The Economic Societies: Springboard to the Spanish Enlightenment

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I. Introduction

The Spanish Enlightenment was a continuation of various reform movements which began in other parts of Europe at earlier dates. Its greatest intensity took place during the last half of the eighteenth century under the administrations of Charles III and Charles IV. This intensity coincided closely with the most active life of the prerequisite vehicle of reform, the economic societies (Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del País). Reformers working through the economic societies faced two major obstacles to an improved economic order for eighteenth-century Spain. The first was the Church, which had strong vested interests in terms of ownership of land, special tax privileges, control over many of the educational institutions, and censorship through means of the Inquisition. The second was the landed aristocracy, which was often closely associated with the vested interests of the Church. The aristocracy was favoured by lack of taxation, entailed estates, taxing privileges against the poor, and control of public institutions. The Church and the aristocracy benefited from the repressed majority in the populace. It was in their interest to maintain the status quo socially, politically, and economically.

The economic societies were officially-sanctioned organizations sheltering education works and proposed legislation by regalists, Freemasons, Jansenists, and others considered by the Church to be heretical types. They were able to counter the Church and the aristocracy with various reform movements with relative impunity. The Spanish Enlightenment would have been greatly retarded without the economic societies as a countering force.

Padre Benito Feijoo sparked the Spanish Enlightenment early in the eighteenth century with his attacks on superstitions and custom of the times. His action was followed by the era of the "enlightened despots,"[1] who changed the

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[1] In addition to the Spanish monarchs, Charles III and Charles IV, the enlightened despots included Frederick II in Prussia, Catherine II in Russia, Joseph II in Austria, Gustavus III in Sweden, and Stanislaw in Poland.

relationship of the State to the individual and made the State independent of the Church. The State took an interest in the welfare of individuals as a means to its own power. Bitar argued that in Spain the State became an intermediary between man and God.[2] The enlightened despots and the Spanish economic societies formed a complementary link from the people to the government and a barrier between the Church and reformers of the time. The barrier was not absolute, however, as demonstrated by the many persecutions which were imposed on reformers of the last half of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century. Revolutionary outside ideas were inhibited since the overt support of reform movements would challenge papal authority and local officials of the Church. Resistance to the strength of the Church and the Inquisition necessitated some cohesive bond to help prevent the isolated breakdown of the elements of enlightenment and reform necessary to bring prosperity to Spain.

The purposes of this paper are:

1. To identify the need for a reform vehicle in terms of education, economics, and legislation;
2. To examine the establishment of the economic societies and key agents in sympathy with their reform movements;
3. To discuss exemplary activities of the societies in the reform movement of the Enlightenment; and
4. To evaluate the impact of the economic societies on the Enlightenment.

II. Need for the Societies

There were multiple reasons for reform in Spain: economic decadence, poor land resource use and inequitable land tenure policies, poor education, and deficient industrial development. Spain was considerably behind the rest of Europe in economic development, as illustrated below. The economic decadence in Spain was perhaps the most pressing reason for concentrating on the need for a development vehicle. The decadence started roughly with the seventeenth century and lasted a hundred years or so, well into the second decade of the 1700s.[3] Declines in stock raising, agriculture, and trade were accompanied by population losses, poor harvests, political impotence and a title consciousness combined with an aversion to work.[4] Spain was slow to accept new thought on education, philosophy, and economics, all of which could have served as the basis of progress to be made in the country. Evidence of Spain's backwardness in the eighteenth century was manifest by the absence of scientific contributions

[2] Marcelo Bitar-Letaif, *Economistas Españoles del Siglo XVIII*, (Madrid, Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1968), p. 8.

[3] Jaime Vicens-Vives, *An Economic History of Spain*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 6.

[4] *Ibid*., pp. 411–412.

akin to those in other countries, where outstanding gains were made in analytical mechanics, optics, acoustics, thermodynamics, electricity and magnetism, and chemistry.[5]

According to Shafer, " The Spanish Bourbons inherited in 1700 from their Hapsburg predecessors a nation suffering from a diseased economy, however sound the other national organs may have been." and "At least it was clear then, as now, that a cure for the economic ailment would be useful. All governments of eighteenth-century Spain yearned to fatten the fisc by improving the general economy; but their efforts had ambiguous results at best."[6] Efforts were made to tax Church lands after the Concordat of 1753 between Ferdinand and the Pope. Other attempts were made to tax lands of the aristocracy, but these plans largely failed.[7] These frustrated efforts, combined with high military expenditures, helped to keep the public till empty.

