebuck takes a swipe at “immoral landlords” who wish to “maintain a dangerous corn monopoly”.
- The speech is supporting an important principle; the education of the people is not only a matter of “national concern” but “a key principle of government”. The idea that a government could spend money on the people is groundbreaking for the early nineteenth century.

- From a report by Leonard Horner, a factory inspector, to a Parliamentary select committee investigating the operation of the factory laws.
- Horner was one of the four inspectors appointed as a result of the Factory act 1833.
- The regulatory framework set up by the legislation was innovatory and exemplified the trend towards the monitoring and supervisory mechanisms supporting new laws.
- The date is four years after the legislation was passed so the effectiveness of, and the reaction to, the factory legislation could be critically assessed.
- Horner refers to the debate in parliament about the “effective interference” posed by the legislation to the operation of the free market.
- Horner reports that the fierce opposition to the regulation of working hours and conditions of children had subsided and that there is a growing consensus that legislation was “necessary”.
- The impact of the various reports into factory conditions still clearly rankles with “respectable cotton mill owners” who felt that their reputations had been traduced by unfair and exaggerated claims.
- Nevertheless, Horner is clear that in some cases “the evidence laid before Parliament” was accurate.
- Horner refers to the motivation behind the Factory Act, namely “the protection of children”, the need to safeguard “the health and moral state of the children”, and especially “the humane object of the Act”. This illustrates the legislation’s humanitarian motivation and its struggle against the arguments of the believers in unrestrained market forces.
- Horner, of course, owes his position as an inspector to the Factory Act and this needs to be considered in any assessment of the value of his report. On the other hand, as an inspector he will be used to observing, recording and assessing evidence in the provision of reports in the new regulatory framework set by Parliament.
- His report is primarily concerned with the textile industry and does not comment on practices in employment elsewhere.

Source C:

Lord John Russell, a leading Whig minister and an architect of the 1832 Reform Bill, in a speech at his celebratory banquet after the general election (1837)

Having just been re-elected as Member of Parliament for Frome in the recent general election I am pleased to be called a Reformer – one wishing to see the progress of improvement and to see the country advance in all that was good and generous and enlightened. When the leading acts of the governments of Lord Grey and Viscount Melbourne are considered, these governments had not been idle. In reforming the municipal corporations they had to contend with the opposition of corrupt influence. In the amendment of the Poor Laws the government had to encounter the great opposition of large bodies of the poor who had been supported in idleness at the expense of the hard working and industrious. A reform government alone had the courage to grapple with the evil and to place the Poor Laws on that footing which would promote the comfort of the industrious classes. As for the reform of Parliament, there may be parts of the Reform Act that are still open for discussion, but I would say the less frequently such a measure as the Reform Act is discussed the better – at this time I am not for making a further change in the great institutions of this country.

- From a speech by Lord John Russell at a celebratory banquet following his election as a MP in the general election of 1837.
- Lord John Russell was one of the most important Whig ministers – he was Home Secretary at the time- and had been one of the main architects of the Reform Bill which passed into law in 1832.
- The date is just after the 1837 general election - the Whigs have been in power for most of the previous 7 years and have just been re-elected.
- Russell is proud to extol the virtues of the Whigs as reformers. The record of the Whigs as a reforming ministry was, by any measure, substantial.
- Russell highlights the significant reform of municipal government and the opposition of “corrupt influence”, which is plainly a consequence of the Reform Act 1832. The Municipal Corporations Act followed the pattern of investigation by a Commission before legislation was prepared.
- Russell places great emphasis on the Whig achievement in passing the reform of the Poor Law. He clearly betrays the influence of utilitarians and ratepayers in that process: the poor “had been supported in idleness at the expense of the hard working and industrious”. The “industrious classes” are seen as the priorities, indeed Russell refers to their “comfort”.
- As a main architect of the reform Act his views on parliamentary reform are significant. Russell explains the classic Whig position - the Reform Act was seen as a final position - “I am not for making a further change in the great institutions of the country”.
- This reveals one of the main motivations behind the Chartist movement which is about to take off- the Whigs and the middle classes will not countenance further parliamentary reform.
- Of course, Russell is a politician and would be expected to put the best possible gloss on the achievements of his government and its reforms. It is a speech at a banquet celebrating success in an election not a sober appraisal of the Whig achievement.
- In reality, the Whigs in Parliament were entirely reliant on Irish votes after the 1837 election; the Tories were making up lost ground after their election debacle in 1832. The record of the Whigs in government after 1837 was a pale shadow of its success between 1830 and 1837.

