



To the Paymasters of the Devizes Union

It was intimated to the Guardians assembled on Tuesday last, by Mr Ady, the Assistant Commissioner, that the Poor Law Commissioners intend striking a new average immediately, based upon the three past years expenditure; and, to my astonishment, the same gentleman informed us that the new arrangement was intended to include, not only the future expenses, but also the existing debt, viz, the debt incurred for building thee house. etc. etc. I must, however, do him the justice to say, that he considered the intention of including the existing debt if good in law, to be inconsistent with common sense; to which I have no doubt you have gained no advantage from the Union, but, perhaps the reverse, at least in a pecuniary point of view, will upon investigation be ready to add - it is inconsistent with common justice too! And I will as briefly as possible, attempt to show why I think it deserves to be thus branded.

It is well known, that previous to the introduction of the new law, the expenses of the different parishes were economised or neglected, according to the vigilance or carelessness of the rate payers. The introduction of the new law has had just this effect, that all those parishes that were badly managed before, (from whatever cause it may have proceeded, whether from disagreement amongst paymasters as to their share of labourers, or from any other cause,) have had their expenditure in our Union reduced, in some instances as much as one-half. This in some measure, may be fairly attributed to the assistance of those men, who it is proved, notwithstanding the difficulties of the old law, were still competent to manage their parochial affairs satisfactorily; which I think you will admit to be conclusive, when I tell you that the new law has in some instances been the means of raising the expenditure, viz, by the difference, of contributing towards the expenses of the establishment, etc. etc.

If then my inference be a correct one, it is but a poor requital for their services, after having assisted their neighbours in reducing their rates, the first opportunity should be sought of striking a new average, based upon the reduction affected by their endeavours, and which very basis as it relieves the party who have gained most by it, so it must, of course, saddle that party (who have gained nothing but the satisfaction of assisting their neighbours) just in the same ratio as the other is relieved. But when it is intended that the expenses of building, etc. is to be included in the contemplated arrangement, and to disturb what was considered final, it must appear to be for the sake of relieving one parish of another, and I think loudly calls for the remonstrance and interference of those parishes at least who are losers by the arrangement, as being both unjust in principle and inconsistent with common sense.

A Guardian

P.S. - It is fair to say - I don't believe the Paymasters of those Parishes who have gained most, desire, and I hardly think they will accept, such an unjust arrangement, unless forced upon them. Devizes rate payers will do well to look into this.

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