Sarrailh pointed out numerous examples of the economic misery of the Spanish masses during the eighteenth century. The country's patriots had at least become cognizant of criticism from the outside, especially from France, where Spain was portrayed as a dual society in which most of the populace were illiterates who could barely sustain themselves, while a select few lived in prosperity.[8]

A strong economic argument could be made for land reform; open lands, due to disallowance of enclosure by fencing, prevented the highest and best use of resources. Entailed estates, both civil and ecclesiastical, hindered prosperity by interfering with free resource movement and free trade. Population decline, with remaining residents at the point of starvation, were portrayed by Sarrailh. Maltreatment of tenant farmers, taxing tenants of land, restrictions on crop selection, and other repressive regulations kept the lower classes downtrodden. Hunger, sickness, and death were the rule.[9]

Shafer added that "In addition, the eighteenth century inherited problems of currency inflation and rising prices; an emphasis on currency inflation and rising prices; an emphasis on stockraising at the expense of agriculture; the holding out of production of vast lands held by communes, nobility, and Church; a decayed commerce, internal and external; a long enfeebled industrial production; and a social bias against manual labor."[10] Wars, unwillingness to tax, and running the

[5] Francisco Galindo-Garcia, *El Espiritu del Siglo XVIII y la Personalidad de Jovellanos*, (Oviedo, Instituto de Estudios Asturianos, 1971), p. 19.

[6] Robert Jones Shafer, *The Economic Societies in the Spanish World (1763-1821)*, (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1958), p. 4.

[7] Richard Herr, *The Modern Nations in Historical Perspective-Spain*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 54-55.

[8] Jean Sarrailh, *La España Ilustrada de la Segunda Mitad del Siglo XVIII*, Translation by Antonio Alatorre, (Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1957), pp. 17-21.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 22-30.

[10] Shafer, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

printing press were causes of inflation during the latter part of the century. Hamilton reported that Spain resorted to paper money for the first time in 1780.[11] The emphasis on stockraising was carried out by supporting the Mesta, the sheepherders' guild, by prohibiting farmers from putting the plow to their land. Agriculture was therefore deprived of the opportunity to allocate lands to food production which was more valuable to the economy because of price changes in favour of food and against stockraising.[12]

Ignorance, inertia, and a conformist attitude were the great impediments to economic progress in Spain in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Astrologers practised artful deceit as the ignorant maintained their beliefs in magic and mysticism. Some people believed that old seeds led to the production of different plant species. Feijoo was amused on observing the fearful ignorant during an eclipse, as they shyly set out for their quarters, while he himself took a stroll to demonstrate that no harm would result.[13] Olavide was persecuted by the Inquisition in the late 1770's because, among other reasons. "... he championed the Copernican system, and objected to the ringing of bells as a specific against thunderstorms."[14] Fejioo portrayed the bleeding of the anaemic and other similar acts to illustrate the backwardness of the medical profession in Spain.[15]

The existing conditions suggested a great opportunity in the field of education at all levels of Spanish society. Sarrailh detailed the worthless teaching methods of the Church, with its emphasis on Latin and strict discipline to the tune of corporal punishment, its arbitrariness, its incoherence, and its gloomy monastic hypocrisy. Emphasis on rote memory, personal prejudices against the poorer classes, an abundance of philosophizing, and scant opportunity for application to the problems of the day were the circumstances of education for younger students. As a partial remedy, the teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic was put forth by Jovellanos as a worthy goal of the economic societies.[16]

In discussing the revisionists, Shafer remarked that "They could not turn for advancement for their ideas to the universities, which clung to traditional patterns, much as English universities in the same period. Intellectual fossilization in these cloisters merely resulted in the new ideas being introduced outside them often through specialized institutions formed on foreign models."[17]

[11] Earl J. Hamilton, *War and Prices in Spain 1651-1800*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 152.

[12] Herr, 1971, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

[13] Sarrailh, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-65.

[14] Cecil Roth, *The Spanish Inquisition*, (New York, W.W. Norton and Company, 1964), p. 255.

[15] Sarrailh, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 55-57.