Keeping the question in mind, use the information above and identify similarities and differences between the sources. These may vary in number: you do not need to have an equal amount of each.

Similarities between the sources

Sources A, B and C all consider the issue of reform in its different contexts during the 1830s. All are broadly supportive of reform.

Sources A and B focus on the moral case for reform whether it be the benefits of education or the protection of the health and moral state children in employment. Source B says the Factory Act had an “humane object”.

Source C acknowledges the importance of reform and its place in the achievements of the Whig government.

Differences between the sources

Sources A, B and C deal with different aspects of reform, A with education, B with factory reform and C with municipal government, the Poor law and parliamentary reform.

Source A is mainly concerned with the reasons for reform. Source B does touch on those but is also concerned with the implementation and consequences of factory reform.

Source C, by contrast, places reform into a political context, notably the contribution of a particular political party. Where it does deal with motivation it stresses the very different motivation behind the reform of the poor laws compared to the humanitarian impulse behind factory and educational reform.

Now, considering the general context of the period, your analysis of the sources and their provenances, identification of the specific content and identification of similarities and differences outline and explain the value and limitations of the sources – both individually and collectively – to an historian studying the issue in the question. Again, these may vary in number: you do not need to have an equal amount of each.

What is the value of the source or sources to an historian studying...

The most significant value of Source A to an historian studying the Whig governments of the 1830s is the early importance of a social welfare issue to the newly elected and reformed parliament. Also significant is the understanding that education was a national concern and something a government would spend money upon.

Why is this a value?

(include contextual material – specific or general – where necessary)

Although there has been some scepticism about the education grant as, in 1833, six times as much was spent rebuilding the royal stables, nevertheless an important principle has been established: a government could spend money directly on a social welfare issue. The grant became a fixed item of expenditure, reaching 100k per annum in the 1840s. In 1839, an inspectorate was set up to monitor and report upon the quality of education in grant aided schools further enhancing the role of government in supporting the education of the masses. The grant was split between the two national societies with the bulk going to the more numerous Anglican voluntary schools. The place of religious instruction in the aided sector was to be a recurring political issue exemplified by the conflict over educational provision for education in the factory legislation of the 1840s. Also of value to historians are the wider contextual references to the Corn Laws and the issue of rural protest.

The most significant value of Source B is that it is a first-hand account of the origins of, and impact of, factory legislation in the 1830s from a well-placed and informed observer whose views commanded the respect and attention of Parliament. Horner's role was to investigate, record and report the implementation of factory legislation as part of the newly introduced regulatory framework for working conditions in factories.

The issue of factory reform and, in particular, the protection of young children had aroused fierce debate. The humanitarian coalition arguing for reform included Tories, radicals and aristocrats like Lord Ashley. Michael Sadler's parliamentary campaign had been very successful and a select committee, packed with his allies, produced a damning report about factory conditions in 1832. As a result a Royal Commission was set up to investigate the problem the following year. Significantly it was directed by the prominent utilitarian Edwin Chadwick and the commission tried to play down what it saw as the exaggerated material publicised by Sadler's report. The eventual report of the commission was a deft balance between the arguments of the factory owners and economists against the reduction of hours and the need to protect children who were not free agents in the economy. This tension is reflected in Horner's report which emphasises not only the importance of the health and moral state of children in employment but also the reservations of factory owners.

Source C, the speech by Lord John Russell, is a valuable insight into the motivation of the Whig governments. The reforms of those governments are praised and two of the most significant—the municipal reforms and the poor law changes—are justified in detail. Most significant, however, is Russell's view that further parliamentary reform was not necessary. Not for nothing was he known as "Finality Jack".

