

Extracts from a Speech on Repeal of the Corn Laws, 15 May 1846 Sir Robert Peel [Added by Marjie Bloy, Ph.D.] <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/cornlaws3.html> My belief is, that in seeking the re-enactment of the existing law after its suspension, you would have had to contend with greater difficulties than you anticipate. I have a strong belief that the greatest object which we or any other government can contemplate would be to elevate the social condition of that class of the people with whom we are brought into no direct relationship by the exercise of the elective franchise. The mere interests of the landlords [and] occupying tenants, important as they are, are subordinate to the great question – what is calculated to increase the comforts, to improve the condition, and elevate the social character of the millions who subsist by manual labour, whether they are engaged in manufactures or in agriculture? I wish to convince them that our object has been so to apportion taxation, that we shall relieve industry and labour from any undue burden, and transfer it, so far as is consistent with the public good, to those who are better enabled to bear it. [From Speeches of Sir Robert Peel, 1853, Vol.... Now, all of you admit that the real question at issue is the improvement of the social and moral condition of the masses of the population; we wish to elevate in the gradation of society that great class which gains its support by manual labour. These are the motives on which I acted. 4, 698–96]