[17] Shafer, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

Polt reported a similar low esteem for the universities in that "The important intellectual progress of the age, in Spain and elsewhere, took place outside the universities and often against their opposition."[18] Cabarrús was more emphatic and argued for closing down the universities, referring to them as cesspools of humanity. They were fraught with corruption and error, and he thought they caused great damage and could not be shut down too soon.[19]

Padre Luis Antonio Verey's (pseudonymn El Barbadiño) book *Verdadeiro método de estudar* cricitized Spain's universities for emphasis on memory, Aristotelian and scholastic authority, and for a lack of concern for experimentation. The book was not well received by the clergy since it was perceived as anti-Jesuit, but it was approved by the agents of reform.[20]

The aim of the reformers was to promote useful knowledge instead of multiplying the examples of useless teaching. Jovellanos, Cabarrús, and Campomanes certainly pressed for this type of action. Cabarrús demanded teaching of "... only necessary, useful and practical things."[21] Jovellanos was more moderate, prescribing a balance of the practical and the theoretical as complementary stimulants to progress.[22]

The need for an enlightened group of policy makers and an enlightened magistracy was a constant theme of Jovellanos, who was perhaps the greatest contributor to the Spanish Enlightenment. He saw the need to open up foreign and domestic commerce through free enterprise and elimination of impediments to the allocation of resources. This end could be attained only by the economic education of government officials and by general education of the populace. [23]

The opportunity cost related to poor education was apparent in Sarrailh's chapter on the "Burden of the Routine," in which he reported on the great difficulty in changing any production method in the country. Bernardo Ward had argued that spinning production at times could be increased by as much as five times by a simple change in methods.[24] Spain's industrial development depended upon changes in education to take advantage of all opportunities for gain in the country's economy.

The agents of change were the revisionists and the vehicle was the group of economic societies. According to Shafer, "The Spanish revisionists were moderate reformers, not revolutionaries or heretics. Some, as Aranda, were fun-

[18] JOHN H. R. POLT, *Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos*, (New York, Twayne Publishers, 1971), p. 108.

[19] Sarrailh, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 199-202.

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 176-178.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

[23] GASPAR MELCHOR DE JOVELLANOS, "Economía Civil." In Don Miguel Artola (ed.), *Obras De D. Gaspar Melchor De Jovellanos*, (Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1956), pp. 7-17.

[24] Sarrailh, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

damentally political figures and most of the important revisionists held some sort of official position; others, as Olavide and Cabarrús were in part writers of a doctrinal and ideological bent; another group, including Campomanes, was distinguished by its learning, especially historical, and by its practical point of view."[25]

Only through an insulating vehicle such as the economic societies would it have been possible to protect the individual agents of reform from persecution by the conservative elements including the Inquisition and the Church. According to Shafer, "The influence of the Church was attacked by a number of measures, of which the expulsion of the Jesuits was merely the most spectacular. The Church cast a sour eye upon the revisionists, nor was it reconciled by knowledge that other governments in the age of enlightened despotism were enacting similar measures. There were few liberal ecclesiastics, and the general population of Spain was never enthusiastic about the aims of the civil government in its quarrels with the Church."[26]

III. Establishment of the Economic Societies

The failures of the universities and lower level educational institutions left a void which was partially filled by what Shafer called "specialized institutions" based on foreign models. Some of these were the Royal Spanish Academy, the Academy of History, the Academy of Fine Arts of Saint Ferdinand, the School of Mines in Almadén, and the Museum and Botany Garden at Madrid. Shafer stated that, "Not least of these new, liberal, extra-university centres of enlightenment were the sixty Economic Societies of Friends of the Country organized between 1775 and the dawn of the new century."[27]

At the impulse of Peñaflorida and fifteen others in 1763, a Project and Plan of Agriculture, Sciences and Useful Arts for Guipúzcoa was synthesized and approved by the "Juntas generales" in Villafranca. The document included the proposal of "... a 'Society,' a lottery to support it, and means of improving agriculture, rustic economy, the sciences, the useful arts, industry, and commerce."[28]

The Society was organized at Azcoitia in December 1764 and had its first annual meeting at Vergara on 6 to 14 February, 1765, to hear numerous scientific papers. According to Shafer, "An order in 1765 gave royal license for the Society, directing officials of the Basque provinces to aid it. Statutes were printed in 1766, but soon changed, the new statutes being approved by the Crown in 1773, and published in 1774."[29]

[25] Shafer, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 29.
[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

The economic societies were not original to Spain, having forbears in the Royal Societies of London, Dublin, and the royal academies of Paris, Berlin, and St. Petersburg. Shafer reported that, "Spaniards resident in France in the last three or four decades of the century must have known of the numerous agricultural societies of that country."[30] Similar societies which stimulated the establishment of the Spanish societies also were mentioned in Zurich and Berne in Switzerland and in Scotland.[31] Bernardo Ward referred to societies in Sweden, Tuscany, France, and Dublin on which juntas of zealous patricians in Spain could model their supporting organization.[32]