The reform of Parliament in 1832 was a moderate reform that enfranchised merchants, manufacturers, professional and trades people - the emerging middle classes—with new property qualifications for voting. Radical changes such as the secret ballot were rejected. Although the Whigs drew the sting of radicalism temporarily their failure to embark on more extensive parliamentary reform did much to motivate the Chartist movement. The reform of parliament led inexorably to the reform of the municipal corporations partly because of the impact of the new £10 householder voter in borough representation. The newly reformed parliament quickly instituted a committee to investigate the state of municipal corporations. The massive scale of the task led to the appointment of a Royal Commission, directed by Joseph Parkes. This was already a familiar pattern for all significant reforms in this period—investigation, report, legislation, monitoring and/or inspection. The resulting legislation provided a uniform system for all municipal government and a framework to improve urban conditions with significant long-term consequences for public health reform.

The most significant reform was the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834. Pressure to reform the poor law had been building for years. The utilitarians had it in their sights, alleging inefficiency, high costs and the disincentivisation of labour. The social disorder during the Swing Riots 1830-1 spurred the Whigs into action. A Royal Commission was set up to investigate the Poor laws. Under the firm direction of utilitarians such as Edwin Chadwick and Nassau Senior a highly influential report not only criticised the amount spent on poor relief but also alleged that labourers were being turned into lazy idlers. The report proposed a more rational, uniform and centralised system to replace the old poor laws with the less eligibility test and the workhouse at the core of its recommendations. The resulting Poor Law Amendment Act was passed with little opposition in Parliament indeed with a wide measure of agreement between the Whigs and Tories. The resulting reduction in poor law expenditure was welcomed by ratepayers—the "industrious classes" mentioned by Russell in his speech. However, the new Poor Law in operation proved contentious, meeting with considerable resistance particularly in the northern urban areas and achieving notoriety in Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist* (1837-9) and the Andover Workhouse scandal (1845).

The three sources taken together illustrate the motivation behind and consequences of the Whig reforms as well as some aspects of the political history of the 1830s.

The sources reveal not only the Whigs' moderation in the Reform Act 1832 but also the expansion of government activity in social welfare issues and the regulation of working conditions.

What are the limitations of the source or sources to an historian studying...

The most significant limitation of Source A is that it is a speech by a radical MP so we only see one viewpoint in a Parliament of considerably less radical participants. There was vocal and persuasive opposition to the ideas of government intervention in social welfare issues and especially in the operation of the free market economy.

The most significant limitation of Source B is that Horner is part of the system brought in by the Factory Act 1833, in fact his job depends on it. He might be expected to be wholly supportive of the legislation and the ideas behind it.

The most significant limitation of Source C is that it is a partisan Whig view from one of the Party's most significant leaders. It is also produced for an audience likely to be completely uncritical; it is, after all, a celebratory banquet following a successful election.

Why is it a limitation?

(include contextual material – specific or general – where necessary)

There had been other ideas for the education of the poor particularly the provision of elementary education from the rates. Despite the influence of utilitarians ideas about state control and centralisation, they were fiercely resisted as was to be shown in later debates about public health reform. In the end parliament went for the option of supporting education through the existing voluntary societies.

The regulation of working conditions was controversial and the factory owners proved to be a powerful lobby. The tension between the arguments of the economists and factory owners and the humanitarians was revealed in the Royal Commission report itself and was played out in all the debates about factory legislation in the 1830s and 1840s. The debate went to the heart of the issue about the influence of *laissez-faire* philosophy on the role of government in state and economy.

Russell's audience would not have wanted to hear criticism of the Party's legislative achievements. The Poor Law Amendment Act was already controversial by 1837; the parliamentary reform issue was far from finalised as the country was about to be convulsed by the Chartist movement.

In summary, what is the value of these sources to an historian studying...

Overall, these sources are valuable to an historian studying the motivation behind, and the implementation of, one of the great reforming programmes of the nineteenth century. The theme of reform pervades all three sources as does the expansion of government activity in social welfare issues and the regulation of working conditions. What is also clear is the determination of the Whigs to close the lid on further parliamentary reform. Source A is a radical, and therefore a minority, viewpoint. Horner in Source B could be seen as a reliable commentator even if he was an integral part of the newly created regulatory framework. Russell's view in Source C, although revealing of Whig motives, is a partisan political speech with all the faults and virtues of the genre.