Certainly, various juntas and more informal "tertulias" led logically to the establishment of the original society. In speaking of one of the tertulia groups as early as 1748, Sarrailh reported that, "... Mondays they will discuss mathematics; Tuesdays, physics; Wednesdays, reading history writings and translation done by the 'academics'; Thursdays and Sundays, small concerts; Fridays, geography; and Saturdays, discussions on question of the day."[33] The Freemasonry movement helped considerably in laying the groundwork for spreading new secular ideas in the populace by way of the economic societies.[34]

Following information such as that provided by Bernardo Ward and Melchor Rafael de Macanaz with respect to foreign societies, it was Campomanes who gave impetus to the national proliferation of economic societies in Spain.[35] After the independent organization of societies at Baeza and Jaén in 1774, Campomanes issued his Circular of November 18 from the Consejo Supremo de Castilla directing local authorities to establish economic societies in their provinces. This directive was accompanied by many copies of the *Discurso sobre el fomento de la industria popular* which was attributed to Campomanes.[36] Details for the operation of societies were spelled out in the first essay of Compomanes' *Discurso sobre la educación popular de los artesanos y su fomento* published in 1775.[37]

The societies were largely regional organizations but had a rather wide influence because of the distribution of their members and of their schools' alumni around the world. Many of the members resided outside of the region of their society. This was especially true of the Basque Society.[38]

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[33] Sarrailh, *op. cit.*, p. 231.
[34] Shafer, *op. cit.*, p. 25
[35] Sarrailh, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-236 and Shafer, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
[36] Sarrailh, *op. cit.*, p. 252. In a separate paper I have dealt with the questioned authenticity of this authorship.
[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 252-253.
[38] Shafer, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-47.

The members of the society were motivated by feelings of patriotism which directed their dedication of time, effort and money to the organizations. Some of the organizations were called "Sociedades Patrióticas" in place of "Sociedades Económicas." Their membership covered all socio-economic levels and often included the clergy, in spite of the many conflicts of the societies and the Church. The majority of the members were from the nobility of the time.

Of numbers of people, Shafer thought 5,000 to 10,000 might have been members between 1764 and 1821 and stated that, "The Madrid had 450 enrolled in 1795; the Segovia, 116 in 1785; the S. Cristóval de la Laguna, 122 in 1779; the Las Palmas was founded by at least 65 at about the same time; the Valencia claimed over 300 in 1777, but listed only 206 in 1786; the Basque had some 400 members in 1773 and may have enrolled 1,000 between 1767 and 1793. There were sixty-odd societies in 1803; some did little, some nothing at all."[39]

Dues of members were the only regular monetary support for some of the societies. Lotteries were a source of income for others. Monetary gifts also came from members, the Crown, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Certain municipalities gave direct financial support and free meeting space for the local organization.[40] Herr reported from news items on the financing of the Murcia Economic Society, which was established in 1778, that "The bishop of Murcia, Manuel Rubín de Celis, had been its soul and chief benefactor. He endowed it with an annual income of fifteen thousand reales. His successor had also supported it financially, and the present bishop, Victoriano López Gonzalo, besides bearing the expenses of all the prizes it offered, established factories for linen and silk ribbons and for woollen and linen cloth to give useful employment to indigent men and women. The society maintained elementary schools for boys and girls, in which learning the catechism was encouraged by the award of prizes. It had another free school for arithmetic, geometry, and drawing."[41]

The Madrid Society was exceptional in that it received support through a Royal Gratuity Fund. Most of this fund was used for financing education for the poor and for provision of work for the poor in cottage industries. One society attempted to raise money by selling issues of its proceedings. The largest support of the societies, no doubt, came from the free services of their members. Shafer reported that in money terms, the entire dues collection of the Madrid Society covered scarcely more than half the costs of four spinning schools it maintained in its first couple of years. The Crown was more generous with the Madrid Society than with the others, probably because of the fact that the Madrid Society functioned much like a research bureau for the government. All

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

[41] Richard Herr, *The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 356.

in all, the financing for the societies was sparse, and it declined from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century.[42]

To ask that private contributions fund the societies would have been a big order. There was sporadic and continuing competition for financial gifts. An example is the campaign of 1793 against the French. The first part of this campaign was supported entirely from gifts from individuals at home and abroad, but a sizable deficit would eventually occur in the budget, requiring financing by borrowing. The war with France was scarcely over when a new war with the British would ensue.[43] The generous gifts of the individual members illustrate their dedication to the belief that the economy would be improved by enhancing the abilities of the private sector, an idea which they promoted with their many free enterprise prescriptions.

Progress of the societies was not smooth; they encountered setbacks such as those from repression by Floridablanca due to his fears of French ideas of liberty and due to financial competition from the war support against France and Britain in the 1790's.[44] The societies were also ineffectual during the War of Liberation from 1808-1814.[45] Their work did not come back strongly after the War. The Madrid Society is probably representative as described by Shafer, "But although the Madrid Society did some work in 1814-1821, it confined itself to relatively innocuous charitable, educational, and cultural work, not picking up the controversial economic questions considered earlier."[46]

With respect to the role and tenure of the societies, Shafer stated that "Their decadence in the nineteenth century coincided with the appearance of such bodies as the Ministries of Public Instruction and Public Works, the provincial commissions of those ministries, the Ateneos and other centers of culture and of industrial and economic propaganda, the Chambers of Commerce, Agricultural Federations, and Workers Centers."[47]

IV. Activities of the Societies

The results of the support of the economic societies in the reform movement were both general and specific with respect to education and government. Great opportunities for the societies to effect reform arose coincident with the expulsion of the Jesuits. The societies were popular organizations with various objectives. They attempted to assist the peasant agricultural classes by teaching

[42] Shafer, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-74.
[43] Herr, 1958, *op. cit.*, pp. 381-388.
[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 381-388.
[45] Shafer, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

them and by providing material aid in the form of free seeds and proper tools. Their liberal economic legislation tended to enhance the economy by reducing impediments to progress in agriculture and industry.[48]

Education was one of the most important activities of the economic societies. According to Sarrailh, "The Government dedicated its attention, after 1771, to professional education which was distributed by the economic societies. The Sociedad Económica Vascongada received for its library, after 1771, the famous education course of La Chalotais, and multiplied the schools year after year, undertaking an ambitious project: the founding of a modern model college."[49]

This model college opened in 1776 in Vergara was called the Real Seminario Patriótico Vascongado and was under the direction of Count Peñaflorida, who established the first economic society in 1764. These liberal technical schools were a radical contrast to the typical ecclesiastical schools and the universities in that they purported to "... form able subjects for careers and profession of immediate utility to the state."[50]

The Real Seminario in Vergara and some of the later ones were liberal by giving a thorough grounding in the humanities, with emphasis on modern languages of science such as French, Italian, English, and German. They were practical by their emphasis on experimental physics, agriculture and mathematics. The institute at Vergara was the first major secular school of its type in Spain, yet it continued to give religious instruction. The Church was de-emphasized, and the school objective was directed toward the solution of the problem of the State. It included among other departments, commerce, chemistry, mineralogy, metallurgy, public architecture, and agronomy. The college reflected the attitude of Peñaflorida who was "... an ardent friend of the modern sciences in inverse proportion with his respect for the methods of Aristotle."[51]

Mutually protective bonds were established between the teaching institutions and the economic societies proliferating in the rest of the country after 1774. This pervasive protection would have some power in reducing the censoring of material and in reducing other effects of the Inquisition. The times were right for an influx of ideas not possible before the administration of Charles III.[52]

Olavide, one of the leading members of the Seville Society, had the job of reforming the university in Seville. He also established obligatory primary education in the Sierra Morena area of Spain, an area of resettlement under his direction as intendant. Campomanes, leading member of the Madrid Society,

[48] Bitar-Letaif, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
[49] Sarrailh, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-212.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 212.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 212.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

promoted economic development through the teaching of artisans by the dissemination of the technical manuals. His associate Cabarrús took a more radical view, demanding universal elementary education, complete liberty of expression, and physical as well as intellectual instruction.[53]

Sarrailh added that "In 1792, in one of his famous letters to Jovellanos, Cabarrús traces out a complete and audacious plan of education, completely impregnated with the French revolutionary spirit."[54] Like Jovellanos, Cabarrús envisioned free public education to elementary schoolage children, without regard to family status. He believed the educational process should be a happy one for the students as they learned while playing. Jovellanos and Josefa Amar y Borbón agreed with the idea of Cabarrús on the importance of the human capital-building process of physical education and its complementary effect on improving the mind.[55]

Cabarrús would direct students, at the age of ten or so, toward a specific vocation, keeping in mind the needs of the state. It would be necessary to reduce emphasis on nonuseful functions such as "... the vocations of the clergy, of the religious state, of the militia, of jurisprudence and of all the parasitic classes of solicitors and agents, public secretaries and servants."[56]

One of Jovellanos' specific contributions supported by the societies was his Real Instituto Asturiano in Gijón. This particular school was dedicated to the study of navigation and mineralogy but had a bent to liberal arts as did the one at Vergara. Polt indicated that, "The Institute was not a secondary school of the general type but the first technical school of Spain with pedagogical ends which would transcend the immediately practical ones of the military schools and ship pilots schools. "They were concerned, in fact, with an effort to secularize Spanish education, to reduce the theological and juridical studies and to increase the scientists of industrial application."[57]

Other less publicized schools were established by the Societies. In Zamora, a spinning school was built, as were three industrial and agricultural schools. Industrial schools were started in Valencia and Jerez while an agricultural school was established in Zaragoza along with a school for spinning and handicrafts and a drafting and design academy. Zaragoza eventually had a school of mathematics, purchasing mathematics instruments from London in 1789. A few years later, the King authorized professorships of botany and chemistry. In Barcelona the Junta de Commercio, a sister organization of the societies, founded a marine school as well as schools in Olot, Mallorca, Zaragoza, Tárrega, and Gerona. In

[53] John H. R. Polt, "Jovellanos y la Educación," *Cuadernos de la Cátedra Fejioo*, 2 (18), 1966, pp. 332-333.

[54] Sarrailh, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

[56] *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

[57] Polt, 1966, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

Valladolid, a drafting school succeeded the academy, which was founded in 1759.[58]

Vocational training was prescribed by the economic societies for the poor, for women, and for nuns.[59] It was used as one means to combat beggary and vagrancy.[60] Vocational training agreed with the idea of resources, even those of the Church, being fully employed in productive endeavours for the benefit of the individual and the State. The economics of vocational education and of education in general was made explicit in various publications such as the *Tratado teórico-práctico de enseñanza*[61] by Jovellanos and the *Discurso sobre el fomento de la industria popular*[62] attributed to Campomanes. These writings anticipated the popularization of human capital theory by almost two centuries.

In the agricultural domain, the societies made special studies including seeding methods, use of fertilizers, irrigation, plant culture, methods of milling grain, preparation of olive oil, tree pruning, and tree farming. The studies often resulted in reports distributed to persons in need of the information, and demonstration effects were commonly carried out in the gardens of prominent members. Distribution of seeds and plants was a common practice of the societies; experimental farms were acquired by the societies to carry out research on plants.[63] In 1771 Olavide, a member of the Seville Society, had ploughs with wheels introduced to the countryside.[64]

The societies attempted to stimulate agriculture and the industrial arts by awarding prizes to the best artisans and best products at contests and expositions much like those of the county fair in the United States in the present century. Both Campomanes and Jovellanos were promoters of this type of activity.[65]

In the industrial sector the societies studied bridge construction, metallurgy, and various methods of spinning, weaving, and bleaching of textiles.[66] The societies at times functioned in much the same way as our present-day agricultural and engineering experimental stations. They also distributed information, aside from their own schools, in much the same manner as the Agricultural Extension Service in the United States today.

The economic societies were responsible for many medical experiments. Innoculation and vaccination for disease prevention were projects which added

[58] Sarrailh, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-271.

[59] Polt, 1971, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107.

[60] Shafer, *op. cit.* pp. 50-57.

[61] Polt, 1971, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-110. I have dealt with the human capital thinking of Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos in another paper.

[62] Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes, *Discurso Sobre el Fomento de la Industria Popular*, Facsimile edition, (Oviedo, Centro de Estudios del Siglo XVIII, 1979).

[63] Sarrailh, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 253 and Shafer, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

[66] Sarrailh, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-266.

to statistical results favourable to the human capital element of economic development. Resistance to innoculation and sanitary burials were encountered from the Church.[67] Innoculations and the value of a good diet had been noted in the *Discurso sobre el fomento de la industria popular*.[68]

The economic societies published major documents supporting legislation of a revisionist nature relating to education, agrarian reform, tax reform, and other related matters. The most important document of this type was Jovellanos' *Informe en el expedience de ley agraria*, [69] the report on the agrarian law, which was published by the Madrid Society in 1795. It would have been impossible for Jovellanos to write under his own name a revisionist discourse on such politically sensitive topics. This document was of such profound concern to the Church that ultimately it was put on the "Index" of prohibited books for a hundred years.[70]

The *Ley Agraria* could be described as a free-enterprise document dedicated to abolishing laws forming impediments to free trade and free movement of resources. These laws included those against enclosure by fencing, which gave sheepherders undue advantages over farmers,[71] and those protecting entailed estates such as mortmain of ecclesiastical bodies and primogeniture of private citizens. Integral with the entailed estates were the tax exemptions which gave the wealthy and the Church advantages over others.[72] The economic societies fought the guild system which set up monopolies depriving consumers of lower prices and higher quality.[73] Price controls were also attacked by the economic societies. Some of the free enterprise prescriptions contained in the *Ley agraria* could be traced to the *Discurso sobre el fomento de la industria popular*, [74] 1774, attributed to Campomanes, and others were contained in the treatise on *Economía civil*, [75] 1776, by Jovellanos. It is significant that these documents were coincident with, or anticipated, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.[76]

Many of the legislative reforms promoted by the economic societies were put into practice in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Payne reported that "Taxes on salaried officials and on the church were raised, and new issues of paper money were backed by special levies on landowners and

[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 49-54.

[68] Campomanes, *op. cit.*, pp. li-lii.

[69] Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, "Informe en el Expediente de Ley Agraria." In D. Candido Nocedal (ed.), *Obras de Don Gaspar Melchor De Jovellanos*, Volume II, (Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1952).

[70] Polt, 1971, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-99.

[71] *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 96-99.

[73] Shafer, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

[74] Campomanes, *op. cit.*

[75] Jovellanos, 1956, *op. cit.*

[76] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, (New York, Random House, 1937).

on the Church. For the first time, the aristocracy was brought directly under taxation, and this explains part of the opposition to the government in central Spain. In 1795, Godoy's government took the step of abolishing the special 'servicio' tax on peasants that had first been levied in sixteenth-century Castile, making the burden somewhat less inequitable." and "Another important precedent was set in 1798, when the government decided to raise money by auctioning off surplus buildings owned by municipalities. This was the first time that entailed property was seized and auctioned by the state to pay for war expenses. In 1798, the government also decreed the sale of the property of most church charitable foundations, as well as of all remaining unsold Jesuit property, and during subsequent years further levies were agreed to by the church to meet military expenses. In 1799, a new property tax was levied on the wealthy."[77]

Other results of economic society recommendations cited by Payne were that "One major reform was the partial abolition of the 'señorío eclesiástico' in 1806. Papal permisson was obtained to sell one-seventh of church properties in return for state bonds. This was the last great step of eighteenth-century regalist policy and opened the way to all-out disamortization of church lands by the succeeding liberal regime thirty years later."[78]

Another action sympathetic with the recommendations of the economic societies was that "The Corps of Engineers of Highways and Canals was created in 1799, and all public works undertaken were turned over to it."[79] Vicens also reported that the Cortes of Cádiz which was convoked in 1810 "... drew up a series of magnificent plans regarding ownership of land, trade policy, and organization of industry. It was this Cortes which timidly initiated the bourgeois ideal; elimination of legal feudalism in rural areas, ecclesiastical disentailment, and suppression of guilds."[80]

Extensions of the societies' movements into the nineteenth century included a more complete mobilization of agricultural property than was previously possible. This change had a lasting positive impact on the Spanish economy. According to Vicens "Uncultivated and crown lands, entailed and mortmain properties, all were put on the public market and into economic circulation. This shock permitted a recovery of the national economy which after 1855 was translated into tangible benefits."[81] Labour was made free to move by the abolition of the guilds. The liberals encouraged a statistical and economic sensitivity which led to the creation of the Ministry of Development (Ministerio

[77] Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Spain and Portugal*, Volume 2, (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), pp. 418–419.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 419.

[79] Vicens-Vives, *op. cit.*, p. 679.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 611.

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 613.

de Fomento). Vicens stated that "The great sources for studying the economy of this period are all liberal ones."[82]

The improved technical base established by the scientific movement of the economic societies formed the foundation for the many industrial advances of Spain in the nineteenth century. Harbour and shipping improvements, development of steamship lines, and development of the railroads benefited from this foundation.[83] Vicens argued that "... then there was the visual as well as commercial tool represented by the spread of expositions."[84] These marketing devices were not original with the societies but were certainly popularized by them as an education, development, and marketing method. The use of fertilizers in the latter part of the nineteenth century is reportedly responsible for important gains in the balance of payments. The economic societies had furnished experiments around a century earlier to show the productivity improvements possible from fertilizers.[85]

In addition to the economic liberalism contributed by the economic societies, considerable advancement accrued to Spain in the field of economics. The advances could be grouped under two categories, political economy (economía civil) and rural economy, the latter including farm management, home economics, and various other applied or technique-subject-matter areas. The paucity of economics professorships was remedied at the insistence of the economic societies. Shafer reported that "The Cortes in 1813 ordered the establishment of chairs of *economía civil* in all universities, and *escuelas patrióticas* of agriculture in all principal towns."[86] The Spanish Enlightenment economists were not great theoreticians, but they changed the tone of acceptance of known theory to the advantage of the country.

Progress in the reform movement of the Enlightenment often came with great sacrifice for particular individuals, in spite of the protection afforded by the economic societies. Cabarrús was imprisoned in 1790 on spurious charges as a result of his reform action. Jovellanos was exiled from his Madrid post to Asturias for defending Cabarrús. The two were back in favour from 1797-1798 when Godoy, the Prince of Peace, again exiled Jovellanos from the court.[87] Godoy himself was deposed for a couple of years and later imprisoned for his reformist actions; one of his successors, Mariano Luís de Urquijo, was dismissed and imprisoned in 1800; Jovellanos was imprisoned in 1801 for about seven years. These persecutions were largely stimulated by the reform movements sanctioned by the economic societies. Aranda, a predecessor to Godoy, a

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 613.
[83] *Ibid.*, pp. 689-692.
[84] *Ibid.*, p. 692.
[85] *Ibid.*, pp. 700-701.
[86] Shafer, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
[87] *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

supporter of Jovellanos for his first government appointment, and a champion of the revisionist movement, was deposed from his government position.[88] Aranda was known to be a Freemason and held a high position in the Masonic rite; he was chief minister, proposing the expulsion of the Jesuits following the food riots of 1766.[89] In the administration of Charles III "... the Holy Office was exercised with comparative restraint, but in 1778 it still retained the power to try, disgrace, and force from Spain Pablo de Olavide, Campomanes' chief collaborator in agrarian and educational reform."[90] Valentín de Foronda, liberal member of the Basque society who had been consul-general to the United States, was imprisoned after publication of his Spanish version of Rousseau's *Social Contract* in 1814.[91]

The success of the economic societies as privately-supported organizations ultimately contributed to their diminished role in the economy as they were gradually replaced by governmental organizations which carried out some of their functions. The new government bureaus replacing the societies would have probably been greatly delayed in appearance without the reform support of the economic societies.

V. Conclusion

An evaluation of the Spanish economic societies revealed that they had a significant effect on the economic welfare of the populace through reducing the relative power of the Church and the landed aristocracy. The original goals of the societies of "... improving agriculture, rustic economy, the sciences, the useful arts, industry, and commerce"[92] were attained. The direct tangible effects of the societies could be seen in terms of schools built, materials and texts distributed, demonstration effects of vocational and technical education, experimentation in crops and methods, and information brought from foreign countries. Those effects much more difficult to evaulate are the ones which occurred because the protective wall of the officially-sanctioned societies allowed the bringing together of people and ideas which would not have been possible in the absence of the economic societies.

Economic development in Spain was advanced by the economic societies mainly through education and legislation. Under the education heading, signal improvements were noted in the following categories:

1. General secular education at all levels,
2. Vocational and technical education,

[88] Payne, *op. cit.*, pp. 416-420.
[89] *Ibid.*, pp. 362-363.
[90] *Ibid.*, p. 364.
[91] Shafer, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

3. Experimentation and research, and
4. Extension and information.

The economic societies altered the character of education to promote the useful arts and sciences which Spain needed. The result of this change in education was an important foundation of technical progress in the next century.

Legislative reform of the societies concentrated on free enterprise and free movement of resources. Land reform was one of the main results from their proposals. Specific progress was made by:

1. Taxing the aristocracy,
2. Taxing Church lands,
3. Reducing taxes on peasants,
4. Abolishing entailments of the Church and individuals,
5. Suppressing and abolishing the guilds,
6. Abolishing the anti-closure laws, and
7. Reducing restrictions on crop selection.

These changes provided the means for a more equitable distribution of land and income and for an upward social mobility for the poor. This part of the reform movement set the tone for economic liberalism in the nineteenth century.

The field of economics was advanced by the dissemination of books and other literature, from foreign sources as well as from the society members and other domestic sources. It was also advanced by the establishment of professorships of economics.

In summary, the societies made a lasting impact on many technical, political, economic, educational, and cultural aspects of the Enlightenment populace and generations of the future. Spain's intellectual progress and economic reforms would have been greatly delayed without the support of the economic societies as a springboard.